

Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman

Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor

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**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
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Introduction

A Bushman's story.....2-3

Chapter one

Bushman ethnography

The First people of the Kalahari..... 3-5

Before They Came.....6-8

A day in a life of a Bushman.....8-13

The Bushman Wars.....14-16

Chapter two

Conceptualizing Bushman poverty.....16-19

Measuring Bushman Poverty.....20-24

Then came Poverty.....24-27

Chapter three

Indigenous values doggerel: poverty analysis.....28-31

A Test of Measurement.....31 -32

Conclusion

How to escape: The poverty trap.....32- 33

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

Introduction

A Bushman's story

The original intention of this research was to attempt to find a better way to measure poverty. By focusing in on a specific group like the Bushman of the Kalahari, the original supposition was that an economical model that more accurately measures indigenous poverty was needed; a tool that would enable economists to better understand and measure the depth of poverty of indigenous people.

What has become apparent from this research is that, in the case of the Kalahari Bushman, there simply is no measure based upon western values systems that could accurately measure bushman poverty. What also has become apparent through this research is that no measure is needed. Solving the problem of Bushman poverty is easy; they simply need their land back and to be left to manage it the way they want; this would alleviate most if not all bushman poverty.

Consequently, no mathematical model is needed. The problem is a political one as this paper argues in chapter two. In chapter one, the history of the Bushman since the first contact with white man and also the daily life of the Bushman, that has remained virtually unchanged for thousands of years, are detailed.

What is considered as poverty and popular methods used to measure it are discussed in chapter two of this paper. Whilst a critic of popular measures attempts to

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

validate these concepts in the case of the Bushman fail. The measure simply cannot relate to the Bushman condition. What becomes apparent in the final section of this research is that all attempts to put dollars in the pockets of the Bushman can only make matters worse; perhaps the Bushmen had best be left alone, free from neo-liberal intention.

Chapter One

Bushman ethnography

The First people of the Kalahari

There has been considerable debate amongst anthropologists and scholars over the years; about what to call them. Neither of the terms Bushman¹, San, Khoisan or Basarwa are indigenous terms for Bushman (Barnard 2007). Many excepted terms still used today to describe the Bushman, were or still are derogatory.

The term Sankhoi became popular in the 1970s. However, San or Sankhoi only applies to one small group and should not be used as a collective term to mean all Bushman. The terms Kung, San, khoi-khoi and Sankhoi or Khoisan, are not indigenous Bushman terms also only apply to specific groups. These appellations originated from the Khoekhoe and applies to those who have no cattle and were considered of a low status and impoverished by the Khoekhoe; who were themselves originally labeled by the Dutch as 'Hottentots'(Barnard, 2007, Gall, 2001).

¹ Originated from the Dutch Bosjesmans meaning Bushman (Barnard 2007; p12)

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

The Setswana name Masarwa, which is derogatory for Bushman, meaning simply “of the bush” or bush-man, which in Setswana, is a noun class word, used to describe things like rocks and stones rather than people. This was later changed to Basarwa to include them under the people group “Ba” as in “Ba~na” meaning Men. The reason for this change was due to the ‘inquisitiveness of school children in the 1970s’(Barnard, 2007), who kept asking their teacher why the Bushmen were not considered as people. The Botswana government eventually responded by changing their official classification to include them as people (see Barnard, 2007, Gall, 2001). For these reasons and to avoid confusion from now on this paper will group all under the banner of the “Bushman” to mean the collective, and, refer to individual groups under their indigenous names, where applicable. Although this term was originally derogatory it has now become acceptable in academic circles as well as to the Bushman themselves.

The story of the Kalahari Bushman is a one of persecution, deprivation and genocide that spans over two centuries. ‘After centuries of persecution, few Bushman are unable to stand up for themselves against more dominant groups - whether black or white - especially those in some sort of authority’(Gall, 2001; p 211). Over the centuries the Bushman of the Kalahari have fended off their enemies with little more than a bow, a poisoned arrow and a wooden spear, coexistent with a superior understanding of their environment in which they lived. Their numbers are now so diminished that the few groups remaining, are scattered far and wide across the desert regions of southern Africa.

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

This makes communication and organization difficult thus leaving them vulnerable to dominate groups.

The study of the Bushman in the past has led to many misleading myths and untruths about Bushman ethnography. As Barnard clearly states ‘we anthropologists constantly change our image of these people in diverse ways. These reflect our time, our nationality, traditions and our shifting and often complex theoretical position’(Barnard, 2007; p1).

The first record of the Soaqua² was written in the journal of Van Riebeeck in 1653 (Barnard 2007; p138). The treatment that they have received since the first contact with white man in 1653 may have been a direct reflection of the cultural values that were held at the time. However, despite how views may have changed since Van Riebeeck, one constant misconception has remained. The Sankhoi Bushman continue to be viewed as a primitive and thus untenable to society. This misconception and belief have aided the destruction of their culture and mired their ability to exist in their traditional way. This paper will later explain why the Bushman should be considered ‘thoroughly modern’(Barnard 2007) and contrasts the common misconception of their primitiveness with their current struggle.

² Soaqua used by Van Riebeeck to describe the bushman, originally the masculine plural form of the Khoekhoe term for Khoisan (originally spelled Koisan). Contact with the Khoekhoe was, made earlier than this by Vasco de Gama, in particular by one of his crew Fernao Veloso in April 1497. However, they were quickly chased back to their ships. Some trading with the Khoekhoe was also carried out before Van Riebeeck. It must be noted there was little distinction made between the Khoekhoe and the Bushman at this time and most likely this contact was only with the Khoekhoe (Barnard, A. (2004) *Hunter-gatherers in history, archaeology and anthropology*, Oxford ; New York, Berg, Barnard, A. (2007) *Anthropology and the bushman*, Oxford ; New York, Berg. *et al*)

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

Before They Came

Anthropologists argue that the Bushman has lived in southern Africa for an arguable forty or fifty thousand years or more. However, recent genetic evidence suggests that, as the Bushman claim for themselves, they are the first people of the Kalahari and of Southern Africa. Recent DNA research into mitochondrial DNA hypothesizes that we all descend from one 'African Eve' (Barnard 2004: Deacon and Deacon 1999: Gall 2001). This Eve, or Eve's would be more accurate, in a "recent African origins" model which traces the genetic inheritance of all modern humans to an ancestral African population of between 1000 and 10,000 people, living in Sub-Saharan Africa some '200,000 years ago' (Deacon and Deacon 1999: *et all*).

Archeological discoveries have uncovered the earliest remains of modern man, in dig sites around the Klaas River in South Africa. These remains were found to be the direct ancestors of the Bushman; in particular they are related to the Khoisan and Khoekhoe. This interestingly directly links the original Bushman Hunter gather, with the original kohekohe herders of the Cape, whom the early settlers favored over the Bushman. Accordingly, these original genes are represented in all Southern Africa peoples. 'San, Khoekhoe and other ethnically differentiated groups in southern Africa carry in their genes a history that can be unraveled through genetic studies' (Deacon and Deacon, 1999; p93), that could link all modern man directly to the Bushman.

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

At Tsodilo hills in Botswana rock art that dates back 20,000-30,000 years or more, can be found. The rock paintings represent some of the most outstanding rock art to be found anywhere, demonstrating the exceptional skills of the Bushman artist; whilst allowing a glimpse into Bushman culture and way of life before colonisation.

The Bushman culture is highly complex and diverse with equally complex and diverse dialects. They hold a bond to their ancestors and animal spirits, concomitant with a belief in God as creator and appeaser of all things however; not comparable to the Christian view of God. They hold gathering to bless and appease their ancestors. Their most well know of these is the Bushman trance dance in which they chant and sing themselves into a trance like state in which they communicate with the ancestors; often asking for help to heal the sick or to bless the next hunt, and above all to thank the animal and nature spirits for providing food (see Gall, 2001: Guenther, 1977: Hitchcock, 2002).

The Bushman has a deep understanding and spiritual connection to their environment. Their knowledge of plants used for healing is equivalent to any modern biologist the problem is, it is in a different language so not understood by modern scientist. This as Shiva (1991) suggests, 'should be translated into a language that our modern scientist can understand', this can be applied to all indigenous cultures. This coincidentally highlights the first reason as to why we should consider the Bushman as thoroughly modern.

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

The Bushman understanding of wildlife is second to none; they have an intuitive knowledge of where the animals are and when they will migrate and to where they will go. They understand the animal's needs and preferred environment for each species. This knowledge that is passed on from the elders to the young, could take a modern animal biologist or ecologist many years to learn and maybe still they would not understand as well as the Bushman Hunter gatherer (See Gall, 2001: Hitchcock, 2002)

A day in a life of a Bushman

On a normal day the Bushman wake early, depending on the season he may kindle the fire for warmth whilst he eats any food that may be remaining from the night before. The women look after the small children attending to their needs, whilst the men and the older boys gather their things ready to go hunting for the day.

Bushmen, usually live in small groups of around eight or ten families to each group. Some groups do grow larger than this though it is uncommon. Survival hunting and gathering, especially in a habitat as barren and desolate as the central Kalahari region, requires group formation. The central Kalahari Bushman groups are small and highly mobile; they seldom number more than fifty members to group.

Each group maintains exclusive territorial rights to an area of a few hundred square kilometers. The men and boys set off hunting, whilst the women prepare to go of gathering plants, roots and tubers that are used for both food and healing. Bushman woman provide around 75% of the communities' food whilst the men provide the rest

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

through hunting. On average a Bushman male or female hunter gather will spend around '3-5' hours of each day either hunting or gathering food and water (Sahlins, 1974 ; pp19-225).

The bushman families live a semi nomadic life moving from one semi permanent village to the next when food availability in the current area falls, or as the season changes. They live in simple dome shaped grass huts surrounded with a stockade of thorny acacias that help to keep the animals out at night. Bushman only concentrates in larger groups around more permanent sources of water in the dry winter months.

These larger groups are made up of family members, relatives, cousins etc as well as outsiders. The more nomadic members of the group and may come and go at will, or perhaps may chose to stay on as a more permanent members of the group. They may marry into the group or just simply stay. No formal contract is made or is needed.

The groups may stay in these temporary villages for several months at a time. In the wet season when food and water become more abundant, the family groups will split up into smaller bands and disperse themselves over a wider area. They may not return to the village or see each other again until the next winter; perhaps even then will choose different winter homes, it could be several years before these groups are all in the same place at the same time. Closer family relations however usually do spend the winter together.

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

The Bushmen have no chiefs and no hierarchical system of leadership and no specialised personnel. The lifestyle of the bushman simple does not lend itself to this kind of thinking; the groups must work in harmony in order to survive. Any decision affecting the social group are settled through discussions and debate in which all adults or near adult, male or female can partake. Discussion are informal and need no set place, decisions are seldom made in a single discussion. To outside observers, the egalitarian nature of the Bushman political society must appear alien indeed.

Children begin to share the group's responsibility as young as eight or nine. The boys hunt and the girls help their mothers gathering plants and roots. family member's all share equal status with each other as do the parents. The only relationship in Bushman society, in which authority is inherent, is the parent-child relationship.

The bushman own few personal belongings, what they do own belong to either the man or the woman equally. The Bushman has no concept of matrimonial property. The few belonging they do have mainly consist of tools used for hunting or gathering, such as, a spear, bow and arrow, digging stick, culinary implements and musical instruments as well as clothes and ceremonial trinkets or charm amulets. They also carry materials for their shelters with them when migrating.

Despite lack of property ownership, the Bushman does have some sense of territorial space. With small groups operating in ill defined areas in which they move from place to place. They don't consider the land as being owned by the group rather it is

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

the animals, plants and water that are a common shared wealth to be shared with all group members.

For people of other groups from outside their traditional hunting area will need permission to use the water or resources from the elder descendants of the clan. Rain and ground water belong to no one; however, permanent or semi-permanent wells or waterholes are group property.

New clans are seldom formed, and most clans have had contacted each other at some time in their history. All can be related to each other through marriage or ancestral relation.

Animals belong to no one until they are killed then they belong to the one who put in the first poison arrow that stuck. The meat is then shared amongst his whole family group and whoever helped with the hunting. Hunting parties usually consisted of around five or six adult or young adult males. They hunt by setting traps or with bows and small spears. Once the first arrow has stuck, they may track the animal for days at a time until the poison takes hold and the animal finally drops, it is uncommon for a Bushman to leave an animal to die unnecessarily.

Bushman social life is about sharing giving and the promotion of the group's ability to be mobile and efficient. They lend and borrow without second thought. The Bushman has no form of economic exchange value and don't not buy sell or trade

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

amongst themselves or with other groups. In fact, exchanges made for money and claims of ownership are general frowned upon and considered to create social tension.

The members of each group are themselves quite fluid; there are no set boundaries, groups mix between all other groups. However, each group considers itself to be complete within itself and autonomous in respect of other groups. There have never been any intergroup wars, or any wars ever fought between Bushman.

The Bushman of the Kalahari are clearly a people who live day by day and one day at a time, being both a practical and yet at the same time a highly complex and highly spiritual people.

Although births and deaths amongst bushman are treated lightly holding no ceremonies or rituals for either the Bushman hold instead to the spirits of man and nature rather than to the man himself. All things according to Bushman belief hold sprits of the descendents. Waterholes, trees, mountains the clouds and rain all hold the spirits of past people. The Bushman sees God as the creator and man as the beginning of the cycle of life. When a person's life is over his spirit becomes the wind or rains or an animal all these things where once men, who in turn were created by god.

The spirits that inhabit the animals and trees have great magical powers, they can bring the gift of healing and life equally they can bring devastation and illness; it is for this reason the spirits must be appeased.

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

The focus of Bushman religious ceremony is the trance dance. During the trance dance which is undertaken by all Bushman of any age. They can contact the spirits of the ancestors and their offer thanks. If a person is sick, they will take them to the graves of the ancestors to ask for healing. They also use the trance dance for healing or to bless the next hunt. There is no set order or structure to the trance dance. The group gathers they begin to play their instrument and simply dance themselves into a state of trance. The dance can last hours or days, nothing is organized. One can relate it to a sixties happening they just happened and could happen anywhere any time nothing is prearranged.

Bushman society and culture bears little if any resemblance to western cultures or society they have maintained a unique way of living that simply holds no comparison to the Marxist view of teleological advancement, Because of this they have continued to live outside of the capitalist's economic dream.

The Bushman Wars

All early attempts to assimilate the Bushman either by force or by passive means failed, this led the early settlers in the cape to believe that the bushman don't want to work, the reason for this, believed the settlers, was because the Bushman were lazy, sub-human and will never be brought in to modernity; being nothing less than savages and animals (see Barnard 2007: Gall 2001: Guenther 1977: *et all*). Consequently the settler

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

believed that ‘the Bushman had no interest in the protestant work ethic’ (Gall 2001; p96) however, in reality they most likely had ‘no wish to be laborers in the white man’s vineyards’ (Gall 2001; p99).

The response from the Boer³ was to apply more force. The Boers banned the Bushman from hunting and sent a clear message to the favored Khoekhoe, with whom they allowed shared grazing on communal land; that the Bushman was to be considered free game and offered rewards of cattle or money to those who killed them. The Boers conducted raiding parties on Bushman families slaughtering all in sight, woman and children included with no discrimination. In retaliation the Bushman would conduct raiding parties of their own, stealing or killing the settler’s cattle and sheep. This was not only necessary for food as they were banned from hunting, but all so served as [some kind of] retribution for the Bushman. Unfortunately, from these actions the Bushman acquired the stigma of being cattle rustlers and thieves; a stigma that stuck with them well into the twentieth century.

The Battle of Sneeberg the Bushman suffered a devastating defeat against the Boers. The victory cleared the way for the Great Trek of 1835. The Trekboers crossed the mighty Orange River and into Bushman land unhindered from the raiding Bushman. Then on to what was later to become known as the Free State and then the new Transvaal. By 1847 the northwest cape as far as the Orange River was completely

³ Boer is the Dutch name for Farmer; the early Dutch trekkers took this name as their common identity.

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

annexed by the settlers. Bushman land was declared a communal grassing land, only the Bushman had no rights on this land (Gall 2001; pp94-100: *et all*).

The San people remained stubborn to change and both Dutch and later the English attempts to bring them “culture” where in vain (Gall 2001). This only help anger both the Dutch and the English settlers even further. This encouraged the settlers to continue hunting the Bushman like animals. By the mid nineteenth century most of the surviving Bushman where pushed back into the harsh, inhospitable interior of the Kalahari Desert, however the killing continued, the ‘settlers wanted a completely Bushman free Cape’ (Barnard 2007: Gall 2001; p35-40).

By the end of the century only 500 Bushman remained within the cape. ‘The last known Bushman artist of the Malutis Tribe was shot in the Witteberg Native Reserve’ (Stow 1905; p230: cited Barnard 2007; p35), ‘he had ten small horn pots hanging from his belt, each of which contained a different colored paint with no two colours alike and each had a marked difference from the rest, it was apparent form his dress that he was well respected amongst his people; thus perished ‘the last of the painter tribes of Bushmen’ (*ibid*); with him died a 20,000 year old tradition of Bushman rock art.

Over the centuries the Bushman have become the victims of greed and hatred. They have been dispossessed of their land and rights. ‘The treatment of the Bushman by

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

both the early settlers and the Khoikhoi⁴ amounts to nothing less than genocide' and not a single person was ever brought to justice (Barnard, 2007, Gall, 2001: *et all*).

Chapter Two

Conceptualizing Bushman poverty

“Wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else” (Aristotle, 350BC The Nicomachean Ethics)

The term “hunter gather” that has been attached to the Bushman, was possibly first used by Adam Smith around 1748 (Barnard, 2004; p 32), who interestingly at the time, according to Barnard, appeared unaware that any hunter gathers existed anywhere in the African continent .

There have been several failed attempts to integrate the Bushman of the Kalahari into the modern world. Guenther (1977) writes of the rich white farmers of northern Botswana, who inhabit vast areas of the most fertile land in the country. The white people acquired their land around the turn of last century from the Bantu-speaking Tawana.

Prior to the Tawana settlers, who were originally from neighbouring Ngamiland, the land was inhabited solely by the Bushman. The Tawana laid claim to the land and sold it to white settlers, with no consultation with the Bushman people (Guenther, 1977).

⁴ Coincidentally, the Khoi Khoi previously had lived alongside the Bushman, where encouraged by the settlers, to hunt them down and kill them for reward (Gall, S. (2001) *The bushmen of southern Africa : Slaughter of the innocent*, London, Chatto & Windus.

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

Historical evidence shows that Bushmen communities have always lived in northern Botswana and in the desert regions of the Kalahari.

The Bushmen, are a nomadic people and never stay in one place for too long. Also, the low wages that the early settlers paid the bushman meant that they had to supplement their income with hunting. Often after a hunting trip they would return to find no jobs as the farmer would have employed a new group of workers. Thus the cycle begun again with the new group, they never stayed long enough to learn the skills required to work on a farm (Guenther, 1977). This tendency to wander that is still evident in today's modern Bushman, is not dissimilar to the Australian Aborigines walkabout.

Although there has been a lot written about the Bushman of the Kalahari, there is little actual evidence to be found of the extent of poverty in which they live. The reason for this must partly be because they have lived predominantly outside of the economic system. Concomitant with this the attitudes of the southern African Governments so far have not provided for a fair assessment of the situation.

The Bushman people are but one of a number minority groups in Botswana and represent a relatively small proportion of the total population. Again, precise data of exactly how many Bushman there are, is hard to find, with figures varying from as little as '3%' (Hitchcock, 2002) up to '10%' (US Bureau of African Affairs, 2007) of the population.

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

Whatever the actual figures it must be remembered that Botswana's total population is currently only 1.8 million (UNFPA, 2008) of these 57% live in urban areas; leaving 43% who live in the rural regions of the country. Consequently even low numbers of Bushman could represent a considerably higher percentage of the total population comparatively.

Gall (2002) estimated that around a 100,000 Bushman remain in southern Africa, with some '50,000' in Botswana, '35000' in Namibia and around '4,500' in South Africa, the rest are scattered around in Angola, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Because the bushman have been isolated at the bottom of the ladder and due the social stratification that is inherent within the capitalist economic system; they are genetically distinct which makes identification relatively simple when collecting Data (see: Barnard 2007: Gall 2002:*et all*).

Over the last 10 years the people of the Kalahari have surfed renewed attempts to forcibly remove them from their ancestral lands. They have been put into temporary camps with few facilities and no chance to hunt or continue their traditional lifestyle. Consequently, through living in this environment they find themselves, for the first time in their history suffering the inflictions of modern life. Survival International reports that for the first time they now have Aids and other sexually transmitted diseases within the community and many are becoming alcoholics or are suffering from depression; truly

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

modern inflictions that have never been experienced by these people before (see, Survival-international 2008).

The Organisation for Information and Communications Technologies for Development (OICT) a subsidiary of the NGO Development Gateway Foundation, who suggest that the ‘Kalahari Bushmen, have become a depressed and marginalised community, excluded from their traditional nomadic range by the good intentions of those who have fenced it into national wildlife parks in which there is no place for humans, and certainly no place for those who treat these preserves of endangered species as a larder’ (OICT 2003).

With the discovery in 2002 of a plant that helps combat obesity and only grows in the Kalahari Desert region, began the realisation that their knowledge is of some value, subsequently, attempts by the NGO The first People of the Kalahari, (TFKG) are being made to profit from it. Once again, Vandana Shiva has been advocating saving and protecting indigenous cultures for many years, for this very reason. In order to preserve diversity it is the indigenous people who hold the key, suggests Shiva (Shiva, 1991). She goes on to state that some 80% of all modern medicines originated in the forest. These medicines have all been discovered with the help of the indigenous tribes that live there and that they have been using these plants or compounds for many hundreds of years; before being discovered by European anthropologists and biologists⁵.

⁵ Why we should consider many indigenous tribes as modern See page 7 of this paper.

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

‘In the past the San people's understanding of their environment was everything they needed, but as the fences went up, that understanding became irrelevant; they lost everything and fell into poverty’ (OICT 2003). However, now their knowledge is of value. the OICT is providing the Bushman with handheld computer that are used to collect data of wildlife migration patterns (OICT 2003), this is at least an attempt to work within the Bushman’s capability and within his natural environment. Along with this the Bushman themselves are now becoming unified, with the creation of the self styled NGO, The first People of the Kalahari, (TFKG) set up by the San people in order to unify and take control of the Bushman’s knowledge and fight for land rights as well as control their wealth.

Measuring Bushman poverty

As Good (1999) argues poverty in Botswana is primarily an indigenous creation with deep roots. The poverty in Botswana is intricately woven in to the historical and contemporary national pursuit, of individual accumulation, that has been upheld by the Tswana State since its formation.

Over the years the Kalahari Bushmen has remained in poverty where their richer neighbours denied them simple rights to the land. In Botswana, South Africa and Namibia, the Bushmen have found their territory drastically reduced. In Botswana as the

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

Bamangwato⁶ power base expanded; a system of socioeconomic stratification was introduced based on rule of law held in the hands of the elites. A system requiring servitude to the state; all must pay tax to the ruling elites. Their-in lies a problem with the Bushman who choose to live outside of this system. The lands were placed in the hands of the commoner, and their resident populations, the ‘Basarwa and Bakgalagadi, were incorporated as serfs’ (Good 1992; p70) and denied any rights .

They the government see the bushman as being in the way of wildlife preservation and see no place for “people living in the Stone Age” (president festus Mogwi; BBC News 2007). In fact, that idea could be nothing further from the truth. On the contrary the bushman could possibly hold the key to the conservation and preservation not only of the wildlife but, the plants and trees as well.

The Botswana government also considers the bushman in the way of diamond mining and mineral extraction. It is because of all these conflicting interest that measuring poverty in Botswana is a complex business, as Good (1999) argues ‘no present-day snapshot, survey approach is likely to deal adequately with its density and complexities’(Good 1999; p187)

It has been suggested By Finley (1964) that ‘all forms of labour on behalf of another take place under conditions of relative powerlessness. Our own readiness to

⁶ Bamangwato people are one of the eight principal tribes of Botswana.

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

contrast the degradation of slavery with the dignity of paid wage labour is a wonderful testimony to the effectiveness with which our own system has effectively legitimated its own particular form of relatively un-free labour' (cited Russell, 1976; pp179-180).

Finley (1964) also suggests that, two key characteristics of slavery are, 'people as property, and deracination'. The Bushmen in Botswana cannot be considered "enslaved" according to Finley (1964) since they are the aboriginal inhabitants of the territory, however with their forced removal from hunting grounds to compounds could be seen as a kind of 'deracination' (cited Russell, 1976; pp179-180) .

In contradiction to Finley ownership views, Geoffrey Oteng the Botswana Governments assistant minister of local Government, lands and housing in Gaborone in 1993 issued a 'violent diatribe' at a Botswana society conference. When addressing the Bushman and John Hardbattle, who before his death was an avid campaigner for Bushman rights. Hardbattle had managed to gain international assistance to help the Bushman fight for their rights. Oteng stated "you think that theses outsiders will always help you, well one of these days they will be gone and there will only be us, and we own you, and will own you till the end of time, and you will not achieve what you want" (Gall, 2001)⁷. This seemingly fulfils Finley's (1964) second criteria of slavery. Thus, leaving the bushman by all accounts still enslaved in the twenty first century; despite slavery being made illegal a well over century ago.

⁷ This was also reported The Memegi and The Reporter Botswana's leading Daily news papers, although at the time of writing this paper, back issues were unavailable in the UK.

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

In many ways, the Bushman people are at the bottom of the Botswana socio-economic system. Sizeable proportions live below the poverty line. Statistically and by using current western values systems, they show some of the highest rates of infant mortality alongside the lowest living standards and literacy rates (Gall, 2001, The U.S State Department, 2007).

In many cases they have insecure access to land and resources which in the case of the Bushman is causing real poverty. To a Bushman land is everything and money is of little value. Although on saying this it is quite common these days to find the bushman using a mixed economy. They, when needed, have been known to work on farms or as game trackers and guides; they also partake in tribal dance demonstrations for tourist and sell them Bushman artefacts and curios. It is not uncommon these days to find Bushman who have completely given up on the traditional ways, choosing to work in the city as labours or in semiskilled employment, thus leading their culture and knowledge into decimation

In all the time that humans have existed on this planet, up till now some '97%' (Gall 2002) of that time has been spent as hunter gatherers. It was around 13000 years ago in the Fertile Crescent the first humans began to farm and use simple tools for agriculture such as bone handled flint blades, sickles and grain basket; later came stone slab grinders and storage pits. However, archeological evidence shows that it was not

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

until around 11000BC when these tools and techniques became abundantly used (see Diamond, 1997; pp105-113).

The human reliance on technology has only happened during the last 2% of human existence. In this time our predominant reliance on computers and other technologies, has become so extreme that if it were to fail us for any reason, modern day society would simply collapse causing widespread panic leading to death and hunger. The only people able to survive in the twenty first century without modern technology would be the Bushman and around 150 remaining hunter gatherer tribes that are scattered around the planet.

Then Came Poverty

The study of poverty is intrinsically a political problem; it is also an ethical issue that implies injustice and the recognition of right and wrong. The control of the process for poverty alleviation is predominantly in the hands of the political elites, who govern the poor and manage their wellbeing. ‘Those who decide who is poor are themselves never poor’ (Monnickendam 2004; p29). Consequently, decisions that affect the poor are subjugated by their struggle for power and the exploitive nature of that process. ‘John Kenneth Galbraith (1994) argues that everyone's access to a basic source of income is an absolute and inescapable requirement in a good society’ (cited Good 1999; p186).

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

As with Sen's entitlement theory Galbraith (1994) debates that basic human rights form the bases of civilised or good society. Sen argues that 'freedom is the both the primary end and the principle means of development' (Sen 1999; p31). Claiming that it is access to these entitlements that are at the root of real poverty; this concept also offers the presupposition that, societies that fail to deliver these basic human rights, are presumably uncivilised, is not just or good.

There appears to be some consensus among 'scholars and practitioners alike that the causes, manifestations and consequences of poverty are multidimensional' (Sen 1999: Cited Woolcock 2007; p1), meaning that poverty cannot be defined by income alone. Although there appears some agreement between the constructivists and the positivists in that they both see poverty as multi-dimensional however, it is the nature of these dimensions that is at question.

Most livelihoods approaches such as Sen's 'Entitlement theory' (Sen, 1981) tend to focus on economic and social aspects rather than physical dimensions such as personal safety. The concept of security itself is mostly associated with national and international territorial disputes only recently have there been efforts to broaden this to incorporate notions of human security focusing on basic needs and human dignity (World Bank 2000/2001).

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

The dollar a day poverty measure that has become popular in recent times, was first created by Mollie Orshansky as an emergency measure for the USA, this measure was only intended to be used in times of a national food crises. This system of poverty measurement is based on a commodity basket pertaining to a minimum amount of food needed to survive for a year, in a time of crises by farming and non farming households in the USA; this can then be converted into an estimated yearly cost in Dollars.

Orshansky poverty line as summarized by (Barrington 1997)

“Formula:

$$I_p = FM * MNFE = FM * PFP * EFP$$

$$\text{Nonfarm } I_p = 3 * 1 * EFP$$

$$\text{Farming } I_p = 3 * 0.6 * EFP = 0.6 * \text{nonfarm } I_p$$

Where I_p = poverty level income, FM = food multiplier, defined as the inverse of the proportion of income spent on food, $MNFE = PFP * EFP$ minimum essential expenditure on food; PFP = proportion of total food value purchased, EFP = estimated yearly cost per household living within the economy food plan, assuming all food is purchased in the market (re-rendered from Barrington 1997; p408).

Orshansky then estimated that, on average, farm families purchased 60% of their consumed food, whereas nonfarm families effectively purchased all the food they consumed. Orshansky multiplied the average proportion of food value purchased ‘(PFP) by 3.7’ (Barrington, 1997; p407)

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

The Orshansky poverty measures disregard any necessary non food elements to commodity basket. As a compensator she uses the food multiplier to calculate the inverse of the average proportion of income spent on food giving the minimum necessary income per archetypal US household. The U.S. government has to date has kept the original Orshansky formula intact, only adjusting the poverty line to allow for inflation.

This concept was later adopted by David Dollar and rehabilitated to suite the developing world. David Dollar used the original measure as base line to work out the dollar value of a daily commodity basket for the poor; he then uses a modifier to convert this into purchasing power parity dollars (PPP).

Poverty measured as income below a dollar a day, has some usefulness, however, in reality that amount of money could represent riches for many Bushman hunter gatherers in Botswana today however, in reality money is of little worth to the Bushman living in the desert (see Good, 1999; pp186-187).

Chapter three

Indigenous values doggerel: poverty analysis

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

Using the Dollar a day to measure poverty, 64% of Botswana's population still live in poverty. 43% of Botswana's population live in rural locations however, we know that, at least 10 % of the population included in these figures have no need for a dollar a day; they have chosen not to live the alternative lifestyle of living within the capitalist economic system.

The rest of the poverty-stricken are also living in rural areas where, at least 20-30% having chosen the traditional rural Tswana life style, of herding cattle and living on the cattle post; which is a kind of mixed economy; the Tswana traditionally only sell cattle when they need the use of money. The remaining conservative estimate of 14% reserved for children, street children, and, unemployed people in the towns and cities, as well as the sick, lame and elderly⁸. On top of which, according to statistic 80% of Botswana's population is presumed literate.

It is clearly obvious from these figures that the Dollar day measure has something missing. The traditional Motswana cattle herder considers cattle more valuable than money, consequently just because he does not have money does not mean he is poor; he may have many thousands of pula invested in his cows (Demographic sources The U.S State Department, 2007: Earth Trends 2003: *et al*).

⁸ Possibly a small percentage of the above 30% mention could also include elderly retired ex-city folk.

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

By proposing poverty measure based on a Dollar a day concomitant with, Neoliberal views that development and poverty alleviation simply means putting money in individual pockets, although this is of value to many living in towns and cities within the capitalist economy. However, these values must surely influence attitudes of governments towards their treatment of indigenous cultures. Possible influencing policy that forces indigenous communities out of their natural environment and traditional way of life, into one of servitude to the economic system and slavery to the Dollar; this often means working for a master or boss, on a farm, down a mine or in a sweatshop.

The utilitarian approach of Dollar and Cray uses hedonic calculus when obtaining and manipulating data statistics. This limits itself by being concerned only with the sum-total and does not include minority or individual sufferance. This also does not account for communities outside the normal economic framework.

A popular and widely used headcount index in its simplified form $P_o = \frac{N_p}{n}$ or best written as $P_o = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N I(y_i < z)$ where P_o is the proportion of the population counted as poor and N_p equals the number of people considered to be poor within the total population.

The problem with using random sampling when obtaining data for statics is that, this data can vary quite considerably depending on where the survey takes place and what

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

deciding factors are used to determine the data identity, i.e. what poverty indicators are used as a measure and how do these apply to the rest of the population living in different regions. Of the plethora of poverty measures that are available and have been used up until now, most if not all use a headcount index of some form or other. Consequently, the base data provided by these methods is fallible.

Most poverty lines devised over the years can be classified into two main groups: the direct income-based and the budget-standard. In the direct income-based method, income alone determines the extent of poverty below a threshold or poverty line. In the indirect or proxy method, income is determined by a commodity basket of food and material goods of a value deemed sufficient for the poor (see Monnickendam' 2004; p4).

The proxy method or the income threshold measurements, connect poverty to individuals whose income falls below the standard threshold. The standard threshold is a capricious fraction of an economic index that is 'in most cases based on the mean or median income' (Monnickendam 2004; p4-5) of a given population. The income-proxy measure is only useful in giving an indicator of the conditions of poverty relative to the wider population. In contrast to this, direct poverty measurement attempts to determine the 'lifestyles' (*ibid*) and conditions that the people in poverty live in. However, the most important use of setting a poverty line is for benchmarking.

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

Many current day poverty measures use proxies such as income or life expectancy, infant mortality rates or literacy rates, being the most widely used proxies in current times. These proxies have some value however, they fall short when it comes to measuring the poverty of the Kalahari bushmen.

A test of measurement

The Bushman value system is completely alien to that of the rest of the developed world. They hold no materialistic value, they have no economic exchange system in fact economic transaction is frowned upon by the Bushman community concomitantly with, this they share everything, including their children or other members of the family. It is not uncommon for groups to swap children in order to keep the balance of the male/female ratio within the group. The children are always free to return to their birthing parents whenever they want to. Considering this it becomes obvious that Bushman poverty cannot be measured using western value systems.

Simply what makes a Bushman poor cannot be measured using proxies such as income or literacy rates or even mortality rates. They are simply ineffective at measuring Bushman poverty and don't reflect the true value system of the Bushman.

Consider what makes a Bushman poor and the first thing that is obvious is loss of land. However, it is not only loss of land. The land has some basic requirements that are needed, in order to make the land hospitable to the Bushman. Firstly, and obviously

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

they need water, next animals to hunt and plants to gather; all this comes with the land. However, above all else they need the political freedom to roam the land and be able to use it as they choose. Another and all-important choice are that the Bushman need to be near to the place that their ancestors are buried. Spiritually that is the only place the bushman feels safe. The burial place of their ancestors is the only place where they can conduct healing ceremonies. To the Bushman this is the most important condition above all else. If the Bushman loses their connection with the ancestors, their culture has no hope of surviving. To the Bushman these are the things that represent real poverty.

Conclusion

How to escape: the poverty trap

Western styled neo-Liberal development chooses profit over socioeconomic condition. Most if not all development theories maintain a growth centred ethos. That is, the maximisation of output in order to increase profit with disregard for the natural or social diversity that exist. Since the industrial revolution, 'Growth centred development has been at the forefront of 'western style' development theorists'. Consequently, all current day poverty measures inherit this ethos in there making. The Millennium Development Goals suggest the halving of the number of people living on a dollar a day between 1990 and 2015. This vision has no benefit to a Bushman other than that to make his life a misery. By encourage the Bushman to earn a dollar a day can only destroy their culture whilst forcing them into poverty.

**Poverty and the Kalahari Bushman:
Advancing the Conceptualization of what it means to be poor**

A dollar a day might be useful for the urban poor as an extra dollar could mean a considerable increase in the commodity basket. However, to bushman this is useless, as they don't use money when obtaining their commodity basket. They live outside the economic system. In the case of the Bushman Sen's entitlement theories is a more valid theoretical framework for this case. The bushman poverty is caused by marginalisation and the loss of land and from being forced into desolate camps far from the ancestor's graves. This is clearly a loss of entitlement.

This paper has highlighted a gap in the thinking of economic theorist in that the systems that they conceptualise do not on the whole, consider the indigenous cultures that live outside of the normal economic system. Perhaps, this is the reason tribes like the Bushman are getting left behind. Simply there is no system that caters or measures their specific needs or class of poverty. This paper has also shown the reason why we need to develop poverty definitions that suits and values the needs of the indigenous people; concepts that would normally be alien to the Neo-liberal perspective.

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