

Guns and Horses, c 1750 to c 1850: Korana – People or Raiding Hordes?

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Abstract. The aim of the present article is to discuss the question of identity of the Korana, one of many groups of mixed African/European culture which roamed South African Highveld during the first half of the 19th century. Among the scholars there is growing interest in frontier communities, such as Bastards, Griquas and other Oorlam groups and the role they played in South African history and politics during the first decades of the 19th century. One of those communities were the Korana. But one of the problems the contemporary scholars have is the diversity of those communities. There were several predatory groups which roamed the Highveld: Oorlams, Bastards, Griqua, Hartenaars, Korana and Bergenaars. They were very similar in their pedigree and shared many elements of material culture. Therefore specialists tend to define Korana by their lifestyle. But obviously such a definition is very wide, and in fact too inclusive. In this article author tries to point to other options, of creating more exact definition, of this community.

Keywords: African studies; colonial studies; South Africa; 18th and 19th century; migrations; Oorlam communities; Korana; ethnic composition and identity; cultural influences

The first half of the 19th century was a time of upheaval in South Africa, even if we accept the point of view of some contemporary historians that the difaqane/mfecane and the Great Trek were just historiographical inventions (Cobbing 1988; Wright 1989; Etherington 2001: 329-346). The fact remains that we may observe several important developments and changes in the demographic, political, social and cultural situation of South Africa in this period. One of the most