



The Anatomy of a South African Genocide: The Extermination of the Cape San Peoples

By Mohamed Adhikari

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In 1998 David Kruiper, the leader of the ǀKhomani San who today live in the Kalahari Desert in South Africa, lamented, “We have been made into nothing.” His comment applies equally to the fate of all the hunter- gatherer societies of the Cape Colony who were destroyed by the impact of European colonialism. Until relatively recently, the extermination of the Cape San peoples has been treated as little more than a footnote to South African narratives of colonial conquest.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Dutch-speaking pastoralists who infiltrated the Cape interior dispossessed its aboriginal inhabitants. In response to indigenous resistance, colonists formed mounted militia units known as commandos with the express purpose of destroying San bands. This ensured the virtual extinction of the Cape San peoples. In *The Anatomy of a South African Genocide*, Mohamed Adhikari examines the history of the San and persuasively presents the annihilation of Cape San society as genocide.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Anatomy of a South African Genocide provides a succinct and accessible summary of a large body of scholarship on San colonial history. This makes it useful to both academic and lay readers. The book is a high-quality contribution to public education about the colonial history of the San.”

— Mathias Guenther, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada

“The Anatomy of a South African Genocide is provocative and consequential. By compellingly arguing that the extermination of the Cape San is genocide, Adhikari makes an argument with cultural, legal, and political implications in postapartheid South Africa. Adhikari’s clear prose and conveyance of complicated issues...make this short book suitable for a wider public audience and the college classroom.”

— *H-Genocide*

“The author's passion for this subject is palpable, driving a successful effort to present the disintegration of San society as a genocide.”

— *The Historian*

“In a time where fundamentalist intolerance, xenophobia, and racism still crop up constantly, Adhikari’s book serves as an apt, timely, and necessary call to guard against the horrors of such outrage.”

— *African Studies Quarterly*

“The book is well-written, well-argued, insightful, and makes significant contributions to the literature on San and South African history, and genocide.”

— Robert Hitchcock, Michigan State University

“The author’s research and command of the literature is impressive. The judgments are well balanced, fair and based on sound scholarship. This is an accessible book that will help to expand consciousness about the fate of the San and introduce ... students to debates about genocide in a colonial context.”

— Nigel Penn, University of Cape Town

About the Author

Mohamed Adhikari is an associate professor at the University of Cape Town. His most recent books are *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial Identity in the South African Coloured Community* and *Burdened by Race: Coloured Identity in Southern Africa*.

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