

Bush For The Bushmen

Review by Carol Barta <cbarta@tyrell.net>

Access Librarian, Hooley-Bundschu Library, Avila College, 11901 Wornall Rd. Kansas City, MO 64145 TEL: 816-942-8400 FAX: 816-942-336

Perrott, John. *Bush For The Bushmen*. Greenville, PA: Beaver Pond Publishing, 1992. 227 pp. US\$14.95 paper ISBN: 1- 881399-04-4.

Bush for the Bushmen should have been an influential book. A work outlining the resource needs of the San tribesmen of the Kalahari Desert should add to the dialogue on the use of land in the region. The San's traditional nomadic life style requires unrestricted access to large tracts of land. The author would like to persuade the reader and, more importantly, the United States government to take up their cause. Unfortunately, *Bush for the Bushmen* falls short of its goal.

John Perrott, an engineer for the Bechtel Company, has spent most of his adult life planning and constructing oil pipelines around the globe. In his career he has aided and abetted multinational firms in their relentless quest to deprive indigenous peoples of their land. The first third of the book is devoted to describing his exploits during adventure trips to Tibet and Alaska as well as other parts of Africa. He undertook this trip to the Kalahari Desert as just another adventure trip organized by a professional tour guide. The tour was planned to visit the area inhabited by the San tribes in hopes of contacting them.

One of the major flaws of the book is Perrott's attempt to reconstruct conversations, resulting in very stilted dialogue and a slow pace to the story.

The author's attitude toward the San is overtly paternalistic and somewhat demeaning. He refers to San tribespeople who have given up their nomadic lifestyle as "tame" Bushmen. His writing casts shame upon those San who have tried to adapt to the rapidly encroaching civilization, rather than on those who thrust civilization upon them. While the author's purpose in writing the book could be deemed noble, his credibility as a preserver of the wilderness is questionable given his employer and his lifestyle. Creating small reservations of "bush" for the San to roam does little to mitigate the strain which corporations who mine natural resources put on the land. The adventure tourist business also contributes to the decline of the wilderness.

Among the books redeeming features are the author's several dozen photographs of the tribesmen. These pictures give the reader a small glimpse of the tribal culture and traditions which the book otherwise lacks.

Not recommended.