Boston University

OpenBU **http://open.bu.edu**

African Studies Center ASC Working Papers in African Studies Series

1986

Foragers for life: relations of property, production, and labor in the perpetuation of Bushman status

https://hdl.handle.net/2144/41066

"Downloaded from OpenBU. Boston University's institutional repository."

FORAGERS FOR LIFE:
RELATIONS OF PROPERTY, PRODUCTION,
AND LABOR IN THE PERPETUATION OF
BUSHMAN STATUS

By Edwin Wilmsen

African Studies Center

1986

This paper has been prepared for inclusion in P. Bonte and J. Galaty, eds., Herders, Warriors, and Traders: The Political Economy of African Pastoralism (forthcoming).

WORKING PAPERS
NO. 111
AFRICAN STUDIES CENTER
Boston University
270 Bay State Rd.
Boston, MA 02215

FORAGERS FOR LIFE: RELATIONS OF PROPERTY, PRODUCTION, AND LABOR IN THE PERPETUATION OF BUSHMAN STATUS

By Edwin Wilmsen

Unlike all other native peoples of southern Africa, none of those called "Bushmen" (the majority of whom speak San languages)[1] have been able, in this century, to accumulate sufficient capital with which to maintain significant herds of cattle of their own. Why is this so? What accounts for the continued existence in modern southern Africa of peoples who appear to have practiced until recently an aboriginal foraging economy?[2] Why are there peoples in the twentieth century who could conceivably be labelled "Bushmen"?

At the same time, in this century in Botswana and Namibia, a significant majority of peoples so labelled have pursued a substantially pastoralist way of life in symbiosis with, employed by, or enserfed to Bantu speaking cattle owners, primarily Batswana and Herero. As we shall see, this is equally true of earlier centuries with the modification that some proportion of San speakers, themselves, then owned herds of respectable size. And all "Bushmen foragers," no matter how far into the center of the Kalahari they may have been found at any particular moment, were in those previous centuries - and remain now - enmeshed through kinship and material production networks in the dominant pastoralist economies of the region. Despite this, during this century, no contemporary San herders have been able to establish livestock-based domestic economies independent of Bantu pastoralists until this decade, when a few are managing to do so. None have yet been able to enter into commodity production of cattle for readily available commercial markets now dominated by Tswana and Herero producers. What are the reasons for this state of affairs?

In the prevailing paradigm of anthropology applied to the Kalahari, that of evolutionary ecology, these have been non-questions, never asked, without answers. This is because the distinction drawn by Levi-Strauss (1958) between peoples <u>prior to</u> history and those <u>in</u> history has fundamentally informed all anthropological approaches to San-speaking "foragers." Ethnographers of these peoples have assumed that they were quintessential aboriginal foragers whose way of life had changed little for millenia. Both geographic isolation and cultural conservatism were invoked to account for this static condition. It was asserted, without investigation, that neither African agropastoralists nor any other external influence had impinged significantly on their isolation until the middle third of this century. As a consequence, San were declared to be socially and culturally uninterested in and unprepared for participation in independent pastoral

economies. Oddly, at the same time, they were acknowledged to be seasoned herdsmen for others.

More than anything else, that evolutionist paradigm, with those premises, has raised the San from public obscurity; through it, the "Kalahari Bushmen" have captured the imagination of the world. So strong has been the appeal that Wobst laments with justified consternation that a "Bushman" model has come to dominate anthropological constructions not only of modern, but of prehistoric foragers as well. This, indeed, has come to pass. But the image upon which that model is itself constructed was drawn from the intersection of theories of cultural ecology and of cultural evolution where a notion was conceived about the life of hunters-in-a-world-of-hunters prior to the intervention of domesticated modes of production.

Anthropologists have projected this image ahistorically onto a present conceived to have, for Bushmen hunters (now called foragers), an essentially synchronic, shallow past. To paraphrase Cohn's words: a place has been posited where natives are authentic, untouched, and aboriginal; where it is possible to deny the central historical fact that the peoples studied are constituted in the historically significant colonial situation; where it is thought possible to affirm instead that these peoples are somehow out of time and history (Cohn 1980:199). Historians, for their part, paint a similarly synchronic image into the first chapters of their books and then insert that image incrementally - and unchanged - at points along their otherwise progressive narratives. Vansina (1985) responds eloquently to this practice: "The time should be long past that hunter-gatherers ... are seen as living witnesses to primordial conditions of life, as `roots of heaven,' .... unfortunately, this image still lingers [and] has made it almost impossible it seems to shake off the old premisses." Wolf (1983), in the same vein, massively documents the fallacy underlying any such notion of peoples without history.

My purpose here is to shake at least some of those old premises loose, if not off, from the San. The questions that opened this essay are central to a more satisfactory assessment than we now have of the proper place of "Bushmen" in the anthropological lexicon of cultural categories. More urgently, answers to these questions are essential elements in current efforts to gain equity for those of southern Africa's peoples who have been too long relegated to that subordinating category.

For these answers, we must dig into the archaeology of the Kalahari to gain a view of the precapitalist economic formations of the region and into archival records to follow the transformation of these precapitalist forms under colonial domination. In the course of this exegesis, it will be shown that peoples called "Bushmen" actively played significant roles in the economic and political history of the region; by no means were all such peoples always stockless foragers. It will also become clear that "Bushmen" is an invented category the referents and designees of which change in concert with altering regional circumstances.

Work of mine in progress (Wilmsen ms) extensively documents the evidence upon which the foregoing assertions are based; much of the following argument is also condensed from that work and from an earlier essay (Wilmsen 1983).

Passarge (1907) set the tone for ethnographic reporting of San when he divided "Das Leben der Buschmanner in fruheren Zeiten" (Bushman life in earlier times) from that "in der Jetztzeit" (in the present). His observational present was 1896-98 and featured Zhu as husbandmen of cattle and goats, associates (subordinate) of Tswana and Herero, and - in immediately preceding decades but no longer then - participants in mercantile trade, as well as foragers of wild resources. His earlier time, by which he meant the late precolonial period, was the same with husbandry, external contact, and trade subtracted while foraging was extrapolated to fill the void. Modern anthropologists - Marshall (1976), Lee (1979), Tanaka (1980), and Silberbauer (1981) - follow that precedent. They report the presence of peoples and activities extraneous to their purpose and then set them aside to be reintroduced later in the narrative, if at all, only to emphasize the distance of San from other peoples and their attendent influences.

I shall not detain readers with a descriptive reiteration of San foraging activities; anyone not familiar with these and wishing to gain such familiarity may turn to the above- mentioned ethnographies, even perhaps to Passarge for whom we need make few allowances due to the passage of time in this regard. But I will summarize, in order to emphasize, the conditions of husbandry and association that encompassed San economic and social relations at the time the observations were made upon which those modern classic ethnographies of these peoples are based. First, official Botswana veterinary service records for anthrax and bucillosis inoculation show that during the 1950s and early 1960s about 10,000 cattle were kept in the NxaiNxai-Qangwa valleys. This number fell, due to drought and outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease, to about 6,000 in the late 1960s but had rebounded by 1974 (Wilmsen 1975 documents these records). The area in which these animals were kept is about 50km x 60km, 3,000km2, a size which indicates a stocking rate of about 2 - 3 head per km2. Similar stocking rates are maintained in the rest of Ngamiland where water is obtainable, hence, where people live. Quantitative statements of this kind cannot be projected into earlier decades much less into previous centuries, but evidence to be presented later in this essay will support the proposition that significant numbers of cattle have been kept in the region for a very long time.

During the 1960s and 1970s, 99 percent of the cattle in the NxaiNxai-Qangwa area were owned by Batswana and Herero. The first accurate figures we have for Zhu stock ownership are provided by Lee (1979:411) for the period 1967-69. At this time, 27 percent of the 151 adult male Zhu in his sample acknowledged ownership of 102 head among themselves for an average of 2.5 head per owning household. Ownership of donkeys and goats was, respectively, 20 percent and 55 percent higher. Furthermore, Lee

(1979:409) tells us "that many [of these] men had owned cattle and goats in the past." In addition, every one of these men was then, or had recently been, actively engaged in the care of cattle for others (Wilmsen 1982).

Records for the other areas where San were observed at about mid-century are far less informative. Tanaka (1980:50-51) tells us that in the central Kalahari some Gwi owned goats and donkeys, but he gives no further information and seems to think that these were more-or-less whimsical acquisitions. At the same time, he finds that the Gwi are "parasitic ... on the field and dairy products of the [Ba]Kgalagadi for a good deal of their food." Silberbauer is silent on the matter, while Marshall (1976:61) dismisses it with a footnote saying that many Zhu "expressed the wish to have cattle."

With respect to association with Bantu speakers, Lee (1979: 53) again provides the only managable data; these are revealing. Of the rather stable population of about 900 persons who lived in the NxaiNxai-Qangwa area during the 1960s and 1970s, 43 percent to 49 percent were Tswana and Herero. Put another way, only slightly more than half of the inhabitants of the area were Zhu "Bushmen" during the period under consideration. We have already heard from Tanaka that Gwi rely substantially on Bakgalagadi coresidents, whatever their relative numbers which are not given, who are not otherwise mentioned. Again, Silberbauer has nothing to say. Marshall (1976:58-59) dissembles, mentioning only a few non-San, pastoralist families while citing several police actions to remove others in enforcement of imposed bureaucratic policies regarding land allocation among native groups.

Now, this brief recitation of economic holdings and group associations should give us pause. If fewer than half the inhabitants (Bantu) of an area are able to control 99 percent of the most valuable commodity (cattle) in the area and the other, proportionally greater, part of the inhabitants (San) remain dependent upon them for substantial parts of their livelihood - through employment, servitude, symbiotic exchange, "parasitism," or whatever - while investing meager resources to gain a small share in that valuable commodity and expressing a wish to increase that share but being unable to do so in significant measure, then something is going on in the environment that transcends ecology and supersedes evolution.

The structure of this complex situation lies in the historically realized and transformed social relations of production of the groups involved along with their associated means of production. To adequately define these groups and the relations among them, it is necessary to analyze them in their historic and social contexts, and further, to analyze shifts in these contexts as they altered relations among the groups. An analysis of the history of property relations and of the place of labor in the political economy of the region is the essential first step in this project.[3]

Let us, then, turn our attention to that history of property relations, first to that part revealed by archaeology. Review of the recent prehistory of the Kalahari adds significant dimensions to our understanding of the variety of circumstances in which its present inhabitants exist. Roughly 2000 years ago, Iron Age pastoralists began to occupy the Kalahari as part of the wide-ranging penetration of pastoralist economies into southern Africa. Domestic animals and grains, along with metallurgy, formed the basis of these economies, and were introduced below the Okavango-Zambezi river systems at this time.

During the first centuries A.D., the northern margin of the Kalahari was actively part of a wider sphere extending into Angola, Zaire, and Zambia, where relatively small communities of Bantu and Khoisan speakers intermingled. Economic and linguistic - and, therefore, social - transfers appear to have flown freely among those communities with the result that pastoral economies became well established in the Kalahari (Denbow and Wilmsen 1986). By A.D. 500, such economies were entrenched throughout southern Africa all the way to the Cape itself.

This Iron Age system grew rapidly during the next 500 years. In eastern Botswana, a three-tiered hierarchy of settlements developed with a few primary centers dominating surrounding secondary and tertiary sites (Denbow 1984). The pastoral economic form of this system was mature and pervasive. A measure of the size of herds that were kept is provided by kraal dung deposits which were burned and thus preserved through silicification. At the primary centers, Taukome and Toutswe, these deposits reach diameters of 100m and depths of 150cm; such deposits are also often found at tertiary sites but in much smaller size. Conversely, hunted animal remains far outnumber those of domesticates in the small locations while at the central nodes these proportions are reversed. Metal is scarce and exotic goods are absent at the smaller locations where stone tools predominate. Abundant metal tools and ornaments along with glass beads and sea shells attest to the hierarchically dominant status of the large central nodes. These beads and shells were luxury items obtained through exchange networks that reached Arab importers on the east coast of the continent. It seems evident that immigrant pastoralists quickly dominated the indigenous foraging systems of the eastern Kalahari and incorporated them hegemonically into an expanded political economy in which both hunting and herding were pursued at all hierarchical levels.

The history of pastoralism in the western sandveld Kalahari has a similar chronology although it differs in a number of significant social and economic details. The essential Iron Age elements, cattle-sheep-goat pastoralism, cultivation of grains, and metallurgy, are present here from the sixth century onward (Denbow and Wilmsen 1983). Glass beads and sea shells found at three sites extend the transcontinental trade established for the eastern region far into the west by A.D. 800; at least one site, Nqoma, seems to have been an important entrepot through which exports and imports were channelled. River mussel shells, fish

bones, and a distinctive stone material delineate the more local, intraregional trade networks between Okavango and sandveld communities. An important contrast is that these western sites do not display the complex hierarchical structure found in the east. Another is that ceramic styles are not homogeneous; variants often associated elsewhere with Khoisan and others with Bantu are found in the same sites, often in direct association. This suggests that their makers engaged in a more mutually balanced interaction than did their eastern counterparts. It appears that pastoralist penetration into the western Kalahari was on a smaller scale than in the east and that different mechanisms of political economic interaction were at work here.

The entire range of Kalahari environments was incorporated into these Early Iron Age systems, from the riverine and hardveld ecosystems far out into the sandveld (Wilmsen 1978). This is not really surprising; the region is more properly described as savannah rather than desert and provides superb pasturage if not overstocked. It should not be overlooked, moreover, in light of the importance of interregional trade, that pasturage was not the only resource sought at this time; commodities for exchange were equally important.

As trade with the east coast grew in scale, however, the nearer peoples on the Zimbabwe highlands organized trading networks to their own benefit. The routes to the ocean from the west were truncated beginning in the eleventh century by the developing trader states, Kami, Great Zimbabwe, and Mapungubwe and from then on the Kalahari was reduced to the sole status of producer in the Indian Ocean trade. Ceramic- and metal-using agropastoralist economies continued to function in the Kalahari, but now under the shadow of Zimbabwean states; a series of sites dated from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries documents this continuity into the time of recorded history.

A colonial trade boom in the nineteenth century, based on ivory, feathers, and cattle, brought a wide variety of Europeans with their quest for wealth, their goods of many kinds, and their force of arms into the region and transformed its economy and society once again. The first written records show that Europeans entered an already flourishing precolonial trade in which San were major producers. In 1850 Livingstone (1912:113, 116) recorded that a very large number of ostriches were killed annually by Bushmen who traded the feathers of these birds to the Ndebele. A few years later, Chapman (1971, I:143) wrote in his diary that Bushmen who accompanied his expeditions urged him to shoot ostriches so that they could obtain more black feathers for that trade, a request with which he readily complied, since he wanted the white feathers which then had an inflated value on the European market.

Those reports are from the eastern Kalahari. In the west, in Namibia, Galton (1953:172), also in 1850, observed the active trade among Ovambo, Herero, and San in which beads, shells, iron and copper implements, salt, cattle, and many other goods were

constantly moving from source to consumer. European items were quickly incorporated into this precolonial trade (Birmingham 1981:38). Brink had already noticed on the Orange River in 1761 the presence of Portugese glass beads transferred so far south from their Kongo-Angolan entry into Africa through the agency of San and Tswana middlemen (Mossop 1947:51). Okihiro (1976:187-189) summarizes similar networks from the east coast where Portugese had now replaced Arabs as the agents of transmission in the overseas trade.

In 1836, Alexander (1938, I:287) recorded trade in metals, ornaments, and livestock between interior peoples in central Namibia and Portugese north of the Cunene on the Angolan coast. Not long after, Oswell (1900, II:230, 245), the first Englishman along with Livingstone to reach the river systems on the northern edge of the Kalahari, reported that many people there were dressed in European cloth and clothing. In 1855, the Canadian trader, Green (1857,I:535-539), found that gunpowder was in such abundant supply in the region that it was not hoarded but traded freely among native groups. Earlier, in 1853, Andersson (1854:5, 31) published advice to traders saying that beads were so common that they had little value in the Ngami trade. By that time, Lazlo Magyar and Mambari, following ancient salt trade routes, had been active among the Angolan !Kung for two decades; we can be sure that these people relayed this trade southward to their Zhu kinsmen in Ngami-Namibia.

The scope of that involvement by San was great. Hahn gave 50 to 60 tons as his lowest estimate of copper ore produced by Bushmen at Tsumeb mines; he also remarks that these producers would allow no one else to see the diggings (Petermann's 1867:285-286). In the same report, he continues with observations of the salt trade - also controlled at the time by Bushmen - which he says was if anything more valuable than the trade in copper. The routes of this trade were probably as old as the Iron Age and had functioned in the transfer of pastoralism and metallurgy into the western Kalahari from where they splayed out northward into Angola, Zambia, and beyond, and were the avenues along which European goods had already made their way southward as far as the Orange River.

These observations by the first Europeans to enter the region offer convincing evidence that San were engaged in interregional trade before any whites arrived there. It is evident that these first Europeans penetrated an already existing trade network relaying goods between the interior and the Mozambique, Cape, Namibian, and Angolan coasts (Parsons 1977:118).

It was this long-standing trade that the emerging Tswana states attempted to control while simultaneously acquiring control over the rapidly developing European trade. In the process their suzerainty over the reduced classes, especially peoples such as San, was solidified as they tightened their grip on indigenous trade. Parsons (1977:118) summarizes early records showing that before the 1850s the Tswana hunted little of the

ivory which they sold to Europeans but bought it from Bushmen with a fraction of the non-productive goods, such as beads, they received in the trade. Tshekedi, chief of the Bangwato in 1935 testified to the London Missionary Society: "There was in those times no question of overlordship of one people over another ... at that time we had no strength by which we could force them to become our servants." The powerful new means of production, guns and horses, introduced in this trade were retained by the Tswana for themselves who were aided thereby in subjugating other peoples - principally San and Bakgalagadi - and in expropriating the surplus product of these peoples' labor for their own profit (Nangati 1982:142, 144).

No part of the region was ignored in the search for ivory. Serton (1954:133, 177) records that traders regularly visited such supposedly remote places as the NyaeNyae-Dobe area and established trading camps there. Robert Lewis, who traded in this area for three decades beginning in 1863, left his name at Lewisfontein by which Qangwa was known on maps until 1965. He and other hunter-traders as well as the Boer Dorstland Trekkers, who spent three years in the area at the end of the 1870s, are remembered vividly by current residents of the area (NxaiNxai Historical Texts). But these were all latecomers. Portugese beads are found in an archaeological component at Tsodilo where they were brought in the eighteenth-century trade along the ancient routes noted above. It is upon just this area that Marshall (1976) and Lee (1979) build their claim that San were isolated and immune from outside influence and thus retained an aboriginal foraging life.

But, far from being isolated, San were primary producers heavily involved in interregional trade. Chapman estimated that 15,000 to 20,000 pounds of ivory was exported annually from Ngami-Namibia during the 1860s. That rate of production was maintained until the 1880s. In the eastern Kalahari, the average annual production was estimated to be about 80,000 during this period (Chapman 1971, I:186, 211; Estherhuyse 1968:13; Parsons 1977:121). The numbers of elephants killed by the best white hunters are known and from these it is clear that at most only half of this annual ivory production could have been shot by Europeans; the actual proportion was almost surely much less. The remainder must have been produced by native hunters, many of whom were San. Consequently, for at least two decades these "Bushmen" hunters must have killed every year approximately 300 elephants in Ngami-Namibia and four times that many in the east in order to produce their share of the exported ivory. Their control of the copper and salt trade has already been noted. In addition, "Bushmen" produced the bulk of ostrich feathers and game skins that were exported in great quantity from the region.

The result of all this activity was that European traders were constantly in contact with the producers of sought- after items - ivory, feathers, hides, and cattle. This ivory-feather trade vanished in the 1880s when the elephants were hunted out and feathers went out of fashion in Europe. A minor economic

boom brought about by construction of Cecil Rhodes' railway from the Cape to Bulaweyo briefly stimulated an export of cattle from Angola and Ngami-Namibia in the late 1880s and early 1890s (Clarence-Smith and Moorsom 1975:374). Consequently, cattle and their accompanying cowhand jobs passed through many communities along the old trade routes across the Kalahari to the line of rail. The pastoral production upon which this export was based had already been contributing heavily to the Atlantic and Cape trade for more than half a century. Its roots lie in the later precolonial development of Iron Age pastoralism in the region to which we must now return our attention.

We may reasonably infer that large herds were kept in the western Kalahari in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because Bangaloa pastoralists are known to have been in the Lake Ngami area by 1700, and Herero may have been there as well as in the rest of the northwestern Kalahari much earlier (Campbell 1982:130-131). Dated archaeological sites in the Tsodilo Hills, at NxaiNxai, and in Namibia argue strongly that pastoralism had been continuosly a principal form of economy in the region since its introduction.

Cattle from these interior pastoralist economies began to enter the European Atlantic trade before the beginning of the nineteenth century. Alexander's report of that trade has been mentioned; in addition, in the 1790s American whalers supplied themselves on the Namibian coast and a little later one captain is recorded to have anticipated buying two or three thousand head for their hides from interior tribes (Kienetz 1977:556). Cape traders were established at Walfish Bay in 1841. During the next decade, prodigious numbers of cattle must have been obtained; at times, 350 ships with 6,000 crew are recorded to have been fed on interior beef (Kienetz 1977:557-558). During the 1860s and 1870s, 10,000 or more head were sent every year to the Cape from Ngami-Namibia alone.

The Nama chiefs, Jonker Afrikaner and Amraal Lambert, were the principal suppliers of these cattle. To obtain sufficient stock, they raided from their bases near Windhoek and Gobabis northward and eastward into Ngamiland, where their targets were mainly Herero and Tswana herds. But San were also victims. The missionary, Tindall, reported in 1843 that Bushman smallstock was taken and that Nama had been the agents of dispossession of these people (1959:34, 118). There is evidence to make us confident that this state of affairs had not always existed. Vedder records that about a hundred years earlier, San were able to confiscate Herero herds (1938:138-139). Wikar describes several cattle-keeping San along the Orange River at about that time (Mossop 1935:29-79). In 1791, Van Reenan noted that it was Nama access to European trade that turned the balance against Bergdamara, and Bushmen, and deprived them of their livestock (Mossop 1935:315).

Nevertheless, the missionary, Irle (1906:158), wrote that some Bushmen had smallstock in the 1860s, while, at the same

time, Andersson both was told of (1861:187) and saw (State Archive Service n.d.:124) Bushmen cattle in the NyaeNyae area. In the east, Livingstone often commented on Bushman livestock - cattle as well as goats - and of the ability of these people as herdsmen; by 1869, they had been entirely dispossessed (1912:65, 119; Schapera 1961:161, 241).

Insofar as its strength could sustain interregional economies, the mini-boom brought about by the construction of Rhodes' rail collapsed in 1896, coincident with the onset of rinderpest, which wiped out 75 percent of the cattle and remaining wild ungulates of southern Africa. Both the native and the European economies of the Namib-Kalahari, which had fused into an interdependent if not a unitary formation, became correspondingly moribund. As suddenly as it had been set up in the 1850s, the commercial scene dissolved in the 1890s. The Kalahari had been sucked clean of commoditizable wild animals as if by a vacuum cleaner, but it was only selectively destroyed and people could manage reasonably well on the bushman diet of nuts and berries left to them, as San are recorded by anthropologists to have done in this century.

What could not be overcome was the fact that they now had relatively little to offer in trade and less with which to buy from traders. The surplus native product of the region had been exhausted, and nothing had been introduced to replace it. Neither the economy nor the material requirements of the people were as they had been a century before. Except for a few cattlepost jobs, San labor - just recently valued highly if rewarded lowly - had become virtually worthless in a now non-existent market.

It was not only the conditions of production that changed during the nineteenth century period of mercantile capitalism. The social relations of labor were also transformed. The means by which this was accomplished was instituted by Kgari, chief of the Bangwato in about 1826, who is credited with rationalizing the socio-economic stratification incipiently present in Ngwato political structure. He did this in order to bring more firmly under his control the spectacularly increased numbers of people subject to him and, more to the point, their equally spectacularly increased productive potential. This system, the <u>kgamelo</u> (milk jug) system, greatly enhanced the class ranking inherent in Tswana social structure and increased the power of local elites by giving them direct economic and administrative control over the lower classes in their assigned sphere of responsibility. In 1847, this system was instituted by Batawana in Ngamiland.

Cattle were crucial in this system because they were lent out in patronage by elites to poorer clients under obligatory conditions, called <u>mafisa</u>, in which a client's assets were mortgaged against the safety of his patron's property and of his support of the patron's interests. It was clearly to the advantage of administrators to gain control of all cattle in their districts, for they then held not only the intrinsic value of the animals but also their far higher mortgage value by means of

which the allegiance of subordinates was assured (Parsons 1974:648).

Those San and other non-Tswana who owned cattle were quickly dispossessed of their herds in this process, and many were reduced to landless servant status (Schapera 1970:89; Parsons 1974:648; Okihiro 1977:135-137). This latter group was transformed into an underclass called malata (serf) in Sengwato and batlhanka (servant) in Setawana. Although most San were ultimately disenfranchized in this manner, a substantial number were incorporated into Tswana polities (Ncgoncgo 1982:29). It was that San majority relegated to the status of serf that later, in the playing out of the colonial process, became pauperized "Bushmen."

A different process unfolded in the west. There, Nama commandos continued to raid pretty much at will, but after quickly extracting the current crop of ivory and animals from an area, they withdrew to their home bases (Lau 1982). It was only at those bases that Nama exercised anything like political control over other peoples. It is, fortunately, beyond the scope of this essay to attempt to analyze why the course of history was different here than in the east. But Okihiro's observation is cogent: European incursions, from an early moment, destroyed local polities and substituted raiding rather than trading as the dominant form of economic activity (Okihiro 1977:189). As Ncgoncgo remarks, raiding became necessary for survival (1982:166). Those who were raided, as those enserfed, were placed in double jeopardy. Not only was the surplus product of their labor expropriated, but their access to newly acquired necessities - both outlets for their products (their only means of accumulating exchange value) and sources of supply for their import needs - was channelled through these same dominant exploitative powers. Their growing dependence on these powers was assured.

With the collapse of hunting, a hunter's life was no longer worth as much as it had been - not to himself, now left with only a slim subsistence supplement, nor to centers of accumulation, where emphasis shifted from quick tributary extraction to longer-term sustained production. In practical terms, this meant that cattle were now unchallenged by ivory as the central source of wealth in the Kalahari region.

The kgamelo system was well suited to the tributary extraction of capital value when, as in hunting, the means of production remained largely with subordinated ranks. In herding, however, the means of production remained in the hands of herd owners, even of absentee owners. In 1875, Khama, chief of the Bangwato, saw this and moved to bring the new relations of production under his direct control (Parsons 1974:653). He restructured the kgamelo system to bring about in effect the capitalization of labor and land. Part of his reform reassigned cattle of the tribal herd to commoners and vassals, thus bypassing the lower elite administrators and centralizing authority more firmly in the chief.

Khama also nominally freed serfs, ostensibly giving them the right to dispose of their labor in their own interests. This was illusory. In fact, the conditions in which serfs found themselves had deteriorated. In the economic reality of the time, there were very limited opportunities for freed serf labor. As primary producers during the years of mercantile hunting, hunters had retained some bargaining power in the disposal of their product. This power had declined as state capital consolidated its strength and hunting became less remunerative. Now, as obligatory herders, former hunters were completely at the mercy of their masters.

A simple imperative difference between forces of production of ivory and of beef underlies that condition: it requires fewer herders to manage 100 cattle than it does hunters to kill one elephant. Consequently, a cattle owner needs to engage fewer herders than must a merchant hunter, reducing thereby the lateral spread of economic opportunities. The inequalities inherent in the conversion for the underclass whose labor formerly secured the ivory and then secured the herds is readily apparent. There were substantially fewer places for herders than there had been for hunters, even in the expanding cattle economy. With few exceptions, all San who had not been absorbed as Tswana - and thus were no longer Bushmen - were reduced to the status of a propertyless class.

It is also readily apparent why members of that underclass, who were mainly San, should compete for the few available positions. The system had quite suddenly alienated San labor from the land more thoroughly than had been possible before and had, thereby, created a captive surplus labor pool with essentially only a single outlet. Those San who could capture a cattlepost position obtained a measure of security in the system - at the bottom of the heap, but in it. Those whose labor was not immediately needed (and it must be noted that these were not only San) were now without direct means to participate in regional economies.

Some turned to raiding. Raiding in the nineteenth century was a response to unequal trade relations and was a means to transfer exchange value in a distorted market system. Successful raiders could expect a viable, if unfair, return for their efforts. Now, in the first decades of the twentieth century, there was no longer raiding of large herds for value but only small scale stock theft for immediate meals. The transition was brought about by the utter exclusion of the reduced classes from legitimate economic channels.

Others were relegated to the more inaccessible and difficult zones of the Kalahari, where they fell deeper and deeper into foraging, which had become a condition of poverty in the overall structure of society. They thus became a secondary labor pool, maintained at no expense to the controlling classes, who could draw upon this underclass at will to free their own members for

cash-earning opportunities, education, and "the lifestyle of the `new elite' that spanned Southern Africa" (Parsons 1977:136).

In his investigation of the servile conditions under which San lived in Botswana in the 1930s, Tagart (1933:7) saw the core of the matter clearly: "The fact is that there is little opportunity for any natives to obtain paid employment ... in the protectorate.... this has been the most potent factor in perpetuating the servile condition of the Masarwa, and remains the greatest obstacle in the way of their emancipation .... and until greater opportunity for independent employment presents itself, it is difficult to see how the Masarwa can be helped to emerge from the condition of apathy and dependence into which they have lapsed."

The escape valve from empty local markets for Tswana labor was migration to South Africa, principally to the mines. Schapera (1947:38-39) estimated that, in 1938-40, 28 percent of all adult male Batswana were away on migrant labor; that proportion rose to 46 percent during World War II when about 10,000 men from the Protectorate served in the British army. In contrast, only 42 San men from eastern Botswana were registered as being on the mines in 1936 (Botswana National Archives 1938). Tswana men would have been unable to avail themselves of migrant employment without a supplementary labor pool from which to replace absent labor at cattleposts and fields. The conditions of migratory work made it necessary for Tswana laborers to retain an agropastoral base at their villages where their families remained and the costs of social production were met (Parson 1981:240). San, prevented from going to the mines in proportionate numbers, supplied the bulk of the required labor supplement.

The foraging that "Bushmen" were now forced to practice was subsistence foraging, no longer the fully formed pastoro-foraging it had been in the early 1800s. Still less was it the prepastoral foraging of earlier millenia, which this twentieth century form resembled only in the skills and techniques required to extract resources from the environment. It was now a partial economic formation incapable of supplying all the needs of those in it. The only means to obtain those unrequited needs were embedded in the social relations of production dominated by pastoralists who exercised exclusive political and social control over all levels of the structure.

Those doubly dispossessed "Bushmen," foraging unseen in the veld, were entirely dependent on their kin at the cattleposts to pass on to them what snippits they might of their acquired needs: tobacco, coffee/tea, sugar, cloth, metal implements and utensils; the list is long. Those cattlepost kin were themselves entirely dependent on their pastoral masters. Both forms of "Bushmen," those who foraged and those who herded, had been alienated from managing property in their own interests. The end result of this colonial process made San peoples appear to be traditionally landless and created the squatter communities - Tanaka's parasites - that are mentioned, only to be discounted as aberrant, in every ethnography of these peoples.

NOTES

1. The term, Bushman, has been derogatory since its introduction in the seventeenth century; I use it in quotation marks in irony to emphasize its inappropriateness. The term, San, now in vogue does not alter the referent because the peoples so labelled are spoken of in terms indistinguishable from those employed earlier when those peoples were called Bushmen. I use San when I wish to designate a large, rather loosely defined set of peoples who speak any Khoisan language except Nama. Whenever possible, I use the terms which particular groups apply to themselves.

2. Jack Parson first posed this question to me in this form and started thereby the thinking that led to this paper; I am happy to acknowledge this debt to so fine a scholar.

3. The following analysis is drawn from three larger works of mine; a report to the National Migration Study of Botswana, a paper, "Those Who Have Each Other," which will appear in a book I am editing, We Are Here: Land Tenure and Social History of Foragers, and the second chapter of Land Filled with Flies: A Political Economy of Kalahari Foraging. Unless otherwise cited, the material presented in the remainder of this essay is from those works.

REFERENCES

Alexander, J.
1967 An Expedition of Discovery into the Interior of Africa, Through the Hitherto Undescribed Countries of the Great Namaquas, Boschmans, and the Hill Damaras. Cape Town, Struik. Facsimile reprint of 1838 original.

Andersson, C.
1861 The Okavango River: A Narrative of Travel, Exploration, and Adventure. New York.

Birmingham, D.
1981 Central Africa to 1870. Cambridge.

Botswana National Archives
1938 S360/1 Joyce, Marsarwa Report.

Campbell, A.
1982 Notes on the Prehistoric Background to 1840, pp. 13-22, in Hitchcock and Smith.

Chapman, J.
1971 Travels in the Interior of Africa, 1849-1863, Cape Town.

Clarence-Smith, W. and R. Moorsom
1975 Underdevelopment and Class Formation in Ovamboland 1845-1915." Journal of African History, 16: 365-381.

Cohn, B.
1980 History and Anthropology: The State of Play. Comparative Studies in Society and History 22:198-221.

Denbow, J.
1984 Prehistoric Herders and Foragers of the Kalahari: The Evidence for 1500 Years of Interaction, pp. 175-194, in Schrire.

Denbow, J. and Wilmsen, E.
1983 Iron Age Pastoralist Settlements in Botswana. South African Journal of Science 79:405-408.

1986 A Revised Prehistory of Pastoralism in Southern Africa.

Esterhuyse, J.
1968 South West Africa, 1880-1894: The Establishment of German Authority in South West Africa, Cape Town.

Galton, F.
1835 The Narrative of an Explorer in Tropical South Africa, London.

Green, F.
1857 Narratives of an Expedition to the Northwest of Lake Ngami, Extending to the Capital of Debabe's Territory, via Souka River, Hitherto an Unexplored Portion of Africa" Eastern Province Monthly Magazine 1:535-539.

Irle, J.
1906 Die Herero: ein Beitrag zur Landes-, Volks-, & Missions kunde, Gutesloh.

Kienetz, A.
1977 The Key Role of the Orlam Migrations in the Early Europeanization of South-West Africa (Namibia), The International Journal of African Historical Studies 10:553-572.

Lau, B.
1982 The Emergence of Kommando Politics in Namaland, Southern Namibia:1800-1870," M.A. thesis, University of Cape Town.

Lee, R.
1979 The !Kung San: Men, Women, and Work in a Foraging Society, Harvard.

Levi-Strauss, C.
1958 Structural Anthropology. Basic Books.

Livingstone, D.
1912 Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa, London. Originally published in 1857.

London Missionary Society
1935 Report of an Enquiry by the South Africa District Committee, Alice.

Marshall, L.
1976 The !Kung of NyaeNyae, Harvard.

Mossop, E. (ed.)
1935 The Journal of Hendrik Jakob Wikar (1779), English translation by A. van der Horst), and The Journals of Jacobus Coetse Janz (1760) and Willem van Reenan (1791), Cape Town.

Nangati, F.
1982 Early Capitalist Penetration: The Impact of Precolonial Trade in Kweneng (1840-1876), pp. 140-147, in Hitchcock and Smith.

Ncgoncgo, L.
1982 Impact of the Difaqane on Tswana states, pp. 161-171, in Hitchcock and Smith.

Okihiro, G.
1976 Hunters, Herders, Cultivators, and Traders: Interaction and Change in the Kalagadi, Nineteenth Century, Ph.D. thesis, UCLA.

Oswell, W.
1900 William Cotton Oswell, London.

Parson, J.
1981 Cattle, Class, and State in Rural Botswana. Journal of Southern African Studies 7:236-255.

Parsons, N.
1974a The Economic History of Khama's Country in Southern Africa, African Social Research 18:643-675.

1977 The Economic History of Khama's Country in Botswana, 1844-1930, pp. 113-143, in Palmer and Parsons.

Passarge, S.
1907 Die Buschmanner der Kalahari, Berlin.

Petermann's Geographische Mitteilungen
1867b Neueste Deutsche Forschungen in Sud-Afrika: von Karl Mauch, Hugo Hahn und Richard Brenner, 1866 und 1867, 8:281-298.

Schapera, I.
1947 Migrant Labour and Tribal Life, Oxford.

1970 Tribal Innovators, London.

Schapera, I. (ed.)
1961 David Livingstone's Missionary Correspondence, Berkeley.

Serton, P. (ed.)
1954 The Narrative and Journal of Gerald McKiernan in South West Africa, 1874-1879), Cape Town.

Silberbauer, G.
1981 Hunter and Habitat in the Central Kalahari Desert, Cambridge.

State Archive Service, Windhoek
n.d. D2.8-A30, "The Andersson Papers," microfilm A(83)1.

Tagart, E.
1933 Report on the Conditions Existing Among the Masarwa. Government Printer, Pretoria.

Tanaka, J.
1980 The San: Hunter-gatherers of the Kalahari, A Study in Ecological Anthropology, Tokyo.

Tindall, B.
1959 The Journal of Joseph Tindall, Missionary in South West Africa. The Van Riebeck Society. no.40.

Vansina, J.
1985 Hunter-gatherers of Equatorial Africa in Historical Perspective, in Rottland and Vossen.

Vedder, H.
1938 South West Africa in Early Times: Being the Story of South West Africa Up to the Time of Maharero's Death in 1890, London.

Wilmsen, E.
1978 Prehistoric and Historic Antecedents of an Ngamiland Community, Botswana Notes and Records 10:5-18.

1982 Migration Patterns of Remote Area Dwellers, in C. Kerven (ed.), pp. 237-376, Migration in Botswana: Patterns, Causes, and Consequences. Central Statistics Office, Gaborone.

1983 The Ecology of Illusion: Anthropological Foraging in the Kalahari, Reviews in Anthropology 10:9-20.

i.p. Those Who Have Each Other: Land Tenure of Kalahari Foragers, in E. Wilmsen (ed.), We Are Here: Social History and Politics of Forager Land Rights.

ms Land Filled with Flies: A Political Economy of Kalahari Foraging.

Wolf, E.
1983 Europe and the Peoples Without History.