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Linda Waldman. *The Griqua Conundrum: Political and Socio-Cultural Identity in the Northern Cape, South Africa.* Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007. 253 pp. $59.95 (paper), ISBN 978-3-03910-562-5.

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The title of this book is in a way a tautology. No one, including the Griquas themselves, has ever been able to work out what it is to be Griqua. Historically, they are the ultimate people "in between" in South African history and society. Ever since the emergence in the later eighteenth century of the group which became the Griquas–the ethnonym was coined in consultation with a Scottish missionary in 1813–the Griquas have been maneuvering between a whole raft of identities–Khoekhoe, Khoesan, colonial, "colored," Christian, to take one simple alliterative list. Attempts to reduce them to any single one of the categories of the South African state have only succeeded when imposed by the force of the colonial, segregationist, and apartheid state, and even then only very partially. In this of course they are like all South Africans, only perhaps more so.

The only way out of this problem, for an observer, is to take the emic vision of the Griquas themselves as the guideline with which one should work. In a sense, this only transfers the problem one link farther along the chain of evidence. Griqua ideas as to who they are have changed wildly over the course of the last two centuries and vary considerably from person to person. That of course is the point. The history of Griqua identity is most clearly a continual and continually contested process, not a "thing" which could ever be static. It is only by working through the varying ways in which people who have called themselves Griquas have considered themselves to be such that it becomes possible to say anything, however tentatively, about how the conundrum has been, and is, resolved, always in slightly different ways.

There have, over the years, been a number of studies of Griqua history, by Martin Legassick, Robert Ross, and Michael Besten above all.[1] Linda Waldman complements these on the basis of her anthropological fieldwork in Griqualand West, and above all in Griquatown itself. This has allowed her to describe the intricate and contradictory politics of Griqua leaders through the twentieth century, and particularly since 1990, when there has been a rush for recognition, in the hope that this will bring about an income. Being indigenous has had its advantages and the Griquas, who once claimed their position as part of colonial society, have made efforts to stress their Khoekhoe ancestry. This has played out on the national level, with the Le Fleur family, based among the descendants of the "Old Prophet," or the "kneg" (servant of God) Abraham Andries Stockenstrom Le Fleur, at its head. The family, which is split into a number of competing factions, each with their own church, has a considerable level of exposure, and many followers in the Southern and Western Cape, but much less adherence in the complicated ethnic world of the Northern Cape. Here there are the descendants of the Kok family, and indeed the Waterboers, with a lineage that, it can be claimed, goes back to the eighteenth, or early nineteenth century. There are fascinating stories told here about how the remains of Cornelis Kok II, dug out of the churchyard in the Griqualand West village of Campbell by physical anthropologists (with, at the time, some level of agreement from the Campbell Griquas), were returned with great ceremony by Professor Philip Tobias. But there are many others who can make a claim to prominence, in an intermingling of church and political organization. Many had Batswana forebears, but in the multilingual world of Griquatown, where Afrikaans is everyone's first language but where most people also speak Setswana, they have assimilated into the Griqua community.

In some ways, what Waldman has presented is the ethnography of a depressed country *dorp* in South Africa, of which there are many. In the town itself, the Griquas are seen as the most poverty-stricken of the community, and as *boorlinge* (*inboorlinge*, or inhabitants) are set against the so-called incomers who tend to be better educated and more prosperous. Even a descendent of Andries Waterboer, who bears his ancestor's noble name, is not seen as a *boorling*, because he was brought up outside the town, and is a prosperous builder. In some ways, though, Griquadom is used by the poor of the town as a source of pride, as a way to claim to be someone de-

spite their poverty. It is emphasized in a set of rituals, above all around female initiation, which provide a sense of belonging, and a sense of worth and heritage. The descriptions of these rituals, and of the lives of a number of Waldman's key informants, are the best parts of this fascinating book.

Waldman cannot claim to have solved the Griqua conundrum. In principle it is insoluble. Their social position derives from what she describes as the "fractured, fluid and hybrid nature of marginalized identities" (p. 207), which was exacerbated through the twentieth century as a group which had once been on the borderline between black and white, as among the most prosperous and "civilized" of those who were not accepted into white society, has slipped into great poverty. But she, and the people she studies, have shown that the easy classifications of apartheid and, for that matter, of social scientists and historians, cannot hold. Griqua history is sad and problematic in all sorts of ways, but in the end, in its message to defy the pigeonholers of this world, it is a story of hope.

Note

[1]. Martin Legassick, "The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana and the Missionaries: The Politics of a Frontier Zone," (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1969); Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas: A Study in the Development of Stratification in South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); and Michael Besten, "Transformation and Reconstitution of Khoe-San Identities: A A S Le Fleur I, Griqua Identities and Post-Apartheid Khoe-San Revivalism (1894-2004)," (Ph.D. diss., Leiden University, 2006).

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