

## **Negotiating apartheid and its legacy. Three decades as a citizen anthropologist of the Richtersveld**

*Emile André Boonzaier*

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**Supervisors: Jan Blommaert, Karel Arnaut**

Department of African Languages and Cultures, Ghent University

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This dissertation is a portfolio thesis consisting of eleven published articles and a report submitted as evidence in a land claim court case. All of this work has been about, drawn on, or been stimulated by nearly three decades' work in the Richtersveld, a 'Coloured Rural Area' (or 'Reserve') in the remote and arid Namaqualand region of the Northern Cape Province of South Africa.

The eleven texts in the portfolio are somewhat disparate: they tackle different topics, were written for different audiences, and range from the more academic to the purely 'applied'. The dissertation attempts to bring them together under the reflexive theme of 'citizen anthropologist' – one whose roles as citizen and anthropologist cannot be disentangled. This involves a retrospective reflection on the portfolio texts against the background of changing political realities in South Africa, and of changing trends in the discipline of anthropology.

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter. It begins by considering the relationship between anthropologists and their subjects in the light of Angela Cheater's defensive comments about 'citizen anthropologists' and Archie Mafeje's scathing attacks on imperial anthropology. This is followed by a brief overview of anthropology in South Africa (focusing on the second half of the 20th century) in which it is argued that doing anthropology 'at home' lent it a distinctive character, which (amongst other things) resulted in significant divisions within the discipline. The third section is a brief introduction to the Richtersveld and various notions relevant to the discussions that follow, such as 'reserve', 'coloured', 'baster' and 'race classification'. The last section of this chapter is a personal account of my introduction to the discipline of anthropology and to the Richtersveld as a field site.

The remainder of the thesis presents the various portfolio texts. These are grouped together and presented in five separate chapters, each dealing with a different theme.

Chapter 2 – 'Race and culture' – contrasts an article about the genesis of racial categories in Namaqualand with one that essentially affirms the outmoded notion of a static and bounded 'Khoi culture'. The third article in this chapter can be viewed as a corrective to this image of a 'traditional' culture. It emphasises that the picture of 'Khoi culture' is an historical reconstruction, and pays due attention to cultural interactions and change.

The next three chapters all deal with land issues. The Coloured Reserves in South Africa have, for around 150 years, provided residents with some security of tenure, but their

land rights have been threatened several times during this time. Chapter 3 focuses on the government's 'development' scheme to introduce 'economic units' and the arguments that were mustered to inform and resist it. In chapter 4 I look at the process whereby a National Park was established in the northern part of the reserve and the way in which 'traditional Nama culture' was used to motivate for the protection of land. The chapter also examines how the park and the changing political landscape in South Africa related to the emergent ethnic identities in the Richtersveld. Chapter 5 concerns the ultimately successful legal action, begun in 1998, to reclaim the large tracts of land lost in 1837 and 1926. Here the lengthy 'expert witness' testimony is presented and the court case discussed with particular reference to the notions of 'expert' and 'truth'. The chapter also tries to show how the strategies adopted by the residents and their lawyers relate to the notions of 'community' and 'multiculturalism'.

The last chapter reflects on the changing face of anthropology in the 'new' South Africa. It includes two articles: one encouraging a revision of traditional anthropological topics and subject populations; the other considering the candidate's changing position as researcher in the Richtersveld. These articles form the background for a discussion of the continuing tension between applied and theoretical anthropology; the changing nature of fieldwork and shifting power relationships between researcher and subject.