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Markets and social exclusion: postcolony and San deprivation in Botswana

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The article uses the case of the San to historically examine the dynamic nature of public welfare in the face of aggressive postcolonial assimilationist pressures. To operationalise the concept of social exclusion, government policies and programmes are used as a yardstick against which progressive entitlements, or entitlement failures, can be measured and monitored over time. The analysis demonstrates that power relations and institutional structures of decision-making have not only eroded extant and potential entitlement relations in mineral-rich Botswana, but also negated San citizenship. Social exclusion has engendered insecurity, uncertainty, and social and economic vulnerability. In the light of Vision 2016, a national manifesto that will guide development in the new millennium, specific innovative approaches are needed to combat San social exclusion. The answer to this problem is not only the evolution of pluralist political parties and cultural organisations. Institutional economic innovation and San integration into factor markets deserve more analytical attention.

San populations occupy the margins of the modern Botswana economy. Throughout the 1990s entire scattered San populations were directly dependent on public transfers as destitutes (Valentine 1993a, 1993b; Good 1993; Gaborone 1997). Precariousness, it would appear, has been the bane of their existence. Wily (1982:292) demonstrates that by the 1970s Tswana tribesmen had taken over key land and water resources in areas like Ghanzi in a wave of unprecedented displacement that traumatised the San to the extent that the majority of them "increasingly turned to begging, piecework and stock theft for survival". She sadly observes that they were "demoralized, drunk and apathetic" (ibid,).

Recently, a San representative told a seminar that the San have been rendered landless, jobless and powerless to the extent that "they therefore spend a lot of time drinking alcohol. In the end they are decimated by alcohol related diseases" (cited in Tutwane 2001:18). They are among the poorest people in the country. Their social position has spawned a terminological melange of considerable magnitude in the Botswana developmental discourse: 'alienation, dependency, deprivation, despair, discrimination, disintegration, dispossession, exploitation, inequity, marginalisation, oppression, political exclusion, powerlessness" (Macdonald and Molamu 1997).

For centuries, these people have remained only partially integrated into highly imperfect markets. Actually, it is the degree of imperfection of the markets which the San confront on a daily basis that distinguish them from their nearest compatriots, the dominant Tswana speakers who, thanks to colonial benevolence are, by and large integrated into fully working markets even though many still live below the poverty datum line (RoB 1988, 1995, 1996, 1997a; Central Statistics Office 1996; UNDP 1997; Ditlhong 1997).

San social exclusion is accentuated by the very nature of the market conditions they continue to confront on a daily basis. Bhalla and Lapeyre (1997) note that although the problems of marginalization, poverty and exclusion have been on the agenda in many developing countries, the concept of social exclusion has, for reasons unknown, gained little attention. This is particularly the case with respect to the economic aspects of exclusion. However, it is not difficult to observe that this situation is probably due to the absence of a welfare state in many developing countries.

In some literature social exclusion refers to social disqualification or social disaffiliation "leading to a breakdown of the relationship between society and the individual" (Bhalla and Lapeyre 1997:414). This perspective of exclusion is linked to a tradition where social cohesion or integration is achieved by key state institutions. However, social exclusion can also be analysed in terms of collective economic behaviour. It may "reflect voluntary individual choices, patterns of interests or a contractual relationship between actors or 'distortions' to the system, such as discrimination, market failures and unenforced rights" (ibid.:415). Viewed from this broader perspective this notion is not very different from the notions of exit, voice and loyalty developed by Hirschman (1979, 1981). Similarities are also to be found in the concepts of citizen incorporation and disengagement so replete in African economic history (Chazan and Rothchild, 1988). Besides, Botswana distribution inequalities are largely the result of maladjustment to economic liquidity and not scarcity and general underdevelopment as is the case elsewhere in much of Africa (Thapelo 1998).

The central argument is that although living in a market economy, San welfare is dependent on non-market transactions, especially public transfers, charity, unreliable patronage networks and other culturally defined distributional channels principally because of past injustices committed by politically dominant Tswana groups.

Postcolonial bureaucratic domination of these people has been so pervasive that their interests have been stereotyped and routinised to the extent that it is no longer easy for them to effectively influence the agenda of the political system. This is the case because their markets in capital, land, labour and entrepreneurship have since independence been drastically undermined by inappropriate state interventions in the rural economy, poor educational achievement, erratic, fragmentary, and consistently incomplete availability of production inputs, and more significantly lack of discretion and flexibility in the labour markets facing these politically powerless people (Macala 1984; Gadibolae 1985).

A radical critique of postcolonial land reform policies demonstrates how San marginality has continued to be a function of accumulation for the dominant others. The result of this asymmetry is the current growing resentment among the San. Despite the increasing insensitivity of leading politicians, as exemplified by the element of menace that now permeates official discourse (Taylor 2002; Thapelo 2002), San discontent has the potential to undermine the collective ambitions enshrined in *Vision 2016* (RoB 1997b, 1997c).

Participation, citizenship and public welfare

Elsewhere I place considerable emphasis on the importance of citizen participation in the development process (Thapelo 1998) In latter analyses I note the absence of sustainable rural development in Botswana. I also point out the absence of effective participation by the peasantry in the development process. Specifically, I attribute the prevalence of rural underdevelopment to the absence of an alternative to the bureaucratic rigidity of the state. The argument is that there is a need for the evolution of alternative rural institutions and programmes capable of facilitating peasant participation in national development and the promotion of social welfare. This is particularly urgent for the San who were almost completely dependent on public transfers in the 1990s. This interpretation of peasant participation and rural underdevelopment in Botswana, however, begs a number of questions. First, what is participation? Second, is participation necessary for development? Finally, who should lead development? We need to address these critical questions within the context of Botswana before we can clearly establish where the responsibility for the welfare of the nation's poor rests.

Theoretically, there is no universal definition of political participation, or cultural and economic participation for that matter. For our purposes here, however, an appropriate working definition of participation is the one adopted by the United Nations Research Institute for

Social Development (UNRISD) which contends that participation designates "...[the] organised efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements hitherto excluded from such control" (Wolfe, 1983:2). In short, participation is not only about participatory democracy, (that is a political regime that allows a large segment of the population to take a direct and active part in government or the formation of public policy (Raymond, 1978)), but it also designates the conferment of citizenship. Citizenship in this context becomes synonymous with optimal safety guarantees and freedoms in three spheres of life: civil, political and socio-economic spaces. Development is thus dependent on both institutional innovations and political mobilisation of the underprivileged or economically exploited groups in society.

Perspectives on San social transformation

Academic studies of the interaction between agro-pastoral and foraging populations in Botswana are basically dominated by two traditions. First, there is the isolationist-evolutionist model that primarily contends that San people historically existed in a world of pristine isolation from the rest of the Tswana communities characterised by economic autarky and self-regulation. A thorough examination of this perspective has been dealt with elsewhere (see Solway and Lee 1990; Ng'ong'ola 1997; Taylor 2001). Other studies indicate that this conception, wittingly or otherwise, helps to legitimise San lack of property by romantically emphasising their aboriginality (Good 1993).

In the last two decades this theoretical perspective came under particularly intense scrutiny and criticism from a social science that recognised the historical vacuity in the isolationist model. New theoretical models emerged from a swelling body of archaeological, historical and ethnographic work that challenged the assumptions of orthodox anthropology. These studies focused on the examination of contact situations among the San, Tswana-speaking ethnic groups and Europeans (Hitchcock 1982; Solway 1987; 1994a, 1994b; Wilmsen 1989a, 1989b, 1989c). What emerged was a historical-interactive picture that demonstrates how connections between forces of capitalist penetration and political control led to the emergence of historically specific socio-cultural and economic formations in modern Botswana.

Based on models of political economy developed in the 1980s, the historical-interactive perspective sought to illustrate how the ahistorical nature of the isolationist-evolutionist models played into the hands of Tswana elite who found an ideological justification in the myth of San aboriginality, and used the latter to exclude the San from mainstream economic life. The ruling and development class coalition regards the San as weak, innocent, abused, vulnerable, but virtuous people who deserve state benevolence and nurturing; a historical stereotyping that in effect works against San people.

Postcolonial elite domination

Diana Wylie (1990) argues that structural inequality was the core concept in the Tswana political realm of the nineteenth century symbolised, she says, by the proverbial expression that "no man was another's equal" (*batho ga re lekane re se meno*). The interdependence between political power and economic wealth was illustrated by the prevalent usage of the term "*Kgosi*" for both a chief and a rich man. Thus acceptance and legitimisation of social stratification had firm ideological formations. The latter remained largely unchanged in 20th century Botswana. In this analysis I demonstrate how political domination, not only in terms of economic exploitation, but also in everyday practices and dominant discourses perpetually undermined San entitlement relations. A careful analysis of patterns of participation in, or exclusion from, social institutions, the dominant social discourse and political economy in general, is central to our understanding of a particular dynamic of rural differentiation that obtains mostly in San domiciled areas.

The question of San conditions and public welfare is compounded by a number of factors. However, in my view, two of these stand out and need to be delineated and analysed. These are (i) claims on the San by outsiders who continually promoted market fragmentation and (ii) dominant Tswana ideological/intellectual discourse that legitimated the economics of intolerance and subsequent San marginality. These factors are inter-related and consistently overlapped and reinforced each other in such a way that they cumulatively obscured the reality of the San historical existential dilemma to many a passive observer. The Botswana government, in pursuit of a vigorous policy of social control, through a prolonged process of depoliticisation (Thapelo 1998), consistently employed a strategy of co-option and assimilation of minority ethnic groups. While this policy provoked resentment and backfired as far as groups like Bakalanga are concerned (Werbner 2001), it continually served an exit market function for the less numerous and politically disorganised San leading to increased deprivation and vulnerability.

Extractive economic behaviour by dominant others. The situation in the Kalahari and Ghanzi districts, home to the majority of the San people, is compounded by the presence of both Afrikaner and Tswana farmers whose unwelcome residency, dating back almost a hundred years, was further entrenched by the agro-pastoral reforms initiated by the postcolonial state in the 1970s. The presence of these groups produced a demonstration effect that had serious historical implications for San development. Development models and living standards established, and continually redefined by neighbourly dominant groups, acquired legitimisation in the eyes of policy makers.

First, San exploitation was a function of accumulation by these groups as the San provided cheap labour for a booming cattle economy. Then, the prosperous latter groups were being held up as examples of what could be achieved by all Batswana in a growing liberal democracy. The market distortions that worked against San development and accumulation in the past were ignored. It is precisely because policymaking was premised on either neglect or ignorance of the historical past that policies aimed at San development failed to improve their economic situation.

Dominant Tswana discourse and dysfunctional patronage networks, The confinement of the San in the most arid parts of the Kalahari desert under an all-encompassing Tswana political and economic structure, did not only intensify their dependence on the benevolence of their masters, but also facilitated an elaborate evolution of patronage networks which, in addition to promoting Tswana political power in the notoriously uncertain colonial geopolitical context of Southern Africa, simultaneously denied the San an equal opportunity for group mobilisation. In the 1970s, the dominant Tswana social discourse, coupled with Tswana numerical strength, played a critical role in determining the economic fortunes of both the latter and the San. For instance in 1978 the extension of physical infrastructure and services to the remotest citizens virtually ground to a halt as hitherto uncontrolled inter-ministerial conflicts assumed a consensual perspective that purported to "... [operate] in reality by a different set of criteria, namely the 'numbers game'... whereby rural dwellers qualified for services on the basis of their population numbers" (Wily 1981:84).

This population agglomeration approach (i.e. the larger the resident group the more services and facilities) exacerbated the crisis of remote areas' underdevelopment at a time when the government was vigorously pursuing one of the most ambitious land reforms in the Third World, namely the Tribal Grazing Land Policy (TGLP) (Leach 1978). The latter, as we will see later, came to constitute the final stage in San land dispossession and directly gave momentum to non-market rights of access to land or non-price forms of tenancy like squatting which are

now predominant over open market transactions in areas like Kalahari, Ghanzi and parts of Ngamiland and the Central Districts.

Postcolonial state and facets of San deprivation

The San deserve particular attention for two reasons. First, unlike the more sedentary agro-pastoral communities in Botswana, these people are very vulnerable to natural visitations like drought and general ecological collapse and consequently experience more instances of structural poverty; a situation which further exacerbates the circle of relative poverty that has characterised their lives throughout the postcolonial era. The second reason is that the fragile nature of their lives affords us the opportunity to expand our analysis by assessing the relative influence of forces of nature, like the recurrent drought epidemics, debilitating human and animal diseases, and state policy in fostering dependent relations between the San and their politically and economically dominant Tswana neighbours. This approach affords us the opportunity to debunk ideological arguments by the ruling elite, namely it is drought, and not public policy, that accounts for the preponderant presence of both structural and relative poverty among the San. By looking at actions taken by individuals and institutions, we can establish the links between structure and agency and establish how their interactions have affected the material welfare of the subjects under investigation at critical historical junctures in Botswana; a situation which is even more pertinent given that Botswana has in the last four decades experienced periods of both extreme poverty and unprecedented prosperity.

Literature (Russell and Russell 1979; Thapelo 1998; Morapedi 1989; Madzwamuse 1998; Ng'ong'ola 1997; Gaborone 1997; Mogwe 1994) lends colour to the supposition that San deprivation is predicated on the following facets of life and existence: i) lack of land and water rights; ii) exclusion from the livestock industry; iii) rudimentary forms of local political leadership owing largely to state social control; iv) the existence of imperfect labour markets in San settlements and v) the pervasive influence of state policy in directing income generation and maintenance strategies in rural areas. By and large government policies have tended to promote San proletarianisation instead of economic empowerment through market integration.

San social exclusion

When the first advocacy of a settlement approach to the so-called "Bushman problem" evolved in colonial Bechuanaland in the first decades of the last century, the intention was ostensibly to curb the rate of alleged stock theft and cattle rustling by the San and also to avert rangeland destruction through veld fires equally allegedly caused by marauding bands of the San (Russell 1976). The formulation of land use policy was at that time prompted by a desire on the part of both the colonial administration and indigenous agro-pastoral farmers to promote the institutionalisation of a national system of law and order among San peasants and also to protect pastures in the process.

The movement from communal to individual tenure of both grazing land and farmland in Botswana, which started at the turn of the century, and intensified in the 1950s, was further exacerbated by the introduction of regulatory instruments for rangeland management aimed at formally institutionalising land-tenure, land-use and water-use between 1968 and 1975. Chief among these privatisation measures, were the Tribal Land Act (TLA) of 1968 and the TGLP of 1975. The TLA (and subsequent amendments) stripped tribal chiefs and headmen of their land allocation powers that were vested into the hands of the Ministry of Local Government and Lands whose hybrid Land Boards were now authorised to allocate tribal land (some 71% of the country) to tribesmen. The TGLP ushered in a leasehold tenure regime for propertied Tswana farmers, with lease periods of 50 years, subject to renewal and inheritance. By the early 1980s some 200 large commercial cattle ranches had mushroomed in the Ghanzi district, where San populations were heavily concentrated. Although the lease provisions could make for economic

rents, in practice these leases contained few and ambiguous conditions, and at ridiculous rentals of PULA 256 per 6,400 hectare ranch (in 1976), rents were set at sub-economic levels (with a three year grace period). In size these ranches averaged between 4,900 and 6,400 hectares each and in 1986, with new lease properties declared in six other districts, they covered 50,000 square kilometres of Botswana (Arntzen 1990). This economic dispensation benefited groups other than the San who could only enter the farm labour market that remained notorious for its imperfections (Macala 1984).

Rangeland commercialisation also worsened the San situation in several ways. First, the Tribal Land Act (No. 54 of 1968), and the most important of its amendments (No. 6 of 1970), which introduced Land Boards and delineated their land allocation powers in all the national districts, did not specify the rights of the San to land nor did subsequent amendments (Hitchcock and Holm 1993). Under the legal provisions of this piece of legislation, one of the important pre-requisites for land allocation to individuals by Land Boards was to consider, prior to instituting a customary grant, the status of the applicant as "a tribesman" (RoB, 1973: Regulation 8(1)(a)).

Section 20(1) (TLA No.54 of 1968) stipulated that no grant of customary land rights should be made to any person who was not "a tribesman" or an exempted person. In Section 2 of the TLA "a tribesman" was defined as "any citizen of Botswana who is a member of the tribe occupying the Tribal area" (TLA No. 54 of 1968, also as amended in 1973). The TLA perpetuated a serious omission in that, by granting common law status to Tswana customary land law, it effectively excluded consideration of San land needs or land rights, based as it is upon the predominant historical Tswana agro-pastoral land use patterns. The prior historical displacement of the San by both white settlers and dominant Tswana polities was not taken into account. The British colonial administration, which introduced tribal based reserves in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, did not give the San a reserve of their own. Scattered across the country within and without Tswana tribal reserves (now districts), the San were, according to the TLA clause, on technical interpretation, not "tribesmen".

The provisions of the TLA, which were paradoxically occasioned by the transference of power from a despotic traditional chiefly authority to a supposedly more democratic dispensation of local government, can actually be assailed for, in the words of one critic, emphasising tribal affiliation as a qualifying entitlement to land in a modern era (Ng'ong'ola 1992). One critical aspect of this Act is that since "citizens" primarily qualified for customary grants only in "the Tribal Area", "non-tribesmen" found themselves in a difficult situation as the legal provisions explicitly excluded political assimilation as qualifying entitlement within a foreign tribal entity, in favour of entitlement by bureaucratic ministerial exemption (ibid.). It was under the background of such exclusionary legislative measures that many Land Boards concluded that local San were not "tribesmen" and therefore not entitled to land allocation under the TLA. This trend was evident even in those areas that the San had occupied for over three or four generations (Wily, 1980, 1981). These apparently unjust exclusionary measures found legal assent and institutional sanction in an official statement of opinion in 1978 when a litigation consultant to the Attorney General concluded that "... Masarwa (sic) have always been true nomads, owing no allegiance to any chief or tribe...it appears to me that true nomad Masarwa can have no rights of any kind except rights to hunting" (cited in Ng'ong'ola 1997:1-2).

Although the government officially distanced itself, in a statement, from this discriminatory approach arguing that ethnicity was not in principle a condition for land allocation, research indicates that subsequent discriminatory Land Board decisions and practices went unpunished (Werbner 1982). Although many of these discriminatory laws were either removed or further amended in the 1990s (Ng'ong'ola 1997) so that they could be more socially inclusive, damage

had already been done. To make matters worse, postcolonial conservation legislation, for both fauna and flora, and the increasing perception within government circles of the tourist industry as a potential engine for economic growth in the future have both given a new, and more intrusively aggressive, momentum to San displacement and haphazard resettlement (Taylor 2001 2002; Gumbo 2002; Thapelo 2002). These latter two developments have negatively affected just about every San community in Botswana. Land previously belonging to a diversity of San communities has in the last three years fallen victim to relentless zoning, demarcation, privatisation, 'museumification', political delimitation, commercialisation, infrastructural development, mining, and a variety of tourist ventures. All this was done in the name of progress and national economic development. San interests were sacrificed to the public good. Thus for the San, the poverty trap is here to stay.

Entitlement failures

It is important to observe that government interest in the welfare of the San was not inspired by any euphoric postcolonial altruistic concerns for the marginalised minorities. The pressure to enforce a range of measures entitling marginalised San communities to the right(s), for example in Ghanzi, to share, to the full the standards prevailing in society, came first from a supportive section of the Ghanzi farming community (which was influential in the Ghanzi District Council), and from private individuals. The government responded to these suggestions positively and accordingly incorporated proposed market-integration San projects in the 1968/73 National Development Plan. However, bureaucratic wrangling aborted all the proposed schemes (i.e. the privatisation of the D'Kar Mission, resettlement of San squatters, revival of a tannery at D'Kar) and emphasis shifted to "special policies" on San people. This dramatic change of policy led to a series of heated debates about how best to deal with the "Bushmen problem".

Central to these debates was the issue of whether it was advisable to treat the San as a special group. Government's position was that the San should not be seen to be receiving undue special assistance that might cause the resentment of other poor citizens. No appeal to injustices of the past was advanced to make a case for these hapless people. Government White Paper No. 1 of 1972 entitled "Rural Development in Botswana" made the situation more problematic. It re-emphasised the government's dual economic strategy that aimed at "securing rapid and large returns to the nation from intensive capital investment in mining and other viable modern industries mainly aimed at export markets... and re-investing the proceeds of these investments to promote labour intensive activities and improve services in the rural areas" (RoB 1972:6).

This policy document, which laid the foundation for postcolonial development policy had an ominous warning for the marginalised groups in the rural sector, especially the San. It argued that socio-economic transformation would not "favour the rich or deprive the poor", and that "emphasis on equality must not lead us into assuming that the living standards of all the population can be raised by redistributing the assets of the few people who are relatively well off" (*ibid.*).

Thus in effect public policy was legitimising stratified distribution at a time when renewed interest in the San called for equality of entitlement and opportunity. Elizabeth Wily, then Bushman Development Officer, advocated an interventionist approach that directly involved the San in their own development. Paternalism towards the San was to be discouraged in favour of direct participation and the San were to be "our poor backward citizens" who needed a "boost programme" so that they could "benefit from normal rural development action" (Wily 1980).

Unfortunately such arguments fell on deaf ears. In an analytical sense, this advocacy agenda could not have succeeded given the fact that the projected implementation of the

San development programmes coincided with a very ambitious national programme of land reform; the TGLP. The Bushman Development Officer was initially optimistic that this policy, which made a specific commitment to safeguard the interests of those who owned only a few cattle or none at all (RoB 1975), would promote San advancement. In any case a directive to all local government departments was circulated after the publication of TGLP policy guidelines explicitly stating the importance of "evaluating and taking account of the needs of Basarwa (sic)" (cited in Wily 1980).

No one seems to have heeded this instruction. However, as it turned out there were no empty areas for the proposed TGLP commercial farms and consequently, in addition to commercialising existing cattle-post areas, nation-wide agro-pastoral commercialisation encroached into areas where sizeable San communities lived, thus forestalling any prospects for San development in their own ancestral land. As opposing lobbies emerged within and without government institutions concerning the unfolding displacement of the San, official discourse assumed a most unprecedented tone of indifferent belligerence. A senior district official summed up this mood of exasperation at a special Land Use Planning Advisory Group meeting in 1978 thus, "we have had enough 'going to the people'. Consultation takes too much time. We should abandon it. We need to go ahead. All this discussion and planning is getting in the way of development. Basarwa, if they are in the way, should be gotten out of the way so that we can put up our fences" (cited in Hitchcock 1982:26).

As the enclosure movement intensified and the welfare of the San was subsumed under an all encompassing Remote Area Development Programme, catering to all poor remote area dwellers (estimated at 60,000 people in 1977 of whom 30,000 were San), the most important policies Wily had advocated witnessed a radical re-orientation from self-reliance to benevolent state paternalism. The San thus remained, once again, in a position of "inertia and stolid acceptance of their dependence on the Bantu" (Silberbauer 1965:137). One MP criticised Wily's approach to San development as a form of "separate development" (Botswana Daily News, 15 March, 1978:2). Meanwhile, the position of Wily was localised and the San, now officially regarded as destitute, became directly dependent on the state.

The above analysis demonstrates how state bureaucratic domination became a critical determinant factor in San social transformation between 1968, when the Tribal Land Act received parliamentary assent, and the 1970s when the enclosure effects of the TGLP became more pronounced. Before her acrimonious departure from service, Wily decided to dispel charges of "separate development" by recommending to government that San development programmes be incorporated into what she called Extra Rural Dwellers (ERDs) development assistance schemes. The ERDs were considered to be (i) poor rural citizens (i.e. living below the poverty datum line); (ii) resident outside villages or on the fringes; (iii) generally non-stock holders; (iv) partially dependent on hunting and gathering for subsistence and (v) often culturally and linguistically distinct (Wily 1981).

Wily was aware that contemporary rural development initiatives did not reach the San and other ERDs. Her conviction was that because of their "backwardness" the San deserved affirmative action style assistance. But from the above recommendation it is possible that she was beginning to realise the imminence of the need to slant development programmes toward all poor sections of the rural peasantry. On the other hand it may well be that this reversal of philosophy was a ploy to reserve the status quo of the Bushmen Development Programme--even though in an expanded form. Whatever the intention was, this retreat into a sphere of ambiguity, in retrospect, backfired tragically. Her successor turned out to be extremely wary of any efforts to secure land for the San, and tended to favour their villagisation: to make them live like the sedentary (presumably more civilised) agriculturists and pastoralists.

Government had accepted the proposal by Wily and formally changed the name of National Development Plan Project LG 32 from Bushmen Development Programme to Extra Rural

Development, replaced by the name Remote Area Development Programme in 1977. Thus, by the late 1970s, the "Bushmen problem" became an officially acknowledged aspect of rural underdevelopment. It is against this background that we use government's commitment to this problem as a yardstick measure of its general policy towards rural underdevelopment. The government's political, administrative, financial and institutional ability to reverse the economic woes of the remote area dwelling peasants should be a useful indicator of its commitment to rural development in general. Its apparent failure in this regard, especially with respect to the San, does not augur well for the future of the underprivileged in our society.

San response

In his celebration of peasant resistance to capital and predatory political domination, Scott (1985) exposes everyday forms of peasant resistance. These he refers to as "the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labour, food, taxes, rents, and interest from them" (1985:29). The "ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups" like the San are associated with "foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth"(ibid.,). Thus what many Batswana perceive as unreasonable or criminal behaviour on the part of the San can analytically be regarded as rational behaviour by the San because to them it is purposeful behaviour, wittingly or otherwise.

The historical record suggests that these actions have had some effect on the various forms of exploitation that the San confronted in the past. The analysis may appear to be condoning criminality but not so long ago an economics Nobel laureate, and specialist in public welfare, argued strongly that consistent threats to property rights in countries where income inequalities are extreme is not necessarily uneconomic, using the American underclass as an example (Sen 1993). These forms of resistance may lead to economic liberation. The San have, however, attempted several of them without much success.

Confronted with cases of general mistreatment, bureaucratic rigidity of the postcolonial state, land alienation, absence of opportunities for gainful employment or failure to receive promised wages, lack of compensation for their homes when evicted, competition for herding jobs with the so-called "more dependable but more expensive alternatives [Bantu]" (Russell 1976:194) and the introduction of borehole technology, fencing and trucking (all of which effectively downgraded their bargaining power in an already precarious labour market), the San seem to have seized on two weapons of resistance and survival. First, stock theft. This was a problem to administrators throughout the colonial period (Taggart 1933). In 1965 the escalation of cattle-theft was up to 200 head per farm (Wily 1982). These are stories familiar to the wealthy Motswana cattle owner and public reader. What is not understood are the motives behind them. In the labour market the San also managed to drive some of their employers to distraction. One white farmer lamented that "however interesting he may be to the anthropologist...[the Bushman] is the world's worst worker and the farmer's worst friend. If he feels hungry he will kill an ox or a sheep, usually the fattest one out of the herd he is tending" (cited in Russell 1976: 188).

These forms of struggle were effective during the colonial period and they solicited an appropriate response from the authorities who tried very hard to promote San access to land, as illustrated by the establishment of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (Silberbauer 1965). The postcolonial state, however, in pursuit of technocratic policy regimes, was wary of this situation and immediately instituted a plethora of legislations to enable privatisation of tenure, foreign direct investment, enforcement of property rights and general untrammelled operation of market forces. The San stood no chance and consequently their struggle tended to be championed by sympathetic outsiders like Survival International, the

American Anthropological Association and Ditshwanelo, alongside San-led protonationalist organisations and associations.

With the projected encashment of diamond deposits, promotion of tourist ventures, and the as yet uncertain but continuing implementation of the Community Based Natural Resources Management Policy (RoB 2000) in San populated areas, it is now unlikely that we will witness a revolution occasioned by a social avalanche of petty acts of insubordination carried out by disorganised and uncoordinated San groupings in the future. It would appear that any viable solution to this problem would have to involve key state institutions and the San people themselves. What is critical is the simple fact that the government must provide sufficient incentives for the San to enable them to enter the market economy as worthy competitors on their own terms.

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