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**Julie J. Taylor.** *Naming the Land: San Identity and Community Conservation in Namibia's West Caprivi.* Basel: BAB (Basler Afrika Bibliographien), 2012. 280 S. ISBN 978-3-905758-25-2.

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For quite some time, San or 'Bushmen' have not only been subject to romantic projections, but also to sustained scholarly debate. The 'Kalahari Debate' has pitted primordial views that saw San as particularly archaic, stone-age hunter-gatherers against constructivist positions that highlighted the trajectory of San marginalisation as one aspect of the expansion of settler colonialism in Southern Africa. Again, not all San groups have been equally exposed to spotlight. Among the rather neglected groups are Khwe, so-called 'Black Bushmen' living in the West of Namibia's Zambezi (formerly Caprivi) Region. Julie J. Taylor's book, based on an Oxford DPhil thesis, adds to a limited but remarkable strand of research that throws light on the lives of this group.

Taylor's account is based on intensive field work carried out between 1999 and 2006, along with archival sources. Taking her cue from constructivist concerns, she focuses on the interrelated issues of authority and identity as they played out in competing claims and struggles over resources. Consequently, Taylor maps out the interplay between the colonial state, competing bodies with claims to traditional authority, and an array of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in indigenous rights and environmental causes. Given the overriding importance of the setting and the central concern for nature conservation in a region with an exceptional density of game, the role of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) forms a pervasive vantage point of the study. One of its central themes is the hardening of ethnically defined identities in the course or progressing institutionalisation of resource management as well as of authority on a range of levels and consequently also of rights accorded to Khwe.

From pre-colonial time, inter-ethnic dynamics in the region had developed from contests between Bantu speaking groups, in particular Mbukushu and Tawana. By and large, Khwe were subjected yet also partly incorporated by Mbkushu. Serious colonial intervention into this rather fluid inter-ethnic situation set in from the 1930s onwards, motivated by efforts of the South African administration to effectively control the movement of cattle across the Angola border and

veterinary disease. Khwe were conceptualised as not possessing cattle, and soon one of only two border guards on the vast frontier began to act as an 'intermediator' between Khwe and the state (p. 67), which in this way began to extend its control and at the same time changed power relations on the ground.

In a way, these developments set the tone for Taylor's account and the gist of her argument – the dialectical and pervasive relationship that existed between the gains derived from asserting particularly Khwe rights, along with collective identity, and a secular tendency towards the extension of state control. This took on an array of different guises, along with forms of conflict and contestation between Khwe and Mbukushu. Such forms included, at various stages, the recruitment of Khwe as scouts for the South African army during the 'Border War' of the 1960s–80s as well as subsequently the conflict over land when an ascendant Mbukushu chief aligned to the SWAPO (South-West Africa People's Organisation) government pursued a vigorous policy of securing land for himself and his followers that also was claimed by Khwe as their ancestral heritage. Proposed land uses differed starkly. While Mbukushu focused on agropastoralism, Khwe pursued a hunting-gathering perspective along with some limited agriculture in the quest for an officially recognised conservancy. The latter would give them ownership of wildlife and the respective profits from commercial hunting and tourism.

There were however many obstacles to these interests, including the status of the region as a National Park, the spillover of the Angolan civil war and the conflict over Caprivi separatism in the late 1990s, the first Namibian president Sam Nujoma's (1990–2005) well-documented chagrin against the Khwe on account of their former collaboration with the South African army, and last but not least a stunning range of institutional actors with quite diverse agendas. Such actors included four Namibian ministries – environment and tourism, regional and local government, defence, and prisons and correctional services – as well as a number of NGOs and private tourism and hunting entrepreneurs.

NGOs active in the region fall into two broad categories, those concerned primarily with indigenous and minority rights, and those with a CBNRM agenda. Taylor's focus is on the latter and her account, based also on participant observation, illuminates specific strategies to depoliticise the issues, drawing inspiration from James Ferguson's seminal analysis of the 'Anti-Politics Machine'. However, in this case, the aim is to diffuse both inter-ethnic conflict and potential tensions with officialdom. In this way, pursuing Khwe – or, to a lesser extent, Mbukushu – concerns appears as a largely technical issue of nature conservation and resource management. Still, Deputy Prime Minister Libertine Amathila, advocating San issues, introduced a strong political slant to the debate during the first Pohamba presidency (2005–10), which also coincided with the ministerial recognition of the Khwe-dominated Kyaramacan Association in 2006. This body and by its mediation Khwe were now given rights to trophy hunting. Again, Taylor shows how this entailed not only differential treatment of Khwe and Mbukushu in terms of monetary proceeds and game meat, but also increased inequality amongst Khwe, which was further enhanced by the actions of a newly elected Khwe chief.

All these issues are brought together once more in Taylor's account of 'countermapping'. Assisted by computer technology, NGOs took particularly Khwe – again to a lesser extent Mbukushu – through a process of ascertaining names of places and plants as a means of establishing first-comer rights in the region. In the event, Taylor shows how further cleavages emerged that contradict the image of a homogeneous community and instead accentuate differences along the lines of gender, status and generation, also in the extent to which persons were involved in the naming ex-

ercise. Moreover, Taylor shows how mapping engenders a dialectic of making Khwe both visible – their concerns reaching an audience – and legible to the state. By doing the work of the state, NGOs help to extend its reach.

In this way, Taylor's account is important in a number of ways that go beyond her immediate field of investigation. This is true in particular both for the dynamics of nature conservation in its linkage with ethnic boundaries and with the politics of indigenous, particularly San communities, which are pervasive across Southern Africa, as well as for the relationship between traditional communities and the state. It should, however, be noted that the research presented here is somewhat dated. It ends in 2007, right after the inception of the Kyaramacan Association, leaving out subsequent developments. Unfortunately, the author does not address this problem. Still, this should not diminish the interest this stimulating and insightful study deserves.



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