Class, Culture and Recognition: San Farm Workers and Indigenous Identities[1]

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Abstract: This paper examines the processes of identity formation among contemporary Namibian San. I survey the topic from two perspectives. First, I consider features of the political economic and cultural context that shape the recognition and misrecognition of the San by others; second, I argue that the situation of San generational farm workers in the Omaheke Region present important challenges to received definitions of "class," "culture," "authenticity," and "autonomy," and therefore highlight critical limitations to the fields of recognition for indigenous identities in southern Africa.

Keywords: San, Namibia, rights, class, identity, recognition

Résumé : Cet article examine le processus de formation de l'identité chez les San de Namibie. J'analyse ce phénomène selon deux perspectives. D'abord, je relève les caractéristiques des contextes politiques, économiques et culturels qui permettent que les San soient ou non reconnus par les autres. Ensuite, je montre que la situation des fermiers héréditaires san dans la région Omaheke présente des difficultés sérieuses par rapport aux définitions courantes de «classe», «culture», «authenticité» et «autonomie», et donc fait ressortir des lacunes importantes dans le domaine de la reconnaissance des identités autochtones en Afrique du Sud.

Mots-clés : San, Namibia, droits, classe, identité, reconnaissance

Introduction

Over 30 years ago ethnographic research on the San challenged deeply held beliefs about "human nature." The work of Richard Lee, and other Kalahari researchers influenced by Lee, was especially important because it debunked Hobbesian stereotypes about "primitive people" that served to justify race, class and gender inequalities, both within Western societies and in colonial contexts. Today, the challenges presented by the San to western philosophical and political presuppositions go beyond exploding myths and stereotypes. Their current activism as indigenous peoples and their current engagement in identity politics requires activists and academics to rethink received definitions of "culture," "class," "autonomy," and "authenticity."

Meanwhile anthropology, and Kalahari hunter-gatherer studies in particular, has undergone a philosophical shift away from trying to uncover a universal human nature to examining what goes into the local production of distinct identities. The Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor highlights the distinction between "human nature" and "identity" in the following way:

> Herder put forward the idea that each of us has an original way of being human...This idea has burrowed very deep into modern consciousness...There is a certain way of being human that is *my* way...this notion gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life; I miss what being human is for *me*. (1994: 30)

Two key presuppositions provide the basis for contemporary identity politics. First, identity is predicated on what Taylor calls "the ideal of authenticity"; that is, an "authentic" identity cannot be imposed, but is something that only autonomous agents can articulate and define for themselves (Taylor, 1994: 31; see also Hall, 1997a; 1997b). This ideal sets the standard for cultural authenticity as well: "Just like individuals, a *Volk* should

be true to itself, that is, its own culture" (Taylor, ibid). The second presupposition is that identity requires recognition. As Taylor notes: "[O]ur identity is partly shaped by recognition or by its absence...Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (1994: 25).

In this paper I address these two theses—that identities rest on an "ideal of authenticity," and that identities require recognition—in light of the situation of the farm San in the Omaheke Region of Namibia. I first examine some of the ideological causes, and material consequences of misrecognition. I then outline how current San struggles for political recognition reveal important assumptions surrounding the terms "authenticity" and "the invention of tradition." Finally, I examine expressions of identity among the San in the Omaheke, a context in which the idea of San culture (as an autonomous creation) is in tension with their highly dependent underclass status. This is a tension which expressed itself in the field of hunter gatherer studies as the central question of the Great Kalahari Debate: that is, should the San be seen as creations or as casualties of colonization and global capitalism? (see Gordon and Spiegel, 1993: 89).

Invisible and Indigenous Identities

Disappearing Bushmen

When I first arrived in Namibia, a researcher with the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation who had grown up in the Omaheke informed me that there were no Bushmen left in the region—they had disappeared years ago. It turned out that Bushmen were conspicuously present in the Omaheke, and that what the NBC researcher had meant to say was that there were no *real* or *authentic* Bushmen left in the region. This was a widespread and historically deep attitude among non-San in Namibia.

The "real" Bushmen have disappeared, first, through intermarriage with other ethnic groups. A white resident of Gobabis told me: "There are no pure Bushmen left anymore. They've been intermarrying with other ethnic groups far too long." Boldly tying group authenticity directly to its male members, he explained: "Real Bushmen have semi-erections all the time." More importantly, however, the San have "disappeared" because they have been forced to abandon their traditional hunting and gathering lifestyle. Once they become incorporated into a modern political economy and state system, they cease to be "authentic" Bushmen. This view is not confined to Namibia. A missionary in Ghanzi, Botswana, told me: "Once they get an education, they are no longer Bushmen...when they go to look for work they are Basarwa."[2]

I initially treated stories about disappearing Bushmen as ill-informed stereotypes that contributed to the general neglect of the San by the state. But the more often I heard such stories, the more I was forced to acknowledge a deeper problem, and one that bore on larger issues of identity politics. During the first year of my field work (1996), the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) was established to assist the San in their claims for rights as indigenous peoples in national and international forums. It suddenly began to matter a great deal whether the underclass of farm labourers I studied in the Omaheke were "real" Bushmen. The class status of the Omaheke San—and doubts about cultural authenticity engendered by that status—was becoming increasingly linked to their prospects for political empowerment, and to the form such empowerment might eventually take.

Exclusion and Exploitation

To understand how the Omaheke San became invisible, we need to take a brief glance back. Two very different historical trajectories of colonial rule and identity formation were followed in the case of the Namibian San. For those San living in what is now the Otjozondjupa Region, colonial rule, and later apartheid, took the form of geographical, economic and political segregation and containment on reserves and an ethnic homeland (Bushmanland), where they were able to maintain a foraging lifestyle until fairly recently. But other groups—such as the Omaheke San—experienced colonial rule and apartheid as a process of complete land dispossession and eventual incorporation into the lowest stratum of a racialized and ethnically hierarchical class system. These two historical trajectories were reflected by the colonial distinction between the "wild" hunting and gathering Bushmen, and the "tame" farm labouring Bushmen.

The distinction between "wild" and "tame" Bushmen was never part of an internally coherent ideological scheme. But it did provide opportunistic justifications for exploitative labour relations—justifications that are echoed by the Omaheke farmers today. For example, many farmers still do not see their San employees as workers (which, since independence, would imply rights to certain standards of housing and remuneration); the Bushmen are still considered "wild" enough to have no need for a living wage or for decent housing (see also Suzman, 2000; Sylvain, 1997; 1999).

But, while their inherent "wildness" excludes them from cash transactions and state politics, the loss of their foraging lifestyle prevents their recognition as "real" Bushmen. Too conspicuously Bushmen for participation in the "modern" world, but too obviously farm labourers to claim an "authentic" Bushman identity, the Omaheke San have fallen from sight between our categories of class and culture.

Three connected assumptions in popular discourse influence how Bushmen identity is recognized (or misrecognized): first, Bushman identity is pegged to a unique relationship with the land;[3] second, this relationship is crucial to a pre-modern lifestyle and identity; and third, class relationships—by alienating the San from their land and incorporating them into "modern" social relationships—dissolves their cultural identity. As the San struggle for recognition by participating in international forums, we should ask whether, and to what extent, the prospects for recognition of indigenous peoples in southern Africa is tied to these neo-colonial assumptions about racial "Others."

Two main goals of the international indigenous peoples' movement are to secure land rights and to achieve local self-determination.[4] San struggles around these issues have so far been impressive. For example, the ≠Khomani San in South Africa won an important land claim victory in 1999 and, in 1998, the Ju/'hoansi in the north of Namibia were granted rights to what is now the Nyae Nyae Conservancy (Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Sothern Africa, 1998). Even in cases where the San have not yet been successful in their struggles over land rights—such as in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve—connections with the global indigenous movement and broader NGO networks have helped lend international support to their cause. Nonetheless, some aspects of international discourse on indigenous identity resonate uncomfortably close to the three assumptions I outlined above.

First, much of the rhetoric surrounding land rights invokes the ontological premise that what *distinguishes* indigenous peoples from the masses of the world's impoverished marginalized minorities is a unique (often spiritual) relationship with the land. For example, in a speech celebrating the ≠Khomani victory, the South African Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs (Hon. Derek Hanekom) stated: "We are here celebrating more than just the settlement of a land claim: we are here celebrating the rebirth of the ≠Khomani nation" (cited in Brörmann, 1999: 43). The ≠Khomani San's lawyer (Mr. Chennells) told the *Globe and Mail* that "a return to their land will give them back their identity" (Saturday March 20, 1999). However, if the formerly landless ≠Khomani nation is being "reborn," if their cultural identity is being "given back," then to whom were land rights given, if not the cultural community of the ≠Khomani San? This conceptual inconsistency provides as much room for the denial of rights to land and political representation as it does for the recognition of these rights.

Second, as Will Kymlicka (1999) points out, legal distinctions between indigenous peoples and stateless nations (or "national minorities") rest on the notion that indigenous peoples are defined by radical "Otherness." New international norms regarding the status of indigenous peoples are based on the belief that

> Indigenous peoples do not just constitute distinct cultures, but...entirely different forms of culture...rooted in a pre-modern way of life that needs protecting from the forces of modernization.... (Kymlicka, 1999: 289)

The third (and related) assumption is found in the exclusive nature of the distinction between culture and class. For example, Anti-Slavery International and the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs describes a consequence of slavery and other forms of unfree labour as the "loss of cultural and political identity as Peoples" (1997: 19).

Each of these three assumptions magnifies the distinction between indigenous peoples and impoverished minorities. This is worrisome for two reasons: first, it effectively isolates indigenous peoples' issues from class issues, making the two mutually exclusive concerns; and secondly, by essentializing the identities of indigenous peoples it risks "deculturating" those indigenous people who were dispossessed of their land by colonization. Much like the popular discourse on the "disappearing Bushmen," international discourse on indigenism risks defining those San who happen also to be an underclass as casualties of colonization and capitalism.

Rights and Recognition

The Invention of Tradition and Traditional Authorities

An alternative to defining the farm San as casualties of colonization and capitalism is to describe them as creations of these same processes, which is the approach that Kalahari "revisionists" adopted (see Wilmsen, 1989; Wilmsen and Denbow, 1990). The revisionists' "invention of tradition" approach appears, superficially at least, to recommend itself in cases where the San live in conditions of extreme dependency and are subject to the

stereotypes that more powerful groups impose on them. But despite the commendable historicism of the revisionists' approach, they remain wedded to a deeply essentialist view of ethnic identity: their claim is that if we do not find the Bushmen of "traditionalist" ethnography, but instead find slaves, serfs, or rural proletarians, then, first, the category "Bushmen" is merely a creation of capitalism and colonization and, second, if the category is "created" or "invented," then it is a Western *fiction*. As Robert Gordon says, in *The Bushman Myth*:

> The term Bushman is thus a "lumpen" category into which all those who failed to conform or acquiesce were dumped. It is not an ethnic group but a sociopolitical category derived from a wider setting. (1992: 6)

Here the implication is that if an identity has been constructed—if it is a product of history—it must be fictitious (or in Gordon's words "a myth"). Either ethnicity and culture are primordial, ontological categories, or they are nothing at all. A second problem with the revisionists' use of the "invention of tradition" approach—one that has been emphasized in Richard Lee's work—is that it attributes too much power to "the system" (see Lee, 1992; Solway and Lee, 1990). This perspective obscures San agency in the dynamic relationships between the San and their significant "Others," whether those Others are the agents of colonialism, capitalism, or newly independent governments.

After the Namibian government passed the Traditional Authorities Act in 1995 (amended 1997), San groups in Namibia began petitioning for government recognition for their community leaders (see Felton, 2000).[5] Government recognition of community leaders may mean a seat on the Council of Traditional Leaders, which would give the San a voice in discussions about land reform (Felton, 2000: 5). San struggles for recognition under this Act are shaped by the three assumptions outlined above: that is, Bushmen identity is pegged to the land, it is premodern, and it is incompatible with class relations. At the same time, however, their struggles for political recognition are also shaped by assumptions surrounding the term "invented": that is, invented traditions are "made up" and "fictitious." I will address each assumption in turn.

First, the obstacles some San communities have confronted are associated with making landedness a precondition for recognition. The Traditional Authorities Act defines a "traditional community" as (*inter alia*) one "inhabiting a common communal area" (i.e., living in a former homeland). According to this definition, those San who live as a farm labouring underclass on land owned by others do not qualify as a "traditional community," and so have been unable to gain official recognition. However, the minority of San who retained at least *de facto* land rights (that is, those most clearly "tribalized" by colonial rule and put into a homeland) are also those who are most unproblematically entitled to political recognition.

Second, the recognition of San traditional leaders is also hindered by a static definition of "pre-modern" and "primitive" San culture. A common view holds that the San traditionally lived in foraging band societies, and so did not own land, nor did they have formal leadership structures (Felton, 2000: 6).[6] Introducing leadership structures and modern property relations would compromise their cultural authenticity. Finally, San struggles for political recognition under the Traditional Authorities Act are shaped by tensions between class status and cultural identity. Silke Felton notes that the San are generally regarded as "different" by other ethnic groups, but they "are not usually credited with characteristics of distinct tribes"; instead, they are seen by others "as a socially inferior, mainly cattleless *class*" (2000: 6, emphasis mine). The implication of this attitude is that the San are more appropriately placed under the jurisdiction of the Bantu-speaking Traditional Authority for the area in which San "serfs" are found.

In light of static definitions of "authentic" Bushmen identity—as inherently premodern and uncontaminated by class—San struggles for recognition are troubled by the question whether "...traditional leadership [is being] copied or 'invented'?" (Felton, 2000: 4). Where continuity with the past is taken as the standard for measuring cultural authenticity, any form of activism that appears to involve "inventing" becomes questionable, because "invented" is taken to mean "fictitious," "made up," and therefore "inauthentic" (Lee, 1992: 36; Li, 2000: 150; Linnekin, 1991; Solway and Lee, 1990: 110). The assumptions underlying common conceptions of "authentic" and "invented" put pressure on indigenous peoples, in particular the San who are still struggling for recognition, to conform to what are often stereotypical definitions of their cultural identity.

The Ideal of Authenticity and the Problem of Autonomy

Since the "invention of tradition" approach to ethnic identity is often seen to undermine the claims to cultural authenticity of indigenous peoples, some have suggested that promoting an essentialized identity is a politically effective strategy for indigenous peoples to adopt (see,

for example, Lattas, 1993). However, strategic essentialism can also leave the San open to accusations that their own expressions of identity are merely opportunistic, and therefore "inauthentic" (Li, 2000: 151). Furthermore, strategic essentialism may not help us avoid the problem of misrecognition. The case of the ≠Khomani San at the Kagga Kamma Bushman ecotourism scheme provides an important lesson here.

Public reaction to Kagga Kamma invoked rhetoric that contrasts "authentic primitives" with a "detribalized" underclass. One letter to the South African newspaper, the *Argus*, expressed the hope that "the local authorities in Ceres will not allow [...] these happy child-like people [...] to be used for 'exhibition' purposes" (cited in White, 1995: 16). Another letter claimed:

> There are in fact no Bushmen today who still live in the traditional way as hunter-gatherers...Dressed in rags and on the edge of starvation, [the little people at Kagga Kamma] were happy to accept the chance *to act like Bushmen.* (cited in White, 1995: 16, emphasis mine)

The distinction between "authentic," happy "child-like" Bushmen and impoverished people who merely *act like* Bushmen is important for the following reasons: first, the stereotype of "happy child-like Bushmen" provides a common justification for denying the San the status of modern citizens and for their continued economic exploitation as an underclass; second, if cultural rights are meant to redress historical injustices and inequalities, and not merely create a space for the preservation of fossilized cultures, then it is counter-productive to deny cultural identity to those people most in need of economic and social justice.[7]

As public response to the Kagga Kamma ecotourism project and the case of the Traditional Authorities Act in Namibia both indicate, the San are struggling for rights on a very narrow and contradictory field of recognition: they may be denied rights as an ethnic group on the grounds that their underclass status dissolves their cultural authenticity; and they may be denied rights as modern citizens on the grounds that their "authentic" cultural identity is defined by premodern, prepolitical primitivism (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999; Garland, 1999).

The assumptions about "cultural authenticity" and "invented traditions" make an invented, but authentic culture a contradiction in terms, equivalent to a fictional, but real culture. They leave no room to acknowledge San agency in the creation ("invention") of their own identity. Solway and Lee have convincingly argued that "foragers can be autonomous without being isolated and engaged without being incorporated" (1990: 110). We can take this important point about autonomy further, and apply it to the case of the farm San to challenge the view that underclass status (as a condition of dependency) is incompatible with a cultural identity (as an autonomous creation). Autonomy is never perfect and absolute—it is always partial, and is usually negotiated and compromised, without being altogether lost. My own research found that the Omaheke farm San, despite their conditions of dependency, still exercise considerable autonomy in the creation of their own cultural identity—they have a hand in the invention of their own traditions. If we want to find the "authentic" San, we must look to the world the San made for themselves, and not let our search be hobbled by an overdrawn contrast between class and culture.

Class versus Culture

Colonization and Class Formation

In the Omaheke Region, class relations both shape and are shaped by local cultural systems. Afrikaner settlers did not introduce an acultural global economy into the Omaheke when they established their cattle ranches, but brought with them their own culturally unique method of organizing the Omaheke political economy. Since the system of farm government in the Omaheke enjoyed (and still enjoys) considerable autonomy from state interference, the settlers were able to give expression to their culturally distinctive views of race, class and gender. A central feature of this cultural political economy is the principle of farm government known as *baasskap*, which organizes race, gender and class relations according to the model of an extended patriarchal family (see Sylvain, 2001). In the Omaheke, the settlers' complex and contradictory racial mythology of the "Bushman" relegates the San to the bottom rung in an ethnic labour heirarchy where, under the *baasskap* system of family and farm government, the San are placed in the position of perpetual childhood. ("I am the Papa," an Afrikaner farmer will say of "his Bushmen," even if "his" Bushmen labourers literally helped to raise him from childhood on his father's farm.)

In the Omaheke, the San are subject to powerful stereotypes that shape their material conditions and their cultural context. Given the farmers' economic dominance and the hegemonic status their world view enjoys, we might expect to find that the cultural identity of the San has been imposed—that is, that they have come to understand themselves according to the farm-

ers' terms (see, for example, Suzman, 2000). But this view of San cultural identity is far too simplistic.

Cultural Identity and Class Consciousness

The Omaheke San do have a cultural identity, and it is one which they have forged for themselves in relation to and in opposition to the definitions the farmers' try to impose upon them. Their culturally unique ways of coping with and resisting class exploitation are an essential part of what it means for them to be San today. I will offer a few examples to illustrate the nature of the dynamic culture the Omaheke San have created for themselves.

The most significant challenge to the Afrikaners' paternalistic ideology and patriarchal "family-based" farm government is the vitality and adaptability of the San's own kinship ties. The San kinship system I encountered on the farms was remarkably similar to those described by Lee (1986; 1993) and Marshall (1976) among the foraging San in Dobe and Nyae Nyae, but with a few features that reflect their class situation.[8] In the past, farmers gave San servants European names.[9] Over the years, the San appropriated these Afrikaner names and assimilated them into their own naming system so that specific "Afrikaans names" are now linked with specific San names. Thus, if a child is named after a grandmother who has the San name "N≠isa" and the Afrikaans name "Anna," then that child will also be called N≠isa-Anna. The San take their naming system very much to heart and get quite upset when, as sometimes happens, a farmer presumes to give a San child an "Afrikaans" name. They get upset for good reason: a name also marks a location in a kinship system. Their kinship system is crucial to their existence as a community, and to their sense of who they are as a "people" (*nasie*). Kinship provides the basis for ordering a whole world of social interaction that is not directly under the farmer's control.

Beyond providing the basis for ordering social relationships, kinship ties, together with their very strong sharing ethos, also forms the infrastructure connecting the widely scattered farm San community and enabling elaborate systems of mutual support and assistance. The San confront their conditions of dependency and exploitation by mobilizing their kinship system to provide a social safety-net that helps them to cope with scarce resources, unemployment and "homelessness" (Sylvain, 1999; 1997). This social infrastructure is especially important as men travel great distances from farm to farm seeking work, and for San living in conditions of extreme marginalization far from geneological kin. In such cases, non-kin who have the same name will assume the kin relations of their namesakes, "making family," and thus form bonds of mutual assistance and support.

Despite the fact that the Omaheke San live in conditions of extreme poverty, their cultural resources provide for more than just bare survival; they also provide a sense of identity and unity. San expressive culture in the Omaheke reflects both a cultural identity and a class consciousness. For example, San healers ritualistically incorporate money into their healing ceremonies (trance dances), which are now often conducted in order to combat the psychological distress of poverty, exploitation and alcoholism. The healers, who are also known for their ability to transform themselves into "dangerous" animals (lions, leopards, etc.) now purport to use this power to gain advantages in stock theft as well as hunting. Their menstrual (Besu) ceremony includes some recently invented symbols, such as dressing the initiate in the garb of a Herero woman—a symbol of higher class status—to signal her "upward" transition to "womanhood." Today the menstrual ceremony marking the transition to "womanhood" means not only that the young initiate is marriageable and ready for domestic duties, but also that she is ready for domestic service in white households.[10]

I can here only hint at the dynamic culture that the San have made for themselves in the Omaheke. But I suggest that what a closer examination will show is that, in the Omaheke, class and culture are mutually constituting: the unique culture of the Omaheke San would not exist as it does today if it were not for their class experiences; and the class system in the Omaheke would not exist as it does today if not for the culturally unique responses and modes of resistance on the part of the San people themselves.[11]

Conclusion

The linguistically and culturally diverse San groups throughout southern Africa are only now building the institutional infrastructure necessary for gaining rights and recognition. The question of whether or not the San are merely *creating* a "distinct identity" or "traditions" will nag us only so long as we assume that whatever is forged by historical processes and political economy cannot be a *real* cultural identity. Current San activism self-consciously reflects their colonial and post-colonial experiences of dispossession, marginalization, exploitation and stigmatization (see, for example /Useb, 2000; Gaeses,1998; Thoma and ≠Oma, 1999). The recognition of this historical, contextual and emergent identity is critical to the empowerment of the San, and to the improvement of their material conditions.

Andrew Spiegel (1994) notes that the invention and manipulation of tradition have the potential to either legitimate or, alternatively, to challenge dominant power asymmetries. However, the emancipatory potential of manipulating traditions or asserting cultural identity is linked to the form that cultural rights rhetoric takes. The challenge facing rights activism is that of minimizing the extent to which claims for cultural rights sustain unequal power relations in other areas of social and economic life (see Bond and Gilliam, 1994: 4; Stammers, 1999: 1005). Critics of identity politics have rightly noted that an overemphasis on representation and "discourse" distract us from pressing problems of poverty and economic inequalities (Craig and Tiessen, 1993; Nystrom and Puckett, 1998; Rorty, 1998). Lee suggests that "focusing [...] on the social construction of current indigenous realities" has led anthropologists to neglect "indigenous peoples' still precarious position in the political economy and class politics of their respective nation states" (2000: 20). Lee's point highlights the need to recognize that indigenous issues are inseparable from class issues.

San activism also represents a deeper challenge to post-colonial, neo-liberal political categories since "rights are not just instruments of law, they are expressions of [a] moral identity as a people" (Ignatieff, 2000: 12; see also Stammers, 1999). San struggles are therefore also efforts to articulate and legitimate an alternative identity, one which challenges us to rethink conventional categories (such as class and culture) as well as the philosophical and anthropological concepts (such as "authentic" and "invented") that sustain postcolonial inequalities.

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Notes

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2 In this context, the missionary meant that the San are "serfs" when they become "Basarwa."

3 The relevant relationship is more profound than mere territoriality. The implicit claim is that they have a unique *way of being* in the natural environment.

4 For a discussion of the debates surrounding "self-determination" in indigenous peoples' politics see Kymlicka (1999).

5 This act defines a "traditional community" as:

> ...an indigenous, homogeneous, endogamous social grouping of persons comprising families deriving from exogamous clans which share a common ancestry, language, cultural heritage, customs and traditions, recognizes a common traditional authority and inhabits a common communal area; and includes the members of that community residing outside the common area (cited in Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa, 2000: 13, ft 7).

The use of the term "indigenous" here is problematic because it defines all Africans as "indigenous," and so has the potential to diminish the significance of San peoples' claims to indigenous status, and/or the application of international legal instruments on indigenous peoples' rights to the situation of the San people in Namibia (ibid).

6 Joram /Useb, a Hai//om community facilitator and researcher, reports:

> Nowadays my San colleagues and I have to listen to government officials and others making statements to this effect: "You people never had leaders. Why do you need leaders today? (2000: 1).

7 The importance of genuine recognition was expressed by /Useb in the following way:

> [San community leaders] are convinced that if they all acquire the status of an officially recognized leader, they will be able to invalidate the prevailing stereotypical notion that all San live in former Bushmanland, speak one language, are unable to farm cattle and crops, live a nomadic lifestyle, have no roots in their ancestral lands and thus have never had leaders (2000: 7).

8 Widlok (2000) offers a similar analysis of Hai//om kinship and naming systems.

9 Many of these European names carry the diminutive suffix "tjie"—for example, Vaetjie, and especially "Mannetjie" (boy or small man)—which serves to perpetuate the San's "childlike" status and reinforce the farmer's paternalistic role (see also van Onselen, 1992: 141-142). Other "European" names given by farmers are actually nicknames, such as "Grootmeid" (Big Maid) and "Boesjman" (Bushman).

10 Two important points Guenther has raised are useful to recall here. First, Guenther notes that Nharo identity must be understood in terms of their experiences of class exploitation, racial discrimination and ethnic marginalization. In this context, a highly politicized San identity was expressed through cultural revitalization movements (1979, 1986). Second, Guenther argues that the Nharo can be described as "cultural foragers" who are capable of creatively incorporating new items and influences into their own cultural practices, without losing their cultural identity (1997 and 1996).

11 For more ethnographic detail on the mutual construction of class and culture in the Omaheke see Sylvain (1999, 2001, 2002).

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