

**Griqua hymnody: a Musical ethnography of Griqua identity through song**

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## Declaration

I declare that the thesis hereby handed in for the qualification Magister Musicae at the University of the Free State is my own independent work and that I have not previously submitted the same work for a qualification at/in another University/faculty.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "C. A. Meyer", is written above a horizontal line.

Chester A. Meyer

I hereby concede all copyright to the University of the Free State.

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Chester A. Meyer

## Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Acknowledgments   | ii  |
| Declaration   | iii |
| Chapter 1 – Introduction  | 1   |
| 1.1 Background and Rationale  | 1   |
| 1.2 Personal involvement and investment in Griqua nation  | 4   |
| 1.3 Research problem and objectives   | 5   |
| 1.4 Research design and research methodology  | 6   |
| <br>  |     |
| Chapter 2 – Historical Perspective  | 9   |
| 2.1 Early Griqua history  | 11  |
| 2.2 Adam Kok I  | 12  |
| 2.3 Mission contact   | 13  |
| 2.4 Mission hymnody   | 15  |
| 2.5 Conclusion  | 18  |
| <br>  |     |
| Chapter 3 – The Kneg taught us to sing - A. A. S. Le Fleur I and use of<br>hymnody in Griqua politics | 20  |
| 3.1 The cultivation of a modern Griqua identity   | 22  |
| 3.2 The rise of A.A.S. Le Fleur I and his politics  | 27  |
| 3.3 The “exodus”  | 29  |
| 3.4 A modern Griqua community   | 31  |
| 3.5 Conclusion  | 32  |
| <br>  |     |
| Chapter 4 – I am Griqua – Questions of identity and music   | 35  |
| 4.1 Coloured identity   | 37  |
| 4.2 Griqua Cultural identity  | 40  |
| 4.3 Performing identity   | 44  |
| 4.4 The significance of hymnody   | 46  |
| 4.5 Conclusion  | 49  |

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Chapter 5 – The Griqua don’t speak, they sing       | 51           |
| 5.1 Definition of Lof                               | 54           |
| 5.2 Historical moments of lof                       | 55           |
| 5.3 Lof as a collective experience                  |              |
| 5.3.1 Setting up meetings                           | 58           |
| 5.3.2 Initial reflection on lof                     | 58           |
| 5.3.3 The “power” of lof                            | 59           |
| 5.4 Personal experiences of lof                     |              |
| 5.4.1 Profoundly personal                           | 62           |
| 5.4.2 There shall be joy in the morning             | 63           |
| 5.5 The music                                       |              |
| 5.5.1 Sonic spaces                                  | 65           |
| 5.5.2 Text and Melody                               | 65           |
| 5.5.3 Performance practice                          | 68           |
| 5.6 Lof as identity formation                       | 69           |
| Chapter 6 – (Re)member <i>lof</i> – The way forward | 72           |
| 6.1 “New” <i>lof</i>                                | 74           |
| 6.2 Griqua youth and Griqua hymnody                 | 81           |
| 6.3 To (re)member                                   | 84           |
| 6.4 Conclusion                                      | 86           |
| Chapter 7 – Conclusion                              | 89           |
| Bibliography  | 95           |
| English Summary                                     | 102          |
| Afrikaans Summary                                   | 103          |
| Addendum A  | Compact Disc |

## List of Figures

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Fig. 1 – Sarah (Gordon) Le Fleur   | 4  |
| Fig.2 - The Griqua flag used by the Griqua National Conference of Kranshoek  | 10 |
| Fig.3 - Map of Southern Africa c.1850 (Ross, 1976)   | 15 |
| Fig.4 - Andries (Andrew) Abraham Stockenström Le Fleur I   | 20 |
| Fig.5 - The house on Jakkalskraal farm where Le Fleur lived and died in 1941   | 31 |
| Fig.6 - Auntie Rosy Bruintjies from Colesberg and the author   | 45 |
| Fig.7 – Outside the Griqua Independent Church, Kranshoek   | 55 |
| Fig.8 - Aunty Rosy and Ousie Ting-Ting – Two sisters   | 60 |
| Fig.9 - Uncle Sammy of Kranshoek   | 63 |
| Fig.10 - Church members leaving the church and greeting each other whilst<br>singing and forming a circle until everyone has left the building – a Griqua<br>tradition | 73 |
| Fig.11 - An example of a hymn in Tonic Sol-fa notation from Aunty Rosy’s<br>Sankey hymnal  | 77 |
| Fig.12 – The Sankey hymn Come Believing  | 80 |
| Fig.13 - Members of the Griqua youth standing in front of the Griqua flag  | 84 |

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Rationale

As a research topic, approaching the history of the Griqua people has long held a certain fascination in South Africa because as a people, the Griqua came into being without a pre-recorded history. Yet the genesis of this community is marked by the rise of a familial dynasty that was known and recognised by kings and queens of Great Britain and ultimately stood the test of time to emerge as a well-organised social structure in the twenty-first century (Schoeman, 2002). In this thesis, I contribute to important critical attempts to “write the history” of the Griqua people by focussing on the spiritual music of the Griqua people living in a variety of different areas of contemporary South Africa.

Recent historians such as Karel Schoeman have conducted extensive research on the history of the so-called “Griqua Nation”. Schoeman’s work is largely based on documentation by the European missionaries who worked with the Griqua people. In more recent times the works of Linda Waldman (2009) and Michael Besten (2006) document the contemporary living situations of the Griqua people in South Africa. In such current studies, scholars have largely focused on specific elements of Griqua cultural history and the unique linguistic form of Afrikaans typically spoken by the Griqua people living north of the Orange River. One such scholar, Hans du Plessis, published several books in which he composed poems, mostly psalms, using the peculiar Griqua Afrikaans (du Plessis, 2001: *Innie skylte vannie Jirre*).

After the initial publication, these turn-of-the-century “Griqua Psalms” were set to music by several composers in South Africa (i.e., Randall Wicomb, Awie van Wyk and Neil van der Watt) and subsequently recorded and performed by soloists and choirs. The generally held view among many consumers of South African music was that these composed and commoditised Griqua Psalms were indeed the original and authentic music of the Griqua people or at least based on Griqua music. This, however, is a

complete misrepresentation of fact. The research I present in my thesis will now provide a more accurate representation of the nature of Griqua religious music, its history, and present day performance practice and move beyond the misunderstood “Griqua Psalms” to more concrete examples of Griqua expressive culture.

Annette Cloete conducted extensive research on Griqua music in 1986 for her graduate work at the University of Stellenbosch. Her research was based on an accumulation of data of the religious and secular music of a variety of Griqua groups in South Africa. Cloete’s detailed study has been a tremendous resource for my own research, but it does not adequately address the deeper emotional and spiritual world of the Griqua people. The study of Matilda Burden (1991) on the folk music of the Coloured community, however extensive, does not have as its focus the emotional world of Coloured and Griqua communities. The research in this thesis will thus contribute in new and significant ways by providing an ethnographic context for an analysis of the social components of the music cultures experienced by those self-identifying as Griqua people today. The research presented in my thesis also has the added value of presenting Griqua history, culture, and identity in the reality of post-apartheid South Africa, whereas previous scholars focused on identity before and during Apartheid (such as Ross, Cloete, etc.).

In many ways South Africa since the mid 1990s is still recovering from the scars of Apartheid. Within this context the previously known “Coloured communities” are still attempting to retrieve their frequently stolen and/or lost identities. Under colonial rule and later under apartheid the Coloured groupings were seen as miscasts who are neither black nor white and who did not possess a culture of their own. Many Griqua people, for example, originally registered themselves as “Coloured” under Apartheid laws, since the designation of “Griqua” was a marker of native ethnicity that was viewed at the time as inferior to that of “Coloured” (Besten, 2006:188). Thus, many Griqua people chose the “Coloured” designation due to obvious political reasons, which then resulted in an entire generation feeling shame for being a part of the Griqua Nation (Besten, 2006:188).



The shame due to racial designations does not only pertain to the Griqua, but the Coloured classification in general brought with it shame and resentment. Martina Tormina explains the Coloured identity referring to the writing of author Zoë Wicomb:

in her analysis of the multi-faceted aspects of shame in connection with coloured identity, [Wicomb] points out that “the shame is located in the very word *Coloured*, a category established by the Nationalist government's Population Registration Act of 1950, when it was defined negatively as “not a White person or a Black””. (2013:21)

The category of Coloured during Apartheid stereotyped Coloured people as a “mixed-breed” with no nationhood, identity, land, or culture” (Tormina, 2013:22). It is thus crucial to document Coloured identity and culture as part of a process of redress, in this instance through musical performance.

Marie Jorritsma in her book *Sonic spaces of the Karoo* (2011) delves into the music of the Coloured people in the Karoo. This groundbreaking publication provides a framework for research on the music of other communities in South Africa. Jorritsma lends a voice to Coloured music and acknowledges the hymns of the community as their unique vocal presence in South Africa (2011:130). The narratives hidden in the hymns that Jorritsma unearthed led me to apply these same arguments and methods to investigate the performance of hymns in the Griqua community.

My extensive contact with the Griqua people of Kranshoek affords me unique access to a binding factor in Griqua identity—their praise singing. These hymns with their rich history and unique performance style hold more than what is perceived by an outsider at a ceremony or church service. Only when we delve into the lives of the people who perform these hymns, does it become apparent that the performance of Griqua hymns does not end in the communal reality, but instead their hymnody penetrates the very lives of the Griqua people.

## 1.2 Personal Involvement and Investment in the Griqua Nation

I must disclose upfront that my personal interest in the musical practises of the Griqua people first arose from my close familial connection with the Le Fleur Griqua seated at the village of Kranshoek in the Southern Cape. This particular group of Griqua was first founded by A.A.S Le Fleur I (aka *die Kneg* or “the Servant”) in the beginning of the twentieth century. My great aunt Sarah Gordon married the youngest son of Le Fleur (Thomas) and members of my family still live in Kranshoek and form part of the *Howelike Huis* or royal Griqua family.

Le Fleur’s great-grandson, Allen Le Fleur, is the current paramount chief of this community. The Griqua people of Kranshoek as well as those belonging to the affiliated Griqua branches in the rest of South Africa stand under the great-grandson’s leadership. This is also true of the Griqua National Conference and the Griqua Independent Church. Thus, my academic point of entry and access to the proposed object of study is both formed and informed by my family’s investment in Griqua culture and history.



Fig.1 - Sarah (Gordon) Le Fleur (My great-aunt)

### **1.3 Research problem and objectives**

The research documented and presented in this thesis is primarily concerned with two main questions, namely:

1. What is (1) the general nature and (2) specific aspects of Griqua hymnody performance that occur within the Griqua Independent Church of Le Fleur that are unique to the Griqua people?
2. To what extent does Griqua hymnody influence and shape the individual and communal identity of this specific group of Griqua people?

Griqua hymnody, according to Griqua people (Personal communication: Sammy Jansen, January 2013), has frequently been misrepresented and misunderstood in the general South African consciousness, and today little is still known about the contemporary Griqua context. By addressing in detail the two questions above, my research will not only highlight a unique South African expressive culture, but more importantly the thesis will position the performance of Griqua identity as both historically rooted and relevant in contemporary contexts.

My preliminary ethnographic field research points to an all-encompassing and vibrant presence of Griqua hymnody within both historical and contemporary Griqua communities. It is one of my primary theses that the musical performance of hymns, if performed frequently and energetically, substantively forms the identity of both individuals and of the community as a whole. Individual and collective Griqua identity is a relatively fluid concept; it is nearly impossible to pinpoint the historical identity of a certain group or to say with absolute certainty and authority what are defining factors in the formation of identity. However, the problematic nature inherent in contemporary identity studies makes this phenomenon all the more compelling. As ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes observes, "Identities constructed through music frequently involve notions of place and space; they also involve notions of difference and social boundaries. Thus, musical identities are often not abstract, rationalist constructs; rather they organise

hierarchies of a moral and often political order, resulting in highly emotive notions of selfhood” (1997:3).

Following these lines of argumentation, the research presented in this thesis has as its objective a desire to document, represent, and analyse in a largely narrative approach the variety of emotive aspects of Griqua identity that are negotiated and reinforced implicitly through the everyday musical performance of hymns. Oili-Helena Ylijoki believes that the reason why the narrative approach is widely applied in the human and social sciences is the fact that “narratives impart meaning to experiences by integrating them into a temporal and coherent whole with a specific plot structure” (2001:22). A narrative approach is utilised in this study to provide meaning to the musical experience of Griqua communities. Henry Trotter (2009) identifies this process of documenting emotive aspects of identity through musical performance as a means of measuring the “resonance of identity”—its depth, power, and ultimately its relevance. It involves understanding identity beyond its explicit, more rational manifestations.

#### **1.4 Research design and research methodology**

This thesis follows the path of an inclusive musicology that incorporates different fields within musicology, ethnomusicology, and other disciplines in the humanities such as sociology and anthropology. It attempts to explore the fact that each community within a culture has its own unique system of perceiving and classifying its positionality, and that each culture is thus likely—perhaps certain—to have its own musicology. Such an approach to musical thought as cultural systems attempt to locate explanations of local or native or national musics within a greater whole and identifying relationships between local communities and greater, dominant cultures (see Bruno Nettl, 1999: 289).

After obtaining permission from the current Griqua paramount chief, Alan Le Fleur, to conduct field research to support my study, several members of the Griqua communities of mainly Colesberg and Kranshoek were selected by the researcher for interviews. Over the course of approximately two years (September 2012 – August 2014) the selected interviewees were visited in their homes for semi-formal interviews where aspects regarding Griqua musical hymns and general aspects of Griqua culture were

discussed. All interviewees granted permission for their answers and responses to be used in this study and for the usage of audio recording of interviews. The researcher was also granted permission to attend all Griqua events and ceremonies. During these events audio recordings were made of the singing which was then melodically analysed in order to document observations on a variety of musical characteristics such as timbre, tempo, and harmonisation. Some of these recordings are included in the thesis for referencing purposes. The melodies performed during Griqua gatherings were documented and are presented as part of this study. As part of the narrative nature of the study, a variety of ancillary performance practices observed during interviews (when performances spontaneously arose) and events were also documented.

The methodology used follows the strains of ethnomusicology and anthropology where participatory observation as leading to what anthropologist David B. Coplan describes as a way “understanding of the emotional and imaginative responses of people to the sonic expression of human experience and sociability” (2002:11). The study draws on direct observation in order to investigate the perception and effect of hymns on the individual and community and secondly to analyse the unique performance practise of hymns amongst members of the Griqua Independent Church. A highly participatory study such as this also leans heavily on ethnography where a thick descriptive narrative, a term first applied by Clifford Geertz (Springs, 2008:951), is employed in order to place the reader directly in the sonic world of the Griqua.

The thesis will consist of the following sections:

- Historic perspective – A brief chapter sharing the history of the Griqua people of South Africa and early musical practise.
- The Kneg taught us to sing – A.A.S. Le Fleur I and his use of hymnody in Griqua politics – This chapter will outline Le Fleur’s part in the history of the Griqua, the founding of a Griqua Church and his use of “lof”.
- I am Griqua! – Questions of identity and music – Theories of identity and identity-formation will be discussed and how identity is influenced by music.

- The Griqua don't speak, they sing! – The fieldwork done in Kranshoek and Colesberg are documented to indicate the effect of Griqua hymns on the people who practise them.
- (Re)member lof – The way forward – This brief chapter discuss the viability of Griqua hymnody in a changing society.
- Conclusion.

## Chapter 2

### Historical perspective

*During the summer of 2013 I attended a choir rehearsal in the Griqua church hall in Kranshoek village. It was a specific rehearsal for the church service that was to take place that evening where Griqua from around the country would join together to end the year 2013. This is known as Jaarafsluit, one of the yearly commemorative days. I was introduced to Mr. Roy Williams, the head of “Sang en Kultuur” [song and culture], and he invited me to sit next to him during the rehearsal. While the choir rehearsed in the sweltering December heat of the Southern Cape, Williams and I had an informal chat about the music the choir was singing. He specifically discussed the music that was uniquely the Griqua’s own, that is the songs composed for the Griqua with words that describe situations and feelings unique to the community. During this conversation Williams suddenly stood up and asked the choir to kindly sing the specific song about their history. The choir appeared pleased to oblige, and after the enthusiastic choirmaster sang the first line, the choir joined in with even greater enthusiasm. When they got to the second verse it struck me that this song functioned as a historical document, in fact as a history lesson. (Personal fieldnote, 31 December 2013)*

#### Hymn 22, verse 2, **Die Kanniedood**

|  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Met genot dink ons terug aan kaptein Kok | We happily think back to Captain Kok |
| Onder hom het Griekwa op gekom           | Under him the Griqua grew            |
| Toe Cornelius, weldra bewaar hy ons      | Then Cornelius, he kept us safe      |
| Die Griekwa volk kan nie dood            | The Griqua cannot die                |

The title of the hymn quoted above, *Die Kanniedood*, refers to the aloe variegata, an aloe plant indigenous to South Africa that appears on the flag of the current Griqua people and serves as their emblem. The name Kanniedood [which means “cannot die”] refers to the plant’s ability to survive under extreme circumstances. The plant signifies the Griqua who have survived amidst uncertain times and adversity during their complicated history in southern Africa.



Fig.2 - The Griqua flag used by the Griqua National Conference of Kranshoek (Griqua history brochure, 2012)

This particular verse in the Griqua hymn demonstrates a specific way in which the Griqua people of Kranshoek connect their contemporary existence to the historical times of Adam Kok, the founder of the “Griekwa *volk*” [tribe]. The text of the hymn is a reminder to the people singing it of their heritage, specifically where they come from, and to the listeners it shares the pride Griqua have with their history.

I should note that the Griqua people with whom I have engaged in the past two years of fieldwork made little mention of Adam Kok, the well-known historic leader of the Griqua,



but were more concerned with the history they had lived through and was still fresh in the communal memory—that of Le Fleur. Therefore, hymns such as *Die Kanniedood* position an interesting historical rootedness within everyday musical performance of Griqua choirs.

In order to approach an understanding of the culture, identity, and music specific to the Griqua people of South Africa, there needs to be an understanding of the positionality of the Griqua within the greater South African history. Their connection with the early Khoisan tribes and their encounters with missionaries provide a framework for ways in which to interpret their twenty-first century political ideals and cultural practises.

This chapter briefly outlines the ways in which the Griqua came into being and progressed from a loosely formed community to a well-organised “tribe” (as was the colonial definition). The chapter further underscores the work of Christian missionaries in the development of the musical practises specific to the Griqua people.

## **2.1 Early Griqua history**

The Griqua are a group of people in South Africa that has a history stretching back over three hundred years. They are mostly of mixed racial origin with a combined ancestry that includes the original Khoisan people of southern Africa, the slaves brought to the Cape from other parts of Africa and Asia, the black sub-Saharan African people, and the European settlers who occupied the country from around the mid-seventeenth century (Ross, 1976:1).

Griqua history is closely linked to the Khoisan (Khoesan) people of South Africa. The word Khoisan refers to the two tribes inhabiting the land, the Khoi and the San. The general knowledge and assumptions about the San tribes are that they were largely hunter-gatherers and that the Khoi tribes maintained a relative pastoral existence. There are early references to Khoi tribes which resemble the name of Griqua, most notable the Chariguriqua or Grigriqua (Besten, 2006:19-21). The arrival of European settlers in southern Africa led to the dislocation of many Khoisan communities. The groups living

outside the jurisdiction of colonial rule were, however, able to successfully maintain a rooted traditional life and culture.

It was at this time that we know that the cultural makeup or cultural identity of Khoisan communities became increasingly fluid, and they as a people became comfortable with accepting people of different tribes and races into their own community. This was the case for the group who ultimately began to refer to themselves as Griqua. Early on they were a predominantly Khoisan community that assimilated other people of mixed race and also people from Black African tribes (Besten, 2006:20).

## **2.2 Adam Kok I**

Around the middle of the sixteenth century the free slave Adam Kok acquired *burgher* [citizen] status and grazing rights from the government of the Cape Colony for the farm Stinkfontein in the Piketberg area of today's Western Cape. Kok's ethnic origins are unclear. He was described as "Hottentot," but was presumed to be of slave origin (Ross, 1976:14; Besten 2006:23). It is safe to assume then that he had a mixed ethnic origin.

Remnants of the Grigriqua or Charigriqua Khoi-tribe, mentioned earlier, living in the area started attaching themselves to Kok due to his land wealth and livestock. Kok became known as a so-called "Hottentot" leader and was granted status as the "captain" of his tribe (Besten, 2006:23; Ross, 1976:13). Adam Kok eventually lost his farm in 1771 to a white person, and he and his followers were forced to move further inland to escape the rule of the colonial government of the Cape. Kok himself was of slave origin, and his followers—though mostly from the local Khoi tribes—now consisted of a large variety of other ethnicities. The original culture and identity of the group was composed of a fusion of traditional Khoisan practises and cultural elements borrowed from the cultural practise of both Europeans and Black African tribes (Besten, 2006:20).

### 2.3 Missionary contact

Around the time Adam Kok and his followers were forced to move into the interior of South Africa, European missionaries (primarily the Moravian missionaries from Germany and the London Missionary Society in 1799) started working in what was then the established Cape Colony amongst all the different indigenous groups. However, the first missionary to reach the Griqua clan only occurred at the end of Adam Kok's life when his son Cornelius Kok (who is referenced in the above mentioned hymn) became the leader of the Griqua. Cornelius Kok was baptised by a minister between 1801 and 1805, thus affording Christian missionaries access to spread the Gospel among the Griqua. This group of people who would later become "Griqua," led by the Kok family, were known at the time as *Basters* (meaning "bastards"). They only commenced calling themselves Griqua in 1813 after some encouragement from missionaries. (I should note that the term "Griqua" was initially intended to reference the original Chariguriqua tribe mentioned previously.) This encounter would mark the start of a longstanding relationship between the Griqua and the London Missionary Society (Schoeman, 2002:17-22).

The early Griqua lived a semi-nomadic life, moving from their original community location along the outskirts of the original Cape Colony, in the direction of the Orange River. Between 1801 and 1822 the Griqua began to settle at several mission stations, Klaarwater (Now known as Griquatown or Griekwastad), Philippolis, and other settlements around the Orange River. In these new mission stations they were served by several clergy from the London Missionary Society [see map on p.14].

The government ruling the Cape Colony at the time acknowledged the leadership of the Kok family as "Captains" of their own people, thus originating the concept of Griqua captaincy. The "Captaincy" was a dynasty of rulers that were used by missionaries to maintain control over the people and they were also given a substantial amount of land in return for their loyalty (Schoeman, 2002: 17-37).

Missionaries, such as those from the London Missionary Society, promoted a settled mode of existence opposed to their nomadic nature that fostered stability and

acquisition of wealth among the Griqua. The missionaries also facilitated access to colonial resources and trade networks. This together with the ability to read and write led to a change in status and power within the Griqua community (Besten, 2006:30). The leadership of the Kok family was challenged and different factions occurred among the Griqua communities living in and around the mission stations Klaarwater and Philippolis. Although the missionaries brought stability to Griqua life, Besten argues that their presence also “contributed to factionalism that would characterise Griqua history” (2006:30).

Griqua history around the time of these early missionaries is particularly important to the present study of music and identity. It is, however, not necessary for the success of my own study to provide any further details of Griqua history, for it is the specific work of the missionaries that ultimately influenced Griqua identity, religion, and music as I will outline in this study.

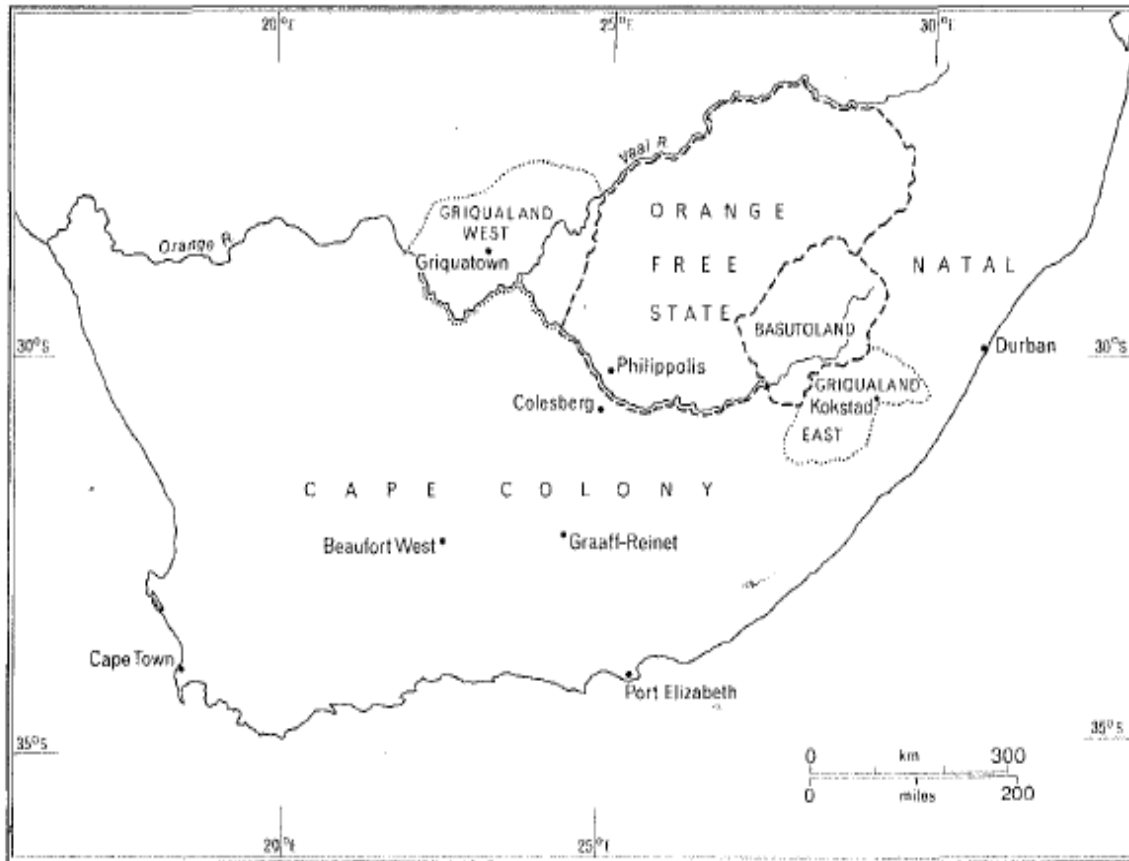


Fig.3 - Map of Southern Africa c.1850 (Ross, 1976)

## 2.4 Mission hymnody

With the spread of the central tenets of the Christian gospel in remote areas of South Africa came a whole new way of life to the Griqua—Westernisation—frequently leaving their older habits, customs, and ways of living behind (Besten, 2006:24-25). The Griqua quickly adopted and assimilated new traditions and rooted such changes in the hymnodic practice brought to them by the missionaries. As indicated in letters from early missionaries, this assimilation of Western culture is clear. Edward Solomon, a missionary at the Philippolis mission station, commented in 1855 that: “Taken as a whole, the Griqua tribe will now amount to from 8000 to 10 000 souls and it is decidedly

the furthest advanced in civilisation of all those connected with the Hottentot race” (as quoted in Schoeman, 2007: 219). Introducing the term “civilisation,” Solomon directly introduces a difference between the then contemporary Griqua way of life and the Western way of life.

It is clear from a variety of sources that early hymns assumed a critical role in the spread of the Christian gospel and teachings of everyday Christian life. “In their work, southern Africa mission workers soon realised that singing was the most effective method of attracting the attention of those targeted for conversion” (Muller 2008:212, quoted by Jordaan 2013:41). The missionaries working amongst the Griqua being from the London Missionary Society therefore used English hymns as part of their evangelisation. The hymns were mostly translated into Dutch since this was the language most of the Griqua spoke, or rather a variant form of Dutch. According to early records, the Griqua took to these English hymn tunes quite easily and were soon singing with much conviction. In epistolary accounts from missionaries who visited the Griqua mission station at Philipolis in what is now the Free State in 1834, the singing of the Griqua people inhabiting the area is already mentioned. August Gebel from the Berlin Missionary Society stated that the singing of the English melodies was “quite surprisingly true and that the Hottentot tribes are in general able to sing well” (Schoeman, 2005:75-78).

The missionaries worked in and amongst various tribes in southern Africa and it is now clear as to what extent musical hymns were utilised as a specific and calculated tool in the conversion process. The difference in Griqua culture, however, is that other tribes managed to maintain several unique aspects of their traditions and ethnic music. The Griqua, however, fully assimilated into Western culture, and it will come apparent in this study that those who self-identify as Griqua still today use the Western hymn as a marker of local identity.

A variety of historic accounts illuminate the fact that Christian missionaries worked tirelessly amongst the Griqua to evangelise them and in the process make them “civilised” by their Western standards. It can therefore be implied that the Griqua were encouraged to abandon their traditional tribal art forms—specifically song and dance—

and adopt the newly introduced Western hymns as part of their emergent Christian and “civilised” identity. Besten suggests that the Griqua adopted a Christian identity in order to gain “respect from and social equality with Whites” (2006:30). By singing hymns, the Griqua affirmed their new Christian identity. Thus, hymnody became a way of performing a new identity both for the community itself as well as communicating that identity to the outside world.

Gerrit Jordaan explains that this new style of “singing that the missionaries taught and prescribed took something away from the people they wanted to convert” (2013: 40). Hymnody with its structure was in stark contrast with the more free nature of Khoisan music and African music in general. South African ethnomusicologist Carol Muller suggests that “mission hymnody was taught through the written form of tonic solfa, in the structure of the Baroque hymn with the soprano, alto, tenor, and bass voice parts as the norm” (1997:8). It can therefore be argued that the singing of hymns equalled a Christian identity and the structured way of living it accompanied.

In an article in *The Hymnology Annual* (1991) Robin A. Leaver digs deeper into mission hymnody to focus more specifically on the role mission hymns have played in southern Africa, linking the performance of hymns to race relations within the country:

With the missionaries came not only the Gospel but also a social cultural conditioning which taught that those who brought the message were somehow more-equal than those to whom they had come. That the messengers were white and the recipients black contributed to the incipient racial heresy that is still tearing Southern Africa apart – a situation that is all the more appalling in that many white South Africans employ theological arguments to bolster their own racialism. (1991:42)

This social and cultural conditioning is so deeply rooted in the psyche of South Africans, black and white alike, that it is still a struggle to maintain a sense of identity, even in a post-Apartheid era where race is not imagined to be an issue of importance (Adhikari, 2004: 174-175). The Coloured community, of which the Griqua are today a part, struggled to find their unique voice and identity in the new South Africa where they are

once again marginalised (Adhikari, 2008: 77-78). They are a community distinctly African, but also with a strong European heritage and trail of cultural influence. It is with this backdrop that the Griqua emerge as a unique group in South Africa today since they stand firmly convicted in their own identity, even if it is a highly contested one that has been (re)invented, (re)assimilated, and (re)indigenised.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

It becomes clear in the hymn *Die Kanniedood* that the Griqua of Kranshoek claim their heritage with that of Adam Kok and his followers. Their current cultural practises are not a representation of the time of Kok or that of the pre-historic Khoisan tribes. This chapter explores one cultural practice that connects the Le Fleur Griqua of today to that of the early Griqua—hymnody.

Historical accounts such as those given by Ross, Besten, and Schoeman clearly demonstrate how Christianity and Westernisation erased the traditional practises of the Khoisan tribes. The Griqua under Adam Kok I were heterogenous. They were a group with an assortment of cultural practises which made the assimilation of Western culture less complicated than that of the more homogenous tribes. It was through the means of the mission hymn that the Griqua reinvented their cultural identity. Hymns that were used by missionaries to attract the attention of tribes were later utilised by converts to demonstrate their acceptance of Christianity and their submission to Western culture. Hymnody, in this instance, became a way of communicating the truths of identity and culture. Subsequent chapters will explore the function of hymnody in Griqua identity and also in what way the mission hymn is indigenised and reinvented.

Like the followers of Adam Kok I, the Griqua today are also an amalgamation of different people of mixed descent. The Griqua under Le Fleur are in most cases not descended from the Kok captaincies, but rather self-identify as Griqua. Their heritage, identity and culture are a reinvention of Griqua culture based on the values and ideology of Le Fleur. The hymn serves as one of the markers of modern day Le Fleur Griqua identity. It cannot be said with certainty to what extent the hymnodic practises of the Le



Fleur Griqua and the Kok Griqua correlate, but it will become evident in the following chapter how hymnody is utilised by Le Fleur to reinvent a new Griqua identity.

## Chapter 3

### The *Kneg* taught us to sing –

#### A.A.S. Le Fleur I and his use of hymnody in Griqua politics

*I was a small boy when I first heard about the name Le Fleur. It was my grandmother who told me the story of this man who led the Griqua and by walking from town to town gathered more Griqua followers. According to oral history, when he passed my hometown Colesberg, my grandmother's aunt decided to join him and later married one of his sons. In my teen years I met my Le Fleur family for the first time and was fascinated by the anecdotes they told about their grandfather.*



Fig.4 - Andries (Andrew) Abraham Stockenström Le Fleur I (Griqua History Brochure, 2012)

During my fieldwork in the past three years the same narratives of Le Fleur's prophecies, miracles and relocation ventures were conveyed to me multiple times by Griqua and non-Griqua alike. The name Andries (Andrew) Abraham Stockenström Le Fleur has become associated with the Griqua and their history in the same fashion as that of great eighteenth century Griqua leader, Adam Kok I.

It is impossible to study the hymnodic practises of the Griqua today without an understanding of the life and work of Le Fleur. The Le Fleur Griqua are known to the contemporary general public as the “singing Griqua” and when you attempt to find the origin of their hymns and their use of hymns, the same answer persists: “The *Kneg* taught us to sing!” The Griqua of Kranshoek believes that they owe the very survival of a Griqua *volk* to the efforts of A.A.S. Le Fleur I (A.A.S. Le Fleur II is his grandson and was paramount chief later in 1952). Again this conviction is echoed in the words of a hymn, just like the hymn about their history mentioned previously. The following hymn specifically honours Le Fleur:

***Gesang 18: Ons dank U hoof***

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Ons dank u Hoof, ons dank u Hoof,</i> | <i>We thank you Chief (Paramount chief)</i> |
| <i>Vir u opoffering</i>                  | <i>for your sacrifice</i>                   |
| <i>Om weer van ons ‘n nasie maak</i>     | <i>to make us a nation again</i>            |
| <i>‘n weg gevalde volk.</i>              | <i>(us) a lost tribe.</i>                   |

The Afrikaans word *volk* as it appears in this hymn are often used by the Griqua people when referring to themselves. Leaders will address those congregated as “die volk” and gatherings will be described as “volksbyeenkomste”. I introduce this term as a word that can only be used in its original Afrikaans form due to the multiplicity of its meaning. The word *volk* can be translated as “nation” or “tribe”.

Apart from the Griqua, the word was also used by the Apartheid government referring to the White Afrikaans people. The development of the Afrikaans language at the turn of the twentieth century led to the birth of an Afrikaner *volk* as Afrikaans publications became vehicles for Afrikaner nationalism (Giliomee, 1987:121). The Afrikaner *volk*, however did not include people of colour who spoke Afrikaans, but referred to White Afrikaans people on the basis that they were a separate group that historically developed to have a distinct nationality (Giliomee, 2003:379). *Volk* is used by the

Griqua in much the same way as it was used by the Afrikaner nationalist government. As the word originated for both nations around the same time it may be an indication of the Griqua imitation of the Afrikaner nationalist ideals. This becomes clearer in this chapter as the work and ideals of Le Fleur are discussed and expanded.

However, when the modern Griqua followers of Le Fleur refer to themselves as the Griqua *volk* it means that they view themselves as more than just the remnants of an ancient tribe, but that they are now a nation with an identity, symbols and ceremonies. The word *volk* also reference their belief that they are the “chosen nation,” chosen and favoured by God, just like the biblical nation (*volk*) of Israel. *Volk* is indeed both a statement and a belief.

This chapter will underscore the efforts of Le Fleur and its relation to Griqua hymnody.

### **3.1 The cultivation of a modern Griqua identity**

Modern Griqua identity and the Griqua hymn are closely linked. A discussion of the cultivation of Griqua identity underscores the prominence of hymnody in the identity formation of the modern Le Fleur Griqua. An emergent identity formation focussing on religion arose with the so-called “Le Fleur dynasty” occurring around the turn of the twentieth century. Contemporary Griqua identity is largely based on the efforts of the first Le Fleur (A.A.S. Le Fleur I) amongst the Griqua and Coloured communities throughout South Africa to unite people into a Griqua nation. This is highlighted by historian Michael Besten:

Reflecting the colonial juncture in which Griqua and Coloureds were constituted – a juncture characterized by the erosion of the Khoe-San cultures, and the appropriation and ascendance of colonial culture and values amongst colonized sections – Le Fleur cultivated a Griqua identity that appealed much to Christian and European cultural values at the same time as he promoted the affirmation of Khoekhoe identities. (Besten 2006: 151)

Around the turn of the twentieth century, the Griqua people were still scattered throughout the country of South Africa with little sense of homeland or situated-ness (Schoeman, 2002:247). There was no one willing to assume the mantle of the leadership of the so-called “lost tribe” after the death of Adam Kok III (1874). Le Fleur’s father, Abraham Le Fleur, started assisting the widow of the deceased Kok in the mid 1880’s in representing the Griqua that were left in Kokstad (Edgar and Saunders, 1982:203). A young man at the time, Andries Abraham Stockenström Le Fleur I, came forward in 1889 and stated that he had received a vision from God in which he was instructed to collect the “dead bones (children) of Adam Kok” (Besten, 2006: 59; Griqua history brochure 2012:15). Le Fleur lived in Kokstad in the Natal province at the time where his father was working for the Kok family.

At the death of Lady Kok, the widow of Adam Kok III, Le Fleur was elected the leader of the remaining Griqua in Kokstad, the town named after founder of the Griqua people, Adam Kok I. He subsequently married the daughter of Adam “Muis” Kok (a nephew of the previous leader) and with that dynastical move, a new chapter in the history of the Griqua was established (Edgar and Saunders, 1982:204).

One of Le Fleur’s legacies was that he institutionalised the Griqua culture and religion by founding the Griqua National Conference (GNC) and the Griqua Independent Church (GIC) and from there a united front arose of Griqua who could sustain what little there was left of their 200-year history. Le Fleur worked tirelessly to provide the Griqua with a sense of communal identity and belonging, and ultimately his work transformed Griqua history for South Africa in the twentieth century. (Note: The current leader of the Griqua of Kranshoek and its affiliated branches is the fourth Le Fleur leader in this lineage and a descendant of the original Adam Kok [Besten 2006; Schoeman 2002]).

A.A.S Le Fleur’s importance for this study is not only in his position as a religious and political leader, but also in the means he managed to establish his leadership; most notably in his use of music. In regards to his utilizing of the Christian hymn it is noteworthy that Le Fleur founded a choir movement in 1919, a year before he founded the GIC. The Griqua Choir Union (GCU) was a reaction to the plight of the poverty-stricken Coloured people living in Namakwaland, a region in the Northern Cape of

South Africa. The idea was that the choirs would give concerts and raise money that could then be contributed to assist the people of Namakwaland. The *Griqua history brochure* suggests that the choirs did more than just give concerts, but it played an important part in “*die herbevestiging van die Griekwa volk*” [the re-establishment of the Griqua *volk*] (2012:12). This understanding of the part of music implies that hymnody here enters the political sphere. The founding of a choir union before the church (1920) is a telling sign that the music was not a reaction to Le Fleur’s institutionalising of religion, but that music may have incited a need for a Griqua church and ultimately influenced Le Fleur’s politics. Ethnomusicologist Lara Allen argues that “music functions as a trenchant political site in Africa, primarily because it is the most widely appreciated art form on the continent” (2004:1). This line of reasoning links music directly with politics and shows that music can become a means by which people associate themselves with particular political ideologies. Allen also suggests that “the capacity of music to coordinate action, and the importance of this for the formation of group identity, is widely acknowledged” (2004:9). Music has certainly contributed to the formation of group identity amongst the Griqua. Throughout my fieldwork amongst Le Fleur followers I discovered that hymnody formed an integral part of Le Fleur’s reform movement. This discovery is confirmed when Besten describes the historical 1920 conference where the GIC was founded and comments that “the significance of singing, which served to keep Le Fleur’s followers together and to maintain their attachment to his teachings, was reflected at the conference” (2006:158). The function of hymnody as an instrument in the reinventing and sustaining of the Griqua in the twentieth century becomes ever more evident.

*In the early afternoon of New Year’s Day 2013 I am visiting some Griqua women in Kranshoek. As we sit around the table, drinking our tea, we reminisce about the previous evening’s events where the Griqua ended their year at the graveside of Le Fleur. It was my first time attending and I am impressed by all the ceremony and tradition. The women are glad that I found it so interesting and impressive, but are quick to discuss the problems. They quickly start complaining about the fact that the Guard Choir was late and not able to perform their task properly and this took away some of the grandeur of the ceremony. They explain*

*to me that the Guard Choir is the personal choir of the paramount chief. They are supposed to travel with him and “guard him” with their hymns, and it is customary for them to arrive before the chief and announce his arrival. At official occasions such as “Year End” they also have to sing the Le Fleur hymn and the hymn of the paramount chief. These hymns have specific slots in the ceremony of the evening and are one of the rare occasions where the choir get to “perform” intricate choir works. (Personal fieldnote, 01 January 2013)*

The use of musical hymns, as is the case with the Griqua followers of Le Fleur, is not an uncommon phenomenon in societies that wish to establish their distinctive identity. South African hymnodist Elsabe Kloppers highlighted the Scottish tradition of singing psalms as a part of their national identity. She concludes that “hymns and psalms form an important part of the cultural identities and collective memory of a nation” (Kloppers, 2012:167). The use of hymns as part of a cultural identity became clear during my many visits to Griqua communities who claim to be followers of Le Fleur. The use of a hymn for the paramount chief and a Le Fleur hymn to be sung during commemorative days all point to the purpose of hymns as part of the culture of Griquaness. The distinctive Griqua traditions and ceremonies in question are all immersed in hymnody. The history behind the use of hymnody seems to point to the *roepkore* phenomenon.

Twentieth century Griqua history, with reference to Le Fleur’s leadership, mentions choirs that were sent by him throughout South Africa, giving concerts and promoting the Griqua cause (Griqua History Brochure 2012:12). These choirs, consisting of young girls, were the so-called “*roepkore*”. *Roepkore* can be translated as “the calling choirs” that were used to call the Griqua *volk* to unity with their singing. The unity referred to relates directly to the notion that Le Fleur maintained that all Coloured people should unite as a collective Griqua nation. These choirs were first formed in 1919 with the purpose of collecting donations for a poverty stricken area. The success of the *roepkore* amongst Coloured people were to such extent that the choirs went further than the original area of the Western Cape and moved into other parts of the country and ultimately became part of Griqua culture. According to oral tradition, the choir sang an **exclusively** religious repertoire, mostly taught to them by Le Fleur himself. The hymn

that was sung to “call” the *volk* was the now famous Griqua hymn “Come oh come while Christ is calling”. And when Griqua members today make a case that they do not worship Le Fleur they virtually always use a line to the extent of: “The hymn did not say Come oh come while Le Fleur is calling, but it was Christ calling us to join the *volk*. We honour Le Fleur, but we worship God” (Bruitjies, personal communication, August 2014)

The group of young women that were selected to sing in *die roepkore* were regarded as special and enlivening a pure way of living (as demonstrated by the all-white attire that they wore). A few of the original members from the *roepkore* are still alive and are held in high regard with the modern-day followers of Le Fleur. The tradition of choirs is still flourishing in Griqua culture and female members of the choir will also dress in all-white attire during official celebrations and ceremonies.

Dress plays an imperative part in Griqua religion. Women in the community have to wear a dress or skirt to church and men wear suits. A woman also cannot pray or sing when her head is not covered (Personal observation and communication). The significance of clothes also occurs among other ethnic religious communities such as the Nazarites. Carol Muller has done extensive research regarding the cultural practises of this group. Members of this group wear a white prayer gown (These are called *imiNazareth*) and believe that both the prayer gown and singing hymns have the same spiritual power and “to protect the body of the believer from bodily harm, either through illness or violence” (Muller, 2005:59).

Le Fleur relied heavily on the nature of mystery of religion, and in this engagement of mystery, music became a vital agent. “Man is a social animal and needs to belong to some kind of community, which helps explain why nationalism is so virulent and religion so much part of it” (Dingley, 2011:393). Griqua cultural identity and religion is interwoven in every sense and it seems that the Griqua community pride themselves on their religious based culture. The use of the Christian religion by Le Fleur is significant, because being a Christian appealed to the Western population (those of European descent) and the choice of hymns flowing from this are also in line with the music of the “white” Afrikaans and English Christian churches of the time. Le Fleur desired the



Griqua to be viewed by the increasingly separatist government as “good Christian people,” but he also was in favour of having the Griqua identifying with a specific Khoisan heritage (Besten, 2006). Thus, the traditional Western hymn becomes indigenised, only to some extent, in the mouths and voices of Griqua. For the Griqua to give the hymns a distinct “Griqua flavour” becomes a means of reinventing their Griqua identity through performance. This was also one of the reasons why he found it necessary to establish an independent Griqua church, so that they could worship in their own style (Griqua history brochure, 2012:11). This gives an impression of singing hymns in a more traditional African style, which is not the case. The distinct Griqua style of singing is rather in a unique sound, the less structured use of four-part harmony and the choice of melody and text, there is no clapping of hands, dancing or anything pertaining to African culture. The frequency and instances of hymnody in Griqua culture contributes greatly to the reinventing of Griqua identity through hymnody. This will become more evident and discussed in detail in later chapters.

The specific political ideals and views that lead to the utilising of hymnody as a political agent need some exploring. It is therefore essential to comprehend the rise of Le Fleur as the religious and political leader of “his” Griqua in the twentieth century.

### **3.2 The rise of A.A.S. Le Fleur I and his politics**

By now it is evident that politics and music cannot be detached from each other in the Griqua reformation process led by Le Fleur. Allen states that “the capacity of music to coordinate action, and the importance of this for the formation of group identity, is widely acknowledged” (2004:9). For the Griqua reform movement this was indeed the case, and research into their politics of the time will underscore that.

A.A.S. Le Fleur was a central figure in South African politics during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century. Le Fleur first got involved in Griqua politics in 1894 in a legal battle for land that was owed to the Griqua. In a highly complex unfolding of events his specific ideas of self-reliance and landownership quickly became a threat to the government of the day. He was imprisoned in 1898 on charges for causing a

rebellion (see Besten, 2006:60-93). When Le Fleur was eventually released from prison in 1903, Besten describes his work and ideals as follows:

Le Fleur believed that the way to reach these ideals of independence and landownership was through establishing farming communities who could become self-reliant. (Besten, 2006:150)

It was this specific struggle for land that started the political life of Le Fleur, and after his release in 1903 he continued to share his ideals with Griqua and Coloured people. The ideals that Besten mentions led to the founding of the Griqua National Conference (GNC) in 1904. This organisation is still the voice of the Le Fleur Griqua today with much the same ideals as in 1904 in a South Africa where the ownership of land is a much contested issue.

Le Fleur's peculiar Griqua-Coloured ethno-nationalism also prompted him to start the *Griqua and Coloured People's Opinion* (a weekly newspaper promoting pride amongst the Griqua), and the Griqua Independent Church both in 1920. His purpose according to Besten was "to unify and reform Coloureds as Griqua into ordered law abiding, self-reliant and proud ethno-national Christian subjects" (2006: 151). This highlights his vision of a Griqua beyond just ethnic origins or links with the Kok captaincies, but any person who had Khoisan origins could self-identify as Griqua. Christianity also becomes central to the reform process of the Griqua and just as the missionaries came with the notion to reform native tribes into a Western way of living by using the Christian message, so Le Fleur came with a message from God. As shown in previous sections the Griqua Independent Church of Le Fleur (and its music) becomes an important agent in promoting his notion of political reformation within the Coloured community (Edgar and Saunders, 1982:216).

Le Fleur was by all accounts a deeply spiritual man, and his inclusion of religion in what seems to be a political struggle, complicated his ventures and also compromised his credibility in the eyes of the general public (Legassick, 2010:200-205). He was a pioneer in what is now known as *identity politics*. This form of mobilizing a group of people is "typically aimed to secure the political freedom of a specific constituency

marginalized within its larger context. Members of that constituency assert or reclaim ways of understanding their distinctiveness that challenge dominant oppressive characterizations, with the goal of greater self-determination” (Heyes 2012:1). The struggle for land was based on the fact that the Griqua were once landowners, but they had been cheated out of their land by white people and were now being marginalised with the rest of the greater Coloured community. Le Fleur wanted the Griqua to be proud of their heritage and identity and reclaim the land that was once owned by the Kok captains.

Identity politics as a mode of organising is intimately connected to the idea that “some social groups are oppressed in some or other way, purely based on the fact of who they are” (Heyes, 2012:2). Le Fleur saw in the impoverished Coloured communities of the early twentieth century a lack of identity. Through the Griqua choirs and the Griqua Church his notions of self-reliance and landownership reached a variety of Coloured communities and they related to his sentiments.

...[C]oming at a time when white domination was being further entrenched and black societies were becoming more impoverished and atomized, his settlement schemes and his promotion of ethnic consciousness and self-pride held out to his followers the promise of an escape from poverty, a means of preserving a cultural cohesiveness, and a way of distancing themselves from Africans, who were being relegated to the lowest strata of South African society. (Edgar and Saunders, 1982:220)

Le Fleur, for the general Coloured community of the time, was more than just a spiritual leader; he was also a politician. In him some members in the Coloured community found a “messiah,” and by joining the Griqua they acquired a new identity.

### **3.3 The “exodus”**

The Le Fleur narrative is full of intrigue, failure, and ultimately leads to the establishing of a Griqua *volk* who believe that they were chosen and called by God.

It is worth noting that not all Le Fleur's attempts at gathering and relocating his followers were successful. It is however impossible, for the purposes of this study, to discuss at length the detail of all the resettlement schemes Le Fleur undertook in his lifetime (see Besten, 2006: 121-150).

Martin Legassick suggests that "if Le Fleur's Griqua movement was mad, however, it was also consistent". He explains that it seemed "mad because it lacked a material basis: land" (2010:205). After years of failed attempts, Le Fleur acquired land in the Knysna area and ultimately in 1926 led a group of the Griqua people (some of the original clan from Kokstad and a great number of Coloured people from all over the country who joined the Griqua movement) to two farms outside Plettenberg Bay, Kranshoek and Jakkalskraal in the Southern Cape. Some other farms were also acquired, but Kranshoek and Jakkalskraal still remain Griqua property today. The "Griqua movement of Le Fleur" now had a material basis. Not all his followers moved to this base for various reasons, but instead formed branches of the GNC and GIC in different towns and cities throughout South Africa. The idea for the Kranshoek followers was that of sustaining themselves and living in the traditions of their forefathers. Jakkalskraal was used and is still being used for farming purposes and this is also where Le Fleur himself lived until the time of his death in 1941.



Fig.5 - The house on Jakkalskraal farm where Le Fleur lived and died in 1941

It was his belief (and still the belief of his followers today) that it was to Kranshoek that God called the children (the so-called “dead bones”) of Adam Kok.

Although most of Le Fleur’s relocation ventures failed Besten argues that “he did however succeed to establish among some Coloured communities a sense of reconnection with their Khoi heritage and he contributed to the broadening of the Griqua community in South Africa” (Besten, 2006:150). It is also true that Le Fleur put Griqua politics on the forefront and his descendants are still active to further advance Griqua politics in South Africa from their base in Kranshoek.

### **3.4 A modern Griqua community**

The ideals of Le Fleur discussed previously, to lead the Coloured community as a whole and that all Coloureds should regard themselves as Griqua, are still flourishing in the GNC and GIC. This makes the Griqua an open ethnic and religious community.

Membership to the flagship organisations is open to all Coloured people and conversions regularly take place. These conversions are mostly based on intermarriage and those who want to reconnect with their ethnic heritage. It will become evident in later chapters to what extent the hymnody influences new converts.

Ultimately the spread of Le Fleur's ideals was accomplished efficiently with music as a primary agent. Several of the Griqua people, during the course of my fieldwork, confirmed that it was specifically the singing of the Griqua people that attracted "other people" (other Coloured people) to the Griqua and their cause for self-preservation. Interviews with Griqua communities in Colesberg and Kranshoek uncovered that this is still the case today, namely that people who join the Griqua Church and subsequently share in the Griqua political ideals are mostly drawn to the community by the unique singing (soundscape and performance contexts) of the contemporary Griqua culture.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The prophecies of A.A.S Le Fleur I became known amongst Coloured communities throughout South Africa. His followers referred to him as "*Die Kneg*" [the servant], meaning that he was the servant of God there to serve his people in accordance to his specific calling from God. This name has stuck with later generations of Griqua and they still refer to him as the *Kneg* and in more recent times he is now also known as "The Reformer" pointing to his role in altering the course of Griqua history. He is revered by the Griqua based in Kranshoek as a prophet, and during conversations the *Kneg* is portrayed as a saint-like figure. His prophecies and work are still referenced, and they continue to be a vital part of the teachings of the Griqua Independent Church. There are also annual celebrations and commemorations of his birth and some of his achievements. His work is also of interest to outsiders and a few academic studies (Besten, 2006; Edgars and Saunders, 1982) that have been cited in this chapter have appeared focussing on his life and work.

The most significant ode to Le Fleur is the annual gathering at his gravesite, a significant pilgrimage for his followers. The times that I attended and participated in this

pilgrimage, the leaders underscored that this honouring of Le Fleur is not because they worship him, but instead a reminder of his work and his legacy. During this solemn occasion the music features in a prominent manner. This is also a testimony of Le Fleur's vision of a singing church and nation. Hymnody was an enormous component in the formation of a Griqua cultural identity and it is therefore embedded in most aspects of Griqua life. In subsequent chapters ethnographic research will explore to what extent hymnody penetrates the individual and social identity of the Griqua.

A comparison with the missionary use of music and the incorporation of music in the work of Le Fleur can be drawn. The mission hymn was used to draw the attention of the non-Christian and to teach fundamental truths about Christianity. With his *roepkore* Le Fleur uses the music of these choirs to draw the attention of Coloured communities around South Africa. He places a great amount of value on singing and encourages it in the GIC as a vital part of Griqua religion (Besten, 2006:158). In fact, today the members of GIC attribute the survival of the Griqua as a whole to the singing. They believe it was the singing of the choirs that had a supernatural power; that God spoke and worked (to and in people) through their singing. The "power" of the singing is still a significant part of Griqua spirituality and members testify to miraculous events when they began to sing. This all-encompassing use of hymnody will be revealed and examined in a subsequent chapter applying ethnographic narratives.

A few generations later, Kranshoek remains the centre of Griqua culture and life for all followers of Le Fleur. The Paramount Chief resides there, and the gravesite of their leader is only a few metres away on the hill called Robberg. The people living in Kranshoek today now work in nearby towns, and the newer generation has gone off to universities, living in the country's larger cities. There are other factions or groups of Griqua people in South Africa who do not belong to the Le Fleur clan but who still consider themselves Griqua by birth and stand under the leadership of other members of the original Kok family. There is however another Le Fleur faction who is based in Knysna, close to Kranshoek. This group separated due to a contestation of leadership. Their hymns and other traditions resemble that of the Kranshoek group. (As a reminder, for the purpose of this study I only focus on the Le Fleur Griqua based in

Kranshoek, because they have been the most prominent in contemporary Griqua history.)

The church of Le Fleur, the Griqua Independent Church, is the agent that keeps his music legacy alive. The performance of hymns here and in the personal lives of members is not only for religious purposes, but links the past with the present and thus contributes to the vision of an ethnic identity. This unique Griqua ethnic identity will be probed in the subsequent chapter and also the ways in which music influence and contribute to a new Griqua identity.

Furthermore, the research in this chapter and the preceding chapter also reveals that the Griqua in missionary times and the Le Fleur Griqua had to align with Western ideology for political reasons. Now that the political power has shifted in South Africa, the Griqua are tracing and claiming their Khoisan roots, again mostly for aligning themselves with the government of the day. Research in the subsequent chapter will underline some of the paths the GNC is following in order to establish an ethnic identity within the broader South African political landscape and the effect, if any, hymnody has on this process.



## Chapter 4

### I am Griqua –

#### Questions of Identity and music

*On a Saturday morning in August 2014 I had a conversation with a group of young people in the offices of the Griqua National Conference in the village Kranshoek. One of them, a young girl of 17, talks about what it means to be Griqua and I am struck by the boldness of her words: To me it feels like I can proudly stand up and say: I am Griqua! (Personal communication: 9 August 2014)*

In the wake of the South Africa's first democratic election in 1994 all South Africans got the designation on their identity document as South African citizens. Previously one was assigned a race category, for example White, Cape Coloured, Indian, or Native. Now that race categories have been something of the past and races interacted freely, it became essential to know who one was. I myself have struggled to explain to my White friends what it meant to be Coloured. What is really and truly our Coloured culture? What music can be classified as traditional Coloured music? To my young mind there was no folk music that could be attributed to Coloured people. The folk tunes we grew up with were the "cultural property" of the Afrikaner (White) people.

These questions of tradition, culture and identity, made me trace back my roots and I ultimately identified with links to my Khoisan heritage. Knowing that I was a descendant of the first people to inhabit South Africa (See Lehmann: Aboriginal title, Indigenous rights and the right to Culture, 2004) gave me a sense of pride and belonging, although this was a fact that was treated with shame during Apartheid within Coloured communities. I was not the only one to align myself with this ethnic heritage, but it seems to have been a common trend amongst certain sectors of the Coloured community at the time.

The Griqua followers of Le Fleur have long been identifying with their Khoisan heritage as was illustrated in the previous chapter. It is only after the end of Apartheid that the Griqua came to play a leading part in this movement of reconnecting with a Khoisan heritage. However, modern Griqua culture as it has emerged since the early twentieth century with the reform work of Le Fleur had little in common with popular notions of Khoisan culture. Instead, Griqua culture is one that has practises that evolved around a strong Christian ethos, most notably the distinct manner of singing of hymns. The reconnection with Khoisan roots was a claim of descent and not an adaptation of historic Khoisan culture. The comment of the Griqua girl, mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, that she can “proudly stand up and say: I am Griqua!” demonstrates an alteration in the feeling of shame that a Khoisan heritage caused in the Apartheid era. To now say “I am Griqua!” ultimately implies that “I am proud of my Khoisan heritage.”

This chapter explores the search for an ethnic Griqua identity, but that search also represents the search for a South African identity. It has been sketched in earlier chapters that Griqua identity without their music is unthinkable in fact they are indeed performing their identity through their music. The missionary hymn remains an inevitable and major part of both Griqua and Coloured music and the research will show that it is an undercurrent in South African music in general.

The study of the music of a group of people such as the Griqua requires an understanding of the collective community of people who share unique ethnic and religious views. Ethnomusicologist Kay Shelemay remarks that “aspects of musical experience cannot be studied without considering different modalities of collective experience” (2011: 354). The differences in the imagined past of ethnic groups provides a variety of understandings and experiences of music. The musical experiences of the Griqua people of Kranshoek are profoundly influenced by their recent history, their religious beliefs and political ideals. Current Griqua identity and the performance thereof are also certainly interwoven with musical experience and performance.

## 4.1 Coloured Identity

The collective experience of Griqua and Coloured people in South Africa in the past century naturally influence their musical experience and musical performance practise. It is crucial to investigate the multi-faceted nature of post-modern Coloured identity in order to comprehend the musical performance of the Griqua of South Africa. Marie Jorritsma describes the (spiritual) music of Coloured people as a “vocal presence that refused to be silenced...by oppression and marginalization” (2011:130). It is evident that this rings true for the Griqua and that their hymnody are indeed their voice, identity and indeed their history in a post-modern South Africa where oppression and marginalization are still rife.

South African national identity in general is one with diverse points of reference. Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni describes South African identity at present as “a contested work in progress, which is open to different interpretations and trajectories” (2012: 407). Modern South Africa is still plagued by issues of race and ethnicity that distorts a sense of national identity. After the end of Apartheid and the birth of the so called “New South Africa” the notion of a “rainbow nation” was introduced by the prominent apartheid activist and Nobel peace-prize winner, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Farred, 2001:175). This expression offers a framework for a new non-racial national identity that accommodates all the diverse cultures of South Africa.

The diversity of cultures united as one is made clear in the South African National Anthem which combines two anthems (*Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika* and *Die Stem*) in four different languages. Coplan and Jules-Rosette suggest that some of the motives for this new anthem were to “promote unity, inclusiveness and reconciliation” (2005:302). With the new national anthem the rainbow rhetoric is captured in and through music. This is yet another example where music enters the political sphere.

The first part of the national anthem, “Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika,” is a hymn that asks God to bless Africa. This hymn became the anthem of the African National Congress (ANC) in the struggle against apartheid (Olwage, 2006:28). It is also the national anthem of other African countries, such as Zimbabwe and is generally recognised as the anthem for the

African continent (Coplan and Jules-Rosette, 2005:285). The anthem was composed by black South African, Enoch Sontonga, but the style is that of the missionary hymn as Sontonga was trained at the Lovedale mission station. The original version of the hymn definitely contains “patterns of Methodist hymnody and African praise singing” (Coplan and Jules-Rosette, 2005:288). African hymnody becomes the voice of the apartheid struggle and it is, as Jorritsma suggests of Coloured religious music, a “vocal presence that refused to be silenced” (2011:130), but the struggle hymn now extends even further to the promotion of national unity.

The notion of national unity that is promoted and embodied through the music of the national anthem is not continually viable as Ndlovu-Gatsheni comments that “despite how hard those who believe in the miracle of a rainbow nation can celebrate it, there is clear evidence that its future is not assured due to contestations over belonging, citizenship and resources” (2012: 409). It is against this backdrop of belonging, citizenship, and cultural resources that Griqua ethnicity and identity takes shape.

Griqua ethnic identity cannot be viewed without taking into account the state of Coloured identity in South Africa. Grant Farred observes that “for the South African coloured community, identity is an issue fraught with racial ambivalence and ideological uncertainty” (2001:176). Ideologies regarding Coloured identity are profoundly influenced by this notion of the ‘rainbow nation’ and its ambiguous and vague nature.

In post-apartheid South Africa, the maintenance of various forms of identity is critical to any race or tribe that wishes to maintain a unique cultural profile in the country. I agree, from my personal experience, with both Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Mohammed Adhikari that race continues to be an integral part of our lives as South Africans. Adhikari, one of the most prominent academics on Coloured identity in South Africa, comments that “despite the political correctness and rainbow rhetoric that veneers much of South African public life, the reality of racial politics in day-to-day living and the pervasiveness of racial forms of thinking have made non-racism an impractical option for those seeking to mobilise popular support” (2004:175). Race has become highly politicized and still influences sport and cultural movements in South Africa. Racial and ethnic designations are thus a continuing occurrence within our society.

It has been mentioned in previous chapters that the Griqua are in fact mostly Coloured people who self-identify as Griqua. It is therefore understandable that Griqua and Coloured identity issues are to a great extent similar as they have co-existed as a marginalised group in South Africa. Griqua identity is therefore dependent on an understanding of Coloured identity and cannot be examined without placing it in this context.

Janette Yarwood views the end of apartheid as “destabilizing the identities of all South Africans”. She goes further in her essay to say that “... the nature and the continued assertion of coloured identity continue to be heavily debated in post-apartheid South Africa” (2006:50). The contested identities in South Africa now bring about a renewed exploration of self and collective identities and questions previous perceptions of identity. There exist a number of theories to make sense of Coloured identity and this all point to a realisation that the Coloured community of South Africa need to find new ways to rewrite their own history (Adhikari, 2008:77).

Coloured identity is all the more contested, because there is a feeling among the community of being marginalised even in a democratic South Africa. There has been extensive writing on this topic by several leading academics (Adhikari, Erasmus, etc.) who attempt to define Coloured identity in present-day South Africa. There has also been critique of the use of the term itself, “Coloured identity”. Abebe Zegeye reviews the essays of scholars trying to define a Coloured identity and concludes that the Coloured category should not exist, but that Coloured people should choose to celebrate their blackness (Zegeye, 2001, 207-228). Be that as it may, my sentiments lie with Zimitri Erasmus who calls for an “acknowledgement of ‘coloured’ identity as part of the shifting texture of a broader black experience” (Erasmus, 2000 as quoted by Zegeye, 2001: 211). Erasmus appeals for a perception of Colouredness as a creolised identity that was constructed under the conditions of slavery and domination (2001:22). Jorritsma, also influenced by the arguments of Erasmus, concludes that:

The story of coloured people in South Africa is the story of encounter, creolization, and entanglement, aspects that have persisted throughout the

country's history, despite the severe superimpositions of colonization, segregation, and apartheid. (2011:103)

It is my observation that the Griqua people I have interviewed view themselves primarily as Griqua and only secondarily as Coloured. There was in most cases a distinct pride in being something other than “just” Coloured, but belonging to a group with a more definite cultural history (a Khoisan heritage) than the hybrid, creolised heritage of “normal” Coloureds. This is of course ironic, since most of these Griqua people have no genetic links to the Griqua tribe of the nineteenth century. As stated before, they belong to the church of Le Fleur and are affiliated with the Griqua National Conference. Although this “definite history” among modern Griqua might be the general perception, the Griqua today is as much a product of creolisation as their “normal” Coloured counterparts. And as research in previous chapters proved, the Griqua were at their origins a people of mixed descent.

It is imperative to acknowledge the cultural identity of the Griqua and the way they perform their identity as part of the broader Coloured experience within South Africa. The Griqua story of “encounter, creolization and entanglement” needs to be articulated to add to the larger, multi-faceted and contested South African identity. I propose that it is through hymnody that the Griqua narrative can be conveyed. John Street suggests that music can be “portrayed as a form of communication, as a way of articulating certain experiences and values” (2007: 324). Griqua music in the form of hymnody has certainly remained a consistent aspect of Griqua culture in the last century and continues to articulate certain historical and religious experiences and values within Griqua cultural identity.

## **4.2 Griqua Cultural Identity**

In a historical context there is sufficient evidence that demonstrates that the formative role of music was a critical factor in preventing the Griqua from extinction in difficult times and in cultivating a Griqua cultural identity.

In a memorandum drawn up by the magistrate of Kokstad in 1925 on the position of the Griqua in the area he concludes: "...I may say that in my opinion the "Griqua" as a separate class are doomed to extinction. This will be slow but sure. Melting away of race and dispersion set in many years ago. They will gradually become absorbed in the great coloured class which is ever on the increase in this country" (Schoeman, 2002:247)

Schoeman further explains how this situation of doom that is explained above turned around:

In spite of their uncompromising situation at the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the Kokstad Griquas succeeded in retaining their identity under the leadership of A.A.S. le Fleur (1867-1941), who had married the daughter of Adam "Muis" Kok, heir and successor to Adam Kok III, establishing their own religious body, the Griqua Independent Church, and finally acquiring a viable centre of national life at Kranshoek near Plettenberg Bay. Far from being 'doomed to extinction', as stated so confidently in 1925, they survived into the new South Africa, to be officially recognized as a 'separate ethnic community' in 1997. (2002:247)

The role that A.A.S. Le Fleur played in the history of the Griqua secured their survival into the "new South Africa". Without his efforts and industrious work on behalf of the Griqua, the words written by this unknown magistrate in Kokstad (1925) might have become prophetic. The new Griqua identity fostered by Le Fleur is what fuels the assertion of Griquaness in the past twenty years of a democratic South Africa. A case in point is the historic campaign by Griqua leaders for the return of the bodily remains of Saartjie Baartman or also referred to as Sarah Bartmann.

*I remember clearly a day in 1996 when a group of family members and other Griqua arrived at our house in Colesberg. They were all wearing white t-shirts with the words "Bring back Saartjie Baartman" printed in blue on them. They were on their way to Johannesburg to talk to government about bringing back the remains of this Khoisan woman. My aunt Shiela (Le Fleur) told me the story of*

*Saartjie and shared some insights about our Khoisan heritage that we should be proud of. (Personal observation before fieldwork began, 1996)*

The Griqua people affiliated with the Griqua National Conference of Kranshoek were concerned about marginalisation at the onset of the new democratic order in 1994. The reaction of the Kranshoek Griqua to their concerns is described by Besten as follows:

This inclined leaders of the Kranshoek based GNC to attempt to develop a national international profile and to highlight the position of the South African Khoe-San in international forums like the United Nations. The GNC saw Sarah (or Saartjie) Bartmann, whose remains (comprising her complete skeleton, bottled brains and genitalia, as well as the complete cast of her body) – were held at the Musee de l'Homme (Museum of Man) in France after her death around 1815, as a symbol that they could use to raise awareness about the South African Khoe-San, nationally and internationally. The GNC also saw Bartmann as a symbol that they could use in developing a national and international profile as the leading representative of the South African Khoe-San. (2006:330)

Sarah (Saartjie) Baartman became a symbol for the Griqua, and specifically for the Griqua National Conference (GNC) of Kranshoek, to raise awareness in regards to the Khoisan with them at the forefront of this struggle for recognition (Besten, 2006:275). In the end, much of the work done by the GNC was overlooked when the return of Saartjie Baartman's remains became a victory for different lobby-groups (Bestern, 2006:334-335). Most notably were the South African Government, women's rights organisations, and other Khoisan representatives.

In spite of these turn of events, the return of Saartjie Baartman signifies a change in the production of post-apartheid ethnic identities. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall describes this experience as follows:

Is it only a matter of unearthing that which the colonial experience buried and overlaid, bringing to light the hidden continuities it suppressed? Or is a quite different practice entailed - not the rediscovery but the production of identity. Not



an identity grounded in the archaeology, but in the re-telling of the past? We should not, for a moment, underestimate or neglect the importance of the act of imaginative rediscovery which this conception of a rediscovered, essential identity entails. (1990:224)

In the case of the Griqua it is indeed a production of identity as Hall proposes, but based on a rediscovery of the buried past. Just as Le Fleur based his political ideals on a Khoisan heritage, so the twenty-first century leaders identify with the Khoisan roots and attempt to re-tell their story and produce their own identity. The struggle for the leaders of today lies in government sanctioned authority. The marginalisation of Griqua and Khoisan in government were rejected by Anthony Le Fleur of the Knysna GNC during a conference in 1997 where he suggested “that the legacy of colonialism and apartheid” were to blame for government policy now “disqualifying Khoe-San from qualifying for a traditional authority system” (Besten, 2006:326).

Griqua identity serves as an example of a South African indigenous identity that has been constructed by the colonial experience, the apartheid experience and also the post-apartheid experience. Their culture speaks of a unique merging of Western and traditional African culture and becomes a South African culture in every sense of the word. It is through their music that they perform their identity on a constant basis. The definition of cultural identity helps put the assertion of Griqua identity through musical performance in perspective:

In order to define more precisely the meaning of the term ‘cultural identity’, one must take into consideration various elements that are its components, such as: simultaneous attachment of identity to an individual and to a group, understanding identity as a relationship with the other and other people, its historical nature and changeability, as well as the relativity of identity in relation to the social context and other identities. (Dusan, Sasa, and Imre, 2012:58).

Griqua identity, and the components that it consists of, is first and foremost grounded in their shared history and heritage going back from the time of Adam Kok I and later the legacy of A.A.S Le Fleur I. The Griqua community also base its identity in the common

religion of Le Fleur's Griqua Independent Church. It is in this religious context that hymnody comes to play a pivotal part. The position of music and hymns in the founding and sustaining of this church has been thoroughly highlighted in preceding chapters and it is necessary to explore the dynamics of music as a cultural expression in the formation of identity.

### **4.3 Performing identity**

Christine Lucia states in her introduction to the book *Music and Identity – Transformation and negotiation* that “identity is intimately connected to performance, since music as cultural expression only exists in and through performance” (2007:1). In light of Lucia's statement, it becomes clear in this thesis, through the documentation of my fieldwork and other research, that Griqua identity lies intrinsically within its musical identity and specifically the hymnody of these people. Song, both individual and communal, becomes the expressive action in which identity is shaped and grounded for the Griqua. Mary Robertson concludes in her research on South African music and identity that music “may serve multiple roles in the formation and articulation of identity” and one of them may be to “emphasise existing boundaries of group membership” (2004:137). It seems that individual and communal Griqua identity is connected to the performance of hymns.

The following narrative of Aunt Rosy from Colesberg attempts to illustrate how hymnody pertains to individual Griqua members.

*Arriving at the house of Aunt Rosy in Colesberg on a September morning in 2012 I asked her to tell me about her personal experience of lof (hymn singing). “It is part of everything I do” she explained. “If I clean the house or do the washing I am constantly singing” she mimicked the chores, she then leaned forward and said in a whisper: “Lof is my prayer”. (Personal communication, 25 September 2013)*



Fig.6 - Auntie Rosy Bruintjies from Colesberg and the author

The fact that the Griqua people perform their hymns on a daily basis is an indicator that the performance of hymns has become closely linked to their individual and collective identity. The performance of these hymns and other religious practices is something that has been ongoing since the time of the missionaries, reinforced with the Le Fleur dynasty, and also when government laws did not recognise the Griqua existence. Music functions as a means to perform the ethnic identity of Griqua people. If one performs these hymns, one is in fact aligning and identifying with the Griqua followers of Le Fleur.

David Coplan argues the following in this regard:

The notion of an ethnic musical identity involves the fashioning of a politics of culture in which self-identified groups employ forms and items of musical expression to embody, make virtual, and mobilise a potentially resistant social alignment and identification. The task of the anthropological researcher must then be to explore how musical strategies, embodied in styles, genres, items, and occasions of performance, in actuality work to perform ethnic identity. (2002:10)

The Griqua also relate to their music communally, and when singing together there is a unique sense of shared identity. As mentioned earlier, music in the form of singing was

the primary mobilising tool at the turn of the twentieth century used by A.A.S. Le Fleur I in his enactment to identity politics. Music is therefore also a heavy symbol which links the Griqua community's past to their present. Following the lines of Coplan's argument, the singing of hymns is a musical expression of the people who self-identify as Griqua. The collective experience of hymnody in a specific and unique Griqua style and genre serves as a means to embody the ethnic and cultural identity of Griqua people.

#### **4.4 The significance of hymnody**

The music of the Griqua tribe in South Africa is at this point in history almost exclusively of a religious nature. Hymns, for example, have become a part of the overall construction of Griqua identity. Although originally a Western musical tradition appropriated from missionaries, inherited hymnody became a critical part of their shared history and collective belief system. The Griqua people identify with these hymns on both an individual level as well as community level. Hymnody has thus become part of their social, religious, and "national" (ethnic) life.

Elsabé Kloppers explains that hymnody (and by extension, the study of hymns and their development) is an "essential part of the religious language and (self-) expression of most believers within the Christian religion. Although most believers would seldom recognise it as such; hymns are not only about religious and theological expression. Hymnody also forms an important part of the cultural identities, frames of (world) interpretation, ideologies, self-concepts, symbols, moral values and the collective cultural memory of believers within a nation, which means that Christians within all nations have certain hymnic and hymnological identities" (2007:181). Such an understanding of the role of hymnody makes for an effective argument when applied to missionary work among the Griqua and the use of hymnody in colonial and recent times.

In a recent study done on the role of hymns in Swedish local and religious identity, the researcher, Ingrid Åkesson (2012), uses the following argument to explain why the singing of hymns and identity are indeed connected:

I propose that one basic reason is that singing performance and song style are so intimately connected to issues of 1) individual identity – they are grounded in your body, 2) group and local identity – singing expresses shared history and experiences, and 3) religious identity – singers kept to their own interpretation of how to express faith. ([www.identityinsong.wp.hu.uu.nl](http://www.identityinsong.wp.hu.uu.nl))

The argument above is valid, especially when applied to the Griqua history. First, they were stripped of their existing culture and introduced to new non-indigenous ways of living through Christian teachings and hymns, which ultimately resulted into Westernisation. The missionaries transmitted these hymns orally and the Griqua people ultimately indigenized the Western hymns. The hymns today then serve as a means to express a shared history and experience.

Joanna Smolko writes about a similar cultural phenomenon in which music links the American past to the current identity: “In light of these new approaches to American history, music became a tangible link to the past, whether used to support national agendas, or to emphasize family, regional, or ethnic identities, identities often in conflict with the idealistic picture of a united American nation. The popular folk music revival emphasized music “of the people,” and idealized the rural lifestyle” (2009: 83). Hymnody in South Africa functions as a unique way of remembering and re-telling the past, but also, as in the case of the national anthem, a means to promote national agendas.

The following hypothesis by Marie Jorritsma in regards to music as a link with the past are contained in her study of music within a coloured community in the Karoo:

Traces of encounters between Khoisan, slaves, Xhosa (or in the case of the Griqua, Tswana and Basotho), colonist, and missionary in this music not only ensure the preservation of auditory history of this community, but also indicate a statement of defiance to the dominant power structures inherent in colonialism and apartheid. (2011: 62)

Jorritsma understands hymnody as a way for a community to archive their history and preserve their musical identity (2011:62). Griqua hymnody is a phenomenon that proves

to be a performance of identity and a unique retelling of Griqua history, and more importantly, in their own voice.

Lastly the performance (in this case of hymns) is not just about preservation of a culture or ethnicity, but it is also communicating the uniqueness, unity and purpose of the Griqua tribe. Street's suggestion, as cited earlier, that music can be "portrayed as a form of communication, as a way of articulating certain experiences and values" (2007:324) further implies that the hymns being used not only serve an inward purpose of establishing an ethnic identity among Griqua, but they also communicate a message to those outside of the Griqua group.

Another example of music as a form of in-out experience is what Lara Allen describes "that when, at mass rallies for instance, thousands of people sing an anthem, a very powerful sense of unity and belonging is created; the corollary, exclusion, is also unequivocal; the separation between those in and those out intensely felt" (Allen, 2004:9). The words of some of the hymns are also specifically focused on the ethnic identity of this group, using words such as *Kneg, Iof* and *Griekwa volk* that excludes the non-Griqua. In these hymns some of the religious beliefs regarding their ethnicity seem to surface. The belief exists that the Griqua are somehow chosen by God as His people like the biblical narrative of how God chose the Israelites as His people in the Old Testament. This belief forms a core part of Griqua religion. The performance of hymns for the Griqua ultimately creates the "powerful" and "intense" feelings as described by Lara Allen in the aforementioned citation.

Hymnody also forms the base for the mainstream creolised Coloured music traditions such as "Cape Jazz". The late Alex van Heerden, a Cape Jazz musician, claimed that "the compositions of everybody from Abdullah Ibrahim obviously...but also in the more contemporary...the music that we've played as Cape jazz. It's very influenced by church music and the harmonic complexities which come with that" (Martin, 2009:81). The influence of the Western hymn is evident in South African music, especially in the hybrid culture of Coloured music. Abdullah Ibrahim, a jazz composer and performer, is a leading composer who embodies in his music a certain Coloured voice, most notably with his now famous composition "Mannenberg". Ibrahim, a converted Muslim, returns

in his compositions to the hymns of his childhood and in the composition “Mamma,” Christine Lucia claims that the harmonies are firmly rooted in church hymnody (2002:132). Hymnody is not only the voice and identity of the Griqua alone, but extends to Black, White, and Coloured people and it is the basis of the national anthem which attempts to unite South Africa.

Lucia finds that the use of hymnody in Ibrahim’s “Mamma” creates a memory of church “and all its associations with family histories, traditions, community practices, congregational singing, rituals and symbols of all kinds” (2002:134). The hymns and its association with church then represent a memory of community identity; it represents the sound of childhood (Lucia, 2002:134). I propose that music, and indeed hymnody due to our missionary past, might be the common denominator between races and cultures in the “rainbow nation”.

The examples and arguments presented here regarding the nature of hymnody, illustrate how hymnody influences the collective identity of communities. The research of Jorritsma, Lucia and Martin provides a framework for the significance of hymnody within the South African context and supports the notion that Griqua hymnody may influence Griqua collective identity.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Although all South Africans became citizens of their country in 1994, Grant Farred argues that “Coloureds can only become full citizens if their ‘partiality’ is historicized, addressed, and recognized as both an articulation of difference and a desire for a reconfigured understanding of what it means to be a South African” (2001:176, 197). The partiality to which he refers is the Coloured experience of not being able to associate with either Black or White and being marginalised by both races. Farred also suggests that the Coloured community struggle to overcome their “history of marginality within the South Africa body politic” and that the ‘rainbow nation’ has not allowed Coloureds to “transcend particularity and difference” (2001:177). It is therefore essential to recognise Coloured identity as a unique experience in South African culture to

reconfigure South African identity. Just as Coloured and Griqua identities are forever intertwined so is their music. The research of Jorritsma suggests that Coloured music is for the most part embedded in hymnody, just like the Griqua music. In the musical practise of the Griqua people, traces can be found of a creolised history and the performing of their unique experience as South Africans.

The research into Griqua identity reveals a cultural identity that is telling of their history and reinventing of their current status as Khoisan descendants. During the Khoisan revivalism after the democratisation of South Africa, most Khoisan groups rejected the Coloured category in favour of Khoisan categories (Besten, 2006:321). Although Griqua cultural practises which rely heavily on the West and Christianity may not appear as traditional African practises in comparison to the culture of other indigenous South African tribes such as Xhosa or Zulu practices, it represents a South African culture. At conferences held between 1994 and 1998 where Khoisan aspirations were discussed a display of Khoisan culture were occasionally exhibited to affirm a contemporary Khoisan indigenous culture. During these displays Griqua choirs would also sing their hymns as a display of their culture (Besten, 2006:316). This is yet another illustration how the Griqua hymn tells the story of their past, it is also a means of reinventing their present and serves as an identity marker.

Music, then, represents a remarkable meeting point of the private and public realms, providing encounters of self-identity (this is who I am; this is who I'm not) with collective identity (this is who we are; this is who we're not). (Hesmondhalgh, 2008:329)

The singing of their hymns is the manner in which the Griqua perform a part of their collective identity. Their unique cultural identity is the product of colonialism, apartheid and even post-apartheid experiences. Hymnody as it occurs in Griqua culture serves not only as a tool in the collective cultural memory, but it forms an important part in the self-identity of group members. To declare that you are Griqua is to identify with certain cultural elements such as hymn singing.



The exact occurrences of Griqua hymnody performances in the lives of individuals are brought to light by ethnographic narratives in the subsequent chapter. The musical style and elements as well as the performance practice unearthed with these narratives will underscore the hymn as a marker of Griqua identity.

## Chapter 5

### The Griqua don't speak, they sing

I travelled to Kranshoek in the Southern Cape, the headquarters of the Griqua nation, on 31 December 2012. This was not just a normal visit, however. It fell on the date when many Griqua people travel to Kranshoek, more specifically to Robberg, a hill on which the first Le Fleur Paramount Chief (A.A.S. Le Fleur I, *Die Kneg*) is buried. This day marks an annual pilgrimage for the Griqua people to pay homage to the man who united the so-called "nation" and went on to found the Griqua Independent Church. It was also a chance for me to visit with a variety of members of my own family. and therefore my parents and grandmother came along. (I also need to disclose that I was fully aware that the presence of my family would only prove to be beneficial in gaining access to individual interviews and to collecting the data necessary.)

On arrival that afternoon we attended the flag-ceremony, but not after receiving a lecture from my aunt Elizabeth Le Fleur on the protocol and appropriate dress for such an occasion. We dressed in our Sunday best: jackets and ties for the men, long skirts and hats for the women.

The flag ceremony happens at the end of the day where the flag is lowered. It is a ceremonial event, but not utterly important to attend. It is mostly attended by those who are in the vicinity. On this day there were some leaders, members of the official choir, kitchen staff, and some of the elderly.

At this occasion we were initially welcomed, and then we watched with great interest the children marching towards the flagpole all dressed in their traditional clothes. The clothes were in fact quite ordinary clothes, nothing you would expect when the word "traditional" is used as a descriptor: the boys wore grey trousers with white shirts and the girls wore white dresses with a white headscarf. All of them wore a sash over the shoulders that featured stripes in the colours of the Griqua flag: blue, green, and red.

After a few general hymns were sung, the flag was brought down and the Griqua National anthem was sung. (Refer to track 1 on CD)



Fig.7 – Outside the Griqua Independent Church, Kranshoek

# Griekwa Volkslied

Unknown

God eeu-wig groot en goed Wij smee-kend U be-hoedt ons Va-der-land

Laat volk en Zou - we rein in liefd ver bon den

zijn O ze gen groot en klein met mil de hand.

English translation (author's translation)

*God eternal great and good*

*We plead, protect our Fatherland*

*May nation and sovereign stay in covenant*

*Oh bless great and small with Your hand.*

## 5.1 Definition of *Lof*

In order to position the importance of the musical practice of praising in Griqua religious performance, I now introduce the Griqua concept of *lof*. In previous chapters I simply referred to the singing of hymns, which it is indeed, but the Griqua themselves (Personal communication: Sammy Jansen and Rosy Brintjies) think that their music performance goes further than just singing hymns.

The word “lof” is a term used by the Griqua of Kranshoek to describe typical religious musical practise. *Lof* is an Afrikaans term that can be simply translated as “praise”.

There is, however, a distinction between the general understanding of “praise” and the Griqua conceptualization of “lof”. The Griqua use the term *lof* to distinguish between the stereotypical singing of hymns and singing as a way of being. *Lof* to the Griqua is an internal spiritual experience made external, which often transcends mere singing. The sounds of Griqua *lof* are similar in many ways to the singing of the typical Coloured congregation. The unique qualities of Griqua *lof* do not lie in merely the sound, however. Rather, it is in the context of the performance that the experience that *lof* provides and the emotions it evokes in both listener and the participant or performer are made manifest. When you stand in the midst of the performance of *lof* brought on by a congregation of devoted Griqua Christians, the singing seems to be never ending. In fact after forty-five minutes of singing it might seem as if there is no sign of fatigue or the slightest loss of enthusiasm as one song leads seamlessly into the next. The facial expressions on the faces of both young and old give the impression that the performance of *lof* is of no trivial matter. They are, as they believe, bringing *lof* to the God who chose the Griqua as his people (Landau, 2010:201).

## **5.2 Historical moments of *lof***

The concept and use of *lof* has become an important part of Griqua cultural and religious life only in the past century with the leadership of the first Le Fleur Paramount Chief or the *Kneg* as he is referred to. *Die Kneg* placed a high priority on *lof*, and throughout his life *lof* was always present and always performed with considerable spiritual significance.

The following moments in the work of *Die Kneg* stand out in regards to his view on *lof*: The *Kneg* was jailed in 1898 for apparently leading the Griqua in a rebellion against the ruling British Government in South Africa. While in prison he was almost killed by a falling rock. He heard a hymn being sung and knew that he was saved from the rock by God for a greater purpose. The Dutch text of the hymn was: “*Ewig duurt zijn teer erbarmen, Hij gedenk niet onze schuldt, Hij versorgt en dra onze armen met genade en geduldt*” [“His tender love lasts forever and He never thinks about our trespasses, He

provides for us with mercy and patience”]. He also delivered a prophecy to the Griqua people, his fellow inmates, and prison wardens that he would be released from prison at three o’clock in the afternoon of 03 April 1903. This prophecy came true and when he walked out of the prison, he asked for a moment and stood singing outside the prison gate the hymn “O God, mijn God, Gij aller vorsten Heer!” (Boezak, 2012). This hymn became known as the Covenant hymn, signifying the moment that the Griqua belief God promised that they are His chosen nation. The melody appears on the following page based on one of the Geneva psalms of Loys Bourgoeis. The Bourgoeis melody *Or peut bien dire Israel maintenant* as it appears as an Afrikaans psalm in the hymnal of the Dutch Reformed Church (*Lieboek van die Kerk*, 2002) has five distinct phrases. In the Griqua version the melody is only sung with four phrases, the third phrase being omitted. The Griqua did not learn this melody from a hymnbook, but it was orally transmitted from the time of *Die Kneg* and it came from Le Fleur himself. Le Fleur might have omitted the phrase himself in order for his words to fit this specific melody or a the phrase might have become lost in the oral transmission. The melody, however, is widely sung to several texts within the current Griqua Independent Church.

As mentioned earlier, *Die Kneg* travelled throughout South Africa accompanied by a choir and he put a significant emphasis on the formation of choirs in all the different congregations of the Griqua Independent Church. Choral festivals were also organised in which all Griqua choirs could take part during the past century in Griqua history.

The reason, according to the Griqua historian Boezak (2012), as to why Le Fleur decided to found a church movement is because he determined that a spiritual place was needed in which the Griqua could worship in their own culturally unique way (Boezak compiled history brochures for the Kranshoek GNC). Thus, Griqua praise performance or *lof* could flourish at the same time that the Griqua ideals were promoted.

# O God mijn God

Loys Bourgeois

O God mijn God Gij al ler vor sten Heer Ik zing ver heugd Uw  
7  
groo ten Naam ter eer. Ik zal den roem van U we Ma je steit  
13  
Ver hoog gen tot in d'eind looz eeu wig heid.

English translation (author's translation)

*O God, my God, You are the Lord of lords*

*I will sing with joy to honour Your great Name*

*The glory of Your majesty I will praise until the depths of eternity*

## **5.3 Praise as a collective experience**

### **5.3.1 Setting up meetings**

In my conversations with a variety of individuals who self-identify as Griqua, I attempted to establish, through questions, the role of hymn singing and its connection with identity for the individual and the community in Griqua religious performance. I found that such questions did not elicit response in formal interviews or in questionnaires. It was only in informal conversations that the most valuable information was shared with me. The informality (and intimacy) around a shared cup of tea, for example, tended to put everyone at ease, and slowly stories were exchanged instead of mere responses provided to me in response to my questions. This is why I tell the story of different individuals since this is the source of information that surfaced in our conversations.

### **5.3.2 Initial ideas on *lof***

After first experiencing the flag ceremony that I introduced at the opening of this chapter, I approached a number people and started to make appointments for interviews, or “drinking tea,” for the next day. I talked to three sisters with whom my grandmother grew up, and it was there beneath the flagpole and in front of the monument that they spoke about the concept of *lof*. The three sisters grew up in the town of Colesberg, located in the Karoo. One of them, Rosy Bruintjies, still lives there while her two elder sisters, Aunty Minah and Ousie Ting-Ting, has now settled in Kranshoek.

In the lively conversation, where the sisters would often talk at the same time and at a fast pace, I identified some ideas that were already shared concerning *lof*. “It’s something you can’t describe to another person, it has to be felt” Aunty Minah explained. Her sister Ousie (meaning “old sister”) Ting-Ting added: “When you sing, you feel it stirring inside. The more you *lof*, the stronger the feeling gets.” From what I could gather at that moment, induced by *lof*, such a feeling is ascribed to the Christian belief that the Holy Spirit works within a person in a supernatural way.

My Uncle Basie, an elder in the local community and also a member of the Le Fleur family, was also eager to talk to me about *lof*. He took me aside and whispered his thoughts on *lof* and how it should be understood, in a manner that made me



understood that this was a very serious matter to him: “You have to live inside the *lof*, you can’t just *lof* without believing it. *Lof* is faith,” he repeatedly told me.

### **5.3.3 Power of *lof***

There is a specific hymn that the *Kneg* used while on route through South Africa soliciting people to join the Griqua cause. The hymn, titled “*Come, o come, while Christ is calling,*” is still closely associated with the Griqua nation and it was sung during the service that I attended, as well as at Griqua homes that I visited. Uncle Basie conveyed to me that this hymn has been instrumental on many occasions where *lof* was considered to be the cause for miracles: “*Come, o come,* made people who were supposed to leave this world get up and be cured. You just have to believe the Lord is calling you and He will pick you up, even from your deathbed”

On separate occasions there were discussions of incidents of *lof* that called many to join the Griqua, highlighting the fact that *lof* was the force behind people working tirelessly for the Griqua cause over the century (personal communication, Rosy Bruintjies, December 2012). A woman (Janet Jansen) in a later conversation on New Year’s Day told me that she was a member of the Anglican Church (The Church of England) and lived in Cape Town, but she had visited Kranshoek a few times. During these visits the constant and passionate *lof* of the Griqua had made such an impression on her that she left the Anglican Church, moved to Kranshoek, and is now devoting her life to the Griqua cause.

During the preparation service in the hall that preceded the midnight gathering at the gravesite of the *Kneg*, the singing was lively and performed wholeheartedly with enthusiasm by the congregation of about a thousand people. The hall was filled to capacity, some people sitting outside listening to the service and joining the *lof*. The first part of the service was confined to *lof*. One song led into another with an individual (usually a tenor or soprano) giving the first few bars, and the congregation follows in four-part harmony.

In the sermon preached by a passionate minister, he asked the Griqua people “to bring *lof* with pure hearts” and “out of one mouth (united)” and only then would the Holy Spirit would be in their *lof*. The sermon was interrupted on numerous occasions by a member of the congregation singing the first line of a hymn and the

congregation standing up and introducing an expression of *lof*. I had often heard of this practise, but was surprised by the frequent occurrence and the endless enthusiasm with which it was introduced. The chosen hymn was triggered by phrases and ideas that the minister shared, and in order to emphasise these ideas, *lof* was added to the sermon.

I was confronted on numerous occasions by stories of the miracles *lof* can bring about when performed with “pure hearts” and in unity by the “*volk*”. Ousie Ting-Ting, for example, shared with me the story of how when the previous paramount chief had been ill, the entire community decided to go to his house and *lof*. They stood there in the pouring rain, singing for hours without end, only stopping for an occasional prayer. They left late that night, tired and wet, but united in their *lof* and prayers for the chief. The next morning the chief miraculously made a full recovery, many thought in response to the overwhelming expression of *lof*.



Fig.8 - Aunty Rosy and Ousie Ting-Ting – Two sisters

## Come o come (2)

Unknown

Come oh come while Christ is cal ling Lin ger not in path of sin Se ver

6  
ev ry tide that binds thee Ere thyheavn ly race be gin Cal ling now Cal ling now hear the

12  
Sa viour cal ling now. Cal ling now cal ling now hear the Sa viour cal ling

(Refer to track 2 on CD – Sung by the three sisters)

I was told on several occasions of the spiritual nature of *lof*, described by the Griqua as the power in and of *lof*. These spiritual encounters are what most people also attribute to why *lof* is still a binding factor of the Griqua people. I was now trying to establish a better understanding of how a community and individuals express their religion through music and claim to experience an encounter with the sacred or divine through *lof*.

Paul Cantz defines spirituality as something that “represents an intrinsically motivated need to seek out something greater than oneself, to seek out order in a seemingly chaotic world, and to assuage the existential angst that pesters the human condition” (2013: 70). Iris Yob asks the question: *Why is music a language of spirituality?* (2010:145). The question proposes a link between music and the spiritual experience of human beings. Yob argues that spirituality, music and religion are connected and come to the following conclusion: *If both music and religion are*

*manifestations of human spirituality, then it is not surprising that music and religion have often accompanied each other.*

It became apparent throughout the interviews I conducted that the Griqua believe that *lof* allows them to connect with God (that is, to have a spiritual encounter) and that this connectedness to the sacred or divine facilitates super-natural acts such as healing. Thus, music becomes the healing agent, healing mostly their spiritual ailments and, in special cases, the physical.

## **5.4 Personal experiences of *lof***

### **5.4.1 Profoundly personal**

Of the eight people interviewed during my initial field research in Kranshoek coupled with the many sermons I listened to by Griqua ministers from different parts of the country, there is a common thread in which *lof* can be understood as a profoundly personal experience dear to the hearts of the Griqua.

My Aunt Rachel, also a leader in the Griqua Counsel, says that *lof* is something she lives out on a daily basis. In her experience, it is something that keeps her calm in times of turmoil and strengthens her spirit. Another leader called Uncle Sammy, explained to me that he could sing even before he could talk. The *lof* assumed a major role in his upbringing and now his life as a whole. He goes further to say: “it fills your soul, unlike anything else.”



Fig.9 - Uncle Sammy of Kranshoek

The personal experience of *lof* is very real for many people, as was confirmed for me in this early field research. For example, each morning I woke up to hear my aunt and uncle singing hymns as they got dressed and prepared breakfast. The sounds of soft singing coming from the kitchen were in these days spent in Kranshoek an everyday occurrence. During numerous conversations with family and field colleagues there were moments when somebody would spontaneously begin to *lof* by singing single verse of a hymn due to its special personal meaning to them or to illustrate a point.

#### **5.4.2 There shall be joy in the morning**

An example of a tender moment of intimate praise in a family setting was documented when I visited the three sisters who first shared some of their stories and experiences in the beginning after the flag ceremony. While sitting around the kitchen table making general conversation, one sister, Aunty Minah, made the remark to my grandmother that she finds it difficult to accept that she is losing her sight in old age. Silence fell on the conversation and then one of the sisters started singing the first few bars of a hymn with the words, “There shall be joy in the morning.” The other sisters joined in. Aunty Minah, with tears in her eyes, joined in

last. The text of the hymn, encouraging the believer to keep the faith in the dark hours, was the answer to their sister's struggle with accepting her failing physical condition. This was a poignant example in which a Griqua family deals openly with emotions, not with conversation, but with music, singing hymns—*lof*.

During an earlier conversation in September 2012 in Colesberg, one of the same three sisters, Aunt Rosy, told me specifically how *lof* is an integral aspect of her everyday life. Aunt Rosy is known in her community as one of the “true” Griqua people in Colesberg and has been campaigning for the Griqua cause her whole life. She rises each morning with a song to thank the Lord for another day. She sings while she cleans her house, and if something is troubling her, she goes to her room to *lof* until the burden on her soul lifts. As I listened to her relay this to me I realised that the singing of hymns has come to aid and in some cases substitute for the oral role of prayer in the life of Aunt Rosy and in the everyday lives of countless other Griqua.

Both my Aunt Rachel Manuel and the secretary of the Griqua Council, Sammy Jansen, communicated to me that the tradition of *lof* was unique to the Griqua. For the Griqua it is not just a case of hymn singing, but rather a cultural tradition that they use to perform their identity into being on a daily basis. Ousie Ting-Ting went even further by telling me what *lof* meant to her. For Ting-Ting *lof* is a guide, a healing power, and consolation in pain and suffering and she confided in me that it meant *everything* to her.

On leaving Kranshoek in 2013 I was sent off with a hymn which I surmised was a favourite in Kranshoek since it was sung so many times by our family with the words (roughly translated): “Through His grace I will go forth on my life's path”. The words of the hymn and the solemn performance thereof seem to be an indication of how this community deal with the suffering in their lives, singing to God, rather than complaining. (Refer to track 3 on CD)

## **5.5 Griqua music**

### **5.5.1 Sounds of *lof***

My reference of Griqua sounds is from my teenage years where my Griqua family would sing on arrival and before departing after a visit to our home in Colesberg. I also remember the singing at the graveside of my grandfather. The family, joined by the some of the Griqua community of Colesberg, stood beside the grave and sang while we attempted to deal with our loss. At the time, I remember that the earthy sounds were soothing, comforting and, as near as I could discern at that time, sincere.

The Griqua hymns sung on all occasions during my initial fieldtrips and in all subsequent trips were always unaccompanied and sung in harmony. Where a full congregation was present there was always four-part harmony and when performed in more intimate family settings, the hymns are typically sung in several parts depending on the variety of voices available.

The singing seems to come naturally, without much effort and thought. There is no printed music, but instead, an oral tradition of learning music exists. Griqua people are clearly exposed to their hymn singing traditions from an early age. The assimilation of the music, words, and performance practice is thus a natural consequence. When you become a part of the community, by either joining the church or by inter-marriage, learning all the hymns becomes vital. It is, however, not a complicated task to learn the hymns if you spend enough time with the Griqua. In the days spent in Kranshoek, I found myself humming the melodies when I spent time on my own. Some melodies were in a familiar idiom while others provided more of a challenge. The frequency of the performance of hymns was ultimately what made them memorable, however.

### **5.5.2 Text and Melody**

The words of the hymns sung by the Griqua are either in Dutch, Afrikaans, or English. Some of the Dutch songs border linguistically on Afrikaans, while others rely on a style of Dutch that was spoken in South Africa in the late nineteenth century (according to an analysis made by professor Jaap Steyn, emeritus professor in

Afrikaans and Dutch at the University of the Free State, communicated via e-mail, 2012).

Many melodies are those sung by mainstream (Protestant) churches throughout the world, while others are more aligned with the Coloured musical idiom of South Africa. Several hymns are sung in such a unique manner that it sometimes prove to be a challenge to place the melody in a specific category. The melodies are for the most part fixed so that a Griqua from Colesberg and a Griqua of Kranshoek should in theory be able to sing together with ease. Forms of melodic improvisation occur in the performance context. The same melody can be used as a lively form of *lof* during a gathering and can be sung in a more intimate setting in the family. The phrasing would change and also the tempo. The intimate performance would require a slower tempo and therefore phrases that are shorter.

It is interesting to note that the same hymn text can have a variety of melodies to which it can be sung, and everyone seems to have a personal favourite tune. The tunes are not, however, considered to be alternatives, but rather there are times when the same hymn can be sung with six different melodies. Such variances in melody can thus change the mood and the phrasing of a text significantly. The most celebrated of this phenomenon are the countless melodies that exist to the text of Psalm 100. Some claim that there are more than one hundred melodies known to the Griqua. I include one audio example of this hymn that is highly associated with the Kranshoek Griqua. (Refer to Track 6 on CD) Another example is the hymn: "Daar is maar Een" ("There is but One"). In one version two verses are sung as one and in another version two lines from the original are sung as full verse repeating some word phrases.

All the texts and melodies are sung from memory and the people who grew up in a Griqua household testify that they were fed with these hymns from birth. Those who joined later "pick up" the most popular tunes fast, because of the frequency of *lof* within the community.



## Daar is maar een (First melody)

Johann Kruger

Daar is maar een uit al ler tal va n min nens waar dig heid

7

'tIs Je zus dien ek kie zen zal voor tijd en eeu wig heid

The first melody is written in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of lyrics, and the second staff contains the melody for the second line. The melody is simple and homophonic, using mostly quarter and eighth notes.

## Daar is maar een (Second melody)

Daar is maar een uit a ller tal va n min nens waar dig

7

heid 'tIs Je zus dien ek kie zen

II

zal voor tijd en eeu wig heid.

The second melody is also in G major and 4/4 time. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of lyrics, and the second and third staves contain the melody for the second line. The melody is simple and homophonic, using mostly quarter and eighth notes. The second staff begins with a fermata over the word 'heid'.

(Refer to track 4 on CD)

### 5.5.3 Performance practice

*On the way to the hall where we gather for an evening service the lively sounds from those already there greet us in the street. In the hall the choir sits in the middle. The women are dressed in long white dresses and white headscarves or hats and the men are wearing suits. There is no clapping of hands or dance, but a lot of movement can be observed. Bodies are swaying to and fro to the rhythm of the music. Some eyes are closed and some faces are contorted with concentration. (Personal fieldnote, 31 December 2012)*

The performance of hymns, or *lof* as I describe earlier in this chapter, is enacted in a solemn way and should not be compared to other charismatic styles of worship. There is, however, enough movement and animation in the *lof* that gives it a unique quality. The singing is never demure; rather it is performed boldly, vigorously, and mostly with conviction.

I observed at different gatherings and in the more intimate settings how most women would tilt their head and close their eyes while they *lof*. This could be attributed to the spiritual encounter *lof* is for the Griqua. The closed eyes can be seen as assisting in finding a connection with their God. That link between spirituality (feeling spiritually uplifted) and music that is described earlier in this chapter.

Later in the evening during the same service, the mood of the *lof* changed. Instead of the hearty singing of the early service, the *lof* performed now was of a more intense nature. The singing of the congregation was now hushed and when I looked back people were on their knees and “bringing *lof*” in a prayerful manner. It was after this that the minister called on the congregation to bring their cares, sickness, and problems to the Lord. A few came to the front for prayer by elders and other ministers.

The performance of *lof* is of course dependent on the individual or the make-up of the specific group. Not all incidents of performance happen with the same amount of commitment and fervour and some are a lot less solemn. The essence of this *lof* phenomenon is that it is still performed after almost a century, it happens regularly and it is still regarded as an essential part to being a Griqua.

## 5.6 Lof as identity formation

Out in the open air at the grave of A.A.S. Le Fleur I, on a windy New Year's Eve, I witnessed the Griqua people singing for hours – a testimony to their commitment to the cause and the faith. There is also a common belief among the Griqua that *lof* is something that not only keeps you connected to God, but also serves as the social glue that keeps the Griqua together. As such, *lof* both unites the Griqua, while simultaneously reaffirming their cause of being a united front, claiming special rights for the Griqua as the first peoples of South Africa.

The critical position of *lof* is further illustrated by the fact that the Paramount Chief has a “Guard Choir” in residence rather than the guards that typically surround “royals”. As mentioned earlier, the current Paramount Chief (Opperhoof) is Allen Le Fleur, the great-grandson of A.A.S Le Fleur I. The role of the Guard Choir is to protect the chief with their *lof*. They travel with him on all his visits to the different communities in South Africa. It is also protocol that they arrive before the Paramount Chief, in order to receive him publically with *lof*.

During the gathering at the grave site, mentioned above, this choir stood behind the Chief the entire time creating a strong visual image of bodyguards. They even walked behind him when he went up to the grave of the *Kneg* to lay a wreath on the grave. At the end of the ceremony it is traditional for the chief to slaughter a lamb to give thanks to God for the year passed. I witnessed this ceremony and also here the Guard Choir had a role to play. The choir surrounded the chief and were bringing *lof* while this ritual took place.

This tradition of a Guard Choir comes from the time when the first Le Fleur, the *Kneg*, walked through South Africa with the *roepkore* (calling choirs) who through their *lof* called people to the join the Griqua people. Therefore the role of a choir following the Paramount Chief and guarding him with *lof* is a historical extension of the ways in which the Griqua managed to survive the past hundred years in South Africa.

From the initial materials I gathered in Colesberg (September 2012) and Kranshoek (December 2012) the singing of hymns in Griqua communities is not only of great spiritual importance, but is also an essential part of being Griqua and thus integral to

Griqua identity formation. I have yet to encounter a committed Griqua person who does not view the act of *lof* as an integral act of the Griqua community. At social gatherings everyone typically sings together all the time. *Lof* is regarded as part of the communal or cultural identity of the Griqua.

South African ethnomusicologist Marie Jorritsma (2011) describes the singing of a Coloured community in the Karoo as follows: "... the community's sonic archive not only provides a sense of musical history but also potentially reveals new insights in the areas of oral history, community memory, and cultural identity." This is a similar phenomenon to what I experienced among the Griqua in Kranshoek. The music was first of all a social reality that provides insight not only into the community but also its cultural identity. In addition the *lof* of the Griqua serves as a reminder of their history and also a call to stay true to the Griqua cause.

If *lof* is put into a cultural and historical perspective, it can be argued that singing ultimately became a vehicle for Griqua politics. It is through the *lof* that people (outsiders and those who "gave up" their Griqua identity) were called to join and it is *lof* that sustained them as a group when they were marginalised. Today the *lof* is the reminder of their struggle, but also the strides they made in becoming recognised as an ethnic group in South Africa.

*Lof* in the mouth of the Griqua transcends religion, but connects to the awareness of being Griqua.

Musical material operates in a domain of non-verbal information, whether we believe it to be divorced from, or an essential part of, a social fabric of being. Its meanings may remain personal and unarticulated in any kind of verbal form, whether it be interpreted through listening, analysis or performance. (Lossef, 2011:50)

The religious music of the Griqua people provides meaning to their existence. It is as personal as it is indeed a social fabric of being and it conveys meaning to the performers and observer.

It is evident in every situation, collective and personal, of how pivotal *lof* is for the Griqua people. It is part of their everyday life, their faith, their ceremonial life. *Lof* is

not the only aspect of their identity formation as a people, but it seems to be a big part of that which makes Griqua people truly Griqua

## Chapter 6

### **(Re)member *lof* - The way forward**

*On one of my last visits to Kranshoek in August 2014 I was asked to address the congregation after the Sunday service to inform them about my research. The congregation of about a hundred members have left the church building singing a hymn and greeting each other with a handshake and are congregated outside while I explained my work. As I looked at the faces in front of me I realised that all ages present. The Sunday school children and the teenagers were present and quite a few young men and women in their twenties stood scattered among the aged faces of the senior citizens. I have observed the same make-up of a Griqua church service I attended in Colesberg earlier that year.*

*After I finished my short explanation, one of the leaders asked the volk to “bless” me with a hymn for my journey home. The choirmaster sang the first line in the open air: “Bewaar Uwe kinderen” [Protect Your children] and all followed him, singing this solemn hymn in a prayerful manner with heads bowed. I looked at the faces and saw everyone singing the Dutch words, young and old. As the voices disappeared in the open air I wondered how it happens that a fourteen year old in 2014 still knows the words and melody of an archaic Dutch hymn. (Personal fieldnote, 10 August 2014)*



Fig.10 - Church members leaving the church and greeting each other whilst singing and forming a circle until everyone has left the building – a Grika tradition

Fieldwork over the past three years (2012-2014) has brought some insights into the emotional lives of the Grika people. In this chapter I draw on my experiences and conversations with the Grika people in Kranshoek and Colesberg and attempt to discuss the challenges and viability of Grika music.

The research in this study has already shown that individual and communal Grika identity is profoundly influenced by hymnody. This chapter then explores not just the future of Grika hymnody as such, but the future and viability of the performance practice of Grika hymnody as part of an ethnic identity.

The term “lof,” as defined and illustrated in the preceding chapter, embodies all that Grika hymnody and the performance thereof represents. The questions this chapter asks is: Is *lof* adapting to changing times in the mouth of the youth or is it a fading phenomenon? To what extent is *lof* influencing the membership of the Grika Independent Church?

The ethnographic narratives in the previous chapters shows that music as part of identity becomes an agent by which the Grika define their ethnic identity, but it has also become a means of performing their history. As David Hesmondhalgh

comments that “music, then, represents a remarkable meeting point of the private and public realms, providing encounters of self-identity (this is who I am; this is who I’m not) with collective identity (this is who we are; this is who we’re not)” (2008:329).

The preceding chapters furthermore illustrated how music in Griqua culture facilitates a collective identity; it is therefore imperative to comprehend how modern day performance of the Griqua hymn negotiates between self-identity and collective identity. For this we need to look at the ways in which the Griqua use hymnody as a means to (re)member, but also adapt. I use the term (re)member, because hymnody is not just a means to remember, but also functions as a way of communicating to members inside and outside the Griqua structures. Gregory Barz uses the term (re)memoring when referring to both memories and social processes of engagement (2006:206). I use this peculiar way of defining this term in reference to Barz. The term (re)member suggests an understanding of both the terms remember and member, but also combining remembrance with members. In the case of the Griqua, the performance of memory through hymnody stands central (remembering), and through that performance, members are motivated to stay and new members are convinced to join the Griqua community. Hymnody then serves as a means to (re)member.

## **6.1 “New” *lof***

In October 2013 I attended a choir practise at the house of Aunty Rosy Bruintjies in Colesberg in the Northern Cape of South Africa. The choir practise in the Griqua Independent Church is not the typical church choir practise. In the Griqua community the entire congregation is the choir and this practise was an open invitation for one and all with the purpose of studying new hymns.

Aunty Rosy, a key source of information I introduced earlier in this study, explained to me beforehand that there is an attempt by the leadership of the church to broaden the scope of hymns among the Griqua people, but she knows all these “new” hymns already and is now trying to teach the rest of the congregation (*volk*) these hymns. The practise was attended by approximately fifteen people of the eighty-member



congregation. Among the attendees there were six young people under the age of twenty-five. Two of them were Aunty Rosy's daughters.

In the sitting room the "choir" formed two lines and sheets of paper were handed out with the hymn texts on them. After a short prayer by one of the ministers (*Leraars*) attending, Aunty Rosy just started them off singing the first line of each hymn and they followed her lead. Some they knew better than others, and there were hymns that Aunty Rosy classified as "too unknown – We'll get to them later". The well-known tunes were sung in four-part harmony almost immediately after the opening line; the lesser known ones were eventually sung in four parts after listening and humming along the first couple of verses. The accompanying parts were improvised for the most part on basic tonic, subdominant, and dominant chords with a peculiar use of a pedal point by the basses if they were uncertain of the harmonies.

No sheet music was used at this choir practise, also no sol-fa notation as I expected, although Aunty Rosy and some of the other members know how to read Tonic Sol-fa notation. Aunty Rosy and her two daughters, Abigail and Carmen, stood in close proximity to each other and took the lead in the singing of almost all the "new" hymns. It was clear that they were familiar with these hymns and all the members were closely following their lead. At times, Aunty Rosy would stop and correct certain inaccuracies in the melody line and some of the rhythms.

In a later conversation that week she told me that she and her children sing often at home and she taught them all these hymns since they were little. She told me the story of how as a young woman she bought herself a Sankey hymnal (*Sankey's Sacred Songs and Solos*) in Cape Town and when she returned to Colesberg, she and the rest of the family sang through that book for hours. She showed me the old and torn book with sol-fa notation. "All the new hymns they're trying to learn to the "volk" are actually old songs that got lost". (The term *volk* referring to the Griqua as a whole and their (mostly political) ideals as described in preceding chapters). (See page 21)

By the utilizing hymns of the past there is a desire to expand and adapt their *lof* without losing the core meaning and style of the Griqua hymn. The musical style does not change, the sounds stay the same, but the "new music" becomes a gesture of the Griqua who is willing to adapt, but are still bound to tradition. This gesture of

presenting the old music as new is an indication that the current Griqua leadership are set on abiding by the tradition of lof as set out by the Kneg. It also testifies to the sacredness of this tradition within the modern Griqua community.

The next day I visited one of the Griqua leaders in Colesberg, Aunty Annetjie, and she gave me a CD with these new hymns that were made especially with the youth in mind. While listening to it on my way home, I was surprised to find that a great number of hymns on the CD were known to me. These “new” hymns were indeed “old” favourites in other mainstream churches. I now needed to trace the origins of commonly known hymns that were being recovered. All evidence pointed to the Sankey hymnal Aunty Rosie mentioned.

COME OH COME

" I have called thee by thy name ; thou art mine" Isa. xliii - I  
 n - G.  
 .f | r :- .de:r .m | d :s, :d .d | d :- .t,:d .l, | s, :- .  
 Come, oh come, while Christ is call-ing, In-ger not in paths of sin;  
 .l, | f, :- .m,:f,s, | m, :m, :s,.se, | l, :-se,:l,.f, | m, :- .  
 Come, oh come, while Christ is plead-ing, Oh what love His tones con-vey.  
 .d | t, :- .le,:t,.t, | d :d :d .d | d :- .r :d .d | d :- .  
 Come, oh come, de-lay no long-er, For th'ac-cept-ed time is now.  
 .d, | s, :- .s,:s,.s, | d, :d, :m,.m, | f, :- .f,:f,.f, | d, :- .

.f | r :- .de:r .m | d :s, :d .t, | l,.l,:f :t, | d :- .  
 Ev-ery - ry tie that binds you, And the heav'nly race be-gin.  
 .l, | f, :- .m,:f,s, | m, :m, :s,.s, | f,.f,:l, :f, | m, :- .  
 Will you slight His proffer'd mer-cy, Will you lon-ger from Him stray.  
 .d | t, :- .le,:t,.t, | d :d :d .d | d .d :r :r | d :- .  
 Yield, oh, yield yourself to Je-sus, And be-fore His scep-tre bow.  
 .d, | s, :- .s,:s,.s, | d, :d, :m,.m, | f,.f,:r, :s, | d, :- .

Chorus  
 .l | f : - :f .s | m : - :m .m | r .m :f :s | m : -  
 calling now, calling now . Hear the Saviour call-ing now.  
 .f | r : - :r .t, | d :d :d .d | t, .d :t, :t, | d : -  
 s .s :s : s .s :s :s .s :s .s :s :s  
 calling now calling now, Hear the Saviour calling, calling now  
 s, .s, :s, : d .d :d :d .d :d f .m :r :s, :d .d :d

.l | f : - :f .s | m : - :m .m | r .m :f :t, | d  
 calling now, calling now, Hear the Saviour calling now.  
 .f | r : - :r .t, | d :d :d .d | l, .l, :l, :s, .f, | m, :  
 s .s :s : s .s :s :s .s :s f .de:r :r | d  
 calling now, calling now, Hear the Saviour call-ing now.  
 s, .s, :s, : d .d :d :d .d :d f, .m, :r, :s, | d,

Fig.11 - An example of a hymn in Tonic Sol-fa notation from Aunty Rosy's Sankey hymnal

“The Sankey,” as it is popularly known in Coloured communities, is a collection of popular hymns from America and original hymns written by Ira D. Sankey (1840-1908). This became a highly popular hymnal in the late eighteenth century until deep into the twentieth century and “Sankey’s music had an enthusiastic reception in South Africa” (Olwage, 2006:14). South African musicologist Grant Olwage argues that the singing of Sankey’s hymns contributed to “a history of musical Christianizing that shaped the world of Victorian evangelism” (2010:237).

The hymnals of Sankey were especially widespread among Coloured people in South Africa during most of the twentieth century. The popularity of this hymnal was due to the fact that it was available in tonic sol-fa, something that was taught in (then missionary) schools and was a skill among most educated Coloured and Black people. The melodies in the book are also easily memorable and this contributed to the success of this collection as the following citation suggests:

English and American missionaries preferred Sankey hymns, also translated into African languages, which were used systematically and with great success as a missionary tool all over the world. These unassuming hymns, usually in a major key with simple, repetitive rhythmic patterns, served to spread the gospel in American churches and missions. (Berger, 2013: 478)

Many of the English hymns sung today by the Griqua people have their origin from the Sankey hymnal, and although only a few people own this hymnal today, the music is still widely sung. Hymns from the Sankey were taught to choirs and congregations across denominations. There are certain Sankey funeral hymns that are well known in almost all the Coloured communities in South Africa. I observed this while attending a funeral in Mamre (a Moravian Mission Station) in the Western Cape. There were mourners from all over the country and most of us did not know the Moravian hymns, but when one of the hymns from the Sankey collection, “No night there,” was sung, it was noticeable how everyone, including me, could join in the hymn.

In a number of conversations, to Griqua and Coloured people, the fondness the Coloured community has for the Griqua singing were described. Aunt Bokkie of Colesberg relayed the following to me:

The people really like the Griqua singing. You know Aunty Marta Pennels was a Methodist, but she said that when she dies, she wants the Griqua to sing at her funeral. The Griqua's singing was something special to her. When she died her family asked if the Griqua people could sing and we did it for her, because we all knew how much she loved the singing of the Griqua. (Personal communication: September 2013).

This story and numerous others like it lead me to believe that some members of the Coloured community are captivated by the singing of the Griqua. I connect this fondness Griqua music evokes to the Griqua's use of Sankey hymns. The melodies of Sankey are for the Coloured communities today a reminder of a long gone past. In mainstream Coloured churches these hymns have become archaic and outdated, but many people grew up hearing these hymns. So the singing of the Griqua then represents a part of the childhood memories, knowing or not. This linking of music with memory refer to the earlier discussion of hymns as a representation of childhood as experienced and utilised by Abdullah Ibrahim as described in Chapter 4 (see page 49).

In the light of the observations above the question arises as to how long will post-modern youth be satisfied with singing music that is labelled "archaic and outdated" by today's popular standards. In the subsequent section interviews with some of the Griqua youth and observations made during fieldwork attempts to provide answers to the youth's stance towards Griqua *lof*.

I salvaged a later edition of the Sankey in staff notation and compared the melodies I recorded during fieldwork with melodies published by Sankey. Quite a few could be traced back to the hymnal, but there are some cases where the original melody was altered through years of oral transmission. I include one of the original Sankey hymns here. The hymn that I chose to include is a common part of Griqua *lof* and one that I heard during the course of my fieldwork. The hymn is called "Come believing!" and is sung during gatherings with much enjoyment. The rhythms as it appears in the printed version are slightly adapted and the four part harmony used in the hymnal is somewhat altered. However, "Come believing!" does not include the usual quasi call-and-response method that is incorporated into the less structured and more popular hymns. The performance practice of most hymns is open to

improvisation and altered according to the situation, the geographical area and the number of voices available.

## No. 514. Come Believing!

"Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."—JOHN vi. 37.

EL NATHAN.

J. McGRANAHAN.

1. Once a - gain the Gos - pel mes - sage, From the Sa - viour you have heard ;  
 2. Ma - ny sum - mers you have was - ted, Ri - pened har - vests you have seen ;  
 3. Je - sus for your choice is wait - ing ; Tar - ry not : at once de - cide !  
 4. Cease of fit - ness to be think - ing ; Do not lon - ger try to feel ;  
 5. Let your will to God be giv - en, Trust in Christ's a - to - ning blood ;

1. Will you heed the in - vi - ta - tion ? Will you turn and seek the Lord ?  
 2. Win - ter snows by Spring have melt - ed, Yet you lin - ger in your sin.  
 3. While the Spi - rit now is stri - ving, Yield, and seek the Sa - viour's side.  
 4. It is *trust - ing*, and not *feel - ing*, That will give the Spi - rit's seal.  
 5. Look to Je - sus now in hea - ven, Rest on His un - chang - ing word.

CHORUS.

Come be - liev - ing ! come be - liev - ing ! Come to Je - sus ! look and live !  
 come ! come ! look ! oh, look and live !  
 look ! oh, look and live !

Come be - liev - ing ! come be - liev - ing ! Come to Je - sus ! look and live !  
 come ! come !

Fig.12 – The Sankey hymn “Come Believing”

## 6.2 Griqua youth and Griqua hymnody

The participation of the youth in church activities was a matter of concern to many of the Griqua people I spoke to during fieldwork. According to Van der Merwe et al. (2013:1) this seems to be a global problem in all church denominations. The Griqua youth now live in a different South Africa than previous generations. They do not experience the same oppression and marginalisation that their ancestors experienced during colonisation and Apartheid and being bombarded with all the technological advances of the twenty-first century. All of this may contribute to the perceived waning interest of the youth in Griqua affairs. Fieldnotes assist to shed light on the relation of the Griqua youth to their heritage of hymnody and their utilising thereof.

Uncle Sammy, who I mentioned previously, in Kranshoek and Aunty Rosy in Colesberg blames the parents for the youth's lack of interest in Griqua affairs. They seem to think that Griqua children and teenagers are not informed enough about the history of their people and what it means to be a Griqua. This lack of knowledge and interest is also true for *lof*. In tales told by some of the "true" Griqua people (people who grew up as Griqua) they spoke of a time where *lof* was an important and vital part of every Griqua household. Freek Louw of Colesberg conveyed to me how his father use to get up in the morning and started singing, not just singing, but *lof*. My observations and later conversations with the youth showed quite the opposite of the fears expressed by the older members.

During my two visits to Kranshoek on New Year's Eve at the graveside of the *Kneg* I noticed quite a number of young people. They were not just onlookers, but participated in all the events and they "brought *lof*" in a convincing manner. On a more personal level I also witnessed teenagers in my Le Fleur family busy with *lof* while moving around the house. I can only derive that these are the young people who grow up with a sense of what "Griquaness" entails and that *lof* played a part in their identity formation. This however, needed more exploring and research.

The concern over the disengaged youth is in fact on a much larger scale than the few elders I spoke to, it has also reached the leadership of the Griqua and more

specific the Griqua National Conference. It was therefore announced on New Year's Eve 2013 that 2014 would be the year that efforts will be made to focus on the youth of the Griqua community. I followed up on this in August 2014 and learned about a youth camp being organised involving all the Griqua youth groups across South Africa in an attempt to engage the youth in church and *volk* affairs. I suspected that *lof* would be a major part of this gathering, as it is of any Griqua ceremony, but mostly *lof* in the traditional sense.

The hymnodist, Elsabe Kloppers, discusses in one of her papers the balance between the traditional and the modern in hymnody. She mentions that the realities of generations change and that hymns should also become a reflection of this (2003:203). Marie Jorritsma also give accounts of how young people in a Coloured community do not want to sing the old hymns anymore, but rather have an affinity to the "*koortjies*" (choruses) (2011:96;101). My experience as an organist in a student congregation (DRC Student Church, Bloemfontein) also made me aware that few young people seem to know the tunes of traditional hymns. It is certain that music in the church affects youth attendance and participation (Van der Merwe et al., 2013:2).

Taking these current South African experiences into consideration, the Griqua youth seem to be more traditional. They are present and even active in matters of church and *volk*, although it is not in the great numbers that the leadership would like. And the attempt, mentioned earlier, launched to "modernise" the *lof*, is, as it seems now, not a change of the music, but rather a reintroduction of the old.

I observed two further reasons that seem to be a reason for the "loss" of the Griqua youth where music or *lof* is concerned. The first reason may be attributed to the use of Dutch in some hymns, something that is not in the frame of reference of an Afrikaans speaking fourteen year old today. Although the two languages are closely related and Afrikaans was born out of Dutch, the Dutch might sound "strange" to some young Afrikaans speakers within the Coloured community as was mentioned in conversations with the Griqua youth and some of the leaders. The national leader for Music and Culture of the Griqua National Conference mentioned in a conversation in December 2013 that the young people cannot relate to the Dutch lyrics and this is a problem for the leadership because this is part of their heritage (personal communication). I found that the older generation treasured the Dutch and were in



fact proud of these exclusive Griqua hymns. A second, maybe less obvious, observation was that the lack of musical instruments in the Griqua community may prove to estrange the youth. The church does not allow any form of instrumental music and all singing is always done a cappella. During my time spent in Kranshoek in December 2013 I learned of a project in the village to teach children to play musical instruments. This is something nearly everyone in the conversation sounded positive about, but unfortunately this is not allowed in the Griqua church.

The young people of the Griqua community have surely come into contact with the modern gospel music of the evangelical churches. I have found instances of this music in conversations over the past few years. Janet Jansen once told of how the teenage boys wanted to start a singing ensemble and when they were all present she asked them to sing the *koortjie* [chorus] “He never failed me yet”. She wanted to see if they had a “*lof* spirit” and when she saw they understood what they were singing, this endeavour got her blessing (personal communication: January 2013). This proves that there is definitely knowledge of modern gospel music. The Coloured spiritual music, *koortjies*, is known, but not used by the Griqua church. The *koortjies* in other Coloured churches are seen as the more progressive church music as opposed to traditional hymns and by singing *koortjies* churches hope to attract the normally disengaged youth.

During my visit in August 2014 in Kranshoek, I had interviews with some of the young adults in the community. These young men and women were fervent and proud members of the Griqua and they explained to me that *lof* was an important part of their lives. They did not have a problem with the Dutch hymns or the fact that there are no instruments allowed in the church. They also had no desire to incorporate modern gospel music in their church and as part of their worship. One young man explained that he found the way Griqua do things “*baie lieflik*” (very lovely). It seemed to me that *lof* were also part of their everyday lives, like it is for the older members. A teenage girl conveyed that when her academic work in school get too much she stops and sings a hymn to ask God for help. From the multitude of narratives of personal encounters of *lof* I can determine that they grew up with the hymns of the Griqua and it seems that *lof* is still a part of their identity as a new Griqua generation.



Fig.13 - Members of the Griqua youth standing in front of the Griqua flag

(Refer to track 5 on CD to hear these members *lof*)

The question of the youth's involvement in Griqua life and religion will not only depend on guidance from the leadership, but also how the elements of Griqua identity, such as *lof*, will persist in the lives of these young men and women.

The *lof* of the Griqua people has been a long time tool in encouraging people to join and to stay with the Griqua community. There is hope from the community that the children and young people who grew up with *lof* and know all those hymns by heart will be the ones who will stay faithful to their community.

### **6.3 To (re)member**

For the Griqua followers of Le Fleur, membership to the Griqua Independent Church implies more than just religious affiliation. If one becomes a member of the church, one naturally become part of the Griqua people. It is an adoption of Griqua culture and traditions and an allegiance to the "Griqua Royal Household" and the structures that govern the Griqua people (Griqua National Conference). An adoption of Griqua culture implies adopting *lof*, as this is one of the key traditions of the Griqua. Thus, if you become a member, you must remember the Griqua past through the performance of *lof*. *Lof* also serves as a way to remember the political ideals of the Griqua. This leads to the use of the term (re)member that implies that *lof* leads to

both becoming a member and a means to remember and furthermore how those who leave the GIC, come back to become a member again and thus (RE)-member as a result of the *lof*.

I was curious as to what part *lof* played to members who “become” Griqua. Is it perhaps just part of the package or is it more substantial than that? The interviews display a range of members who have quite different reasons for being part of the Griqua. Some who were total outsiders and attracted to the culture and others who grew up in the Griqua culture, but for some reason left and ultimately decided to return to “their” people.

Annetjie McKay was one of the leaders of the Griqua community in Colesberg. I had heard from my grandmother that Annetjie is not a “true” Griqua, but became one by joining the church and she acquired a leadership position. I decided to find out more about Annetjie and her story.

In her sitting room one evening Annetjie explained to me how her story as a Griqua began: “I initially belonged to the then Dutch Reformed Mission Church, but because of internal conflict, I started exploring other avenues. You know how it is with these things” she said leaning back on her sofa (Personal communication: September 2013). Her contact with the Griqua started as a visit one Sunday, as she had done with all the other church denominations in the Coloured community. The visits became more frequent and she confesses that she started to rather enjoy the Griqua church. She explained to me over coffee that “Their enthusiastic singing, the *lof*, attracted me, but also their devotion to being part of the Griqua people.”

The role of music as a way of attracting has been discussed in this study already. It is however a recurring theme that characterise not only the work of *Die Kneg*, but also of the Griqua in the twenty-first century.

The new members who have found a home in the Griqua Independent Church also become members of the Griqua National Conference. This implicates music in the political life of the Griqua as the GNC is the vessel by which the Griqua people of Kranshoek negotiate a place for them in the South African political sphere.

On one of my visits to Colesberg I visited the house of Freek Louw, someone who (re)membered. We sat under a tree outside his house and talked about his life

experiences as a member of the Griqua. He grew up in a staunch Griqua household. His father was “a man of *lof*” who used to start his day with singing an array of hymns until they all eventually woke up. As a young man he decided to leave the Griqua church and join an evangelical church. Looking to the ground he goes on to tell of his spiritual journey and how he eventually could not be in that church anymore, because “my heart longed for the *lof* of the Griqua”. He has now moved back the Griqua Independent Church and (RE)membered. He is currently a lay-minister for the congregation in Colesberg.

Freek’s story serves as an example of how music formed part of his self-identity and part of his ethnic identity as a Griqua. It was the hymns, the singing and the distinctive manner of *lof* that eventually urged him to come back. There was a (re)membering of the past and because of that he (RE)membered. The music, that initially attracts outsiders, is the agent that encourages the Griqua to come back to being Griqua. What happened to Freek is what the elders in the Griqua community hope will happen to the current youth who grow up in Griqua households where *lof* still plays a necessary role and forms part of self- and collective identity.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

At the epicentre of Griqua life in Kranshoek, there is still a strong connection to Griqua history and tradition, but life has changed since the time of the Kneg and certain adaptations were necessary to the traditions instilled by the Kneg. The element of their tradition that has largely remained the same is the *lof*. In the same way Le Fleur saw *lof* as “something with great spiritual power,” it is still regarded and used as such by most Griqua followers of Le Fleur (personal communication: Jansen, 2014). The same hymns are sung and some are still sung in the Dutch vernacular of the early twentieth century. The soundscape of Griqua hymnody have, by all accounts, stayed the same producing a unique and recognisable “Griqua sound”. This is the reason why it is vehemently promoted by leaders and elders in the community. After numerous conversations (Uncle Basie, Adriaan Toontjies and Ousie Ting-Ting) I have come to the conclusion that there is an unspoken fear that if the *lof* is lost, the Griqua will be lost. All research points to *lof* as a marker of Griqua identity in a more complex manner that surpasses the spiritual and emotional lives of individuals, but enters the political life of the Griqua as a community. *Lof* was part of

the Le Fleur reforming process and remained a vital part of Griqua life throughout the twentieth century during apartheid and post-apartheid marginalisation. *Lof* is thus one of the corner stones of the Le Fleur Griqua and this makes it integral in the future of the Griqua in South Africa.

The efforts made by the Griqua leaders to preserve the *lof* are indeed efforts in the preserving of Griqua culture. Through distributing CD's with hymns for the children and youth, the GNC attempts to preserve the future of the Griqua through *lof*. The music recorded on the CD's still contains Dutch and a few of the hymns from the Sankey hymnbooks and the field research has shown that these are indeed the hymns sung by the Griqua youth today from the choir practise in Colesberg to four young people in a conference room in Kranshoek.

There may be grounds for fear that the Griqua youth may become disengaged, but I suspect that there is enough evidence to put these fears to rest. The number of youth attending Griqua gatherings and church services paints a picture of young people still willing to relate to the beliefs of their elders. The use of *lof* in the traditional Griqua way, both communal and individual, still rings true for the young men and woman who self-identify as Griqua. And as many of them confessed over the three years: they are still proud of being Griqua.

From some case studies mentioned above it seems that *lof* is still an agent in "recruiting" members and even "calling them back". The narratives of *lof* as a unique factor in the formation and sustaining of the Griqua serves as confirmation that *lof* forms an integral part of Griqua cultural identity and that it will remain to do so in the future. *Lof* will indeed (re)member.

The narratives provide insight into the self-identity of members who self-identify as Griqua. It demonstrates how hymnody relates to individual members. The performance of hymns creates notions of place and space as suggested by Stokes (1997). For Freek and Rosy Griqua hymnody performance transports them to their own past and that of the "volk". For young members it creates a sense of pride in the past of their people, hymnody thus creates a sense of belonging to a broader Griqua community. The same hymns create different meanings to each individual and to the different generations. Like the comment of Gerrit Jordaan as earlier cited suggests that although hymn singing is a "very personal" experience, it also remains a

“communal form of expression” (Jordaan, 2012:2). The younger generation brings a new interpretation of Griqua *lof*. Although the hymns remain the same, the personal experience of this generation will result in a new culture of *lof*. The performance practice of Griqua hymnody will, for most active members of the Griqua community, remain the “sonic expression” of their experience as a community in South Africa (Coplan, 2002:11).

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

Research for the present study started at a much earlier stage than the three years spent officially researching this topic. I have long been interested in Griqua history, culture, and their singing since I was a teenager. Griqua family and friends have over the years always been eager to answer my constant questions regarding this subject. It was only at a funeral in Kranshoek in 2009 that the possibility for this topic as a graduate-level project took shape. The constant singing by the Griqua people during that weekend in 2009 stayed with me and led to further investigation regarding Griqua hymnody and, more specifically, the effect it has on the people who perform it.

As stated in the introduction, this thesis initially set out to answer two main questions:

1. What is (1) the general nature and (2) specific aspects of Griqua hymnody that occur within the Griqua Independent Church of Le Fleur that are unique to the Griqua people?
2. To what extent does Griqua hymnody influence and shape the individual and communal identity of this specific group of Griqua people?

The methodology for the study followed the central tenets of ethnomusicology and anthropology in which the technique of participatory observation is employed. The ethnographic narratives ultimately lead to what anthropologist David B. Coplan describes as an “understanding of the emotional and imaginative responses of people to the sonic expression of human experience and sociability” (2002:11). For me, fieldwork among the Griqua community proved that the “sonic expression of human experience” for the Griqua followers of Le Fleur occurred within the contexts of the hymns they sing.

To provide sufficient insight into the two questions raised at the outset of the research, a presentation of the Griqua as a people was necessary. The hymnodic practises of the Griqua cannot be studied without knowledge of the group’s history

as this influence Griqua hymnody in a profound manner. Thus, a history of the origins of the Griqua tribe and their development under the constraints of colonisation and apartheid was presented.

The historical accounts of Ross, Besten, Schoeman and other historians introduced in Chapter Two serve as a clear demonstration of the ways in which Christianity and Westernisation erased or veiled the traditional practises of the indigenous Khoisan tribes. It is imperative to understand that the Griqua under the leadership of Adam Kok I was heterogenous; they were a group with an assortment of cultural practises, and according to mission accounts the assimilation of Western culture were less complicated than that of the more homogenous tribes. It is by means of the mission hymn that the Griqua reinvented their cultural identity. Hymns that were used by missionaries to draw the attention of tribes were later utilised by converts to demonstrate their acceptance of Christianity and their submission to Western culture. Hymnody, in this instance, has become a way of communicating the truths of identity and culture.

The heterogenous nature of the Griqua persisted to modern times and similar to the followers of Adam Kok I, the Griqua today are also an amalgamation of different people of mixed descent. The reformed Griqua of the twentieth century under the leadership of A.A.S. Le Fleur are in most cases not descended from the Kok captaincies, but nevertheless newly self-identify as Griqua. Their heritage, identity, and culture are a reinvention of Griqua culture based on the values and ideology of the later Le Fleur. A.A.S Le Fleur's importance for this study is not only in his position as a religious and political leader, but also in the very means he managed to establish his leadership and reach out to and attract a larger following; most notably in his use of music that led to the hymn serving as one of the markers of modern day Le Fleur Griqua identity.

Although no evidence exists that could highlight any similarities between the original Griqua mission hymnody of the nineteenth century and their present-day hymnodic practice, a comparison with the missionary utilization of music and the incorporation of music in the reform work of Le Fleur can be drawn. The mission hymn, according to historical accounts, was used to entice and convert the non-Christian and to teach fundamental truths about Christianity. With his *roepkore* Le Fleur utilized the music



of these choirs to attract the attention of ordinary Coloureds around South Africa. He placed a significant degree of value on singing and encouraged it in the Griqua Independent Church as a vital part of Griqua religion (Besten, 2006:158).

The research on historical aspects of Griqua hymnody underscores and depicts the position of hymnody within the modern-day Griqua Independent Church. This church of Le Fleur is the agent that ensures the contemporary survival and preservation of Griqua hymnody. The performance of hymns here and in the personal lives of members is not only for religious purposes, but links the past with the present and thus contributes to the Le Fleur vision of a Griqua ethnic identity.

Furthermore, the complexity of racial and ethnic identities in South Africa today and the performing of these identities compels the researcher to position the Griqua within this terrain. The apartheid designations of race influenced the position of the Griqua community and added them to the Coloured category. Besten notes that “although the association between Griqua identity and the Coloured identity category became reinforced officially during apartheid, the two categories coexisted ambivalently in the self-identity of many Griqua” (2006:346). This ambivalence gave me the impetus to investigate the recognition of Coloured identity as a unique experience in South African culture to reconfigure post-apartheid South African identity. The research on Coloured identity by leading academics in this field such as Mohammed Adhikari and Zimitri Erasmus offers insight into the complexity of this multi-faceted and often ambivalent phenomenon in post-apartheid South Africa. Whilst Coloured and Griqua identities are forever intertwined, so is their music. The research of Marie Jorritsma suggests that Coloured music is for the most part embedded in hymnody, similarly so the Griqua music. In the musical practise of the Griqua people, traces can be found of a creolised history and the performing of their unique experience as South Africans.

The singing of their hymns is the manner in which the Griqua perform a part of their collective identity. Their unique cultural identity is the product of colonialism, apartheid and even post-apartheid experiences. Hymnody as it occurs in Griqua culture serves not only as a tool in the collective cultural memory, but it forms an essential part in the self-identity of group members. To declare that you are Griqua is to identify with certain cultural elements such as hymn singing.

By means of ethnographic narratives, the research for this thesis has provided accounts of the general nature of Griqua hymnody in a personal and communal setting. The term “lof” was introduced as it is used by the people themselves to describe the performance practice of Griqua hymnody. It became evident in these narratives that the religious music of the Griqua people provides meaning to their existence. To *lof* is as personal as it is indeed a social fabric of being, and it conveys deep cultural meaning to the performers and observer. It is evident in every situation, collective and personal, of how pivotal and intimate *lof* is for the Griqua people. Numerous interviews and observations over the course of three years provide insight into the *lof* phenomenon and portray it as part of their everyday life, their faith, their ceremonial life. *Lof* is not the only aspect of their identity formation as a people, but it seems to be a significant part of that which makes Griqua people truly Griqua.

The soundscape of Griqua hymnody has, by all accounts, stayed the same producing a unique and recognisable “Griqua sound”. This, together with the unique performance practice, is the reason why it is strongly promoted and supported by leaders and elders in the community. I would go so far as to say that there is an unspoken fear that if the *lof* is lost, the Griqua will be lost. All research points to *lof* as a marker of Griqua identity in a more complex manner that surpasses the spiritual and emotional lives of individuals, but enters the political life of the Griqua as a community. *Lof* was part of the Le Fleur reformation process and remained a vital part of Griqua life throughout the twentieth century during both the apartheid and post-apartheid marginalisation. *Lof* is thus one of the cornerstones of the Le Fleur Griqua and this makes it integral in the future of the Griqua in South Africa.

Therefore the future of the Kranshoek Griqua is dependent on the relation between the youth and their *lof*. There may be grounds for the legitimate fear that the Griqua youth may become disengaged, but I suspect that there is sufficient evidence to put those fears to rest. The number of youth attending Griqua gatherings and church services clearly indicates that young people are still willing to relate to the beliefs of their elders. The use of *lof* in the traditional Griqua way still rings true for the young men and woman who self-identify as Griqua. And as many of them confessed to me over the three years: they are still proud of being Griqua and of their Griqua heritage.

One of the reasons for this study, as stated in the introduction, was to provide a true representation of Griqua music to the general South African public. The “Griqua psalm” phenomenon of the last fifteen years provided a misrepresentation of Griqua musical practice to South African music consumers. These original compositions primarily consisted of the poems of Hans du Plessis set to non-Griqua music. Du Plessis conducted extensive research on the language of the Griqua people living in the Northern Cape region of South Africa and used composed poems using that regional dialect based on well-known psalms from the Bible. The endearing nature of the Afrikaans dialect made the collection a commercial success and this led to a multitude of musical compositions. Although composers did not sell or claim their compositions as Griqua music, it was perceived as at least based on Griqua music by the listeners and even performers. Members of the Griqua Independent Church based in Kranshoek feels that the language and the music used in the poems and compositions are indeed a misrepresentation of their culture and members do not want to be associated with the so-called “Griqua psalms” (Sammy Jansen, personal communication: January 2013). The research presented in this study now places Griqua hymnody in a historical context and provide ethnographic accounts of Griqua musical practice. The language, melody and musical style uncovered during the research contradicts the compositions and commercial music that were misunderstood as Griqua music.

Griqua history, language, and culture provide a vibrant subject for research on the performance of contemporary identity formation of communities in post-Apartheid South Africa. Historians and anthropologists have contributed extensive research into many facets of Griqua life and identity (Schoeman, 2007, Waldman, 2009), yet there remained a significant gap in such studies—the everyday musical performance of Griqua identity. This study now contributes to the documentation of the musical performance of a specific group of Griqua, positioning it as a unique South African expressive culture.

The present research will also contribute in significant ways to other studies of contemporary, marginalised communities in South Africa by offering insight into the emotional and internal lives of individuals and groups based on an analysis of expressive culture and a study of identity formation through musical performances. Griqua perception of their own historical reality is uniquely intertwined with their

religion and the music that connects them with their past, their God, and ultimately with the broader Griqua community.

This thesis may also provide a framework for research in musicology on the music of other tribes and marginalised communities in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa that have not yet been the subject of research. It also connects with the field of Sociology and Anthropology as it shows how art forms can influence a community and their identity.

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## SUMMARY

The study presents the hymnodic practises of the Griqua community belonging to the Kranshoek based Griqua Independent Church. The research traces the history of the Griqua and their hymns from eighteenth century missionaries until the spiritual and political work of A.A.S. Le Fleur I in the twentieth century. Issues regarding Griqua identity and the effects of colonisation and apartheid are highlighted and placed within the current South African context. The research and fieldwork further demonstrate that hymnody becomes the manner in which the Griqua community perform their identity as a marginalised community in South Africa. Ethnographic narratives illustrate the true nature of the Griqua hymn as well as the profound effect it has on the communal and personal lives of this community. The distinctive performance practice of these hymns referred to by the Griqua community as *lof*, played a pivotal part in the formation and sustaining of the twentieth century Griqua ethnic identity and remains a marker of Griqua identity for the followers of Le Fleur today. The study furthermore investigates the role hymnody fulfils in the everyday lives of members as well as the manner in which it attracts new members and retains the Griqua youth. The musical ethnography utilized in this study positions Griqua hymnody as a unique South African expressive culture.

## OPSOMMING

Die studie bespreek die himnologiese praktyke van die Griekwa gemeenskap wat geaffillieer is met die Kranshoek gebaseerde Griekwa Independentente Kerk. Die navorsing volg die geskiedenis van die Griekwa en hul kerklied vanaf die agtiende eeuse sendelinge tot die spirituele en politieke werwing van A.A.S. Le Fleur I gedurende die twintigste eeu. Griekwa identiteit word ondersoek teen die agtergrond van kolonialisasie en apartheid en dit word positioneer binne die hedendaagse Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Die navorsing en veldwerk toon dat himnologie nou as uitdrukkingsmiddel van die Griekwa se identiteit as gemarginaliseerde gemeenskap in Suid-Afrika aangewend word. Die aanwending van n etnografiese narratief illustreer die ware aard van Griekwa himnologie asook die invloed daarvan op die gemeenskaplike en persoonlike lewens van hierdie gemeenskap. Die unieke uitvoeringspraktyk van hierdie kerkliedere word deur die spesifieke gemeenskap beskryf as "lof". Dit is dan juis die "Griekwa lof" wat 'n beduidende rol gespeel het in die formasie en volhoubaarheid van die Griekwa etniese identiteit van die twintigste eeu en dit dien steeds as aanduiding van 'n Griekwa identiteit vir die hedendaagse volgelinge van Le Fleur. Die studie toon verder watter rol himnologie vervul in die alledaagse lewens van lede en hoe dit ook aangewend word om lede te werf en die Griekwa jeug te behou. Die musikale etnografie wat in hierdie studie aangewend word positioneer Griekwa himnologie nou as 'n unieke ekspressiewe kultuur in Suid-Afrika.