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Khoisan ancestry and coloured identity: A study of the korana royal house under chief Josiah Kats

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ABSTRACT

The advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994 coincided with International Legislation where the International Labour Organisation ILO Convention 1969 – Indigenous & Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 was prominent in their 'rights to roots' campaign, closely followed by the 1994 United Nations Draft - Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These international debates filtered through to local communities in South Africa, who was still in the infant stages of democracy. The newly installed government glanced off ethnic loyalty in favour of the spirit of nationalism as the building blocks to unity in the new State. Under leadership of the African National Congress (ANC), resurgent voices of Khoisan revivalist groups appeared to reassert an identity linked to particularity. This was done in the wake of a colonial and apartheid past, where these institutions destabilised identities hence the formation and mobilization of new political structures amongst neo-Khoisan Revivalist groups. Many of these neo-Khoisan groups are spearheaded by self-appointed leaders to mobilize support on the basis of ethnic loyalty to foster notions of 'belonging' to an ethnic society and the scramble for resources. This thesis looked at the contemporary view of those who are in the process of identity reclamation. It has done so by using the Korana Royal House as a vignette to look at the broader Khoisan movement. The thesis looked at the evolution of naming rules and customs and how these interrelate in different contexts and the international discourse about concepts like indigenous and traditional groups.

The thesis also focused on some of the revival processes of the Korana identity linked to indigeneity as opposed to traditional leadership as espoused by the Bill on traditional leadership. The thesis concludes that Chapter 12, of the Constitution of South Africa of 1996, which recognise the role of traditional leaders in society is being challenged by the re-entering of groups like the Korana and others claiming recognition on their status as indigenous people.

Keywords: Identity, Indigenous Leadership, Khoisan, Mobilization, Traditional Leadership