

REVIEWS

G.S. Nienaber and P.E. Raper, *Toponymica Hottentotica*, A**, H-Z. S.A. Naamkundesentrum, Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, Pretoria, 1977. 1126 pp. Boards R12.00

This is the second of a two-volume study which seeks to establish the Hottentot or, more correctly, Khoekhoen origin of certain place names in South Africa. (The first volume, A*, takes the alphabetical list of names up to G.) The work is scientifically orientated in that the writers' tentative conclusions are based upon meticulous research and careful consideration of the available, often conflicting, data.

Random dips into the book may prove to be amusing. But an appreciation of what it offers to the future researcher in this field demands a grasp of its method of presentation. The authors provide a list of abbreviations which reveals upon consultation that, for example, the letters DNW after a writer's name in the text signifies *Deutsch-Nama Wörterbuch*; that *Daghregister* stands for: *Daghregister gehouden by Oppercoopman Jan Anthonisz van Riebeeck*; or that *Narrative* refers to either *A narrative of a visit to Mauritius and South Africa*, Backhouse J., or *Narrative of an exploratory tour to the North-East of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope*, Arbousset, T. and Daumas, F. A bibliography, which includes only the more important works or articles consulted, fills slightly more than ten pages, the dates of publication ranging from those of the earliest travellers into the hinterland to those of contemporary researchers. The bibliography bears witness to an unflagging interest in onomatology throughout the years. A striking fact which emerges from it is that there seems to have been a remarkable increase in research during the second half of this century. The spate of publications suggests the topicality of Khoekhoen toponymy, hence its scope as research material for future doctoral theses. Then there are two detailed index maps of South Africa which enable the reader to locate the names referred to in the text. The geographic distribution of these names is wide indeed: '...these Khoekhoen place-names occur from the Kunene River in South West Africa through the Namib, through Namaqualand, down to the Peninsula, eastwards all along the South of the Cape Coast up to about the present border of Natal. So it is actually a very vast field which is covered by these names' (Dr

P.E. Raper, *English Usage in Southern Africa*, vol. 8, nos. 1 and 2, September 1977, p. 9).

Entries in the list of names are in heavy type and conform to an almost undeviating pattern. This strict observance of a particular form facilitates comprehension of what is often extremely intricate information. The name (of a district, a town, a farm, a region, a mountain range or a river) and its alternatives are followed by a letter in the upper case and a number; sometimes by yet another letter in the lower case and a reference to a further alternative, elsewhere in the alphabetical list. HASEUER for example, has the alternatives HASUUR, HASÜR, HASUR. The S which follows shows that it is situated in South West Africa, while in the number 2618, the first two digits indicate the degree of latitude, the second two the degree of longitude. The lower case k which precedes the final alternative, OANOAB, stands for 'kyk' (see) and directs the reader to that name in the alphabetical list. The entry therefore reads as follows:

HASEUER, HASUUR, HASÜR, HASUR S 2618 k OANOAB

The list of sources for HASEUR also adheres to a fixed scheme, providing, in this order, the name of the person who gave the information, the date, the reference to the book, manuscript, conversation or interview, and, finally, the quotation itself, whether verbal or written. It is these quotations which are bound to attract the casual 'dipper', for here the vague personages which figured in the History books of his youth, chiefly by being relegated to footnotes, suddenly come alive as 'journeys long ago' are evoked from the pages of, for example, Barrow and Burchell, Le Vaillant and Lichtenstein.

Then follows the main part of the entry, a discussion of the accumulated evidence. This is in Afrikaans and presupposes some familiarity with the language. 'We hope', remarks Dr Raper, 'to have *Toponymica Hottentotica* translated into English as well, because I think it will have a big market – there is a lot of interest, not only among English-speaking people in this country, but also overseas' (*English Usage in Southern Africa*, Vol. 8, nos. 1 and 2, p. 13). A translation should ease matters. But the fact remains that satisfactory comprehension of the material would demand a rudimentary knowledge of German, Dutch, Seventeenth Century Dutch, Khoekhoen and 'Old Cape', which is the name of the Hottentot dialects up to about 1815. One imagines that prospective researchers will arm themselves accordingly.

The assessment of the material, exhaustive or brief, as the case may be, evaluates the claims made in the different (and differing) sources and, by means of comparison, determines an approximate

choice among them. It takes into account, *inter alia*, the linguistic structuring of the word and its gradual change of meaning in the process of being used, and more often misused, by writers who were, by and large, ignorant of the language.

A typical source guide is that to the name KEISKAMMA. The following information has been selected, with many and important deletions, by the present reviewer:

Godée Molsbergen, 1752: '... en ten laatsten dat zijn land van het Damasonquas land tot aan de reviere Chijs Chamma strekte'; and again: '... voor de Chijs Chamma rivier dewelke soowel door de Caffers als de Hottentotten met den eygensten naam word genoemd ...'.

Sparrman, 1775: '... there was a river, called Kaisi-kamma, which derived its source from a mountain known to the colonists by the name of the Bambusberg, or Bamboo-mountain, from the circumstance of a sort of reeds or bamboos growing upon it, which were very much prized by them for the purpose of making handles for their long whips'.

Paterson, 1779: '...a river a little to the eastward of us, called by the natives, the Kys Comma'.

Van Reenen, 1790: '... at the Keis kamma where several Kaffers came to us from ... Captain Sambee'.

Barrow, 1797: '... we came to a river of very considerable magnitude called the Keiskamma'.

Lichtenstein, 1803-6: 'An der Mündung des Flusses Keissi (Keiskamma der Hottentotten) liegt ein Anker von einem gestrandeten Schiff', with a footnote: '... für Keissi hat er [Albertil] den hottentotischen Namen 't Keiskamma (t'Kamma bedeutet nemlich Wasser oder Fluss) ...'.

Burchell, 1811: The Hottentots, when speaking Dutch, call these pitfalls by the mixed name of 'Kysi-gat or Tkysi-gat ... This word, as I learn from the Hottentots, is the true etymon of the name of a large river, now forming the eastern boundary of the new English Colony beyond Algoa Bay, and which should therefore be written Kysikamma or Keisikamma'.

Hewitt, 1877: 'Keis-kamma, Kaffraria (?gkeis, xkama - puffadder river)'.

Kingon, 1918: 'We know that ... certain Hottentot tribes were assimilated into the Kaffir tribes ... Moreover, the very derivation of the name Keiskama (originally i-Xesi) indicates an agreement arrived at, as between the Kaffirs and Hottentots, by

which the fourth river from the Kei was to be the dividing line between the races. Perhaps it was this fact which gave rise to the generally received idea that the Kei marked the eastern limit of Hottentot-Bushman advance.'

Pettman, 1931: 'Keiskamma (keisa, glittering, shining) ... generally supposed to mean "sweet" or "shining" ...'.

Maingard, 1934: 'Etymology of Keiskamma. A hint as to the right derivation is given by Van der Kemp: "it is composed of t'kei, sand, and t'kamma, water" '.

Du Plessis, 1970: '... die sleutelwoord ... is vierde. Die vier riviere van die Kei af is die Gqunube, Nahoon, Buffelsrivier en Keiskamma. Tussen die Hottentotwoord vir vier, nl. *haka* en *Keis* (kamma) sien ek geen verband nie. Maar tussen die Hottentotwoord vir vyf, nl. *gisi* en *Keis*(kamma) is daar wel groot ooreenkoms t.o.v. klank ... daar is nie meer vier riviere nie, maar wel vyf ... Keiskamma, die vyfde rivier'.

In their discussion of these quotations the writers consider the merits of the different claims, concentrating upon the probable sound and structure as well as establishing whether the assumed word would fit into the toponymical pattern. Some explanations are linguistically less acceptable than others. Sandrivier, Grootrivier, Vyfderivier and Wildsgatrivier get short shrift, while Blinkrivier, Soetrivier, Pofadderrivier/Slangrivier and Sterkrivier pass muster. The authors' tentative preference for Pofadderrivier proves, according to them, that the earliest translations are usually the most dependable. The addendum affords a glimpse into the unceasing process of research. After the entry had been completed, the authors chanced upon the following information in A.W. Burton's *Sparks from the Border Anvil*, 1950, which harks back, in one instance, to the year 1856: '... the witchdoctor ... left his kraal ... near the Keiskamma or Pufadder River (Hottentot derivation: Gheis meaning Puff adder and Khamma meaning water)'. Such confirmation undoubtedly encourages the researcher in his protracted exploration of the truth hidden in sound, structure and meaning, rough-hew them how the 'foreigner' may.

This book certainly does not fall into the category, 'light reading'. But, as a stimulating review of what has already been achieved and an open invitation to continue the quest, it offers tangible proof of the claim that research is 'the discovery of new knowledge and the extension and application of existing knowledge'.¹

Mey Hurter

¹ Rob Summers in 'The Responsibility of the University in Research', *Communiqué*, Vol. 4, no. 2, p. 115.