

By the 1750s the trekboers were ensconced on the Karoo plains of the Onder Bokkeveld and in the Hantam and Roggeveld mountains. The fact that they spread themselves relatively thinly within this newly-occupied area may explain why, for the most part, they and the Khoe-San were able to share its resources and co-exist relatively peacefully. The Khoe-San were still very vulnerable to maltreatment by the Dutch, however, and in some cases they were forcibly removed from the springs at which they were based. As a result, tensions between the Khoe-San and the Colonists began to build up again.

They erupted in 1754 when “Bosjesmans-Hottentotten” began assembling in the Voorste (Little) and Agterste (Lower) Roggeveld. The raiders fortified themselves in huts built of stone and mounted a series of raids on the farms of the Dutch in the Olifants River, Bokkeveld, Roggeveld and Doorn River areas. Some farmers were forced to abandon their homes, but a commando was raised and a number of Khoe-San kraals located and forced to submit to the Colonists. The leader of the San in the area was traced and, together with three other Khoe-San leaders, was persuaded to accept the Company’s copper-headed staffs of office, as well as gifts of sheep from the Roggeveld farmers. For more than a decade there was relative peace in the Roggeveld and Onder Bokkeveld and several small kraals of “tame Hottentots” lived interspersed amongst the trekboers of this area.

An isolated incident was the cause of widespread conflict breaking out yet again in 1770 as Khoe-San and trekboers competed for the diminishing environmental resources of the interior escarpment. It appears that the spark which initiated this conflict was a dispute between a San leader and the European servant, or knecht, of a Roggeveld farmer. During the course of this dispute the knecht was killed and the San leader’s kraal was in turn attacked by a commando. Khoe-San, including those who had previously lived amongst the Dutch, now rose up and attacked farmers from the Hantam to the Sneeuwberg.

A number of commandos were sent out against the Khoe-San during the course of the following two years as the conflict continued. Further impetus was given to the hostilities by a rumour which spread through the Roggeveld in 1772 that a commando from the Bokkeveld planned to come and kill all the Roggeveld Khoe and Bastards/Basters. Panic-stricken, Khoe servants deserted and joined up with Khoe-San in the mountains. The rebellion was quashed in the same year, however, and Khoe-San captives taken to Cape Town. According to the Swedish botanist, Thunberg, who was living in Cape Town at the time, they did not deny their crimes, “but asserted that they acted so in their own defence, the Europeans making every year fresh encroachments upon their lands and possessions, and forcing them continually further up into the country, whence they were driven back again by the other Hottentots, or else killed”. Most of the captives received sentences ranging from flogging to long terms of imprisonment and death, while some were released and allowed to return to their places of origin.

### **The period 1770 to 1795: occupation of the Seekoei River Valley, Sneeuwberg, Camdeboo and adjacent areas**

By 1770 a frontier had been established along the edges of the interior escarpment - roughly along the line of the Roggeveld, Nieuweveld and Sneeuwberg ranges. The population of the Boers was increasing rapidly and a number of early travellers commented on the large size of their families. New land was therefore constantly being sought out on which the sons of farmers could establish their own places. The variation in their prosperity and fortunes was reflected in the form of their houses, which varied from large, comfortable manor houses to relatively small and modest buildings.



A Boer's manor house. By Samuel Daniell.

Source: Library of Parliament.



A Boer's estate. By J.C. Poortemans.

Source: Library of Parliament.

At the same time that farmers had been moving northwards into Khoe-San-occupied areas, other Colonists had been migrating eastwards between the Swartberg and the Indian Ocean. They reached the Groot Brak River near Mossel Bay by about 1730, and by 1765 they had reached the Gamtoos River. By 1768 they had moved into the area between the Sundays and Bushman's rivers and had turned inland and begun to occupy the plains of the Camdeboo at the base of the Sneeuwberg, where they began registering loan-farms. Here they were joined by farmers from the Bokkeveld, Roggeveld and Hantam, who, faced with the aridity of Khoe-San-occupied areas to the north, had spread eastwards along the escarpment to the Nieuweveld, Camdeboo, Sneeuwberg and Bruintjeshoogte. By 1770 these trekboers had reached the Sneeuwberg mountains and the Camdeboo plains.



**A wagon traversing a kloof.**

Source: Barrow, J. (1801-1804). *An Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa, in the Years 1797 and 1798*. London: Cadell and Davies.



**A wagon traversing a pass.**

Source: Lucas, T.I. (1861). *Pen and Pencil Reminiscences of a Campaign in South Africa*. London: Day.



Burchell's party descends from the Sneeuwberg, c. 1810.

Source (original): Burchell, W.J. (1822/24). *Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa*. 2 vols. London: Printed by Longman et al.

The intense cold of the Sneeuwberg during winter meant that its inhabitants, like those of the Roggeveld mountains, were forced to abandon their homes during the colder months and move to the lower-lying plains at its base. Aside from this inconvenience, however, the mountains offered a number of advantages to the incoming settlers. It was reasonably well-watered, it was almost completely free of horse sickness and it contained many fertile valleys suitable for grazing and limited cultivation. Colonel Robert Jacob Gordon, Commander of the Cape Garrison, was greatly impressed with the potential of the area for farming when he visited it about ten years after it had begun to be settled, and he remarked that the sheep of the farmers who had occupied the mountains grew “fatter than cattle” in this region. It is not surprising, therefore, that many loan-farms were soon registered and established in this region. The first farms in these areas were registered in 1768, and in the early 1770s a number of farms were registered in the areas abutting the Seekoei River, which drained from the Sneeuwberg in a north-easterly direction into the Gariep. By the end of 1774, more than 250 farms had already been granted to frontier farmers in what was to become, in 1786, the District of Graaff-Reinet.

Many of the factors which favoured settlement in the Sneeuwberg by the Dutch farmers also made the area attractive for the autochthonous Swy èi San and the animals which they followed on their seasonal round. Numerous Swy èi, known to the settlers as “Snese” or “Chinese” Bosjesmans because of their small, “slit” eyes and their light-yellow skin, occupied these mountains, and conflict between them and the frontier farmers was inevitable once the mountain valleys and the springs on the plains had been claimed by the Colonists. The farm of one of the immigrant trekboers was attacked in 1770 and the San soon intensified their attacks. Within three years, farmers in the Camdeboo, Sneeuwberg and Seekoei River valley found themselves in a state of siege, and by 1773 the situation had deteriorated to such an extent that they were forced to appeal to the Company for help.

These appeals resulted in the Company's supporting the formation of a Great Commando, or "Groot Kommando", in 1774 under the overall leadership of Godlieb Rudolph Opperman. The Company instructed the Colonists to try and make peace with the leaders of the San. Orders were also issued that no blood should be spilt without its being absolutely necessary and, if at all possible, women and defenceless males should be spared. However, the authorities went on to instruct the Colonists that, if it proved impossible to subdue the San without using force, they were "to attack the robbers from all sides in their dens and lurking places and to reduce them either to a permanent state of peace and quiet, or otherwise, in case of necessity, entirely to destroy them".

It is clear from these instructions that, while preferring peace to a long and costly war, the Dutch authorities had provided a mandate for genocide, should the situation demand it - policy that was to become official in 1777 when the Council of Policy gave their blessing to the extermination of San whenever and wherever they were encountered. Despite their urging restraint on the part of the commando members, moreover, the authorities were aware that similar orders had been issued in the past to no effect as the Company was completely unable to enforce them. The Landdrost of Stellenbosch, who had been responsible for exercising authority on the eastern frontier until the establishment of the district of Graaff-Reinet, was hundreds of miles away, and the frontier farmers showed little respect for his local representatives. The rules laid down by the Company for the treatment of San by the members of the Great Commando were therefore unlikely to be adhered to.

Having obtained the official sanction and support of the Company, the Boers began assembling for what they hoped would be a final and decisive onslaught on the San. The Great Commando was split into three groups. The first section set out from the Bokkeveld. They searched the Middle and Klein Roggeveld and travelled as far east as the Koup and the Nieuweveld Mountains. The second section left from the Roggeveld for an area north and north-east of the Sak River. A third group attacked San kraals in the Sneeuwberg, Seekoei River valley, Camdeboo, Nieuweveld and Koup.

In all, more than 500 San were killed and well over 200 captured, while only one member of the commandos lost his life and none was taken captive. These figures illustrate the extent to which the odds were stacked against the indigenous inhabitants in any clash with a well-organised commando armed with muskets. Despite these casualties, however, Khoe-San resistance to the incursion of the trekboers continued unabated and undiminished in its intensity, and for the next 20 years a bitter war was fought between San and farmers in the Hantam, Roggeveld, Nieuweveld, Sneeuwberg and Camdeboo.

A variety of strategies were adopted by the Cape San to reduce the advantage which the well-armed and mounted settlers had in this struggle - although curiously, unlike the later San raiders of the Maloti-Drakensberg, raids in the eighteenth century were almost always conducted on foot, rather than on horses stolen from the farmers. They usually made their incursions during the rainy season - the time when the horses of the farmers in the lower-lying areas were often afflicted by horse sickness, making pursuit on horseback difficult. At this time, too, the wet caused the muskets of the Boers to misfire. The period when the moon was in its last quarter was also a favourable time for raids as it allowed them to complete their raids in darkness, but make their escape with the stolen livestock with the assistance of the morning moon's light.

When attacking the Boers' Khoe herders in the veld or mountains, their *modus operandi* was to hide themselves behind bushes or rocks as close as possible to cattle and sheep being herded. Overcome by the heat of his fire and drowsy from the effects of the dagga (*Cannabis sativa*) he had smoked, the

herder more often than not would fall asleep, allowing the San to creep up and kill him. Anger at the Khoes' collaboration with the Dutch on commandos, including commandos that resulted in the capture and enslavement of San women and children, sometimes provoked them into doing this in a particularly cruel fashion, similar to that in which cattle were slaughtered. In these cases, the herder's abdomen would be slit open, the main artery severed and the unfortunate victim left to die. His gun would be taken and the livestock he was tending driven, night and day if necessary, into the mountains. Spies would be placed on the surrounding heights to see whether they were being pursued by the Dutch farmers.



Armed "Bushman Hottentots" prepared for an expedition. Detail. By Samuel Daniell.

Source: Library of Parliament.



A Khoesman herdsman. By "W.J.".

Source: Library of Parliament.

During their flight they would consume some of the animals and those that they were unable either to eat or to take with them were killed with their assegais or shot with poisoned arrows. According to one account, perhaps apocryphal, they sometimes carried lion skins with them on these raids, as the scent of these frightened the cattle and made it easier to drive them at speed over difficult terrain. Once they reached a place in the mountains where they felt reasonably secure, they encamped with their booty and constructed kraals of bushes and huts covered with mats. They would remain in these temporary camps until their supply of food ran out, when they would prepare for another raid on the Colonists.



San raiders prepare to roll a boulder down onto their pursuers. Note the cattle being driven up the steep incline and the man about to spear one of the animals - probably one that could not keep up with the others. By Charles Davidson Bell.

Source: Museum Africa.

Although casualties were much lower amongst the farmers and their Khoe-San auxiliaries than among the San of the mountains, death by poisoned arrow was greatly feared by the enemies of the San. The southern San groups made their poison from a variety of ingredients, including the grubs of certain beetles, snake venom, and parts of poisonous plants and trees - such as the castor bean, the leaves of the *Euphorbia virosa* tree, and the bulbous root of one of the amaryllis species, known to the Dutch as “gifbol” (poison bulb). These poisons, sometimes used in combination, were highly potent, and if an arrow penetrated deeply they could kill a person within a very short period of time. According to some sources, the poison they used when hunting game differed, in potency or kind, from that which they used in warfare. A number of San groups were said to have antidotes to the poison, which, if they existed, must have been more effective than the combination of gunpowder and urine reportedly used by some Khoe.

The arrows of the San, tipped with points made of stone and bone, or, in later times, iron or even glass, were usually carried in a quiver made of a hollowed-out stem of a branch or the stem of a form of aloe (the kokerboom, or quiver tree), which was fitted with a skin base and cover. In times of war, some San groups inserted their arrows into a fillet placed around the head, where they could be easily reached. In this way they were able to shoot about five or six arrows a minute with a reasonable degree of accuracy to a distance of 60 to 80 paces (although the trekboers’ muzzle-loading muskets could easily kill at more than twice this range). They were shot individually at specific targets, or in a shower aimed in the general direction of the enemy.



A San man armed with a bow, and with arrows placed in a fillet on his head. By Edward Orme.

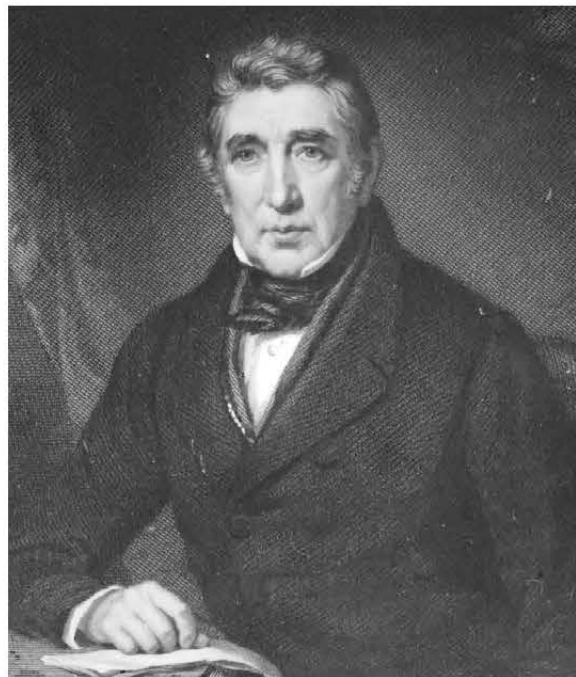
Source: Library of Parliament.

There are a number of accounts of the terrible fate of people struck by San poisoned arrows. Burchell, who journeyed over the Sneeuwberg in 1811, was told by his Khoer servants of a man who was pierced by so many arrows of the Sneeuwberg San that when his body was found he "looked more like a porcupine than a man". Ten years earlier, missionary Johannes Van der Kemp witnessed the deaths of two Khoer herders struck by poisoned arrows while looking after horses in the mountains, and his account of this incident demonstrates the rapidity with which death could ensue once a person had been struck by a poison arrow:

“The Hottentot Ngei came running down the mountain; he was wounded in several parts of his body by the Boschemen with poisoned arrows; he vomited, was vertiginous, and, whilst he spoke, fell down and expired at my feet. Another was also wounded, and dropped down dead before he could reach us; their wounds were only superficial, though death ensued within a quarter of an hour”.

Even when the victim survived he was liable to endure great suffering since wounds from poisoned arrows generally healed very slowly. George Thompson who travelled in South Africa in the early 1820s, reported that a farmer he encountered still suffered great pain from a poisoned arrow wound inflicted 30 years earlier.

Not only were the San feared for their proficiency with the bow and arrow, but they also gained a reputation for great stoicism and bravery in the face of overwhelming odds. They often fought to the last man when cornered, and Thunberg reported that “a Boshiesman who is mortally wounded by a ball is never found crying or lamenting in any shape whatsoever”. About 25 years later, John Barrow, private secretary to the Governor of the Cape, Earl Macartney, also remarked on the bravery of the San in combat. “It frequently happens”, he wrote at the end of the eighteenth century, “that a party will ... (throw) themselves in the midst of the Colonists in order to create confusion, and to give their countrymen, concealed amongst the rocks or in the long grass, at the expense of their own lives, an opportunity of exercising more effectually their mortal weapons upon their enemies, and at the same time to facilitate the escape of their wives and children”.



John Barrow.

Source: Cape Archives.

Adriaan van Jaarsveld reported in 1775 that San of the Seekoei River area, captured by a party under his command and ordered to lead them to two others who had escaped capture, refused to do so, despite knowing that they would be shot for refusing to co-operate with their captors:

“I strongly impressed on them ... that if they misled us ... they should certainly be put to death; but that if they pointed out the hiding place of the fugitives, they should thereby save their lives ... I then let them depart, but they had only gone about an hour, when (they) fell on the ground; our spies desired them to rise, but they lay as if dead, without making answer; they then tried to make them

rise by means of some blows, but they still made as if they were dead; and seeing no means of getting these deceivers to leave the spot, and that they might not be any further betrayed by them, they were therefore killed on the spot by our spies ...”

Acts of heroism such as these, together with the fact, already mentioned, that San were considered in some senses vermin or sub-human by many of the farmers, who shot them on sight, meant that San casualties were extremely high and the war on them was marked by atrocities on the part of the Dutch Colonists, in the course of which thousands of men, women and children were cruelly put to death.

Little point would be served in providing detailed descriptions of the many atrocities, which are well attested to in the historical record, but the following account by William Somerville, a Scottish doctor and traveller, provides some idea of the sufferings experienced by the San at this time. Travelling through the Eastern Cape near the Winterberg-AmaThola range in the last years of the eighteenth century, Somerville visited the site of a massacre perpetrated by a Boer commando on San men, women and children several years earlier. This is his description of the scene:

“On the bank of a river at the bottom of a rugged precipice exhibiting at a little distance the resemblance of a ruinous castle shaded and obscured in the front with spreading trees a most romantic spot attracted our attention. We left the road to visit it, and a nearer view added to the gloomy ideas which its first aspect had created; the ground was strewed (sic) with morsels of human bones in such number that there remained not a doubt of the place having at some period not very remote been the abode of some unfortunate horde ... One of our fellow travellers ... told us that about twelve years ago a commando of Boers led by Klaas Smit, who is still alive, and a man noted for his piety amongst the farmers ... had gone in pursuit of some roving bosjesmen who had stolen cattle from the inhabitants. Their spies sent out before the party had discovered by the smoke of the fires at which they cooked their victuals that a kraal resided at that spot ... Upon this intelligence which the Hottentots had gained ... they beset them so perfectly that every retreat was cut off, and began to fire upon them with swanshot and slugs before dawn of day - in this way men, women and children were murdered. The fire was kept up as long as a living creature appeared.”

It is a reflection of how little worth was attached by the frontier farmers to the life of a San person at the time that even Colonists of high standing in their communities, like the individual mentioned in Somerville’s account, were guilty of acts of this kind. George Thompson was later to remark of one such person, a veldkommandant who admitted to him that he had been on many commandos that had been involved in the killing of San and the capture of their children:

“It struck me as a strange and melancholy trait of human nature, that this Veld-Commandant, in many other points a meritorious, benevolent and clear-sighted man, seemed to be perfectly unconscious that any part of his own proceedings, or those of his countrymen, in their wars with the Bushmen, could awaken my abhorrence. The massacre of many hundreds of these miserable creatures, and the carrying away of their children into servitude, seemed to be considered by him and his companions as things perfectly lawful, just, and necessary ... .”

As a contemporary account by Anders Sparrman, a visitor to the frontier regions, makes clear, however, the brutal manner in which the San were treated by the commandos was not approved of by all the Dutch Colonists. “I am far from accusing all the Colonists of having a hand in these and other cruelties, which are too frequently committed (against the San) in this quarter of the globe”, Sparrman wrote. “While some of them plumed themselves upon them, there were many who, on the contrary, held them in abomination, and feared lest the vengeance of heaven should, for all these

crimes, fall upon their land and their prosperity”. It is also clear that the systematic slaughter of Khoe-San by the Boers was never encouraged or approved by the Company. Government officials at the Cape continually exhorted the farmers to try to negotiate and make peace with the San. If this was not possible, they ordered, those San who actively resisted the establishment of farms in their territories were to be captured and treated humanely. As has been mentioned, however, the Company was in no position to control and discipline the distant frontier farmers, and, despite wishing to prevent confrontation between the San and burghers nominally under their control, they were prepared to sanction the use of extreme measures by the farmers if it appeared that these would succeed where other strategies had failed.

That they did not succeed is indicated by the fact that the suffering of their people at the hands of the commandos served only to harden the San in their resolve to resist the Dutch. “I have to inform you that the fury of the Bushmen on the Sneeuwberg gets worse and worse every day”, wrote an anxious Veldwachtmeester D.S. Van der Merwe to the Landdrost in June 1776. The situation was clearly getting out of hand for the Colonists, and when Colonel Gordon visited the Sneeuwberg in 1777 it was to see whether peace could be negotiated with the San there. Although he was unsuccessful in this and was not able to make contact with the San, he reported a speech by a San chief which demonstrates the determination of these people to defend their land against the Dutch:

“These so called Bushmen or Chinese have a famous chief called Koerekei, or bullet-escaper. Veldwachtmeester Van der Merwen told me that, after an action which he commanded, this Koerekei, standing on a cliff out of range, shouted out to him: “What are you doing in my land? You who have taken all the places where the eland and other game live. Why did you not stay where the sun goes down, where you first came from?” He went on to say that he would kill the herdsmen of the Dutch and chase them all away. As he went off he further said that it would be seen who would win.



Hunting eland.

Source: Drayson, A.W. (1858). *Sporting Scenes Amongst the Kaffirs of South Africa*. London: Routledge.



Boers and their servants returning from a hunting expedition. By Samuel Daniell.

Source: Library of Parliament.

It appears that Koerekei's confidence in the San's ability to chase the Dutch from the land was not misplaced. One of the most prominent Boer leaders, Adriaan Van Jaarsveld, had already tucked his tail between his legs and fled the Sneeuwberg, and within a few years of Gordon's visit the area from the Hex River to the Swartberg as well as much of the Roggeveld, Koup, Sneeuwberg, Seekoei River valley and Camdeboo was under Khoe-San control. Many Colonists were now forced to abandon their farms.

Gordon was followed by the Governor of the Cape, Van Plettenberg, who visited the eastern frontier in 1778 and erected a beacon in the Seekoei River valley, near present-day Colesberg, defining the most northerly point of the Colony. On his return to Cape Town, Van Plettenberg recommended the establishment of a drostdy in Graaff-Reinet, and in 1786 the new district of Graaff-Reinet was proclaimed and a drostdy built. It was hoped that, with the establishment of the new drostdy, it would be easier for the Company to monitor and control the Colonists on the north-eastern frontier.

Despite the presence of the government's representatives at Graaff-Reinet and closer governmental supervision of the area, however, the rate of attrition amongst the San communities in the district remained very high. H.C.D. Maynier, appointed Landdrost of Graaff-Reinet in 1792, testified that he had "found that regularly every year large commandos, consisting of 200 and 300 armed Boors, had been sent against the Bosjesmen, and learnt by their reports that generally many hundreds of Bosjesmen were killed by them, ... and that the greatest part of the killed comprised helpless women and innocent children". He was "acquainted with the most horrible atrocities committed on these occasions".

Between 1786 and 1795 at least 2,500 San were killed and more than 650 taken prisoner on the north-eastern frontier alone. During the same period the San killed 276 people, mostly Khoe-San herders looking after the Boers' cattle and sheep. These are the official figures and they are almost certainly too low if one considers that illegal commandos were not reported and one farmer alone boasted to Colonel Richard Collins, who toured the Colony in 1808 and 1809, that in his younger days parties under his command had shot or captured about 3,200 San over a period of six years. No wonder then, as Barrow remarked, "the burden of their song was vengeance against the Dutch".

The Sneeuwberg San nevertheless continued to cling to their mountain strongholds, and it became clear that it was the spirit of the Dutch farmers rather than that of the Khoe-San which was breaking. Dismayed at the scale of the resistance that they were facing, the morale of the farmers plummeted. Khoe servants and San now joined forces and assembled in large numbers to oppose the Boers, causing many farms in the Tarka, Sneeuwberg and Bruintjeshoogte areas to be abandoned.

To combat the intensified threat from Khoe and San raiders, veldwachtmeesters, who led the commandos, were forced to call out farmers for duty much more frequently. Conditions on commando were arduous, however, and the members' farms and families were vulnerable to attack while they were away. Those who could afford to do so sent surrogates - usually their Baster or Khoe servants. The discipline of the farmers, who were loathe to serve on the commandos, began to deteriorate - a problem that was on the increase but which the veldwachtmeesters had faced for some time. D.S. Van der Merwe had complained in 1780, for example, that when he tried to form a commando he got "more excuses than men". And a few years earlier, in 1777, some farmers were already openly ridiculing those in charge of recruiting men and provisions for the commandos, as the following report by the same Van der Merwe makes clear:

'I ... ordered the wagon of C. de Clerk on the commando, to convey the provisions, but he sent me the wagon without a tilt (canvas covering); I then sent him a letter to send the tilt, as he was ordered to send his wagon with all its appurtenances; on which he sent me a letter running as follows: "Monsieur D.S. Van der Merwe. You write me to send my wagon tilt tomorrow, which it is impossible that I can do, as it is the bolster of my bed. I am not unwilling, if I had enough bedclothes, to give the tilt, but I am deficient in these. I remain, therefore, after compliments, your friend, Cornelius de Clerk." Turning over the paper, Van der Merwe found the following words written: "The tilt of which I write you is the bolster for my head, and my wife is my mattrass (sic); so if you claim the tilt by force, order the mattrass with it, as cook?'

Conditions for farmers further to the west in the Roggeveld, Nieuweveld and Koup were as bad as in the Sneeuwberg. Khoe-San bands continued to roam these mountains, attacking farmhouses and stealing livestock and, as in the areas closer to Graaff-Reinet, commandos were encountering much larger bands than had been the case in the earlier period of the conflict. San and other groups were joining up to oppose the European Colonists, and traditionally acephalous San societies now found it necessary to rely on strong leadership in the face of the threats they faced from the Europeans. The fact that the later bands were often reinforced by Khoe servants armed with firearms meant that they were sometimes able to take on and repulse the Colonists when they were attacked. A Khoe-San group that entered the area at the southern base of the Nieuweberg in 1791, for example, was said to be about 1,000 strong, and a commando that attacked a Khoe-San kraal in the Kareeberg in 1790 was forced to retreat as a result of fierce resistance - the Khoe-San were armed with guns as well as bows and arrows and had been reinforced by other kraals in the area. Similarly, a large Khoe-San group located by a commando in 1792 were well-enough armed and organised to successfully resist the

commando's attack on them. In contrast, it has been estimated that, by the end of the eighteenth century, the population of trekboers in the Cape did not exceed 1,000.

As the eighteenth century drew to a close, therefore, the Colonists of the north-western and north-eastern frontier came to realise that a military solution to the conflict was unlikely to be achieved. It was thus at this time that serious efforts were made by the British, who had occupied the Cape in 1795, as well as some farmers and newly-arrived missionaries, to pacify and settle the San. The hope was that the "disassembling" of San society and culture, and the threat it posed to settler society, could be achieved by peaceful means, rather than by the physical extermination of the people themselves. These efforts met with varying degrees of success and will be discussed in the following chapter.

## TIMELINE

**1497**

Vasco da Gama encounters San hunter-gatherers at Saldanha Bay

**1652**

The Dutch East India Company establishes a station at the Cape

**1657**

The first free burghers are allocated land on the Liesbeeck River

**1700**

Farmers cross the Berg River and establish farms in the Land van Waveren (Tulbagh area)

The cattle trade with the Khoe, previously monopolized by the Company, is opened to the Colonists

**1704**

A number of military posts established by this time to counter Khoe-San raids

**1713**

First outbreak of smallpox amongst the Khoe, and possibly also the San

**1714**

The introduction of the loan farm system

**1716**

Peace negotiated between the Colonists and the Khoe-San – raids infrequent between this date and 1739

**1725**

Farmers settle in the Olifants River Valley

**1730**

Further expansion by farmers south-eastwards into the Warm and Koue Bokkeveld

**1739**

Bushman War – Namaquas and San in the Sandveld, Piketberg and Bokkeveld rise up against the Dutch

First veldkorporaals appointed

Khoe-San defeated

**1740**

Farmers begin to expand into Khoe-San territories to the north and east of the Olifants River valley

**1754**

Khoe-San of the Roggeveld assemble and raid farms in the Olifants River, Bokkeveld, Roggeveld and Doorn river areas

Peace negotiated

**1768**

First farms registered in the Sneeuwberg

**1770**

First San raids on the Sneeuwberg farms

Farms registered in the Seekoei River valley

**1772**

Khoe-San of the Roggeveld rebel

Rebellion put down and captives taken to Cape Town to be tried and sentenced

**1773**

Dutch in the Sneeuwberg abandon their farms in the face of San attacks

**1774**

More than 250 farms registered in the Graaff-Reinet region by this time

The Great Commando assembled and widespread attacks on Khoe-San are launched

**1777**

Colonel Gordon visits the Sneeuwberg to assess the situation there

**1778**

Governor Van Plettenberg visits the Sneeuwberg area and erects a beacon in the Seekoei River area, near modern Colesberg, marking the northern-most point of the Colony

**1786**

The District of Graaff-Reinet proclaimed

**1786-1795**

Fierce resistance from Khoe-San in the Sneeuwberg and adjoining areas – many raids mounted on the farms of the Colonists

**1795**

Efforts made by the British, who had occupied the Cape, to bring about peace with the Khoe-San