CHAPTER 2

The Shoreline Frontier at Camissa 1600 - 1652:
The true story of the founding of the Port of Cape Town

In this chapter, we explore a largely neglected aspect of our immediate pre-colonial history, the pre-Van Riebeeck years. We find there was already vibrant multi-cultural interaction supporting the nascent refreshment station and proto-port settlement that would become Cape Town and the Cape Colony. This enables us to develop an understanding and appreciation for the role that the indigenes – the Khoena – played in the establishment of the Port of Cape Town and their holding of the shoreline frontier for 52 years prior to colonial occupation. It is this story that for me lays the basis for establishing a different way of presenting ourselves and our culture and departing from this word “Coloured”. This is the story of how Camissa began as a free independent port servicing visitors of all seafaring nations and as a people whose embrace was finally betrayed when the Dutch stomped over the port operation and dispossessed the indigene entrepreneurs. We rightfully need to reclaim Camissa and allow Camissa to embrace us again. This would be a just burial of a demeaning label and restorative justice for an unrecognised African people.

The terms ‘Indigenes’ or ‘Indigenous people’ is used in their broadest sense of being indigenous to Africa. Referring to indigenes does not imply that Khoena or Khoi were exclusively indigenous to the Cape. They were not, because they migrated to the Cape and settled sometime in the early second millennium. But they are indigenous Africans like all other formations of Africans in South Africa. Only specific San groups were indigenous regionally to the Cape as ‘First People’ eg: the Xam. So while the San groups indigenous to the Cape are ‘First People’ the Khoena or Khoi are not, they are what we can call ‘Foundation People’ in their many tributaries across South Africa. The early farmer people who from 100 CE developed a fairly powerful presence also as traders in Botswana and South Africa came to be known as the Kalanga and they like the Khoena (or Khoi) were as much a ‘foundation people’ as the Khoena (or Khoi).

The arbitrary use by American social historian Richard Elphick of the term ‘Nations’ as in ‘First Nation’ is just totally out of place and irrelevant to South Africa. In a way he acknowledges this by using the term ‘so-called’ to prefix ‘nations’ before going on to use the term liberally in inverted commas. The idea of kingdoms and nations was really a creation by Kolbe, whose European ideas were overlaid on the indigenes. Elphick borrows from Kolbe and interfaces Kolbe’s thought with that of Hoernle to a point. And then Elphick departs into his own discussions but all of the time cautions that the Khoi of that time had structures that were unstable and not easy to define. Unfortunately many social activists fighting for Khoena (or Khoi) rights have not understood this exploration in Elphick’s work and the dubious use in primary source texts and they have thus started demanding recognition as kings with kingdoms and even for nation status and secession.

Hoernle’s concepts of tribes and clans based on Nama research was described by Elphick who challenged the inappropriate terminology for the Cape Khoena (or Khoi) formations given their state of flux. Hoernle as an ethnologist and anthropologist was highly respected throughout her life but nonetheless her work was the product of her colonial lens and the Namaqua culture was assumed to be universal to the Khoena (or Khoi).
Elphick\textsuperscript{129} demonstrates that according to Hoernle’s definitions the nine Cape Khoi group names from 17\textsuperscript{th} century primary sources only represent three tribes. There is actually no firm indication as to whether all of the Cape Khoi groups were tribes, clans or possibly some loser formations. Elphick also made the point of there being a strong state of flux inasmuch as tribes and clans would come and go rather than be around for all time. During the period 1652 to 1707 one can actually clearly see mergers and separation and disappearance of identities which were more like clans than tribes. As we saw in the first chapter Sadr questions whether organisational formations in the Western Cape were anywhere as near the type of organisational development overlaid on the Cape Khoena (or Khoi) by colonial writers.

There is only one mention of a possible king and in most cases Kai Bi’a (Senior Head) or Bi’a (Head) would have been the norm. The Senior Head of a formation was always assisted by a council made up of clan or sub-formation Heads, or family Heads, if it was a clan. Thus governance was a collective affair rather than hierarchical. Identification of formations seemed on possible by observance of to whom tribute was paid or by whom and on what authority tribute was demanded. Neither the concepts of tribe/clans nor kingdoms/nations neatly fit the Khoena (or Khoi) who seemed to still be in the early phases of such organisational development when the Europeans established the economy. There was a relatively flat form of organisation almost of a family type or small community village type. It has become opportunistic for some Cape Khoi revivalists to lay claim to such colonial and imperial terminology as Kings, Empires and Nation States in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. It can only be described as bizarre.

For a long time there has been an unbalanced approach to recalling the past, because the indigene experience has been but a footnote in an otherwise European dominated narrative. Even the critical view of many European commentators of the time who questioned or presented an alternative narrative tended to be marginalised. Effectively, the indigenes are presented as incidental to the founding of the port settlement of Cape Town and presented as playing no significant part in its founding, or even portrayed as a nuisance factor.

Indeed, not only were the Dutch responsible for dispossessing the Indigenes of their land, livestock and livelihoods, but indigene people also found themselves robbed of their history as the true founders of the Mother City. The title of the American academic Richard Elphick’s\textsuperscript{130} book illustrates the point very well – ‘The Khoikhoi and the Founding of White south Africa.’ The indigene story is viewed through the white lens of the ‘Founding of White South Africa’.

In order to more accurately reflect the historical narrative, a combination of the perspectives and experiences of both sides of the ‘Shoreline Frontier’, is required. As there is no written indigene record, there is a greater onus on historians to examine overlooked texts, including the omissions, contradictions, obvious embellishments, and ideological overlay in the records of the time. We need to listen carefully to the voices raised in opposition to the colonists among the indigenes at the time, despite these being recorded by the beneficiaries of the dispossession. Sadr\textsuperscript{131} notes that the archaeological records unfortunately are sparse when it comes to the Khoena Cape herders. A further factor motivating a review of this period is the need to empower the marginalised and those denied self-determination based on heritage and identity, in our time, and to counter myths and falsehoods adopted by some in pursuit of narrow and bizarre ethno-nationalist interests.
Much amplification is given to the many traveller texts and to Jan van Riebeeck’s narrative. These are quite disparaging of the indigenes of Table Bay. They refer to the Khoena as temporary nomadic inhabitants, dirty, smelly, lazy, good-for-nothing thieves and scavengers, unaware of the broader world beyond their shores. They are likened to beasts.132

This unfortunate view is deeply embedded in the minds of scholars and of South Africans in general. One can even see a degree of racism embedded in the science of archaeology. However, there are other accounts by seafarers and scribes, which tell a different story about an enterprising and helpful indigene people, some of whom had travelled abroad. They tell of trading and port operations in a busy bay that preceded the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck by at least fifty-two years and that effectively constituted a settled Indigene proto-port trading community.

Even the more balanced historical accounts present the community referred to by other Indigenes in a disparaging manner as Goringhaicona, as simply being drifters and outcasts from the other groups; a kind of mystery phenomenon. But they do not ‘join the dots’ between increased shipping and its impact on indigene modes of living and economy nor the complex relations evidenced in primary sources. Entrepreneurship is simply brushed aside as opportunism, scavenging and begging practices by primitives.

Also deeply embedded in social history is the notion that the Cape’s multi-cultural and multi-ethnic ancestral heritage starts in 1652. The circumstances of the fifty-two years prior to van Riebeeck’s arrival, and the dynamics of other port settlements globally, suggest otherwise. The longer social development story going back 2000 years, as elaborated in the first chapter, simply does not feature at all, yet ample evidence exists of a South African society doing trade with Arabia, India, Southeast Asia and China at least from 800 CE if not earlier by the Kalanga, Southern Africa’s other ‘foundation people’.

By the time that the Khoena (or Khoi) arrived in the Western Cape in the early second millennium there were trading lines across the country from the south overland to Mozambique ports. The establishment of the Cape Port of Camissa changed these longer trade routes for local Khoena (Khoi) people. While in the north of South Africa goods available for trade included gold and ivory, at Table Bay it was meat, water, salt, and timber, as well as services for the sick and maritime communications services.

Stage one trading over long distance was from the southernmost Khoena (or Khoi) to the Kei, stage two from there to the Ndandwe and Mthethwa heartland of KZN, and stage three from there to the Mozambique ports, reaching out to the rest of the world. There were also trading links up to the Kai Gariep making a route through to the Tswana and on to the Limpopo, as well as trading links up the western seaboard to the Damara in Namibia. These routes saw iron, copper, dagga and local African products moving in stages from one part of Southern Africa to another. All people who had emerged from the Limpopo-Sashe basin and populated South Africa participated in some degree of trading and had access to staged routes to participate in this.133

Further consideration of the first fifty-two years of the 17th century is that it offers an alternative version of the foundation of the port, the city of Cape Town and its people. This largely unbiased maritime historical record provides a positive and non-racial ‘heritage anchor’ for those labelled ‘Coloured’ and indeed all who cherish what can be referred to as the ‘Camissa Embrace’. With regard to persons of mixed parentage pre-1652, passing scribes, Tavernier and Mundy, and others, make clear references to indigene children who
they describe as “white and beautiful”\textsuperscript{134} (in the case of Krotoa) with African and European features, and “… well-favoured as it could not be expected in such a place”.\textsuperscript{135} Van Riebeeck also refers to Oedasoa’s daughter as “a pretty, well-shaped girl, no darker than a fairly white mestizo”\textsuperscript{136}.

Accounts show that Europeans consistently spent lengthy stays at Table Bay from as early as 1601, during which time they interacted extensively with the indigenes. Theal\textsuperscript{137} tells us of Joris Spilbergen, commander of the Dutch fleet, who gave Table Bay its name on a visit in 1601. He mentions sick sailors being conveyed to land where a hospital was established. Raven-Hart\textsuperscript{138} provides the figures of 1 839 sheep and 149 cattle being traded to four ships between 1601 and 1608. Tavernier \textsuperscript{139} reports, “So soon as the ship arrives, they [the indigenes] bring their beasts to the shore with what other commodities they have, to barter…..”. After being shipwrecked with sixty-two men in 1647 and remaining at Table Bay for almost a year, Leendert Janzsen reported to the VOC that the natives came in friendship to trade with them, \textsuperscript{140}.

Stayovers could be anything from three weeks to more than nine months. In the last decade prior to 1652, Gaastra and Bruin\textsuperscript{141} provide three tables of shipping movements for each decade, allowing us to conclude that up to three ships a month were dropping anchor at Table Bay simply on the outward bound journeys, and not including homeward bound sea traffic.

This fact substantially alters the narrative of the landscape that Van Riebeeck ‘tamed’. He was a much more controversial figure than is acknowledged. Contradictory perspectives among the Europeans allow us the opportunity to question dominant narratives. The orthodoxy is that in the two decades before Van Riebeeck, the European presence was semi-permanent with few gaps. What changed in 1652 was the permanence of European abode, colonial development intent, and the dislodging of the early indigene foundations of a settlement and their proto-port economy.

In 1613, Aldworth, President and Factor of the English Factory in Surat, states in a letter to the English East India Company in relation to the Cape of Good Hope, “… the climate is very healthy, insomuch that, we arrived there with many of our people sick, they all regained their health and strength within twenty days”. Furthermore, the letter states, “… we found the natives of the country to be very courteous and tractable folk, and they did not give us the least annoyance during the time we were there.”\textsuperscript{142} Aldworth was a champion for English settlement at the Cape.

In 1644, 340 men survived the wrecking of the Dutch ship \textit{Mauritius Eylant} and remained at Table Bay until rescued by the \textit{Tijger}. The survivors camped at Salt River for four months before being picked up and the numbers of people were more than double Van Riebeeck’s later 1652 settlement party.\textsuperscript{143} As a result of the frequent stayovers many make-shift forts and defensive redoubts were built. Indigenes became quite accustomed to the visitors.

The anecdotal accounts are backed by maritime records showing that from 1590 until 1700 there were 2 632 ships that called at the Cape, involving five nationalities. Of these, 1 071 ships dropped anchor in Table Bay between 1600 and 1652.\textsuperscript{144}

Analyses of the full lists of sea-traffic broken down per nationality for each decade of the 17th century, cargoes carried and shipping attrition rates, all call into question the traditional narrative on the beginnings of the port of Cape Town. The depth of services rendered before 1652 and the negative characterisation of the indigene people of Table Bay are also challenged. While the Dutch dominated the numbers of ships
doing stayovers from the first decade of the 17th century, England followed with significant numbers of vessels, followed by France, Portugal and Denmark – all dropping anchor and having lengthy stayovers in Table Bay.\textsuperscript{145}

In the period 1610 to 1620, English ships increased by ten times the number of the previous decade. This illustrates why the English considered colonisation at this point, but their attempt at this with ten Newgate convicts from 1614 to 1616 failed. They then opted to utilise the indigene support infrastructure. In 1619, they also formally explored the possibility of a joint English-Dutch presence at the Cape. In 1620, England annexed the Cape of Good Hope formally, but nothing came of this venture.\textsuperscript{146}

Looking at the comparative maritime records, one gets a good picture of matters such as the competitiveness of the European powers, the dominance of the Dutch, the size and shape of their vessels, and changes over time to ship technology as cargoes changed. One further needs to examine the attrition rate that faced vessels and the dire need of seamen and passengers, especially the sick, to have breaks ashore. What nobody really interrogates is the effect of all of this on the local population at the Cape and on their way of life. Indeed, it is projected that for two centuries the indigenes dozily and idly sat and watched all that was happening at the Cape from 1488 when the Europeans first entered their space, or 1421 when the Chinese fleet of Zeng He passed by in his circumnavigation of the world.\textsuperscript{147}

In 1985, Elphick\textsuperscript{148} sums up the dynamic; “In a sense, the VOC Company’s frontier had reached the Peninsulas [indigenes] fifty years before the Colony was established.” This statement was a great leap forward on the previous blanking-out of any pre-1652 perspective that cast indigenes in a favourable light or gave credence to what may be called modern social organisation or ‘civilisation’. One can thus refer to the seashore of Table Bay as the first frontier or ‘Shoreline Frontier’.

Despite Elphick’s cautious but advanced exploration of the peninsular indigenes’ involvement with the sea route to the east, most studies do not draw together all elements that stand out during this period.\textsuperscript{149} None recognise the indigene founding of Cape Town and the heritage roots of those who can refer to themselves as the ‘people of Camissa’ or descendants of ‘the Camissa Embrace’.

Indigene social history in school textbooks and museums has been overwhelmed by approaches that project indigenes purely as stone-age and iron-age primitives. This history was challenged when Elphick dared to present his work to public audiences. This development was also paralleled by a new generation of archaeologists, such as Parkington, Hall, Kinahan, Huffman and others, who questioned the dominant historical paradigm.

One needs to examine not just what ships carried from the east, but what they carried to the east. At the same time one needs to understand the powerful dynamics in that region, which lent strategic importance to the Cape. Records show an almost studious omission in our South African history books of the main role of outward-bound shipping, which was to carry company officials and loads of troops to supply the trade wars in Southeast Asia. Recorded figures for the numbers carried on ships when calculated per ship indicate that there could have been as many as 200 000 people who travelled through Table Bay over the half-century. In the east, the Dutch were fighting the English, French, Portuguese, indigenes and Muslim Sultanates at different times, and they needed to fortify their factories and huge bases in India, Sri Lanka, Arakan and Batavia.
Factories stretched across the long Indian and Bengali Coast and from Arakan (Rakhine State) in Myanmar, to Thailand (Siam), Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, through to Formosa, and Japan and then throughout Indonesia. This was a scenario thirsty for thousands of troops.\textsuperscript{150}

The VOC had all the powers of state ceded to them by the Dutch States General. These troops, to be deployed in active combat in the east, needed time ashore at strategic stops. After a stayover at St Helena, the voyages were long and arduous with the soldiers and officials getting sick and dying on board. They also grew grumpy and fights broke out. By 1615, the ships’ masters were complaining that troops had to have time ashore at the Cape of Good Hope. The VOC took a decision that from 1616, it would be compulsory for all Dutch shipping to stay over at Table Bay.

Therefore, contact with and impacts on indigenes at the Cape must have been greater than many historical accounts project. This increased trade is the most likely factor to have been instrumental in one Khoena group splitting from the Cochouqua and later another splitting from the Goringhiaqua, the Gorachouqua both of whom permanently resided on the Cape Peninsula.

By examining the number of vessels that made the return journey, one sees a dramatic attrition rate resulting from ships being worn out and either condemned or wrecked. Only around 50% returned to Europe. This spurred the improvement of shipbuilding technology and the need for repair stations and refreshment posts \textit{en route}. It also became the chief incentive to replace the indigene proto-port operations with a more sophisticated port operation.

Not examined either is the impact on the Cape indigenes of being confronted with slavery on the ships and the obvious correlation of slavery to colour. There has been a naive quiet assumption that the Khoena only came across the institution of slavery during the permanent European settlement. Recent research provides enough indicators that the Cape indigenes encountered slaves and slave-trading long before 1652. The operations of the VOC and English East India Company had slavery at their core and this was instrumental in the shaping of Indian Ocean societies.\textsuperscript{151} Slaves passed from the Indian Ocean westwards and from the Atlantic Ocean eastwards. The Portuguese took slaves to Portugal from West Africa as early as 1435\textsuperscript{124} and Indian slaves from 1510. The British took slaves to St Helena from 1628 and the Dutch were taking African slaves to Southeast Asia from 1623.\textsuperscript{152}

This kind of human traffic – soldiers, officials and slaves - through ports, results in stowaways and stay-behinds; shore-leave by men leads to sexual encounters and relations becoming a norm. Ship repairs need materials and therefore the reconnoitring of landscape and the cutting of timber may have led to job creation and further trade. The ships required supplies of fresh water, meat, salt and vegetables. The indigenes, particularly inland, were known to have large stocks of cattle and sheep. They had a highly successful farming economy. Salt production for sale was also a new occupation.

Over half a century, trade and service patterns grew. There are a number of records of long-term stays at the Cape by substantial numbers of stranded as well as sick Europeans. On the whole, given the recorded numbers involved, and the rudimentary living conditions, conflict with indigenes was surprisingly rare. The few incidents of conflict are easily explained, as was done by Janzsen in 1648.\textsuperscript{153}

The emergence of social formations or tribes among the Khoena from the earliest times to the 17\textsuperscript{th} century follows a multiplication by division pattern – segmentation and differentiation, brought on by internal
differences and external impacts. The Khoena migrants from the northern reaches of South Africa along the Limpopo Prior had been in the Eastern Cape from around 650 CE and in the Western Cape from some time just after 1050 CE. From the 16th century it would seem there were just the Cochoqua, moving between the West Coast and the Peninsula, depending on weather patterns and grazing availability. The impact of periodic European presence changed the way of life and economy of the indigenes so that a permanent presence emerged at the Cape Peninsula, which was known locally as Hui iGaeb. Elphick shows us that the first emergence of separate formations was the Griguriqua from the West Coast Nama and then the Goringhaiqua from the Cochouqua, and Chainouqua. The latter, and a smaller rival offshoot of the Goinghaiqua, the Gorachouqua later became permanently settled in an area eight miles from Table Bay, today comprising Liesbeeck, Mowbray and Rondebosch.

Another different kind of offshoot, the Goringhaicona made up of drifters and outcasts from all the aforementioned clans and assisted by the English, established themselves, first on Robben Island as a community of traders and later, on the mainland banks of the Camissa River (/ammi ssa) in Table Bay, still as a trading community. They were neither a tribe nor a clan but a totally new creation of entrepreneurs formed to meet the needs of passing ships.

Interestingly, with reference to the Nama dictionary when you break down the components of the name Gorinhaiqua to its three parts (!Uri - //ae - khoe), it means white - coming together - with people. The slightly disparaging term Goringhaicona means “our kin who drifted away from us”. Hidden social history may be discerned in clan names and by the practices that set formations or clans and tribes apart from other indigene communities.

Evidence suggests that the emergence of divergent formations, clans, tribes and individual entrepreneurs and farmers coincided with the English engaging the services of Xhore (Coree) in 1613 and Autshumao (Haddah/Herrie) in 1631. These events saw the development of rivalries and conflict and records show that the different groups of indigenes were not averse to seeking advantage in their conflicts by asking Europeans to back them up. The indicators of proto-urbanisation are clear.

The English in particular, through their interventions, were catalysts of change in modes of living and economy for the indigenes by taking key personalities abroad to London and Java. This practice was then copied by the Dutch. Written accounts show that at least five verifiable Khoena were taken abroad to gain experience and training between 1613 and 1655. New commodities such as skillets, knives, iron, copper, brass, tobacco, clothes, beads and alcohol became available and skewed the existing economic values, including the trade in and ownership of livestock, and introduced new social problems and opportunities.

Xhore and a companion were kidnapped and taken to London aboard the Hector in 1613, but only Xhore survived the trip. Sir Thomas Smythe of the English East India Company had hoped that after training, Xhore would facilitate colonisation plans for Table Bay using the Newgate convicts. As mentioned previously, this experiment was abandoned after three disastrous years.

The English fell back on a ‘Plan-B’ and Xhore became the first of the formal traders used as facilitators by European shipping. He used this position to become a wealthy authority figure and Chief with a following.
He is said to have been murdered by the Dutch for non-cooperation in 1626, and thereafter there was an immediate down-swing in economic relations at the Cape.\textsuperscript{161}

Even though Xhore had served other European nationalities, with him gone, the English suffered the most, as they had enjoyed the best relations with him and his people. The English then recruited and sent Autshumao to Southeast Asia for training at Java. On his return, the English took the unprecedented step of settling him and his community on Robben Island to run a formal supply and postal station.\textsuperscript{162} Autshumao did this ably. Once, with authority, he directed the French away from what he called an English station. Peter Mundy\textsuperscript{163}, travelling on the English ship \textit{Mary}, refers to Autshumao on Robben Island, noting that he wore European clothing, \textit{“Heere the said Hadda Hveth with all his kindred and Allies, in number about 60 persons, men, weomen and Children. Of the latter there were some soe welfavoured as it could not be expected in such a place. They came all about us, verie merrilye rejoyceinge att our Comeinge, better apparelled then those on the Maine, though after the same manner, Hadda excepted; whore that day came in English habitt from head to foote. …..The said Hadda is Cheife of all that dwell there and Governor of the Island.”}

Notably here Autshumao is referred as Governor of Robben Island and is described as wearing European clothes.

Knox-Johnston\textsuperscript{164} notes, \textit{“… the Dutch and the English also had their own trusted native who would keep letters and hand them over to the captains of home-going ships. A ship on arriving in the bay would fire a cannon, and this would bring the ‘postman’ down to the beach …. A ship’s boat would be sent to fetch him and he would exchange mail and report any other useful information in exchange for a small reward.”}

Autshumao performed his postmaster, trader and port master roles ably, was a proficient linguist, was shrewd and astute and also knew the value of playing off the English against their enemies, the Dutch and French. The Khoena knew to keep their main herds of thousands of cattle and sheep, and their families, far inland away from the Europeans. Autshumao was not simply an opportunist go-between trader but filled a defensive buffer role for his people. Regardless of the basic nature of the services provided, he did offer post and communications, stevedoring, ship’s chandlers and trader services.

After a few years, around 1638, the Robben Island station proved too restricting for Autshumao and Artus Geijsels\textsuperscript{165} reports finding the Goringhaiqua back on the mainland. They established their settlement alongside the Camissa River Mouth, known in the local language as Sweet Water (/\textit{ammi ssa}). Here the indigenes established the foundation village and port operation that would become the City of Cape Town. The Goringhaicona themselves were dubbed ‘Watermen’ by the Dutch in recognition of their role as guardians of the fresh water and because they assisted the seamen to load water for the ships. This was about 14 years prior to the European settlement in 1652.

Jodocus Hondius\textsuperscript{166} in 1652 describes the Table Bay site and river, \textit{“A short distance beyond the tail of the Lion Mount in is the little Fresh River which is a stream rising in the foothills of Table Mountain, or in its higher slopes. The river usually flows quite strongly, but in most parts the water does not reach above the knees. In the year 1644 the crew of the wrecked ship Mauritius marked out a fort with 4 bastions across this Fresh River in order to protect the fresh water, but no building took place until this present year, 1652,”}
when a fortress was begun on the eastern side of the same streamlet”. This text refers to Van Riebeeck’s appropriation of the Camissa settlement, the exact spot being the current Cape Town city blocks around Lower Plein Street and Adderley known as the Golden Acre Centre. This shows how the Camissa was recognised for its strategic importance just as the indigenes had recognised it. The first aggression of the Dutch against the indigenes was the seizure of the site of Autshumao’s community guarding the river.

According to Theal, Jan van Riebeeck was given clear instructions by the VOC. “The skippers were directed to proceed to Table Bay, and to construct close to the fresh water river, a wooden building, the materials for which they were to take with them. They were then to select a suitable site for a fort, to contain space for the accommodation of seventy or eighty men, and to this fort when finished they were to give the name Good Hope.” In the first eight months after van Riebeeck’s arrival, he built a fort right on top of Autshumao’s village, which had hosted him and his men. Van Riebeeck notes that after he had moved into the fort he could still see the forlorn Autshumao encamped by the river.

The term //ammis, gammis, kamis or kamma is the root for ‘Camissa’ in the language of the Nama and !Ora. It is also the term for any fresh-water river. The river in Table Bay is noted by the Portuguese as ‘Aguada de Saldanha’ (water of Saldanha – the original Portuguese name for Table Bay) while the Dutch similarly later named this same river the Soetwater Rivieren (Sweetwater) and referred to it in documents as Fresh Water, as distinguished from Zouten Rivieren (Salt River). The Khoena did not have affectionate or honorary names as in the European tradition. Words used were utilitarian and simply descriptive or for verbal route-mapping.

Governor-General van Goens in 1682 notes that the inland Khoena refer to a fresh-water river as ‘Camissa’ or ‘Cumissa’. These indigene names, pop-up elsewhere, meaning the same thing – fresh water. For example – Tsistsikamma = tse-tsesa + kamma means ‘clear water’, ‘place of much water’ or ‘place where water begins’.

A previous mention has been made of the wrecking of the Nieuwe Haerlem (1647) and its survivors. Here we look at their interactions with the indigenes in more depth.

Leendert Janzsen, Matthijs Proot and the other leading personalities, used their time at the Cape to gather intelligence. They recorded the flora and fauna; the indigenes and their cattle and sheep herds; the local trading practices and the arrival of vessels; they also began mapping the Peninsula. This was later shared in the Netherlands with Jodocus Hondius III who drafted up a scientific report, which was published. In addition, Janzsen and Proot produced their own report, the Remonstratie, for the VOC.

What Janzsen and Proot had to say about the indigenes and about how relations with them should be conducted would later be contradicted by Van Riebeeck. They wrote:

“Others will say that the natives are brutish and cannibals, from whom nothing good is to be expected, and we shall have to be on our guard continually; but this is only a sailors’ yarn … it is not to be denied that they are without laws or government … and it is indeed true, that also some sailors and soldiers have been killed by them; but the reason for this is always left unspoken by our folk, to excuse themselves for having been the cause of it, since we firmly believe that the peasants of this country [Holland], if their cattle were to be shot down and taken off without payment, would not show themselves a whit better than these natives,
had they not to fear the law. ...since the natives ... came daily to the fort (which we had thrown up for our
defence) with all friendliness to barter, and brought cattle and sheep in quantities ...”\(^{173}\)

Later, some of the survivors went to a local settlement where they were made welcome. Janssen and Proot make it quite clear that all instances of altercation are a result of, “the uncivilised and ungrateful conduct of our folk”.\(^{174}\)

In 1648, a fleet of twelve ships under the command of Admiral de Jong, took Janzsen and his men back to Holland. On board the same ship carrying Janzsen was a disgraced VOC merchant from the Dutch Factory at Tonkin (Hanoi) in Vietnam who had been caught stealing from the VOC – Jan van Riebeeck.

The disgraced official showed a huge interest in Janzsen’s proposal that the Dutch should establish a permanent base at Table Bay. During their three-week sojourn at Table Bay, Van Riebeeck also got a good feel for the place and talked to the other survivors. In the process, he developed a contrary view regarding the indigenes to those expressed by Janzsens and Proot. It was on board the return voyage that Janzsen and his five senior men prepared the proposal for a permanent Dutch presence at Table Bay. It was known as the ‘Remonstratie’ and it found favour with the VOC.\(^{175}\)

Van Riebeeck offered to lead a settlement expedition to establish Dutch control at the Cape after Proot turned the post down. Van Riebeeck was described as a “fiery-tempered, resolute man, in the prime of life, with perfect health, untiring energy, and unbounded zeal”\(^{176}\) – a sometimes dangerous cocktail of characteristics. The Dutch needed to maintain their dominance in the east, so control of the strategically positioned Cape was vital. A more technologically advanced port operation was required to undertake ship repairs and servicing in order to reduce the 50% attrition rate.

Janzsen and Proot’s views of, and interactions with, the indigenes were highly favourable and respectful in comparison to Van Riebeeck’s approach. In general, Europeans painted the indigenes as no more than beasts, or at best, ‘noble savages’\(^{177}\). Janzsen’s approach notably mirrored that of the English, who built a system of cooperative relations with indigenes. Janzsen spoke glowingly of the Khoena in Table Bay who were of great assistance to him during his long sojourn. He recommended that the VOC accept and respect the existing trading and servicing role of the indigenes by ensuring that any settlement be based on cooperation rather than conquest.\(^{178}\)

The report by Janzsen and Proot was a clear recognition that the servicing port of Cape Town already existed, was simply not under European governance.

Van Riebeeck was bent on conquest and dislodging any form of intermediary trading by indigenes. He wanted a simple, direct, cost-effective trading relationship as a stepping stone to ultimate Company control over all resources. As such, the Camissa community’s entrepreneurial approach as a proto-trading class was out of the question. Van Riebeeck was also wary of the fact that the local kingpin, Autshumao had a very strong relationship with the English and was not shy about projecting veiled threats to call for assistance from his English friends.\(^{179}\)
The report to the VOC presented a picture of a fertile land, with many vessels stopping over, friendly locals with livestock sustainably nurtured and rear bases of indigene populations and resources. It described trade that was being done and mentioned, importantly, that no European power had established itself at the bay.\textsuperscript{180} Indeed, as already shown, trading was organised by the indigenes under an English-trained Autshumao and a small group of indigene ‘Watermans’ — the people of Camissa, occupying the Table Bay area.

Van Riebeeck strained against the bridle of his instructions from the VOC to tread carefully and show respect to the local operations of the indigenes. He believed his own assessments to be better\textsuperscript{181}. Effectively, Van Riebeeck went head-to-head with Autshumao, calling his trading practices thievery, undercutting his business and finally engineering a hostile take-over of Autshumao’s modest settlement. One entry in Van Riebeeck’s journal\textsuperscript{182} makes it very clear that both Van Riebeeck and Autshumao were highly conscious of Autshumao’s proud role as a trading entrepreneur — “Herrie in the meanwhile, priding himself on having originated the incipient trade…”.

The Goringhaicona were totally disrupted. Schoeman\textsuperscript{183} explains the first step in drawing in the Khoena into servitude when Van Riebeeck took Autshumao’s 10 year-old niece Krotoa into the fort as a servant to work alongside five Asian slave women and girls and two slave girls of her own age from Madagascar (Abyssinian royalties). Elphick\textsuperscript{184} elaborates further that from 1659 a number of other indigenes entered service at the Fort de Goede Hoop where they worked alongside Asian slaves.

Besides Van Riebeeck’s well-known diaries, he also left a record of lesser known correspondence. While the former, by his own hand, tends to portray himself favourably, his correspondence and the views of others, sheds a different light on the man. It was he with his cavalier attitude towards the indigenes that laid the foundation for over 176 years of wars that lead to the pacification of the indigenes, or the flight of the Cape Khoena to the north-western Gariep district and to the mass genocide of the San, despite their valiant wars of resistance.

Elphick\textsuperscript{185} notes that shortly after arriving at the Cape, Van Riebeeck wrote to the VOC imploring them to allow him to round up all the Peninsula Khoena, put them in chains and force them into labour. The VOC refused his request. Elphick\textsuperscript{186} notes that again, in 1657, van Riebeeck and Van Goens wrote to the VOC outlining a plan and seeking approval to build five ‘redoubts’ at key kloofs in Hout Bay, so that they could lure and imprison peninsular Khoena and their cattle there and then keep them so imprisoned to ensure that they would be forced to supply cattle to the company continuously. This would ensure that the Khoena would be cut off from potential allies in the interior and they would at the same time be prevented from harming the colony. This effectively was an early concept of a concentration camp.

This concept was initially considered by the VOC but was rejected only because it would have cost too much and required many soldiers. Instead, in 1659, van Riebeeck built a watered down version of his proposal. He erected a wooden fence with a line of defensive towers and wild almond hedges from Salt River to Kirstenbosch.\textsuperscript{187} The creation of this boundary by Jan van Riebeeck was both a defensive structure and was meant to send a message to the Indigenes that this was no longer their land. It was a clear act of land and resource seizure and an act of expulsion. This act and Van Riebeeck’s ideas however, set the paradigm of European-Indigene relations that has remained to this day. Forced removals and the ‘redoubt’
concept essentially translated into group-areas and reservations, and lasted well after Van Riebeeck, right up to the imposition of the Group Areas Act under Apartheid in 1950.

From these initial drives to dispossess the indigenes, a 176-year war lasting into the third decade of the nineteenth century against the Khoena and San (See chapter on the 15 wars) ensued and dovetailed with the 100 years of Frontier Wars against the amaXhosa in the Eastern Cape. The tragedy was that the Cape government managed to conscript many pacified Cape Khoena people into commandos and use them in the genocide of the San. Though official South African history of this period referred to only as “trek-boer expansion” is mute on the wars of dispossession these are well recorded by many academic works and was the longest European war and dispossession campaign on the continent of Africa. It was also the longest and most intense resistance by Africans against European colonialism, yet many still question why the indigenous people did not resist – a notion propagated by Apartheid colonial history and propaganda.

The early endeavour of the Khoena trading community, who embraced visitors and whom no doubt some visitors embraced and were assimilated into, deserves more recognition. Certainly, the first children to have been born from relations between the indigenes, seafaring Europeans, ‘free-blacks’ and slaves took place in those fifty-two years prior to formal European settlement, and this phenomenon requires more research. The Camissa village where the Grand Parade, Castle and District Six stand today can give us all a whole new take on our past. It is this Camissa Footprint and all that was born from it, both before and after 1652, that should inform our sense of identity.

We certainly cannot ignore the overwhelming evidence that 1652 was not a magical date of Khoena and European interaction, nor can we ignore the vast numbers of vessels and people who came here and interacted with locals before that date. Key indigene people travelled abroad and returned, engaged with new technology, trading and new ways of living.

They were not merely ignorant, ‘primitive’ beach scavengers. With all this information at our fingertips, we cannot accept uncritically the European writings that have marginalised and robbed South Africans of a fair view of their forebears. Genetic mingling in South Africa continued after 1652 when the heritage of the Camissa continued to be weaved. Indigenes, slaves, ‘Free-Blacks’ and European non-conformists continued to embrace each other in their struggles to overcome adversity and from this embrace children were born.

There also was a shadow side of abuse of slave women that resulted in births of children. Micro-historian Mansell Upham tells us that while, in time, the VOC would formally forbid European company officials from having ‘carnal conversation’ with slaves and indigenes, Van Riebeeck as commander at the Cape also used the encouraging term with officials to ‘fructify’ the slave women as being beneficial to the company. Indeed Upham elaborates that Van Riebeeck also requested from the VOC that Angolans be captured for the purpose of farming and marriages. This injunction is a part of the story of the Camissa heritage, as are the over four centuries of experiences the descendants of Camissa have endured, in rising above various forms of manipulation designed by the authorities of the day, including the Apartheid regime, for their own greater good.

Today the Camissa River, symbolic of the coming together of peoples facing adversity on the shoreline frontier, still flows vibrantly through Cape Town and into the sea, just as it always did, but now underground.
Now it is hidden from view, covered over by stratigraphic layers that make up the history of the City of Cape Town. This is mirrored in the obscuring overlays placed on the identity of those labelled ‘Coloured’ by successive administrative regimes. Both the river and the people have been covered over. The first step in excavating these layers is to acknowledge that once, long ago, before colonial settlement, a people had settled on the banks of the Camissa River and formed a trade and service community, and in so doing, laid the foundations of a city and an African creole people.

There are more complexities in our past than many would care to acknowledge, but a wonderful focal point also arises to move us away from racial and excluding terminology and anchor our local identities alongside our national, regional and Pan-African identities. An understanding of this early heritage should encourage us to move away from racial terminology like Coloured, White, and Black. Today there are three broad heritage streams that flow through South Africans and no rigid walls separate us – African, Afro-European and Afro-Asian. This is heritage and not race. The African communities are as diverse as the Afro-European and Afro-Asian communities.

Camissa people (not ‘coloured’) have a heritage that constitutes a multicultural and multi-ethnic African people including indigenes; slaves from India, Southeast Asia and Africa; ‘Free-Blacks’, Droster communities, Liberated Africans; and other migrants of colour like indentured labourers, exiles, refugees, and economic-migrants; and also non-conformist Europeans. The Camissa heritage brings all of these wonderful tributaries together and they can take their rightful place alongside other African communities - Zulu, Xhosa, Cape Khoena, San (/Xam), Sotho, Korana, Tswana, Venda, Pedi, Nama, Griqua, Shangaan, Ndebele, Lembe, Swazi, and others. All three heritage streams – African, Afro-European and Afro-Asian have many sub-identities in the diverse South African family. Thus the story and the heritage of the original founders of the port, and the people that they embraced, gave birth to the descendants who were derogatorily labelled ‘Coloured’ – a colonial administrative term.

History has been unfair to Autshumao and the Goringhaicona trading mission at Camissa. It has never properly analysed what happened in the fifty-two years prior to van Riebeeck’s arrival or the twenty-year-old trading settlement at Camissa and the impact of ships, sailors, officials and troops who were adequately catered for by locals. The social history of Cape Town has marginalised the Camissa community. This settlement was born of a people who changed their economic and social ways of life, as happened in other ports around Africa and indeed, globally.

As an example – Lundy192 shows how the Bijagos, a very small ethnic group who, like the Khoena, founded a proto-settlement that would be developed over time by the Portuguese to become the port city of Bissau. Historian Walter Rodney193 shows how these coastal people originated as refugees and fierce resisters from inland struggles and were in the opportune place at the right time to service the Portuguese, who recognised the Bijagos’ water mobility between the islands and their military skills. The Bijagos quickly realised that there was something that they could trade with the visitors – slaves. This was the foundation of the city and they also allied with other small groups and developed a new creole language – Kriolo. The story is not a proud one, but it illustrates the complexity of the origins of peoples in every African port city and does not attempt to de-Africanise a people as happened in South Africa in 1911 when ‘Colouredism’ was forced upon one sector of the African population. Coastal port cities in Africa, Asia and the Americas
have three things in common at their root – sea travelling visitors, locals prepared to adapt their ways of living and a need for trade.

Why should the Cape indigenes and their ‘Tavern of the Seas’ settlement be viewed any differently? Likewise history as taught in schools and celebrated in public consciousness grows silent on the fate of the Cape indigenes after the second Dutch-Khoena war, whereas huge amounts of information exist on the over 176 years of valiantly resisted warfare and genocide that largely ‘cleansed’ the Khoena and the San from the Western Cape, save for those who were pacified and went into apprenticeships and servitude.

**Introduction to the Khoena and San Rebellions**

Levaillant a Frenchman who visited the Cape between 1781 and 1784 levels a similar critique to Janzsen’s, “It is without reason that he [the Cape indigene] is accused of being cruel. ... Can anything be more sensible than to repel force by force? ... Wherever we have sought fit to establish ourselves, we have reduced the unhappy nations to slavery or flight; we have appropriated to our own use, without scruple, whatever appeared to answer our purpose”.

De Grandpré visited the Cape between 1786 and 1787 and described the genocide of the Xam or San people ('Boschis/Bushmen').

“... they have hunted the Boschis as one would hunt hares; their dogs have been trained for it. Hunting packs of dogs, horses, slaves, children, women, men; all are put to this dreadful purpose ... The Dutch will always be to blame for the ruin of the Hottentot nation in the eyes of sensitive men; they have repeated at the tip of Africa the same bloodied scenes as the Spaniards first enacted in America. Perhaps they only lacked a Las Casas to make a formal complaint against them before the tribunal of the whole of Europe. When they did not slit the throats of these people by the thousand, they wiped them out one at a time. If they did not train their dogs to hunt them down initially, they did so in due course.... The Dutch government failed its obligations to these destitute people.”

The Khoena, according to Elphick and as generally acknowledged by all academic studies, emerged in the northern Kalahari periphery and then around 2200 years ago split into groups which in a gradual migratory drift moved into eastern South Africa, the Gariep River territory and Namibia. From the Gariep River district their slow migratory drift continued with some moving down into south-eastern South Africa and some moving to the Western Cape probably around just over 900 years ago, where they joined the ‘First People’ of the Cape, the Xam, who due to the Khoena pastoralism were displaced to the Central Cape, Karoo region. The Khoena were not directly related to the Xam who had been living in the Eastern and Western Cape for thousands of years. DNA and linguistic attributes point toward earlier links between the Tshua Kalahari San and East African groups like the Hadza and Sandawe with their Nilotic links further back in time. Later through European colonial expansion and ethnic cleansing in the Cape there was a more rapid migration of Khoena resisters back again towards the Gariep region.

After the 1713 smallpox epidemic and as a result of forced removals, pass laws, war, cultural ethnocide, genocide, conscription and forced apprenticeship on farms, the Western Cape Khoena population plummeted, whereas other population segments grew significantly. But the Khoena did not cease to exist,
as some would argue, regardless of the cultural ethnocide meted out against them by the colonists.

According to Elphick in the late 17th and early 18th century, across the Peninsula, Cape Flats and immediate West Coast vicinity, there were up to 8 000 Peninsula indigenes and 16 000 Cochoqua indigenes. In the eastern regions, up to Mossel Bay there were around 25 000 each of the Chainouquas and Hessequas, and beyond Saldanha up to the Buffels River a possible further 25 000 Chariguriqua and Namaqua. This is a population of around 100 000 within the colony and it excludes the considerable number of Khoena and San population around the Gariep and beyond. Those that were pastoralist had large herds of thousands of sheep and cattle. In contrast, the census of 1805 for the Cape Colony shows the extent of attrition - only some 20 000 Khoena, fragmented and largely the offspring of mixed parentage (Khoena/Slave), were scattered across the Cape Colony, mainly in servitude. Very few remained in the Peninsula and environs up to the Hottentots Holland Mountains. Penn shows that from the 1670s southern Cape indigene refugees also began fleeing in the direction of Namaqualand and the Kai Gariep River, and this tendency increased over time.

Although smallpox played a part in the decreasing population figures, the role of the disease is smaller than many historians have inferred. Penn tells another story, of the numerous wars on Cape indigenes between 1677 and 1802 at the ever shifting and forgotten north-western frontier, and of the documented genocide practices of Commandos on the San between 1774-1799. Legassick elaborates further on the final wars and pacification of the Khoena and San on the eastern frontier 1799-1829. These wars had a far greater impact on the population, and answers the silence about what happened to the original communities of indigenes who first engaged the visitors who arrived by sea. From 1865 the census in the Cape Colony was professionally compiled showing actual counts per town and for the first time the figures for ‘Hottentots’ (Nama, Korana, Hill Damara, Griqua, Cape Khoi and San) while the figure for ‘Mixed/Other’ which we refer to as Camissa was 288 511 (African and Asian slaves and indentured labour descendants, descendants of migrants of colour, and with some Khoi and assimilated non-conformist European). But in an act of cultural genocide as defined by the United Nations the government of the Union of South Africa in the census of 1911 arbitrarily and forcibly created a new single category called ‘Coloured’ into which the various distinct African groups of Khoi people were stripped of their identities and together with the Camissa people were collectively labelled as ‘Coloured’. In both 1904 and 1911 a number of those previously called ‘Hottentots’ were also arbitrarily recorded as Natives. Collectively in 1911 there was then a figure of 454 959 people projected as ‘Coloured’ and all other identities disappeared.

In 1950 this unjust situation was further compounded with the imposition of the Apartheid Population Registration Act and Group Areas Act which for the first time provided a definition of ‘Coloured’ that exposed the blatant social engineering nature of identification.

The UN Convention of 1948 on genocide notes that it recognises two features of genocide as being (article 2 c) deliberately inflicting on a group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; and (article 2 e) forcibly transferring children of a group to another group.

Whether these actions are part of other physical acts of genocide such as mass murder is immaterial, and constitutes genocide in itself. Essentially, though specifying children and in this case children along with parents suffered the act of changing their identity, these would include any act of stripping people of their
identity and forcing them to assimilate within the identity of others. While section (e) specifically mentions children, the 1911 action by the Union of South Africa and its further entrenchment in 1950 under Apartheid, also specified under the International Criminal Court section 7 (j) as a crime against humanity and its post 1994 continuation under the ANC government, it would be difficult to separate this injustice from including the parents and other adults forced to undergo classification, reclassification and the social engineering of identity.

It is unfortunate that the time of writing this book, the African National Congress government though having repealed the two Apartheid Acts, still uses the Apartheid definition of ‘Coloured’ in practice as well as the original act of genocide of 1911 underpinning the Apartheid definition in perpetuating the de-Africanisation of those classified as ‘Coloured’. Thus the legacy of the act of genocide of 1911 involving the creation of the ‘Coloured’ category has been consciously kept alive by government. Post the liberation struggle, in which those classified partook to liberate themselves from Apartheid, there was great hope that the new government of the ANC would take such steps to restore the African identities of those de-Africanised by Apartheid. Instead the ANC government consciously embraced this aspect of Apartheid and poured new wine into old wineskins, perpetuating the falsehood that ‘Coloured’ people are a non-African minority and this has soured the relationship between many activists during the struggle for liberation and the political organisation it supported. The ANC has come down firmly in supporting Apartheid style multi-racialism rather than the non-racialism it once supported and which our new South African constitution obligates them to follow. The ANC government considers it to be fundamental to its ideology that African tribes only as defined by Apartheid, considered to be of purely sub-Saharan ancestry, should be prioritised for restorative justice, while Africans of purely Southern African ancestry (Khoi and San) and of Camissa (mixed African) ancestry should be considered second class in line for restorative justice. The false racist notion of purity thus continues to be employed. What is most worrying is that the ANC and government does not seem to understand that what it is doing, is wrong. Former liberation movement officers in the prison service took the government to the Labour Court and won their case against discrimination by the state based on this notion of first and second class Africans, but there has been no shift by government to stop these practices.

This conclusion jumped from events of 400 years ago to the present simply to illustrate that the Khoi and Camissa are an African people who can provide documentary evidence over the ages to show in various census that they exist and that they are still fight the same battles for freedom and justice that they first faced at the shoreline frontier.

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91


