

J.T. van der Kemp's Link to the British Anti-slavery Network and his Civil Rights Activism on Behalf of the Khoi (1801 – 1803)

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Abstract

In this article, I firstly trace Van der Kemp's link to the British anti-slavery network. Secondly, and following my exposition of Van der Kemp's anti-slavery advocacy (cf. Smit 2016), I argue that the position and treatment of the Khoi should be seen as similar to that of slaves during the first half of the eighteenth century at the Cape. This provides credence to Van der Kemp's (and Philip's) vehement criticism of both government and frontier settler farmers for their treatment of the Khoi. Finally, I provide a link of Van der Kemp's civil rights activism, to that of the British anti-slave trade network and its discourse on civil rights in Britain at the time. (In this article I do not deal with the significance of Van der Kemp's post-conversionist views and publications, vis-à-vis his 'enlightenment' views and scholarship dating from the pre- and post-deist phases of his life.)

Keywords: J.T. van der Kemp, Khoi (or Khoikhoi/ Khoisan), Anti-slavery network, John Newton, Thomas Clarkson, William Wilberforce, Clapham circle, John Locke, Thomas Gisbourne, civil rights activism, civil rights discourse

1 Introduction

At the beginning of the eighteenth century in South Africa, and due to progressive settler colonisation at the Cape, the Khoi people were mostly a permanently displaced people. Over more than one hundred and fifty years, the

various Khoi ethnic groups progressively lost both cattle and land, despite their resistance and sporadic clashes with colonial settlers and cattle raiding commandos. The forces at work ranged from the variable dynamics of the unequal systems of the bartering of sheep, goats and cattle in exchange for copper, beads, tobacco and alcohol with the Dutch settlement at Cape Town, to the constantly increasing advancing of colonising settler encroachment on and conquest of traditionally Khoi lands (cf. Marks 1972:55- 80; Elphick 1977:277; Elphick & Malherbe 1989:3-65; Crais 1992:40-44 amongst others). The result was that when J.T. van der Kemp made the Khoi's acquaintance in 1801, they mostly comprised of landless poor living in the Cape and squatting in its villages – e.g. the settler village of Graaf Reinet. Some also served as poorly paid labourers on settler farms and/ or in the colonial dragoons. Some groups though roamed across the constantly shifting colonial frontier borders (both to the East and the North of Cape Town) under leaders who lead intermittent counter-expeditions against the brutal excesses of the frontier settler farmers and colonial commandos. To this we may add those who associated with so-called 'run-away slaves', 'banditti', and deserted sailors and soldiers beyond the colonial borders. There were also some minor Khoi-related settlements beyond the colonial borders, e.g. the Griquas (cf. Marks 1972; and Penn 1989; 1994; 2005). (Some Khoi were also settled at the Moravian mission station at Baviaanskloof/ Genadendal since 1792 – cf. Viljoen 1995.)

When Van der Kemp arrived in Graaf Reinet following his return from Xhosaland in 1801, he decided to start a mission amongst the Khoi rather than the Xhosa – contrary to his original plan. This was due to his concern over the 'state of the Khoi nation' and the 'conditions' under which he saw the Khoi live at Graaff Reinet. Since this moment, and for the next ten years till his death, he (together with some of his fellow missionaries, such as James Read), would become a champion of Khoi interests vis-à-vis the exploitation perpetrated by both government and frontier settler farmers. This article provides the background to these dynamics. It is my contention that these can only be fully appreciated if we trace Van der Kemp's personal link to the British anti-slavery movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in Britain and the related discourse on civil rights. It is Van der Kemp's *link* to this then developing network since especially the late 1780s in Britain – with the abolition of the slave trade in 1807; and the abolition of slavery as such in 1833 more than twenty years after his death in 1811 – that impacted his concerns and interventions for the well-being and 'happiness' of the Khoi.

The tracing of this link, will also feed into a later publication on the actual discourse that informed Van der Kemp's vehement opposition to slavery and the nature of his civil rights advocacy for the Khoi evident in his intense and often heated exchanges with the colonial Governor(s) and resident government officials on behalf of the Khoi in the period 1801 - 1810. So, to establish this *link*, is an important step in our study of Van der Kemp's intellectual legacy.

For this article, then, I firstly briefly trace this link and network. This is followed by a brief linking of Van der Kemp's views on the position and treatment of the Khoi to slavery at the Cape, and his parallel advocacy of anti-slavery, and the Khoi's freedom and their civil rights.

2 Van der Kemp's Link to the Anti-slavery Network in Britain

As indicated in Smit (2016:37 - 42), Van der Kemp was against the slave trade. In this analysis, I argued that there are at least four perspectives that can be identified in his South African texts related to his anti-slavery advocacy.

The first concerns the law against the baptism of slaves which he became aware of in his interaction with slaves; the second, his attempts to have this law abolished; the third, his aversion to this institution [i.e. slavery as such]; and the fourth, the news on the abolition of the slave trade (Smit 2016:37).

Van der Kemp's anti-slavery stance and advocacy for the abolition of slavery, then, is well attested in his South African texts. Indicative is not only his attempts to have the law against the baptism of slaves abolished – which did come about due to his submissions to the colonial government, one year after his death, in 1812 – but also his organising of a celebration at Bethelsdorp in 1807 when news reached South Africa that Britain have abolished the British slave trade.

Van der Kemp's main link to the evangelical anti-slavery discourse of the late eighteenth century in Britain, that I could trace, and that we can be historically certain of, involves his frequent visits to the Anglican Reverend John Newton of London. On behalf of the LMS, Newton was his contact person when Van der Kemp came to London in 1797 to be both ordained as minister

of the Church of Scotland (3 November 1797, Presbyterian Church of Crown Plaza) – one of the non-conformist denominations associated with the LMS – and to meet with representatives of the LMS, before his departure to South Africa as first LMS President of African Missions in 1799 (cf. Enklaar 1772:104f). Enklaar (1988:49), in his celebrated biography of Van der Kemp, reports that Van der Kemp frequently interacted with Newton during his eight weeks stay in London. These visits were precipitated by the fact that Newton was the LMS contact person through which Van der Kemp’s suitability for the mission in South Africa was established by the LMS via a mutual friend in the Netherlands, Mr. Cornelius Brem, an elder of the Scottish Reformed congregation in Rotterdam (Enklaar 1988:47). On request of Newton (on behalf of the LMS), Brem – in his capacity as life-long friend of the Van der Kemp family – submitted a letter describing the ‘character’ of Van der Kemp, also providing a brief life-history and commenting on his suitability for the mission (cf. Smit 2015:14f). So, when Van der Kemp visited London, it was only natural that he became acquainted with Newton as his main contact person and intermediary between himself and the LMS directors (cf. also Enklaar 1972: 104f). (His initial correspondence with the LMS was via the LMS secretary John Love; cf. Enklaar 1972:100f, 108.)

Newton’s significance is that he himself was one of the most prominent leaders in the anti-slavery movement in Britain during the late 1780s and 1790s. His own views and writings formed part of existing discourses around slavery, and especially the anti-slavery movement. Before his evangelical conversion and subsequent training for the Anglican ministry, and becoming an Anglican priest, he himself was the captain of British slave ships that operated off the slave coasts of Africa. Concerning leadership, he was also one of the first generation and leaders – together with the wealthy John Thornton (cf. Tomkins 2010:24ff) – of the Clapham circle, a collaborator with Wilberforce on the latter’s submissions to the House of Commons concerning the abolition of the slave trade over a twenty year period until its abolition in 1807, and the author of the very significant *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade* (1788) (cf. *The Life of John Newton 1725 – 1807*). Amongst others, this book provided evidence of the inhumanity of the slave trade for the submissions Wilberforce and his collaborators had to continuously amass and submit to parliament in support of his repeatedly proposed bills for the abolition of the slave trade. (He also published an autobiography in which he recounted his life-history related to slavery, and a number of collections of his

numerous letters and other publications – cf. Newton [c. 1778] 2003; Aitken 2007:359f; and Tomkins 2010: 265.) With regard to Wilberforce, the latter attended Newton's sermons when he was eight years old, and sought out his advice after his conversion experience in his early twenties, e.g. with regard to his staying on in politics as M.P. or seeking to study for the priesthood (cf. *The Life of John Newton 1725 – 1807*; John Newton, 1725 – 1807). Newton advised him to stay on in politics in the interests of the parliamentary advancement of the anti-slavery cause.

Concerning the content of Newton's publication (of forty one pages), he advocated the abolition of the slave trade; provides a first-hand account of the death of one fifth of all British sailors on slave ships annually (due to sickness and slave revolts); the appalling conditions under which both male and female slaves are shipped – in chains, with many dying *en route* to the Americas; the nature of the procuring of slaves from their fellow Africans on the mainland of Africa; the conditions under which slaves have to live aboard ship – which sometimes see as many as half die before they reach their destination; and the conditions under which they are sold once they arrive at their destination. Symptomatic of the abolition movement's arguments based on 'moral sensibility', 'humanity' and 'conscience', Newton (1788:14) says that the effect of slavery has a 'direct tendency to efface the *moral sense*, to rob the heart of every gentle and *humane disposition*, and to harden it, like steel, against all impressions of *sensibility*' (e.a. cf. also Carey 2003a; 2003b; and 2005). Stating a number of times that he writes thirty years after he himself has been a captain of British slave ships, he finally says that he writes out of,

... conviction, that the share I have formerly had in the trade, binds me, in *conscience*, to throw what light I am able upon the subject, now it is likely to become a point of Parliamentary investigation ... [as well as in the interests of] the *feelings of humanity*, and in regard for the honour, and welfare of my country (e.a.; Newton 1788:41).

To the reader, he says, he appeals to '*common sense*' which is in contrast to 'a commerce, so *iniquitous*, so *cruel*, so *oppressive*, so *destructive*, as the African slave trade' (e.a.; Newton 1788:41).

With his publication, as well as his close assistance of Wilberforce, Newton was one of the leaders of the anti-slavery movement in Britain. Historically, the movement's wider network had its origins among the

Quakers, but came about especially in the wake of the publications of Granville Sharp (1769), John Wesley's book of 1774, and Thomas Clarkson's dissertation on this matter in 1784. These impacted the anti-slavery movement among British evangelicals decisively (cf. 'The Abolition Project' on the 'Quakers' and 'William Wilberforce'; as well as Molema 1920:182; Ross 1986:33f).

Among the Quakers, it has a long history, in fact, since 1661, when George Fox founded this religious grouping, the 'Religious Society of Friends' or Quakers. He agitated 'against slaveholding by Society members' and spoke 'against slavery on his visit to North America' (cf. Smith n.d.). In Britain, the Quakers also advocated an end to slavery, and if not as an institution, then at least the slave trade (cf. Mason 2001:92). More broadly speaking, the antislavery movement became a 'popular movement' in the 1780s in Britain. This was so especially among evangelicals, in the wake of John Wesley's publication, *Thoughts upon Slavery* (1774), wherein, for his evidence of the inhumanity of the slave trade, he drew on Quaker reports (cf. Mason 2001:103; Carey 2003a). In addition to these reports, Wesley himself was influenced by Granville Sharp (cf. Carey 2003a:273f), an Anglican priest, probably by his *A Representation of the Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery* (1769), the first publication in England attacking slavery, and an American Quaker – Anthony Benezet (cf. esp. his publication of 1772).

Whereas the main tenor of the Quakers' and Wesley's advocacy was the abolition of slavery as such, this was not yet taken up by other Christian movements or denominations in Britain during the 1770s – including the Moravians. Even though the latter spearheaded Christian missions amongst colonised peoples and slaves in the colonies, they did not propagate the abolition of slavery as yet. Even so, the publication by the Moravian, Spangenberg ([1782] 1788:42), *An Account of the Manner in which the Protestant Church of the Unitas Fratrum or United Brethren Preach the Gospel and Carry on the Mission among the Heathen* (English translation in 1788), became a defining text on Christian missions in the colonies across the Christian denominations into the 1830s (cf. Mason 2001:147). It propagated the conversion of slaves, not abolition, but a 'benign slavery' to especially Christian slaves. It used Pauline mission preaching on the equality of both 'slave and free' as template, including the notion of the example missionaries (and Christians) have to set to converts.

Conversely, it was the anti-slavery propagation of the Quakers in Brit-

ain, though, that markedly influenced Clarkson (cf. Clarkson 1808:110ff; 131ff) and those he in turn influenced and inspired during the 1880s. Clarkson wrote a dissertation in Latin, in 1785, for which he received the first prize at the University of Cambridge. The English translation was published a year later in 1886, and titled: *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African*. Significant for the South African anti-slavery discourse is that Clarkson already titled his last chapter in Part 1 of his dissertation: 'Chap. VIII. Their [meaning slavery's] Revival in Africa. – Short History of their Revival. – Five Classes of Involuntary Slaves among the Moderns. – Cruel Instance of the Dutch Colonists at the Cape' (cf. also Clarkson 1808). With regard to this latter point, Clarkson (1786) quotes Sparrman (1785), saying:

Having thus explained as much of the history of modern servitude, as is sufficient for the prosecution of our design, we should have closed our account here, but that a work, just published, has furnished us with a singular anecdote of the colonists of a neighbouring nation, which we cannot but relate. The learned author [Sparrman], having described the method which the Dutch colonists at the Cape make use of to take the [Khoi] and enslave them takes occasion, in many subsequent parts of the work, to mention the dreadful effects of the practice of slavery; which, as he justly remarks, 'leads to all manner of misdemeanours and wickedness. Pregnant women', says he, 'and children in their tenderest years, were not at this time, neither indeed are they ever, exempt from the effects of the hatred and spirit of vengeance constantly harboured by the colonists, with respect to the [San] nation; *excepting such indeed as are marked out to be carried away into bondage.*

It is this publication by Clarkson and later evidence of the realities and physical conditions of slavery that Clarkson amassed and submitted to William Wilberforce that, amongst others, convinced the latter to take up the anti-slavery cause in Parliament (cf. William Wilberforce 1759 – 1833; Clarkson 1808:241; 243ff). Apart from Quaker influence, Clarkson wrote his text also under influence of the surgeon and later Anglican priest, James Ramsey who wrote *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (1784a); and *An Inquiry into the Effects of Putting a*

Stop to the African Slave Trade: And of Granting Liberty to the Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies (1784b) (cf. Clarkson 1808:171).

Wilberforce ‘converted’ to Christian Evangelicalism in 1785 (cf. his strongly evangelical book of 1789, which went through eighteen editions into the 1830s – *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes of This Country Contrasted with Real Christianity*). It is well-known that it was Clarkson and Newton that convinced Wilberforce to not enter religious ministry after his ‘conversion’, but to remain in public politics on behalf of the anti-slavery movement (cf. Aitken 2007:275f; 299f; and Tomkins 2010:49). Throughout the 1790s and early 1800s, and despite many setbacks (cf. Tomkins 2010:66-72; 80-90) Wilberforce worked tirelessly on his anti-slavery campaigns – with regard to his repeated submissions to parliament concerning the abolition of the slave trade (1807), and later, the abolition of slavery *per se* (1834), one year after his death. (The leadership of this latter campaign was taken over from Wilberforce by Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, in 1824 (cf. Temperley 1974:39). Whereas his book of 1789 provided some theological arguments for the public critical engagement of Christians, the publication of his book, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade: Addressed to the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of Yorkshire* (1807), coincided with the year Britain abolished the slave trade, and addresses the matter in all its aspects comprehensively. (Cf. too *An Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade* 1807.) It needs to be noted that to have advocated for the abolition of the slave *trade*, and not slavery as such, was a decision taken by Wilberforce and the Clapham circle already in the late 1780s. The reason is that, in their estimation, parliament would not have approved the abolition of slavery as such (during the late 1780s and throughout the 1790s), since the majority in parliament, including bishops and clergy, and those colonial merchants parliamentarians represented, were themselves slave holders, and substantially benefitted financially from slavery. The advocacy for the abolition of the slave trade, as a first step though, stood a better chance of approval, since this could be argued on ‘moral sense’ and ‘humanitarian’ grounds. It was also believed that once the trade in slavery would be stopped, the abolition of slavery as such would, in time abate and also be stopped. (Prior to the landmark decision in 1807, there was a legal case in Britain in 1772 that ruled that when a slave arrived in Britain, he or she would be set free immediately on arrival. This came about due to the advocacy of Granville Sharpe.)

Significantly – and providing some insight into the biblical theology that impacted the anti-slavery discourse – Wilberforce prefaced his book with two Biblical texts. In the original publication, they read as follows:

There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free: but Christ is all, and in all. Put on therefore, bowels of mercies, kindness, &c – Col 3:12. 12.

God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth – Acts 27:26.

Amongst others, these biblical texts featured centrally to anti-slavery and the later abolitionist discourse.

Apart from the publications by the anti-slavery movement's leaders, institutionally, it is important to also note that Newton, Clarkson, and Wilberforce (amongst others) formed the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (or: The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, est. 1787; Aitken 2007:310,323). Throughout the 1790s and into the early part of the 1800s, Newton and Clarkson, together with other collaborators in the Society worked closely with Wilberforce on the abolition of the slave trade – and that despite many setbacks (which I shall not cover here). Their inputs also impacted Wilberforce's speeches before the House of Commons during the 1790s, starting with his 1789 Abolition Speech (cf. Clarkson 1808:272) and the drafting and submission of the Slave Trade Act of 1807.

Van der Kemp was fundamentally influenced by this anti-slavery network and the discourse it has been developing when he visited London in 1797. His anti-slavery stance and advocacy in South Africa resonates with Newton's discourse as well as the tenor of the publications of the wider abolitionist network and their discourse. Amongst others, this is especially evident in Van der Kemp's references to the 'cruelty' slaves (and especially Khoi) experience, and that 'conscience' and the dictates of 'common sense' demand that one resists this horrible institution. We cannot understand Van der Kemp's intervention for and on behalf of the Khoi without this foundational perspective, i.e. his link to the wider abolitionist network (and its discourse) in Britain.

3 The Khoi as Similar in Position and Treatment to the Slaves at the Cape

As for Van der Kemp, for John Philip (1775 – 1851), the position of the Khoi at the Cape was that of *de facto* slaves – even though it was colonial policy not to enslave indigenous, colonised peoples, dating from the time of the D.E.I.C. (cf. Philip 1828:358). Indicative is the repeated arguments by both Van der Kemp and later, John Philip, that the Khoi are a ‘free people’ or a ‘free nation’ and that they should not be treated like slaves. This is the main tenor of Van der Kemp’s continuous critique of the frontier settler farmers for their ill treatment of the Khoi, his complaints to the governor and other government officials (cf. Smit 2016), as well as that of Philip (cf. the latter’s summary of his argument in the last pages of the first volume of his book, *Researches in South Africa ...* 1828:399-402). This a central point to the argument for Van der Kemp’s intervention for and on behalf of the Khoi, and I provide some perspectives below in brief.

Reporting on the arrival of Janssens as appointed Batavian Governor at the Cape in 1803, Philip (1828:90) reports:

On the arrival of General Janssens, the frontier Boors proposed that all [Khoi] should be seized; that every individual among them should have a chain put upon his legs; and that they should be distributed among them as slaves. The state of public opinion in Europe would have not admitted, had the General been so inclined, a method of enslaving the people, of so direct a nature; and the proposal was rejected with becoming spirit.

This reference to 1803, provides some insight into the frontier settler farmers’ views of the Khoi at the time of the arrival of the Batavian government at the Cape. This was though not shared by Janssens, who was influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau – his notion of the equality of all and that ‘civilisation’ has a detrimental effect on people in the state of nature – and who advocated the freeing of slaves from birth, and who also wanted to stop the importing of slaves into the colony. This general policy was shared with revolutionary Holland at the time, because France abolished slavery in 1794 (though Napoleon re-instituted it in 1802.) Even though Janssens could not fulfil this vision (since the Batavian governance at the Cape came to an end in 1806), the quote from Philip provides some perspective on the general views of settler

farmers of the Khoi at the time. This was due to their shortage of labour. Important though, for our purposes, is the positioning of the Khoi with that of slaves and the fact that they were treated similarly by the settler farmers. It is important to note that it predates the British occupation of the Cape in 1795 and that it would continue into the 1800s. This is borne out by numerous scholars' research, and I provide a few brief perspectives.

As an introductory statement to his book, Worden (1985:4) for instance states:

The shortage of slaves [in the period 1652 - 1795] led to the [progressive] incorporation of Khoikhoi and San labourers into the economy. They entered into a social structure already conditioned by the slave system and, although nominally free, became subject to similar means of coercion and control which were later to be applied in a modified form to Bantu-speaking labourers.

The same assertion is present in the studies by Penn (1989; 1994) for the D.E.I.C. period and the early part of the nineteenth century. He (Penn 1989:17f) concludes that after 1770, the 'status of both free and captive Khoisan differed little from each other, or indeed from the status of slaves'. Settler farmers treated 'Khoikhoi laborers' 'the same way' as slaves. This, he says, gave rise to a 'common consciousness [of rebellion/ insurrection] between slaves and Khoikhoi laborers' (Penn 1994:44,42; cf. also Newton-King 1981 with regard to the Khoi rebellion of 1799-1803; and Ross 1983:52). The situation described by Worden, Penn, and Newton-King is the situation Van der Kemp encountered, and it is Van der Kemp (and Philip, and their fellow missionaries) that impacted the Khoi 'consciousness' in addition to the latter's own deductions. Nevertheless, and despite these interventions as well as the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807, slavery of both nominal slaves and the Khoi at the Cape persisted regardless. This is similar to what was experienced in other British colonies – that where the hope was that the abolition of the slave trade would systematically bring slavery to an end over time, this did not happen. In response, abolitionists in Britain developed a renewed energy under the leadership of Wilberforce and Buxton (since 1824) to advocate for the abolition of slavery as such. Indicative of the fact that the Khoi remained in the *de facto* position of slaves and that they were treated like slaves, we can also further refer to Philip (1828) and Ross (1986).

Quoting the Scottish Enlightenment Philosopher, Adam Ferguson (1767:132), Philip (1828:159) says:

‘A People’, says a profound thinker [Ferguson], ‘are cultivated or unimproved in their talents, in proportion as those talents are employed in the practice of the arts and the affairs of society; they are improved or corrupted in their manners, in proportion as they are encouraged and directed to act on the maxims of freedom and justice, or as they are degraded into a state of meanness and servitude’. The [Khoi] is in a worse condition than the slave: the system of oppression under which the [Khoi] groans is attended with all the evils of the slave system; and those evils, in many instances more aggravated in the virulence of their character, without any of those mitigating circumstances which have been urged in defence of common slavery. The only difference in favour of the condition of the [Khoi] is, that he cannot according to the institutions of the colony, be publicly bought and sold; but this difference is more in name than in reality, when it is recollected that he is at present nothing more than an object of patronage, a perquisite of office, a kind of transferable property; and that this circumstance, which makes him of less value to the master, subjects him to hardships, from which the common slave is, to a certain degree exempted.

Philip (1828:166) also says:

Having shown the efficacious means employed to stifle the complaints of the [Khoi], and their unprotected state in the service of the colonists, I must advert to another feature in their hard condition, which might have led us to suppose that the appellation of “*Free People*,” bestowed upon them in the proclamations of the government, had been employed in cruel mockery, had we not known that it was intended to conceal from the British public, the *shocking state of slavery and oppression* under which they have been placed.

With regard to this point, Ross’s (1986:96) interpretation is as follows:

In practice, Philip saw two things to be absolutely necessary for the good of all the inhabitants of South Africa – the ending of slavery and

the *de facto* slavery of the Khoi and of the other 'free persons of colour'. He was willing to leave the ending of legal slavery to the work of Wilberforce [and his friend Buxton since 1824] and the Anti-Slavery society in Britain, where, at Westminster, it could alone be effectively done. He saw his own particular task to be the ending of the practical servile status of the Khoi and other persons of colour in the colony.

With regard to Khoi 'freedom' – central to Van der Kemp's argument – Ross (1982:44) says:

... it was the Khoisan, not their potential master, who were largely responsible for their own independence, however fragile, temporary and precarious that may have been. Seeing the degradation and powerlessness of the slaves alongside whom they had to work, the Khoisan did everything in their power to avoid being reduced to a similar position. Throughout the period of slavery they stressed their distinct, free status. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, an English traveller noted that the Cape Town Khoi whom he otherwise noted as degraded and servile, 'have a great love of liberty, and an utter Aversion to slavery. Neither will they hire themselves in your service longer than from Morning to Night, for they will be paid and sleep Freeman, and no hirelings When necessary, they defended their right to independence with guerrilla war. Not until slavery was abolished did the Khoisan allow themselves to be lumped together with the ex-slaves

Ross (1986:101) also points out that it was another friend of Philip's in Britain, Sir Jahleel Brenton,

... who was instrumental in persuading Wilberforce that the plight of the Khoi was intimately associated with the problem of slavery in the Cape. Once convinced that this was the business of the anti-slavery lobby, Wilberforce pressed this matter to the House (of Commons) and had it accepted.

As for Van der Kemp, for Philip, the position of the Khoi at the Cape was then

that of *de facto* slaves. This was so prior to 1795 and continued into the 1800s.

4 Anti-Slavery Activism Paralleled by Civil Rights Activism

Indicative of their civil rights activism on behalf of the Khoi, which parallels their anti-slavery activism, is that both Van der Kemp and Philip mainly petitioned the governors and colonial administrators of their time in their advocacy and grievances about the behaviour of the settler farmers towards the Khoi. This relates to their repeated assertions to the colonial government of the ‘freedom’ of the Khoi on the one hand, and their advocacy for the Khoi to participate in civil life, as a ‘free people’ on an ‘equal footing’ with the colonists, and that with their own land. The settler articulation of ‘freedom’ with ‘civil society’ at the Cape discursively already dated at least from the 1770s under the then still D.E.I.C. rule (cf. Smit 2016:7-9). This, however, was not the case for colonised people(s). As indicated above, the Khoi have progressively lost their land, and found themselves in a situation similar to that of slaves – without officially-recognised ‘freedom’, ‘civil rights’, and land by the colonial government. In van der Kemp’s formulations, he advocated for instance for the ‘*rights of a free nation*’ (LMS II EL2 1803:94) for the Khoi; for them to be ‘*perfectly free, upon an equal footing in every respect with the Colonists*’ (LMS TVDK 1801:494; e.a.); that government communicates to them that ‘their *rights*’ are ‘acknowledged’ and grant them ‘a tract of *land* ... separate from the boors’ (VDKF 1801:cxxxvii); and that they should not be compelled into ‘service’ to the ‘boors’ or ‘his Majesty’s service’ ‘against their will’ or without their ‘own *free* inclination’ (VDKR 1802: clv).

These ideas became popular among anti-slave trade advocates in Britain and North America during the second half of the eighteenth century. Amongst others, Van der Kemp’s views resonate with Locke’s in his second *Treatise* (1690) on civil government, especially his grounding of ‘political power’ in ‘Natural Law’. Right at the outset, he says:

In this state [the state of nature] men [people] are perfectly *free* to order their actions, and dispose of their *possessions* and *themselves*, in any way they like, without asking anyone’s permission – subject only to limits set by the law of nature. It is also a state of *equality*, in which no-one has more power and authority than anyone else; because it is

simply obvious that creatures of the same species and status, all born to all the same advantages of nature and to the use of the same abilities, should also be *equal* in other ways, with *no-one being subjected to or subordinate to anyone else ...* (e.a.; Locke 1690:189f).

Locke's natural law principle was that all were free and equal in a state of nature, and that all equally dispensed of their property or possessions, including their labour, according to their own decision. As such, though, 'he [or she] isn't at liberty to destroy himself [or herself], or even to destroy any created thing in his [or her] possession unless something nobler than its mere preservation is at stake'. In this state, Locke also says that one may also not 'take away or damage anything that contributes to the preservation of someone else's life, liberty, health, limb, or goods'. If this was not possible, people would be reduced to a state of slavery. In this regard, and as part of his introduction to 'slavery', Locke (1690: 205f) says:

The *natural liberty* of man [people] is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of men [people] but to be ruled only by the law of nature. The *liberty of man* [the human being] in society is to be under no legislative power except the one established by consent in the commonwealth; and not under the power of any will or under restraint from any law except what is enacted by the legislature in accordance with its mandate *Freedom of men [people] under government* is having a standing rule to live by, common to everyone in the society in question, and made by the legislative power that has been set up in it; a liberty to follow one's own will in anything that isn't forbidden by the rule, and not to be subject to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of another man [person]: as *freedom of nature* is to be under no other restraint but the law of nature.

Under a government – which for Locke could be either monarchical in the British democratic, representative sense or republican (in the North American sense) – 'civil rights' was legalised and dispensed by government. Government had to ensure the protection of the rights of its citizens and also guaranteed the space in which all could participate in civil life (and political life) equally without harm or repression.

In the British colonies, it was the laws and regulations pertaining to both metropole and colony that determined and regulated the civil rights of settlers. Van der Kemp – as would other humanitarians – advocated that the same civil rights of British citizens be extended to colonised people(s), the Khoi in this case. Significantly, his discourse and activism on behalf of the Khoi were on par and equally echoed the ‘rights’ discourse and its related activist expressions during the latter half of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century in Britain (cf. Human Rights 1760 – 1815, for a brief summary).

With regard to the general anti-slavery discourse of the time though, the most significant civil rights contributions were present in the repeated focus on ‘freedom’, the biblically-founded Christian beliefs in the ‘equality’ of all people, and the proclaiming of the civil rights of all. Within the anti-slave trade movement, this is most centrally captured in the publication, *The Principles of Moral Philosophy Investigated and Briefly Applied to the Constitution of Civil Society* (1789), by Thomas Gisbourne. He was a fellow Clapham circle member, and close associate of Wilberforce (and Clarkson). The main focus of Gisbourne’s book, was his critique of Paley, based on the fact that the latter’s notion that ‘utility’ is the basis of morality, is incompatible with the precepts of ‘reason [later ‘unassisted reason’], confirmed by revelation [or scripture]’ (cf. esp. Gisbourne 1789:7,25,81-85). In his exposition of the articulation of ‘reason’ and ‘scripture’, he echoes Locke’s views on ‘natural law’ (cf. Smit forthcoming). Wilberforce believed that Gisbourne’s scripture-based view conclusively refuted Paley (cf. Gascoigne 2002:244).

With regard to the mission, Van der Kemp advocated to the LMS directors, that parallel to their anti-slavery convictions and pronouncements, ‘religion’/ ‘Christianity’ should be articulated with ‘civil’ society. At least in two instances, he refers to ‘civil’ life, in his text on ‘African Missions’ and the different positions a ‘missionary establishment’ should have, e.g. that the missions should articulate with ‘civil and social affairs’; and amongst others, that each mission station should have a ‘Regulator [for the mission’s] civil and household affairs’ (LMS II AM 1803:172; LMS II AM 1803:173-175). This too resonates with Locke, in that he argued that ‘property’ (under which we could understand ‘household affairs’) is an individual matter for the individual to decide on.

A positive appreciation of ‘civil’ society in which all are treated equally, is also foundational to Van der Kemp’s notion and uses of

'civilization'. In this context, for him, 'civilization' was embedded in the late eighteenth century notion of 'civil' rights – even though Van der Kemp and the broader anti-slavery discourse obviously drew their perspectives from biblical understandings of 'equality'.

It needs to be stressed that the anti-slave trade discourse as well as the civil rights activist discourse were part and parcel of a religious discourse – where 'religion' and 'Christianity' were used interchangeably. Clarkson already makes the point of the equality of all people (quoting Paul), that there is no distinction between a free person and a slave, that all are equal, and that the only force which brought about the abolition of slavery was Christianity – in his discourse, where this happened in history prior to 1785.

John Philip would develop this advocacy of 'civil rights' further in his letters and book (cf. esp. Ross's chapter, 'John Philip and Civil Rights' in Ross 1986: 77 – 115). Akin to Van der Kemp (and Locke), Philip (1828) also brings the notions of 'civil' conditions (the 'climate') that has to be fostered to the fore, for the equal participation in civil rights by all, as well as his notion of 'civilization'. This is evident already in the title of his book: *Researches in South Africa: Illustrating the Civil, Moral, and Religious Condition of the Native Tribes: Including Journals of the Author's Travels in the Interior: Together with Detailed Accounts of the Progress of the Christian Missions, Exhibiting the Influence of Christianity in Promoting Civilization.*

Similar to Philip, Van der Kemp's anti-slavery and civil rights advocacy was also not a political act separate from his missionary endeavours. The one did not exclude the other. In the discursive context of the time, the common understanding of 'politics' in Britain was defined by the 'factional fighting over patronage within the aristocratic oligarchies' [esp. the Whig and Tory] in Britain (also impacting on colonising subjects in Britain's colonies) (cf. Ross 1986:79; 78ff). Ross's (1986:101) quotation of the treasurer of the LMS in his submission of June 1825, Hankey, with regard to his attempt at clearing the LMS from Lord Charles Somerset's criticisms, is indicative. He pits 'politics in the contemporary sense – that is, the manoeuvring of factions in the unreformed [British] Parliament' against the stance of the missionaries, viz. that they concern themselves with the 'state' of the Khoi, as a 'moral and religious topic [to be advocated on its proper grounds]'. Given this perspective, Ross (1986:79) further points out that for Philip, 'almost nothing he ever did was political'. The same can be said of Van der Kemp and that is why this article treats his civil rights engagements on behalf of and with the Khoi as the

complementary side to his anti-slavery convictions.

Furthermore, Van der Kemp's (and Philip's) critique of the colonial government and his advocacy for and on behalf of the Khoi in this regard, was an important forerunner, prefiguring the later founding of the 'Aborigines' Protection Society' (APS) on behalf of indigenous people in the colonies (with Philip and Buxton centrally involved) in 1836 (three years after the abolition of slavery), and the first report of the 'Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes (British Settlements)' to the British Parliament, in 1837 (cf. Stocking 1971:372). Advocating what could be called 'humanitarian interventions' in the colonies the main tenor of the APS was to advocate for 'equal rights' as equal to colonists, that all people are 'of one blood' – or one race, the human race, as the emblem of its publication proclaims – but as British subjects (Cf. Heartfield's 2011 paradoxical but contested history of the society). Be that as it may. Van der Kemp could be seen as a forerunner and founder of this anti-colonial, and later anti-imperial humanitarian legacy in his discourse and activism for Khoi freedom, equality, and civil rights.

Conclusion

In this article I firstly traced Van der Kemp's anti-slavery advocacy to the anti-slavery discourse and network in Britain. This was followed by an argument that links Van der Kemp's views on the position and treatment of the Khoi to slavery at the Cape, and his parallel advocacy of anti-slavery, and the Khoi's freedom and their civil rights. The actual discursive content of these focuses will be traced in further research.

Even so, the article broached the very important matter of 'civil rights'. It is my contention that the virtual absence of civil rights discourse and civil rights activism, constitutes gap on the African continent which needs to be filled. In my argument, and looking back on the abolitionist discourse among some Christian thinkers in Britain, this discourse and activism must be developed by religious institutions and organisations. If religious organisations and institutions across the spectrum of the major world religions in Africa, join hands, they can provide very important interventions of the neglect of civil rights irrespective of race, colour or creed by African governments. As such their strengthening of civil rights discourse and activism, will make African civil societies stronger while the keep governments accountable to the people and their rights. It will also importantly impact the fostering of stronger African

civil societies, inclusive of all people and groups of people in African countries.

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