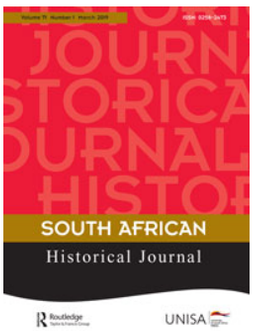

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Mathias Persson

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Southern Darkness, Northern Light: 'Civilisation' and 'Savagery' in Anders Sparrman's Southern African Travelogue

Mathias Persson *

Uppsala University

Abstract

This article interrogates how the entangled concepts of civilisation and savagery were envisioned and brought into play in the globetrotting Linnaean disciple Anders Sparrman's (1748–1820) southern African travel account, how far and along which lines the dichotomy between them was tempered and challenged, and to what extent exposure to a foreign continent encouraged critical and destabilising introspection. The analysis deals with his representations of the inhabitants of Africa in the form of colonists, slaves, and Khoisan, as well as with his renderings of the Europeans. The investigation sheds further light on the erudite construction and employment of 'civilisation' and 'savagery' at the threshold between early modern and modern. It also provides a fresh take on Sparrman himself, while addressing the scholarly debate on his human-related conceptions and proposing a new approach to them.

Keywords: Anders Sparrman; savagery; civilisation; travel writing; Cape colony; Khoisan; slavery; Carolus Linnaeus; eighteenth century

Introduction

Between 1772 and 1776, the globetrotting natural historian and Linnaean disciple Anders Sparrman (1748–1820) undertook a four-year journey of exploration to Africa and the South Seas. His impressions of the Southern Hemisphere were conveyed in a voluminous trilogy, published gradually and translated into a number of languages. The first volume is devoted to southern Africa, the second and the third to the Pacific. Aside from botanical and zoological data, the books contain a plethora of remarks on the humans and human communities he encountered, which are the focus here.

This article interrogates how the entangled concepts of civilisation and savagery were envisioned and brought into play in Sparrman's account of southern Africa, how far and along

*Email: mathias.persson@ekhist.uu.se

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which lines the dichotomy between them was tempered and challenged, and to what extent exposure to a foreign continent encouraged critical and destabilising introspection. The analysis deals with his representations of the inhabitants of Africa in the form of colonists, slaves, and Khoisan, as well as with his renderings of the Europeans. The Xhosa ('Kaffirs') were afforded little room in the travelogue and are therefore almost entirely left out of the article.

The investigation does three things. First, it sheds further light on the erudite construction and employment of 'civilisation' and 'savagery' at the threshold between early modern and modern, a juncture at which scientific travel became institutionalised and grew ever-more utilitarian in tune with European colonial expansion.[1] Sparrman is a suitable object of study in this respect due to both his interest in humans and his international renown; at the time of its release, the southern African volume catapulted him to European fame.[2] Needless to say, the goal is not to craft or regurgitate any essentialising binary between Europeans and non-Europeans, but to elucidate a ubiquitous conceptual pairing in eighteenth-century Europe. Second, the analysis provides a fresh take on Sparrman himself, who has previously been studied mostly with regard to travel literature and the Linnaean school of natural history. Third, it addresses the scholarly debate on his human-related conceptions and proposes a new approach to them.

The southern African travelogue has been the battleground for radically divergent interpretations of Sparrman's views on peoples and cultures. Raoul J. Granqvist styles him as an unadulterated friend of the Africans and a full-fledged detractor of the colonists, whom he supposedly cast as the real 'savages'. According to Granqvist, the Swedish traveller-scientist

> played angry dichotomous tricks. 'Savage/savagery' was not the synonym for the mythic connotations of static otherness; it was a factual description of contemporary colonial practices in the white Dutch Cape colony.[3]

As this article aims to demonstrate, this reading falls short of doing justice to Sparrman's multifaceted outlook. At the other end of the gamut, Mary Louise Pratt portrays Sparrman as a scientific imperialist, in keeping with her appraisal of natural history as an instrument of European expansion. Pratt maintains that Sparrman toned down dissension and violence, and that he wrote the landscape as devoid of humans, thereby resolutely marginalising its autochthonous as well as its white dwellers. Even so, the former were objectified, biologised, and deterritorialised, represented as silent and naked bodies without culture or history, whereas the images of the latter were saturated with 'the beloved bourgeois scenario of the rough and humble peasant gladly sharing his subsistence with the enlightened man of the metropolis'.[4]

1. A.E. Martin and S. Pickford, 'Introduction', in A.E. Martin and S. Pickford, eds, *Travel Narratives in Translation, 1750–1830: Nationalism, Ideology, Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 12.
2. K. Nyberg, 'Anders Sparrman: Konturer av en livshistoria', in G. Broberg, D. Dunér and R. Moberg, eds, *Anders Sparrman: Linnean, världsresenär, fattigläkare* (Uppsala: Svenska Linnésällskapet, 2012), 24; R.J. Granqvist, 'Fieldwork as Translation: Linnaeus' Apostle Anders Sparrman and the Hottentot Perspective', *Cross/Cultures*, 168 (2013), 168.
3. Granqvist, 'Fieldwork as Translation', 156–159.
4. M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 38–39, 51–53, 55–57. Not surprisingly, Granqvist is a vocal opponent of Pratt's reading. See Granqvist, 'Fieldwork as Translation', 156, 172–173.

Pratt's reading has been criticised and revised by a number of researchers – William Beinart, Carina Lidström, Kenneth Nyberg, and Nicole Ulrich. All of them have directly or indirectly called attention to the ambiguities and intricacies in the southern African travel narrative. For instance, Beinart states that its author did not fashion himself primarily as patriarchal or dominant, yet combined superciliousness and hierarchical differentiation of 'savagery' with 'an explicitly humane position on some of the social ills of the [Cape] Colony', i.e. slavery and the conduct of the colonists towards the indigenes.[5] To give another example Carina Lidström points out that Sparrman advocated the plasticity of human behaviour, but also that he pitted European Enlightenment against heathen darkness.[6] However, none of Pratt's critics offers a comprehensive scrutiny of Sparrman's thinking about humans.

The criticism of Pratt can be related to a more general problematisation and nuancing of the attribution of an 'imperialist gaze' to European traveller-scientists. This reconsideration likewise complicates the picture; not least, it has been argued that such actors were often disadvantaged and unable to exercise much power in extra-European settings. That being said, there is no denying that the genre of travel writing was as a whole, to speak with Paul Smethurst, 'supportive of empire, trade and the landowning classes'.[7]

Adding to these interrelated strands of revision, the current article takes a wide grip of the human-related comments in Sparrman's southern African travel narrative, as opposed to singling out representations of a particular group, which would only give one piece of a grander puzzle. The scope could of course have been extended to include the Pacific volumes, but this would effectively have made any in-depth investigation impossible. The analysis recognises the multilayeredness of Sparrman's vision of the human world, but also suggests a new way to tie together its core thematic elements.

The introduction is followed by one section on the dichotomy of civilisation and savagery and one on Sparrman and the southern African venue, after which the investigation of the southern African travelogue commences. This part is divided into three sections that highlight Sparrman's representations of, in turn, the colonists, the slaves, and the Khoisan. The article concludes with a discussion of its main findings.

'Civilisation' and 'Savagery'

The civilisation–savagery binary was a commonplace in eighteenth-century Europe, where it corresponded to other lopsided conceptual pairings, recurrent in the flourishing genre of

5. W. Beinart, 'Men, Science, Travel and Nature in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Cape', Journal of Southern African Studies, 24, 4 (1998), 777–778, 785–787, direct quotation from page 786.
6. C. Lidström, *Berättare på resa: Svenska resenärers reseberättelser 1667–1829* (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 2015), 333, 355–356; Nyberg, 'Anders Sparrman', 25–27; N. Ulrich, 'Dr Anders Sparrman: Travelling with the Labouring Poor in the Late Eighteenth-Century Cape', *South African Historical Journal*, 61, 4 (2009), 732–733, 735–736, 740, 746–747.
7. B. Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 219; N. Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770–1840: 'From an Antique Land'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3, 16, 18, 20; P. Smethurst, *Travel Writing and the Natural World, 1768–1840* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 19, 67, 196–197, 199, direct quotation from page 197.

travel writing: culture–nature, cultivation–wilderness, progress–regress, subject–object.[8] The 'civilised' portion of humankind was defined by refinement and apprehended as a universal standard of measurement; the normative and Eurocentric label summarised the 'identity of enlightened men and women who comparatively and self-confidently assumed the superiority of their own way of life'.[9] Allegedly located on the verge of social time and predating civil society, 'savages' were considered to occupy the state of nature. Perceived as 'people without history' and even without land, since property rights were reserved for communities with familiar governmental and agricultural practices, they constituted the farthest opposite of cultivated life in the minds of many Europeans.[10]

Savagery and civilisation were profoundly entwined concepts with striking and crucial functional affinities. Both shaped rather than described reality and were integral to the colonial venture. Indeed, 'in its own conception of "the savage", the colonial imagination sees white, western culture reflected back as "civilization"; a beneficent gift to the colonized', supposedly in need of rescuing from their rudimentary situation.[11] At the same time, it must be remembered that European interactions with the rest of the globe have fed into self-images as well as into images of foreign cultures.[12] Arguably, European identity has been forged as much from the outside as from the inside, and during the eighteenth century Europe's margins substantially contributed to its notion of itself as being at the heart of things. Notably, experiences of and comparisons with alien cultures could result in autocritique, cultural relativism, and destabilisation of the Self.[13]

Insofar as he had a complex approach to and blended positive and negative opinions of 'savage' peoples, Sparrman resonated with contemporaneous Cape travellers and embodied broader representational patterns that arose from the Other serving as a screen for miscellaneous European projections.[14] In the case of Africa, its indigenous inhabitants 'were reduced

8. For these other binaries, see Smethurst, *Travel Writing*, 7, 48.
9. L. Wolff, 'Discovering Cultural Perspective: The Intellectual History of Anthropological Thought in the Age of Enlightenment', in L. Wolff and M. Cipolloni, eds, *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 10; L. Wolff and M. Cipolloni, 'Preface', in Wolff and Cipolloni, *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment*, xi; B. Bowden, 'The Ideal of Civilisation: Its Origins and Socio-Political Character', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 7 (2004), 28–32.
10. A. Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 13–14; B. Buchan and M. Heath, 'Savagery and Civilization: From *Terra Nullius* to the "Tide of History"', *Ethnicities*, 6, 1 (2006), 6–9, 11–14; E.R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).
11. Buchan and Heath, 'Savagery and Civilization', 6–7, 13, direct quotation from page 6. T. Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 219–220.
12. B. Dolan, *Exploring European Frontiers: British Travellers in the Age of Enlightenment* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 5; S. Hall, 'Creolité and the Process of Creolization', in E.G. Rodríguez and S.A. Tate, eds, *Creolizing Europe: Legacies and Transformations* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 15–16.
13. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 6; C.W.J. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 40; Wolff, 'Discovering Cultural Perspective', 7–8; Leask, *Curiosity*, 49–50.
14. D. Johnson, 'Representing the Cape "Hottentots", from the French Enlightenment to Post-Apartheid South Africa', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 40, 4 (2007), 536, 539–540; D. Johnson, *Imagining the Cape Colony: History, Literature, and the South African Nation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 83–84; T.C. Jacques, 'From Savages and Barbarians to Primitives: Africa, Social Typologies, and History in Eighteenth-Century French Philosophy', *History & Theory*, 36 (1997), 200–201; C.C. Crais, 'The Vacant Land:

to a monolithic substance that mirrored whatever qualities Europe was assumed to possess, fear, or secretly desire'.[15] The mixture of favourable and unfavourable assessments could draw upon a time-honoured 'comparative critical dialectic of virtues and vices' in ethnography, more specifically 'the oscillating positive/negative symbolic polarities of the Golden Age and the cannibal', a dyad of elastic motifs steeped in classical mythology.[16]

Eighteenth-century Europe displayed predominantly pejorative images of Africa and African indigenes, who were seen as savage versions of Europeans and ascribed an entrenched inertia that made them ignorant, undeveloped, idle, and susceptible to inferior passions; to be sure, these traits were also taken to distinguish savages overall. Still, Africa was now and again envisaged as an unspoilt Arcadia of simplicity, virtue, and wisdom, and Africans at times credited with potential for arts.[17] Sparrman's travel narrative comprised all of the above attributions. The Arcadian imagery had tangible links to the scriptural and classical idea of a lost condition of innocence and, vitally, to the bucolic or pastoral tradition, which glorified shepherding and was imbued with 'golden-age escapism'. A staple in late-eighteenth-century descriptions of Pacific islands, it remained influential along with its ideological cousin the georgic genre, whose exponents adulated agricultural work and refracted the peasant through a sentimental lens.[18] While atemporal pastoral nature did not require improvement, the wielding of conventional aesthetic formulas imposed structure on the non-European natural world and its occupants, just like stadial theory (see below) and imaginings of future farming.[19] Although notions of an African Arcadia have frequently been associated with the 'noble savage', this figure does not factor into the current analysis, since its historical conceptual validity has been compellingly questioned and it accordingly tends to obstruct rather than facilitate a proper understanding of the past.[20]

Sparrman and the southern African venue

Sparrman embarked on several lengthy travels in the service of natural history, the first of which brought him to China in the mid-1760s. The African journey was proposed by one

The Mythology of British Expansion in the Eastern Cape, South Africa', *Journal of Social History*, 25, 2 (1991), 258–259; I.C. Campbell, 'Savages Noble and Ignoble: The Preconceptions of Early European Voyagers in Polynesia', *Pacific Studies*, 4 (1980), 48–52, 57–58.

15. Jacques, 'From Savages and Barbarians', 201.
16. For the dialectic and the polarities, see Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, 11–12, 25, 29, direct quotations from page 166, 29.
17. Jacques, 'From Savages and Barbarians', 200–201, 204–206; Johnson, 'Representing the Cape "Hottentots"', 534–537.
18. For the 'state of innocence', see N. Penn, *The Forgotten Frontier: Colonist and Khoisan on the Cape's Northern Frontier in the 18th Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 6. For the bucolic and georgic traditions, see I.D. Whyte, *Landscape and History since 1500* (London: Reaktion, 2002), 70; B.W. Breed, *Pastoral Inscriptions: Reading and Writing Virgil's* Eclogues (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2006), 16; B. Pearson, *Rifled Sanctuaries: Some Views of the Pacific Islands in Western Literature to 1900* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1984), 37–38; A.S. Wyngaard, *From Savage to Citizen: The Invention of the Peasant in the French Enlightenment* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 33. The direct quotation is from Breed, *Pastoral Inscriptions*, 16.
19. Smethurst, *Travel Writing*, 71, 79.
20. For African Arcadia and the 'noble savage', see Jacques, 'From Savages and Barbarians', 200. For the historical validity of the 'noble savage', see Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage.*

of his patrons, the erudite sea captain Carl Gustav Ekeberg, and supported by his teacher at Uppsala University, the illustrious botanist Carolus Linnaeus, who spearheaded a global classification project that encompassed all of nature, including humanity, and had palpable utilitarian and colonialist overtones. Sparrman reached his destination on one of the Swedish East India Company's ships in April 1772 but left already in November the same year to join James Cook's second voyage alongside the German naturalist father-and-son duo Johann Reinhold and Georg Forster. He arrived back at the Cape roughly two years later, in March 1775, where he stayed until his departure for Sweden in April 1776.[21]

As a natural historian touring the southern African interior, Sparrman followed in the footsteps of his compatriot, friend, and Linnaean co-disciple Carl Peter Thunberg, a pioneer of university botany in that section of the continent. Like Thunberg and due to Linnaeus' instruction as well as so-called apodemic theory, which demanded the impersonal and artless enumeration of useful or scientific facts, Sparrman engaged in observations of 'an encyclopedic, pre-disciplinary character', covering minerals, plants, animals, and humans.[22] Although rumination on peoples and cultures was as a rule 'an important by-product of extra-European travel', this does not fit well with Sparrman, for whom humans took clear precedence together with the animals.[23]

Situated at the crossroads of the Atlantic and the Indian oceans, of Europe, Africa, and Asia, the sparsely inhabited Cape colony boasted a natural environment of great interest to an assortment of European natural researchers. It was, in Pratt's words, a 'place where scientific travel, the momentum for inland expansion, and the shifting relations of contact these engendered, played themselves out conspicuously and dramatically'. Run by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and acting as a gateway to the continental interior, the colony formed a contact zone marked by unequal and segregated coexistence between African indigenes, Europeans and European colonists, European and Asian convicts, Asian exiles, some African and a multitude of Asian slaves, and mixed descendants.[24] The indigenous

21. For Sparrman, see Nyberg, 'Anders Sparrman', 15–18, 20, 24; A. Sparrman, *Resa till Goda Hopps-udden, södra pol-kretsen och omkring jordklotet, samt till hottentott- och caffer-landen, åren 1772–76* […] (Stockholm: Anders J. Nordström, 1783), 1–3, 12, 86–90, 105, 760. For Linnaeus' global classification project, see Smethurst, *Travel Writing*, 29–31; L. Andersson Burnett and B. Buchan, 'The Edinburgh Connection: Linnaean Natural History, Scottish Moral Philosophy and the Colonial Implications of Enlightenment Thought', in H. Hodacs, K. Nyberg and S. Van Damme, eds, *Linnaeus, Natural History and the Circulation of Knowledge* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2018), 161–166.

22. For Thunberg and the relationship between him and Sparrman, see M.-C. Skuncke, *Carl Peter Thunberg: Botanist and Physician: Career-Building across the Oceans in the Eighteenth Century* (Uppsala: Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, 2014), 71–72, 92, 256, direct quotation on page 72. For apodemic theory, see P. Eliasson, *Platsens blick: Vetenskapsakademien och den naturalhistoriska resan 1790–1840* (Umeå: Umeå University, 1999), 50–51. Compare the discussion of 'the factual travel account' in Smethurst, *Travel Writing*, 46.

23. For rumination on humans and extra-European travel, see Martin and Pickford, 'Introduction', 13. For Sparrman, see Nyberg, 'Anders Sparrman', 18. Direct quotation from Martin and Pickford.

24. N. Worden, 'Introduction', in N. Worden, ed., *Capetown between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2012), ix–xi; Nyberg, 'Anders Sparrman', 17; Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 39–40, direct quotation on page 49; Skuncke, *Carl Peter Thunberg*, 73; Ulrich, 'Dr Anders Sparrman', 732, 737, 748; N. Worden, 'Slavery at the Cape', *Oxford Research Encyclopedias: African History* http://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-76, accessed 14 December 2018.

population included the dual branches of Khoisan, shepherding Khoikhoi ('Hottentots') and hunting and gathering San ('Boshies-men'), whose way of life was irrevocably altered by the European intrusion.[25]

The basic *Weltanschauung* of Sparrman's travelogue was set forth in its preface and opening dedication to the autocratic Swedish king, Gustavus III, who reportedly wielded the torch of the arts and sciences to further the politeness and welfare of his peaceful and fortunate domains. Sparrman pictured the Southern Hemisphere as less healthy than the Northern one, which was denoted as 'the civilised world' in the travel narrative proper. He felt pity and discomfort recalling 'the eternal ice of the Antarctic environs' and 'the darkness and savagery' of the territories beyond Europe, while the juxtaposition of North and South prompted him to laud Providence, bless his monarch, and affirm his sincere allegiance to Gustavus III.[26]

To Sparrman, African nature came across as an aberration from the European norm. He represented the continent as a strange place, epitomised by marginal scientific progress and odd animals and plants. Its nature even amounted to an inversion of Europe's, given that plant life deviated from 'the regular order of the seasons' as summer transpired in the depth of winter. The very landscape, the vast uncultivated fields, generated a sense of desolateness and savagery.[27] After the tribulations of the Cook expedition, however, Sparrman hailed the continent as a lovely sight and equated the Cape with the civilised and Christian world. Later on, when leaving the colony and travelling into the African interior, he once again identified it with Christendom.[28] From Sparrman's vantage point, then, colonial Africa was not all that bad in comparison with peoples and areas outside of the European sphere of influence.

The colonists: ignorance and insensitivity

Sparrman designated the Cape as a colony, while its white residents went under many names: 'the Dutch', 'the Cape inhabitants', 'the Christians', 'the Christian Settlers', 'the Christian Europeans', 'the Colonists', 'the Dutch Colonists', '[the] Christian Colonists', 'the Cape colonists', 'the Africans', and 'the African colonists'.[29] Irrespective of the exact moniker used, Sparrman did not hold the colonists in high esteem. He portrayed them as rough people, who had more than once been ruled by oppressive or self-interested leaders. They were lazy and ignorant, not just about farming, being much less prone 'to explore the qualities of the Plants, than to impinge on the Land itself', but about everything external to their own lands, which they put in a conceited light.[30] The colonists in general did not care for the sciences or visits to Europe, or for learning languages, despite the importance and intensity of commerce at the Cape. Their mores and habits were weird and coarse, and due to a sizeable portion of them lacking in courtesy Europeans thought little of their manners.[31] Nevertheless, colonists were

25. Ulrich, 'Dr Anders Sparrman', 737, 748; Penn, *The Forgotten Frontier*, 8–9.
26. Sparrman, *Resa till Goda Hopps-udden*, [i]–[ii], 103.
27. *Ibid.*, 6, 56, 157, 258, 264.
28. *Ibid.*, 104–106, 541.
29. *Ibid.*, 17–18, 20–21, 120, 122, 133, 137, 159, 184, 215, 219–220, 262, 556.
30. *Ibid.*, 258.
31. *Ibid.*, 17–18, 20–21, 262–263, 279–280, 494, 573, 658–659, 721–722.

on occasion judged positively, not least those who had been born or living in Europe, and Sparrman held the corn and wine peasants he met to be incredibly honourable.[32] He also discussed the well-known hospitality of the Cape dwellers, but this flattery was partially offset by the announcement that deceit in trade was equally prevalent in the colony and by no means as despised as back home.[33] The colonists were hence negatively contrasted with the Europeans and deemed to fall short of civilised standards.

Although Sparrman applauded farmed fields testifying to 'civilised' diligence and care, the Cape colony was likened to a waning and congested organism, suffering from lethargic circulation between the heart and the limbs. Yet, it could be rejuvenated if only communications were improved. Sparrman visualised how the harbours would be endowed with movement, commerce, industriousness, municipalities, and well-being, and how textile manufactures would be launched in the Cape, supported by extensive cultivation of land that had formerly been left to the wilderness. As things were, the absence of domestic linen made countrymen dress their children in simple sheep skin, like the Khoikhoi.[34] Without manufactories, that is, a state-of-the-art, mercantilist European economy, lapses into 'savagery' were possible. An analogous assertion to the effect that Cape colonists were reminiscent of non-European 'savages' concerned a group of them that feasted together with some Khoikhoi amidst reeking and rotting cadavers. This scene triggered memories of Sparrman's recent voyage with Cook: 'Such a horrible spectacle of meat-gorging Fellowmen, roused a vivid recollection of the Cannibals on *New Zealand*' and almost destroyed his appetite.[35] Cannibalism was likewise invoked in connection with the Khoikhoi, European, and Chinese consumption of insects, which was taken to reveal to what a despicable level human taste and nature could deteriorate.[36]

In a similar vein, Sparrman contemplated whether the southern African locale might have accommodated a major degenerative moment in the distant past. A massive system of stone mounds inspired speculation on historical societies more powerful than the tremendously idle Khoikhoi and Xhosa and on a 'more populous Nation' that 'could easily have had time to melt into so dispersed Shepherds, or been degraded into the current Kaffirs, Hottentots, Bushmen and Savages'.[37] Sparrman's musings on reversal and decay can be related to the idea of colonial degeneration, which usually mirrored and reinforced a faith in European and metropolitan pre-eminence. It was explicitly addressed by Thunberg, who warned that the dispersed Cape colonists – separated from urban life, church attendance, and social intercourse – might 'decline into an abundance of indolence, ignorance, Godlessness, vices and the kind of misery, through which they eventually would come to resemble the oldest inhabitants of the Land more than the people they themselves spring from'. Travellers to the Cape often applied the notion of degeneration to the colonists there, who were believed to be regressing into idle brutes on par with the indigenes on account of a dearth of economic

32. *Ibid.*, 26, 58, 65–66, 236, 300, 302, 370, 679–680, 732. For the corn and wine peasants, see *ibid.*, 57; compare 729, 738.
33. For the hospitality, see *ibid.*, 62, 64, 66–68, 73–74, 77–78, 236, 296, 381, 566, 731–732; for the deceit, see *ibid.*, 317.
34. *Ibid.*, 259, 274, 276–278.
35. *Ibid.*, 402–403, compare 302, 565–566, 569.
36. *Ibid.*, 473–475.
37. *Ibid.*, 677–678.

incentives. Whereas critics of colonialism could conceptualise it as a prime expression of unbridled and degenerative European possessiveness, for those who subscribed to it, toil legitimised land ownership and overseas conquest. The perceived savage-like lassitude of the Cape colonists, who were targeted in eighteenth-century discourses of idleness alongside the Khoisan, set off alarms because it jeopardised the imperial project, as did their alleged brutish ignorance and pitilessness.[38]

The ruthlessness of the colonists was a persistent theme in Sparrman's travel narrative, as in other southern African travelogues of his period.[39] He drew attention to the unjust encroachment on and arbitrary displacement of the Khoikhoi, which had incited 'a reasonable envy towards the Christian Colonists', and declared that the safeguarding of them from lion attacks did not make up for the colonists and their rifles being considerably worse than any wild beasts for the 'Hottentot-Nation' they had coerced and much reduced in size. Sparrman chronicled the banding together of San in an area as they faced the incursion of the colonists, who had already seized their finest living and hunting grounds and sought to annihilate them; while he mentioned that far from all colonists participated in or supported the atrocities, the travelogue recounted how a burning hatred for the San caused the slaughter of pregnant women and innocent children.[40]

On another note, the colonists acted inversely to the example and convention of the autochthonous population when they had their more numerous animals repeatedly graze the same fields, a habit that in conjunction with excessive hunting threatened to devastate the land. The colonists and the Khoikhoi let their animals alternate between grasses based on 'pure knowledge' and 'prejudices', respectively, but the frequent changes of habitat among the latter yielded better livestock and pastures.[41] The colonists thus affected the indigenes more indirectly, as well. Sparrman fathomed the Khoikhois' insensitive handling of cattle principally as an outcome of their socialising with colonists, which removed them from their simplicity. He claimed that affluence spawned troubles and worries among the Khoikhoi and predicted that the continued influx of colonists and foreign commodities would promptly and drastically transform their customs and character, not least their hospitality and care for fellow humans. The familiarity of a San with bribery made Sparrman wonder whether it emanated from 'simple-minded comrades or from the enlightened Colonists' readiness to give the Heathens proof of conciliation in this fashion'. Unable to come up with a resolute answer, to the detriment of 'the knowledge of the human disposition in the savage state', he alluded to one by suggesting that much politer Khoikhoi were just as cognisant of this practice.[42] If Africa had a

38. S. Ahmed, 'Dispossession and Civil Society: The Ambivalence of Enlightenment Political Philosophy', *The Eighteenth Century*, 55, 2–3 (2014), 153, 166, 169; C.P. Thunberg, 'Företal', in C.P. Thunberg, *Resa uti Europa, Africa, Asia, förrättad åren 1770–1779: Andra delen, innehållande tvänne långa resor inåt södra Africas hörn, och sedan til ön Java, åren 1773, 1774, 1775* […] (Uppsala: Johan Edman, 1789), [15]; J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 3, 25–26, 28–29; Ulrich, 'Dr Anders Sparrman', 735.
39. Johnson, 'Representing the Cape "Hottentots"', 541–543.
40. Sparrman, *Resa till Goda Hopps-udden*, 184, 251, 318, 436–437, 544–546.
41. *Ibid.*, 261–265, see also 566.
42. *Ibid.*, 247, 427, 709–710, 725–726. Direct quotations are from pages 709–710. Given Sparrman's general view of the colonists, the adjective 'enlightened' was almost certainly used ironically.

degenerative effect on the Europeans, the colonial enterprise polluted the Africans, in return.

In addition, the colonists were neglectful of their civilising mission. Sparrman found a '*Bastard*' guide who appeared to treasure virtue and loathe vice eligible for enlightenment, in the sense of religious edification as opposed to the nurturing of reason or the acquisition of useful knowledge, but the want of financial gain in proselytising had discouraged the Dutch from seeing to his and others' souls. Sparrman did not doubt that the simplistic and good-tempered Khoikhoi could readily be converted but deemed it unlikely that anybody would bother unless rewards were anticipated.[43] Although he did not appreciate miscegenation, the travelogue directed harsh criticism towards the Reformed Church insofar as it excluded the children of such unions, whom Sparrman considered to be essentially African but in certain respects superior to the Khoikhoi. This exclusion, born out of a wish to deter ethnic intermixing, was to no avail, heartless, and at odds with Christian humility, which stipulated that the Africans should be allowed to accompany the white clergy on the road to heaven.[44]

Simultaneously, Sparrman appraised colonists in the spirit of the bucolic tradition, thereby joining the ranks of other urbane traveller-scientists who basked in literary references and flaunted their classical erudition.[45] The simple-minded and artless colonists that devoted themselves to shepherding were described as decent people enjoying an innocent, virtuous, contented, easy, and happy existence 'in their way', contrary to a lot of peasants elsewhere, who must toil like slaves in their own sweat. As rich and fortunate as the farmers might be in their simplicity and splendid surroundings, however, they still led shabby, negligent, and austere lives lacking medical knowledge and assistance. In the last regard

> at least, the highly valued pastoral life here, with its simple-mindedness and ignorance, is also less praiseworthy than [that in] our more populated and polite Societies, where, alongside the advantage of all other Sciences, the Medical one substantially contributes to the bliss Humans can achieve in their lifetime.[46]

The Arcadian idyll was viable only from the subjective horizon of the colonists; their personal feelings notwithstanding, civilised life in Europe was objectively and overall preferable to theirs, on the edge of indigence and savagery.

The slaves: tyranny and trepidation

The reality of slavery sparked a hostility and revulsion in Sparrman that crystallised in a lasting abolitionist stance.[47] At one point in the southern African travel narrative, he

43. *Ibid.*, 59, 74, 84, 154, 178, 221–223.
44. *Ibid.*, 296–302.
45. Smethurst, *Travel Writing*, 79.
46. Sparrman, *Resa till Goda Hopps-udden*, 566–567, 569–571, 575–576. Direct quotation on page 576.
47. For Sparrman's aversion to slavery, see D.T. Ogden, 'Anders Sparrman and the Abolition of the British Slave Trade', in Broberg, Dunér and Moberg, *Anders Sparrman*, 141–156; K. Rönnbäck, 'Enlightenment, Scientific Exploration and Abolitionism: Anders Sparrman's and Carl Bernhard Wadström's Colonial Encounters in Senegal, 1787–1788 and the British Abolitionist Movement', *Slavery & Abolition*, 34, 3 (2013), 425–445.

empathised with a group of slaves, 'fellow humans', who disliked him as much as others that were, as far as they could tell, apt to enchain them and sell them off. Tyrannical slave owners were plagued by fear, and correctly so, as desperate, wretched, and naturally fiery slaves understandably rebelled against their oppressors and confirmed their human right with blood. Even a gentler despotism robbed slaves of their natural right and afflicted the slave holder with bad conscience and restless sleep.[48]

Nearly all of Sparrman's encounters with slavery brought about impassioned expositions, where the humanity and human right of those in bondage were emphasised. He maintained that slaves who did not succumb under 'the weight of serfdom' were bound for starvation and dishonour at old age, like hoary horses. The unjust, arbitrary, and tyrannical colonists may be prohibited from killing or severely torturing them, but Sparrman could not see how slaves would be able to take legal action against their more or less sovereign owners, who were largely free to do with them as they pleased. Consequently, the 'miserable serf, often more delicate and humane in his emotions, but for the most part more heated in passions than his white Masters', could be liable to much despair and to suicide, an escape from his distress that bereaved the landlord any further profit from his labour. One slave Sparrman met took delight in hearing that slavery had never been permitted in Sweden and that the human right was more cherished in other corners of the world.[49]

A rumour that one colonist had killed a number of his slaves elicited the reflection that 'the perpetration of any crimes, especially those, which like the slave trade or the trafficking of human freedom are not only tolerated but also privileged, never fails to get people embroiled in even more misdeeds and disorders'. On the matter of a peasant who had been slain by his slaves, Sparrman did not know whether the victim was exceptionally stern or if the slaves held that the same kind of crime that had violated and annulled their freedom was warranted to retrieve this treasured and natural property and excusable when it came to tyrants. At any rate, the root cause was the unnatural, unpleasant, and detestable phenomenon of slavery, which induced the unfortunate slaves and in particular their despotic masters to exceedingly inhuman and atrocious acts. The colonists lowered themselves to disproportionate and vehement punishments, some of which were antithetical to humaneness and surpassed animal cruelty. Nonetheless, a slave bold enough to defy serfdom and tyranny became a hero and a martyr for the precious liberty and the natural right, while the gruesome penalties enhanced the sense of repression.[50]

A slave from Madagascar made Sparrman mull over the demeanour of the self-serving Christians on the island, who armed the natives and reaped despondent slaves from their conflicts. He proceeded to assert that millions of people had been saved because of medicaments put forward by those Europeans ('we') rated as savages and that more could have been learnt had not European ('our') tyranny almost exterminated them and their useful experiences. In the same context, Sparrman attributed on the one hand Africans, Europeans, and 'the American Savages', on the other hand colonists and Khoikhoi joint medical insights.[51] Africans were not only emotionally sophisticated, but possessed beneficial knowledge in medicine, too.

48. Sparrman, *Resa till Goda Hopps-udden*, 44–45, 63–64, 69, 80–82.
49. *Ibid.*, 229–230, 758–759. Direct quotation on page 759.
50. *Ibid.*, 78, 753–756, 759.
51. *Ibid.*, 147–148.

The topic of indigenous bondage constituted a subset within the broader discussion of slavery in Sparrman's travelogue. Khoisan were officially not submitted to enslavement, but many of them faced slave-like conditions, not least those who were captured in raids and served as indentured labourers.[52] Even so, Sparrman did not hesitate to talk about autochthonous slavery, which he as usual condemned as an abuse of humankind and a crime ushering in numerous wrongdoings. He remarked that Khoisan serfs and servants ran away although they were treated well and better off than they would elsewise have been. The colonists thought this wholly irrational, not realising that all humans and most animals shared a natural longing for their native homes, kin, and freedom. Due to their enslavement, the San were in a worse situation than before and exposed to the most awful cruelty, which colonists took pride in – the callous dissolution of natural and sacred family bonds, noticeably those between mothers and their children. Sparrman figured that the admirable love of a mother for her child might be stronger in 'these Heathens' than in 'the Christian Tyrant', who exploited it to strengthen the fetters of slavery and stood lower than a savage beast.[53] The colonists emerged as indifferent, vicious, and brutish in their roles as slave owners and authoritarian employers, as well, whereas the slaves and indigenous workers were represented as genuinely human victims of an inhuman and oppressive system.

The Khoisan: idyll and inferiority

The eighteenth century witnessed the pushing aside, weakening, subduing, and exploitation of the Khoisan, who in the shadow of colonialism suffered disease, violence, poverty, and deprivation of resources.[54] In Thunberg's words, 'the entire nation' was 'coerced and restrained'.[55] If Sparrman on the whole viewed the colonists negatively and the slaves positively, his attitude towards the Khoisan was more equivocal, as the travel narrative pictured them in an appreciative manner as well as in unfavourable terms congruent with its prefatory notion of southern darkness and savagery.[56]

Sparrman construed the 'Hottentots' as a less polite but internally peaceful nation and identified them as southernmost Africa's first inhabitants. He outlined their physical appearance and in part compared it to that of Europeans and other Africans. Sparrman stated that the males were virtually naked while the women wore significantly more clothes, and that the Khoikhoi despite being poorly fed displayed contentment and health, 'or at least an *Air de sans souci*'. This carefreeness, the result of feeble nourishment and intemperate sloth stemming from scant needs, did not exclude vigour and speed, for example when the inactivity and idleness begot scarcity and starvation. Aside from that, the Khoikhoi took an interest

52. Worden, 'Slavery at the Cape'; S. Newton-King, 'The Enemy Within', in N. Worden and C. Crais, eds, *Breaking the Chains: Slavery and Emancipation in the Nineteenth-Century Cape Colony* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994).
53. Sparrman, *Resa till Goda Hopps-udden*, 212–215, see also 320–321.
54. Johnson, 'Representing the Cape "Hottentots"', 533, 544–545; Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 40–41, 45; Penn, *The Forgotten Frontier*, 19–23.
55. C. P. Thunberg, *Resa uti Europa, Africa, Asia, förrättad åren 1770–1779: Första delen, innehållande resan til södra Europa och Goda hoppets udde i Africa, åren 1770, 1771, 1772, 1773* […] (Uppsala: Johan Edman, 1788), 197.
56. Compare Nyberg, 'Anders Sparrman', 25–26.

in hunting, glory, and spirits, and some of them were mighty and ferocious. Linnaeus had conceived the Khoikhoi as sexually monstrous since he believed the men to be partially castrated. Sparrman refuted this claim, but noted that the Khoikhoi were less sexually passionate than other peoples and that their technique of moving their huts made a ridiculous and monstrous impression on an unacquainted spectator. Moreover, he represented them as unclean, since they voluptuously enveloped themselves in grease containing soot, dust, and filth as well as in a perfuming herb powder. Yet, Sparrman conjectured that a woman who acted as his hostess might be happy in 'her dirty simplicity'. He approached the language with an open mind and attempted to learn it; albeit utterly strange, difficult to pronounce, and harder to emulate than the bellowing of the hippopotamus, Khoisan did not sound bad once one had gotten used to it. The music was too hard a pill to swallow, though, as was a weird 'so-called game' he observed.[57]

Sparrman painted both the Khoikhoi and the San as religiously ignorant and as ardent and credulous believers in the supernatural. Normally fairly reasonable, they resisted scientific explanations owing to an 'ingrained Religious or Superstitious stubbornness' rather than a conviction rooted in deliberation. Most Khoisan were simple-minded and trusted manipulative impostors who feigned wisdom and offered magical assistance. Nevertheless, Sparrman disputed certain claims about their superstition and invoked equally disposed Swedes and colonists as well as the gullible Cape authorities.[58] A number of Khoikhoi came across as more reflexive than their peers, among them one of his aides, who rejected magic and despised those that had faith in it and their rudeness.[59]

The travelogue identified agreeable moral qualities in the impolite Khoikhoi, such as simple virtues and hearts grateful and good by nature. Their crude abodes effected uniformity and eclipsed envy, which was also counteracted by their relatively equal standard of living, and he considered the Khoikhoi all the less insensible given their extensive hospitality and the responsibility wealthy villages assumed for their own internal welfare. Sparrman went so far as to absolve all Khoisan from violence, vengefulness, and – since they had few wants and desires – most forms of thievery. Fugitive San 'slaves' never brought with them anything but their belongings, a 'common moderation of these Savages towards Tyrants', which the colonists admired and Sparrman had a hard time wrapping his head around.[60]

The Swedish traveller commented on his strangeness in the eyes of a group of simple-minded and pious Khoikhoi herders, who welcomed him amicably. While they kept a lot of livestock and evidently enjoyed their kind of happiness, he was not entirely sure about their sincerity and found their contentment in an uncultivated and completely wild natural setting quite curious; in spite of this, he fashioned them as 'true exemplar[s] of the Pastoral joy, which has so much preoccupied Poets'.[61] Here, the bucolic sentiment that underpinned several of Sparrman's favourable representations of the Khoikhoi broke

57. Sparrman, *Resa till Goda Hopps-udden*, 185–199, 204–205, 227–228, 236–239, 224, 226, 242, 249, 549, 691, 739. Direct quotations on pages 186, 249, 242. For Linnaeus' view of the Khoikhoi, see Skuncke, *Carl Peter Thunberg*, 35, 73.
58. Sparrman, *Resa till Goda Hopps-udden*, 215–221, 316, 388, 435–436, 702, 717. Direct quotation on page 216.
59. *Ibid.*, 152, 423.
60. *Ibid.*, 202, 212, 223, 297, 595, 706, 715, 725. Direct quotation on page 212.
61. *Ibid.*, 419–420, 422, 426–427. Direct quotation on page 420.

through to the surface, in the process subsuming the indigenes into a literary motif. Elsewhere in the travelogue, an application of a Khoisan word not for nothing led him to evoke the ancient Roman poet Virgil, the supreme authority in the early modern pastoral tradition. A similar literary-infused construction of jolly Khoikhoi naïveté was provided in Sparrman's report about a small community he visited, which was said to have neither ruler, nor famished beggars, nor crimes and punishments. Its cheerful, virtuous, and free dwellers had for a long time been guided solely by 'natural righteousness and piety, along with some general Hottentot customs'. Equality was a hallmark of theirs, as was modesty and the absence of envy.[62]

As the already examined accounts of the Khoikhoi and the shepherding colonists show, Sparrman frequently adopted a cultural relativistic stance in keeping with the endemic 'play of relative perspective' during the anthropologically oriented eighteenth century. Recording a festive event, he portrayed the dancing as peculiar, unintelligible, and unregulated, but acknowledged that the participants would perhaps echo this assessment if they were confronted with the most recent European dances. An initial dismissal of a village as dilapidated, impoverished, and locus-infested and of its inhabitants as lazy was later mitigated by the assertion that their lives were not that terrible from their point of view. Furthermore, Sparrman presented the Khoikhoi huts, which he linked to those of the biblical patriarchs, as artless but neat, commendable, and suitable and sufficient for the African indigenes, who were fortunate as they could effortlessly fend for themselves with respect to their huts, too.[63]

The cultural relativism was complemented and balanced by the drawing of parallels between Africans and Europeans that highlighted their shared humanity, in accordance with the widespread consensus among eighteenth-century literati on the universality of human nature. Apropos the dreadful customs of the Khoikhoi to let their elders and motherless infants perish because of a lack of close relatives that could care for them, Sparrman and his fellow constituents of civilisation had

> rightfully accused Hottentots of inhumanity. Even so, they hence deserve our compassion more than to be showered with acrimonious reproaches; with a little afterthought, we should be able to find all too many left helpless, if not altogether abandoned to a bleak fate, in our civilised Societies. I fear that if one compared the weakness and criminality of the Hottentots with that of the Civilised even on the most accurate pair of scales, the result would bring little honour to any of them, and least of all to the latter. When the general behaviour of humans is viewed impartially, we are unlikely to compliment them. That would also be least useful and less affectionate. With self-love and flattering, one is certainly a dangerous Friend to oneself, as well as to humankind.[64]

He informed his readership that hunting was rife in both Sweden and 'the untamed Nations', that the impolite Khoikhoi like other peoples attested to the greater female fondness for frills

62. *Ibid.*, 152, 722–724. Direct quotation from page 722. For Virgil's standing in the pastoral tradition, see Breed, *Pastoral Inscriptions*, 15–16.
63. Sparrman, *Resa till Goda Hopps-udden*, 202–204, 225–227, 375–376, see also 384–385, 391–392, 413. For Sparrman's cultural relativism, see Nyberg, 'Anders Sparrman', 25. For the 'play of relative perspective' and the anthropological orientation of the eighteenth century, see Wolff, 'Discovering Cultural Perspective', 5, 9; Wolff and Cipolloni, 'Preface', xi, xiv.
64. Sparrman, *Resa till Goda Hopps-udden*, 378–380. For the consensus on a universal human nature, see Jacques, 'From Savages and Barbarians', 205.

and body adornments, that charlatans in Africa as well as in 'the more enlightened European Societies' contemptibly strove for status and material gains, and that what was useful deserved as much attention and imitation whether it originated from Paris or southern Africa.[65] In addition, Sparrman positioned the Khoikhoi closer to Europe, and underlined their capacity for civilisation, by crediting them with societies, laws, rights, civil servants, and sovereigns with subjects. The San were likewise attributed societies, some of them allegedly peaceful and quiet.[66]

Sparrman's universalism had its limits, however. One equivalence between Africa and Europe was the predilection for useless ornaments that partly confined limbs and lives, reaching 'from the otherwise in terms of customs so unrestrained and rude *Hottentot* to those who have raised Arts and Sciences to a substantial height'. The statement hints at an operationalisation of stadial theory, as does Sparrman's distinction between a politer and cattle-breeding and a savage and preying category of San.[67] This mode of thinking ranked peoples in a universal hierarchy as per their perceived levels of material and cultural 'progress'. The number of imagined developmental phases varied, but the most prevalent template dictated four stages, each defined by a means of subsistence: hunting and gathering, shepherding, agriculture, and commerce. Another model subdivided humankind into savages, barbarians, and civilised, corresponding to, in turn, hunting and gathering, pastoralism, and farming and commerce.[68] It has been established that Sparrman combined Scottish stadialism with Linnaean taxonomy, thereby exemplifying the intimate relationship between stadial theory and natural history.[69] As far as the southern African travelogue was concerned, indigenous rudeness marked one end of the spectrum and European refinement the other. In a presidential address delivered at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in 1778, Sparrman associated arts, sciences, and commerce with society in its highest potency; he envisioned how a galvanised populace created a mighty society characterised by welfare, comfort, and order, which precipitated agriculture, manufacture, and science. The next step was to build altars and cities and to explore the oceans in quest of knowledge, whereby politeness and civilisation were attained.[70]

Sparrman did caution that civilised humans could elevate ambition to such an extent that it relapsed into a languor that diminished them and that luxury could lead a people both from and to neatness, civilisation, and nature – i.e. be either degenerative or progressive.[71] Still, savagery in the end got the worst of it, and those who failed to climb towards civilisation were ultimately errant:

65. Sparrman, *Resa till Goda Hopps-udden*, 192, 201, 264, 428, direct quotations on 264, 428, see also 473–474.
66. *Ibid.*, 181, 198, 202, 210, 212, 225, 390–391, 421–422, 427–428, 557–559.
67. *Ibid.*, 198, 411, 543. Direct quotation on page 198.
68. Andersson Burnett and Buchan, 'The Edinburgh Connection', 172; N. Wolloch, 'The Civilizing Process, Nature, and Stadial Theory', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 44, 2 (2011), 252–254; E. Rudebeck, *Tilling Nature – Harvesting Culture: Exploring Images of the Human Being in the Transition to Agriculture* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2000), 77; Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, 159.
69. Andersson Burnett and Buchan, 'The Edinburgh Connection', 163, 172–173.
70. A. Sparrman, *Tal, om den tilväxt och nytta, som vetenskaperne i allmänhet, särdeles natural-historien, redan vunnit och ytterligare kunna vinna, genom undersökningar i Söder-hafvet* […] (Stockholm: Johan Georg Lange, 1778), 21–22.
71. Sparrman, *Resa till Goda Hopps-udden*, 253, 476.

> the simple-mindedness or stupidity among savages, which some Philosophers have decreed the greatest bliss, does leave them in total ignorance of certain vices, but […] also brings many of them intrinsic corruptions and suffocates the opportunity for the most beautiful virtues and morals in their stead, too.

Sparrman argued that whereas simplicity in habits was justifiably celebrated, it risked begetting the condition of the Khoikhoi, typified by dirtiness, laziness, and ignorance. Even if a 'Hottentot' experienced tremendous happiness and really loved eating insects, the brutishness was

> unworthy of the higher and more vivacious feelings to which the nobler part of his being could be moulded […] all his lascivious pleasure and nasty blithe are probably considerably beneath the gratification that he could enjoy in an adequately polite state.

The listlessness did not give satisfaction, but caught him in a heavy dream, at times as much of a burden as the indolence itself. This line of reasoning concluded in an endorsement of civilisation and the civilising process, as Sparrman maintained that the routine removal of lice and the penchant for fripperies would gradually make the Khoikhoi more acquainted with and apt for chores and hard work; eventually, they would become civilised on par with Europeans. The projection was lent credence by two of his auxiliaries, who were inclined to wear European clothes and thus looked prepared 'to rise from their lowness and idleness'.[72]

In all likelihood, the vague expression above about some Philosophers first and foremost pertained to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In his presidential oration, Sparrman overall derided the peoples he had encountered in the Southern Hemisphere and compared them unfavourably to the enlightened Europeans, while he vigorously decried 'certain preposterous philosophers' who suffered from the dangerous and disgraceful delusion that savagery was more blissful than civilisation. The main target of this rebuke was evidently Rousseau, who had suffered a similar attack by another Academy president about a year earlier.[73]

Despite the bucolic imagery, the cultural relativism, and the parallels drawn between the Khoikhoi and the Europeans, Sparrman – akin to how he regarded the pastoral colonists – comprehended them to be objectively worse off, no matter their own subjective interpretations of their situation. Placed far down on the ladder of progress, they needed to mount it by emulating their more fully realised fellow humans in the Northern Hemisphere, especially pertaining to work ethic. Civilised Europeans surely had room for betterment, as well, but their starting point was far above and beyond that of the impolite Khoikhoi.

Sparrman's renderings of the San exhibited a dehumanising tendency that bespoke a profound disdain for their venatic existence. The travelogue described them as a less polite, savage, itinerant, and usually stark-naked Khoisan variant or race inhabiting bushy, woody, or mountainous areas and surviving by hunting and plundering. The latter activity made them the enemies of all of humankind, and the colonists chased and exterminated

72. *Ibid.*, 475–477.

73. Sparrman, *Tal, om den tilväxt och nytta*, 21. For the reception of Rousseau in the presidential orations, see M. Persson, 'Det råa tillståndet: Vetenskapsakademien, vildarna och den koloniala världsordningen', in J. Nell and A. Sjödin, eds, *Kritik och beundran: Jean-Jacques Rousseau och Sverige 1750–1850* (Lund: ellerströms, 2017), 125–148.

them in the same manner as the brute animals they mimicked, save for those that wound up in 'slavery'. The San lived like beasts, or worse insofar as they relieved themselves adjacent to their abodes, which were consistent with their mores. Not more knowledgeable about farming than the monkeys they resembled, the scarcely-fed 'Boshies-men' swarmed around searching for wild, raw, and lousy foodstuff, including worms, insects, and snakes.[74]

Sparrman held that the San were used to inconstancy, vagrancy, and licentiousness, and that they by habit and nature hated every kind of work. The theme of autochthonous idleness was subsequently applied to his San helpers but offset by remarks that they were quicker and more resilient than he could ever have fancied.[75] He also found San in the service of colonists to be as swift and careful as their Khoikhoi peers and that San (and Khoikhoi) children who had early on been adapted to a different lifestyle were as alert as anyone. Consonant with stadial theory and its stress on external and accidental causes for the status of any given people, Sparrman claimed that one could hardly devise any natural predisposition 'as a particular obstacle, that not this very impolite Nation [the San and the Khoikhoi] could raise itself to a higher level of civilisation'.[76] No attempt had been made to polish and improve the San and increase their utility to the colonists, but the temperament of San servants and 'slaves' corroborated the viability of this project; that being said, the attitude towards and cruelties against them were major impediments.[77] As in the travelogue's discussion of the Khoikhoi evolving into hard workers and as with eighteenth-century French travellers gauging the Khoisan, it is possible to discern in Sparrman an interest in the economic potential of the indigenes and in procuring colonial labourers.[78]

The San did not conform well with Arcadian fantasy or cultural relativism. They were taken to embody the utmost primitive and to be too close to animals for comfort; tellingly, Sparrman's presidential oration singled out peoples sustaining themselves by hunting, among them the San, as especially wretched, since they 'deteriorate to savages, in fact beasts, until they hardly speak a language that can prove a thinking being'.[79] The travelogue nonetheless emphatically counted them as humans, like the Khoikhoi capable of and fit for civilisation if only granted an opportunity to achieve it.

Conclusion

This article adds to and expands on the criticism of Mary Louise Pratt's reading of Sparrman, which is mistaken insofar as he did not gloss over the indigenes, but on the contrary recognised their cultural practices and environmental frameworks and speculated on their past and their future. Neither did Sparrman ignore aggression, suppression, and discord. He on several occasions represented the Khoisan favourably in relation to their repression and hardships, which suggests that his compassion translated into a positive attitude

74. Sparrman, *Resa till Goda Hopps-udden*, 205, 208–209, 215, 322, 326–327, 368, 543–544, 557.
75. *Ibid.*, 211, 681–682.
76. *Ibid*, 228, 320, direct quotation on 228, compare 297. For stadial theory and contingent causes, see Jacques, 'From Savages and Barbarians', 204–205.
77. Sparrman, *Resa till Goda Hopps-udden*, 546–547.
78. Johnson, 'Representing the Cape "Hottentots"', 539–540.
79. Sparrman, *Tal, om den tilväxt och nytta*, 19–20.

towards them. The same holds true for those in bondage, whose suffering he detailed and resented. Many passages in his travel narrative indulged in contemporary 'imaginative sympathy' for the indigenes and the slaves.[80] Both groups were given a voice, albeit a distorted one, by Sparrman, whose steadfast abolitionism Pratt incidentally does not mention. The emancipatory dimension of his travelogue can be viewed in light of earlier autoptic accounts of Others that likewise sought to 'set the record right'; one noteworthy author in this vein was the Dominican missionary Bartolomé de Las Casas, who dealt with the subjugated natives and their European overlords in the sixteenth-century American colonial setting.[81]

Sparrman's sporadic parallelisations of the San with animals notwithstanding, he believed the indigenes and the slaves to be as human as and fundamentally similar to Europeans; they thus had no less right to freedom and Christian salvation and no less ability for civilisation. Savagery did not take away from humanity or warrant abuse. It is fair to say that Sparrman gave both 'savages' and 'civilised' their due, and that he acknowledged the equal worth, but not equality, of all nations.[82] In this, he manifested what Bronwen Douglas labels 'the deeply Eurocentric universalism of […] the Enlightenment study of man', a mindset she counterposes to 'the divisive racialism' of nineteenth-century anthropology.[83] Significantly, he did not rely on the proto-racial anthropological scheme of his teacher Linnaeus, but instead opted for a stadial approach attentive to factors that could, at least in theory, be modified.[84] Sparrman also resonates with Nigel Leask's observation that a 'historically based model of classical or feudal "antiquity" rather than evolutionary biology and its concomitant "racial science", still provided the dominant matrix by which cultures could be understood and compared'.[85] This shines through in Sparrman's human-related annotations, above all in his bucolic digressions.

Moreover, Sparrman's representations of the colonists were not primarily the domain of 'bourgeois' fancy. While his renderings of the indigenes and the slaves were often humanising, emphatic, and positive, the colonists in the main emerged as intrusive, oppressive, and savage-like. This would seem to confirm Raoul Granqvist's picture of him as a benevolent anti-colonialist, but appearances can be deceiving. First, none of these features negated the basic, Eurocentric North–South and civilisation–savagery dichotomy, which constituted a linchpin throughout the travel narrative, albeit they certainly relaxed and problematised it to an extent. Like the existence of the pastoral colonists, Khoikhoi life was good from an

80. For 'imaginative sympathy', see Johnson, *Imagining the Cape Colony*, 84–85.
81. For Las Casas, see Pagden, *European Encounters*, 78–80.
82. This has previously been stated about Sparrman's colleague and friend Georg Forster: see L. Kontler, 'William Robertson and His German Audience on European and non-European Civilisations', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 80, no. 209, part 1 (2001), 88; L. Kontler, 'Mankind and Its Histories: William Robertson, Georg Forster and a Late Eighteenth-Century German Debate', *Intellectual History Review*, 23, 3 (2013), 418, 422–423.
83. B. Douglas, 'Philosophers, Naturalists, and Antipodean Encounters, 1748–1803', *Intellectual History Review* 23, 3 (2013), 408.
84. For Linnaeus' taxonomy of human varieties, see Skuncke, *Carl Peter Thunberg*, 34–37; Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 32; T. Hoquet, 'Biologization of Race and Racialization of the Human: Bernier, Buffon, Linnaeus', in N. Bancel, T. David and D. Thomas, eds, *The Invention of Race: Scientific and Popular Representations* (London: Routledge, 2014), 25–30; Andersson Burnett and Buchan, 'The Edinburgh Connection', 164, 185–186.
85. Leask, *Curiosity*, 49.

inside perspective but an objectively inferior state of being. The San stood even worse and lower, considering their allegedly cruder and more animalistic disposition. Europeans surely had defects and potential for improvement, too, but were still far better off than and above the under- or un-developed Khoisan.

Second, Sparrman gravitated towards engrained negative images of the Khoisan rather than appreciation or bucolic idealisation of them, and towards the symbolic polarity of the cannibal, a figure he employed as a reference point and apparently saw as a quintessence of rudeness, rather than that of the Golden Age.[86] The positively valued autochthonous Other was largely the product of a literary filtering process, a semi-fictional exemplar of pre-civilised innocence and bliss.

Third, whereas it has been argued that Sparrman tended towards the theme of 'the vileness of the Europeans and the oppression of the indigenous population', the case can be made that he attributed the misdeeds chiefly to colonists who were qualitatively different from their transoceanic relatives.[87] Akin to much of his treatment of the Khoisan, Sparrman held the colonists in low esteem, contrasted them disadvantageously with the Europeans, and perceived them to lead objectively worse lives irrespective of their subjective experiences. There are indications that he bought into the idea of colonial degeneration. In this scenario, the unpolished, despicable, and grim conduct of the colonists, a demeanour evocative of the cannibal polarity, derived from the African locale. At any rate, the northern light of civilisation was essentially untouched by the wickedness of people who were not truly and fully European; the Self remained stable.

Given these aspects and his enduring wish to civilise the natives, it is reasonable to surmise that Sparrman hoped for a colonialism where the Other was met with more respect.[88] Rather than being anti-colonial, he conjured up another kind of colonial order with liberated slaves and educated, Christianised, and Europeanised indigenes. As his presidential address made perfectly clear, the edification of the non-European world would be supplied from Europe:

> We Europeans […] who call ourselves Civilised, and have received the noblest proof of as well as utility from the civilised hearts of savage Patagonians, but at that also seen their and other impolite Nations', so to say, shipwrecking with regard to human provisions and enlightenment, should we not so much sooner, and for the good of humanity, and for the extension of knowledges and Sciences, give these Brethren a human right, which nature has intended for our kind?[89]

The phrase 'civilised hearts' is of the essence here; inside, the savage concealed a potential European who must be brought out and actualised. Further, Sparrman's oration visualised how the North would benefit materially from civilising the South.[90] Along with the deliberations of Khoisan usefulness in the southern African travelogue, this signals that his version of

86. For the prejudices about the Khoisan, see Penn, *The Forgotten Frontier*, 6.
87. For the supposed tendency towards the theme of European vileness, see S. Sörlin and O. Fagerstedt, *Linné och hans apostlar* (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 2004), 155. Direct quotation from Sörlin and Fagerstedt.
88. The inspiration for this interpretation comes from the literature on Georg Forster. See C. Niekerk, 'Georg Forster's *A Voyage round the World*/*Reise um die Welt* (1777–80)', in Martin and Pickford, eds, *Travel Narratives in Translation*, 122.
89. *Tal, om den tilväxt och nytta*, 26.
90. *Ibid.*, 27, 30.

colonialism was not just cultural, but also economic and corresponding to the stress on utility in eighteenth-century Europe.

Sparrman certainly evinced complexities and ambiguities, but the civilising-mission angle goes a long way in reconciling the principal themes in his vision of the human world. The civilising process might not have taken centre stage or involved any sense of urgency, yet, it offers an important key to his multilayered outlook.

ORCID

Mathias Persson http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3965-520X

Author Biography

MATHIAS PERSSON holds a PhD in the history of science and ideas from Uppsala University. He specialises in the eighteenth century and has previously worked on conceptualisations of intra-European Otherness, the relationship between the state and the public sphere, and political allegiances and outlooks in the republic of letters. He is currently affiliated with the Department of Economic History, Uppsala University, and the Department of Historical Studies, University of Johannesburg.