

Another look at ‘Khoikhoi’ and related ethnonyms

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The nomadic pastoralists formerly called “Hottentots” are today known as the *Khoikhoi*, a term also encountered as *Kboekhoe*, often abbreviated as *Khoe*. The name, said to be derived from the words *khoi* (*khoë*) “person” and *khoïn* (*khoen*) “people”, is variously interpreted as “people of people”, “the best people”, “people of pure race”, “excellent people”, “our people”, “people of our group”, among others. Early forms of the name indicate that the two components of the ethnonym are not identical, and that the first contains a click, thus casting doubt on the given interpretations. This article proposes an interpretation based on definitions of words in Van Riebeeck’s Diary. Variant forms *Khoikhoi(n)*, *Kboekhoe(n)* and *Quena* are discussed, as well as a number of ethnonyms that mean “mountain people”.

’n Ander blik op ‘Khoikhoi’ en verwante etnionieme

Die nomadiese herders wat vroeër “Hottentotte” genoem is, staan ook bekend as *Khoikhoi*, ’n term wat dikwels as *Kboekhoe* aangetref word, soms afgekort tot *Khoe*. Volgens sommige is die naam afgelei van *khoi* (*khoë*) “mens” and *khoïn* (*khoen*) “mense”, vertolk as “mens van mense”, “die beste mense”, “mense van suiwer afkoms”, “uitstekende mense”, “ons mense”, “mense van ons groep”, ensovoorts. Vroeë optekeninge wys dat die twee komponente van die naam nie identies is nie en dat die eerste ’n klapklank bevat, wat twyfel op die gegewe vertolkings werp. ’n Verklaring word voorgestel op grond van definisies van woorde in Van Riebeeck se Dagboek. Afwisselende vorme *Khoikhoi(n)*, *Kboekhoe(n)* en *Quena* word bespreek, sowel as ’n aantal stamname wat “bergmense” beteken.

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When Jan van Riebeeck arrived at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, he encountered the indigenous herders subsequently known as “Hottentoots” or “Hottentotten” by the Dutch, and as *Khoikhoi* and variants by the indigenous herders themselves. The earliest form of the name, namely *Quena*, was recorded in 1691: “Quena, de Hottentotsche nation, *natio Hottentotica in genere*” (Nienaber 1963: 310).¹

Nienaber (1989: 812) explains that the name *Quena*

... is afgelei van *khoe-* = ‘mens’, plus die *-n-* van die comm. pl., gevolg deur die *-a-*objectivi. Dit beteken net ‘Mense’ en is as sodanig nie noodsaaklik ’n onderskeidende naam nie. [...] Die genormaliseerde spelling van *Quena* is *Khoena*, waarnaas dan *Khoekhoen(a)*.²

The spelling *Khoekhoe(n)* is in accordance with the orthographic rules of Nama, namely that:

All words which were written with the diphthong *-oi-* in the traditional orthography, are written with *-oe-* in the new orthography, e.g. *khoeb* – man instead of *khoib* (Native Language Bureau 1970: 25).

Thus since that ruling came into effect the spelling *Khoekhoe(n)* for the ethnonym has been gaining ground, while the rendering as *Khoikhoi* has been regarded as antiquated (Nienaber 1989: 616).

The spelling of the ethnonym with the diphthong *oe* was recorded from an early date. Valentyn (1714: 58) mentions that:

De oudste en eigentlyke Ingezetenen van de Kaap zyn de Hottentots [...] Waar die naam van daan komt, weet ik niet, altoos niet van hen, alzooy zich T-hoekoe noemen.³

Subsequently the name appeared more frequently with the diphthong *oi*. Knudsen writes in 1842 of the “Koï-koïnder Hottentotten

- 1 *Quena*, the Hottentot nation, *natio Hottentotica in genere*.
- 2 Is derived from *khoe-* = ‘person’, plus the *-n-* of the comm. pl., followed by the suffix *-a* denoting the object. It simply means ‘People’ and is as such not necessarily a distinguishing name [...] The normalised spelling of *Quena* is *Khoena*, in addition to which, then, *Khoekhoen(a)*.
- 3 The oldest and actual natives of the Cape are the Hottentots [...] Where the name comes from, I do not know, in any case not from themselves, since they

[...] Sie selbst nennen sich Koï-koïn” (Moritz 1916: 150),⁴ adding that *Koï* is the usual common singular word for “person”; *koïn* means “people”, the final nasal consonant *n* denoting the common plural.

Hahn (1867: 238) and Kroenlein (1889) write the ethnonym as *Kboi-Kboin*; Olpp (1876: 78) and Vedder (1966: 112) as *Kboi-kboin*; Theal (1964: 90) as *Kboikhoi*, and Vedder (1965: 17) as *Kboi-Kboi*. Thus, with the exception of Valentyn, who wrote the name with the diphthong *oe*, the majority of the other sources recorded the name with the diphthong *oi*.

As far as the pronunciation of *oe* as *oi* is concerned, Wilson (1986: 253) points out that:

Nama has no sound corresponding to the *-oi-* diphthong. The two vowels were originally separate[d] by a now-elided consonant (probably *w*) and are pronounced separately and are tonally different.

The vowel cluster *oe* is thus not pronounced as /*u*/ as in Afrikaans *boek*, nor as /*i*:/ as in English *Phoenix*, but as /*o*:*e*/, which explains why Van der Kemp & Read in 1804 referred to the language of the Hottentot nation as *Kbwekbwe(nama)* (Nienaber 1963: 311).

1. Meaning of the ethnonym *Kboikhoi* (*Khoekhoe*)

Kroenlein (1889: 209) gives the meaning of *kboi(b)* as “der Mann, Mensch, Freund [...] *kboi-kboin*, pl. comm. die Naman”.⁵ Similarly, Knudsen wrote in 1842: “Khoi-khoin, d.h. Menschen der Menschen, Freunde der Freunde, Menschenfreunde, etc.” (Moritz 1916: 150),⁶ comparable to the currently popular *Batbo pele*.

In 1867 C H Hahn also interpreted “Khoi-Khoin” as “Mensch der Menschen oder Freund der Freunde”,⁷ but added:

call themselves T-hoekoe.

4 Koï-koïn or Hottentots [...] They call themselves Koï-koïn.

5 The man, person, friend [...] *kboi-kboin*, pl. comm., the Nama.

6 Khoi-khoin, i.e. People of People, Friends of Friends, People Friends, etc.

7 People of the people or friend of the friends.

Die Etymologie [...] aber zeigt, dass sie zich, wie viele andere Völker, für Ideal-Menschen halten; dann aber weisen diese Namen darauf hin, dass die Hottentotten schon vor undeutlichen Zeiten [...] jenes Land inne gehabt haben müssen [...] sie seien die ersten und einzigen Menschen (Nienaber 1989: 617).⁸

Olpp (1884: 19) also gives the meaning as “Freund der Freunde”.⁹

Theal (1964: 90-1) mentions that:

The Hottentots termed themselves Khoikhoi, men of men, as they pride themselves upon their superiority over the savage hunters, and in fact they were considerably more advanced towards civilization than the Bushmen.

However, Vedder (1965: 17) mentions:

So wörtlich aber die Uebersetzung ist [namely that Khoekhoen means ‘Mensch der Menschen’], so falsch ist sie auch. [...] Um in Hottentottischen die Echtheit einer Sache darzutun, verdoppelt man das Hauptwort [...] Khoi-Khoi ist ein echter Hottentot, ohne fremde Blutmischung.¹⁰

Vedder (1966: 112) also explains that “Khoigua merely means ‘men’, while Khoin is the word for ‘people’, and Khoi-khoin means people of pure race, i.e. excellent people”. In the word *Khoigua* the ending *gua* is the masculine plural more often encountered as *qua*; the ending *n* in the word *Khoin* is, as pointed out, the Nama common plural ending.

Nienaber (1989: 621-22) rejects these interpretations as well as the attempts at making sense of such expressions as “people of people”:

8 The etymology [...], however, means that they consider themselves, as many other peoples do, to be ideal people; then, moreover, this name indicates that the Hottentots must already have inhabited this land since indeterminate times [...] they are the first and actual people.

9 Friend of the friends.

10 As literal as this explanation is [namely that Khoekhoen means ‘person of the people’], so false is it as well. [...] To express the genuineness of something in Hottentot, one reduplicates the main word [...] Khoi-Khoi is a genuine Hottentot, without miscegenation.

Hulle [the Khoekhoen] noem hulleself *Kboekboen* en het daarmee net bedoel dat hulle mense is wat tot hulle eie groep behoort. Die naam beteken dat so 'n persoon 'n egte lid van sy eiendommlike gemeenskap is. Die siening [...] wil nie 'n verskil in rang of 'n ophemeling van sy gemeenskap beteken nie. [...] 'n Parafrase van die term *Kboekboen* is ruweg net 'Ons mense', of: 'Van ons mense'.¹¹

Nienaber (1989: 615) further states that:

Die normale eietaalse oorkoepelende naam is 'n reduplikasie van die grondwoord *kboe* = 'mens' (in hierdie verband). Soos elders gesê, is *Kboekboen* 'n term vir 'mens van mense', miskien '(ek is) 'n lid van my eie mense/ras.' [...] Die monosillabiese vorm soos *Kboe* of *Kboi* wat net 'man/mens' beteken, kan dit nie alles sê nie.¹²

He also points out that the ethnonym occurs either as a simplex, namely as *Kboi* or *Kboe*, or as a reduplication, namely as *Kboikboi* or *Kboekboe*:

As dit enkelvoudig voorkom, word dit vertaal as 'Mens(e)'; as dit iteratief voorkom, is dit letterlik vertaalbaar as 'Mens-Mense'. Die betekenis van 'Mens-Mense' is nie sonder meer duidelik nie en word soms verskillend geïnterpreteer, altans, gemotiveer (Nienaber 1989: 619).¹³

2. An alternative explanation

This interpretation of the name *Kboekboe(n)*, like the others mentioned earlier, rests on the assumption that *Kboekboe(n)* comprises

- 11 They call themselves *Kboekboen* and by that they merely meant that they are people who belong to their own group. The name means that such a person is a genuine member of the community to which he belongs. The viewpoint [...] does not imply a difference in rank or exaltation of his community [...]. A paraphrase of the term *Kboekboen* is roughly merely 'We people', or 'of our people'.
- 12 The normal inclusive name in the own language is a reduplication of the word *kboe* = 'person' (in this case). As stated elsewhere, *Kboekboen* is a term for 'person of people', perhaps '(I am) a member of my own people/race.' [...] The monosyllabic form such as *Kboe* or *Kboi* which means only 'man/person' cannot express all this.
- 13 If the name occurs in a simple form, it means 'people'; if it occurs iteratively it is literally translatable as 'Person-people'. The meaning of 'Person-people' is not immediately clear and is often interpreted, or rather motivated, differently.

a repetition of the component *Kboe*, each component meaning “person”, the first *Kboe* in the singular, the second in the plural, formed by the addition of the plural common marker *n*. However, two factors indicate that the name is not a reduplication [of the word *kboi* or *kboe* “man, person”], namely variation in the rendering of the two components in early records, and the presence of a click in the first component. Valentyn’s spelling of *Thóekoe*, recorded in 1705 (Nienaber 1963: 311), and *T-boekoe*, recorded in 1714 (Raidt 1973: 58), contains the elements *Thóe* + *koe* or *T-boe* + *koe*, the two components not being identical. Similarly, the recording of the ethnonym in question as *Quoi Queuna* by Gordon (1779a); as *quaiquae* by Barrow (1797 I: 151); as *t³kubkeub* by Lichtenstein in 1805, transcribed as *!kubkeub* (Nienaber 1963: 311), and as *quaiquip* by Smith (1835 in VRS 21 1940: 188) indicates that these early recordings display two separate words as the elements of the ethnonym, and not a duplication of the same word.

The solution is given by Van Riebeeck, who in 1660 wrote: “Khoe is te seggen ende beduyt dit alles, naementlijcq: een hoogen bergh, rijk, geluckige coningh [...]” (Bosman & Thom 1957: 266).¹⁴ The word *Khoe* is similar to *k’koe* “een berg” (“a mountain”), recorded in 1691; *k’bu* “mons; een berg” (“mountain; a mountain”), recorded in 1708, (Nienaber 1963: 217), and Lichtenstein’s recording in 1805 of *t²eub* as a Koranna word for “a mountain” (1930 II: 471), transcribed by Nienaber (1963: 218, 340) as *//eu-b* or *≠eu-b*, the diphthong *eu* pronounced as *oi* in German.

As recorded by Valentyn (1714: 58), Gordon (1779: letter to Fagel), Knudsen in 1842 (Moritz 1916: 150), Theal (1964: 90-1) and Nienaber (1989: 621-22), *Khoekhoe* and variants was the name by which these people called themselves. It is logical that, to distinguish themselves from the Bushmen (and compare the different ethnic names that mean “bush people”), the “Hottentots” might call themselves “mountain people”. And just as there are various Bushman groups with names meaning “bush people”, there are several [Khoikhoi] groups with names meaning “mountain people”.

14 Khoe means to say and means all of this, namely: a high mountain, rich, happy king [...].

Numerous Dutch and Afrikaans names of indigenous groups incorporate the word *berg* “mountain”, such as *Bergdamaras*, *Bergenaars*, *Bergbottentoes*, *Bergklimmers*, *Bergse* and *Bergvolk*. Some of these names are alternatives for Khoe-San names, for example the *Bergbottentoes* (*Soaquas*); *Bergklimmers* (*Nanningais*); *Bergse* (*Ogeis*), and *Bergvolk* (*Soaquas*). Many Khoekhoe ethnonyms have been translated into Dutch and later Afrikaans, for example *Aba-eis* > *Rooivolk* “red people”; *Amkakua* > *Regsbande* “right hands”; *Awan* > *Rooinasie* “red nation”; *Cabonas* > *Velskoendraers* “hide shoe wearers”; *Hoeikwa* > *Sakmense* “bag people”, and *Hoekingeis* > *Skerpioene* “scorpions” (Nienaber 1989: 93, 120, 166, 227, 497-8). Similarly, the ethnonyms incorporating the component *Berg* are demonstrably synonymous with their Khoe-San allonyms.

3. The ethnonym *Bergdamara*

The name *Bergdamara* means “mountain people”: *berg* the Dutch and Afrikaans word for “mountain”, while *dama* is a /Auni (S4), Sesarwa (Tshukwe) (S5) and /Nu //en (S6) word meaning “person” (Bleek 1956: 19), and *ra* is the Hie (C1) common plural marker (Nienaber 1989: 306-7). Dornan (1975: 233) states that “The name Damara is of Hottentot or Bushman origin [...] In Hie the singular is *Dama* and the plural *Damara*, so that it is most likely derived from this language”.

The symbols S4, S5, C1, and so on refer to Bushman ethnic groups and their languages. Bleek (1929: [i] and 1956: [iii-iv]) categorised Bushman tribes into three groups, namely the Northern, Central and Southern groups, on the basis of similarities in the roots of words and other grammatical features, and allocated the symbols N1, N2, N3; C1, C2; S1, S2, S3, and so on to them for ease of reference. In this article the name of the specific language or dialect is given, with the reference number in brackets.

The *Bergdamara* are known by the Khoe-San name *Cboudamara*, for which the earliest spellings are *Gauwdamra* (Gordon 1779 Ms 4: *sp*) and *Gaudamaras* (Moritz 1915: 212). Although the name is very old, as one would expect of ethnonyms of people who occupied

the territory for many thousands of years, the first explanation of the name encountered is that given by Knudsen in 1844 (Moritz 1916: 146):

Die Bergdamras nennen sie Chou-daman, d.h. Dreck-Damras, nicht weil sie sich 'mit Mist bemalen', sondern, weil sie, mit Respekt zu sagen, ihren Abtritt kurz vor der Tür haben. Sie selbst nennen sich nur Daman.¹⁵

The explanation of Chou-daman as “Dreck-Damras” or “excrement people” is based on the interpretation of the component *Chou* as being cognate with the Nama word *xoub* “Scheissen-dreck”, “excrement”, from *xou* “scheissen”, “defecate” (Rust 1960: 52), and has become widely accepted, for example by C H Hahn in 1873 (Vedder 1928: 7), and Vedder (1923: 5).

A different explanation is given by Engelbrecht (1928: 12), who argued on the basis of the word *xau-thamab* “wild watermelon” that

Hoewel dit tot hiertoe die gewoonte was om die naam Xau in Xau-Dama in verband te bring met Xaub, menslike of dierlike uitwerpsel, meen ons bogenoemde stam hierin te moet sien [...] Xau-Dama beteken dus eintlik die wilde swart mense.¹⁶

Budack (1969: 219) rejects this explanation, stating that

Der Ansicht von Prof. Engelbrecht kann ich mich daher nicht anschliessen, während ich die Ableitung von *xoub* für wahrscheinlicher halte [...] diese Erklärung (ist) für die *Kxoe-kxoen* in Südwestafrika heute selbsterklärend.¹⁷

Nienaber (1989: 264) also rejects Engelbrecht’s explanation.

- 15 They call the Bergdamras Chou-daman, i.e. Dreck-Damras, not because they decorate or paint themselves with dung, but because, saying this with respect, they defecate in front of the door. They call themselves merely Daman.
- 16 Although it has been customary hitherto to connect the name Xau in Xau-Dama to *xaub*, human or animal excrement, we are of the opinion that the name of the above-mentioned tribe should be seen in this [...] Xau-Daman thus actually means the wild black people.
- 17 I cannot agree with Professor Engelbrecht’s point of view, since I regard the etymology of *xoub* as being more probable [...] this explanation is self-explanatory to the *Kxoe-kxoen* in South West Africa nowadays.

The name *Bergdamara* occurs frequently for the Goudamara. Thus Solomon (1855: 37) records “There is a tribe [...] called Ghou Damoup by the Namacquas, and most Europeans term them Berg Damaras” [in other words, “mountain Damaras”]. Hahn in 1873 states that:

Die Bergdamras selbst haben den Namen Chau-Daman durchaus nicht angenommen, sondern nennen sich selbst ≠Haukhoin, d.h. richtige, wirkliche Menschen [...] (Vedder 1928 28: 7-8).¹⁸

The term *Bergdamara* is thus a hybrid, the first component meaning “mountain”. The allonym *Gaudamara* has the second component *damara* in common with *Bergdamara*, indicating that the first components of the names, *Berg* and *Gau*, are synonymous. The component *Gau(w)* and its variants *Chou* and *Xau* are comparable with the /Xam (S1) word //xau: “hill, mountain” (Bleek 1956: 633, 737), and with the /Xam (S1) words !kau and !kou and the /!n !ke (S2) word -!kau “mountain” (Bleek 1929: 59). *Bergdamara* and *Chaudam(a)ra* thus both mean “mountain people”.

4. The ethnonym *Hoanin*

Nienaber (1989: 497) gives *Bergdamara* as an alternative name for *Hoanin*. The component *nin* of the name *Hoanin* means “people”, as in other ethnonyms such as ≠*Aunin* and *Hurinin* (Budack 1977: 2). The element *ni-* is the Khoe-San plural marker *ni*, as in the dialectal word /bũ:ni “white men”, the plural of /bũ: “white man” (Traill 1974: 22). According to Nienaber (1989: 150), “die -ni-[is] ’n afleidingsmorfeem met ’n lokativerende funksie t.o.v. die bewoners van ’n plek of omgewing”.¹⁹ The final *-n* of the suffix *ni-n* is the Khoikhoi third person common plural ending (Kroenlein 1889: 233). The component *nin* of the name *Hoanin* and the component *damaras* of the name *Bergdamaras* both mean “people”,

18 The Bergdamras themselves have not accepted this name but call themselves ≠Haukhoin, i.e. real, genuine people.

19 The *-ni-* [is] a derivative morpheme with a locativising function with respect to the inhabitants of a place or vicinity.

the components *Hoa* and *Berg* are “mountain” synonymous; *Hoa* is comparable with the Nama word //*hoa-b* “ein überhängender Felsvorsprung”, “an overhanging cliff”; //*hoa-s* “die Ecke des Berges”, “the corner of the mountain” (Kroenlein 1889: 170); the Hie (C1) word !*goa* “mountain” (Bleek 1956: 384), and the Naron (C2), Tsaukwe (C2a) and Hukwe (C2b) word ≠*gnoa* “mountain, stone, rock” (Bleek 1956: 647). The ethnonym *Hoanin* thus means “mountain people”, synonymous with *Bergdamara(s)*.

5. The ethnonym *Nanningai*

Nanningai is another Khoe-San ethnonym meaning “mountain people”. In 1779 Wikar (Mossop 1935: 36) wrote about “een Bossiesmanskraal genaamd de Nanningai of bergklimmers”.²⁰ Nienaber (1989: 745) situates these people on the northern bank of the Orange River, approximately opposite Coboop, and informs us that the ethnonym *Bergklimmers*, meaning “mountain climbers”, is a translation of *Nanningai*, a name written in Nama as !*Nani-kbâi* (Nienaber 1989: 745), from !*nanib*, !*nanis* “Bergkette”, “mountain chain” (Kroenlein 1889: 245), and *kbâi* “emporsteigen”, “climb up” (Rust 1960: 17), a word cognate with the /Xam (S1) word //*kai:tǝn* “to climb, ascend” (Bleek 1956: 553). Nienaber states that the name may have been given to these people by the Nama, that it was not their name for themselves, and that the name probably referred to their fleeing up cliffs like baboons.

This is a likely explanation, but the occurrence of numerous other ethnonyms with the second component *gais* or *geis*, such as Khougeis (geikhaun), Ogeis, Hoekingeis, Gana-eis, Eineis, gives rise to the question as to whether *Nanningais* does not mean merely “mountain people”, the component *gai* similar to Nama //*ais* and Koranna //*ais* “volk”, “people” (Nienaber 1989: 586), comparable to the /Xam (S1) word !*kai*, also !*kei* “people” (Bleek 1956: 404, 420), and the Seroa (S2d) word ≠*ei* “people, men” (Bleek 1956: 643).

20 A Bushman *kraal* called the Nanningai or mountain climbers.

6. The ethnonym *Ogeis*

Ogeis is an alternative spelling of the name recorded as “Ookhijs oder Bergsche” by C Albrecht in 1807 (Moritz 1916: 108): “eines räuberischen Stammes, welche man Ookhijs oder Bergsche nennt, weil sie meistens auf dem Karasberg in Gross-Namaqualand wohnen”.²¹ Gordon (1779: 21) states “Okeis is de regte naam”,²² and Campbell (1815: 310) explains it as “Okais, or Mountain Tribe”, the mountains being the Karasberg range, as mentioned by Albrecht. //Kbo *Geis* appears as the name of an ethnic group first situated to the east of Aminuis and Nuis, and *Kbo geis* as a group on the Auob River (Hahn 1879), the latter given as *Ko Geis* by Sprigade & Moisel (1904). These groups are equated with the *Ogeis* (Nienaber 1989: 645), and these names thus display the velar explosive consonant *K* not featuring in the name *Ogeis*.

It appears that Tindall (1856: 37) was the first to give a specific meaning for the ethnic name *Ogeis*, as he refers to the “Xo-keis (Great Death), numbering about 400”. Thereafter the meaning “great death” is given fairly consistently as an alternative to the Khoe-San name, thus as “//Ogeis, Grosstodt” by Vollmer (1864) in his diary entry of 9 October 1864 (Vedder 1928 5: 146); as “//O-geis (Grosser Tod)” by Kroenlein in 1870 (Vedder 1928 13: 615, 616), and as “//Ogeis oder Grootdode” by Von Francois (1896: 80). In the twentieth century the name appears with the common plural ending *n*, as in “//Ogain oder Grootdoden” (Schultze 1907: 171); “the //O-gein or Groot Doode” (Hoernle 1925: 5), and “//O-kain, or Groot Dode” (Beach 1938: 7). According to this explanation, the name *Okais*, *Okeis* or *Ookhijs*, subsequently interpreted as *Ogeis*, would be derived from the Nama word //o “sterben”, “to die”, //ob “Krankheit, Tod”, “sickness, death” (Kroenlein 1889: 277), and *gei* “gross”, “big” (Rust 1960: 28).

Although the meaning of //O*geis* and its variants is consistently given as “Groot Dode” or “great death”, this explanation occurs for

21 A thieving tribe, which people call Ookhijs or Bergsche [‘mountainers’], since they live mainly on the Karas Mountains in Great Namaqualand.

22 Okeis is the correct name.

the first time only in 1856, thus 39 years after Albrecht gave *Bergsche* as an alternative name for *Okeis*, *Ookhijis* or *Okais*, for which Campbell in 1815 gave the alternative name “Mountain Tribe”. The reason for the interpretation of the name “death great”, an event which should have been remembered or recorded if it were important enough to be onomastically productive, is unknown. It may be that all these explanations are based on the interpretation of the ethnonym as being of Nama origin, written //Ogeis and interpreted as “great death”. A structure such as “death great” is not typical of Khoe-San naming; the majority of the names consist of specific term + generic term, or adjective + noun.

By analogy with other ethnyonyms, the earliest explanations of the name are more likely to be correct, and *Bergsche* “mountain-eers” and “mountain tribe” translates the indigenous ethnonym first recorded as *Okeis*, *Ookhijis* or *Okais*. Similarly, in names such as *Kouringais*, *Hoensingais*, *Nanningais*, *Hoekingeis*, *Keineis*, *Kabaais* and *Kogeis*, the final component has been identified as similar to Nama //lais and Koranna //?ais “volk” (Nienaber 1989: 586), comparable to the /Xam (S1) words !kei and !kai “people” (Bleek 1956: 420, 404), and to the Seroa (S2d) word ≠ei “people, men” (Bleek 1956: 643). Similarly, the component *kais*, *keis* and *khijis* in the ethnonym under discussion, and their adaptations as *geis*, *gain* and *kain*, are thought to mean “people, folk, men”, the component *O* meaning “mountain”, comparable with the /Xam (S1) word ss’o “mountain” (Bleek & Lloyd 1911: 144, Traill 2007: 147), and the Kung (N2) word !ko “mountain” (Bleek 1956: 436). The explosive velar consonant *k* accompanying the click in the word !ko is similar to the *K* in the variants *Ko geis* and *Kho geis* mentioned earlier. Considering the lateness of the explanation as “great death”, the ignorance as to the reason for the name, the unusual grammatical structure of noun + adjective, and the early equating of the ethnonym with *Bergsche* and “mountain tribe”, *Okais*, *Okeis* and *Ookhijis* are thought to mean “mountain people”.

7. The ethnonym *Cochoquas*

The earliest spelling of the ethnonym is *Kochukwaes*, recorded in 1654 by Nieuhof (Nienaber 1989: 256), and subsequently *Kochoqua*, *Cochoqua* and *Cochoquas*, recorded by Van Riebeeck in 1657, 1659 and 1660 (Bosman & Thom 1955: 186, 202, 1957: 258). The Kochoquas (Cochoquas), also known as the Cogmans or Koekemans, were situated in the vicinity of the present Montagu until the time of Simon van der Stel; then they disappeared from history (Nienaber 1989: 265). Some authorities are of the opinion that these people reappeared later on the Orange River. Wikar's Journal of 1778 states: "Den 25 [October] trokken wy na de Aukokwa of Naauwwege" (Mossop 1935: 136).²³ Mossop (1935: 137 n. 122) situates these people "opposite the present Skanskop, Rooikop and Bellavista Islands near Keimoes". In his diary entry for 18 October 1779 Gordon mentions the "Ogokwa or Smalwangen", situated north of the Orange River between Keimoes and Upington, on Kanon Island and other islands in the Orange River (Raper & Boucher 1988, 2: 327 and n 261).

Wikar and Gordon thus both give the meaning of the Aukokwa or Ogokwa as "Naauwwege" or "Smalwege", "narrow cheeks, hollow cheeks". Theal (1964: 95) wrote:

[...] these tribes [...] usually took their distinctive titles from the name of the chief under whose guidance they commenced to lead a separate existence, by adding to it the suffix qua [...] thus the Cochoqua were the people of Cocho [...].

The name Ogokwa or Aukokwa is generally stated to mean "narrow cheeks", after ≠Kochokab, an early chief with hollow cheeks (Nienaber 1989: 265), the name being derived from Nama ≠o "enge", ≠oro "schmal; schmal sein" (Kroenlein 1889: 287), ≠o "eng" (Rust 1960:17), and *xob* "Backe, Wange", "cheek" (Rust 1960: 8, 71). In his 1872 list of eight smaller Koranna tribes, Schroeder mentions "5. De Naauwwegen (Karel Naauwvang,

23 The 25th [October] we travelled to the Aukokwa or Narrow Cheeks.

kapitein, roover, in de kolonie gevangen)” (Nienaber 1989: 267).²⁴

Engelbrecht (1935: 227 n 3) identified the Aukokwa or Ogoqua as “probably the Kochoqua of the old Cape records”, but some doubt exists as to whether the Aukokwa or Ogoqua are the same people as the Cochoqua of the Cape. As Nienaber (1989: 270) points out:

Die sleutelvraag is nou of (enersyds) die *Cochoqua/Cochona* van die Saldanhabaaigebied, en (andersyds) die *Aukokwa* van Wikar, en die *Ogoqua* van Gordon [...] dieselfde naam vir dieselfde volk kan wees [...] (270): “die tweede laag name wat hulle in onder meer vier opsigte onderskei van die ouer of Ou-Kaapse laag: (i) in tyd – hulle is omtrent ’n eeu later, (ii) in ruimte – die mense woon nie meer in die arm van die Bergrivier nie, hulle is nou aan die Oranjerivier, (iii) in die skriftelike voorstelling – die name begin [...] op ’n klinker, nie op ’n konsonant nie, dit wil sê die Ou-Kaapse uitspraak is gedeveelariseer, en ten slotte: (iv) die suigkonsonant word deur kundiges uit eie waarneming weergegee”.²⁵

Despite these reservations, Nienaber (1989: 271) accepts that the Aukokwa or Ogoqua are the Cochoquas of the Cape, and that the name means “Smalwange”, “narrow cheeks” or “hollow cheeks”. However, this is not likely the case. Nienaber (1989: 720) gives “mountaineers” as an alternative name for *Cochoquas*, and the possibility of synonymy is raised as in so many instances of dual or multiple names for the same group. Elphick (1985: 117) supports this explanation of *Cochoquas* meaning “mountaineers” or “mountain people”: “I am inclined to explain this name [*Cochoqua*, *Kochokwa*] as ‘mountain people’”. For his argument he informs us that:

In 1615 Coree informed Edward Dodsworth of ‘cyvill discorde amongst themselves, that many times he and his friends were robbed by the mountainers.’ Subsequent encounters between the

24 5. The Narrow Cheeks (Karel Naauwawang [‘narrow cheek’], chief, robber, captured in the colony.

25 The second layer of names distinguish themselves from the older layer in four respects: (i) in time – they are about a century later; (ii) in space – the people no longer live in the bend of the Berg River, they are now on the Orange River; (iii) in written representation – the names begin with a vowel not with a consonant, in other words the Old Cape pronunciation is develarized; and finally (iv) the click is given by experts from their own observations.

Europeans and the 'mountainers' showed that the latter were [...] a numerous stock-keeping group whose population, wealth, and location make it probable that they were the Cochoqua (Elphick 1985: 81).

Elphick (1985: 82 n. 37) motivates his explanation of Cochoqua as "mountainers" as follows:

The mystery of the 'mountainers' can be partially solved if it is remembered that the source of the name was Coree, who had obtained a basic English vocabulary. He would use the word *mountain* only if a translation of all or part of the ethnic name of a Khoikhoi group. Nienaber [1963: 217] lists the following forms of the Khoikhoi word for mountain attested for the western Cape: *cou* (1655), *kbœ* (1660), *K'kœ* (1691). This is possibly the first syllable in *Cochoqua*.

The Kung (N2) word *!kœ* is comparable with the cited words for "mountain" (Bleek 1956: 436).

Further support for Elphick's explanation can be found in another alternative name for the Cochoquas. The name *Quena* was used at an earlier stage for the Cochoquas, usually referred to by the Dutch as Saldanhars. In his diary entry of 9 January 1653 Van Riebeeck wrote of "de Saldanhars (onder haer Quena genaemt) [...]" (Bosman & Thom 1952: 115).²⁶ Nienaber (1989: 812) explains that "Die genormaliseerde spelling van *Quena* is *Khoena*".²⁷ The component *na*, common to both names, is composed of the common plural ending *-n-* followed by the object suffix *-a*. The component *Que-* is thus equivalent to *kbœ-*, cognate with the Old Cape dialectal words *kbœ* (1660), *K'kœ* (1691) "mountain" (Nienaber 1963: 217). *Quena* thus means "mountain people", as does *Cochoqua* and its variants.

8. Conclusion

The number of ethnonyms incorporating the component *Berg* "mountain", such as *Bergdamaras*, *Bergenaars*, *Berghottentoos*, *Bergklimmers*, *Bergse* and *Bergvolk*, indicate that this was a popular ethnonym that distinguished some Khoe-San groups from

26 The Saldanhars (called Quena by them).

27 The normalized spelling of *Quena* is *Khoena*.

others. These names frequently refer to the abode of the groups concerned. Thus the *Bergsche* were associated with the Karasberg range, and the *Bergklimmers* with elevations on the northern bank of the Orange River. The mountains where the *Berghvolcq* lived have been identified as the Hawequa Mountains in the Worcester district and the mountains at Meerhofskasteel (Nienaber 1989: 847), while the *Berghottentoes* were encountered in the vicinity of the Hantamsberg and Nardousberg (Nienaber 1989: 183). The *Mountaineers* were situated in the vicinity of Montagu, in the Saldanha Bay area, and in the bend of the Great Berg River (Nienaber 1989: 270). The *Bergdamaras* are still encountered found in the elevated areas of Namibia. These Dutch and Afrikaans ethnonyms are translations of Khoe-San names, just as many others such as *Aba-eis* (*Rooivolk*), *Amkakua* (*Regshande*), *Awan* (*Rooinasie*), *Cabonas* (*Velskoendraers*) and *Hoeekwa* (*Sakmense*). The ethnonym *Khoikhoi*, currently often spelt *Khoekhoe(n)*, is often explained as consisting of a reduplication of the word *Khoi* or *Khoe* “man, person”. The early references to the Khoikhoi (*T-boekoe*, *Tbóekoe*) were as the “oudste en eigentlyke Ingezetenen van de Kaap”, “oldest and actual natives of the Cape” (Valentyn 1714: 58),²⁸ a mountainous area which would have been sufficiently distinctive as a means of referring to its inhabitants. The term *Khoikhoi* and its variants were presumably subsequently extended to also refer to other Khoikhoi groups as well, as was the case with the term *Bushmen* for the hunter-gatherers, later also known as *Sonqua*, *Sanqua*, *San*, and so forth (Raper 2009). Since the earliest recordings of the name *T-boekoe*, *Tbóekoe* and its variants display different components, it is concluded that the ethnonym is composed of two different words. Van Riebeeck’s recording of the word *khoë* as “high mountain”, and other Old Cape words for “mountain” recognisable as the first component of the ethnonyms *Cochoquas*, *Ogeis*, *Nannigai* and *Hoanin*, point to the ethnonym *Khoekhoe(n)* meaning “mountain people”. Reinterpretation of some of these ethnonyms has resulted in folk etymological explanations. A study of ethnonyms reveals structures that have in the past been

28 Oldest and actual natives of the Cape.

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poorly understood or not at all, or misinterpreted; for example the suffix *na* is synonymous with *qua* or alternates with it.

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