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Some Changes among the San under the Influence of Relocation Plan in Botswana

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INTRODUCTION

There have been some reports of San, an indigenous people of Southern Africa, being forced to move to other areas due to the establishment of national parks or game reserves. Such situations arose with the establishment of the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in South Africa, Etosha National Park [Widlok 1999: 34] and Kaudom Game Park [Marshall 1984] in Namibia, and Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Moremi Game Reserve, Chobe National Park and Khutse Game Reserve [Kent 1995a, 1995b] in Botswana (Figure 1). However, encouraged by the worldwide spread in recent years of an increased awareness concerning the rights

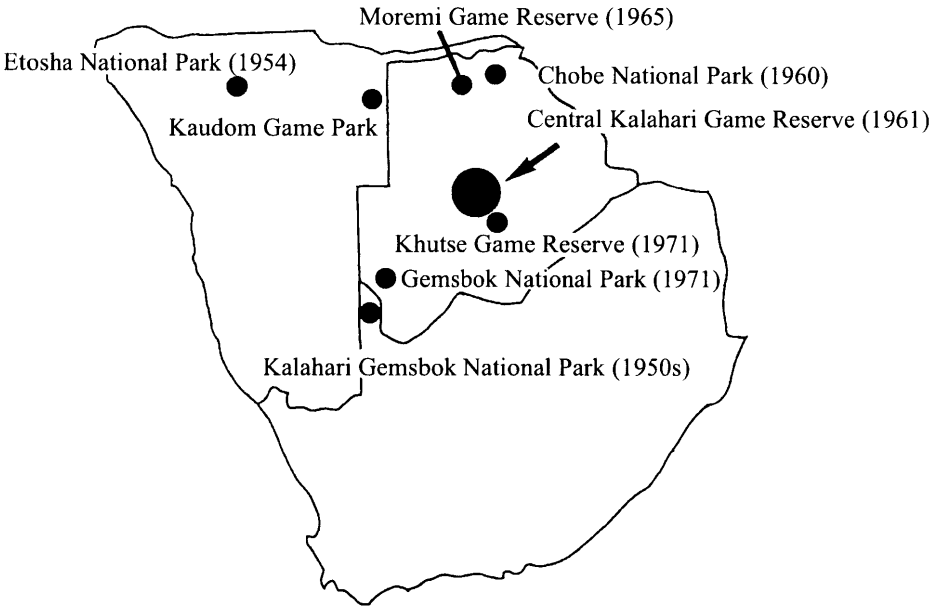


Figure 1. Distribution of Game Reserves and National Parks in Southern Africa
( ) shows the designated year.

and significance of indigenous people, movements have arisen in various areas of Southern Africa seeking to regain legal ownership for the San of the areas of land they originally inhabited.

The most strongly debated land claims in recent years between the government and the San (Basarwa) have been those concerning the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) in Botswana. This debate has drawn much interest from various people, including journalists, anthropologists and people involved in NGOs [Hitchcock 1996b; Erni 1997; Ikeya 2000]. There seems to be a consensus now that most of the San who had been living in the area designated as the CKGR were forced to move to other areas due to new government policies [Harden 1989; Hitchcock and Holm 1993: 316; Saugestad 1996: 9, 1998: 325; Erni 1997: 9]. However, there has not been sufficient clarification in past reports of the process by which the San moved from the reserve, the reasons for moving, and some changes in the San society that accompanied this migration from the reserve. The reason why several-hundred of the San has remained on the reserve has also not been clarified.

This report aims to clarify the reasons for the decisions made by the San, faced with the new government resettlement plan, to leave or to remain on the reserve and the resultant changes in the San society. For this purpose, the author conducted four on-site surveys covering seven areas of the Ghanzi District in Botswana in June and September of 1997 and in April and June of 1998. Changes in the San society in New Xade (Kweisakweni) and Kaudwane, the two new settlements outside CKGR that were established by the government, were also examined.

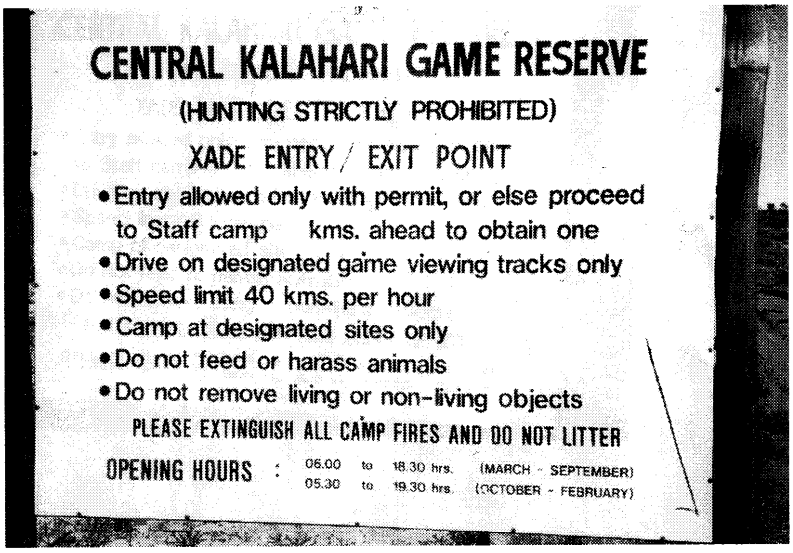


Photo 1. Game reserve sign in the Kalahari
Photograph by K. Ikeya

During the colonial era of Botswana, the land that has now become the CKGR was Crown land [Ikeya 1998, 1999]. In 1961, the colonial government designated an area of 52,000 square kilometers as a game reserve for the purpose of providing a sanctuary for the San, who depended on hunting and food gathering for survival (Photo 1). However, the number of people and activity in the reserve gradually increased, making the coexistence of humans and wild animals in the reserve difficult, and it became necessary for the government to establish a plan for moving the people off the reserve [Hitchcock 1999: 53]. The government also had other reasons for moving people off the reserve. One reason was to allow the progress of diamond mining in the eastern part of the CKGR [Erni 1997: 11]. Diamonds, which are an important source of revenue for the government of Botswana, were first discovered in the reserve by a Canadian mining company, Falconbridge Exploration, in 1980, and Debeers Prospecting Botswana has been mining for diamonds in the eastern part of the reserve since 1982. Other reasons for moving the people off the reserve were to promote tourism, to reduce the costs of services provided to inhabitants of the reserve, and to give them a chance to receive the economic benefits of integration into Botswana society [Hitchcock 1996a].

COURSE OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND INHABITANTS OF CKGR (1986-1997)

In 1986, the government of Botswana decided to move the people living on the CKGR to new settlements outside the reserve [Hitchcock 1996b: 30]. In the same year, the government sent a delegation from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to the reserve to conduct a survey in order to determine the best ways to protect wild animals and to deal with the San living in the reserve. Based on the results of the survey, it was decided that it would be better for the economy and society to encourage, rather than force, inhabitants of the reserve to move to new settlements [Hitchcock 1996b: 45]. In March 1988, a proposal was presented to the government to divide the CKGR into two areas, one area in which the San could legally reside and one area in which residence would be prohibited.[1)] However, the inhabitants of Xade, a settlement in the reserve, expressed their wish to continue their traditional lifestyle in an area cohabited by wild animals. In June 1989, the Minister of Local Government, Lands and Housing and the Minister of Commerce and Industry visited settlements in the reserve to explain the government's plan to the inhabitants of the settlements.[2)]

In October 1991, the Ghanzi District Council reported to inhabitants of the reserve that the government of Botswana was looking for suitable resettlement sites outside the reserve, in the hope of developing the society of reserve inhabitants in the same way as Tswana society had been developed.[3)] They were also told that social facilities such as primary schools and medical clinics would be built at the resettlement sites. When the Deputy Minister of Local Government, Lands and Housing was asked by the member of parliament for Ghanzi District in November

1993 about the state of progress being made in the resettlement plan, he replied that, although no actual progress had been made concerning the problem of the CKGR, the government had been investigating various aspects of the issue, such as appropriate locations for new settlements, protection and utilization of wild animals, preservation of natural resources, and tourism.[4] In August 1995, the chief of Xade conveyed to the government that the inhabitants of Xade wished to remain where they were and that they would wait for a response from the government to their wish.[5] The District Commissioner of Ghanzi also called for a response from the Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing, which has the jurisdiction to decide the future of Xade. However, the appeals by inhabitants of settlements in the CKGR were rejected by the Ministry of Local Government, Land and Housing, who announced in parliament in April 1996 that the environment of the reserve could not be maintained with the existence of settlements in the reserve.[6]

An organization called the First People of the Kalahari (FPK), founded in 1992, has featured prominently in the debate over land rights. This organization has been making efforts to publicize the fact that the San are not represented in any local or national government bodies and the fact that the San have been deprived of ownership rights to any land. In 1993, this organization, represented by John Hardbattle (a Nharo man), was registered as an NGO. The activities of this organization are aimed at gaining social acceptance of the San as an independent ethnic group and securing ownership of land for the San that was inhabited by their ancestors in order to allow the San to pursue their own course of development. This organization has evoked great public interest in the land rights issue by producing a map showing the areas of land traditionally used by the San for natural resources.

John Hardbattle, chairman of the First People of the Kalahari, and Roy Sesana (a ||Gana man), who lived in CKGR, visited Switzerland and U.K. and America between March and May 1996 to gather public support for their movement to resist the government's resettlement policy. During their visit to Switzerland, they visited the UN Human Rights Office in Geneva to appeal about the plight of the San facing forced eviction from the CKGR.[7] These appeals resulted in a visit by the British High Commissioner of Botswana to the reserve to investigate whether coercion was being used to resettle the San outside the reserve. In response to this, the government announced that people wishing to stay in the reserve could do so and that they would not be forced to move.[8]

In March 1997, the Minister of Local Government, Lands and Housing made a request to parliament to grant a budget of six million pula for the development of New Xade and Kaudwane, areas that were designated as resettlement locations.[9] The bill presented to parliament for the development project budget was passed, and development works at these two locations were started. Some of the inhabitants of Xade continued to oppose the government plan, while others willingly made the decision to move,[10] and the movement of people living in Xade finally began in May 1997, 12 years after the first government resolution in 1986 to

resettle the inhabitants of the reserve.

RESETTLEMENT PROCESS (1996-1998) AND REASONS FOR MOVING

The inhabitants of the seven settlements in the CKGR were forced to make two decisions: firstly, whether to move or not, and secondly, if so, which of the two resettlement locations (Figure 2) to move to. The movements of people living around Mothomelo were especially complex. The ||Gana and |Gui living in areas west and northwest of the center of Mothomelo moved to New Xade, while Tsira living in areas east and southeast of the center of Mothomelo moved to Kaudwane, and Hai|nu living in the northeast part of Mothomelo did not move.

The first people in the CKGR to move were the chief and three households of Mothomelo,[11] located in the eastern part of the reserve, and one household in Kikao, who all moved to Kaudwane in the middle of December 1996. Two trucks were supplied by the government to move their furniture and building supplies. People living in Xade began moving to their new settlements about six months later, in May 1997 [Erni 1997]. The first people to move out of Xade were those who lived near the center of the settlement and were not involved in crop harvesting. Three months later, after all the crops had been harvested, the entire population of Xade (about 650 persons) had moved out of the reserve.

However, the resettlement of people living in the eastern part of the CKGR did not proceed so smoothly. Some people living in Mothomelo moved to New Xade

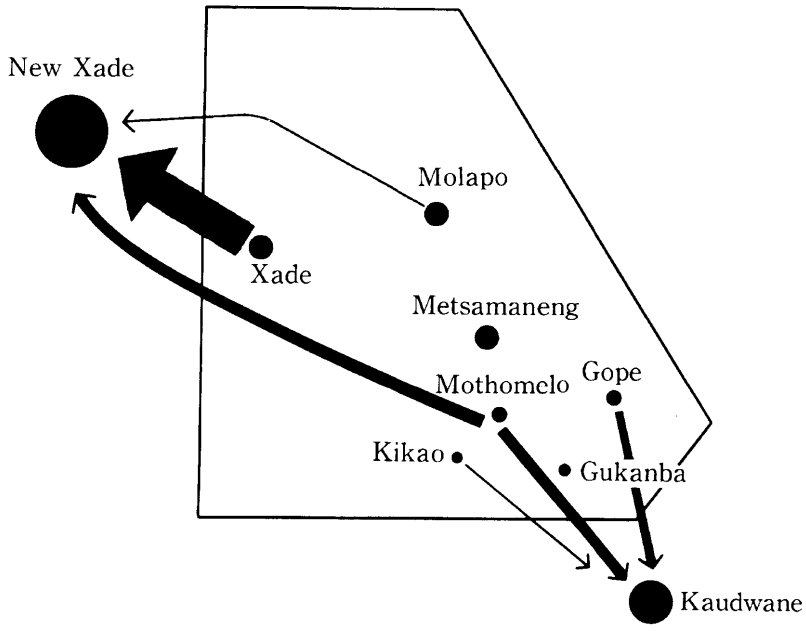


Figure 2. Population movement outside CKGR from 1996 to 1998

between the middle of September and end of October in 1997, and five households in Molapo moved to New Xade in November. About 80 people living in Gope and 180 people living in Mothomelo moved to Kaudwane in November and December, respectively. In March 1998, two more households in Molapo moved to New Xade. However, many people living in the eastern part of the reserve refused to abandon their homes for the cash payment offered by the government as compensation. None of the inhabitants of Metsimaneng or Gukanba moved. Despite the government's offer of compensation, a total of 575 people living in the reserve (180 in Molapo, 150 in Metsimaneng, 90 in Mothomelo, 12 in Kikao, 33 in Gukanba, and 110 in Gope) refused to move.

There was also some subsequent movements of people back to the CKGR. In March 1998, five Tsira households packed their belongings on donkeys and moved back to Mothomelo from Kaudwane, leaving their goats with relatives who remained in Kaudwane. These people decided to move back to the reserve because they could not adapt to life in the new settlement. One man among these five households decided to move back after his wife had died while living in Kaudwane.

The results of the author's surveys revealed that of the total population of approximately 1,700 people initially living in the CKGR, 1,130 have moved out of the reserve and 575 have stayed. The results of the surveys also showed a noticeable difference between the movements of people living in the eastern and western parts of the CKGR. The entire populations of Xade, located in the western part of the reserve, moved out of the reserve over a short period of only 3 months; however, no such mass exodus was seen in the eastern part of the reserve. In the eastern part, there were partial movements from some settlements (Molapo, Mothomelo, Kikao and Gope), no movements at all from other settlements (Metsimaneng and Gukanba), and some movements back to the reserve (Mothomelo).

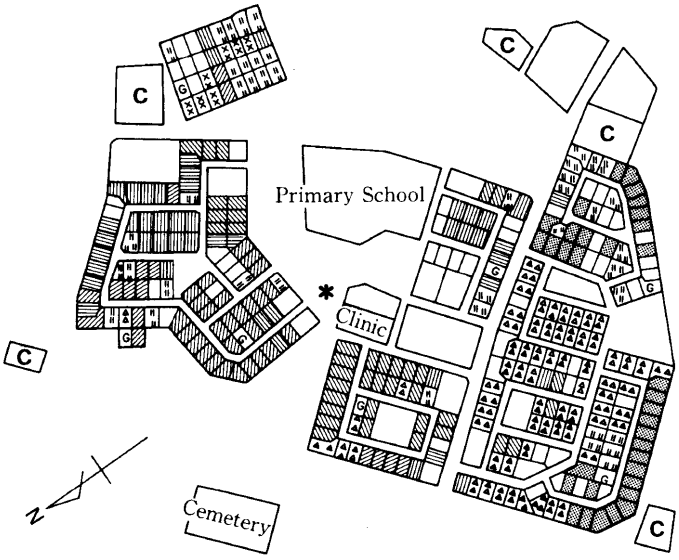
Although the government could be criticized for not making sufficient efforts to convey information concerning the nature of the new settlements to the San, it should be pointed out that the government did continue to provide various services to the people living in the reserve, and the people in the reserve were not coerced into leaving. The compensation offered by the government, the fact that children were also living in the new settlements, and abundant supply of water at the new settlements were the main reasons why people decided to leave the reserve. These findings of the author's surveys disprove the claims made in previous reports that the San were forced to move after the government gradually stopped providing services to inhabitants of the reserve.[12)]

SOME CHANGES IN THE NEW SETTLEMENTS

1) The San's response to the system of individual land ownership

The plan for New Xade (Photo 2) was designed by the Ministry of Local

Photo 2. View of New Xade
Photograph by K. Ikeya



C: Planned cattle kraal ✱: Waterplace ▭ shows one plot.
▨: ||Gana from Xade ▲▲▲: |Gui from Xade ▤: Kgalagadi from Xade
▒: People from Mothomela G: People from Ghanzi
×××: People from Molapo ||||: Unoccupied plot

Figure 3. Pattern of settlement in New Xade

Government, Lands and Housing in a fashion similar to that of new residential areas in Japan. Bush was first cleared away by the staff of the Ghanzi Lands Board. A clinic, traditional meeting place (kgotla) and primary school were constructed in the center of the settlement, and the surrounding land was initially divided into 310 numbered housing plots (40 meters long and 25 meters wide). Six areas within the settlement were designated as areas for construction of goat enclosures and home factories for the processing and sewing of cattle hides, and areas outside the settlement were designated as areas for five cattle kraals, crop fields, a cemetery and camping area for the tourists (Figure 3). Additional plots of land for houses had to be made to accommodate the subsequent influx of people from settlements other than Xade from October 1997.

The first settlers to arrive in New Xade were given the choice of plots for houses. The ||Gana chose to live in the eastern part of New Xade, while the |Gui chose plots of land in the western part. Other groups became dispersed among these two communities. Thus, the socially integrated system that had existed in Xade broke down (Figure 4).

The San responded to this new system of individual ownership of land, which placed limits on their traditional nomadic lifestyle, in three different ways. Some of the San simply disregarded the new system and moved to the bush outside the

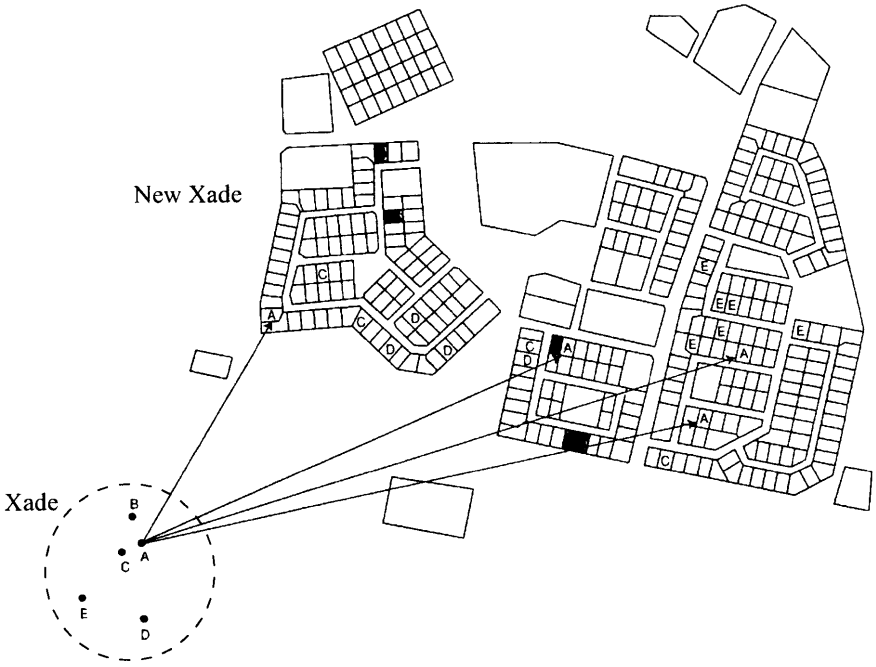


Figure 4. Migration pattern per household from Xade to New Xade
A ~ E show each camp in Xade settlement.
→ shows migration per household.

village, although some of them were later persuaded by staff of the Lands Board to move back to their designated plot of land in the settlement. Others, who were not happy with their neighboring environment or who wished to live next to relatives, exchanged plots of land. The third response to the new system taken by some of the San was to set off on long-term hunting and food gathering expeditions far away from the settlement (Photo 3).

Photo 3. Some San setting off for food gathering and hunting far away from the settlement
Photograph by K. Ikeya

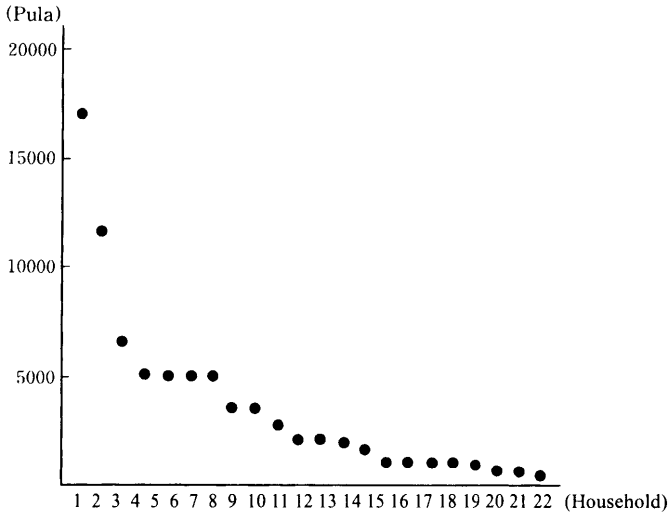


Figure 5. Compensation money per household
Source: Interview

The compensation each household received from the government for moving ranged from 500 to 17,000 pula, depending on the size of their house, goat enclosure and field (Figure 5). This money was used for various purposes. For example, Mr. G., who received 1,000 pula (about 300 US dollars) for his house, bought his wife some new shoes and skirts and used up the remainder drinking beer in a bar every day. Mr. M., who received 1,200 pula for his house and 3,900 pula for his goat pen, used the money to buy a horse (1,600 pula), a radio-cassette player (290 pula), blankets and trousers. San or Kgalagadi who received the larger amounts used the money to pay for construction of new houses and fences (about 1.5 meters in height). In some cases, house construction had to be suspended due to lack of money, and the owner fenced off his plot of land.

2) Economic changes following the introduction of cattle raising to new settlements

The occupations that inhabitants of the new settlements engage in are similar to those in their old settlements: a combination of hunting, food gathering, crop farming, livestock raising and wage labor. Cattle were also brought to the new settlements in April 1998, and cattle raising became a new occupation for the San, one that had been prohibited in the CKGR. The government deliveries of foodstuffs and welfare payments to the elderly inhabitants of the new settlements continues as before.

The main types of hunting conducted outside the new settlements are equestrian hunting and trapping. Gemsboks and springboks are the most sought-after prey. Fresh and dried gemsbok meat is a fast-selling commercial item, but springbok meat is consumed only by the villagers, and the hides are used to make various handicrafts. Food gathering is conducted at places far away from the villages, necessitating overnight trips. Crop farming is carried out in two fenced fields created by the government. Although the fields have not yet been totally fenced, field plots have so far been made for 20 households. Most of the fields are managed by ||Gana, |Gui, and Kgalagadi. Goats are raised in pens built on each plot of land, and they are milked by a member of the household each morning, unlike the old system in which all of the camp inhabitants took turns in milking. Various wage-labor jobs have been offered to inhabitants of the new settlements, including work on the construction of a 60 kilometer water pipeline (from April 1997 to January 1998), construction of fences around fields (from December 1997), and construction of an airstrip and a school (from February 1998). Paid jobs have also been offered as part of the RADO (Remote Area Dwellers Office) Development Project: making blocks and candles (started in May 1998) and making products using sewing machines (started in July 1998).

As part of the government's compensation, each household was offered 5 cows or 15 goats. Most of the households that moved to New Xade chose cows, and in July of 1998 there were a total of 250 cows owned by 50 households in New Xade. Each cow was branded with a number indicating the owner, and the government

made the rule that the owner could not kill any cow that had not produced at least one calf.

The cows are kept in kraals belonging to one group of households. For example, one kraal that had been built by seven households would be used to keep 35 cows, as well as one bull presented on loan from the government. These groups comprise households of the same language (e.g., ||Gana and |Gui) or households from the same settlement in the reserve (e.g., inhabitants of Molapo or Mothomelo). Cows were kept in village common kraals until the construction of the fence around the cow kraals had been completed. Fences around the rectangular kraals are made from wire or wood, joining fence posts of 160 centimeters in height. The fence around each cow pen was built by 3 or 4 men and took about 10 days to complete. These kraals have been built around the settlement at a distance of 500 meters from it.

Two or three people, either members of one of the households or paid herdsmen, are responsible for tending the cows during grazing time. Some of the employed herdsmen have quit because they did not receive their pay. Each day, the cows are led out of their enclosures at about 9 o'clock in the morning and taken to their respective predetermined grazing areas (Photo 4). At about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the cows are taken to the watering place to drink water, and they are herded back into their pens at about 5 o'clock. Cows have sometimes gone missing because a herdsman neglected his job and went to the village to drink beer.

The results of the author's surveys have clarified that, apart from cattle raising, there have been no major changes in the occupations performed by the San since

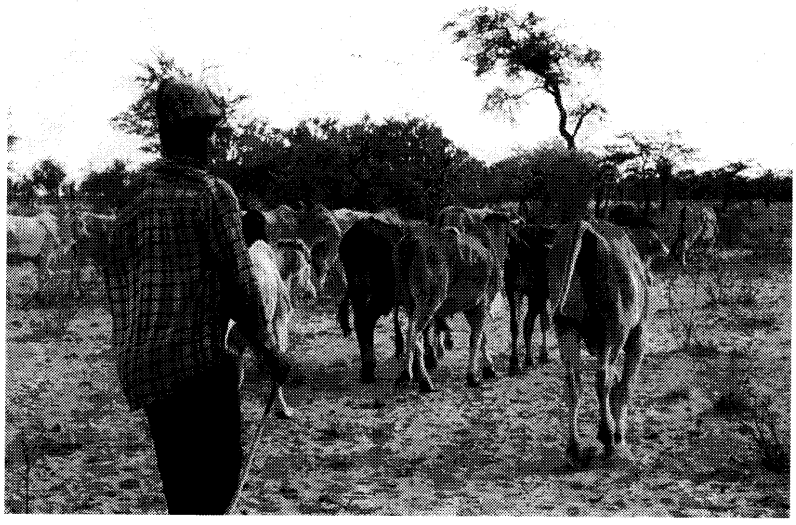


Photo 4. A San herdman taking cows to the grazing areas
Photograph by K. Ikeya

moving the reserve. On the other hand, the addition of cattle raising to the San's combination of occupations may lead to major changes in the San society. Firstly, herdsmen are indispensable to cattle raising, but the San will face difficulties in keeping herdsmen, who cannot directly gain profit from cattle raising. Secondly, the San simply regarded cows as a source of meat; they are not yet fully aware of the value of cows as a source of milk and other commodities.

SOME CHANGES IN THE CKGR

1) Opposition to the government's resettlement plan

The San still living in the CKGR have opposed the government's resettlement policy through activities organized by the First People of the Kalahari, an NGO organization financially backed by the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWIGIA) in Denmark. The San fill six positions in the organization; manager, assistant office manager, chairman of the board, transport officer, secretary and driver. The organization also has a board of 10 members (nine Nharo and one !Ko) selected from D'kar, West Hanahai, Ghanzi, Kagae, Chobokane and Qabo. Ways to effectively use money and appropriate activities are discussed at board meetings. The organization also employs a consultant and a lawyer.

The government resettlement plan is the major problem in which the First People of the Kalahari are involved. To resolve this problem, a negotiating team was formed by representatives of all of the settlements in the reserve: two representatives from Xade, two from Molapo, two from Metsimaneng, two from Mothomelo, one from Kikao, one from Kukama, and two from Gope. The ambivalent situation of having three people who have already moved from the reserve in the organization has arisen.

Activities of the First People of the Kalahari include meetings organized by the board members, demands for land rights, field trips to the CKGR, visits to other areas of the country in which the San reside, and occasional meetings with the Minister of Local Government, Lands and Housing or even meeting the President of Botswana.

In June 1997, members of the negotiating team were chosen by the First People of the Kalahari [Erni 1997; Saugestad 1998: 327] and a meeting was held in D'kar, to which a lawyer from Cape Town was invited. On 8 July of the same year, the members of the negotiating team sent a letter demanding land rights to the Minister of Local Government, Lands and Housing, but the minister resigned from his position in September without sending a reply. In September, a social anthropologist affiliated with the IWIGIA, from which the First People of the Kalahari received financial support, visited Botswana for six weeks to support the activities of the First People. At the end of September, member of the negotiating team, through the introduction of their consultant, visited Khwai in Ngamiland District to hold talks with the people of Khwai, who had been forced to move

following the establishment of Moremi Game Reserve. The San were in charge of managing the wild animals in the reserve, and the talks were significant from the viewpoint of the future relationship between humans and animals. In October, the negotiating team again sent a letter demanding land rights to the Minister of Local Government, Lands and Housing. On 24 March in 1998, members of the negotiating team and their consultant met with the President, Sir Ketumile Masire [IWGIA 1998: 303].[13] He told the group to submit their demands for land rights through the Ghanzi District Council.

There is a myth in the San history that everything in the Kalahari Desert, including the animals, plants and sand, was created by a god called Thaoha, who was said to have had two wives called Oshobasi and Oshonsi. The San who remain in the reserve believe that Oshobasi and Oshonsi have been reincarnated as Uiko and Sesana, two members of the negotiating team of the First People of the Kalahari. In other words, the San believe this myth is a justification for their claim to the land.

However, most of the people who stayed in the CKGR were not involved in any First People activities and had little interest in the organization.

2) Economic life in the CKGR

No evidence was found in the author's surveys of claims that the government terminated the supply of foodstuffs and water, medical services, and the monthly living allowance of 150 pula to the people who chose to stay in the reserve. Both the people who moved and those who stayed have continued to receive all of the government welfare services and payments. The main occupations of the people who have stayed in the reserve are hunting, food gathering, crop farming, and livestock raising. Types of hunting include bow-and-arrow hunting, equestrian hunting, dog hunting, and trapping. Some of the hunters are very skillful at trapping duikers and steenboks, the hides of which can be sold.

Crop farming has caused various movements between settlements in the reserve. For example, Kikao and Kukama had good harvests of watermelons in 1995 and 1998, respectively, and the San living in Mothomelo moved to these villages to obtain watermelons. 1998 was a bad year for crops in Metsimaneng due to a lack of rain, and people living in Metsimaneng moved to Mothomelo and used the fields left behind by those who had moved out of the reserve. The Tsira in Mothomelo helped them to build fences around the fields. As for goat raising, the Kgalagadi, who owned the majority of goats, hired the San to tend their goats.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper clarifies the responses of the San to the Botswana government's resettlement plan and the accompanying changes in the San society. The following is a summary of the results of the author's surveys.

1. Of the approximately 1,700 inhabitants of the seven settlements in the CKGR, 1,130 moved off the reserve and 575 stayed. The decisions to move or stay are attributed to differences in values; those who moved placed higher value on the monetary benefits, while those who stayed placed higher value on their ties to the land.

2. The new settlements to which the inhabitants of the reserve moved were divided into individual plots of land for each household, a system that restricted free movement within the settlement. Some of the new settlers exchanged their plots of land, while others moved out of the settlement into the bush. Many of the new settlers used the compensation paid by the government to buy horses and shoes. Cows were also introduced to the new settlements, adding cattle raising as a new occupation for the former reserve inhabitants. Some of the new settlers who could not adapt to life in the new settlement moved back to the reserve.

3. A negotiating team was formed within the First People of the Kalahari to oppose the government resettlement plan. This group has held meetings with the San in various parts of Botswana and was also given the chance to meet with the president of Botswana. The myth of the creation of the Kalahari Desert has been cited in support of the group's claim to land rights. The people who returned to their settlements in the reserve, however, showed little interest in the activities organized by the First People of the Kalahari. People living in the reserve have therefore become divided into those who support the movement to regain land rights and those who have no interest in the land rights issue.

Thus, the San became divided into two groups: one group that moved off the reserve in order to obtain the economic benefits of being integrated into Botswana society and another group that decided to stay and utilize the natural resources of the reserve. The diversity of responses could be explained by social factors like the kinship and the language groups in the CKGR. Given the various movements back and forth, it is oversimplified to say that there were two directly opposed values involved. There should be some clue to understanding the complex interaction between the San groups, individuals, NGOs and the government.

These diverse decisions made by the San should be respected. In other words, the First People of the Kalahari should not recommend to the settlers in the new settlement that they move back to the reserve. The government should also give consideration to both the continued development of the new settlements and to the support of the people remaining in the reserve.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the Office of the President of the Botswana Government for permission to undertake the investigations.

NOTES

1) *The Washington Post*, 27 March, 1988
2) *Botswana Daily News*, 28 November, 1989
3) *Botswana Daily News*, 22 October, 1991
4) *Botswana Daily News*, 24 November, 1993
5) *Botswana Daily News*, 11 August, 1995
6) *Mmegi*, 13-20 May, 1996
7) *The Botswana Gazette*, 17 April, 1996; The Guardian, 5 April, 1996; The Okavango Observer, 14 March, 1997
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9) *Mmegi*, 14-22 June, 1997
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