Article

What Was the Role of the Dutch Reformed Church and Land in Identity Formation on Klipfontein Farm?

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Abstract

Historically, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) or Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) was at the centre of the Afrikaner dynamic, legitimising white Afrikaner nationalist ideals. The strong connection between the DRC (hereafter the church) and the nationalist government meant that the church was the spiritual link to the then ruling National Party for most Afrikaners, justifying the racially based policies and actions of the government. Paradoxically, it was this same church and its teachings that would also be adopted by "coloured" or "brown" Afrikaners to help establish their own group identity. It developed into a mechanism that helped the Klipfontein community, in Eastern Cape, South Africa, in establishing an identity which they could assert against the (white) authorities and neighbours when their right to occupation of Klipfontein was threatened. Thus, a spiritual connection with the land was formed and developed through biblical teachings and rituals. In recent years, a revivalism in Khoe-San identity and its popularity has seemingly threatened this identity. In a country like South Africa, where land and land (dis)possession are perpetual points of contention, Klipfonteiners have adopted an identity that is inextricably linked to their land. Using primary sources, such as archival documentation and interviews conducted with Klipfonteiners as well as those who have dealt directly with Klipfonteiners, and secondary sources dealing with South African coloured identity and the church, this article seeks to address the pivotal role which the church and religion have played in the formation of an identity that seeks to protect Klipfonteiners' rights to the land from external and internal forces.

Keywords: church; land; identity formation; religion; culture; coloured/s; Klipfontein/er/s

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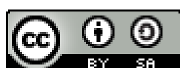

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The Klipfonteiners

Klipfontein Farm is situated in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, near the coastal village of Boesmansriviermond on the R72 between Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth) and East London. The entire Klipfontein population today, according to national classification, is comprised of coloureds. They are the descendants of a "*trekboer*" (literally a wandering farmer) called Dirk Janse van Rensburg and his wife, Sarah Janse van Rensburg, presumably either of Khoe or Cape Malay descent.[1]

The married couple had entered into a joint will (hereafter the Will) before Sarah's death. It stipulated that upon the death of the first dying spouse that their farm, Klipfontein No. 346, would be held by a special trust for the benefit of the survivor and then their children and grandchildren *ad infinitum* (Janse Van Rensburg Papers n.d.). These beneficiaries are known in legal jargon as usufructuaries.[2] The implication of such a will meant that when Sarah died on 31 May 1877, one of the largest farms in the Alexandria District[3] devolved into a trust and Dirk could continue to use the farm as he wished. However, as stipulated by the Will, he and his descendants would no longer have alienation rights to the farm in any way. From that day on, the farm would legally stay within Dirk's immediate family forever.

At the end of the 19th century, Dirk and Sarah's children and their families were the only occupants of the farm. The usufructuaries and their families were all coloureds. As far as can be ascertained, they worked their own land – growing their own crops and keeping livestock. They earned a living by selling surplus livestock and wood to holidaymakers and neighbouring farmers. By 1910, they had ceased to work the land and rented parts of it out to neighbouring farmers (Maclennan 1987, 1). But they were also not the only occupants of the farm.

From about the late 1950s, a steady flow of *amaXhosa* (people of the Xhosa nation) farm labourers and their families settled on Klipfontein.[4] It was during this time that

1 According to her Death Notice, Sarah was born near Cape Town to Robert and Anna Carelse. Although it is difficult to be sure exactly, it was the custom of the time in the Cape Colony for a slave to adopt the surname of the slave-owner for official purposes. It stands then to reason that Sarah may have been born into a family of slaves, yet this has not been proven. Given the claims made in recent years that the Klipfonteiners are at least partly descendants of Khoe ancestors, this would be an interesting avenue to explore as the implications may be potentially significant for future research.

2 According to The Law of Succession in South Africa (Oxford University Press, 2017), a usufruct can be defined as a personal servitude giving the beneficiary (usufructuary) a limited real right to use and enjoy another person's property. The usufructuary must eventually return the property to the owner having preserved its substantial quality. A usufruct right usually lasts for the duration of the usufructuary's lifetime. A usufruct is created when ownership is bequeathed to one person, but the right to use and take the fruits of the property is bequeathed to another.

3 Today, the farm falls under the Ndlambe Municipal District in the Eastern Cape. The farm measured over 1 065 morgen (911.53 hectares) at the time of Sarah's death in 1877.

4 By all accounts it seems that *amaXhosa* families had been staying on the land since the early 20th century.

farm labourers in the area were being evicted along with their families because of an influx of ex-Rhodesian farmers into the area who brought along their own servants and labourers from the then Rhodesia. By the mid-1970s, a significant number of *amaXhosa* occupied the land and outnumbered the coloured population.[5] It was only after the forced removal of all the black African families in 1979 that the farm was inhabited solely by coloureds.

The Klipfontein coloureds were and still are identified along language and cultural lines. They speak Afrikaans and are culturally closer to white Afrikaners than any other culture. Almost all Klipfonteiners are Christian, and of that number, most belong to the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)[6] – the traditional spiritual home of white Afrikaners. They embrace white middle-class norms and values as goals of "respectability", although they form part of the labouring "underclasses" of the local economy. They have always been largely lower-income or working-class people.

Today, most Klipfonteiners are employed in the local consumer industry. Others have found employment in the building sector, with a few Klipfonteiners owning small-time building businesses themselves. Even fewer have professional qualifications that enable them to work as teachers, pastors and branch managers etc. They have prominent positions within the community and are regarded as "*ouderlinge*" (elders), not only in their respective churches but also within the community itself. As an "elite" they are not only recognised by their relative affluence but also their further education. A general consciousness of their superior status within Klipfontein sets them apart from the rest of the working class. But this elite status only exists within the social structures of Klipfontein. Outside of those structures, namely in the eyes of the more affluent white communities, they form part of a "respectable" working class rather than an emerging bourgeois.

Continuous in-fighting between the usufructuaries themselves has been prevalent since the early 20th century (Janse van Rensburg Papers n.d.). The situation deteriorated rapidly and by the 1930s, in order to resolve the tension, the land was divided into four separate portions, each portion representing a usufructuary (URCON 1994, 4). This was an informal agreement (as most agreements pertaining to Klipfontein were) made between the four usufructuaries. However, tensions between the usufructuaries were exacerbated later by legal proceedings as well as by the 1979 forced removals of black African families by government authorities (Joyce Peters, interview, 5 September

5 A second, more significant flow of black African families occurred in the mid-1970s, following false reports in the media that a black African township would be developed on the farm. Settlement was also encouraged by some usufructuaries, who asked those families to pay rent in return for a place to settle.

6 These people are members of the Uniting Reformed Church [Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk (VGK)], formerly known as the Dutch Reformed Missionary Church [Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingskerk (NGSK)]. The Old and the New Apostolic churches make up the rest of the denominations on Klipfontein.

2014a; Maclennan 1987; Leon Rijgrok, interview, 13 July 2015; Magenis van Rensburg, interview, 24 February 2014a). The in-fighting continued throughout the 1980s with each usufructuary faction accusing the other of betrayal (Rijgrok 2015; Van Rensburg 2014b). Eventually, the usufructuaries came to an agreement and dissolved the divisions which separated each usufructuary's portion, thereby eliminating the sub-division of the land (Janse van Rensburg Papers n.d.; URCON 1994). In an attempt to reconcile the various factions, the usufructuaries and community elders agreed to designate a portion of land on the south-easternmost part of the farm to develop into a township (Janse van Rensburg Papers n.d.; Willie Peters 5 September 2014a; Van Rensburg 2014a). Despite numerous pleas to the local municipality, the community elders found little support for the development of such a township. It was only in the early 2000s that the local municipality acted upon the pleas of the Klipfontein elders (George Kleynhans, interview, 22 March 2015; Joyce Peters 2014b; Van Rensburg 2014c). The action came in the form of temporarily renting out the land designated for the township to the municipality, which in turn, developed that land before returning it to the usufructuaries.

Given that Klipfontein is private land that borders an established town, having a populace which requires an infrastructure of a town/village is made even more complex by the peculiar provisions of the Will that govern the administration of that land.

"Coloured" Identity and "Community"

Adhikari (2009, 34–36) divides the historiography of coloureds in South Africa into three categories. The "essentialist" school includes almost all the popular sources as well as many of the older and conservative academic writings. The essentialists do not attempt to question the validity of "colouredness". They approach the subject as a natural product of miscegenation requiring little or no further analysis. Thumbran (2018, 6) rightly points out the nefarious nature of such an approach when she explains that white Afrikaner nationalists used the so-called "threat" of miscegenation as part of a shift in political discourse from the poor white problem to the "native question". It was accepted through this school of thought that coloureds were merely the result of miscegenation, something that needed to be rooted out if the poor white problem was to be resolved.

The "instrumentalists" place "coloured" identity firmly within the context of an artificially imposed category. This school writes within the "liberal" paradigm, influenced by a growing rejection of "coloured" identity dating from the late 1970s. Thus, the "coloured" identity is viewed as a result of historical processes of social engineering created as part of a divide-and-rule strategy. The instrumentalists focus then on social injustices and resistance politics, largely ignoring the accommodation of coloureds within the system.

The third approach, which Adhikari (2005) refers to as "social constructionism", dates from the late 1980s. It criticises the first two approaches for oversimplifying "coloured"

identity and, in the process, denying coloureds the right to participate in the creation of their own identity (Erasmus 2001).

Adhikari (2005), who subscribes to the third school, argues that "coloured" identity is firstly a product of coloureds grounded in a specific historical milieu. Their intermediate status in the racial hierarchy was a result of "assimilationist aspirations" into a dominant culture, negative racial stereotyping and marginality. This intermediate position, according to Adhikari (2005), regulated the way in which "colouredness" functioned under white rule. In the process, severe limitations were placed on independent social and political action.

The fact that coloureds draw their parentage from more than one "racial group" does not mean that they define themselves only along racial lines. Identity does also consist of other indicators such as language, family, social networks and place of residence. For example, in Klipfontein, due to its close proximity to the black township and relations with the *amaXhosa* in the area, many of the coloureds are able to converse not only in Afrikaans but also in *isiXhosa* and English. "Colouredness" can therefore be described as a meeting place of different cultures, identities and languages. Rather than being a clear-cut category, "colouredness" is a self-imposed and official grouping in which discrete boundaries overlap and rigid lines of division blur, reducing the whole notion of race from being clear-cut to, at the very least, problematic (see Erasmus [2001] for more on creolisation theory).

Identity is not a fixed construction, but rather develops through the choices of the individual who is socially embedded. Group ties and associations are part of the construction of these individual identities. It is therefore questionable as to what extent identities are holistic. This is equally true of the Afrikaners, English and *amaXhosa*. There are varieties of "colouredness" that differ from place to place. Although these varieties include certain characteristics in common, no single variety includes them all. Thus, "colouredness" can be described as polymorphous (Victor 2007, 4).

On Klipfontein, this is particularly evident. Some of the local people identify with their Khoe origins, wishing that they could trace back their roots, while others emphasise their *trekboer*, Afrikaner or English ancestry to explain the genealogy of their surnames. Generally, the younger generations focus on their Khoe heritage, embracing the position of their forebears being the original inhabitants of southern Africa – dislocated from their past by black and white settlers and colonialists. Therefore, "colouredness" is a multi-faceted identity that is constituted and contested from within. Individuals draw on their personal experiences and heritages in order to create an identity for themselves.

It is clear that the concept of "colouredness" and debates surrounding the "coloured" identity will not just disappear from post-apartheid discourse as long as they retain their relevance in people's lives. "Colouredness" and its immediate and multi-faceted status, however, will continue to draw criticism both from within and without the "coloured"

community itself. It is inevitable then that the "coloured" identity will remain a contested issue.

Directly related to identity and, in some ways even shaping it, is the concept of "community" used in respect of Klipfontein. Bozzoli (1987, 4) postulates that "community" may refer to a social ideal, where "communal solidarity and sharing are commonplace". In a South African setting, however, it is usually used of ethnic or racial groups of people, mainly black Africans and coloureds living in South Africa. In some cases, it may refer to a group previously called a "tribe". In other instances, it is used to refer to a group of people experiencing the trauma of land dispossession and forced removals. The word may also be used to describe the general makeup of a coloured, black African or Indian urban township. It is also often used to distinguish specific groups of people within the township from the "township-dwellers" in general. In such cases, it is used as an exclusionary device – to distinguish between "insiders" and "outsiders".

In many, if not all, of these cases, "community" seldom possesses negative attributes. It is mainly used to refer to something perceived as "socially good", constructive and something which needs to be nurtured and sustained (Bozzoli 1987, 5). Part of the reason for this favourable view of "community" is the romantic connotations attached to it. It was this aspect that the apartheid regime wished to exploit when it adopted the term in order to refresh the "old-style" apartheid "ethnic" and "racial" categories that included categories such as the "Coloured community" (Bozzoli 1987, 5). Such authoritative use of the term by the state meant that it ran the risk of attaching to it a negative connotation. This stigma has by and large continued post-1994 but has not caused significant damage to the term in common parlance.

However, to ascribe "*gemeenskap*" or "community" to Klipfontein's people is to use the term liberally. Whilst the group perhaps fits into the broader bracket of the "coloured community" and identifies with that category, the people do not exclusively identify with that category. They rather identify themselves through the land upon which they reside (Bezuidenhout 2017, 17). Therefore, they refer to themselves as Klipfonteiners. However, there is little evidence to suggest functionality within the group. Apart from the church, and worker and family groups, there are few spaces available for interaction between the people. Added to this, the Klipfonteiners align themselves to the various family factions present on the farm (Kleynhans 2015). Tensions between these factions are so severe that there can be no real cohesion between these groups. Often, when attempts are made to construct "community" either from an outside force such as church, or from within, they are quashed quite severely through staunch opposition from those factions who do not perceive any benefit in reconciliation (Mike Smuts, interview, 7 March 2015; Van Rensburg 2014b).

However, there have been reasonably more successful attempts by the church, more specifically the DRC, Old Apostolic and New Apostolic churches, to create some sense

of community not only within these congregations, but between them as well (Smuts 2015). This has led to, amongst other developments, the establishment of a representative committee, consisting of the elders from each church (Kleynhans 2015; Smuts 2015). This committee is at the forefront in creating a sense of community in order to consolidate their political capital they have on Klipfontein. Therefore, while the term "*gemeenskap*" or "community" is evidently problematic, it cannot be completely excluded from the article.

The Dutch Reformed Church

In order to understand this type of communal identity, it is essential to understand the DRC and its complex relationship with coloureds, more specifically, the Klipfonteiners.

The churches involved here are: the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK), the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingskerk (NGSK) and the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk Afrika (NGKA). The last two were founded by the NGK for coloureds and black Africans, respectively. By far the most powerful church in the cultural and political history of South Africa has been the all-white Afrikaner NGK. Despite cultural differences among these different churches, they share two important features. Firstly, they distinguish themselves from other churches by their historical roots in continental European traditions of Protestant theology, particularly Dutch and German Calvinism. Secondly, their histories are bound up with the history of the white Afrikaners who were the dominant political force for almost three-quarters of the 20th century in South Africa.

During the first half of the 19th century, it was not uncommon for worship in the NGK to be "mixed" (Davenport 1997, 66; Mostert 1992, 168). Visitors to Boer farms would find the farmers' "*kleurlingvolk*" (coloureds) often participating in the routines of family worship although conversions were rare (Mostert 1992, 170). Thus, the NGK synod's decision in 1857 to legitimise the custom of separate churches for the races had a more decisive impact than it would have had in other denominations (Davenport 1997, 66). It had arisen out of widespread discomfort within white congregations at the presence of black and coloured worshippers. The decision was not based on language differences or on inconveniences caused by residential segregation. Davenport (1997, 66) submits that in the "Dutch Reformed tradition of 'internal holiness', infant baptism was considered to bestow 'covenantal holiness'" only on children of believers. Therefore, Christian and non-Christian communities were regarded as "two static groups between which no movement was likely, if even possible" (Davenport 1997, 66). An additional rationale, which the NGK shared with the English-language churches, argued that coloureds and black Africans would feel more at home in their own churches than as subordinates in white churches (Appel 1994, 2–5; Davenport 1997, 66). The decision of 1857 was followed by another in 1881 to set up the separate NGSK, thereby giving institutional shape to the previously informal relationship of separate church structures, with the

"mother" NGK in a controlling position over the NGSK – a role it was to maintain for more than a century (Davenport 1997, 66; Kinghorn 1997, 136).

The "Promised Land" Rhetoric

As noted earlier, Klipfontein has three main church congregations representing different denominations. The reason why I focus on the NGK and NGSK is because of their influence over the majority of Klipfontein's population. According to a status quo report by URCON (Pty) Ltd (1994, 4), an affiliate firm of Van Wyk and Louw, specialising in urban development and management, the largest denomination on Klipfontein (52%) comprised those adhering to the doctrines of the NGK. The second largest were those adhering to the Old Apostolic Church (26%); and then the New Apostolic Church comprised 15% (URCON 1994, 4). Only 7% indicated that they did not adhere to any religion at all (URCON 1994, 4).

It is uncertain in which year (formal) NGK services began on Klipfontein. There had been church services held on the nearby farm of Brakfontein (later to become the town of Alexandria) since about 1830 to serve the white farmers of Olifantshoek District (later Alexandria District) (No author 1996, 3). The elderly Klipfonteiners interviewed were not certain when church services started on Klipfontein, but all of them could remember going to church whilst growing up in the 1940s (Sara Plaatjies, interview, 5 September 2014; Emma Pullen, interview, 5 September 2014; Louisa Windvogel, interview, 5 September 2014).

The church played and continues to play a significant role in the lives of the Klipfontein community. It has strong sanctioning powers and its influential position is further cemented by the fact that the only school in Klipfontein was built, owned and controlled by the NGK (Smuts 2015; Van Rensburg 2014a). By about the early 1950s, the school was in operation, doubling up as a place where NGSK services could be held (Plaatjies 2014; Smuts 2015). This was where white DRC "*dominees*" (ministers) from Alexandria would periodically travel to Klipfontein as part of the NGSK mandate and would facilitate Sunday "*buitedienste*" (services), baptisms, funerals and "*nagmaal*" (communion) (Smuts 2015). According to various accounts, the services were almost always well attended by the congregation (Kleynhans 2015; Joyce Peters 2014b; Plaatjies 2014; Rijgrok 2015; Smuts 2015; Van Rensburg 2014c). It was at church where community members were able to formally congregate and interact with each other. It was also where they periodically engaged with so-called white Afrikaner intellectuals (*dominees*). The church provided a platform whereby young congregation members were exposed to Christian ideas and values such as brotherly love, fraternity and ordainment (Kleynhans 2015). It also became a central meeting place for Klipfonteiners when matters relating to the community arose. The usufructuaries, trustees or church elders would arrange community meetings to be held in the school (Van Rensburg 2014c). For example, when disputes arose regarding the renting out of land to neighbouring white farmers, the trustee arranged through the usufructuaries that all

Klipfonteiners attend the meeting so that they could be aware of what was happening around them (Van Rensburg 2014c). Thus, the church school would become a politicised space where Klipfonteiners voiced their grievances and concerns.

The church also acted as a conduit for many Klipfonteiners on their "road to redemption" following long spells of alcohol abuse. It is no secret that most crimes committed on Klipfontein are alcohol-related. From disturbing the peace to violence within the family, even house break-ins, alcohol was inevitably a catalyst (Rijgrok 2015). The church then took on the mantle of "rehabilitator". With this sort of capacity it had significant authority over its congregation. The *dominee* was deemed to be the channel between members that went astray and God, the "Supreme Being". In this way, the church wielded power over the Klipfonteiners, shaping and forming values and ideas which were previously neglected.

An example of this power is found in the experiences of many of the usufructuaries. For them, the influx of people onto the farm was a large burden for them to bear. Apart from providing for those indigent relatives who settled on Klipfontein, they also looked to renting land to white farmers, thereby placing extra strain on the land. The rent paid by the neighbouring farmers to each usufructuary was enough to sustain that household but hardly adequate to support an entire community. Thus, for many of the usufructuaries, alcohol soon became an escape from the pressures of providing land for these people (Willie Peters 2014b; Rijgrok 2015). In many instances, they turned to the church for their "salvation". For example, one usufructuary and his wife were taken to the Kenton police station by its station commander after many episodes of alcohol-related domestic violence (Rijgrok 2015). After being threatened with arrest, said usufructuary became involved in church activities, later becoming a church elder and playing a prominent leadership role in Klipfontein (Rijgrok 2015).

Reading the Will in conjunction with the scriptures caused Klipfonteiners to interpret its provisions as a form of divine protection against the loss of their land. They would have been aware of the various removals taking place elsewhere in the country; many people who were forced off their land during those removals came to settle on Klipfontein. For them, the land came to be regarded as a symbol of God's providence, embodying the power of God's law over the law of humankind, namely the racially-based laws of apartheid (Joyce Peters 2014b; Van Rensburg 2014b).

There is no evidence to suggest that the 1986 Belhar Confession influenced the church milieu of Klipfontein before the late 1980s. It is fairly probable that Klipfonteiners would have been aware of the Belhar Confession, but they did not immediately attune themselves to the politics occurring outside their realm of experience. Rather, they continued to use the NGK rhetoric to legitimise their authority over the land. Notions such as "ordained by God" and "obedience to the law of God" were manipulated and reformed by the usufructuaries to construct an identity based on divine allotment of land by God, which superseded all other "laws of man". For example, during the evictions

of black African settlers in 1979, Nicholas "Klaasie" Fischat, one of two usufructuaries opposing the black African occupation would hold regular prayer meetings in his home, where he would reaffirm the idea that the Lord had given them this land and no one but them (the "coloured" Klipfonteiners) had the right to live on it or had the right to take it away from them (Willie Peters 2014b; Plaatjies 2014; Rijgrok 2015). Very often, he would draw upon selective texts out of the Bible (Joshua 1: 13) to support his claims: "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, the Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land."

Fischat's daughter relates how they would allegedly be threatened by some of the black Africans for his role in condoning the removals, but throughout the process, they prayed and held the belief that the Lord would protect them, because the "land was bestowed unto them by Him" (Joyce Peters, 2014b). Thus, this exercise of faith by Klipfonteiners not only became a way of everyday life, but also a tool to entrenching a right of sovereignty and security.

Bader and Palmer (2011, 109) write that "sociologists of religion recognise religiosity as a multi-dimensional construct that can be expressed in a variety of ways". These different "dimensions" focus on the cognitive, behavioural and associative by assessing religiosity according to belief, behaviour and belonging. Considered collectively, these three dimensions can have a "substantive impact" on various social outcomes. For example, affiliation and behaviour can contribute collectively to influence the attitudes Klipfonteiners might have towards the neighbouring black African communities. The strict adherence of traditional apartheid NGK rhetoric flowing from Calvinist doctrine played a big role in determining whether or not acceptance of people based on their racial make-up should be tolerated as neighbours.

But these feelings of racial intolerance are not necessarily shared by Klipfonteiners who grew up in a NGK milieu but did not frequently attend service. For example, two usufructuaries allowed the black African families to stay on the land apparently out of compassion for those who were homeless and poor (Joyce Peters 2014a; Van Rensburg 2014a). By all accounts, these two men were not as frequent churchgoers as the other two usufructuaries. Therefore, as Bader and Palmer (2011, 109) submit, it is not simply affiliation with the religious tradition or denomination that is important, but the combined effect of belonging to the faith and the frequency of exposure to its doctrines, thereby influencing the essential component in shaping a way of life according to religious teachings.

In other instances, these three aspects of religiosity bear independent and sometimes even opposing effects on social outcomes. For example, perhaps the most commonly used indicators of religiosity, namely, denomination, biblical literalism and church attendance, produce countervailing effects with respect to attitudes towards tolerance between usufructuaries and other Klipfonteiners and tolerance or intolerance from the Klipfontein community as a whole towards the black African squatters. Certain

usufructuaries believed that the right thing to do in the eyes of the Lord were not just to welcome "*inkomers*" (new residents) indigents onto Klipfontein, but also black African indigents, regardless of whether racially-based laws and provisions in the Will stipulated otherwise. Contrarily, other usufructuaries as well as those who stayed on the farm under the provisions of the Will believed the land to be the Canaan of a select few coloured family members and therefore only they should have an exclusive right to it. On many occasions, the *inkomers* would evoke similarities between their own plight and those of the Jews of Egypt, as per the Exodus (3: 7–8) story:

> And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land and unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

This sort of rhetoric did not ignore the Will and its significance. On the contrary, the usufructuaries and the rest of the Klipfonteiners utilised the Will and the title deed as instruments of their divine right to the land. These documents supplemented the belief that the right to the land was theirs and no earthly authority could deprive them of that. The former South African Police station commander of Kenton-on-Sea admitted that even if he had been given orders to remove the usufructuaries and their relatives from the land, the eviction would be viewed by the courts as an illegal act, because of the enormous weight that the Will had as legal document (Rijgrok 2015). In the letters of various law firms representing the trustees, concern over how the Will should be interpreted was expressed because of the inability of any authority to remove them due to its strict stipulations (Janse van Rensburg Papers n.d.). The usufructuaries were convinced that nobody could touch them, because "the Lord gave us this land. Black, white, even our own skins cannot take Klipfontein away from us." (Joyce Peters 2014a; Van Rensburg 2014a).

Khoekhoe Revivalism on Klipfontein

In recent years, the church's dominant position as constructor of identity on Klipfontein has been challenged by a resurgence in Khoekhoe identity formation. As mentioned earlier, there has been a shift, especially by younger generations of *inkomers*, towards embracing a Khoekhoe identity. At the very least, this group has merged their Christian theology with the cultural and religious practices associated with the Khoekhoe. The gradual increase in popularity of Khoekhoe identity on Klipfontein is mirrored by what is happening in coloured communities elsewhere in South Africa.

Besten (2009, 139) postulates that a revival of Khoe-San[7] identities in South Africa in the 1990s coincided with several international developments that stimulated growing Khoe-San organisations and the affirmation of their culture and identity. Such developments included the United Nations (UN) declaring that 1993 was the Year of Indigenous People and that 1995–2004 would be the International Decade for the World's Indigenous People (Besten 2009, 139). This focused greater attention on the rights of indigenous or so-called First Nations peoples.

These developments contributed to the realignment of identities within coloured communities. By affirming their Khoe-San identities and claiming "original inhabitants" status, the potential benefits became obvious. For one thing, it fostered a deep sense of belonging in South Africa as well as a sense of entitlement to socio-economic resources such as land (Van Wyk 2016, 39). Since 1994, sections of the coloured population have become more open to acknowledging their African heritage. Many, however, still seek to distinguish themselves from Bantu-speaking communities. In projecting themselves as indigenous people of South Africa, claimants to a Khoe-San identity appropriate a status generally associated with exclusively Bantu-speaking communities during the apartheid period (Besten 2009, 141). The Khoe-San claim that their ancestors had been in southern Africa long before any other peoples, and that their claims to First Nations status are more authentic than anyone else's. This logic encouraged the Khoekhoe to also position themselves as Khoe-San as the San were acknowledged to be the earliest people to have inhabited the region.

The issue of land restitution and traditional land claims has become more contentious in the post-apartheid era as affirmation of Khoe-San identity has become stronger. According to Klaasen (2018, 8), land is and always has been an integral part of Khoekhoe identity. It did not belong to any one person, not even the paramount chief. Instead, it bound the Khoekhoe of a particular territory together. The land was open to be used by all those living on it, even to an individual who did not belong to the original group in that particular territory. The land thus provided the Khoe with shelter and food (Van Wyk 2016, 39). When food sources became scarce, the entire community moved to areas where they could find more resources.

The land was also a religious symbol that connected the Khoekhoe to the "Supreme Being". It was a commodity gifted to them by God for them to use and enjoy. Willa

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7 The term is used to refer to the indigenous peoples of southern Africa who inhabited the area before the arrival of Bantu-speaking pastoralists some 2 000 years ago. Van Wyk (2016) argues that the name refers to cultural, linguistic and even traditional patterns amongst the Khoekhoe and San people. It was appropriated after 1994 by people who regarded themselves as descended from both these indigenous peoples. Hyphenating the two terms reflects the view among some scholars and people who identify themselves as Khoe-San that although the early hunter-gathering and herding indigenes of southern Africa had a shared ancestry and some cultural commonalities, there were differences in language, culture, livelihood and identity between the two. This configuration also takes account of the objection that the San should not be subordinated to, or subsumed within Khoekhoe groupings.

Boesak (quoted in Klaasen 2018, 8) points out how vital the land is to Khoekhoe culture when he notes:

> The Khoisan regard land as Mother Earth, the God-given space where they have practised their culture for millennia. It is inextricably linked to their heritage in all its forms and without it the aboriginal people will not be able to reclaim their rightful place and dignity.

Under the Restitution of Land Rights Act (RLRA) 22 of 1994, persons or communities who lost their property because of apartheid laws or practices after 1913 were invited to submit claims for restitution or compensation. The significance of 1913 is that this is the date when the infamous Natives Land Act of 1913 was introduced in South Africa. This piece of legislation formalised the land dispossession of black South Africans and limited black African land ownership to so-called "native reserves". However, it had little practical effect on the Khoe-San populations, whose land had largely been confiscated already between the 17th and 19th centuries (Van Wyk 2016, 39). Therefore, since the RLRA excludes land dispossession prior to 1913, any Khoe-San claims prior to that date have not been recognised. The significance of such loss of land when considering the contemporary identity of a group with strong ties to land as part of their traditional way of life cannot be overstated (Van Wyk 2016, 39). Therefore, continued displacement from traditional land cannot help but have an impact on Khoe-San identity.

The connection between religion and land is possibly why there is a growing acceptance of Khoe identities at Klipfontein. However, the glaring difference between Klipfonteiners and other communities accepting a Khoekhoe identity is that Klipfonteiners already have possessory rights to the land, but not because of their Khoekhoe heritage. It is also not because of their links to the NGK and the spiritual justification they think they have in occupying the land. Rather, their rights to the land lie in the legal mechanisms put in place by their forebears almost 150 years ago, allowing them to enjoy possessory rights on Klipfontein.

Conclusion

The influence of the church and religion on Klipfonteiners stems not only from a desperate attempt to keep the land, but also from a determination to hold on to the only religion they have ever known. Legally, the Will of Dirk and Sarah Janse van Rensburg made it unambiguously clear that those descendants and indigent relatives staying on the farm could not be removed from it under any circumstances. Therefore, it was unnecessary for them to invoke Christianity as a tool of resistance against dispossession. To understand why they felt they had to reaffirm this fact through religion is to understand the history of the marginalisation of Klipfonteiners, as well as the animosity shown towards them by neighbouring communities and that which arose amongst themselves.

Christianity and scriptural references would be invoked by the usufructuaries to further their own agenda of exclusivity as direct descendants of the original owners of the land, whilst the *inkomers* would do the same to legitimise their occupation of the land, not as owners or custodians of Klipfontein, but as an indigent people ordained by God to settle the land.

The racially based laws coupled with the history of discrimination against Klipfonteiners and their ancestors created racial awareness amongst Klipfonteiners as well as an awareness of the significance of occupying an enclave within a predominantly white-owned area. In substantiating their claim to the land by invoking not only Christianity, but the tenets of the most influential denomination in South Africa at the time, Klipfonteiners withstood any pressures from government or white citizens alike to remove them from the land by force as well. The NGK gave the Klipfonteiners the platform to elect leaders who cared for the interests of most of Klipfontein, and not only for the usufructuaries. It also introduced to them a doctrine which did not necessarily perpetuate subjugation of coloureds, but rather ideas of sovereignty and custodianship. This would appear to support Adhikari's (2009) argument that ruling groups do not create identities among subject peoples. While they may reinforce, constrain or manipulate such identities with varying degree of success, those oppressed create and negotiate their own social identities.

Through the NGK, Klipfonteiners were able to mould and shape an identity which was couched in the same religious doctrine which openly supported the system that aimed to oppress them. In recent years, younger generations of Klipfonteiners have been more willing to adopt a Khoekhoe identity for similar reasons. The objective is to strengthen their ties to the land, especially those who have tenuous links to the community. Though it formed the foundations of a social dynamic, it can be seen that the influences of the *inkomers* as well as the geographical location of Klipfontein was superimposed to create an identity based on counteracting threats from outside as well as from within.

This does not mean that the NGK is exclusively used as a political tool by the Klipfonteiners. The NGK doctrine and practices are taken very seriously by those Klipfontein NGK members. But the theology of the Christian faith was used to legitimise their geographical and social position in the area. Not only were they coloured people with a legal basis to continue to occupy and live within the midst of white landowners, but they also had a spiritual justification by appealing to the same deity worshipped by the ruling white authority. At the same time, this spirituality would also assist Klipfonteiners in discovering a connection to the land on which they live.

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