

preferred, their aspirations are to keep their jobs and endure the future. Their death rate has been high.

The !Kung in the north have been living with Ovambo and Kavango peoples for at least a century. Most have become assimilated and acculturated, raising cattle and other livestock and planting crops. Many families have had sons serving in the colonial army and police for generations. They fought for the Portuguese in the Angolan war of independence and are refugees in Namibia where they are professional soldiers with loyalty to their unit, their officers and their paychecks. The army has settled at least a thousand !Kung in camps in western Bushmanland and has respected the rights of Ju/wasi in eastern Bushmanland. Nevertheless, Most Ju/wasi fear the !Kung and can hardly understand a word they say. In a letter dictated to the Administrator-General Kxao Demi wrote:

We are Ju/wasi and we wish that the white people will hear us. If they do their own thoughts [without hearing us] we do not want it. And we do not want that they [government] will take our lands and make a nature reserve because we want to have our cattle and donkeys and gardens and all things in our country. And the white people [here] do not listen to us. Therefore the nature reserve will finish us and ruin us. We are without work, without anything. We want to develop [//ei tseu — pull up] our land and do not want to go to a strange land because strange people [the Angolan Bushman soldiers] live there and we fear them and do not understand [their speech].

Today it is as realistic to expect that the peoples classified as Bushman in Namibia can speak with one voice, or support common leaders, as it is to expect a United States of Europe by the end of the century. Yet because all "Bushman" are lumped together by outsiders they are expected to represent themselves as a single people. Because Bushman peoples do not have a single voice they have no voice.

As /Xaesce G/= oma says,

We are Ju/wasi. We do not want a nature reserve. All Ju/wasi do not want a nature reserve., Where will they go?

When the whites wanted to make a nature reserve, they first told the Ju/wasi. But they did not tell us that no cattle, no gardens, nothing will be allowed in the reserve. Now they want to do the reserve by force. And Ju/wasi do not consent that the nature reserve will begin now.

Long ago Ju/wasi were without cattle. Now they have cattle. And this is Ju/wasi land.

And people are growing old, and they do not know where they will go, because now their children have cattle and the government wants the Ju/wasi to leave their land with their cattle and go to a strange land and people's hearts are sore because people will be destroyed. We will stay here.

Because this land is Ju/wasi land. And it is a little bit good. Without gifblaar.

And we know this land, and do not know strange places. We know where water is. And bushfoods. And a borehole, it loves money. One borehole costs R15,000.00. And if the borehole dies, what will we do? Without money?

We will stay [here] where God himself made the water. I am finished. □

John Marshall is a coordinator of the !Kung San Foundation.

On the 18th of July in response to a press conference (and the foregoing article) held by John Marshall in Windhoek, the Department of Government Affairs issued a statement which included their rationale for a Nature Reserve in eastern Bushmanland:

"The unaffectedness of eastern Bushmanland as a wilderness with its flora and pans, certain scarce game species, the uniqueness of the Bushman himself and his natural environment, and the shortage of such conservation areas in the rest of the country, are the most important motivations for the possible establishment of a nature conservation area . . . in the eastern part of Bushmanland.

In such a conservation area Bushmen can be used as field rangers, guides for touring groups and as workers in the rest camps. An official master plan for a game reserve has not yet been composed. However, it will be aimed towards the advantage of the Bushmen. The Bushmen will be allowed to keep a limited number of cattle, to grow their gardens and to gather and hunt in the traditional manner."

Apart from the fact that Namibia has probably more nature conservation areas than any other country in the world and that game is relatively scarce in eastern Bushmanland and would have to be translocated from other game areas in order to attract tourists, it is clear that the administration continues to look upon the "unique Bushman" as part of the fauna. It is also apparent that their idea of developing Bushmanland to the advantage of the Ju/wasi is extremely limited.

It is a relief to learn that people will be allowed to keep at least some of their cattle (how many?) in the nature Reserve (although not at waterpoints reserved for game). But how many people? The statement mentions that the Department of Agriculture is developing a demonstration farm on 3,600 ha. west of Tshumkwe which will also "educate and give guidance to Bushman farmers." But where will they farm? The statement does not explain that most of Bushmanland is uninhabitable—the west is mantled in deep sand and waterless forest and people can only live near deep and expensive boreholes at the military camps where the South African Defense Force (SADF) has settled over a thousand Angolan !Kung mercenaries and their families. Subsistence agriculture is only possible in eastern Bushmanland with its several pans, accessible watertable and resources of bushfoods, game and grazing.

The majority of Ju/wasi in Bushmanland live in concentrated squalor at Tshumkwe and the army camps. When the army withdraws, which, inevitably some day it must, where will these 1500-2000 people go? Does anyone believe that a civil government can spend the millions of rand a year required to support the Bushman population in the present manner? Of the several thousand Ju/wasi living outside Bushmanland in the farming districts where work is scarce and ill paid, many have no jobs at all and no where to go. Their situation is desperate. All these people have a right to a future and Bushmanland remains their most viable hope. A handful of jobs as game wardens and rest camp workers or permission granted to a chosen few to practice subsistence farming, will not solve the problem. Bushmanland must be developed for the benefit of all Ju/wasi who live there, not just a fraction, and for their relatives on the

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Ju/Wasi herding cattle.

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outside. Any "master plan" must emphasize human development, not at the cost of, but in line with, conservation. The present plan is far too limited. In fact it is a cruel deception.

The government should make a clear statement that eastern Bushmanland is held in trust for all Ju/wasi until they are accorded the same right and voice in their own affairs, and control over their reservation and its resources, as are other peoples in Namibia. It is specious to say that the only way to protect the land for the people is to proclaim it a nature reserve. A government that can proclaim a nature reserve can recognize the legitimate inherited rights of a people to their land and livelihood. The government should encourage and support additional groups of Ju/wasi from Bushmanland and the farming districts to begin to develop subsistence farms at the waterholes and shallow boreholes in eastern Bushmanland.

The history of the Bushman peoples in Namibia (as elsewhere in southern Africa) has been one of decimation and dispossession. By proclaiming a nature reserve in eastern Bushmanland for the benefit of tourists and a fragment of the Ju/wa population, the government will be repeating this abysmal record. There is obviously not enough land to help all Bushman peoples develop a subsistence base, but by embarking on a plan to help the Ju/wasi — the original inhabitants of that land — the government has a chance to redress the record. ☐

Claire Ritchie
Coordinator
The !Kung San Foundation

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