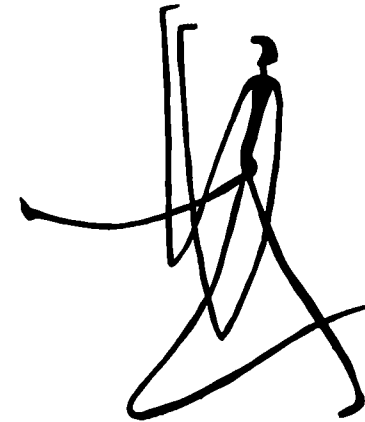


Chapter 3

Bushman Copper and Autonomy



While Bushmen were being entrapped in the vortex of changes brought about by incorporation into the world system, how were they getting on with their fellow indigenes? Two aspects of Bushman life in precolonial Namibia during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century are pivotal. First, Bushmen exercised considerable autonomy. There was no strong centralized authority in the region where most of them lived. It was seen by Europeans as an area that was subject to rival claims by Herero and Ovambo. The botanist-explorer Hans Schinz's remarkable map showed the area as being occupied by (Ovambo) "Ondonga tribute-paying Bushmen" (Schinz 1891). During this time, Herero presence was minimal (Köhler 1959b; see also Schinz 1891). Second, Bushmen were producers of copper; indeed most of these copper deposits were in this locality.

Copper and the Ovambo

Trade, and especially trade and mining in copper, was one of the features that impressed many early travelers in their encounters with Bushmen in this part of Africa. In 1850, Brochado entered Ovamboland from the north. He found:

On [Chief] Nangolo's periphery about 100 to 125 km away are *Kwankhala* [Kung¹] who contrary to most other members of this race, are settled and possess large copper mines and have copper in abundance. Only the [o]Ndonga trade with them trading for copper for tobacco, beads and *pungo* [cannabis]. However, the Ondonga do not precisely know where the mine is. Even the powerful Haimbili of Kuanyama is not

allowed direct contact with them. (cited in Heintze 1972:47; see also Schinz 1891:293ff.)

Brochado also reported that Heikom Bushmen traded salt from the Etosha pans, which they made up in sugar-loaf parcels.

The next travelers in the area, Galton (1889:136) and Andersson (1856:182), found that Bushmen brought the ore to Otjikoto, where they traded it with Ovambo. The very notion of Bushmen being engaged in copper mining clashed with the standard stereotype of Bushmen. Thus, the Reverend Hugo Hahn noted his first encounter with mining Bushmen in these terms: "We met two Bushmen today who were taking copper ore from Otjorukaku to Ondonga *on their own account* where they would sell it for corn, tobacco, and calabashes. *This I never expected from Bushmen*" (Hahn 1985:vol. 4, 1034 [18 July 1857], my emphases and translation). Hahn described how parties of Ovambo (and Bushmen) transported the ore in neatly woven baskets made of palm leaves. Filled, each basket weighed 90 pounds, and when food and water were added, each porter carried approximately 115 pounds! These porters performed with impressive military precision, traveling for six to eight hours per day in parties of about thirty men. Apparently one of the reasons why Hahn's party was attacked by the Ovambo king on this expedition was that the king, Nangoro, wanted to appropriate the group's four wagons to transport copper.

The copper was smelted in Ondonga and made into decorative foot rings,² which Ondonga then traded further afield with their fellow Ovambo. On his next journey in 1866, Hahn observed that Bushmen were mining the copper near Otavi and trading it to Ovambo, who arrived in large numbers. Bushmen still refused to allow outsiders to visit the actual site of mining. Hahn estimated that between fifty and sixty tons of copper were exported to Ondonga per annum. Other Bushmen³ collected and traded salt from the Etosha Pan. This trade was just as important to Bushmen as the copper trade (Moritz 1980; Sohngé 1967; see also Palgrave 1877:46).

Obviously, such mining activities were bound to attract the attention of mercantile adventurers, and McKiernan wrote that in 1875 he managed to find the mine after much difficulty. "Old smelting places were plentiful. Calcined stones, charcoal, and fragments of copper ore in heaps" was how he described this very rich ore body. But he felt that the deposit was too far from the nearest port and that lack of water en route made mining impracticable and uneconomical (McKiernan 1954:53-54).

A few years later, Schinz (1891) confirmed the mining activities near what was then the Republic of Upingtonia. He said that these Bushmen owed their allegiance to the Ondonga chief, Kambonde. By that time the

Bushman monopoly on the salt trade had been broken, as the Ukuambi Ovambo and the Ongandjera Ovambo were also engaged in it (Schinz 1891). A Bushman is credited with discovering the immensely profitable mines at Tsumeb (Lebzelter 1934b:42).

These amicable relations extended to Bushmen living within the various Ovambo tribal areas. "I never heard a Damara or a Bushman speak ill of the Ovampo, they always spoke in the warmest terms of their hospitality and honesty," claimed Galton (1852). "The Bushmen appear to be naturalized," he later wrote, "and free to a distance very far north of Caconda" (Galton 1889:142). Apparently, it was not that free a life because they, like all the subjects of Ovambo chiefs and kings, had to pay tribute. This was in ivory. Moller wrote that, like other citizens, Bushmen living in southern Ovamboland paid a yearly tribute in salt, copper ore or game. Game had to be handed over alive because Ovambo feared that Bushmen might poison the Ovambo king (Moller 1974:148, 152).

Ovambo kings appreciated the advantages of using outsiders for sensitive tasks.⁴ Bushmen were widely reported to have served as bodyguards, executioners, spies, special messengers and professional hunters. They were so effective as spies that Lehmann reported that missionaries complained that Nehale knew about events two weeks before the missionaries did (Lehmann 1956). So trusting were relations between Bushmen and Ovambo that when in the 1860s Andersson went up to Ovamboland after Hahn and Green had been attacked, the Ovambo king fled to a Bushman *werft* for refuge (Vedder 1938). As befitted their mercenary status, the Bushmen were "even more ornamented than the Ovambo themselves, [and were] a kind of standing army" (Galton 1889:142). The Ovambo kings did, on occasion, appoint Bushmen as headmen or foremen of their bands. These Bushmen chiefs were allegedly powerful, and their followers would, if ordered to, kill men or women. One such Ovambo-appointed headman was Quben Qubu, who had his great place at Andoni, but roamed from Ovamboland to the Sandveld, armed with two muzzle-loaders and accompanied by his several wives. He was widely feared and respected by Bushmen and Ovambo (see *Rex v. Qouigan and Habuson* 1919 SCC and *Rex v. Quben Qubu* 1920 SCC). There is also a case of a chief's wife appointing a Bushman as a foreman over a local Ovambo ward (Wulfhorst 1937).

In times of drought, Bushmen often moved in and lived with Ovambo families, usually those with whom they had previously established trading ties (South Africa 1931; Heintze 1972). When old Bushmen could not fend for themselves, they too would attach themselves to an Ovambo household. After such a move, the men would generally assist the Ovambo in moving their livestock to outlying cattle posts during the winter months (South Africa 1934). Stock theft by Bushmen was unknown, and

they would often return strayed cattle (Schoeman n.d.[a]). Indeed, a surprising number settled down in Ovambo-style houses and had fields and cattle.

Perhaps the best social indicator of discrimination involves sex. Inter-marriage appears to have been quite common with the Heikom Bushmen, but not so common with the Kung. It was not only a case of Ovambo men marrying Bushman women but also the other way around, and there was no stigma attached to the offspring of such unions. Wulfhorst related the story of a young Kuanyama whose father was a Bushman. The youth went south on a labor contract and later, on his way back to Ovamboland, met some of his father's relatives and decided to stay with them. He eventually married a Bushman woman, who unfortunately died in childbirth, so he returned to Kuanyama (Wulfhorst 1937:37). But it was not just the commoners who intermarried. Prominent Ovambo kings and headmen including Chief Martin of the Ondonga, and the father of the former Ngandjera chief Tshanika were said to be half-blooded Heikom (SWAA, A50/188/5, 1940).⁵

Relationships with Pastoralists

Determining the degree of Bushman autonomy is difficult because claims to the Bushman area were made later by pastoral Herero. These claims are in conflict with evidence by writers of diverse backgrounds showing that speakers of Nama, Oerlam or Herero did not immutably infringe on the traditional areas of Bushmen in the northeast until after the introduction of firearms (see, for example, Wilhelm 1954; Swanepoel n.d.). During the era of booty capital, pastoral Herero "only came to the Bushman country as casual laborers to the Europeans during the hunting season" (Köhler 1959b:16). Similarly, the Kwangari, who were to become most populous "tribe" in the Okavango area, were, at the turn of the century, still largely north of the river because they feared the Bushmen (ZBU 1010[3], Gibson 1981).

Galton reported the northernmost Herero cattle outpost to be at Okamabuti, near the present-day Grootfontein; beyond that was a large tract of land that belonged to Bushmen (Galton 1889:103). Schinz, who was the most reliable and informative early scientific explorer of this area, reported Herero at Okamabuti on sufferance from the Ovambo king, who had taken pity on them as a result of the losses they had suffered at the hands of marauding Oerlams in the south. Shortly thereafter, residential permission was withdrawn and the Herero retreated to the Waterberg (Schinz 1891:351). In 1857, Hugo Hahn passed through the area en route to Ovamboland and referred to the area around Otjituo (now a major center in the government-proclaimed Herero eth-

nic homeland), Grootfontein and the Otjitjika Mountains as "Bushmanland" (Vedder 1938:308; Moritz 1980). There were no Herero or Khoi in the area.

Ovambo lived to the north of the Etosha Pan but traded with Bushmen who mined copper at what is now Great Otavi. The nearest Herero at that time were south of the Omatako Mountains (Hartmann, cited in Köhler 1959b:15). Under pressure from the incessant raids by Jonker Afrikaner, a well-armed Oerlam bandit leader, some Herero tried to flee northward with their cattle. They intended to join Nangoro in Ovamboland, but on the way to Grootfontein they killed some Bushmen at the Waterberg (another traditional Bushman haunt, now the center of Hereroland). True to his role of "Protector of the Bushmen," Nangoro marched south and routed the Herero at Nuitsas and later again at Grootfontein. Primarily because of Oerlam harassment, a small group of Herero fled to Nangoro in abject poverty and succeeded in gaining asylum (Köhler 1959b; Chapman n.d.).

Who were these Bushmen and where did they come from? One Heikom oral history presents the following reconstruction of their past:

The first Heikom, Xameb [Tsameb?] came to the Namutoni area from Waterberg. At that time, Namutoni was the drinking place of innumerable elephants. The bushes were very thick and the trees were much higher than now. Thus, Xameb and his people moved further on in the direction of Ovamboland but they did not like the sandy soil of Ovamboland and returned to Namutoni. They were great hunters and were left in peace. Only much later did the Hottentots [Khoi] and Damaras [Herero] arrive. The Xaben [Ovambo] were our first friends and we traded with them. The Herero were the first people with whom we made war. (Schoeman n.d.[a])

The southern advance of Herero pastoralists was checked by some singular resistance by a Heikom Bushman leader named Tsameb. With the first appearance of Herero cattle on Bushman preserves, Tsameb organized raids. This led to Herero indiscriminately killing any Bushman they encountered, whether male or female. Tsameb then set about organizing the various Bushman clans to resist the Herero invasion. Because of the success of these strategies, he became known as chief. Later, he obtained Khoi assistance and forced the Herero to retreat. Tsameb's group became known as the *Kai-ei-kwan* (or *Gaikokoin*, in ZBU 2043, Annual Report, Grootfontein Bezirk, 1913) and had "great places," ranging from Karuchas in the Outjo district to what are now the farms Brandenburg and Wittenburg in the present Grootfontein district (SWAA, A50/67, Hahn to CNC, 5 September 1940).

Tsameb was succeeded by his son Aribib, who continued his father's proud and effective tradition of resistance to Herero and later German encroachment (Hartmann, cited by Köhler 1959b; SWAA, A50/67, Hahn to CNC, 5 September 1940). The fragile unity of the Heikom clans were shattered on Aribib's death in 1905, and those clans were subsequently hunted down by both Herero and Germans, who had by this time settled in the area. As a result, Bushmen were driven from their "great places" like Naidaus and Okarusu to the fringes of the Etosha Game Park (proclaimed in 1907), where they found temporary refuge.

Vedder,⁶ testifying before the South West Africa Constitutional Commission in 1936, pointed out that Herero had in precolonial and German colonial times occupied the Okahandja, Omaruru, Otjimbingue and part of the Waterberg area. A few families had "travelled up to the north but they knew very well it was Bushmanland" (SWA Constitutional Commission). Old maps confirm this. A map illustrating the German-Herero war of 1904 showed the northernmost point of Herero settlement to be the southern point of the Waterberg, whereas the Herero settlement nearest to what later became the Epukiro Reserve was at least 150 kilometers distant (Moritz 1980). Other sources confirm the maps. The annual reports from the Grootfontein district point out that before World War I, Otjituo was a major Bushman settlement, and Bleek (1922, 1928) in her pioneering research at Sandfontein, east of Gobabis, found that all her old informants claimed that Herero and Tswana had been middle-aged when they came into their area. Perhaps the most interesting evidence for the recency of Herero contact with Bushmen is to be found in the diary that the Reverend Hahn kept on his journey of exploration from Otjimbingue to Ovamboland in the north. He found that one of the ways his Herero servants referred to the Bushmen was as *ozombushmana*, derived clearly, as he recognized, from Dutch. But he went on to say that the proper Herero name is *ovakuruha* (which can be glossed as 'first' or 'primeval' 'people') (Moritz 1980:21; Katjavivi 1988).⁷

The pioneering anthropologist Gustav Fritsch reported "reliable" Herero as stating that Bushmen had originally occupied the whole land from Ovamboland to the Gariiep (Orange River) before they were driven out by the Namaqua and Herero (Fritsch 1872). And Ratzel (1897) pointed out that many names in what was later Hereroland were derived from Nama.

Of course, there were Herero claims to land occupied by Bushmen, but changing the name of the place does not establish title to it. Many of these claims were quite specious. Maherero, for example, claimed the Otavi area with its copper mines on the grounds that the Herero had mined the copper first and that Grootfontein had previously been occu-

pied by Herero. However, as Schinz pointed out, the Herero word for copper was *otjikoporo*, a word clearly of English origin, and, moreover, Bushmen in the area recognized the hegemony of Kambonde, the Ondonga king, not that of Maherero (Schinz 1891).

But what of Bushman relationships where they lived in areas jointly occupied by pastoralists? Herero pastoral values made for a difficult situation. As Vedder wrote: "One who possesses a herd of cattle which he calls his own, is called a master. One who has not acquired or inherited cattle is of no importance. It is compulsory for such a person to throw in his lot with an owner of property. . . . The poor led a wretched life" (Vedder 1928:175, 207).⁸

Most historical sources concur that Bushmen-Herero relations were bitter. Even Andersson, no admirer of Bushmen and an ardent Hereroophile, noted in 1856: "Some Bushmen surprised and killed eight Damara [Herero] women. This was not to be wondered at, for the Damaras themselves are always waging an exterminating war on the Bushmen. Indeed, they hunt them down, wherever met with, like wild beasts" (Andersson 1856:210-211).

A few years later the artist Baines wrote in his journal:

Another even less welcome piece of intelligence is the confirmation of a report that Chapman's Damaras during his absence had borrowed guns of his servant John, an old soldier of the 74th Highlanders, and instead of hunting as they had promised, had attacked the Bushmen in the hills, killing some, and returning loaded with their almost worthless plunder. This outrage, the result of some ancient feud, is likely to set the Bushmen at enmity with us. (Baines 1864:91)

In 1877, the wife of the hunter Green reported that she had witnessed a Herero and twenty of his men first stun a captive Bushman with knobkerries (wooden clubs), then beat him raw with sjamboks (leather whips), before they finally burned him alive (Tabler 1973:48; see also Jordan 1881:174). Even during the German colonial era, the traveler Moller observed that, in contrast to Ovamboland, Bushmen in Hottentot and Herero areas "live as oppressed pariahs who are unscrupulously exterminated wherever they are found" (Moller 1974:147).

The Reverend H. Beiderbecke, who pioneered the Rhenish Mission Station at the Waterberg in 1873, recalled his frustration in trying to stop Herero raids on Bushman and Bergdamara encampments, where the Herero either killed off the residents or captured the young and strong to serve as slaves (Beiderbecke 1922).⁹ Vedder stated that the Bergdamaras and Bushmen "were regarded by the Hereros as having

no right there at all and they were looked upon as pests. They were killed wherever they were encountered. Women and children were carried off and put to work at domestic tasks and as herd-boys" (Vedder 1938:143). In view of all the evidence his conclusion seems to be plausible.¹⁰

Chapter 4

The Incorporation of Bushmen into the World System



Galton's visit to Ovamboland in the early 1850s was symptomatic of a new era in which white hunters and traders trekked north in large numbers in search of ivory. This era was the result not of Galton's opening up the area so much as of changes in the industrial countries, especially in the United States. As that country industrialized, the nouveau riche sought new status symbols, and the symbol par excellence was the upright piano. "Every American woman feels bound to play the piano, just as she feels bound to wear clothes," wrote a French visitor in 1860. Post-Civil War affluence meant, according to the *Atlantic Monthly* of 1867, that a piano was "only less indispensable than a kitchen range" (cited in Conniff 1987:85). It is estimated that to meet this demand, between 1860 and 1930, 25,000 to 100,000 elephants were killed per year (Conniff 1987:83-89). Between 1852 and 1860 the production of pianos in the United States increased from 9,000 to 22,000 per annum¹ and eventually peaked at 350,000 pianos in 1910, more than twice as many as the Germans produced, the U.S. industry's nearest competitors. By the turn of the century annually 1 in 260 Americans was buying a piano, compared with a modest 1 in 360 for their British peers.

Although it is generally accepted that most of this ivory came from East Africa, a strong case can be made that Namibia supplied a large proportion of the earlier ivory before its herds were depleted. This assertion is based on the fact that the Namibian coast had long been a favorite haunt of Yankee sealers, whalers and guano collectors² and that as the profits from the coast dwindled, adventurers and fortune seekers simply extended their operations inland and switched to ivory. Many of the early hunter-traders were from North America. The risks in the

ivory and cattle trade were high, but so were the profits: Estimates range as high as between 1,500 percent (Lau 1987) and 2,000 percent (Helbig 1983:38).

Figures and records of this era outline a grim march of environmental denudation toward the northeast, the Bushman heartland. By 1860 game was reportedly "shot out" in southern Namibia (Namaland). In 1865 Chapman estimated the value of the Namibian trade with the Cape to be between 10,000 and 12,000 head of cattle and 20,000 pounds of ivory. By 1876 the ratio had changed to 3,000 head of cattle, 5,800 pounds of ostrich feathers and 34,500 pounds of ivory (Davies 1943:130–131).³ After 1878 the decline of game was rapid. In 1880 game was described as "shot out" in central Namibia (Hereroland), and in 1882 the official value of the Namibian trade to the Cape Colony was placed at a measly 26,016 English pounds (de Kock 1948).

Most of these estimates of the value of trade are based on goods channeled through Cape Town and Walvis Bay and are thus gross underestimates. Not only do we have reports that practically all trek oxen on Cape roads were Herero oxen, but there were numerous other trade routes that had different destinations. For example, many traders followed the Nossob and Auob rivers and were based in places like Carnarvon, Upington, Vryburg and Kimberley. The Nossob and Auob routes led to Gobabis and Blydeverwaching, both important trading centers, even rivaling Windhoek. The discovery of diamonds in Kimberley in 1867 served to further enhance this route. During this period there were major routes coming into use leading to the newly discovered gold mines (1882) on the Witwatersrand. These traversed the Kalahari either via Lehututu and Aminuis or via Ngami and Rietfontein (Stals 1962).⁴ As the hunter-traders' sphere of exploitation moved north, the major northern route of travelers, hunters and traders was via either Karakuwisa or Tsintsabis. Cattle from Angola were often exported to the Rand mining area, not by ship, as then duties had to be paid, but directly overland, down to Erikssen's Putz, about forty kilometers from Otjituo. There they were massed and driven through the Kalahari to Lewisfontein (Ngama), a route that took them through Bushman territory to Ngami and then to the Transvaal.

This cattle route was apparently pioneered by Axel Erikssen and probably went through Nyae Nyae. "As it avoided the waterless desert and the unruly Namaquas to the south, it became the customary route between the interior and the west coast. Erikssen himself sent thousands of head of cattle to the interior by this route" (Watts 1926:93; see also SWAA, A198/6/15). Lorna Marshall (1976:54–59) said that at Gautscha and Garu, in the Nyae Nyae area, there are three baobab trees with names and dates ranging from 1876. The implications of this mute



Artist-traveler Thomas Baines noted on this sketch: "Wednesday June 4 1852. The Bushman's Camp and remains of their Rhinoceros. Every particle of flesh or skin b_____ to asc_____ even to the outcroppings of the hoofs. Vangous June 4." Notice muzzle-loader propped against a tree in the left foreground—indicative of incorporation into the world economy. The long strips hung on poles are *biltong*, or jerky. (Courtesy Royal Geographical Society)



Hauptmann Mueller and Bushman at Gautscha, in the heart of contemporary Bushmanland, during Mueller's patrol of 1911. Photographer emphasized differences in stature by having Bushman hold rifle. (Photo courtesy State Archives, Windhoek)

testimony seems to have escaped many Bushman scholars. They point to the fact that the Ju-/wasi of Nyae Nyae have not lived as isolated an existence as the textbooks would like us to believe. Evidence to support this is readily available. For example, Siegfried Passarge's map of his visit to the Nyae Nyae area in 1898 documented routes traversed by Curt von François in 1891 and Powrie in 1898, and there is also an anonymous listing of "Kaffernwagen" (native traders) from the previous year (Passarge 1907).⁵

These hunter-traders did not rush blindly over the landscape. Instead they followed preexisting trade routes and utilized traditional hunting grounds. Hunts involved a large number of people. Expeditions of up to twenty wagons would leave accompanied by a large number of camp servants and stay away for a few months, usually in the winter, pursuing ivory, ostrich feathers or game horns.⁶

Contemporary Views of Bushmen

Bushmen made ideal camp followers. Schinz found them to be the most trustworthy and reliable of the various "natives." Their loyalty was

such that they would allegedly work without pay. This conclusion was also reached by other whites with whom he spoke (Schinz 1891:392). Most hunters reported that Bushmen were very helpful (e.g., Chapman 1868) and would do anything for a small gift of tobacco (Nolte 1886). Indeed the Bushmen's almost-legendary weakness for tobacco was well established. Chapman noted that they obtained tobacco by trading jackal skins in Chapa, a distance of 240 kilometers. On occasion, however, it seems that other hunters had to resort to taking Bushmen hostage in order to force them to be guides (Galton 1889), but they apparently treated Bushmen well during these expeditions. Tales of Bushmen rescuing whites, including Boers, and other blacks from thirst were common (see, e.g., van der Walt 1926; Coetzee 1942; Richard Lee [personal communication]). McKiernan found that Bushmen were always willing to perform even the most dull and menial services and were satisfied with a ration of tobacco, beads or a handkerchief as a reward (McKiernan 1954:77). Generally Bushmen who served as guides were allowed to carry guns and doubled as messengers. Indeed, it is clear that they played a pivotal role in the communications network of the early white hunters and traders (Green 1860; Galton 1889).

The prevailing advice to whites at that time was that Bushmen were usually fine people unless they had been wronged in some way (Tabler 1973:49; McKiernan 1954). Many whites and blacks were apparently killed for raping Bushman women (Andersson 1856:359; Moller 1974:150; Wallis 1936:224). Retributive justice worked both ways. When hunter Hendrik van Zyl heard that a small child of one of the Thirstland Trekkers had wandered off and been killed by Bushmen, he let it be known that there was a limitless supply of tobacco and brandy available at his settlement. He invited Bushmen to participate in this largesse at a specially constructed kraal, and when they were suitably inebriated, ordered them tied up and taken to where the child had been killed. He then invited the Thirstland Trekkers to shoot them. The trekkers declined, so he gave some rifles to the Bushmen attached to the Boers, and after he had read the biblical passage concerning an eye for an eye, ordered them to shoot. Thirty-three Bushmen were murdered in this episode (de Klerk 1977:67).

There were contradictions in the stereotype of Bushmen, which were amplified by the fact that the people so labeled did not constitute a homogeneous group but displayed considerable local autonomy. Familiarity easily bred and easily begot contempt. By the end of his life, for instance, Andersson wrote, "I have come to the conclusion that Bushmen, as a race, deserve no pity" (Andersson 1875:274). However, his disillusionment with them had started prior to this, and on occasion he referred to them as "perfect devils" (1856:140). It appears that generally

many hunters and traders appreciated the qualities of Bushmen as hunters and trackers and, above all, as faithful servants; thus they armed them and encouraged them to hunt for ivory and later for ostrich feathers. Travelers encountered Bushmen armed with rifles hunting in the Okavango region, who, on a good day, could net 145 pounds of ivory (von Moltke n.d.[a]). Indeed, some "great white hunters" were so afraid of elephants that they left all the hunting to Bushmen (Chapman n.d.). It was also common for traders to trade ivory from Bushmen (Chapman 1868:157).

By 1860, when the renowned hunter Frederick Green and trader Axel Erikssen established their hunting headquarters at Grootfontein (Vedder 1938:423), it was clear that even Bushmen of the most isolated parts of the Kalahari were involved in this ecologically destructive booty capitalism. On Green's death, the Yankee trader Gerald McKiernan eulogized him: "Frederick Green was one of the most famous of African hunters, Gordon Cumming or no other could compete with him."⁷ It was estimated that in his lifetime he killed between 750 and 1,000 elephants (McKiernan 1954:93). The upper reaches of the Omuramba Omatako, a dry river bed with lush vegetation, was a popular and much-frequented area for hunters: There was a large hunting camp at Karakuwisa, maintained largely by the "Griqua Bastard," Johannes (Ja) Kruger.⁸ So intense was the hunting in this area that by 1865 Green was forced to move his hunting headquarters to Ondongua (Stals 1968).

Another famous hunter, the Boer Hendrik van Zyl of Ghanzi, visited the Gautscha area in 1874 (Tabler 1973). Van Zyl quickly discovered that the area north of Gobabis to the Okavango River was a "true hunter's paradise" (Burger 1978:42). He employed well over 100 Bushmen (Trumpelmann 1948:16), many of them "shootboys." Indeed, when van Zyl established the world record for killing over 103 elephants in one day (and over 400 elephants in 1877 alone), most of them were accounted for by his Bushman shots. This slaughter took place largely in the area immediately north of the present-day Bushmanland, one traditionally held by Bushmen. These kills yielded over 8,000 pounds of ivory (Tabler 1973:116).

The Demise of the Trade Boom

As more and more traders made their way up to the northeast, trade changed radically and a vicious circle developed that led to the decimation of more and more game as firepower became more accessible. Andersson, for example, reported that in the 1850s a Ngamiland chief accepted three ordinary copper mugs for a large tusk, and that 1,200 pounds of ivory, valued at that time at 240 English pounds, was traded

for one musket (Vedder 1938:304). Approximately twenty years later in Ovamboland, 40 pounds of ivory could be exchanged for an English rifle, and 300 pounds of ivory could buy an excellent rifle or a small cannon (Stals 1968:248, 250). The problem was, Andersson complained, that Portuguese traders were coming down as far as 20° south latitude and giving 50 pounds of gunpowder and 100 pounds of lead for a single tusk and the Boers were disposing of their ammunition in a liberal manner to their "colored neighbors" (Andersson 1858:158).

Given such a situation, it was not long before Ovamboland was denuded of game too. The last elephants were killed in the Etosha Pan area in 1881 (de la Bat 1981, 1982), and by 1886, elephants were declared "hunted out" in Ngami (Tabler 1973:65). Some contemporaries raised their voices against this environmental pillage. Brincker, a missionary, wrote strongly about the "stupid, or rather inhuman, way in which ostriches have been hunted during the last few years, so that they have been almost exterminated," forcing traders and hunters to move further into Ovamboland and the Okavango where "they still get . . . a fair quantity of ivory and feathers through trading and hunting themselves in a way which many people would not care to undertake" (cited in Vedder 1938:447).

The death knell to this once-flourishing trade came in 1892 when the Germans prohibited trade with blacks in arms and ammunition in their newly acquired colony (Stals 1968:290-291). This led, naturally enough, to large-scale smuggling between Angola and Namibia, in which Bushmen played a key role. In 1893 there was a minor revival in trade because of the ostrich feather boom, and Bushmen were, at least in the southern Kalahari, major suppliers of the feathers and not above weighting the loads of feathers with some iron or rocks to obtain a better price (Jackson 1958).

Bushmen were aware of what was happening. In 1920, the oldest Bushman at Tsintsabis police station complained to a visitor, "Elephants, lions, and game of all kinds abounded and have only disappeared since the white man came and shot them in large numbers" (H.J.K. 1920). They could hardly not have been aware: So sickening did the governor's brother, Paul Leutwein, find the situation in the German colonial heyday that he complained that "almost all white hunters are 'Aasjaeger' [carrion hunters]" and that the "Boers sit on their ox-wagons, the bible in the one hand, the rifle in the other and shoot all the game that there is to see" (cited in Tabel 1975:89).

Bushmen played an active role in this ecological devastation. Many professional hunters and traders armed Bushmen and encouraged them to hunt for ivory and ostrich feathers. In 1878 the South African resident, stationed at Walvis Bay, reported that the Damaras (Herero) had

dropped out of the hunting trade, preferring to develop their considerable herds of livestock than move further afield in search of game: "Today the Bushman is using the heavy elephant gun with deadly effect as ever did Damara, Griqua, or Namaqua, and the Damara ponders over the thought of what the Bushman will do with his gun when the game is gone. He sees the trader pass by with the goods he once bought, to enrich tribes beyond over whom he feels he can lord it no longer" (Cape Colony 1879:136). Such a situation of booty capital attracted various types of people, many of them deviants from their own society. One significant group were the "Thirstland Trekkers."

Upingtonia and the First Namibian War of Liberation

A major incursion by whites occurred with the Thirstland Trek when a motley collection of Boer fundamentalists decided to leave the South African Republic (Transvaal) in 1877 and seek a new domicile. They crossed the Kalahari in a number of treks. The first trek, consisting of fifteen families, totaling sixty-two adults, arrived in what is now Rietfontein (in Hereroland), an area traditionally acknowledged as belonging to Bushmen. There they spent two years recuperating before moving north through present-day Bushmanland to the Okavango River. They spent the winter of 1877 grazing their cattle in the Tebraveld. After many tribulations, they eventually made their way to southern Angola, where they managed to eke out a precarious existence. In 1885 an educated Cape Colored, Will Worthington Jordan, persuaded a group of them to return to the Grootfontein area to settle on farms, which he allocated to them on most reasonable terms. Jordan had, as a result of negotiations with the Ondonga king, Kambonde, obtained a concession for 25,000 square kilometers of territory between Grootfontein, Otavi, Etosha Pan and the Waterberg, on payment of 300 English pounds, twenty-five muzzle-loaders, one salted horse and a barrel of brandy (Radel 1947). Although he subdivided his concession into white farms, he retained all the mineral and trading rights in the area.

In October 1885, the *trekboers* announced the formation of the Republic of Upingtonia, named, on Jordan's insistence, after the prime minister of the Cape in an effort to ensure its support for the precarious republic.⁹ Forty-six Boers signed the agreement establishing the republic, and within sixteen months, forty-three farms were allocated. Schinz estimated the Boer population at Grootfontein to be about 500 (1891). However, because of the general uncertainty in the area, arising from Bushman raids and robbery, the Boers did not occupy their farms but

concentrated together at a few places where they lived in *hartebeesthuises* (adobe-style dwellings), around which they planted small fields of wheat and corn (mielies). The republic collapsed after the murder of Jordan in June 1886 and was placed under German protection in May 1887. By this time most of the erstwhile settlers had already moved away, either to Angola or the Transvaal (Burger 1978).

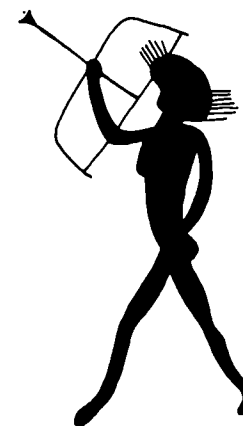
The role of Bushmen in this cardinal episode of contemporary right-wing Afrikaner mythology is central. Bushmen were not only directly responsible for the collapse of Upingtonia, but, indeed, Jordan wanted to establish his pocket republic there because of the rich copper diggings that they controlled and admirably exploited. Other traders and adventurers like McKiernan had visited the Bushman mining operations and were suitably impressed by the richness of the lode but were inhibited by the lack of infrastructure. However, this seemed a small problem to a visionary like Jordan, who dreamed of building a railway line from Walvis Bay to Zimbabwe (Wannenburgh n.d.:170).¹⁰ In order to wrest the copper mines from Bushman control, he needed a large number of whites in the vicinity to protect his investment. In one of his first letters to the German imperial official, Nels, President J. G. Prinsloo of the republic complained that "the Bushmen made up a commando and have shot Mr. James Todd and taken everything which he possessed. The Bushmen still wander amongst us. We do not know what they will do to us" (cited in Burger 1978:374).

The small Boer community had to cope almost daily with Bushman reprisals, in which Bushmen invariably had the upper hand because they were often well armed with rifles, which were a legacy of ivory hunting, and were more mobile than the trekkers (Burger 1978; Prinsloo and Gauche 1933:157ff.). Indeed, the trekkers experienced considerable problems in mounting attacks, as they lacked horses and were forced to borrow them from the trader Erikssen on one occasion. Bushman counterinsurgency operations, judging by the few descriptions available, were well planned and successful, involving, in one instance, the confiscation of 500 cattle belonging to the Boer Prinsloo in one day (Prinsloo and Gauche 1933). A longtime Grootfontein resident, the surveyor Volkmann, recalled in the 1930s: "As far as I can remember, the first Boers who came into this district in about 1880 had to leave very soon again, as there were too many Bushmen living here so that they were unable to protect themselves against the continuous stealing of the Bushmen" (SWAA, A50/67, Volkmann Letter). As Upingtonian President Prinsloo explained in his last letter to Reichskommissar Goring in June 1887: "Due to our inability, we are obliged to move from here. It is due to our

weakness and the rebelliousness of [local] nations which endanger the safety of our families that we are leaving, but should this land be taken into possession by some other possibility, we would like to retain our rights" (cited in Burger 1978:380). Thus ended the first successful Namibian war of liberation.

Chapter 5

Classifying Bushmen: Itinerant Scientists



In the northeastern Kalahari lived what were later to be distinguished as two distinct Bushman "types." The physically larger Nama-speaking Heikom, or San (Vedder 1981 [1934]) and the smaller "genuine" Bushmen, consisting mostly of the Kung who spoke their own language(s). The latter lived to the northeast and southeast of Grootfontein, whereas the Heikom lived predominantly to the northwest and east of Grootfontein. The Heikom, and their Gobabis district relatives, the Naron, were said to be easily distinguishable from the Kung on physiological as well as linguistic grounds (Fourie 1928).

Between Galton's pseudoscientific visit and the next one by a scientist, the botanist Schinz in 1884, a revolution had occurred in southern African anthropological studies and the ways in which scientists conceptualized Bushmen. This revolution occurred on two new fronts, the disciplines of physical anthropology and philology.

The physical anthropology discourse was to dominate "Bushman studies" in terms of numbers of scientific papers produced. In 1872 Gustav Fritsch published the first anthropological study of southern Africa. His *Eingeborenen Südafrikas: Ethnographisch und anatomisch beschreibt* was based on three years of mobile fieldwork. Fritsch claimed to be able to distinguish physiologically between Bushman and Hottentot (Khoi) and argued that they were indeed separate races. Bushmen constituted the Ur-race of Africa (see also Fritsch 1880) and were incapable of learning a European language. Consistent with this stance he also provided a new interpretation of the origin of the word *Bushman*. It was derived, he said, from the Dutch word meaning "bush person" rather than "bush inhabitant," that is, it referred to a mythical race that was, zoologically speaking, between humans and apes. In the evolutionary scheme of things, thus, Bushmen came *prior* to humans. Proof of this he