



FIRST PEOPLE

(San Bushmen)

By Wayne Visser

First people of this ancient land
Last exiles in the desert sand
To you we owe our destiny
Our struggle to be wild and free

We call you Hunter, Bushmen, San
You sowed the seeds of primal Man
A gentler race we have not known
See how your legacy has grown

For millennia you lived in peace
In harmony with nature's beasts
With tools of sinew, wood and stone
And crafts of egg-shell, quill and bone

Hunting game and digging roots
Tapping trees and plucking fruits
Night theatre around dancing fires
Click singing under starry skies

You chose the way of archers' bow
Of hunters' grace - the art of flow:
To give and take and see the whole
To honour life and feed the soul

You felt the weather in your bones
And sensed earth's subtle undertones
You heard the stars whisper 'tsau! tsau!'
And rode the wind, we know not how

The landscape generations trod
Recalls to us your Mantis god
Windswept by myths and scattered tales
Told and retold on dusty trails





Then came the time of racial blight
A target for both black and white
The hunter became hunted prey
Pre-dawning your extinction day

You were the masters of the hunt
But progress left your arrows blunt
And tracking skills that reigned supreme
Are all but lost in history's stream

Yet even now your soul still breathes
On cave walls and in rocky cleaves
In ochre, charcoal, mud and lime
Your gallery now transcends time

We see you smile in every face
Whose eyes reflect that ancient place
In wrinkled elders old as earth
Whose wisdom joins us with our birth

First people of this ancient land
If we could only understand
Your ancient ways still hold the key
To setting ourselves truly free

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