

South Africa

The Griqua story is one that spans time, space, and ethnicity, a product of the larger historical forces that swept over southern Africa during the last four centuries. The descendants of indigenous Khoisan and Africans, imported slaves, and Dutch settlers, the Griqua did not belong to a single culture or ethnicity. They are hard to define and do not easily fit into any categories – a problem for the white supremacists of the twentieth-century who tried to divide South African society into stark racial groupings. The Griquas were really a composite of indigenous and settler race and culture, and their unique identity was profoundly shaped by their history of trekking and settling in independent polities. But despite having some shared characteristics with the white settlers, including religion, their part indigenous history and culture really differentiated them and excluded

It was in 1813 that he visited their mission at Klaarwater, outside the borders of the Cape

Colony. Klaarwater was home to a community of relatively prosperous "Dutch" farmers.

both English and Dutch. After some consultation among themselves, the "Bastards" of
Klaarwater settled on the name Griqua.⁷ The name is derived that of an ancestral chieftain
of the Charigurigua Khoikhoi tribe, Griqua, from whom many of them claimed descent.⁸

as well as for the company employees at Cape Town. But after company employees started farming, the Khoi gradually lost their importance as trading partners. The Khoi were now valued only for their labour and land, which the Dutch coveted – as a result, relations between the settlers and Khoi deteriorated as the settlers started appropriating both. Farmers on the frontier mainly relied on the Khoi for labour, in part because they were available, having been dispossessed, and in part because they were already experienced in working with livestock.¹⁰ This spelled an end to the independent Khoi societies of the Western Cape.¹¹ At the same time, the Company decided that they would import slave labour rather than white European labour to produce food for the passing ships, because they did not want to promote extensive white settlement of the region,

great gender imbalance among the European population, with many more European men than European women, some settlers looked elsewhere for partners.¹⁵ Relationships

between Europeans, imported slaves, and Khoi produced a diverse mixed race

community did not accept his love for a black woman. He was now living among the
Griquas at the kraal of one of the Koks.²² His children, especially if they were darker of

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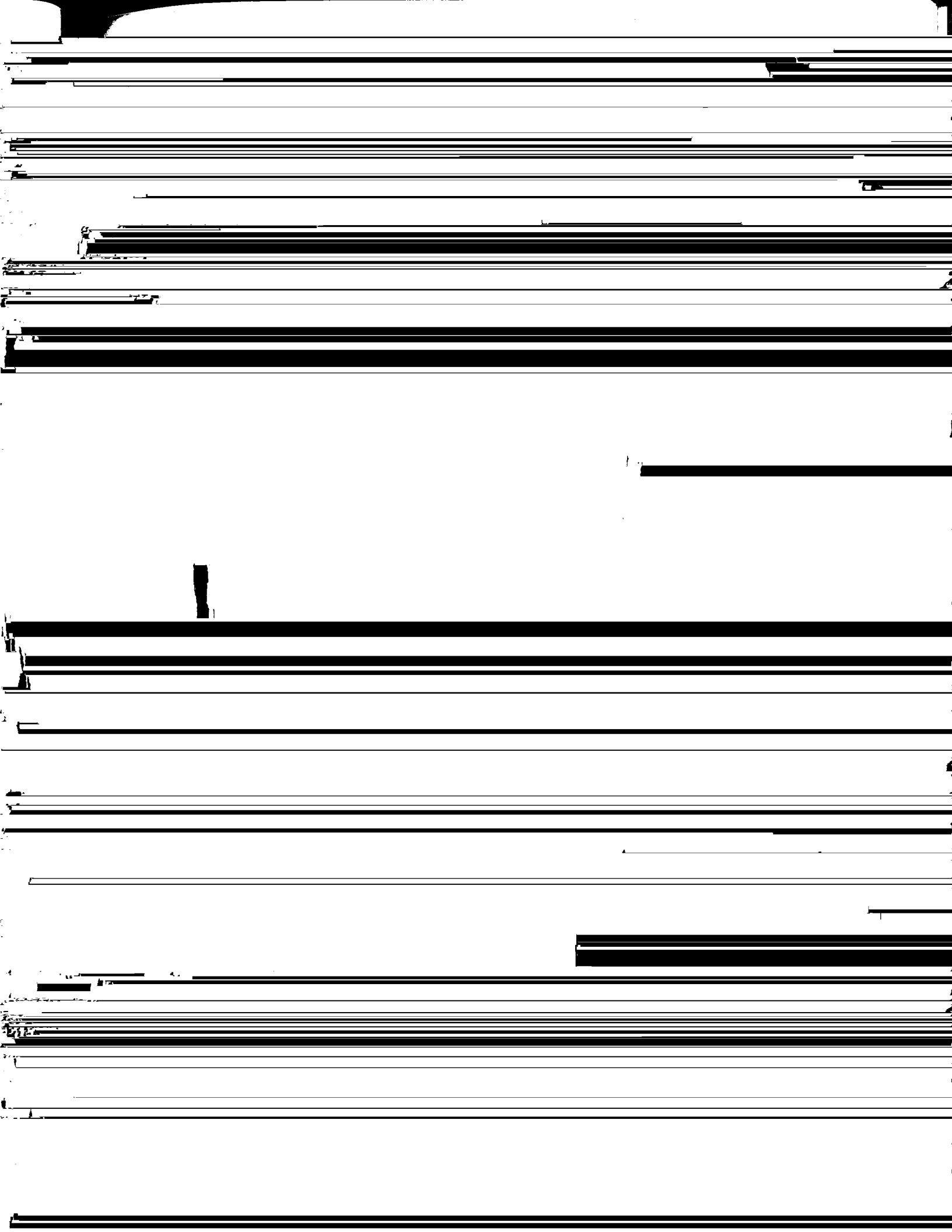
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The Griquas themselves can be traced back to a group of "Bastards" from the Khamiesberg area, on the Northwest coast of what is today South Africa.⁴⁰ Adam Kok I, the first in a line of prominent Griqua leaders, was probably leader of this group. Kok is said to be a freed slave, with at least one European ancestor.⁴¹ He was granted some burgher rights, including the right to graze his considerable flocks of livestock on a farm

... .. 1750. At some point he moved to Khamiesberg, where a number of

the century, the Kok family and their followers were already nearing the area that would become Griqualand West.⁴⁷ By the early nineteenth-century, a community of mixed-race people, Khoisan, Africans, and even Europeans, engaged in hunting, trading, and herding, had established itself at Klaarwater, which became known as Griquatown in 1813.⁴⁸

Arising beyond the borders of the colony were “independent political communities of Khoi-Bastard origin”⁴⁹ the seeds of the Griqua Cantaincies. The rise of



by some of his contemporaries to be of "pure Bushman heritage."⁵⁶ He was able to reach

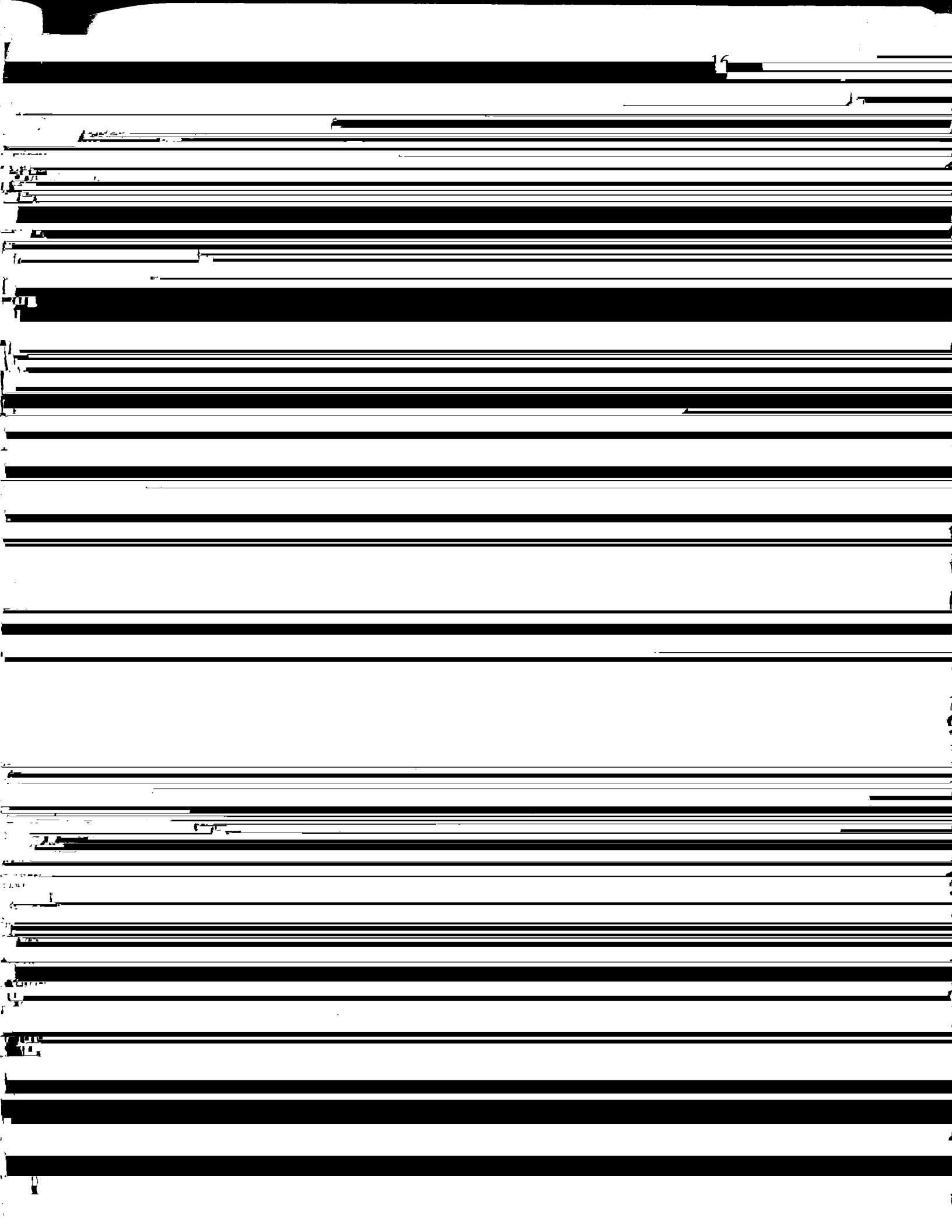
an important position in the community, suggesting that racial and social lines were not

communities.⁶¹ Even though the Griquas included people from a wide range of backgrounds, their polities were still dominated by the old, wealthy Khoi/"Bastard" families.

In the first few decades of the nineteenth-century, many of the Griquas settled down in communities, although there were those who chose to join bands of marauders that made a living through hunting and robbing. Like many places in the dry interior of Southern Africa, the limited supply of water in Griqualand West limited opportunities for large, closely settled towns. As a result, most Griquas lived outside of their town on farms.⁶² They congregated in the towns during important occasions, like church services, ~~relations or during outbreaks of hostility. Because church services always drew a large~~

which was more suited to raising livestock.⁶⁶ This peak period of prosperity enabled the

Khoisan "bee-hive" huts.⁷¹ It was probably these Griquas who were still wearing animal-skin clothing well into the nineteenth-century, as such clothing was more affordable, given the abundance of game in the frontier regions. Again it was probably mostly the



from Klaarwater reading the scripture to a nearby village of "Hottentots, Bushmen and Bootchuanas."⁸¹ Indeed, some Griquas were so devout, that the missionaries had no problem in sending them to preach in outlying communities. Interestingly, Adam Kok III and many of his Raad councillors were not yet members of the Church by 1838, yet they

for status, like Andries Waterboer.⁸⁶ The educated Griquas proved useful for

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were already quite “civilized,” in European terms. In the late 1770s, a European colonel found a community of “Bastards” living on the banks of the Orange River who wore European clothing and were Christian.⁹² Those who migrated from the Colony to the frontier regions during the eighteenth-century, including the “Bastards,” usually brought some aspects of European material culture with them – especially clothing, guns and horses.⁹³ As noted earlier, there were many other social and economic factors at play when considering the adoption of European material culture and lifestyles by the “Bastard” and later the Griqua. Many Griqua simply sought to emulate colonial

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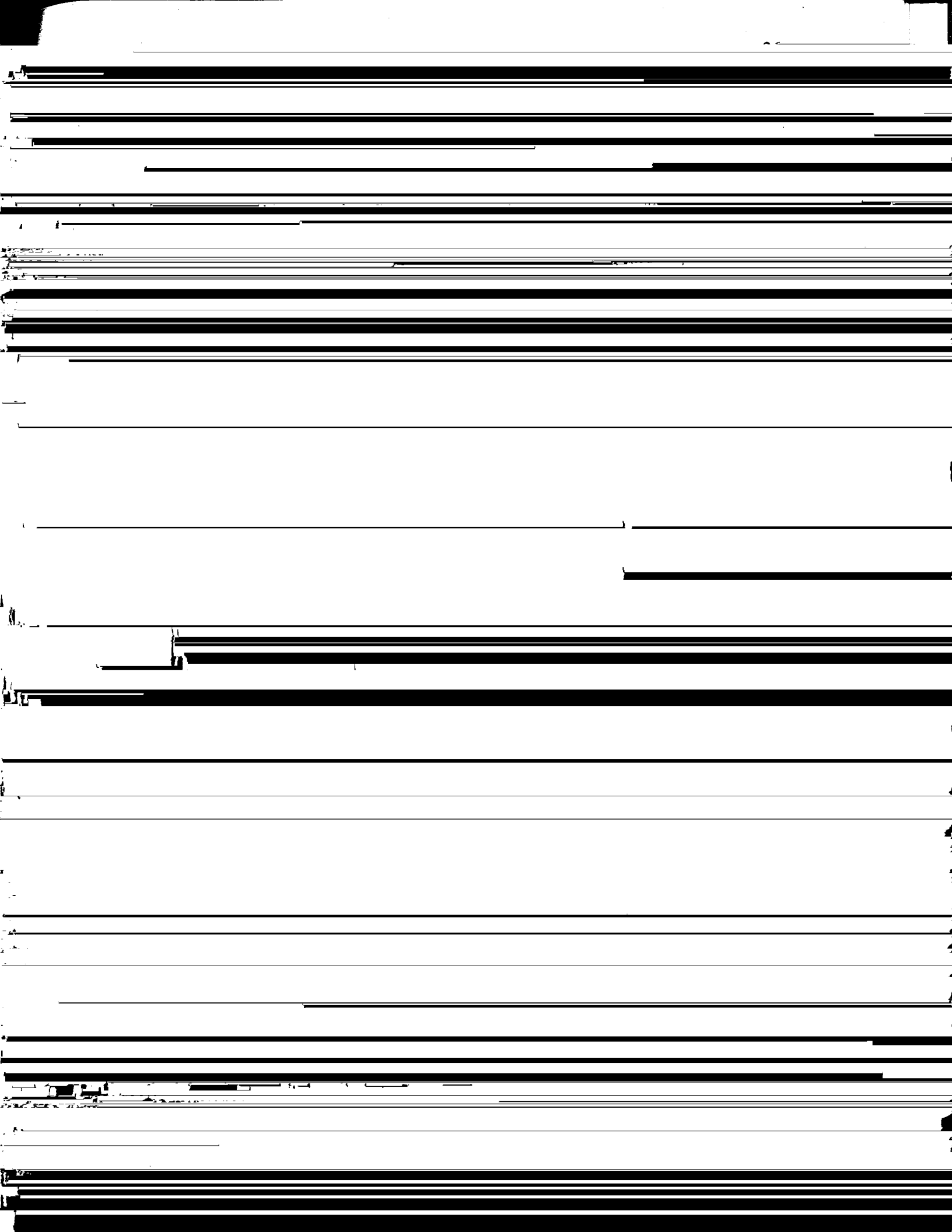
banditry after settling down. Indeed, as the Griquas of Philippolis saw their land being lost to Boer expansion, some took to "Bergenaar-style raiding." Kok either couldn't prevent them from returning to their illegal activities or tacitly supported these activities,

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Griquas of Griquatown followed a pattern similar to those of African chieftaincies, in which the chief held the land in common and any produce belonged to those who worked the land. However, the Philippolis Griquas utilized more European-style individual land

much to bring local Khoisan and Tswana under the sway of the Captains.¹²² These groups had various different patron-client relationships with the Griqua – they lived alongside



African refugees also settled under the Griquas at Philippolis.¹³² It seems that they were accepted by the Griquas, but as an underclass, not as equal members of Griqua society. In Philippolis, for example, African subjects were never fully incorporated as Griqua burghers, and lived there as squatters or labourers.¹³³ Intermarriage between the two groups was rare, partly because of their different cultural backgrounds.¹³⁴ Later, in the 1860s and 1870s when Adam Kok III and his Griquas had moved to Griqualand East, they ruled more Africans chiefdoms than ever before. African subjects of the Griquas lived under their own chiefs and were tried according to their own law and custom in less serious cases.¹³⁵ While Griquas sometimes expressed prejudice towards black Africans, the Griqualand East justice system generally treated all subjects, whether Griqua or African, fairly.¹³⁶ The Africans there paid a hut tax, which made up around 40% of the Griqua government's revenue by 1874.¹³⁷ The Griquas had scuffles with some of their African neighbours, including the Basotho. Sometimes Griqua conflicts with African communities were a result of power struggles, as the Griquas were often trying to assert their dominance over neighbouring indigenous people. Like the other settler and indigenous powers of southern Africa, the Griquas ruled over a variety of subjects and sought to assert their authority over large territories.

The relation between the Griquas and the colonial government of the Cape Colony was not clear-cut and created a lot of tension over time. Initially, it seems that the

¹³² Casalis, *My life in Basutoland*, 136.

¹³³ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 27.

¹³⁴ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 27.

¹³⁵ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 66.

¹³⁶ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 120.

government gave the Griquas permission to settle outside the colony under the care of a missionary.¹³⁸ Indeed, colonial subjects did need government permission to leave the

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communities 144 But this only worked to alienate the missionaries from the people they

South Africa.¹⁴⁹ White settlers were not allowed to leave the colony without permission, and were obliged to return, although the Great Trek did much to change this.¹⁵⁰ The government tried to prevent farmers from settling across the Orange River, forbidding them from erecting permanent structures or cultivating crops.¹⁵¹ Despite his efforts,

land to Boers for terms of up to 40 years. These long-term leases were almost like a sale, as it was hard to get rid of the lessee at the end of such a long period.¹⁵⁷ And

years. There were always land disputes between the Boers and Griquas, yet they had no arbitrator, recognized by both sides, to settle these cases.¹⁶³ As competition for land and resources ensued with the increased migration of Boers across the Orange River, the conflict, which would last for many years, created sharp definition and division of the groups involved.¹⁶⁴ As time went on, and the presence of Boers across the Orange River increased, it became clear that the Boers were generally not very willing to submit to Griqua authority — even if they lived within Griqua territory.

and K'ok were given money and gunpowder. At the same time, the colonial government,

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Kok tried to exercise his authority over these Boers living in his territory, leading some Voortrekker Boers to rise up against him.¹⁷² The Griquas and their missionaries

... were ... settled in the area 173 ...

Griquas were also selling land within the inalienable territory. Kok didn't recognize these sales, but he was unable to stop them.¹⁷⁹ Griqua land, and Kok's authority in the area, was dwindling.

New negotiations happened when the colonial government sought to withdraw

account of their colour” towards the Griqua.¹⁸¹ Arrayed against them was a state of whites who did not quite accept them as equals, and a regional colonial power that tended to favour the white settlers over the Griquas, despite their treaties. In 1861, Adam Kok III ceded sovereignty of his land to the Orange Free State, and trekked with about 2,000 of his subjects from Philippolis and Campbell across the Drakensberg Mountains to Nomansland, with the permission of the Cape’s governor.¹⁸² Eventually, they built a new town there - Kokstad.¹⁸³ Again, they were fleeing the expansion of “white” settlers, searching for a place where they could exist independently.

The Griquas of Griqualand West fell victim to other historical processes. Unlike the Philippolis Griquas, their land did not immediately sit in the way of white settler expansion. By the middle of the nineteenth-century, the towns of Griquatown and Campbell were in a bad state, with many houses deserted and in ruin, a result of the

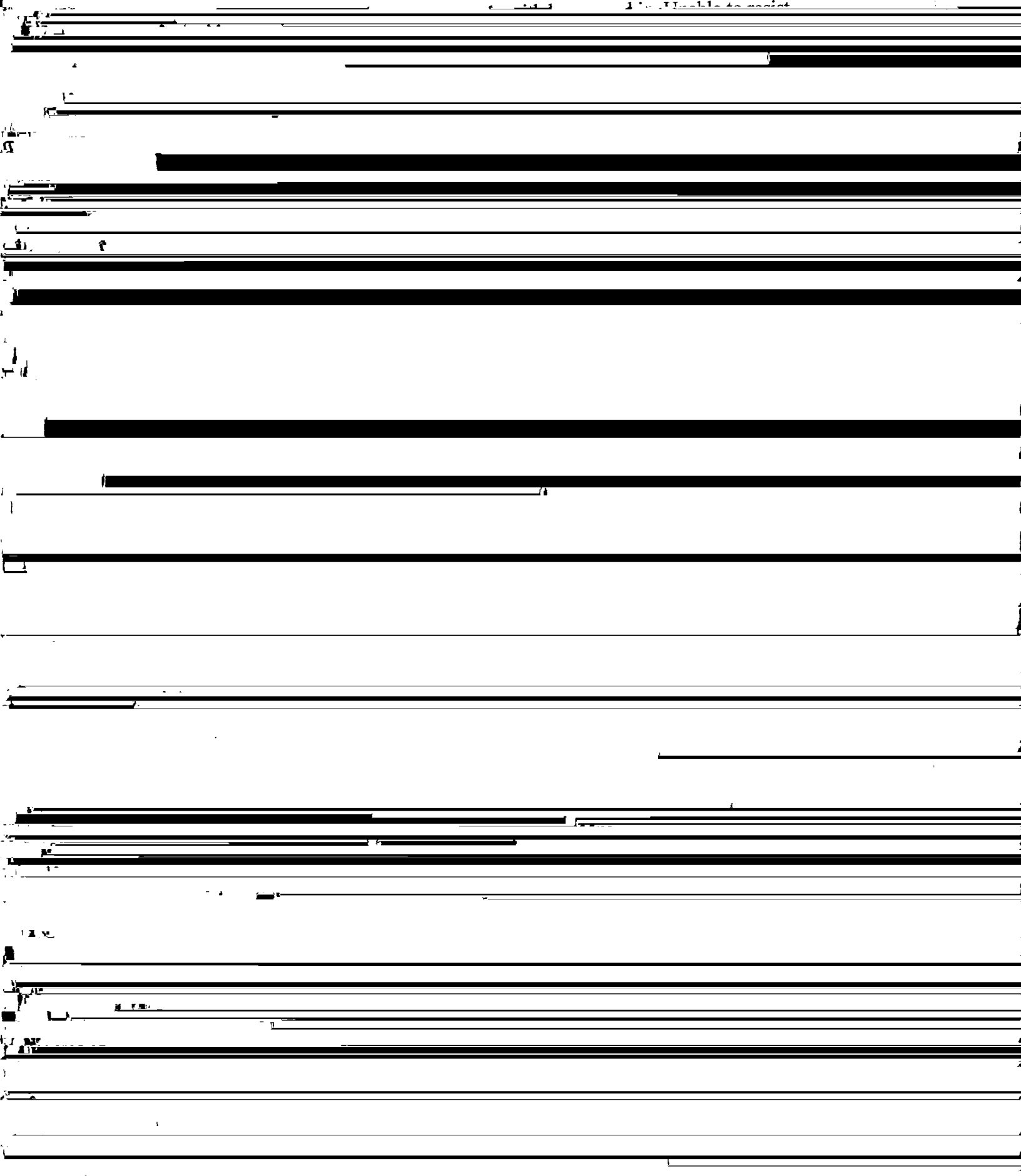
The Griqualand West Griquas also suffered from the consequences of the colonial government abandoning its indigenous allies in favour of white settler ones. In 1852, the Sand River Convention was signed, recognizing the independence of the Boer Transvaal Republic. Some saw it as a betrayal of the colony's responsibilities towards Waterboer, because the "whole of the country north of the Vaal, which was recognized to Waterboer by treaty was made a present of to the Transvaal."¹⁸⁶ In essence, it was a placation of the Boers at the cost of Waterboer's Griquas, who were of diminishing importance to the colonial government. After the death of Andries Waterboer on December 13, 1852, the colonial government further withdrew its support of Griqua polities and ended the treaty it had with the Captaincy of Griqualand West, on the grounds that the treaty had been made with Andries Waterboer alone.¹⁸⁷ The colonial government was in the process of replacing its Griqua allies with white allies, a process facilitated by the smaller population numbers of the Griquas, making it easier for the government to sweep them

¹⁸⁶ 188 G. ... 1871 ... approved by the British

people to Europeans. After his death in 1875 and the annexation of the territory by the colonial government, restrictions on land sales were removed. White land speculators quickly moved in, and the territorial base of the polity was eroded. By the turn of the century, just a handful of Griquas remained landowners, and the prosperity once

189 The Griqua community of Kokstad

an increasingly white dominated order. Ultimately, they were in the way of white settlers



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Appendix 1 – Map

