

# THE HOTTENTOT

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The latest contribution to the problem as to the meanings to be ascribed to such terms as "Bushmanoid", "Korana", "Hottentot", "Boskop", "Upington Hottentot" and "Kakamas Hottentot" has been by Wells <sup>1)</sup> — the occasion being his inspection of three skulls in the Anatomical Museum, Edinburgh — skulls which had been sent there from Port Nolloth by the late Dr. R. Broom in 1897.

The conclusions reached by Wells are embodied in his abstract: "It is argued that the typical Hottentot is not necessarily the type most different from the Bushman, and that the Hottentot group is a complex of three hybridising types of which the Bushman is one." Further — "Hottentot craniology must be based upon all authenticated material and not on arbitrarily selected material."

It seems as if Anthropologists who are not well acquainted with the known ethnic history of South Africa (Keen, Wells, etc.) use the term "Hottentot" in a sense totally different to that in which it is used by South Africans born in the country. As a result of this diversity of use of the term (Hottentot) the use of the word "authentic" or "authenticated" is also very different.

Let us, then, be quite clear as to what we are arguing about.

## HOTTENTOT.

The name given to the tall, light-skinned people, who lived in small settlements and were typical pastoralists, possessing fat-tailed sheep and Afrikaner cattle, was, in 1652, Hottentoo or Ottentoo (Van Riebeeck's *Dagverhaal*, see Du Plessis <sup>2)</sup>). According to Du Plessis, in 1872 Hottentoo had been superceded by Hottentot. The much smaller nomadic hunters were called "Boschjesmannen" (Bushman), whilst the Beachcombers received the name of Watermans (Mandelslo, 1639).

The Watermans (Beachcombers or Kitchmidden Folk) are not known today as a separate entity, although we know a quite considerable amount of their origins and cultures. The Bushman is supposed to have survived up to the present although it is practically certain that comparatively pure-bred, living individuals are extremely scarce or not to be found at all.

The Hottentots have persisted up to the present, at least as a name — since the Afrikaans farmers still use the term "Hotnot" (now in the written language "gekleurde" or "kleurling"; English: Cape Coloured). The Cape Malay and the Cape Indians are separate social entities but have, like the Europeans, added quite considerably to the heredity of the Hotnot. Further, the Cape Coloured has, besides the European, Malay and Indian strains, also absorbed the old slaves, so that if fifty years ago one called a coloured man a Hotnot it might be proudly denied and claimed that his nationality was St. Helena or Malgas.

It is of course also well known that the Hottentot came into close contact with the Bushman and the Bantu (Hop 1761, Wikar 1775, vide Dreyer and Meiring<sup>3)</sup>).

The Bantu being the superior nation (in numbers, fighting spirit and social organisation) to the

Hottentots — who were no doubt already contaminated by Bushman blood at the time of the Bantu-Hottentot contact in the Transkei and in N.W. South Africa — absorbed considerable Hottentot (and with that Bushman) blood but gave very little of their superior blood to the Bush-Hottentot mixture. The opinion was frequently expressed by Zulu herds, more than fifty years ago to the senior author, that Hotnots should all be killed at birth.

From the above it is clear that:—

(1) The name Hottentot was given in Van Riebeeck's time to a distinct racial group, comparatively recently arrived in South Africa and probably already showing some admixture with Bushman (Wika passed through a vast extent of Hottentot country — Namaqualand — and only came to the "true Hottentots" where Kakamas now stands).

(2) Ethnologically the name cannot be applied to racial groups much older than Van Riebeeck's time.

(3) Also ethnologically the term "Hotnot" in the sense of an abbreviation for "Hottentot" cannot be applied to the Cape Coloureds (kleurlinge) who have a diversity of bloodstrains seldom, if ever, to be met with outside South Africa, viz. *Hottentot, Bushman, St. Helena, Madagascar, European, Indian, Malay* and *Bantu*.

Language may, although not necessarily, give an indication as to the affinities of a given racial group; it is generally accepted by students of the Hottentot language that it is basically *Hamitic*. Schapera<sup>4</sup>) acknowledges this Hamitic affinity although he nevertheless claims that the Bushman, Strandlopers and Hottentots belong to the same racial stock.

The *Hamitic* affinity of the Hottentot is further indicated by his domestic animals as also by the fact that at the time that the Hottentots came to South Africa there appears a *totally strange* type of grave — totally strange to South Africa but numerous and well-known in Southern Asia as also in North-Eastern Africa (Sergi<sup>5</sup>).

#### AUTHENTICATED SKULLS.

Wells recommends that only authenticated skulls, and all such, be used to determine the physical feature of the Hottentot. To such a restriction we are in full accord with Wells — *but* where we differ from him, is: *What is authentic?*

Wells places great reliance on *Drennan's Oa'hurst Hottentots*. Since the term Hottentot was first used in the seventeenth century and Drennan's Oakhurst people<sup>6</sup>) are definitely Stone Age Men, are we to assume that the Hottentot pastoralists who came to South Africa with their Bee-Hive graves, fat-tailed sheep, Afrikaner cattle and Hamitic language, made their appearance in South Africa already in the Stone Age?

But Wells does not attempt to make such an assumption! He relies for proof of the "Hottentot" in Oakhurst Hottentot on:

(1) Shrubsall's<sup>7</sup>) mathematical data of a Hottentot. To this there are two grave objections, namely firstly, that mathematical treatment of specimens, selected by collectors or by a Museum Director from a loose collection of heterogenous material, can at most give mathematical expression to an idea in the head of the selector! A second objection is that what was presented to Shrubsall for mathematical treatment were not Hottentots, but at most Hotnots (Cape Coloureds) separated into "more Bushmanoid" and "less Bushmanoid".

(2) Another author accepted by Wells as presenting authentic "Hottentot" material is Keen<sup>8</sup>). How anyone after this can take Wells (or Keen) seriously is a mystery. This particular medical man (Keen) used for "Hottentot" a diversity of material (even skulls of Cape Coloureds used for Anatomical dissection) which gave him a range of variation as wide as his material would have led one to expect.

But of course Wells has matured in a school where a most astonishing procedure has been followed for years. The procedure bases itself on the Boskop skull; this in itself is already very venturesome since the Boskop Calvarium is not fossilised, is neither dated stratigraphically, palaeozoologically nor archaeologically. The rest of the Witwatersrand procedure we can put in the words of Galloway<sup>9</sup>) who naively says: "During the past years, workers in this (Witwatersrand) department have slowly been piecing together an *imaginary picture* of a skull of the Boskop type.

. . . Any feature in the bones of the individual Bush physical type which is foreign to, but sporadically seen in that type, and which is not negro, we have, especially if associated with other Boskopoid features, tentatively diagonalised as Boskopoid." (The italics are ours.)

Starting from a fragment of unknown (but not great) age and significance and using characters found in Bushmanoid skulls (whether such characters also occur in another racial type does not worry them at all) they build up what they call a racial type and leave to others (according to many verbal statements) to prove that this type is the Hottentot type instead of, when such a type is actually discovered, abandoning their vain speculations.

That such skulls were available long ago for their use is well-known — Broom<sup>10</sup>) had already described his Uppington Hottentots, and two other allied skulls (nos. 269 and 270) were also in the MacGregor Museum, Kimberley.

The evil of using terms without even attempting to fix their meanings for one's own benefit, is also well represented by Wells' use of the three skulls in the Anatomical Museum, Edinburgh. He calls skulls such as these authentic because the late Dr. R. Broom calls them Hottentots who were known in life as such! And this 250 years after extensive miscegenation had been taking place!

Can it after this be wondered at that the skeletal material from Mapungubwe were labelled Boskopoid when the merest, most cursory examination convinced the senior author that the material represented the same race as the Hottentots extensively Bushmanized?

### CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING A RACE.

The zoological term "race" should be determined as a group of individuals of comparatively homogeneous physical type, isolated geographically and physiologically. Such a definition is, however, difficult to apply to *Homo sapiens* — if there is such a species. At present the human communities are never geographically isolated and miscegenation always takes place at the points of contact of different races. Such is the position today and such has always been the position even in Van Riebeeck's time.

Judged by such a standard the Hottentot of Van Riebeeck's time with his skin-colour, size, and pastoral units, sheep and cattle, was certainly a distinct race. Further, apart from these physical matters, his language was known and has been shown to be allied to Hamitic. If Schapera<sup>4</sup>) is correct in stating that the language was closer to Bushman than to Hamitic, then we must assume that where this hybrid language was spoken and studied — the study of it was certainly very long after Van Riebeeck's time — miscegenation between Hottentot and Bushman must have been extensive.

To know this race — apart from the very meagre descriptions of the seventeenth century — there are only two ways open to us: —

(1) To study the modern descendants of the Hottentots — a procedure of no value whatsoever in this case, where we have to unravel the reactions and interactions of hundreds of genes belonging to each of more than half a dozen very diverse races.

(2) To investigate the past history of the race in question and to attempt to find the physical remains of individuals of the race living at a time when miscegenation was still confined to 2 or at most 3 races.

The late Dr. R. Broom first trod this path. He found his Uppington Hottentots; but only one of his skulls was really something totally new, and his reconstruction of the broken skull was somewhat slapdash.

Broom had really made a first-rate discovery, but did not have sufficient proof to convince even himself. He afterwards<sup>11</sup>) became misled in the now totally abandoned Korana theory — the Korana being historically known as a Cape Hottentot group, with European admixture which left the Cape and settled in the North.

More fortunate was Dreyer, later associated in this work with Meiring, who reading the Van Riebeeck publication of the *Journal of Wikar* was struck by the statement that this soldier-deserter, well-acquainted with Cape Hottentots, and travelling through Namaqualand found the first real Hottentots on the Orange River near the Aughrabies Falls. These Hottentots were investi-

gated from very numerous graves; miscegenation with Bushmen (Wikar does not mention this) and miscegenation with Bantu (contact with Bantu is mentioned by Wikar) was found; the graves were of the Chinese, Middle East and North East African type; the most Hamitic (least influenced by Bushman or Bantu admixture) were found in the most perfectly constructed graves.

In order to determine the physical type which we are to call Hottentot, must we pick on the skulls most aberrant in form, and from graves most strange to South Africa? Or are we to take the mean for all skulls found on the site — a site obviously occupied for a long period during which miscegenation took place with Bushman and Bantu?

## CONCLUSION

The authors, knowing that the Hottentots were fairly tall, pastoralists of Hamitic affinity; knowing that Wikar, acquainted with many other types of Hottentot, called these Kakamas Hottentots the first true Hottentots he had come across; knowing that both the tallest, most perfect skeletons came from the most perfectly constructed graves — and the skeletons in these particular graves are definitely similar to finds in N.E. Africa (Sergi<sup>5</sup>); and knowing that the language of the Hottentots was Hamitic; knowing all this the authors do not take seriously Wells' claim that our Kakamas Hottentot is a description based on arbitrarily selected material. On the contrary, we are prepared to state categorically that our material has been chosen with a discrimination sadly lacking in the papers of many S.A. authors.

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## BELANGRIKE KENNISGEWING — IMPORTANT NOTICE

Sedert 1928 het die publikasies van die Nasionale Museum in drie reekse verskyn n.l. *Paleontologiese Navorsinge*, *Argeologiese Navorsinge* en *Soölogiese Navorsinge*. Hierdie beleid is nou verander. Voortaan sal slegs een reeks verskyn onder die naam **Navorsinge van die Nasionale Museum**. Die huidige uitgawe begin dus by *Band I, Part I*.

Onderstaande het in die vorige reekse verskyn:

Since 1928 the publications of the Nasionale Museum appeared in the following three series *Paleontologiese Navorsinge*, *Argeologiese Navorsinge* and *Soölogiese Navorsinge*. This policy has been altered and in future all our publications shall appear in one single series under the name **Researches of the Nasionale Museum**. The present issue starts with *Volume I, Part I*.

The following is a list of papers which appeared in the previous series:

### Die „Argeologiese Navorsing van die Nasionale Museum.”

Reeds verskyn:

- Dl. I, St. 1. E. C. N. van Hoepen, „Die Koningse Kultuur. 1. Die Koningse Industrie.” Bl. 1-12. Pl. I-IV. 10 Sept. 1928.
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- Dl. I, St. 4. E. C. N. van Hoepen, „Die Mosselbaaise Kultuur.” Bl. 27-54. Pl. VI-XIX. 22 Febr. 1932.
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