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- 1 This is a carefully considered and well-written anthropological analysis of an evolving relationship between the government of Botswana, the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD)–the principal donor–, and a diverse group of peoples (and aid recipients) referred to as Bushman/Basarwa/San (by outsiders, including the dominant Tswana ethnic group) or as the “First People of the Kalahari” (by indigenous political spokesmen). The book examines assistance to the San provided under the Bushman Development Programme (1974-1977) and its successor the Remote Area Development Programme (RADP). The name change reflects a substantive change of focus from a concern to meet the needs of “Bushmen” into a general welfare program aimed at the rural poor or “Remote Area Dwellers”. The author was attached to the program as a “NORAD Expert” in the early 1990s.
- 2 The author provides a theoretical framework to analyze a development program as the outcome of a conflict of interest between a nation state and its indigenous minorities. The relevance of the concept of ethnicity and of “Indigenous Peoples” (IPs) is made by drawing upon the history of Norwegian-Sami relations (one that evolved through stages similar to those in Botswana). This relation informed NORAD thinking even if it was not reflected in its policy towards, and understanding with, Botswana. Thus Part One discusses the relevance of the concept of ethnicity and the ramifications of international recognition of IPs who pose a challenge to the nation state. Part Two provides an overview of literature about IPs, their socio-cultural organization, and the relation between San and Bantu groups in the Kalahari. Part Three describes the evolution of government action towards the San, including donor involvement; while

Part Four looks at events that occurred after the first international San conference in the region.

- 3 *The Inconvenient Indigenous* is a well-documented study that challenges development planners and social scientists to rethink the basic categories and relations that underpin development policy, namely the incompatibility between building a unified and unitary nation through policies and programs that consistently fail to recognize and address the concerns and needs of its ethnic minorities. Saugestad demonstrates the complexity of the issues by exploring the perceptions and actions of the three sets of actors involved. The author argues that the Bantu-majority “has been able, under the guise of a culturally neutral ideology, to establish a cultural hegemony that curbs the possibilities to exert influence for those who do not share the same cultural premises” (p. 35). The net effect has been a process of growing poverty and social marginalization of the San.
- 4 From the donors’ point of view the key problem derives from the assumption that a development program targeted at “the poor” can assist disadvantaged social groups. As Saugestad shows, in Botswana “the redefinition of the target group stressing marginality and poverty had entirely different implications for the type of processes initiated, and the kind of relationship that was established with the target group” (p. 123). In short, the emphasis shifted away from a concern with the rights of the San to a concern to assimilate them and to make them more like “settled” and “civilized” groups. Furthermore, as the definition of the target group widened, it proved impossible to sustain a focus on the needs of the San with the result that the gulf between the San and better-off groups widened.
- 5 What of the San? Saugestad observes that to the extent that policy is concerned only to assimilate the San (as clients) and not integrate them as citizens (with rights), the effect is to further marginalize them (one might add, to the point of cultural extinction). Thus a “culture-neutral” policy has failed to address the needs of the San and to deliver sustainable economic benefits to them. RADP has, however, reinforced San dependence on powerful brokers. It is to the authors’ credit that the diverse voices and perspectives of the San are incorporated in the study (these views are also useful to understand her assessment of international assistance to the San).
- 6 Saugestad has written an important book, the significance of which lies well beyond its contribution to the literature on development or the San. *The Inconvenient Indigenous* documents the myriad links between donor policies—which are pursued inconsistently and for far too short a period—and recipient government programs, a process that has predictable consequences for the survival of ethnic minorities.