

## Public Policy and San Displacement in Liberal Democratic Botswana

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### **Abstract**

*San displacement and re-settlement in postcolonial Botswana is one of the most controversial policy issues to confront the government in the recent past. The fact of the matter is that government has politically, administratively and institutionally undermined the economics of San public welfare and human rights because of its inability to tame the passions and excesses of outside claimants, especially cattle barons and an emerging bureaucratic bourgeoisie whose interests are coterminous with those of the ruling class coalition. Post-colonial pretensions to a social democratic, or social market, legacy have lost ground to market fundamentalism. The emerging ruling development coalition has amassed wealth beyond the imagination of the ordinary citizen. It is uncompromising in its overlordship and social engineering, wading off, in its triumphalism, any chances of containing and civilising its course. It brooks no social obligation. Its excesses continually undermine the political community, development ethics and universal human values appertaining to individual and social welfare in a social market economy. Asymmetrical power relations and the rigidity of institutional structures of decision-making have not only eroded extant and potential entitlement relations, but also negated San citizenship.*

### **Introduction**

Bias against San interests has become so routinised that it is no longer possible for these interests to effectively influence the policy agenda of the political system, yet it is the dominant classes in Botswana that have inexorably taken the 'brave new world' to the San communities. This untrammelled operation of market forces, exacerbated by a continual desire to penetrate rural society by a *de facto* one-party state, has culminated in the development of a democratic deficit that has not only whittled away essential national democratic institutions and values, but also catapulted the politics of San dispossession into the international spotlight (see Taylor and Mokhawa, 2003). The result is an unprecedented exposure of the weaknesses and fragility of Botswana's liberal democratic credentials.

### **Public Policy and Marginalisation**

This analysis draws mainly on primary and secondary sources to investigate the problem of San displacement and re-settlement, attempting to transcend the frontiers of existing knowledge on the subject by trying to demonstrate how this process of continual encroachment is the result of uneven capitalist development. This argument is based on several interrelated assumptions. First, San domination by other groups is a phenomenon sanctioned by history, not nature, and is therefore amenable to change. Second, this domination has continually found justification in dominant and, until recently, uncontested Tswana political hegemony and its attendant cultural-ideological

discourse. Third, San social exclusion was—and in many respects remains—a function of accumulation by the dominant classes. Finally, this marginalisation process has persisted unremittingly precisely because of a lack of an internally directed intellectual challenge. Culturally denigrated, socially excluded, economically marginalised and politically disenfranchised for well over a century, the San have remained for many years pariahs in their own land. Objects of abuse, they could be—and indeed they were—used and discarded at will (Burchell, 1822; Tagart, 1931; Silberbauer, 1965; Good, 1992, 1993, 1999).

### **Struggle for Survival**

The association of the San with the bush is rooted in history and not, as the Tswana-speaking groups suggest, in their nature (Solway, 1994b). The myth of a pristine, leaderless, property-less and lawless San living in continuing communality actually obscures long-standing historical differentiation processes. Wilmsen (1989) demonstrates how these people developed and controlled the means of production and trade over large parts of the Kalahari centuries before their contact with Tswana-speaking people. At the beginning of the previous millennium, these people were shown not only to have been engaged in long distance trade, but also to have been long engaged in the production of ceramics. European travellers like Burchell (1822) and Livingstone (1857) also provided eyewitness accounts of San cattle keeping. Indeed, Wilmsen (1989) provides an interesting argument that these people may indeed have been the first pastoralists in Botswana.

However, the above analysis begs the critical question: how did the San come to be a dispossessed community dependent on the magnanimity of their Tswana-speaking and European counterparts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? This question is not easy to answer. However, historical sources point to a parallelism that can hardly be incidental: it has been established that a rising Tswana elite gained in wealth and power at a time when the San suffered increasing deprivation of property and political autonomy (Solway 1994b). San deprivation can thus perhaps be attributed to Tswana accumulation. If this is to be accepted, there is a clear need to analytically delineate and highlight the various modes of Tswana economic extractive behaviour and, to remedy the situation, suggest possible democratic procedures for San integration into mainstream economic life.

The question of the San's condition and their public welfare is compounded by a number of factors. The presence of Tswana groups among San communities has produced a demonstration effect that has had serious historical implications for San development. Development models and living standards established, and continually redefined by neighbourly dominant groups, have 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. Currently, the prosperous cattle farmers are being held up as examples of what can be achieved by all Batswana in a growing liberal democracy—the market distortions that worked against San development and accumulation in the past are ignored. It is precisely because policy making is premised on either neglect or ignorance of the historical past that policies aimed at San development so far have failed to improve their economic situation. In the light of recent developments, such as the launching of Vision 2016, it is imperative that we explore the economic past of San people so that viable ways may be established for their incorporation into long-term development and democratic processes in their own terms.

### **Unrelenting Political Domination**

The confinement of the San in the most arid parts of the Kalahari under an all-encompassing Tswana political and economic structure not only intensified their dependence on the benevolence of their masters, but also facilitated an elaborate evolution of patronage networks which, in addition to promoting a valorisation of Tswanaedom in pursuit of political power in the notoriously uncertain colonial context of southern Africa, simultaneously denied the San an equal opportunity for group mobilisation. In the 1970s, the use of 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" (Wily, 1981: 84).

This conventional large population agglomeration approach (i.e. the larger the resident group, the more services and facilities) exacerbated the crisis of remote area underdevelopment. The asymmetric accumulation of political power by Tswana tribal entities in the run-up to the declaration of independence in the 1950s and the consolidation of political power in the 1970s and 80s unwittingly found intellectual justification in publications like Thomas's (1988) *The Harmless People* and Wiseman's (1974) *The Peaceful Outsiders*. Both texts, consciously or unconsciously, poignantly purported to depict the plight of the San as a natural given. More surprising, however, is that even a brilliant and intellectually incisive piece of academic work like Kuper's (1970) classic study of politics in a Kalahari village may possibly be interpreted as abetting the same perception. Critics have noted that, although trying to establish that the politics of the village were democratic, Kuper makes no mention of the San participating in *any* activities of governance! The scenario that emerges from these writings is that of an acquiescent San at peace with themselves and their environment. However, such analysis, as is evident in the literature above, is inadequate, and its patently ahistorical nature can hardly account for social reality. To appreciate fully the marginality of the San in rapidly changing historical circumstances, we need to analyse the dynamic relations between the political and cultural definition of their identity and its material and social grounding.

### **Economic Deprivation and Political Disenfranchisement**

The San deserve particular attention for two reasons. First, unlike historically sedentary agro-pastoral communities, these people are less politically organised and therefore very vulnerable to destabilisation, conquest and all sorts of hazards, and experience more instances of conjunctural poverty than the rest of Botswana. This situation exacerbates the circle of structural poverty that has characterised their lives throughout the colonial and postcolonial eras. The second reason is that the fragile nature of the lives of these people—often completely dependent on the selective benevolence of Tswana cattle feudal lords in the colonial period and the pseudo-welfarist and democratic paternalism of the postcolonial state—affords us the opportunity to expand our analysis by assessing the relative influence of forces of nature (such as recurrent drought) and state policy in fostering dependent relations between the San and their Tswana neighbours. This approach is crucial since it affords us the opportunity to debunk ideological arguments by the ruling elite that it is drought, and not public policy, that accounts for the preponderant presence of both structural and relative poverty among the San. The cy-

clical recurrence of drought, the rapid growth of a liquid economy, without the corresponding evolution of institutional capacity to eradicate stratified modes of distribution inherited from imperial Britain, and erratic, uncertain and often haphazard state policies and programs are 'revelatory crises' in which socio-economic and political structural contradictions are exposed. Our analysis will indicate that such exposure, albeit not necessarily establishing indisputable causality between the said structural contradictions and the deteriorating socio-economic conditions of the San communities, theoretically provides a set of elective affinities that leave no room for any alternatives save to conclude that the plight of the latter group arises from dependence on a state long captured by class interests. This approach is particularly suitable to the context of Botswana since the government has developed a propensity to respond to such "revelatory crises" by disrupting, in the words of one social scientist, "conventional routine sufficiently to allow [itself] to innovate normative codes" (Solway, 1994a:472).

### **Long Walk of Misery**

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. A review of the literature on San accessibility, or exclusion, from land in Botswana indicates that three factors have, at different historical junctures, characterised the pattern and nature of their population settlements. First, when the first advocacy of a settlement approach to the so-called 'Bushman problem' evolved in colonial Bechuanaland, 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 veldt fires caused by marauding bands of San. 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 people and also to protect pastures in the process. In the century before, the San had lost their land to sedentary Tswana pastoralists and the establishment of the Ghanzi Freehold Farming Block between 1889 and 1899 marked the last phase of this land dispossession. In spite of the fact that 20,000 San, about three quarters of the San population at the turn of the century (Silberbauer, 1965), had already been displaced by encroachment on their land by Bantu pastoralists and their cattle, the Ghanzi Freehold Farming Block was the first cattle ranching block to be established by the colonial administration consequent to the annexation of Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885, partly to provide land for Europeans in that area but mainly to establish a buffer zone in the far west against German expansionism. This European land settlement scheme eventually embraced some 18,000 square kilometres of profitable hunting, gathering and grazing land, turning the dispossessed San into squatters on their own traditional land.

Second, as the widespread expansion of British borehole technology intensified, a more human-centred approach to the so-called Bushman problem, as opposed to the purely legislative approach pursued earlier, was adopted to address the intractable problems caused by San displacement. The 1931 official report on conditions existing among the San in the BamaNgwato Reserve (Tagart, 1931) was the first of several others that were to culminate in the evolution of an official colonial policy towards the San. The Tagart report concluded that master-servant relations that bordered on serfdom characterised San-Tswana relations. The response of the colonial administration was to appoint an assistant magistrate to carry out a survey of the San and deal with their affairs.

At the same time, the colonial administration embarked on a number of development projects to improve the lot of the embattled San in the 1930s. For instance, in 1938 it established an agricultural scheme aimed at teaching the San cultivation skills.

On the eve of independence, more vigorous efforts were initiated to address the plight of the San. One of the most far-reaching official actions came about in 1958 when a Bushman Survey Officer, Silberbauer, was appointed by the colonial administration to "... look into the situation of the Bushman people, with a view to seeing how best they might be included within the national life of the future independent Bechuanaland" (Silberbauer, 1965: 2). The latter was a lengthy survey whose wide-ranging recommendations were to impact strongly on official policy towards the San up to 1974 when the postcolonial government appointed Liz Wily as a full-time Bushman Development Officer; a position she held until 1978 when she admitted failure due to frustration deliberately wrought by officialdom. Wily subsequently resigned.

Silberbauer estimated the total population of the San in Bechuanaland to be 24,652 and noted that the majority of these people were scattered widely over the Protectorate, and often interspersed amongst agro-pastoralists in small groups of between 10 and 50 individuals. In 1963, Silberbauer became extremely instrumental in the designation of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, embracing some 32,000 square kilometres of the Kalahari veldt as home to the displaced San. This gazzetting was to prove important in partially protecting the San from the livestock developments of the 1970s. Meanwhile, two aspects of this official colonial policy towards the San are worth noting. First, it is crucial to observe that Silberbauer's terms of reference implied that the colonial administration saw the extension of reservations to cover the San as an appropriate strategy to deal with their displacement; the radical departure from this strategy by the post-colonial government in the 1970s was not to augur well for the future of these people. Second, the fact that San relocation was associated with the preservation of fauna and flora was to later provide a basis for an environmental approach to the San question that was to be grossly abused by the post-colonial government under the pretext of striking an environmental balance between nature and man. This strategy continues even today.

Meanwhile, the 1964-65 Silberbauer recommendations proposed sizeable water developments within the Central Kalahari Game Reserve to enable an estimated 4,000-5,000 San to remain there indefinitely. Wily (1981) records that one borehole was successfully drilled in the Xade area of the Reserve and a grant of 15 000 pounds acquired from Oxfam (United Kingdom) to drill a further five. The Bushman Survey Officer had proposed a total of 15 boreholes to be drilled in the Reserve. However, disappointing geological survey results, difficulties in finding a competent driller and the imperatives of drought relief all conspired to abort the project. Nevertheless, one must emphasise that pressure for initiating and executing San projects of this nature derived largely from international criticisms regarding the exploitation of San communities by their Tswana overlords and certainly not from the dominant Tswana communities. For instance, Dame Joan Vickers, reacting to allegations by the British Anti-Slavery Society that the San were being threatened with extinction as a result of enslavement and extermination by their neighbours, raised a query in the House of Commons in Britain on the 1st April 1965 and asked what arrangements were being made to safeguard their livelihood and improve their (San) living conditions (BNA, 1965b). Local politicians were entirely indifferent to the plight of these people.

The final recommendations of the Silberbauer report also addressed the condition of some 5,000 San who were labourers and squatters on the Ghanzi Freehold Farming Block (Childers, 1976). The establishment of the latter cattle ranching block revolu-

tionised land property rights in the Bechuanaland Protectorate in that, whereas Tswana agro-pastoral peasant communities practised communal grazing, the colonial administration gave the Ghanzi European settlers freehold title over the land they settled allowing individual white farmers to fence in the grazing land for ranches. By 1958, when Silberbauer embarked on his survey, over 100 enclosed ranches had mushroomed in the Ghanzi area and white settlers had the legal right to evict resident San. Silberbauer considered the plight of these people, and he regarded as a serious problem the escalation of unemployment among San farm cattle herders. He thus advocated for the improvement of "the labour market by raising the standard of farming in Ghanzi which would put farmers in a position to pay better wages" (Silberbauer, 1965: 137) and further argued that "government should establish an experimental and breeding station on one of the vacant Ghanzi farms to improve the standard of farming...and to train [the] Bushman (sic) as farm labourers" (*ibid.*, p. 138). More fundamentally perhaps was the argument that "successful pupil farmers ... [should] be given boreholes and stock to start as independent farmers" (*ibid.*, p. 138). The latter point is crucial, for what Silberbauer was in effect advocating was the conferment of entitlements to the San to the point of bringing them to equal status with Tswana agro-pastoral farmers and their European counterparts.

The government initially welcomed the Silberbauer recommendations, and the Ministry of Home Affairs was charged with the responsibility to implement them. However, a special proviso was inserted in the terms of acceptance to the effect that the new policy should avoid the alleged pitfalls of "(a) appearing to treat Bushman on a par with game in the Reserve, and leaving those outside the Reserve entirely to voluntary efforts, (b) expending scarce resources in providing Bushman with facilities for which the people as a whole are eager, on an exceptionally favoured basis" (BNA, 1965a: 6). This latter memorandum is crucial in that debates about the relative merits of preserving San interests alongside Kalahari fauna and flora, on the one hand, and questions about the wisdom of pursuing a policy of apparent separate development towards them as a nation without equal regard to other poor sections of the national population, on the other, were to culminate in (i) a ministerial decision not to use domestic sources of revenue to implement the Silberbauer recommendations and (ii) resentment towards the special treatment of the San becoming so pronounced in postcolonial official discourse that in spite of a query on the negative attitude of the Tswana political elite in the British House of Commons, made in the Committee stage of the Bechuanaland Independence Bill, the 'Bushman question' faded from local discussion. A discussion of the question in the House of Lords, led by Lord Allport in February 1965, solicited no interest in the emerging Tswana nation.

Meanwhile, internal developments were moving in a direction that was to all intents and purposes insensitive to the condition of the San. The movement from communal to individual tenure of both grazing land and farmland—which started at the turn of the century and intensified in the 1930s—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 of 1968, enunciated only two years after the formal attainment of independence in September 1966, and the Tribal Grazing Land Policy of 1975. The Tribal Land Act (and subsequent amendments) stripped tribal chiefs and headmen of their land allocation powers which were then 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 Tribal Grazing Land Policy of 1975 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 are heavily concentrated. Although the lease provisions could make for economic rents, in practice these leases contained few and ambiguous conditions, and at extremely low rentals of P256 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).

Rangeland commercialisation worsened the San situation in several ways. First, the Tribal Land Act (1968) (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 is to consider, prior to instituting a customary grant, the status of the applicant as a "tribesman" (Republic of Botswana, 1973: Regulation 8(1)(a)). Section 20(1) (TLA No.54 of 1968) stipulates that no grant of customary land rights should be made to any person who is not a "tribesman" or an exempted person. In Section 2 of the Tribal Land Act a "tribesman" is 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 Tribal Land Act 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. For instance, 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 Tribal Land Act clause, not "tribesmen". The provisions of the Tribal Land Act, 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 famous 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 qualify for customary grants only in the Tribal Area, non-tribesmen find themselves in a difficult situation, as the legal provisions explicitly exclude political assimilation—as had hitherto been the historical experience—as qualifying entitlement within a foreign tribal entity, in favour of entitlement by bureaucratic ministerial exemption. 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 any land allocation under the Tribal Land Act. This trend was evident even in those areas that the San had occupied for over three or four generations (Wily, 1979a). These apparently unjust exclusionary measures found legal assent and institutional sanction in the official statement of opinion by the Attorney General Chambers in January 1978 when a litigation consultant to the Attorney General concluded that:

... the Masarwa (sic) have always been true nomads, owing no allegiance to any chief or tribe, but have ranged far and wide for a very long time over large areas of the

Kalahari in which they have always had unlimited hunting rights, which they enjoy even today despite the Fauna Conservation Act. The right of Masarwa to hunt is, of course, very important and valuable as hunting is their main source of sustenance...it appears to me that true nomad Masarwa can have no rights of any kind except rights to hunting (Will, 1978, File No. 2/1/1:8).

Although the Ministry of Local Government and Lands officially distanced itself, in a statement, from this discriminatory approach, arguing that ethnicity was not in principle a condition or criteria for the acceptance, or rejection of application for land allocation, research indicates that subsequent blatantly discriminatory Land Board decisions and practices went unpunished (Werbner, 1982 and Wilmsen, 1989).

### **Official Response: The Arrogance of Political Power**

In late April 1974 the government appointed, as we have mentioned, Elizabeth Wily as a full-time Bushman Development Officer. This appointment was not unprecedented, since the colonial administration had appointed an assistant magistrate, J. W. Joyce, to deal with matters pertaining to the San as far back as 1934. George Silberbauer also assumed a similar task in 1958. In 1971 Marcus Rowland, a Motswana Principal in the Ministry of Local Government and Lands, was given responsibility for the portfolio of Bushman Affairs. It is important, however, 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) to share, to the full, the social heritage and live the lives of a 'civilised' people commensurate with the standards prevailing in society (see the *Constitution of Botswana*, Chapter II, No. 3c), came from an enlightened section of the Ghanzi farming community, which was influential in the Ghanzi District Council. Individuals and organisations at home and abroad also played a major role.

In its first District Development Plan for the period 1968-1972, the Ghanzi District Council stated that:

...we are conscious that the Ghanzi has a unique problem in the Bushmen, a distinct social and racial group totalling two-thirds of the District's population. The Bushmen require special assistance.... By establishing the Central Kalahari Reserve, Government made it clear that it recognised the need to guarantee the Bushman's position. What was not perhaps fully appreciated at the time was that the Bushmen are already inextricably involved in the stock-raising economy of Ghanzi as workers on the farms and as clients in the villages. Very many of them are neither willing nor indeed able to resume a purely hunting economy and if they are to play their full part in the development of the District, efforts must be made to settle them as stockowners in an undeveloped area of the District (RoB, 1968: 39-40).

The government responded to these suggestions positively and accordingly incorporated proposed San projects in the 1968/73 National Development Plan. However, bureaucratic wrangling aborted all the proposed San 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 'Bushman problem'. Central to these debates was the issue of whether it was even advisable to treat the San as a special group. The position of the Ministry of Finance and Development 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, para. 6). This policy document, which laid the foundation for postcolonial development policy and trajectory, 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.*, par. II). Thus, in effect, public policy was legitimising stratified distribution at a time when renewed interest in the San called for a development trajectory tempered with social justice and equality of entitlement and opportunity. Thus the brief career of Elizabeth Wily at the Ministry of Local Government and Land was an uphill struggle against an explicit economic policy that advocated rapid rates of growth at the expense of social justice.

Wily had 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 program” so that they could “benefit from normal rural development action” (Wily, 1979a, 1979b, 1980 and 1981). 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 programs clashed with a very ambitious national program of land reform: the Tribal Grazing Land Policy. The Bushmen Development Officer was initially optimistic that this policy, which made a specific commitment to safeguard the interests of those who own only a few cattle or none at all (RoB, 1975), would promote San advancement (Wily, 1979a). In any case a directive to all District Commissioners, District Councils, and Land Boards was circulated after the publication of TGLP policy guidelines stating that:

The Ministry [of Local Government and Lands] wishes to make explicit in the land use planning exercise connected with the Tribal Grazing Land Development Program the importance of evaluating and taking account of the land needs of Basarwa. This is important at all stages of the data collection and survey program, and the process of consultation (LG 2/20 18 July 1975, cited in Wily, 1979b: 13).

No one seems to have heeded this instruction. However, as it turned out there were no empty areas for the proposed commercial farms and, 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 development in their own settlements. As opposing lobbies emerged within and without government institutions, official discourse assumed a most unprecedented tone of indifferent belligerence. A senior district official summed up this mood at a special Land Use Planning Advisory Group meeting in January 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 Program, catering to all poor remote area dwellers (estimated at 60,000 people in 1977, of whom 30,000 were San), the most important policies the Bushmen Development Program had envisaged witnessed a radical change from self-reliance to benevolent state paternalism. In the words of George Silberbauer, echoed some twelve years earlier, the San thus remained in a position of "inertia and stolid acceptance of their dependence on the Bantu" (Silberbauer, 1965: 137). One Member of Parliament criticised Wily's approach to San development as a form of "separate development" (*Botswana Daily News*, 15 March, 1978, p. 2). Meanwhile, the position of Bushmen Development Officer was localised and, officially regarded as destitute, the San became directly dependent on the state.

### **Silent Violence: Anxieties and the Tragic Reality of Government Policy**

As the San are continually and forcibly evicted from their ancestral land and relocated into new settlements their traditional safety nets, as reports already suggest, collapse, leading to more pronounced economic vulnerability and social dislocation. Maladjustment to alien social and economic institutions, structural occupations, unfamiliar physical terrain and ideologies, and highly westernised world view dynamics or cosmologies, invariably add more pain and angst to their already stigmatised identities. The much taunted modernisation crusade turns out to be a symbolically and practically more destructive force than that loathsome Coca-Cola bottle in the film *The Gods Must Be Crazy*. The end result is nothing short of ethnocidal genocide as San either die in their relocated settlements or move to neighbouring urban and peri-urban centres to eke out a living as squatters, beggars, prostitutes or providers of cheap labour. They lack the skills and knowledge to effectively integrate and articulate with the rapidly emerging commercial and highly commodified society and, anyway, entrance into the emerging market economy is constrained by the very nature of ancient San economics. To enter the political market as effective actors, they need to not only contest the dominant discourse that currently favours their dislodgement from ancestral home but also confront and neutralise the 'talent effect' long engendered by wealth, success and sophistication among the dominant Tswana. The possibilities for success in this are extremely limited and hence the San need all the friends and support they can get to survive.

### **Displacement and the Internationalisation of Botswana Politics**

The San have found it worthwhile to project protest politics beyond the realm of the nation-state: a manifestation of the country's democratic deficit and loss of trust in the state by the dispossessed (Taylor and Mokhawa, 2003). When the government, with the connivance and assistance of the Kalahari Conservation Society, tried to evict the San from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in 1986, the San appealed directly to Survival International who, with other human rights groups, raised so much international furore that the re-settlement scheme was halted. A second attempt to implement the same plan in May 1996 raised impassioned debates in the House of Lords in London, received extensive international media coverage and prompted the largest circulation paper in Botswana to draw the Government's attention to the embarrassing aspects of internationalised protest politics (*Mmegi Way Dikgang*, 24-25 May 1996).

Currently, the government is once again trying to forcibly evict the San from the same area. Various groups are up in arms in yet another attempt to protect these long-suffering people from incessant harassment by their own government. The government is trying to lure the people into new settlements for permanent residence, 'compensat-

ing' them with livestock and a lump sum of P34 000 (\$3400). Needless to say, this so-called compensation is extremely, and insultingly, small given the fact that Botswana is a middle-income country with a per capita income of about \$3 600 and foreign reserves of no less than \$6 billion (RoB 2002). Government domestic debt is the lowest in the Third World and the external debt is the lowest in Africa. That such a wealthy country should deem it fit to evict the San from land that has been their home for more than 20,000 years and then provide so little in compensation is the height of unmitigated official arrogance and indifference. Besides, some unscrupulous individuals and syndicates are "using their wealth to buy livestock allocated to Basarwa (sic) by the government". When a reporter confronted a senior government official and asked him to explain this anomaly the answer was at best most cavalier. The latter admitted that although they knew of such practices, they did not "have empirical evidence" and that they had "not investigated the matter". Of course you cannot establish irrefutable evidence without investigation! Government policy radically differs from the one pursued by Permaculture Trust of Botswana. The latter seek to:

Promote income generation through the sustainable use of natural resources and also assist San communities to empower themselves...[through] a people-centred process which empowers poor people by enhancing local management capacity, increasing confidence in indigenous potential and raising collective consciousness....(*Mmegi Monitor* 2001: 8).

This approach is clearly most appropriate to the current parlous condition of the San and it may in the long term effectively lessen their post-colonial dependency on the state. But government will have none of this—it is currently using its monopoly of violence and public expenditure to forcibly relocate the San. The fact of the matter is that commercial interests have besieged Parliament to the extent that innovative response to ordinary people is no longer possible. The discovery of diamonds in the CKGR in the 1990s, plans to build luxury resorts there and government plans for Africa's third largest game reserve (projected to measure 51 800 sq. kms) have now irrevocably put the San on a confrontational course with the state. The real apprehension on the part of the government is that if left to reside on their ancestral land, the San will perhaps legally claim part of the income generated by these ventures.

### Conclusion

This analysis regards the emergence of 'the San issue' within the Botswana body politic as an indictment of the post-colonial development model, especially the unabated growth of distribution inequalities in the rural economy and the irresponsiveness of multiparty politics to the fractiousness of the development process itself. It is too early to diagnose the institutional impacts of these political developments in terms of state authority, legitimacy and capacity, but confidence in the electoral process as a means of redressing social injustices is still evident. In the 1994 elections the BDP vote was cut everywhere, its majorities were reduced in every constituency and three long-serving cabinet ministers were ousted from parliament by the electorate (*Midweek Sun*, 19 October, 1994). It seems clear that the BDP is faced with a serious political backlash; not a big price to pay for years of squandered opportunities and rural underdevelopment. However, the state machinery remains tenacious and the position of the San precarious. The precipitous collapse of the opposition, which was sympathetic to the plight of the San, does not augur well for their struggle inside Botswana. That is why the San see as their only choice appeals to forces outside of Botswana's borders.

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