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*Conservation for Whom?  
Telling Good Lies in the  
Development of Central  
Kalahari*

***“Jy moet daai manne laat dans”***

(“You must let these men dance”, Gall 2002:240).

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Social Anthropology

**Titel: Conservation for Whom? Telling Good Lies in the Development of Central Kalahari**

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**Abstract:** This essay is based on a study of the relocation of the G//ana and G/wi San from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in Botswana. The purpose of the study is to assess the conflicts that have arisen as a result of the relocation-programs, in order to highlight the situation of the San. Addressing issues of nature conservation, eco-tourism and indigeneity, the essay discusses how conservation policies, development programs and eco-tourism projects have been implemented in the Central Kalahari, and the consequences these policies have had for the people who first inhabited of the area.

**Nyckelord: Socialantropologi, Naturbevarande, Urbefolkning, Turism, Central Kalahari, Botswana**

Keywords: Social Anthropology, Conservation, Protected areas, Indigeneity, Indigenous, Tourism, Central Kalahari, Botswana

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# Map of Central Kalahari Game Reserve and Botswana

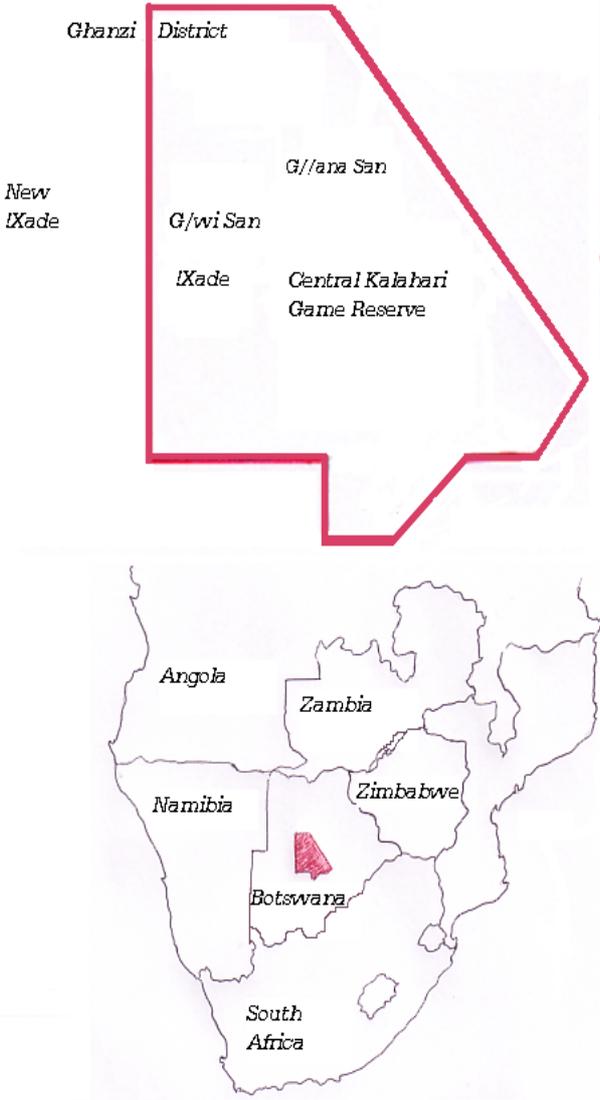


Figure 1. Central Kalahari Game Reserve and Botswana (own composition 2005).

## Background

When I first saw the desert, I thought it was empty of life. Then I found a pearl in the sand in Sossusvlei. Realising that this pearl once belonged to someone who had called this desert place “home”, I was wondering where that someone had gone now. On the so-called “Bushman walk” that I was on, our guide (ironically enough himself called “Bushman”) made me discover that the Namib-desert was in fact sprawling with life, only you knew where to look for it. Though in spite all the tracks we found of the people once living here, we met none but temporary visitors, tourists like ourselves. “Bushman” said that the “bush people”<sup>1</sup> were long gone, hunted out by the white European settlers. Still in the nineteen twenties, he said, it was possible for tourists to send postcards from Namibia portraying an exotic tree from which dead “Bushmen” hanged.

After travelling to Namibia and Botswana, all the way up to Zimbabwe and Zambia, I came back to South Africa with it still echoing in my head, that the Bushmen were dead and that their ancestors living in southern Africa today were not *true* Bushmen. Sometime later, I got a news-bulletin from *Survival International*, a UK-based organization supporting tribal communities and their rights to land. It stated: “*The Gana and Gwi<sup>2</sup> ‘Bushmen’ are being brutally evicted from their ancestral land in the Kalahari Desert of Botswana. The authorities have cut off their water, forbidden them to hunt or gather food, and forced them into bleak resettlement camps. The government says this is to ‘modernise’ them and that that they must not be left on their lands ‘communicating with flora and fauna’*” (The Ecologist September 2003). How could this happen to a people that did not even exist anymore? Survival’s campaign made me interested in finding out more about the Bushmen of today, and their situation in Central Kalahari. Because, as I was soon to find out, these people are not at all dead, even if this sometimes has been claimed to be the case. In fact, the “Bushmen” are struggling very hard to survive, to maintain their traditional way of life and still be able to take part in the development of the modern world without disappearing like a string of pearls in the sand.

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<sup>1</sup>As I will bring up in the chapter “The San and the Problem of Terminology”, there are many different names used when referring to the indigenous people of southern Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Spelled differently depending on if the clicks sounds in these names is spelled out or not (using / and //).

## The Setting

The republic of Botswana in southern Africa has been described as “*one of Africa’s success stories, with a stable and functioning multiparty, democratic government*”.<sup>3</sup> At independence in 1966, the Botswana government were mindful of the apartheid regime in neighbouring South Africa and determined to treat all citizens alike. Consequently, any ethnic and cultural differences among the people of Botswana were ignored. In the 1970s, when the settlement programme first known as the *Remote Area Dwellers Programme* (RADs) was initiated all over the country in order to deliver services to people who lived beyond their reach, it was thus based on the idea that poverty, not prejudice and discrimination, was the San’s main problem. Recently, however, the government’s aim to be cultural-*neutral* has been criticised of becoming cultural-*blind*, and thus depriving people of their cultural identity (Chatty and Colchester 2002:190). According to Rupert Isaacson, one of the founders of *Indigenous Land Rights Fond* (ILRF), the San people “*are being knocked down by the government*” (telephone interview, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005) that states: “*culture is not static... We must treasure these cultural values that help us live prosperously and discard those that retard progress*”.<sup>4</sup> In the mid-1990s, this thinking resulted in that the government came up with a program that aimed to remove several hundred bands of G//ana and G/wi San from *The Central Kalahari Game Reserve* (CKGR), which is situated in the eastern Ghanzi district of Botswana and is the second largest game reserve in the world. According to Robert K. Hitchcock, associate Professor in Anthropology and Geography at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, USA “*the displacement has caused enormous difficulties*” (personal correspondence, 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2005), but the government justifies its policy by stating that modern services, such as water, education and healthcare, can only be delivered to groups outside of the Central Kalahari (Chatty and Colchester 2002:189). It is also said that the G//ana and G/wi San no longer need a reserve to maintain their traditional way of life since they are not “*true Bushmen*” anymore (Isaacson, telephone interview, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005) making the relocation of San an important issue for several reasons (Hitchcock, personal correspondence, 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.botswana-tourism.gov.bw>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.gov.bw>

## **Purpose**

What is happening in Central Kalahari and in Botswana is not uniquely African. The San share their story with many other indigenous minorities all over the world and it is therefore crucial that their story is told. Conservation and development, however contradictory it may sound, often goes hand in hand, often with major impacts on the lives of indigenous people.

The purpose of this essay is to assess the conflict that conservation and development has caused in the Central Kalahari. The Central Kalahari Game Reserve has been recognised by the Botswana government as a highly valuable resource, especially for eco-tourism. Several Swedish travel-companies that offer tours to Botswana state that they operate on a small-scale level in cooperation with the local people, in order to promote a responsible tourism. However, at the same time it has been said that the San plays no role in the tourism industry and that the benefits of tourism therefore does not always reach the local people. In order to assess the conflicts of Central Kalahari Game Reserve, I will compare and discuss the narratives of various Swedish Travel Agencies with the narratives of those who work with the rights of the San. According to the latter as well as for the San people themselves, the issue of Central Kalahari is about basic human rights. On the basis of mutual respect, equal citizenship and opportunity San are prepared to become part of modern society, but as it is now the development-program has been imposed on them at the price of their survival as a people. As many other hunter-gatherers in the world today, they have been forced to choose between the old ways and the new, and find themselves trapped between their traditional hunter-gather way of life and modern society. However, like most people, the San wish to be able to determine their own destiny. Through this essay, I wish to highlight the importance of the San people's right to self-determination, that is, their right to *both* be modern citizens of Botswana and maintain important aspects of their identity as hunter-gatherers and first inhabitants of the Kalahari.

## **Research Questions**

In this essay, I will not make a comprehensive study of San culture in general, but rather I wish to focus on their situation today. Why is it that the San have been relocated from their ancestral homelands; that is what reasons has the Botswana Government stated and what other reasons can there have been for the relocation? Most important, who are the true beneficiaries of nature conservation? Depending on whom you ask, these questions have several different answers. In this essay I will not try to solve this issue, and come up with the final answer, but rather I will try to highlight some of the answers already given and put them into discussion by analysing them.

## **Structure of Argument**

In the first, theoretical, part of this essay, I will look into different theories about the conservation of nature, the issue of indigeneity and the concept of (eco-) tourism. In order to understand the complex situation of the San in the Central Kalahari, these three important components in their lives need to be examined. What does conservation of nature mean, and what consequences does the protection of wildlife areas have on the local inhabitants? These questions will be brought up in the first chapter. In the second chapter, I will look into the history and meaning of eco-tourism, and its downfalls, followed by the third chapter where I present different theories about indigeneity. This being a very wide term, I will also look into the issue of ethnicity, and what it means to be indigenous in Africa. As the San-people traditionally have hunted and gathered for their subsistence, the definition of “hunter-gatherers” also needs to be clarified.

In the empirical part of this essay, I will take a closer look at the San-people as well as the problems they face, and tell the story of Central Kalahari Game Reserve, the ancestral home of the G//ana and G/wi San. Some of the reasons that have been given for the relocation of the G//ana and G/wi will be looked into, before being included in the final discussion in the last, analytical, part of this essay.

## Approach

The theoretical part of this essay has been conducted through literature studies. At first I read anything I could come across about the Central Kalahari and the San people, but later on I realised that I had to rely more to my informants rather than to follow my own way, and therefore changed focus according to their advice. Initially, I wished to bring up the *economic* reasons for the resettlement of the San, such as the diamond industry. However, I was advised by my informants to leave this be, as it soon turned out that there was more to the relocation than economy. As professor Robert K. Hitchcock said, “*when it comes to the Central Kalahari the story is very complicated and not as straight forward as some organizations working on the issue like to suggest*” (personal correspondence, 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2005). Also Joram from the *Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa* (WIMSA) stated that “*it could be true that this forced removal has some economic reasons but that is not the main issue because the diamond mining cannot take...whole CKGR land. The San would still have enough space to live their life*” (personal correspondence, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). Therefore, I decided to focus instead on other issues concerning the relocation of the San, such as the *conservation of wildlife* and *tourism*. However, distance turned small things into true challenges, as to finding suitable informants. In search for answers to all my questions, I wrote around fifty emails to different people and organizations all around the world. Sometimes I did not get a reply at all, in other cases I was encouraged to try to find information elsewhere, while some people took time to help me more than once. The context of this essay has therefore been shaped according to the information I have been able to find. As I for example got a great response from the Swedish travel agencies that I contacted, the narratives representing the tourism industry was naturally given greater space. The empirical part of this essay consists of a number of interviews conducted over telephone or via email-correspondence. I have translated some of these interviews from Swedish to English, but as I have tried my best not to change the content of what has been said, I have still dared to quote my informants (using quotation marks). When I have found a sentence to be very long, or if my informants have repeated themselves, I have sometimes chosen to leave words out. This is marked with three full stops (...). In the cases where I have instead added words, in order to make it clearer what has been said, I have marked this with [].

I have not conducted any field research in Botswana, this being an issue of time and money. Instead, I have focused on the voices of others. Many San feel that they are voiceless, and are frustrated of getting so much attention from journalists, anthropologists and tourists from which they derive little advantage. I wish that I could have made their voices heard in this essay, but since modern forms of communication has a focus on the written word, and there are no San journalists or authors, the barriers of communication turned out to be too difficult to break this time. I am however well aware of that if the voices of the San would have been included (which would have required on site fieldwork) this essay would have acquired further depth, but then, perhaps the voices of others also can tell something about the San-people situation today. Through its outside perspective, I hope my essay highlight this.

### **The Informants**

Some of my informants protested when I told them that I intended to leave their names out. *“These type of questions are based upon personal judgements as much as they are based upon facts”* someone said, explaining that if I would have asked someone else, working for the same organization, I might have got a different answer. Therefore, I will refer to both their name and the organization they represent. However, four people I interviewed did not object when I told them the same thing. In these cases, I have chosen to refer only to the organization or agency that they represent. Here follows a short presentation of my informants and/or the organizations and agencies for which they work. I am very grateful for the time and devotion that they all have spent on helping me writing this essay.

#### ***Robert K. Hitchcock***

Associate Professor of Anthropology and Geography as well as Coordinator of African Studies at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Hitchcock has written extensively on topics concerning environmental politics, conservation and eco-tourism, and is the Executive Board Member of *Kalahari Peoples Fund* (KPF), which provides funding and technical assistance to the San as well as other peoples of Southern Africa.

### ***Rupert Isaacson***

A full-time author and journalist for both UK and US press, Isaacson has extensive knowledge of and experience with San. He spent several years in the Kalahari following the successful land claim of South Africa's Xhmani San, and is a founder of *Indigenous Land Rights Fund* (ILRF), which provides a forum for indigenous communities to gain secure tenure to their ancestral land. The fund protects indigenous communities proprietary rights, as well as the management of wildlife and game. The Central Kalahari Game Reserve land claim is the first project for the fund.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Joram***

Representative from the Namibian regional office for the *Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa* (WIMSA), which provides regional development and advocacy work for the Southern African San, as well as coordination of research, networking and communication etc. Together with the *First People of the Kalahari* (FPK), WIMSA is currently involved in a dialogue with the Botswana government on behalf of the San.

### ***Per Åke Nilsson***

Course administrator for Tourism Science, Department of Social Sciences, Mid Sweden University

### ***Eva- Karin Kronquist***

Representative from the *Swedish Eco-tourism Society* (SET), which was founded in the spring of 1996 after an initiative from *Världsnaturfonden* (WWF) to finance an eco-tourism project in which both the tourism-industry and organizations working with nature conservation would be represented. The Swedish Eco-tourism Society is a non-profit, politically neutral and independent association, whose members represent both private persons, organizations and companies.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.landrightsfund.org>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ekoturism.org>

### ***One Representative from Världens Resor***

*Världens Resor AB* is a travel-company founded in 2002. The company offers one trip to Africa, in Senegal, and works with all-inclusive tours where curiosity, knowledge and joy is said to be the carrying ingredients.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Two Representatives from Äventyrsresor***

*Äventyrsresor AB* was founded in 1984, at the same time as the concept of eco-tourism began to take form. The company operates with small groups, usually of no more than ten people, and offers tailored tours for private persons as well as for companies. *Äventyrsresor* offer one tour to Botswana called “*Were the Great Elephants Dance*”, which is a ten-day safari with few tourists in the “desert and grandiose” Chobe and Okavango area.<sup>8</sup>

### ***One Representative from Tour Africa, Afrikaspecialisterna***

*Tour Africa* is a part of *Tranås Resebyrå AB*, founded in 1979, and is one of the biggest Swedish agencies that offers tours to Africa, and operates only with Africa. *Tour Africa* works with special arrangements and is primarily directed to more independent travellers who wish to take part in the planning of the tour themselves, as it is the tourist who decides what content the tours should have.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.varldensresor.se>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.aventyrresor.se>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.tourafrica.nu>

## Introduction

In London in the year 1900, the protection of African wildlife was the topic of the first international environmental conference ever. No Africans were present, as the delegates of the meeting were the foreign ministers of the European colonial powers<sup>10</sup> that controlled the continent. Through the nineteenth century, European soldiers, officials, missionaries and travellers in Africa had hunted elephant, lion, leopard, cheetah, zebra, antelope and wildebeest. According to *The Times*, by the turn of the century, it was “*perfectly clear that very soon those animals, unless something is done to prevent their extermination, will be stamped out as completely as the dodo*” (cited in Guha 2000:45).

The *Convention of the Preservation of Animals, Birds and Fish in Africa* signed at the London conference indicated a great improvement, but as Guha notes the actual measures introduced were rather modest (2000). Only a few endangered species, including the gorilla and the chimpanzee, were given complete protection, while for other threatened species, such as the elephant, hunters were given licenses which limited the numbers that could be shot. At the same time, some animals were seen as “vermin”. Deemed dangerous to men their killing was encouraged, and bounties were even offered for shooting lions and leopards.

The establishment of the *Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire* followed the London meeting in 1903. This was the first multinational conservation society, whose mission was to halt the destruction of wild animals in the colonies. In these, wildlife conservation was to follow a set pattern. Specifying closed seasons when animals could not be shot and issuing licenses in order to moderate demand was the first step taken, followed by the designation of some species as “protected” and particular territories as “game reserves”. The final step was the establishment of national parks (Guha 2000:45-46).

As a result of the establishment of national parks and game reserves in Africa, indigenous minorities have often been forced to leave their ancestral lands. During the past decade there have been more and more cases in which governments and environmental organizations have been responsible for carrying out programs with disastrous effects on the local people (Hitchcock 1996:9-11). In the world today, states Hitchcock, Africa has the largest number of minority groups at risk of forceful assimilation policies driven by the governments in the states in which they live. In sub-Saharan Africa, more than half of the countries have at least one minority that faces this problem, as they have become victims of discrimination and genocide.

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<sup>10</sup> France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Great Britain.

The situation of the San of southern Africa illustrates some of the problems that indigenous peoples face in today's Africa. Poverty-rates are high, and San have little access to social services as they often live in remotely located areas. There are various health problems, as well as high rates of alcoholism and social conflict. Further, San often face difficulties concerning land-policies (Hitchcock 1996:9-11). According to Guha, Africans have not fitted within the planning of game reserves and national parks, as the progress of conservation has been linked to an identity that the white settler developed with the land, but not with the people who had lived there long before their arrival (Guha 2000:46-47).

### **The Conservation of Nature in Protected Areas**

In late nineteenth century America, romantics saw the noble Indians as a part of wild nature itself. Thoreau found that "*in wilderness is the preservation of the world*" (cited in Colchester 1994:2). Wilderness was to be preserved for the recreation of the human spirit, as a refuge from the ills of civilization. However, the "scientific conservation" chose not to turn its back on industrial society, but to work instead on taming its excesses. It was argued that without the guidance by experts, industrialization would rapidly use up resources and pollute the environment. Laying the basis for the national parks programme in the United States, this view also shaped the global pattern of conservation (Colchester 1994:2).

As pressure on natural resources has intensified, the establishment of "protected areas" has increasingly come into question all around the world. When the first national park ever was created in Yellowstone in 1872, the Native American Indians who inhabited the area were driven out by the army. Chatty and Colchester states that still today, the basic principle of operation is to protect the park or reserve from the supposed damage of the local communities. Scientific investigation has only seen to the existence of reality as perceived in the Western World, that science was to discover and control. The complexity of ecological and social relationships at the local level has therefore been ignored, and conservation efforts in much of the developing world have been based on the assumption that human actions negatively affect the physical environment. Marking this thinking is the common Western urban notion of wilderness as untouched land. According to Chatty and Colchester, models of intervention developed in a particular western concept have been transferred to the developing world with no regard for the specific contexts of the actual receiving environments. Policies have been based on the assumption that ecologically fragile areas only can be maintained without people.

However, in nearly every part of the world even apparent “wilderness” areas has been inhabited and modified by people. In Kenya, for example, the Maasai and their cattle have long maintained the Serengeti grassland. With their exclusion, the Serengeti would be taken over by scrub. The Western conservationist’s concept of wilderness is thus a cultural construct not necessarily shared by other people and civilizations, who might have quite different views of what we call “wilderness”. In opposition to the recent conservation philosophy, these findings suggest that it is rather when local or indigenous people are excluded that land is likely to degrade (Chatty and Colchester 2002:3ff).

According to Harmon, the national park idea in itself can perhaps be a good idea, but because it is context sensitive it is also a potentially dangerous idea, since “*even if the motives behind it were universal, its method would not be universally applicable*” (Harmon 1987:150-158), resulting in that natural values intended to be protected have instead become to deteriorate. Recently, an opposing opinion has thus grown that argues for a more pluralistic way of thinking about the world. “Conservation with a human face” and “community participation” is now a part of the normal language of development theory. Almost everyone claims participation to be a part of their work, but all too often, “participation” in protected area management is quite nominal. In the world of conservation, the term has been used to both justify the extension of control by the State, as well as external decision-making (Chatty and Colchester 2002:10).

### **What Is Eco-tourism?**

By the early twentieth century, growing urbanization had spawned a leisure industry, and the pleasures of weekend camping and trekking played an influential part in the creation of a national park system (Guha 2000:53).

Today, tourism is the biggest industry in the world, with massive impact on people and nature. Already in the early 1980s, states Weaver and Lawton, large-scale tourism was begun to be seen as something problematic for the environment as well as local people. Therefore, small-scale tourism soon became more desirable and as a result alternative options to mass tourism begun to appear. *Eco-tourism* is a form of alternative tourism, which focus of attraction is relatively undisturbed natural environments and their cultural attractions (Weaver and Lawton 2002:359-361).

*The Swedish Eco-tourism society (SET)* wishes to develop a form of tourism that increases nature and culture protection. According to the society, tourism can be an activity that protects instead of destroys.<sup>11</sup> Eco-tourism is described as *quality tourism*, stated to include unforgettable meetings with the local inhabitants and travelling with respect in the heart of nature.<sup>12</sup> *The International Eco-tourism Society (TIES)* defines eco-tourism as a “*responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.*” This means that those who implement and participate in eco-tourism activities should follow certain principles, such as building an environmental and cultural respect and awareness, providing financial benefits and empowerment for local people and supporting international human rights agreements.<sup>13</sup> However, as Weaver and Lawton states, even small-scale activities sometimes have negative impacts. Eco-tourism destinations are usually associated with “natural” or “relatively undisturbed” settings. Most eco-tourism activity thus takes place within protected areas such as national parks. Given that protected areas are expected to fulfil both the preservation of local biodiversity as well as the accommodation of an increasing number of visitors, the sustainability of tourism in these areas can be questioned. Small-scale operators sometimes lack the resources to carry out measures consistent with sustainable tourism, and the alternative tourists themselves may distress the wildlife and be too intrusive in their desire to experience “backstage” lifestyles. In addition, the tourists may unintentionally open the destination to less favourable forms of tourism development. Also, even though the local residents themselves might prefer a more intensive and larger-scale form of tourism that generates higher economic returns, great pressure may be placed on them to adapt to the alternative tourist model (Weaver and Lawton 2002:364-368).

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.ekoturism.org>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.ekoturism.org>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ecotourism.org>

## Theories about Indigeneity

*“It is a category of a human society first invented through human rights reforms, then adapted, internalized, personalized, and collectively transformed by “indigenous peoples” themselves, with conviction and occasionally strident passion ”*

(Ronald Niezen 2003:11)

### Definition

The UN estimates that 300 million indigenous people are residing in more than seventy countries worldwide (Dean and Levi 2003:6), making the definition of *indigenous peoples* a complex question to address (Chatty and Colchester 2002:13). While “indigenous” as a synonym for “native” has a long history of use, the term “indigenous peoples” is relatively new. It first appeared in treaties stated after the establishment of the UN in the wake of the Second World War (Dean and Levi 2003:5). According to Chatty and Colchester, the indigenous identity is a collective choice made by human groups in order to secure control of lands and natural resources, overcome discrimination and renegotiate political relations with nation-states (2002:14). As Susan Kent points out, ethnicity is a very subjective concept. Most groups identify themselves as an ethnic group based on the *emic* perspective that the group-members themselves use to identify and understand their world. At the same time, everybody on the outside sees the group from an *etic* perspective. The question therefore becomes who is to be believed, as these perspectives do not always correlate (2002:3).

In 1977, the second general assembly of the *World Council of Indigenous Peoples* (WCIP) passed a resolution declaring that only indigenous peoples could define the concept of “indigenous peoples”. Therefore, says Bodley, the most obvious answer to the question “who are indigenous peoples?” is simply that they are who they say they are (Bodley 1999:146).

There are thus many different approaches to the term “indigenous”. There will always be a group, according to Neizen, that sees itself as indigenous and yet is excluded from the scholarly definition. Nevertheless, he sees some areas of consensus among formal attempts of definition. The most commonly recognized features of indigenous peoples are descent from original inhabitants of a region prior to the arrival of the settlers; maintenance of cultural differences, distinct from a dominant population; and political marginality resulting in poverty, limited access to services, and absence of protections against unwanted development. There is also a global aspect to indigenous identity that function as the basis for bringing people together in international meetings.

The variety of ethnicity is often a striking at these meetings, writes Niezen, and still there is an attachment shared by all participants to some form of subsistence economy, to a territory or homeland that predates the arrival of settlers and to a spiritual system that predates the arrival of missionaries. What is more, the destruction and loss of these things is shared by indigenous peoples worldwide (Niezen 2003:18-23).

### **The Issue of Ethnicity**

Dean and Levi points out that even though the term identity is often used quite loosely, it allows people to see to the existence of a relation that has been vital in determining indigenous identity and ethnic relations (Dean and Levi 2003:4).

While the term indigenous has a relatively specific meaning, *ethnicity* can be seen as a broader concept. Indigeneity, is often associated with rights, while ethnicity rather has to do with identities, and is expressed through social interaction. However, according to Saugestad, the two concepts still complement each other, as the situation of indigenous peoples must be understood as the outcome of a process of interaction between ethnic groups. Ethnicity is created and recreated in social situations and encounters, and in the way people are coping with the challenges of life. Ethnicity thus includes aspects of both meaning and politics. Ethnicity is constructed by similarity within a group, according to shared values and experiences, in contrast to others. Even though the signs used for expressing identity must be taken from the available repertoire, that is the culture, history and material culture of the group in question, people show an infinite capacity for variation and imagination in the expression of identity (Saugestad 2001:55-56).

Although today almost all indigenous peoples are ethnic groups, the converse does not hold. For example, African Americans is an ethnic group in United States, but they are not indigenous. Native Americans, on the other hand, are both. Thus, an indigenous people does not become an ethnic group by simply sharing a group name, beliefs in common ancestry, culture, religion or language, but only when these traits are consciously recognized as emblems of connectivity and are mobilized to develop a sense of political solidarity (Bodley 1999:4).

According to Kent, the public understanding and use of the terms ethnicity or ethnic groups is similar to that of race, as both are thought to be a biological distinction, when they are rather learned social constructions. As ethnic groups need an “other” from whom they can differentiate themselves, ethnic groups are usually found in heterogeneous societies (Kent 2002:4).

In sub-Saharan Africa, most societies are made up of people from several ethnic groups, and in most countries one ethnic group has distinguished themselves to the disadvantage of the others. In Ghana, for example, the Akan occupy most professional posts and in Kenya the Kikuyu are the best educated and wealthiest group even though they make up less than ten per cent of the country's population as a whole (Burger 1987:164).

### **Being Indigenous in Africa**

There is a particular complexity of the concept "indigenous" in an African context. In the Americas, colonization led to a drastic reduction of the numbers of the indigenous populations, and today they are an oppressed minority in most countries. The indigenous populations of Africa however, were not effected to the European invasion in the same way and most African states today are peopled by the original inhabitants (Burger 1987:162). According to the present concept, indigenous peoples are the descendants of those who occupied a given territory that was invaded, conquered or colonised by white, colonial powers. Though, as Saugestad states, compared to rather clear-cut white settler states such as the Americas and Australia the situation in Europe and Asia is more varied, and some of the most multifaceted relationships are those between original occupants and incoming groups in Africa. In relation to the colonial powers, all native Africans were either first inhabitants, non-dominant or different in culture from the white intruders, and all of them were associated with "nature" and "traditional lifestyles", which are common indigenous attributes. Thus, the dominant black/white dichotomy in Africa has tended to reinforce a notion that all native Africans are indigenous (Saugestad 2001:52). Further, Africa is the continent with the longest history of human occupation, and contains the greatest range of human genetic and cultural diversity. In many cases, it is therefore difficult to determine antecedence since a variety of populations has moved into and out of local areas over time. There have been complex interactions between "first peoples" and newcomers, often with the result that former groups have been marginalized. In no country in Africa are indigenous peoples in control even at local government level, and far less in positions of power at national level. An important criterion for indigeneity is the identification by people themselves of their distinct cultural identity. In Africa, a number of population groups define themselves, and are defined by others, as indigenous (Hitchcock and Vinding 2004:8-9), but according to Burger, decolonisation has not led to equal rights for all of these.

People living in remote areas, like the pastoral Tuareg of the northern region or the hunter-gathering Pygmies and San have achieved a great adaptation to their local environments but are now being put under a growing pressure as they are increasingly being forced to give up their nomadic existence and become settled farmers or seasonal workers (1987:162). Though even if the various indigenous peoples in southern Africa today have highly diverse economic systems they are still often viewed as primitive and under-developed. In the past there were times when they were simply murdered, tortured or enslaved, first by expanding agro-pastoral populations and later on by explorers, hunters, settlers and others. This situation continues to this day, as many San people, although remaining at the bottom of the social ladder, have been forced to assimilate into the dominant society and give up their traditional customs (Hitchcock and Vinding 2004:10).

### **Hunter-gatherers**

The debate concerning the status of recent hunter-gatherers in southern Africa highlights the difficulty of defining “genuine” hunting and gathering. There has long been the idea that hunter-gatherers represent something fundamental in their relationship with nature that has been lost by modern humans (Chatty and Colchester 2002:192). In the seventeenth century, Hobbes described the lives of hunter-gatherers as “*solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short*” (cited in Panter-Brick, Layton and Rowley-Conwy 2001:5), categorising them at the primeval state of humanity. Contemporary John Dryden, on the other hand, portrayed them as people “*living in a state of grace from which the rest of humanity had fallen*” and so coined the phrase “*the noble savage*” (Panter-Brick, Layton and Rowley-Conwy 2001:5). Both Hobbes and Dryden thus pictured hunter-gatherers as unitary and timeless. As they were thought to have minimal contact with the outside world, little attention was paid to matters relating to contact with other peoples.

Not until recently has the acknowledgement and examination of the significance of contact with other people increased (Ingold, Riches and Woodburn 1988:18). Virtually all African hunter-gatherer groups are surrounded by, and have rather frequent contact with, neighbouring pastoral and agricultural groups. Woodburn use the term “encapsulation” when referring to this enclosure. He states that encapsulating groups have often asserted political dominance over the hunter-gatherers and treated them as inferior and different, yet at the same time regarded these as possessing powers linked with a notion that they were the original inhabitants of the country (Ingold, Riches and Woodburn 1988:36-37).

The Ogiek of the Mau forests in Kenya, for example, are regarded as inferior by many of their neighbours. Woodburn writes that among the pastoral Maasai “*they...are regarded as monkey-like and there is even a widespread belief that they have tails*” (Ingold, Riches and Woodburn 1988:41). According to the Maasai, Ogieks lack of cattle indicates their poverty and their lack of ability to develop. Likewise, the Mbuti people in Zaire are labelled as savages by local villagers, who associate them with the wild forest. Similar stereotypes are applied by agricultural and pastoralist neighbours to the San in southern Africa (Ingold, Riches and Woodburn 1988:43). In Botswana, a country that has prided itself on its rapid economic growth and social change over the past three decades, *Basarwa*- the people of the bush- are seen by many of their neighbours as an embarrassment, as a reminder of a past best forgotten (Kent 2002:243-244).

### **The People of the Kalahari**

*...the bottom line is that some people are more equal than others...*

(Robert K. Hitchcock, personal correspondence, 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

The Khoekhoe of southern Africa first encountered the Europeans in 1488, when Bartholomeu Dias became the first man to sail the length of Africa, but it was not until 6<sup>th</sup> of April in 1652, when the envoy of the *Dutch East India Company* dropped anchor in Table Bay, that the counting of their days begun. In the course of the next 150 years, these first settlers and their descendants (known as *Afrikaners* after their adopted country) expanded north and east in search for land and freedom. In the process, they destroyed the indigenous populations. In 1850, only a handful was left, all in the name of civilisation. Today, says Gall, we would call it genocide (2002:49-52).

### **The San and the Problem of Terminology**

The indigenous people of southern Africa are known by many different names. In Namibia and South Africa, when referring to the various foraging and agro-pastoral groups, the term *Bushmen* is used (Hitchcock 1996:15). In Botswana, they were for a time known as *Remote Area Dwellers* (Hitchcock and Vinding 2004:22), but today the official term is *Basarwa* (Saugestaad 2001:27). For the different San tribes living in Angola, Zambia and Zimbabwe there are no official terms (Hitchcock 1996:15).

The most commonly used term, however, is *San*. This name has been adopted by San organizations and is often used by anthropologists, as it refers to the descendants of the aboriginal population (Hitchcock and Vinding 2004:22).

The problem with all these terms- Remote Area Dwellers, San, Bushmen, Basarwa- is however that they do not acknowledge that there are different groups with their own languages, practices and history (Chatty and Colchester 2002:193). According to some linguistics and local-people therefore, it is preferable to use words that the people use in their own languages to refer to themselves. For example, the people of north-western Botswana and north-eastern Namibia call themselves *Ju/'hoansi*, meaning “genuine” or “real” people, while those in the Central Kalahari region call themselves *G/wi* and *G//ana* (Hitchcock 1996:16).

The term *Khoe*, *Khoekhoe* or *Khoesan* is used by many people in South Africa who now reclaim their indigenous ancestry after having been labelled “coloured” for generations. This name was coined to refer to all Khoe-San languages and people. In many of these languages, *Khoe* means “a person”, and it is also the name of the largest of the three families of languages. Recently, however, there has been a debate over this term. Since Khoe is an ethnic label that has been used to refer to a wide diversity of people who mainly come from a herding tradition it has been argued that in a socio-political context it is not always preferable to lump together Khoe and San in one category (Hitchcock and Vinding 2004:23).

### **The Real People**

*“The San people are unique... They have lived isolated in remote desert and swamp areas since other people have pushed them away from their land. Once they inhabited all of southern Africa”*

(representative from *Äventyrsresor*, telephone interview, 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2005).

The San are the hunting and gathering people of southern Africa who live south of the Congo-Zambezi river basin. They have lived in southern Africa for at least 11,000 years, but there have been suggestions of even deeper time connection, relating recent San to the Florisbad fossil finds of 40,000 years ago. In pre-colonial times, the San peoples covered the whole of southern Africa from the Zambezi-valley to the Cape. Over the centuries, though, assimilation and extermination have reduced their numbers. Because of the systematic Dutch extermination campaign, by 1850, they were almost entirely wiped out south of the Orange River (Lee 1976:5-9).

Today, there are 100,000 or so San-people still left in southern Africa, out of which just under 50,000 live in Botswana, about 35,000 in Namibia, 4,500 in South Africa and a few thousand in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Angola (Gall 2002:33). According to Sidsel Saugestad, San are an invisible economic underclass “*squatting at the margins of Botswana society*” (2001:8), yet many academics and writers have observed them intensively for centuries, so they are by no means a forgotten people (Saugestaad 2001:28). However, as Armstrong and Benett highlights: “*the wealth of coverage has nearly always said more about the observer than the observed*” (Chatty and Colchester 2002:192). Early travellers described the San as “manly independent”[sic], and Livingston admirably spoke of the courageous “Bushmen” who hunted lions with bows and arrows. By the end of the nineteenth century however, much of the game on which the San depended on had been shot, and by the middle of the twentieth century, they found themselves as victims of unemployment. Part of the problem, Gall notes, was the arrival of new settlers from South Africa (English speaking this time) who in a process of rationalisation either chose not to hire Bushmen as new labour, or simply sacked them. Diseases such as tuberculosis started to spread, and the infant mortality rate rose as poverty, hunger and malnutrition now took course in a downward spiral (Gall 2002:164ff).

The image created of the San has often been that of the “noble savage”, and as such, they have been viewed with curiosity and fascination. In the nineteenth century, San people paraded in European circuses, and while museums displayed the body parts of their dead, living people were endlessly measured, drawn and photographed. However, not all viewed the San with curiosity. To the African settlers the San were an awful lot of trouble, as they stole cattle and killed farmers (Chatty and Colchester 2002:192). The San were subsequently classed as “vermin”, and could legally be shot on sight (Chatty and Colchester 2002:189).

From the turn of the century when perhaps 60 percent of the San were full time hunter-gatherers, these numbers have steadily dropped. According to Rupert Isaacson, today “*the Bushmen have absolutely nothing*” (telephone interview, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). San all over the Kalahari are facing problems of land loss, labour migration, and shift to agriculture and cash economy. G/wi and G//ana, closely related groups belonging to the Khoe-speaking San people who used to live in Central Kalahari Game Reserve, have replaced their traditional hunting with “equestrian” hunting (that is group-expeditions using horses) after their resettlement. Gathering have continued to be carried out by women to some extent, but as the effort of one trip became greater compared with the gathering activity in their nomadic life, the time necessary for gathering has also increased.

Today the hunting-gathering way of life has rapidly transformed, and employment in road-construction and sale of arts and crafts have become more commonplace (Kent 2002:94-96). Of all the San people in Botswana, fewer than 5 percent still pursue the hunting and gathering way of life. Although part-time hunting and gathering continues to be important in many San communities, the major trend is clearly toward integration at the economic level with the national pastoral-agricultural economy of Botswana. Unfortunately, the San have been politically silent until recently, and despite recent government efforts to remove these legal disabilities, the San continue to exist in many parts of the country as second-class citizens (Lee and DeVore 1976: 20-23).

### **The K'ama Kweni, or People without a Voice**

*“Shame and grief, accumulated from generation to generation, can tie the tongue tight”*

Hugh Brody (cited in Chatty and Colchester 2002:191).

The people once called “lords of the desert” now see themselves as *k'ama kweni*, which literally means “mouth-less” people, or “people without a voice” (Gall 2002: 164-166). Since the mid-1980s, a number of San organizations have been founded all over southern Africa to articulate for themselves what they want from development. Yet, it remains extremely hard for the San to have any influence on the decisions that affect their lives. The San have so few representatives at any significant level in the government service that others mostly continue to speak for them. According to Joram at WIMSA, *“in Botswana there is one San woman chief in the House of Chiefs”*. She is participating in the governments planning meetings on development. Joram explains that *“sometimes the decisions taken on behalf of the San is not favourable and therefore the leaders should defend such kind of decisions to protect the interest of their community”*, however he adds that *“...this is not always done”* (personal correspondence, 20<sup>th</sup> of may 2005).

The San have now started to act upon their frustration at being the objects of so much attention from which they see little benefit. A representative for First People of the Kalahari stated *“we have no voice in this country”* (Chatty and Colchester 2002:194). According to Hitchcock, *“no government really tells their indigenous people everything they need to know...”* (personal correspondence, 11<sup>th</sup> of May, 2005). Thus, San often feel that they are *“the last to know and the first to go”* (Hitchcock and Biesele 2005:1).

The reasons for this are complex. Firstly, the San are often remotely located, “*so out of information loops*”, and second, says Hitchcock, the government often does not tell people in rural areas what it is doing. This sometimes has economic reasons, as “*government officials and business people want first crack at the land or development opportunities*”, though racism also plays a great role. “*San are treated differently because they are looked down upon by the Tswana*”, says Hitchcock (personal correspondence, 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

## **Central Kalahari Game Reserve**

*What shall I say sister  
What shall I say brother  
All of this is my home  
and I carry it in my heart*

Nils Aslak Valkepää,  
*Trekways of the Wind* 1994 (cited in Saugestad 2001:3).

When the Central Kalahari Game Reserve was established in 1961 through the work of John Silbauer, who was then the Ghanzi District Commissioner and Bushman Survey Officer (Kent 2002:236), it was not intended to be a game reserve, but rather a protected area for its human inhabitants. The residents of this part of the Kalahari Desert was then estimated to be 5000 people, mainly G/wi and G//ana San and *Bakgalagadi*, a Setswana-speaking group that moved into the region several hundred years ago. However, when the reserve was first put under consideration, it was thought that a new legislation for a reserve for people would not be required, so instead the already existing game reserve legislation was used. The game-reserve was thought to have several advantages, since it allowed the conservation of valuable natural resources and led to the protection of the area from trespassing by outsiders. Still, there were also arguments made against its establishment, as some people felt that the residents of the reserve would become isolated, and that the hunter-gatherers were being condemned to a primitive way of life by being allowed to continue their traditional way of life (Hitchcock and Biesele 2005:4).

## **The Relocation of the San**

*“The relocation of people is an important question for several reasons. The displacement has caused enormous difficulties. But it also had implications for the people, many of whom feel socially and culturally and ideological bereft”*

(Robert K. Hitchcock, personal correspondence, 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

In the 1980s, recommendations were made by ecologists, environmentalists and Botswana government ministries to relocate the people of Central Kalahari Game Reserve. According to Hitchcock and Biesele, arguments were made that the human population had a negative impact on the wildlife of the reserve, and that the hunter-gatherers were no longer living according to their traditional lifestyle anyhow. It was also suggested that the reserve would have a greater value as a tourist destination if no people were living there and it was pointed out that if the people were to be relocated to settlements outside the reserve, access to the government’s provision of development services would become much easier. Finally, this would also make it easier to deal with the San administratively. As a result, a commission was appointed by the government in 1985 in order to make recommendations about the future of the reserve. Remarkably, notes Hitchcock and Biesele, no representatives from the local people in Central Kalahari Game Reserve were included, and several members of the commission therefore argued for greater consultation with the people that the decisions made would affect. One member even resigned in protest over the way in which the investigation was handled. A year later, it was stated that the Central Kalahari Game Reserve should be maintained as a reserve and that its residents should be encouraged to move elsewhere. Hitchcock and Biesele states that this was done was through a policy of "freezing" development in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (2005). It took months to fix a broken borehole at !Xade, the largest community in the reserve. Buildings and roads were not maintained in the reserve (except for those going to Department of Wildlife, National Parks- and mining exploration camps), and local people claimed that the drought relief feeding programs were implemented more slowly and less effectively in the Central Kalahari than elsewhere in Botswana.

After the relocation of the people from !Xade and some of the communities in the southern part of the reserve, in 1999 its population was estimated to be between 420 and 450. In early 2002, after a second set of major removals, only 17 people were reported to be left in the Central Kalahari (Hitchcock and Biesele 2005:5-8).

According to Gall, the Botswana government has no supporting arguments to refuse the San land rights in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. In the constitution of Botswana, it is held that all people, regardless of their ethnic background, have right to land and resources, which is why the government's argument that the Bushmen must move in order to promote tourism has no validity (2002:240ff).

## **The Life at the Place of Death**

*"I would rather die there than live here"*

(Bushman, New !Xade, May 2002)<sup>14</sup>

The San call New !Xade a "place of death". It has no game for hunting, neither bush food for gathering, nor the graves of their ancestors for healing (Gall 2002:212). According to Joram at WIMSA Regional Office in Namibia, *"the government encouraged the San to leave CKGR with the promise that they will have better live outside the game reserve. Things like better education for their children, hospitals, better housing, better infrastructure etc"*. However, *"after the San tasted the life in the new settlements, they there realized that the new place does not offer an acceptable future and no difference..."* (personal correspondence, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

Rupert Isaacson visited New !Xade in 1997, and recalls that already back then the ground in the settlement was completely grazed out. Therefore, there is a certain controversy to the fact that the resettled San people were given cattle in compensation for their displacement, as these have died from starvation in the settlement (telephone interview, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). For the San, says Armstrong and Bennet, there are few possibilities to make a living in the settlements beyond selling crafts to passing traders. Opportunities are minimal to gather foods, as the land is much over-used, and the freedom to hunt has drastically been restricted by laws. According to Armstrong and Bennet, twenty years after being established the settlements *"on marginal land off the beaten track still are places of despair and social disintegration"* (cited in Chatty and Colchester 2002:190). Isaacson says that in New !Xade there is no money, and no income. As the women no longer are allowed to gather, some of them have turned to prostitution in order to make a living. Thus, the HIV numbers in the resettlements are high. Also, says Isaacson, when the San were displaced from CKGR they were not only displaced from their homelands, but from their traditional way of life as well.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.survival-international.org>

At the same time as they lost their access to herbs and plants to make medicine of, they lost their traditional healers, as well as the land where they used to perform their “traditional trance dance”. “*It doesn't matter if you believe in this traditional trance dance or not, if you have been on one you know it works*”, Isaacson comments (telephone interview, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). San believes that “*the dance brings the rain, the rain brings the plants for grazing, and the grazing brings the animals which can then be hunted for food. So from the trance dance will follow all that is needed, in abundance*” (Gall 2002:240). But with no land, the dance cannot be performed at all.

Isaacson says that a further problem that increase the difficulties brought upon the San is that they are often looked down upon by the staff that works at the clinics in New!Xade. Harassments are so common that the San often prefer not to go to the clinics at all. As a result, there is a very high death rate in the resettlement camps. “*It's a clever form of genocide*”, says Isaacson, who compares the resettlements to “*modern concentration camps*” (telephone interview, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

One major reason why resettlement has proved such a bad experience so far is that the San are expected to join mainstream society on society's own terms, and not their own. Integration means adopting the language and lifestyle of the Batswana, and the loss of land and natural resources has meant the loss of essential components of San's culture. San marriage rituals are not recognized, and the people are discouraged to bury their dead uncoffined, according to tradition. Armstrong and Bennet says that “*the deep hurt which such routine discrimination inflicts on people is incalculable*” (Chatty and Colchester 2002:191). Two decades of development have only seen a few San graduate from university, as many young San never finish school. Those who do have little knowledge of their culture since it is ignored by the education system, at the same time as they often remain excluded from mainstream society because of discrimination and low self-esteem (Chatty and Colchester 2002:191).

Most of the people required to leave their homes and resettle have been hunter-gatherers and part time foragers. In only in a few cases relatively large amounts of compensation has been paid to people for the losses of their homes and other assets. With or without compensation, the resettlement projects have failed to restore the livelihoods of people affected. In a number of cases they have even left people worse off, as planners tend to pay attention exclusively on loss of homes rather than loss of access to means of production, such as land, grazing- and wild resources on which people depend for income (Hitchcock and Vinding 2004:15).

## The Reasons and “the Reason’s Reason”

Anna: “*So what reasons are there for the relocation of the San?*”

Isaacson: “*Do you mean the reasons, or the reason’s reason?*”

(telephone interview, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

## Hunting and Gathering in the CKGR

“*President Mogae can easily show off internationally by saying that traditional hunting is allowed. They are allowed to hunt traditionally but what is wrong if people hunt with the guns?*”

(Joram, personal correspondence, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

According to an employee at *Äventyrsresor*, the San People’s traditional way of life is at one with nature, as they use simple weapons and tools, and offer no threat to the environment but rather are a part of it. Though when asked what he thought would happen if they were to give up their traditional lifestyle, he thought for a moment before answering “*then conflicts will definitely arise...*” (telephone interview, 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2005). Conflicts have definitely arisen.

The government of Botswana claims that the Central Kalahari Game Reserve was set up for conservation purposes, and that the San threaten the game (The Ecologist 2003:6). According to Hitchcock and Biesele however, the declining numbers of the wildlife were not due to subsistence hunting, but rather to drought, habitat change due to the expansion of boreholes, cattle posts on the peripheries of Central Kalahari and the presence of vehicles and tourists (2005:7). The San understand the need for conservation of wildlife, at the same time as they feel that they should be able to live according to their traditions. The denial to hunt is not only a restriction placed on their subsistence rights, but also on their cultural rights (Hitchcock and Vinding 2004:16). Joram at WIMSA Regional explains that “*the San were granted hunting licences to hunt certain game species within the hunting season. Traditional hunting means to use bow, arrow, spears and sneers, but by no means of dogs, guns and donkeys to transport the meat. Since the San had been moved out of their traditional territories in CKGR, without the aid of transport the meat would be rotten before reaching the new settlements (far away) to supply the family*” (personal correspondence, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). Restrictions on hunting, fishing and gathering of wild resources have resulted in whole communities being arrested, jailed, tortured and even killed for having been accused of poaching in areas where there have been anti-poaching operations (Hitchcock and Vinding 2004:16).

Joram says that “*due to the high illiteracy rate among the San community, they could not read how many animals to hunt, period and expiry dates on the licence*” (personal correspondence, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

### **Tourism and Bushmen**

“...So the question remains, is it rich tourists who benefit from the access to the Central Kalahari? And the government officials who have safari companies?”

(Robert K. Hitchcock, personal correspondence, 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2005)

The people of the Kalahari feel that they have not only been resettled to a place that lack infrastructure and resources, but also that their ancestral homelands now have been turned into “*a playground for the rich and famous*” (Hitchcock and Biesele 2005:10). According to *Survival International*, the Botswana government use San to promote the country to tourists, celebrating their hunter-gatherer way of life. Several companies offer similar tours as *Tour2Botswana*, whose “...main focus of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve is the “*Bushmen Experience*”. This walk through nature with San Bushmen is an insight to the interaction of wildlife, plants and human skills in this harsh environment”.<sup>15</sup> Rupert Isaacson says that tourists who wish to see wildlife mainly go to Chobe and the Okavango Delta in northern Botswana, while they come to Central Kalahari hoping to meet the local people. It is therefore an “*irony of an irony*” that the San people are being displaced in order to make way for the tourists, as they have no interest in visiting the Central Kalahari Game Reserve other than to meet the local San (telephone interview, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

According to Joram at WIMSA, “*there are untapped tourism possibilities with the G//ana and G//wi San if this could be spelled out with the government*” (personal correspondence, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). Community-based tourism could have been one way to tap the tourism potential of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, states Hitchcock and Biesele, but instead the Botswana government choose to follow a strategy that aimed to remove the people and allow safari companies to bring in tourists who wished to see “*unspoiled wilderness*” (2005:8). Therefore, *Survival International* is asking people not to choose Botswana as a holiday destination until “*the Gana and Gwi Bushmen...are allowed to return to their land in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) and to hunt and gather freely*”.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.tour2botswana.co.za>

<sup>16</sup> <http://survival-international.org>

The campaign has caused strong reactions, from the government's side but also from organizations working for the San. *"The SI [Survival International] has no respect to the local San organizations, which will at the end carry the damages done by SI"*, says Joram at WIMSA. *"I personally think that SI should slow down and give more space and the voices of local San organizations to sit with the government and see what alternatives are there [that] could be negotiated for both sides without closing doors for each other"* (personal correspondence, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). Survival's call for a boycott has neither had any profound affect on the Swedish travel agencies that offer tours to Botswana. As long as people wish to go there, the agencies will be able to take them. A representative from *Världens Resor* states that *"without knowing the destination in detail"*, a trip to the Central Kalahari Game Reserve could be arranged if there is a demand for this, *"especially if we would get a request from a group that would wish to go there"* (personal correspondence, 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). *"In general, we do not believe in boycotts, as interchange between people is the foremost way to change attitudes"* says an employee at *Äventyrsresor* (personal correspondence, 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). Per Åke Nilsson at Mid Sweden University is of a similar opinion as he says that *"we live in a world which strives for freedom of movement..."* Therefore, *"we probably have to give it a thought that people have a right to see both their cultural and natural heritage"* (personal correspondence, 31 of May 2005). However, as Rupert Isaacson states *"eco-tourism is only worth doing if it benefits the locals"* (telephone interview 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

Many of the Swedish travel companies that offer tours to Botswana say that they are working on a small-scale level, which is claimed to benefit all included, that is both the local people and the environment they inhabit. Eva-Karin Kronquist at the *Swedish Eco-tourism Society* (SET) explains; *"the concept of eco-tourism probably began with the mountain-gorillas of Uganda... Due to poaching the population was heavily reduced... and the hunters were the local people. By letting the poachers become guards and guides the gorillas were more effectively protected than they would have been by just putting them under protection. By considering the people, as well as to the animals and nature, the trend was successfully turned"*. She holds that in order to contribute to the conservation of nature and culture *"we must give both the local inhabitants and the nature a possibility to survive in their home district"* (personal correspondence, 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2005). Several Swedish travelling companies and their representatives whom I interviewed share this view.

For example, an employee at *Världens Resor* says that “*we elaborate the tours in cooperation with the local-people in order to create a sustainable tourism. It is important for us to run a responsible travelling. Our tours are not going to harm the delicate landscapes and cultures that we move about in.*” Though he also adds “*unfortunately, I cannot say that they [the travellers] to any greater extent make inquiries on eco-demands, as you would wish... The market is also very divided*” (personal correspondence, 16th of May 2005). This is an interesting remark, leading to the question of responsibility. What responsibility does sustainable tourism claim? According to *Äventyrsresor* “*the responsibility primarily rests with those who arrange the tour in order to make sure it is carried out according to the supporting capacity of the destination-with minimal impact on culture and environment. We always work via local agents where we demand a strong local establishment and knowledge*” (personal correspondence, 19<sup>th</sup> of May, 2005). An employee at *Tour Africa, Afrikaexperterna* states that: “*it is important for us to have an accurate and just information about different countries and how they act so that each traveller can take their own standpoint on how they wish to travel*”. At the same time, however, he says that “*personally I must admit that I did not know about any political problems in Botswana, and it was interesting to hear about this*” (personal correspondence, 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2005), making it important to question what information the agencies have about their destinations, and what information is left out in the travel brochures. What exactly is the accurate information? According to Hitchcock, “*the San plays no formal or informal role in the tourism*” since “*...the money goes to safari companies, some of which (most of which) are white owned*” (personal correspondence, 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). Thus, Per Åke Nilsson states “*I do not know if there is something that scientifically can be called responsible tourism*”, (personal correspondence, 31 of May 2005). He explains that it is usually said to be advantageous for a destination “*that foreign currency is brought into the area, that employment is created, that low-educated get work opportunities, that the infrastructure is strengthen – that isolation is cut*”. Against this, however, it can be also be held that “*the currency disappears into the pockets of foreign companies... the local people are being exploited in low-paid jobs with long working hours...the infrastructure can not be utilized by the local people and the contact with tourist...have damaging effects in local culture and social norms*” (Per Åke Nilsson, personal correspondence, 31 of May 2005).

As to most things, there are thus two sides of tourism. One the one hand, tourism is often not compatible with either economical or social sustainability, but on the other hand, it can also promote development and contribute to a greater awareness about the ways of the world.

The representative from *Världens Resor* believes that “*there is a universal thought that environmental questions are important and that these are placed quite high on people’s everyday agenda*”. He adds that the choice of travel agency or journey can be important in this context (personal correspondence 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

In order to be compatible at the market, the agencies need to be observant and listen to the interests of the tourists. Scientific or not, today, responsible tourism is becoming increasingly popular and eco-tourism is on a strong demand. However, more than being an environmental friendly alternative, eco-tourism is first and foremost to be seen as an experience. According to one of the representatives from *Äventyrsresor*, “*the experience is central, and these sorts of tours have a strong experience core*”. People who choose to travel with *Äventyrsresor* wish to experience “genuine”, nature- scenery close arrangements (personal correspondence, 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). Likewise, a spokesman from *Tour Afrika, Afrikaexperterna* says that “*what travellers want is a combination of interesting destinations, high quality, reasonable prices etc. The Okavango delta in Botswana attracts some tourists, above all because the tourism is on a small scale level with few travellers and expensive lodges and I imagine that it gives a lot back to the country in question*” (personal correspondence, 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

Several of the companies states that travelling in small groups makes it easier to come up close to the local people as well as the environment, making the experience of the genuine much stronger. “The genuine” is however an individual concept. According to Per Åke Nilsson it is “*that which is different*” that draws people to go on safaris in Africa, however, “*the tourists are not necessarily interested in the genuine, wild and untouched but rather the feeling of the genuine, wild and untouched*”. Thus, it is not always the genuine as such, that is the focus of attraction, but more often perhaps, it is the genuine in its refined form, reshaped to fit the tourist. “*At a closer look*”, says Per Åke Nilsson “*...I think most realise that tourist does not wish to meet wild animals in reality...*” (personal correspondence, 31 of May 2005). That is, people wish to experience reality as they perceive it to be in a certain context, rather than the way it is in the naked truth.

## Discrimination and the Role of Racism

*“In a world where Governments stand accused of many terrible crimes, it does seem strange that the Botswana Government should have to defend itself against the charge of improving the lives of its citizens”<sup>17</sup>*

According to the government, *Basarwa* have never been forced to leave the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. Joram comments this by saying that *“the words President Mogae used in public were to protect his image and that of the Botswana population in order not to be blacklisted by the international public on human rights issues. There are issues of forced removal, which are accompanied by human rights violations and abuses. This also includes issues such as racism. One of the reasons could be that the government thinks that the San remain primitive in the game parks and become the tourist attraction”*. He adds that *“...the government wants to develop the San Community”* (personal correspondence, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

Saugestad states that in spite of the official non-racial ideology, there is a clear social division between the Bantu/Tswana and San group, acted out in the daily, face-to face interaction. *“Basarwa”* represent a past that the greater part of society has abandoned, and while the Bantu are those who establish the frames of interaction, the San are those who must adapt (2001:65). Hitchcock says that the governments wish to *“civilise people they feel are out of the mainstream”*, and *“turn them into Tswana”* (personal correspondence, 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

According to Gall, pushing the Bushmen out of the reserve was a decision that seems to have been born out of cynicism and greed. Cynicism in its total disregard for previous commitments, and greed on the part of the Tswana ruling class who saw the chance of turning the vast empty spaces of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve into highly lucrative mining or tourist concessions (Gall 2002:164ff). The causes of the relocation are therefore multiple. The reasons have to do with *“the government’s desire to have the area be a ‘conservation’ area where high-end tourists can go”* as well as the government’s desire *“not to let Bushmen push them around anymore...i.e. racism against a minority who they feel, to be really honest, is ‘uppity’ ...”* (Robert Hitchcock, personal correspondence, 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2005).

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.gov.bw>

## The Telling of Good Lies

Many of the issues facing indigenous peoples today are the result of global processes, such as economic development, environmental changes and competition for resources. An increasing pressure on the world's natural resources has led to the establishment of a higher number of protected areas. Today, almost everyone claims "conservation with a human face" to be a part of their work. However, the notion of wilderness as untouched land is still very vivid, and conservation-policies are still based upon the idea that ecological fragile areas can be maintained only if they are emptied of human activity. The Botswana government has encouraged the local inhabitants of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve to resettle, as the San has been accused of poaching, and it is claimed that the tourists who come to Central Kalahari wish to see *unspoiled* wilderness.

In the Central Kalahari, there is a clear controversy between wildlife conservation and development, and the issue of the San has caused great conflicts. One important question that needs to be looked into is therefore, what is development, according to whom? For the San, development has so far not meant development in terms of standard of living. Rather the opposite, many San feel that they are even worse off now, after the relocation program begun, than they were before. According to the present concept, development can only be brought to people *outside* the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, as conservation should take place *inside* the reserve. Thus, development cannot come into place inside the reserve, and the San's traditional way of life is not encouraged to be maintained in the resettlements. The government's current policy seems to be that people must be developed from their traditional lifestyles, and that nature must be protected from human activity. Even though it is clear today that what many people call *wilderness* has long been maintained and inhabited by humans, and that ecological fragile areas therefore are not always benefited by human absence, this theory is still not put into practise in Central Kalahari.

So, who benefits from the conservation of protected areas? As it is today, neither the flora and fauna nor the local inhabitants are the true beneficiaries of nature conservation in Central Kalahari. As the San are being removed from the reserve, and more tourists are brought in, the area's attraction as a reserve seems to have only to do with its value as a resource for tourism.

Several of my informants representing Swedish travel agencies expressed the view that if the tourists would not go to Botswana, the San would be even *worse* off than they are now, and therefore, boycott is not the way to go in order make their situation better. Africa will always attract tourists looking for adventure, longing for the genuine and untouched, in search of something different. I also went to Botswana as a tourist. It can be very difficult to find out what exactly is the “accurate” information concerning a tourist destination, this being a very subjective estimation. The contrasts in the statements made by of some of my informants concerning the impact of tourism are sometimes so great that it is hard to believe that they are talking about the same thing (sometimes they even seem to contradict themselves). However, it is clear is that tourism, even when stated to be ecological and responsible, has a massive impact on local people and nature. Eco-tourism is not eco, but it can perhaps become more so if the tourists put higher ecological demands on the agencies with whom they wish to travel. Through community based management and cooperation with the agencies that offer tours in Central Kalahari Game Reserve, there are possibilities to promote an alternative tourism in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve that could benefit the San. As the saying goes, “if there is a will there is a way”, but even though the will is growing, prejudice, discrimination and racism still stand in the way for development in Botswana. In the space of a few years, Botswana has been transformed into one of Africa’s richest countries, with an economic growth that has prompted a massive social change. In wealthy Botswana, hunting and gathering are clear indicators of poverty. The solution to this poverty is believed to be assimilation into the dominant Botswana society. Having the apartheid regime of neighbouring South Africa in thought, at independence the Botswana regime decided to ignore any cultural differences among its people. Black or white, cattle-owner or hunter-gatherer, everybody was to be treated as if they were the same. Consequently, poverty, not discrimination, was seen to be the main problem of the San. The relocation-program has thus a lot to do with the governments attempt to assimilate a people they regard as being “backward”. However, until the problem of discrimination against the San is acknowledged and dealt with by the Botswana government, the development program cannot solve the problems that the San face today.

The San people needs to be recognized for who they are. They are no Stone Age people. They are modern hunter-gathers in a modern world – with their own unique languages and traditions that are all very important elements of San identity – and as such, they are facing great challenges.

Today, there is a growing global awareness for the rights of Indigenous peoples long denied them. International human-rights organizations are therefore promoting the San peoples right to positive discrimination as an indigenous minority with special cultural rights, at the same time as the Botswana government aims to assimilate them into mainstream society through its supposedly cultural neutral welfare programs. Thus, the San are caught up in between these two different trends, and forced to choose between being members of modern society, or a hunter-gatherer culture. This is problematic, since the San people really are both. They are an indigenous minority, with the right to be different, and they are members of Botswana society, with the right not to be discriminated against.

According to Rupert Isaacson, the government of Botswana is telling *good lies*. That is, what is stated about the removal of the G//ana and G/wi San is neither *untrue* nor completely *true* (telephone interview 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). It might be that the San have not been forced to leave their ancestral land in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, as the government have only “encouraged” them to leave the reserve, but the question remains *how* this encouragement has been carried out. It might be that the G//ana and G/wi San now have better access to modern services, such as clinics and schools, but do they have access to *better* services now than before? To the San, the issue of Central Kalahari is about basic human rights. Like most other people, they would like to be in control of their own destiny, and be given the right to choose for themselves what is best for them. Caught up in between conservation and development, the San of today are having a hard time trying to remain the real people. There are many good lies told about the Central Kalahari. However, as long as the San are recognized they will not disappear in the sand. Therefore, it is crucial that the San people can be made heard and seen for what they say they are. They are not voiceless as long as we listen.

## What Happens Now?

So far, seventeen people have not relocated from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve.

According to the government, there will be a “...*continuing with efforts to persuade these 17 people to relocate from the game reserve to settlements outside the reserve where their standards of living could be brought up to the level obtaining in the rest of the country*”.<sup>18</sup>

The G//ana and G/wi San have, via a recently formed advocacy group called *First People of the Kalahari* (FPK) taken the Botswana government to court. They are suing for the right to return to the Central Kalahari Game Reserve and stay there under the terms that were originally granted them in 1961. They are also asking for a guarantee that these rights will be respected, and that the San communities will be partners in the decision making of any future development for the reserve.<sup>19</sup> “*Nobody wants to be held up for genocide if it’s bad for business*” says Rupert Isaacson concerning the land rights claim. However, the government still does “*everything it can to keep the case in limbo*”(telephone interview, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2005). Only this month, San-people have been arrested for hunting in the reserve and one man has died after having stated to have been tortured earlier this summer. According to *Survival International*, officials have also stopped the *First People of the Kalahari* from talking to those in the reserve. In order to stop San from going in, guards will now be put out, as the government has announced that the area around the Central Kalahari Game Reserve will be blockaded.

However, there are still glimpses of hope. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, this year, *First People of the Kalahari* won *Sweden’s Right Livelihood Award*, also known as the “Alternative Nobel Prize”. The award has been given for the San’s resistance against eviction from their ancestral lands, and for maintaining their right to live according to their traditions.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.gov.bw>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.landrightsfund.org>

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