

The Gift Paradigm in Africa

by
Bernedette Muthien



Email: info@engender.org.za
Website: www.engender.org.za

PO Box 12992, Mowbray, 7705, Cape Town, South Africa



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NZ biologist, Atkinson: traced origins of all language to San in Kalahari (semi-arid region spanning 6 Southern African countries).

This concords with anthropologists who argue Khoe-San of Southern Africa as First Peoples of world, based on human mitochondrial (matrilineal) DNA.

Vaughan: “The capitalist mode of production is built **on top** of the gift economy and functions by surreptitiously taking the free gifts of all and making them into profit. This makes everyone hungry for gifts and is the systemic basis of **greed**. In fact by denying and exploiting the maternal economy, the market alters the creative receiving side of the interaction, transforming it into **aggressive taking**.”

Missionary position: Europe's wealth extracted from global South, and Africa in particular.

Postcolonial political-economic elites (Mugabe, Zuma, et al) are patriarchal (with patriarchal women as handmaidens of extraction) and further aid this exploitative greed, devouring natural resources that are abundant and reiterating further greed across ethnicity, geography, and gender.

Question: to what extent are conflicts in Central Africa driven by demands for minerals for e.g. mobile phones???

Patriarchal violences of settler Shona hordes from East Africa centuries before Europeans got into the act, resulted in the complete genocide (extermination) of KhoeSan in e.g. Zimbabwe, where no known KhoeSan can be found in that country. The Native genocide continues in neighbouring Botswana and South Africa, fuelled by patriarchal greed for natural resources and control of Mother Earth, in alliance with European capitalist agents.

Giving (Gift Paradigm) = one person or group satisfies another's needs.

Assumption of Abundance (rather than scarcity & greed).

Relates to Native concepts of Community - Belonging - Interdependence.



Khoe = Human (People) = San

KhoeSan = collective (& unifying) noun for diverse indigenous peoples

A people (and person) belonging to (and of) other people

Pan-African *Ubuntu* (Archbishop Desmond Tutu) or KhoeSan *Khoe!na* :

- people's identities rooted in their communities
- "I am because I belong"
- rather than the Cartesian "I think therefore I am"
- indigenous identities as **human** rather than **man-centred**

"When we look at women's contributions and approaches to development in Africa, we see that generally women are guided by teachings deriving from what I would call a "relational matriarchal principle" that sees us all as human beings and children of one mother, *umunne*. I believe this to be a general and basic African ethic of kinship. It can further be a non-racist and non-patriarchal basis for an alternative global citizenship in the struggle for human rights, social justice and an inclusive development." – Ifi Amadiume (Nigeria/USA)

- **decolonising imperative of Rematriation in reclaiming the Gift Paradigm with its origins in Africa (like language, and the first people).**



Concepts equivalent to **ubuntu** (**ummune**, **Khoe!na**) in every culture across Africa, and indeed the world, from the Iroquois of Turtle Island to imperialist Europe (John Donne's Meditations – no man is an island...)

Indigenous Gifting rooted in relations between people, and relations between people and other sentient beings and their environments...

Ma-Meneputo, Kalahari San Healer:

"The San people found power in the light of the moon. The ancients made a queen and hoisted her up into the sky where she became the moon. The people danced in the light of the moon. This is where we found (find) our healing power."

Ancient people gift the sky with the moon, with the moon gifting the people with healing power.

This continuous gifting present in ancient stories that grandmothers still tell.

Reflects deep understandings of roles in relation to other beings and the environment...

After a million years of shining
The sun doesn't say to the earth -
'You owe me.'

Imagine a love like this.

- Hafiz (Sufi poet)

Sun gifts moon with light which gifts earth with light (and tides and other abundances).

The entire cosmos is structured and functions as a continuous gift.

Fractals: as above so below...

Human body also functions in gift paradigm – organs, cells, even air gifts us with oxygen and other gases necessary for life... Plants gift us with nutrition (and animals for omnivores).

Indigenous peoples honour these infinite spirals of gifting by **appreciation or gratitude**.



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Towards the end of this part of the infinite spiral...

Theory is important.

So are practice and experience.

Interdependent. (Mutually Gifting).

Like the question, which came first: chicken or egg

And the most obvious conclusion: both – and.

Motherers more accurate description for matriarchal peoples: male father (mother's brother) plays critical role in educating & holding space for male children.

Motherers (beyond gender), children, extended families, communities – all critical parts.

Ubuntu: we are all part of the greater whole which reflects each element of its awesome infinity....

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