

11/Perceptions and Directions of Social Change

by Richard Lee

Despite their history of contact with Whites and Blacks, the Ju/'hoansi were still relatively isolated when I first encountered them in 1963. They had very hazy notions of the world beyond their periphery. For example, no one I spoke to in 1963 had ever heard of Africa. They were surprised to learn that they lived on a large body of land called Africa. They *had* heard of South Africa, however. They called it *Johanni*, after Johannesburg, the place where the mine laborers went. More striking was the fact that none of the Ju were aware of the Atlantic Ocean, which was less than 800 kilometers (500 miles) due west of Dobe. I asked them if they knew of a body of water that was so large that if you stood on one side you couldn't see the other. After much discussion they pointed north to the Okavango River, rather than west to the Atlantic.

But a third experience brought home to me how unfamiliar the Ju/'hoansi were with the ways of the wider world. In 1964 I hired Koshitambo, one of the most sophisticated and well-traveled Ju/'hoan. He had made frequent trips to Maun, the tribal capital, as a valet to the local headman, Isak; he loved to make jokes in Setswana and Herero; and seemed to be as knowledgeable about the world as any Ju. I agreed to pay him £10 for two months' work, a reasonable sum in those days, and on pay day I handed him an envelope containing two crisp £5 notes. Koshitambo looked puzzled and appeared upset, but I thought nothing of it and went on with my business. Ten minutes passed, and I caught a glimpse of him sitting forlornly at the edge of the camp, the £5 notes in his hand.

"What's the matter?" I asked Koshitambo.

"Oh, nothing," he said, hesitating.

"Yes there is, I can see something is wrong."

"Oh, /Tontah," Koshitambo finally blurted out, "/Tontah, you disappoint me. You said you were going to pay me ten monies, but instead you have paid me only two!"

It took fifteen minutes and all my limited linguistic powers to explain to Koshitambo that those two scraps of legal tender indeed constituted "ten monies" and not just two. The idea of money, of paper money, of different denominations of paper money, and of convertibility all had to be carefully put across before a pale smile broke on Koshitambo's face and he pocketed the money.

Despite the changes, the Ju/'hoansi entered the 1960s with their kinship, productive, and land-tenure systems relatively intact. They gave birth, raised their children, married, grew old, prayed to their gods and buried their dead in ways that



A Ju/'hoan, a Canadian, and an Herero: an old-style anthropological mug shot.

were similar to what they had done for hundreds of years. This is certainly not to say that the Ju/'hoansi had been static or unchanging. Their way of life had its own rhythms of change, and the arrival of the Whites and the longer contacts with the Blacks had introduced many new elements. But the pace of these changes was sufficiently slow that with time they could be absorbed into the existing structures and world view. Their systems did not break under the force of these changes; they bent and adapted.¹

But in the 1970s the tempo of change accelerated, and new changes kept arriving before the previous ones could be absorbed. The capacity of the Ju to absorb these developments without shattering was being tested to the limit. It is these fundamental changes that we will explore in this chapter.

We will first try to look at the outside world through Ju/'hoansi eyes. How do they perceive the coming of the Blacks and Whites? Then we will explore how they are attempting to adapt to agriculture, wage labor, schools, and changes in land tenure.

¹As noted in Chapter 2 I disagree with the thesis of Schrire (1984) and Wilmsen (1978b, 1981, 1989) that prehistoric contact with herders, some as early as A.D. 1000, fundamentally altered the character of Ju society long before 1900. If true, there should be an abundance of prehistoric evidence of cattle and goat bones in the Dobe area. Such evidence, despite concerted efforts to find it between 1978 and 1992, is almost totally lacking. This topic is explored in detail in Appendix B.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE WHITE MAN

Well into the 1970s the Ju/'hoansi still retained a vigorous sense of themselves as a people and their special status in relation to outsiders. They called themselves *Ju/'hoansi*, "real" or "genuine" people, a term they grudgingly extended to San of other language groups elsewhere in the Kalahari—the Nharo, /Gwi, and !Ko—but not to their Black and White neighbors.

It took over a year of fieldwork before I could speak Ju well enough to find out how the Ju thought of me and the people I represented—the Whites—and where we fit into their scheme of things. The picture was not flattering: very matter of factly, they considered us to be wild animals. One day in late 1964 I was interviewing //Kokanla, the wise and playful wife of ≠Toma//gwe, about animal classification.

"Wild animals we call *!hohm*," she said. "Lions, leopards, cats, hyenas, and wild dogs we call *!hohm a tsi*—wild things of the bush. Tswanas, Gobas, Hereros, and Europeans like you, /Tontah, we call *!hohmsa chu/ o*, wild things of the village."

This came as a great revelation to me. "What exactly are the *!hohm*?"

"We call all creatures who are different from us *!hohm* because when they speak we cannot understand a word. *!Hohm a tsi* are the animals that kill people. We don't understand their language either, so we call them *!hohm*."

"I don't quite understand. Do you mean you don't hear their language?" I asked. Rakudu, a congenial and very intelligent Ju/'hoan from Mahopa, interjected, "It's not quite so simple. The Blacks and Whites we don't understand at all. But the wild animals of the bush, we can understand them a little. When the *!hohm a tsi* call each other we understand what they say. They are saying, 'Come, come join me in enjoying this food.'"

"We called the Blacks and the Whites *!hohm* long ago because we were afraid of them like we were afraid of wild animals. Today we don't fear them. We call them by their names. *Dama* (Herero), ≠*Tebe* (Tswana), /*Ton* (European)."

//Koka was right. Listening in on Ju/'hoan conversations, I heard the terms *!hohm* and its singular, *!homa*, used in everyday speech for Whites and Blacks, without derogatory intent. The older fear had been replaced by a familiarity, yet a definite distance remained.

The Ju were fascinated by Western technology, which they called */tondiesi*, White Man's expertise or skill. They loved to ride on trucks most of all, and developed a lively curiosity about how things worked. I once asked Ju to name as many parts of the truck as they could. This proved to be an interesting exercise because the Ju had to assemble vocabulary from several areas—anatomy, dress, and hunting technology—in order to describe the various parts. The headlights were called */gasi*—eyes; and the hood was called the *tsi*—mouth; the tires were the */gwesti*—shoes or sandals. Gasoline was called *n/ i*, literally vegetable oil or butter; it was also called *!kaitoro*, a derivation from the word *petrol*. Most other parts of the truck were not named at all, or the English-derived names were used. The truck itself was called *do*, the Ju word for metal. Tin cans were also called *do*.

Tape recorders were another source of wonderment for the Ju/'hoansi. They were always asking to listen to tapes recorded at other villages and to *n/ wi e diumsi*—literally, "collect our throats"—so that they could listen to themselves on the tape. One woman even went into trance while listening to a tape of the Women's Drum Dance (see also Katz, 1982:187–191).



Fascination with Western technology: peering under the hood of a Land Rover.

Some forms of Western high technology were the subject of intense discussion. For example, Dobe lay on the flight path for jet planes from South Africa to Angola. Flying so high that they were almost invisible from the ground, the aircraft left vapor trails at 35,000 to 40,000 feet. One day Tsau, a leading /Xai/ xai man, and I watched as a plane came over.

"What is that thing up there with the long tail?" asked Tsau.

"It's a 'fly machine,'" I answered, using the term the !Kung used for airplane. "But it is flying so high that you can't see it."

"That's what I thought it was," explained Tsau, in all seriousness. "Some /Ju/hoansi deceived me. You know what they said? That the Whites were sending messages to each other on long rolls of paper. In the south they could take a great roll of paper covered with writing and fire it out of a giant gun. It would stream over to the north and land. Then they would cover it with new writing and fire it back to the south." Never, I thought, had toilet paper been put to such an imaginative use.

Artificial satellites, which had begun to appear in the Kalahari skies after 1957, were also a topic of discussion. Remember that my fieldwork began only five years after the first satellite had appeared. One starry night I was camped in the bush with two men named /Gau, one young and one old, when a Sputnik slowly crossed the sky. As we watched its progress excitedly, I asked each of them what they thought it was.

Young /Gau spoke with feeling. "The elders have told me that when you see a star moving like that it means that war is coming from the west and going to the east."



/Twan!a and other /Goshe people listening to a tape of one of their healing dances.

Not a bad answer I thought, thinking about the Cold War and the arms race. "And what do you think it means?" I asked the older /Gau.

"I don't know what the elders say. They never said anything to me. All I know is when I see something like that I think the Whites sure have powerful *n/um* to make the stars move!"

In less than a decade, the isolation of the /Ju/hoansi disappeared and their perceptions about and knowledge of the outside world changed rapidly. Young men began to travel out of the area to work on mines and farms, and they brought back wondrous tales of far-off places.

The same /Gau who had spoken so gravely of the satellites was a 25-year-old man who had never been farther than 100 miles from home. In July 1964 I hired him to be my assistant on an archeological dig near Lusaka, Zambia, 500 miles east of Dobe. /Gau was eager for the chance to go to some of the world that he had heard about but never seen. He underwent a profound change on the trip. Arriving in Maun, the tribal capital, clad only in a *chuana*, the leather breechclout, /Gau expressed intense embarrassment. I bought /Gau an outfit—khaki shirt, shorts, socks, and shoes. He balled his *chuana* in his fist and heaved it with all his might into the Okavango River, saying, "I'm never going to wear that thing again as long as I live."

"I wouldn't bet on it, /Gau," I said.

The trip to Zambia lasted five weeks. /Gau was exposed to one staggering novelty after another: tared roads, street lights, running water, and railroad trains were only a few. After three weeks /Gau took to his bed. Whether it was sickness or culture shock I could not tell. But when /Gau returned to Dobe he recovered almost immediately. And soon he was eager to share his experiences with his kin. At the same time,

he was awed by the problem of how to put all of this new world into words, how to convey to his listeners a sense of what he saw. Since 1964 many !Kung have made such trips, and the experiences /Gau describes are commonplace, but then it was all, as he put it, "strange and fearful."

We drove and drove and drove, through the country of the Gobas, the Damas, the Tswanas, and then we came to people who were San like ourselves, with our faces and our skin. They even had quivers on their shoulders like us, and yet when they spoke I could not understand a word of them. I had no /*kun/* as in common with them, no kinsmen among them. When we spoke we had to speak in Setswana. Then we left that place and came to a fence that stretched far in each direction. Men with guns and clothing the color of sand opened the gate and let us through. Then a strange thing happened. The road transformed itself. A giant black snake with a smooth back came up, and we rode on his back. He twisted and turned but we always stayed on his back; we never left him. Riding on that snake's back we went as fast as the wind.

We got to a big village of those people and stopped. We were dying of hunger by that time, and /Tontah made us go into a house and sit down on a chair with a table in front of it. A man who was not a relative of /Tontah came and brought food in a dish. There were three different kinds of food on one bowl. We had to eat it in a strange way. A metal thing shaped like a lizard's forefoot was given to me. I had to spear food with it and bring it to my mouth. It was very hard, but I learned to do it. The other things at this table—knives, cups, spoons—we have in our country too.

Metal is everywhere. When you twist metal, water comes out. You sleep on metal. When night comes giant metal flashlights as tall as trees come on and make the black snake's back shine like day. The people of this country refuse night. They reject it and push it back with light. Even in their houses there are flashlights everywhere.

But one creature of metal frightened me the most. It made the ground shake like a giant herd of wildebeest fleeing for their lives. It had one eye living in its face, like a ghost. It was bigger than many elephants, but walked on wheels like a truck. It had its path of metal and no one could make it go left or right. A fire was in its belly and black smoke breathed from its head. When it stopped it vomited people, and then ate more people. /Tontah was not afraid of it and said let's go in it. I refused. Then I said all right but feared it would kill me. I got in and sat still. When it started to move I wanted to get off. /Tontah made me stay on and so, fearing for my life, I lived.

After that I became ill and lay in my bed for many days. /Tontah took care of me and gave European *nyum*. Then /Tontah brought me back to Dobe; the medicine men and women worked me and worked me and revived me. Today I am just like myself again but happy to be alive and happy to be home.

Experiences like /Gau's gave the younger generations of Ju a changed outlook from that of their parents. They came to handle cash with confidence and would speak of the relative merits of Johannesburg, Francistown, and Windhoek as places to find work. New technology such as transistor radios expanded their horizons even further, though by the year 2000 the first computer had yet to reach the Dobe area.

I think it is fair to say that in the 1960s there were genuine disagreements among the Ju on the desirability of change. Many expressed a fondness for their way of life and a love of the *r'si*—the bush. They said that in the bush you can always find food and game; in the bush you are free to live as you please. An equal number of Ju, like

young /Gau, expressed a fear and dislike of the bush. The bush is hunger, said one man; it is heat and thirst, said another.

As time went on, more and more Ju/hoansi shifted to the latter view. They wanted money and the things that it could buy. They wanted donkeys to ride on and goats and cattle. But wanting is one thing, and getting is quite another.

TRANSITION TO FARMING AND HERDING

At the time of my first field trip in 1963, the Dobe area Ju/hoansi appeared to be full-time hunter-gatherers, with no agriculture or livestock (except at !Goshe). As the fieldwork proceeded, however, a more realistic picture emerged of the "pristine" nature of the Dobe area. I learned that most of the men had experience herding cattle at some point in their lives, and that many men had owned cattle and goats in the past. Further, the Ju were no strangers to agriculture. Many had learned the techniques by assisting Black neighbors, and in years of good rainfall had planted crops themselves. However, because of the extreme unreliability of the rainfall, none of them had succeeded in establishing themselves on an agricultural basis. The same pattern occurred with livestock raising. Men often obtained cattle or goats in payment for working for the Blacks, but only a few families had set themselves up as herders independent of a Black patron.

In all, the Ju planted 10 different crops, including gourds, marijuana, sugarcane, and beans, but by far the most important crops—those planted by 50 or more families—were maize, melons, sorghum, and tobacco. Surprisingly, tobacco was the most frequently planted. It is also the most difficult of the four to grow, requiring deep shade and daily watering. The fact that the Ju/hoansi devoted so much of their farming effort to a nonfood crop suggests that the motive of increasing their food supply was not upmost in their minds.

Sorghum was the most successful food crop, and those who planted it enjoyed a 50 percent rate of success, compared to 35 percent for maize. The government's Agricultural Extension Department even distributed bags of drought-resistant sorghum seed to Ju and other marginal farmers during the 1967 and 1968 growing seasons.

Despite these efforts, agriculture continues to be a very risky proposition for the Dobe area !Kung. Only at !Goshe, where the Ju/hoansi enjoy the patronage of an influential Tswana-Yei cattleman, has agriculture begun to provide a significant portion of the subsistence.

Unlike farming, livestock production is an economically viable adaptation in the Kalahari, and it continues to be the economic mainstay of Botswana. Some form of small-scale herding represents the main hope for the future development of San communities. During 1967–1969 only about 100 head of cattle and 155 goats were owned by Ju in the Dobe area, representing about 2 percent of the cows and 8 percent of the goats in the district (see Chapter 10). Only six Ju families owned the minimum number of livestock to form a viable herd, and of these, only one man had set up with his family as independent farmer-herders. Most of the other people let their animals run with the herds of their Black neighbors.

A goat herd is easier to manage, and several families have built kraals and assembled small herds consisting of their own goats and those of their relatives. These families put the children of the camp to work herding and watering the goats while



Xkache milking a cow from his new herd, 1980.

the adult members combine farming with gathering and hunting. These are the most beginnings of animal husbandry among the Ju on their own, not as employees or clients of Black masters.

The possession of a herd of goats or cattle, or of a field of maize and melons, puts Ju farmer-herders in a difficult position. First, their mobility is restricted by the need for daily supervision of the animals. It is not as easy for family members to go on an extended foraging trip or to pay visits to relatives at distant camps. Someone must always remain with the animals. Second, there are daily tasks to be performed, and the children are pressed into service. Draper (1976) has described how the children in the sedentary !Kung villages are put to work tending the animals or helping with chores, a contrast with their carefree life in the bush camps. A more subtle change noted by Draper (1975) concerns the separation of men and women in daily work and the confining of the latter much closer to home. In bush camps both women and men go far afield in the food quest. In village life, the men maintain their mobility, following the herds, but the women become housebound, with more of their time spent alone with their children and less with peers on common productive tasks. Perhaps the beginnings of the subordination of women can be glimpsed here in the reorganization of household work loads around the demands of farming and herding (see Lee, 1975).

The Case of Debe and Bo

There is a great deal of tension between those families of Ju/hoansi who have begun to farm and herd and their relatives who continue the foraging life. There are real contradictions between the organization and ideology of farming and the organization and ideology of foraging. The most important of these is the contradiction between *sharing*, or generalized reciprocity, which is central to the hunting and gathering way of life, and the *saving*, or husbandry of resources, which is equally central to the farming and herding way of life. As we saw in Chapter 4, the food brought into a Ju/hoansi camp is shared out immediately with residents and visitors alike; for herders to do the same with their livestock, or farmers with their harvested grain, would quickly put them out of business.

How people grappled with these contradictions on the ground was very interesting. Sometimes they made surprising choices. For example, there were two enterprising Ju men at Mahopa, one named Debe, the other Bo. Debe assembled a small herd of goats and cattle and appeared to be on his way to becoming a successful herder. But when meat was scarce his relatives would visit from /Xai/ xai, and under heavy social pressure, Debe would slaughter one goat after another until after several years he sold or gave away his remaining herd, saying that the responsibilities were too heavy. Debe was also successful as a farmer, but his relatives always seemed to appear on his doorstep right at harvest time to consume his harvested crops. Later he tried to enlist the help of his relatives in building a larger field so that they could plant crops together for all of them to eat. But they were so reluctant that Debe in disgust *hired* a Black for wages to help him clear the land and build the brush fence—the first case we know of in which a San paid wages to a Tswana. Oscillating between exhorting his kinfolk to help him farm and hiring an outsider, Debe seemed to be caught in the contradictions between a communalistic and an individualistic style of work relations.

The second man was Bo, the leader of the only group whose members have established themselves as independent farmer-herders. Bo took great pride in his herd of six cows and his fields of maize and melons, and he emphasized to all who would listen that he was on his own and not under Black patronage. Bo was also a rational man, and when his many kinsmen and affines came to his hamlet to share in his good fortune, he fed them a fine meal, offered his fire for overnight, and sent them on their way the next morning with a handful of his home-grown tobacco. Bo knew that nothing could put him out of business more quickly than the arrival of kin on extended visits, so he sent them on their way. The effects of this were striking: people spoke of Bo as stingy and far-hearted; he became feared, and there were mutterings that he had learned techniques of sorcery from Black diviners. So Bo became a successful but very isolated farmer-herder. Finally, in 1970, Bo had had enough. He sold all his cattle and other stock for cash, packed his things, and walked across the border to settle at Chum!kwe (now spelled Tjum!kui) in Namibia. It was factors such as these, and not simply ecological limitations, that were preventing more Ju from moving into farming and herding during the 1960s and 1970s. But even more dramatic changes were on the horizon.

WAGE WORK AND MIGRANT LABOR

During the period 1900–1979, migrant labor in the gold fields of South Africa was a main source of income for hundreds of thousands of African men drawn from

Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Botswana, and as far away as Angola and Malawi. In some areas half the adult men are away in the mines at any given moment.

This practice reached the Dobe area in the late 1950s. By 1968, 15 Dobe area men, about 10 percent of the adult male population, had made the trip to Johannesburg; eight of them had made two or more trips, and one man had signed on for five of the nine-month tours of duty. Men reported wages of between R12 and R18 per month (then equal to 18 to 25 American dollars), but from this total were deducted the worker's off-hours canteen and bar bills, so that when the Dobe area workers were paid off at the end of their contracts, most brought home only between R25 and R40 in total.

In order to go to "Johanni," Dobe area men had to walk out 100 kilometers to the main road at Nokaneg and hitch a ride north to the Witwatersrand Native Labour (Wenela) recruiting depot at Shakawe. After receiving a cursory medical examination, they would wait along with 150 other men for the weekly flight to the mines. At Johannesburg they were sent to one of the 40 or so giant Rand gold mines. The shorter men were classified for surface work at lower pay; the taller and huskier ones were chosen for the more dangerous and better-paid underground work. Returning home after nine months' work, the men were paid off in Shakawe, where a variety of home-brew joints and prostitutes were waiting to relieve them of part of their pay. Many returning workers have brought gonorrhea back to the Dobe area as a result. (By the time of the AIDS crisis of the 1990s this migrant labor system had stopped.) With the rest of their money the men purchased clothes, shoes, saddles, blankets and yard goods, and sometimes donkeys to make their way back to the home area.

The system of remitting mine wages back to families in the rural areas was unknown among the Dobe San. There was no post office, and neither the workers nor their wives could read or write. Instead, the !Kung had developed a standard method for translating the values gained through wage work back into significant values in the *hxaro* exchange system.

When young Bo returned to !Kangwa in September 1968, he was dressed to kill in fedora, plaid shirt, undershirt, sport jacket, long pants with cowboy belt, undershorts, new shoes, and socks. Over the next few days his wardrobe dwindled as each item of clothing appeared in turn in the costume of a friend or relative. By the third day Bo himself was strolling around dressed only in his undershirt and his leather *chuwana*. Bo had given away his entire wardrobe in the *hxaro* network, and we enjoyed seeing one of his kinsmen appear in fedora and *chuwana*, another in sport jacket and *chuwana*, and so on.

In 1967 the first store opened in the Dobe area, at !Kangwa, operated by Greek traders. Housed in the first modern building ever constructed in the !Kangwa Valley, the store sold mealie meal, soap, kerosene, clothing, saddles, and dry goods at inflated prices and purchased cattle from the Herero at reduced prices. The San had few, if any, cattle to sell, but five young men were hired for wages to tend and water the purchased cattle. The pay was only R6 to R8 per month (\$8.40 to \$11.20), but even this small amount has had a major impact in a world without cash.

The major impact of the store on both the San and their Black neighbors came from a single store-bought commodity—sugar. Sugar is the prime ingredient in the potent home-brewed beer (actually a form of mead) that is the centerpiece of a new culture that has sprung up around the !Kangwa store. The beer, called *khadi*, is a clear



One hundred fifty miles north of Dobe is the recruiting depot for migrant laborers to the South African mines.

amber beverage that looks and tastes like a sparkling hard cider. It is made from brown sugar and *Grewia* berries, with fermentation induced by a mixture of bee earth, honeycomb, and honey called *serese*. A number of Ju women have set themselves up as beer entrepreneurs, buying the sugar at the store and selling the product at 5 cents (\$\$.07) a cup. The Ju are scrupulous businesswomen. They do not give drinks on credit, and even close kin are charged the full price for each drink. However, after the day's business is done the same women are seen sharing their wild plant foods in the traditional Ju way with their "customers" at the evening meal.

The new Ju culture is based on selling and drinking beer and listening (and dancing!) to hit tunes from Radio Botswana on transistor radios. Ju drinking behavior resembles that of their Herero and Tswana neighbors, whose women also brew and sell beer. Drinking is confined to the hottest hours of the day, beginning at ten in the morning and continuing to late afternoon. The hot sun overhead must speed the alcohol's effect, because most people are thoroughly drunk by two in the afternoon. Ju drinking parties are loud and rowdy, with shouting and laughter that can be heard a good distance away. Sometimes they take a nasty turn and fights break out, like the brawl at !Kangwa in which a mine returnee gave another man a blow with a club that fractured his skull. The situation is even worse at Chum!kwe across the border in Namibia, where frequent injuries and even deaths occur as a result of Saturday night (and day) brawls.

Many Ju/hoansi were appalled by the new way of life. They expressed fear at the effects of drinking on people's behavior; the loss of control, the fighting, and the neglect of daily tasks were seen as signs of the breakdown of the fabric of society. Stories

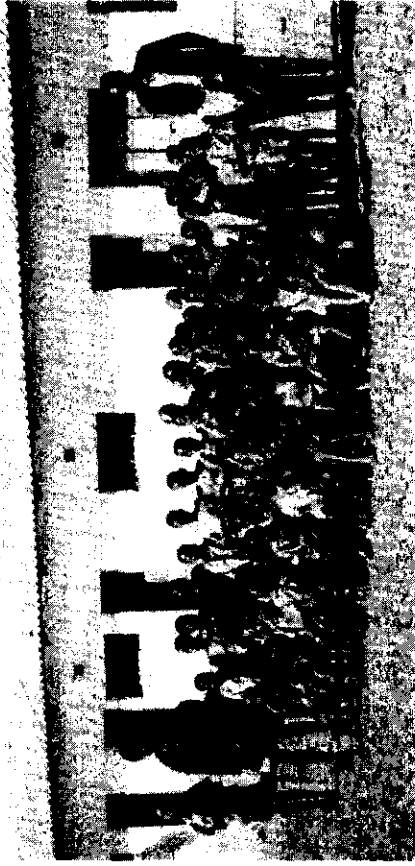
were told and retold, with a mixture of glee and apprehension, of the bizarre behavior of people under the influence. A man named ≠Toma had stepped out of a drinking hut to urinate and had blithely relieved himself into a Herero woman's cooking pot filled with meat. In the uproar that followed, he narrowly escaped a thrashing by the woman's husband. A case was brought in the headman's court, but ≠Toma disclaimed all responsibility, saying that *he* would never do such a thing; it was entirely the fault of the beer. The headman was not persuaded by this argument and fined him a goat for the outrage.

Incidents like these were widely discussed and helped convince many Ju at the other waterholes that !Kangwa was an evil place, one to be avoided. The Ju/hoansi of the interior had entered the 1960s in their isolated areas with their group structures and productive systems intact. Through the decade, the Dobe area became open to outside penetration, starting with the building of the Chum!kwe settlement in 1960 and continuing with the opening of the !Kangwa store and its home-brew supplies in 1967. The arrival of the anthropologists in 1963 and their continuous residence from 1967 to 1971 also had its effect. But a 1960 visitor returning in 1970 would have had no great difficulty in recognizing the Ju/hoansi he knew before. More store-bought clothes, more babies, and more donkeys and goats were in evidence, but the basic pattern remained the same. The 1970s, however, brought new challenges that threatened to change fundamentally the basic pattern of Ju/hoansi existence. The power to make decisions about their lives and future was shifting from within the community to agencies outside the Dobe area and not under their control.

THE FIRST SCHOOL

The Botswana government announced plans in 1968 to build a primary school at !Kangwa, and the school opened its doors in January 1973. The school, a two-room, single-story structure, had two teachers and offered Standards I to IV. The first class consisted of 55 Herero and Tswana students aged 5 to 10, all enrolled in Standard I. The medium of instruction was Setswana, and the curriculum was the standard one for Botswana: reading, writing, math, English, music, art, and Bible study.

Of the 60 or so Ju children of school age, *not a single one enrolled in January 1973*. When I spoke to them in July of that year, Ju parents claimed that the R3 (\$4.50) annual school fee was too high for them. When I observed that R3 per year was not an outrageous amount for people who brewed beer and sometimes worked for wages, they responded that in addition to the fees, each child had to purchase an obligatory school outfit consisting of shoes, underpants, sweater, shirt, and short pants for the boys; shoes, underpants, sweater, and dress for the girls, costing R15 to R17 at the local store, plus the weekly cost of the laundry soap to keep all the clothes clean. This sum put the cost of schooling out of the reach of all but a few Ju families. For those who *could* pay for the fees and the outfits, there remained yet another problem of equal magnitude: how to feed and care for the children in !Kangwa five days a week for eight months of the year. Even though the children would receive a nutritious school lunch, how was the rest of the family to forage for sufficient food in the immediate vicinity of !Kangwa, which already had a resident population of 63 Ju? Ju life depended on mobility, a demand that stood in direct conflict with the school's requirement of regular attendance.



The new school at !Kangwa, 1973.

Ju parents had other objections. Especially at waterholes west and south of !Kangwa, parents expressed concern that the school was located at the village where the heaviest drinking took place. They feared their children might be beaten or neglected if they were left in the care of !Kangwa relatives. Parents also objected to the corporal punishment meted out by the schoolmaster. A fifth reason given by some parents concerned reports from relatives who had children in the school at Chum!kwe, across the border in Namibia. According to these reports, schoolchildren there were growing up to be disrespectful and contemptuous of their parents, even *zaing* them, a form of verbal sexual insulting expressly forbidden between parents and children (see Chapter 8). Finally the Ju/hoansi were disturbed by the lack of sympathy for their culture expressed by the schoolteachers. Ju children were forbidden to speak their own language on school grounds, and no attempt was made in the curriculum to value Ju/hoan culture and heritage. It wasn't until later years that this policy changed for the better (see Chapter 12 and Postscript).

In short, the Ju/hoansi were faced with a real dilemma. They had many good reasons for being suspicious of the school and its impact on their lives, yet if the children did not gain some literacy skills, they would find themselves severely disadvantaged in the rapidly evolving world of land claims, jobs, and international conflict that surrounded them. The central government was creating laws that would increasingly have a direct impact on Ju/hoan lives, and unless the San could read and interpret these laws and make the appropriate responses, their way of life would be in danger. The ability to read and write, therefore, was becoming an even more important skill than hunting in the struggle for survival.

GOVERNMENT AND THE FUTURE

Like their notions of other elements in the outside world, the Ju/hoansi's ideas of government and the state were relatively hazy in 1963. *Horomenti* was their word for

the government, an amalgam in their minds of Tswana and British overlords, with the British paramount. The only two individuals in high office they could name before 1963 were *Mogumagadi*, Mrs. Elizabeth Pulane, the ruling regent of the Batawana tribe and widow of the late paramount chief Moremi, and *Mosadiiriyane*, an affectionate Tswana nickname for Queen Victoria. There was some question over whether Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth were one and the same person. Apart from the occasional government patrols, almost the first direct contact the !Kung had with the central government was when the trucks announcing the pre-Independence elections arrived in mid-1964. I was struck by the spectacle of these "primitive" democrats being carefully instructed by means of a film on what elections were about and how to mark a ballot. The !Kangwa district voted solidly for the ruling Botswana Democratic Party, the electoral symbol of which was the *Dumkra*, an automobile jack.

After Independence in 1966, their member of the legislative assembly, Mr. Kwerepe, occasionally visited the district. From an aristocratic Tswana family, he was reputed to own *mofisa* cattle near !Kangwa. When I met him in 1967 he had just returned from a trip to the United States, where he had had lunch with Robert Kennedy. He was extolling the virtues of the American model of development through private enterprise, a model that was later put into practice in Botswana in the form of the Tribal Grazing Lands Policy (TGLP).

The TGLP provided a mechanism for taking land out of communal tenure and putting it into what amounted to freehold tenure in order to encourage more businesslike farming and ranching practices. Until Independence, the great bulk of Botswana's land had been held under a tribal form of tenure. In this system the paramount chief of each of the eight Tswana tribes doled out parcels of land to senior Tswana lineage heads to allocate grazing and agricultural rights. Effectively, it was a form of communal tenure; no land taxes or grazing fees were paid, and no one could appropriate a piece of land for his own exclusive use. In the Dobe area, this tribal tenure coexisted with the Ju/'hoan *n/oro* system: foragers and herders shared the waterholes and the space around them.

With Independence came a plan to rationalize the country's cattle industry, to take land out of tribal tenure and allocate it to individuals and syndicates on 50-99 year renewable leases. The lessees would survey and fence the land and would limit their herd sizes to the number of animals that could be supported in line with modern range management techniques. The plan's proponents, like Mr. Kwerepe, hailed it as the start of a new era in scientific and profitable animal production. But, like the Enclosure movement in seventeenth-century Britain and similar movements in many other Western countries, the Tribal Grazing Land Policy was a means of transforming inalienable communal land into valuable real estate, the leases for which could be bought and sold. It threatened to transform the people who lived on that land from independent hunters and herders into tenants and landless squatters.

To the government's credit, safeguards were installed to prevent the too-rapid takeover of tribal land by unscrupulous speculators. Land boards were set up in each district to screen every application before deed and title were granted. In spite of the safeguards, the Ju of the Dobe area and other San were at a great disadvantage under the new legislation. Lacking schooling, they were quite out of their depth in the legal complexities of land board negotiations. Also, it was impossible for them to make the frequent trips to Maun to attend the land board hearings.

With the start of the 1970s, the future of the San and their role in society became a topic of discussion within the higher levels of the government. Liberal, Western-trained Batswana and expatriate civil servants saw the San, now called the *Basarwa*, as in some ways analogous to the native peoples in places like Canada and the United States. They lived on the margins of society, were socially stigmatized, and had less opportunity for advancement than did the great majority of their fellow citizens.

In 1974, the government established the Basarwa Development Office (BDO). The BDO's job was to count the Basarwa, find out what their special needs were, and offer grants to local authorities for their welfare. In the North West District, where Dobe was located, the Ju/'hoansi received three forms of aid: scholarships to attend primary school, aid for well-digging, and agricultural extension advice. The effects on the Dobe area were striking. By 1976-1977, over 70 Ju children had enrolled in the two area schools, one at !Kangwa and the other at /Xai/ xai. After a series of name changes, and in order to remove any association of this agency with a single ethnic group, the BDO became the RADO, Remote Area Dwellers Office, and ever since, the Dobe Ju/'hoansi and other Botswana San, some 58,000 of them, have been known as "Rads."

Craft marketing was another important development for the Ju/'hoansi. For many years the Ju had produced some ostrich-eggshell bead necklaces for the tourist trade. They were purchased by European traders from Ghanzi for ridiculously low prices. Fifteen cents was paid for a string that took two days of work to produce. The traders then resold them for ten times the amount. The government-owned craft marketing board, Botswana Craft, was thus a boon to the Ju and to many other rural people. They paid the craftspeople two-thirds of retail for everything they bought.

Income from craft production quickly rose to become the major source of cash in the Dobe area, an influx to the community of \$300 to \$500 a month.

Unfortunately, the influx of cash also caused a boom in beer-making at !Kangwa, and the practice spread to other centers. Drunkenness, squabbling, and neglect of nutrition increased in frequency and caused a crisis in the school program. Several parents withdrew their children from the school, fearing for the children's safety.

Well-digging was another area of emphasis by the Remote Area Dwellers Office. By 1977, 20 applications had been received from Dobe area Ju/'hoansi for digging permits. But here again, things didn't turn out as planned. Despite the efforts of the RADO, 15 of the applications were tied up in red tape by local land boards, and only 5 were approved. Of these, at only one, the well at Dobe itself, were the Ju/'hoansi successful in striking water.

The greatest successes have been recorded in agriculture and stock raising. By the early 1980s, the number of cattle in Ju hands had increased dramatically, and over 50 Ju agricultural fields had been registered with the land board. In 1980 I estimated that at least a dozen Ju families had herds of sufficient size to provide a substantial portion of their diet. And six Ju families owned steel ploughs, a device that made agriculture possible on a greatly expanded scale.

Yet even these successes brought with them new social problems. The breakdown of sharing, the appearance for the first time of wealth differences, and a tendency toward the subordination of women were all trends that could be discerned in embryo as the Ju/'hoansi entered the last two decades of the twentieth century.

On a trip to Dobe in 1980, I visited my old friend /Xashe. It was his father, ≠Toma//gwe, who had first greeted me at Dobe Pan 17 years before (Chapter 1). His *tsu* N'eishi had made me his "son." /Xashe's daughter //Koka, now in her twenties, had been my "betrothed" (see Chapter 6).

The people of the Dobe waterhole had prospered. We were greeted with much affection, and /Xashe showed me around his new semipermanent village of well-constructed mud-walled houses that he had built with his two middle-aged brothers and an older sister. Then we visited the kraal, where I counted 19 cows and calves in the family herd, a very respectable herd size, well above the minimum for herding self-sufficiency. /Xashe and I talked over old times as his daughter //Koka, who was now happily married to a man from Chum!kwe, played her portable record player, blasting out the latest hit tunes from Johannesburg. We walked over to a smaller kraal, where his teenage son was leading 60 goats out to browse. The cows and goats of other Dobe hamlets could be heard through the trees heading out to pasture.

In a quiet glade away from the village we sat down to smoke our pipes. /Xashe, always a thoughtful person, seemed to be in an even more somber mood than usual. I asked him what was the matter.

After a long pause he replied, "It's all these people of Dobe. There are so many of them now, and all these goats, and all the cows, and all the things. And everyone has trunks full of clothes and blankets. And we argue all the time. Sometimes I wonder if we wouldn't be better off if we had stayed like we were when you first came here."

"Mi≠tum," I replied, using the term we had shared many years before, "mi≠tum, I don't know. I honestly don't know. You may be right. But whatever you and I feel, this is your life now. You can't go back."

12/The Ju/'hoansi Today

Over 20 years have passed since that fateful conversation with /Xashe. Changes that /Xashe saw so clearly in 1980 have continued to gather momentum. There is more cash circulating in the Dobe area but also more poverty. Sharing has declined further and interpersonal conflict, fueled by alcohol, seems even more frequent. The government now offers more services in the area but also controls their lives more tightly. Outside forces are seeking to control the economic resources of the Dobe area—water and grazing—and the Ju/'hoansi are mobilizing to resist. The experience of the Ju/'hoansi in the 1980s and 1990s has paralleled that of band and tribal societies worldwide. Like other foragers they are becoming part of the modern "world system."

This chapter updates the changes in Ju/'hoansi life and documents their continuing transformation from (relatively) isolated foragers to peasants coping with the demands of the state, of investment capital, and of development. Anthropological studies began in the Nyae Nyae in 1951 and in the Dobe area in 1963 (see pp. 11–14). But even as these studies were in full swing, the ground was shifting and the pace of change was accelerating: earlier in Nyae Nyae, and later in Dobe. To bring the story up to the present, this chapter will deal first with the Dobe area and second with Nyae Nyae. Chapter 13 goes on to make some observations on changing anthropological practice and to draw some conclusions about the lessons the Ju/'hoansi can teach us.

A traveller returning to the Dobe area in the 1990s would notice the changes even before he or she arrives. The 90-mile road from Nakaneng, once considered the worst in the district if not the whole country, was upgraded. The deep sand and heavy going remain, but a trip that used to take eight hours in four-wheel drive was reduced to three. Eight miles before !Goshe one saw the first borehole, owned by a private ranching syndicate, and the first of many if powerful cattle-barons have their way.

!Goshe itself, the first village, hasn't changed much, though a borehole has replaced the pitwells, and the homesteads of mud-walled houses look prosperous. Ten miles further brings you to !Kangwa and here the changes are dramatic. !Kangwa, or Qangwa, the capital of the Qangwa district (population 1000) has become an administrative and services center with close to 300 inhabitants (compared to 108 in 1964). I counted at least 25 salaried officeholders in the 1990s, compared to three in the 1960s. Today !Kangwa boasts an expanded school with eight grades and a student hostel, a four-bed clinic with a birthing wing, a police station, an agricultural extension office, and a large storehouse for drought relief food distributions. Other amenities include a dirt-and-gravel airstrip, a piped water system to standpipes, and a radio-telephone link to the capital (that sometimes works). There are several small stores

and home-brew parlors; the latter, filled from morning on with raucous patrons, lend an air of frontier gaiety to the scene.

Twelve miles further west, along a new road, we come to the Dobe waterhole itself, and while the changes here are less dramatic than at !Kangwa, they still offer surprises. Three decades of cattle grazing have turned the Dobe pan into a dustbowl. Gone are the rich groves of berry bushes; the goats have browsed them out. Water for humans and cattle comes from a borehole drilled in the 1990s. The scale of Dobe has expanded considerably, from one or two small camps in the 1960s to eight large semipermanent villages in 2000. Herero live here now, as well as Ju/hoansi. In a fenced compound built for government business, a mobile clinic is held monthly. Located strategically near the border crossing, Dobe has become an important transit point and stopover for visitors to and from Namibia. In fact, the village closest to the fence receives so many visitors that everyone calls it "Dam //ga si:"—"the place you drop your hat." With a population of 165 (up from 35 in 1964), Dobe is now the third-largest village in the Qangwa District and is in line for a school and clinic of its own in the next few years.

DOBE: THREE DECADES OF CHANGE

In 1963 three-quarters of the Dobe area Ju/hoansi had been living in camps based primarily on hunting and gathering, while the rest were attached to Black cattle-posts. In the Dobe area of 1963–1964 there had been a virtual absence of the institutions associated with the state and the mercantile economy; there were no trading stores, no schools, no clinics, no government feeding programs, no boreholes or airstrips, and except for the tribal headman, clerk, and constable, no resident civil servants. By 1992 all these institutions were in place and the Dobe area people were entering their third decade of rapid social change; they had been transformed in a generation from a society of foragers—some of whom herded and worked for others—to a society of small-holders who eked out a living by herding, farming, and craft production, along with some hunting and gathering.

Some of the more significant developments can be briefly recapped. In 1965 a fence was built along the Botswana/Namibia border, dividing the Dobe area from the adjacent Nyae Nyae and limiting movement between the two. Foragers had to climb the fence in order to reach food on the other side, and this affected use of about 30 percent of their foraging area. In 1967 the first store opened at !Kangwa, making goods available to the Ju/hoansi, who at the time, had almost no money to buy anything.

In 1973 the first school was opened at !Kangwa, followed by the second school at /Xai/ xai in 1976. During the 1970s most Ju/hoansi started to build semipermanent mud-walled houses around cattle kraals. Most of the cattle in their herds were loan cattle or *mafisa*. In the mid-1970s the first borehole was drilled, primarily to serve the school and the growing administrative structures at !Kangwa village. In 1978, as the result of a prolonged drought, feeding programs were instituted for all the Ju/hoansi residents of the Dobe area as well as some of the Hereros. Feeding eased hardship but at the same time sharply increased the dependency of the Ju/hoansi on the central government.

In the same year South Africa upgraded its counter-insurgency warfare in South West Africa, and in 1979 some Dobe Ju/hoansi men crossed the border to join the



Government officials registering voters at Dobe in 1964 on the eve of Botswana independence.

South African Defense Force (SADF) in its fight against the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) (Lee and Hurlich, 1982).

In 1980 a clinic staffed by a nurse was opened at !Kangwa. Through the decade the clinic was upgraded and its links were improved to outlying communities. With the building of two airstrips and the inauguration of a radio link with Maun, it became possible for doctors to fly in and to evacuate seriously ill people to a hospital.

In the early 1980s game laws were tightened; the exemption for bow hunters was abolished and they were required to purchase an expensive (for them) license; as a result hunting declined. For most of the decade most Ju/hoansi lived on government rations supplemented by herding, farming, and foraging. The formation of the Village Development Committees (VDCs) around the same time gave some Ju/hoansi a nominal voice in local affairs, though the emerging local (Herero) elites often disregarded their opinions.

LIFE IN THE 1990S

Let us look at the Dobe area in the 1990s in more detail according to some of the categories discussed in previous chapters. In settlement patterns, Ju/hoansi villages now look like other Botswana villages. The beehive-shaped grass huts are largely gone, replaced by semipermanent mud-walled houses behind makeshift stockades to keep out cattle. Villages ceased to be circular and tight-knit. Twenty-five people who lived in a space 20-by-20 meters now spread themselves out in a line-village several hundred meters long. Instead of looking across the central open space at each other the houses face the kraal where cattle and goats are kept, inscribing in settlement pattern a symbolic shift from reliance on each other to reliance on property in the form of herds (Yellen, 1990c).



Weekly distribution of food from international donors to remote area dwellers at !Kangwa, 1987.

Marked changes could also be seen in the way the Ju/hoansi made a living. Hunting and gathering, which provided Dobe Ju/hoansi with 85 percent of their calories as recently as 1964, now supplies perhaps 30 percent of their food. The rest is made up of milk and meat from domestic stock, store-bought or government-issue mealie meal, and vast quantities of heavily-sugared tea whitened with powdered milk. Foraged foods and occasional produce from gardens makes up the rest of the vegetable diet. For most of the 1980s, government and foreign drought relief provided most of the food. So much was available that surplus was often fed to dogs.

Changes in health and nutritional status have been striking. In the medical world the !Kung San had been famous for having very low serum cholesterol, low blood pressures that do not rise with age, and a general absence of heart disease (Truswell and Hansen, 1976:165–194; Truswell, Kennelly, Hansen, and Lee, 1972). Restudies in the late 1980s of the same population indicate that cholesterol counts and blood pressures at all ages are higher, and cases of hypertension and heart disease have been reported (Kent and Lee, 1992; Hansen et al., 1994). Adoption of a diet dominated by refined carbohydrates, heavier smoking, alcohol consumption, and changes in lifestyle are all factors implicated in producing these changes.

During the 1980s the food handouts almost became a way of life, so when the government cut off general food distributions, the Dobe people were shocked and angry. They had become dependent on the weekly handouts and didn't know where to turn. It was an open question how they would respond to the cut-off, but they did bounce back—and in unexpected ways. For example, in mid-1987 there was a revival of hunting; men who hadn't hunted for years took it up again, and younger men who had never become skilled with bow and arrow hunted from horseback with

spears.¹ In the first week of July 1987 five eland were killed, more than had been taken in the previous year. The possession of horses was the key to hunting success. One old couple sold six of their cows to buy one horse and then sent young men out to hunt for them. Subsequently food distribution was resumed but stricter criteria were instituted, leaving an atmosphere of uncertainty about the government's intentions.²

Of particular significance economically has been their relations with their Herero neighbors. As early as 1900 some Ju/hoansi had been involved in boarding cattle for wealthy Tswana (Lee, 1979:76–82). The institution of loan cattle or *mafisa* is well established all over Botswana (Hitchcock, 1977). By 1973 about 20 percent of Ju/hoansi families had some involvement as *mafisa* herders and the numbers were increasing. However, in the 1980s people had become bitter about *mafisa*: they complained that cattle promised in payment for services rendered—usually one female calf per year—were not being paid, and without these beasts it was difficult to start one's own herd. Coupled with the withdrawal of government rations the lack of *mafisa* had soured some Dobe Ju/hoansi about their prospects in Botswana.

The people saw what was happening in Namibia where a nonprofit foundation, the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia, was helping the Ju/hoansi drill boreholes for extended family groups and helping them obtain cattle. Dobe area Ju/hoansi wanted their own boreholes and a Norwegian government overseas development agency was favorably disposed to financing the project. But a Kalahari Peoples Fund proposal for five to eight boreholes, strongly supported by the people of the Dobe area, was blocked by the Botswana Government, a decision indicating that the government's once liberal policies toward the Remote Area Dwellers/Basarwa were assuming an increasingly regressive character.

The unofficial grounds given for rejecting the borehole proposal in 1987 was that the anthropological presence in the Northwest District was promoting "ethnic favoritism." But the anti-San attitude was reflected in other areas as well. In 1990–1991 three ranches in the Ghanzi District to the south, earmarked for settlement by Remote Area Dwellers (mostly Bushmen), were taken by the government and turned over to private interests. After many protests, local and international, the status of these ranches remains in doubt (Hitchcock and Holm, 1993). Government plans tabled in 1992 indicate further disturbing trends: a policy of wholesale dispossession of the San that is so drastic that it has alarmed human-rights advocates in Botswana and internationally (Mogwe, 1992).

In the late 1980s some Dobe people started a movement to leave Botswana and cross the fence to their relatives in Namibia, and by 1992 some had actually made the move. As Komtisa from Mahopa said of the Botswana government in October, 1991, (for the source of the following quotes see note 7, p. 181).

We don't want a government which treats us like the woman who ate meat but only smeared her child's mouth with fat. When someone came to ask if the child had been fed she said "Don't you see the fat around his mouth?" But in fact he was hungry.

¹The revival of hunting was encouraged by the government in connection with wider conservation measures. Aerial game censuses showed that game was plentiful, so individuals—both men and women—were issued permits to kill one male and one female per year of many species of large game.

²For this and other information about conditions in the Dobe area in the early 1990s, I thank Jeffrey Kurland, Megan Biesele, and Eric Wood who visited Dobe-Nyae Nyae in 1991–1992.



Kung San Works staff on a crafts-buying trip to /Xai/ xai in 1987.

While uncertainty about land continues to dog the Dobe Ju/'hoansi, some compensating developments have brightened this generally gloomy picture. Craft production, introduced earlier (see p. 165), has taken a major step forward. The /Kung San Works and its successor organizations are purchasing increasing volumes of Dobe Area crafts, primarily from Ju/'hoansi but also from Herero. This has had the effect of pumping considerable cash into the Ju/'hoansi economy, from a level of \$300-\$500 per month before the marketing scheme, to \$2000-\$3000 per month at the peak of the scheme. Unfortunately there were still not many opportunities for productive investment of the proceeds in infrastructure such as plows, bicycles, cattle, or horses. While some large stock was purchased, a distressing amount of income was absorbed in buying beer, brandy, home-brew materials, bags of candies, and the ubiquitous sugar, tea, and powdered milk product Nespray, called "Nes" by the Ju/'hoansi. Itinerant "hawkers" from Maun have been quick to capitalize on the Ju/'hoansi appetite for alcohol. They always seemed to arrive in a village immediately after the /Kung San Works payroll vehicle has left.

Schooling and the problems of youth have been a particular area of concern. When the first school opened, at /Kangwa, some Ju/'hoansi parents overcame initial reluctance and registered their children, scraping together the money for fees and the obligatory school uniforms (pp. 162-163). Most Ju/'hoansi, however, ignored the school or withdrew their children when the latter objected to being forbidden to speak their own language on school grounds or to the mild corporal punishment that is standard practice in Botswana schools. Even when Ju/'hoansi parents insisted that their children stay in school, the children often failed to attend classes and walked back to their home villages. Recently attempts have been made to set up a hostel for Ju/'hoansi children near the school where they can have a home away from home (the school itself has no residential facilities) but absenteeism remains a major problem in the 1990s.

In spite of these obstacles, at least four of the Dobe area students went on to secondary school in the 1980s. But even for these students—the first to get this far in the educational system—the road has not been easy. While troubles with the law and with alcohol have plagued the graduates, as of this writing, two hold teaching jobs in Namibia and one, Royal /O/oo, played a crucial role in Ju/'hoansi empowerment there (see pp. 187-188). The fourth, Chiqo Nxauwe (the only woman), was working in Maun, in the 1990s seeking higher education and struggling with the issue of racism against San. As she wrote:

... I am down here in Botswana trying to find out how I can get educated but it is really difficult; everything needs money to continue with my education at private secondary [school]. So I tell you my problem. Maybe you can help me with something or ideas. Royal and Benjamin are at Namibia working there because of the problems of money and racism in Botswana. . . . (Chiqo Nxauwe, personal communication, 13 May 1992)

For the large majority of Ju/'hoansi with no or little schooling, the job prospects are poor, and a life of odd jobs combined with heavy drinking is not uncommon. It was a bitter irony of underdevelopment that in the mid-1980s many youths were attracted to Namibia where jobs in the South African Army were the only ones available.

Far more successful was the second and smaller of the two schools, at /Xai/ xai. There, a progressive headmaster, wisely incorporating many elements of Ju/'hoansi culture into the curriculum, was rewarded with strong parental and community support for the school and a low absentee rate. The /Gwihaba Dancers, a troupe of /Xai/ xai schoolchildren, drew national attention in 1986 (see Postscript).

In the long run, Dobe area Ju/'hoansi face serious difficulties. Under the 1975 TGLP policy, when wealthy Tswana have wanted to expand cattle production they form borehole syndicates to stake out ranches in remote areas. With 99-year leases that can be bought and sold, ownership is tantamount to private tenure. By the late 1980s the borehole drilling was approaching the Dobe area. Therefore if the Dobe Ju/'hoansi do not form borehole syndicates soon, with overseas help, their traditional foraging areas may be permanently cut off from them by commercial ranching. In the year 2000, through the efforts of KPF and the Kuru Development Trust, the borehole scheme was successfully reinstated (see below).

The Subordinate Land Board in the area has for a long time in essence ignored the Ju/'hoansi, and they are deeply skeptical about their chance to participate in it as citizens of Botswana. As Xumi from /Xai/ xai told a meeting in late 1991:

They always talk about "Batswana," but where are "Basarwa" supposed to be in that? . . . The Land Board is what they use to take our land away from us.

His relative Tshao added

The reason is that we're Ju/'hoansi. The ones who are black call themselves "the owners of gardening," and they run the Land Board. Those of us who are Ju/'hoansi are not represented. . . . They say that we're Batswana but don't mean it. The only ones on the Land Board are Black people.



Chiyo Nxauwe (center) and other San students at Okavango Secondary School, Gomaré Botswana, 1987.

NYAE NYAE: A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

In comparison to Dobe, the situation of the Nyae Nyae people across the border in Namibia has been even more difficult. While the Dobe people had to meet the challenges of declining foraging, sedentarization, and the cold immersion into a market economy, the Ju/hoansi of Nyae Nyae had to deal with even more: massive resettlement, the imposition of apartheid, the loss of most of their land base, militarization, and finally the triumph and trauma of Independence and post-Independence Namibia.

If the Dobe Ju/hoansi had largely been left to their own devices in a policy of benign neglect, the Nyae Nyae Ju/hoansi were subjected to a policy of forced acculturation. The story begins on Christmas Day 1959, after the Marshall family had completed their anthropological research, when a South African administrator arrived in Nyae Nyae to assemble the Ju/hoansi at the town of Tjum!kui (Chum!kwe). They were attracted by promises of wage work, agricultural training, and medical care, but what they found was very different.

For over two decades 900–1000 Ju/hoansi were herded together under the watchful eye of South African authorities and missionaries, while weekly shipments of government rations supported the settlement. These rations were supplemented by some wage work, and by occasional trips out—further and further from the artificial center as time went on—for bush foods. The enforced idleness and unaccustomed crowding took a heavy toll; home-brew parties, social problems, and family violence became a regular feature of life at Tjum!kui. One Ju/hoan woman described life there this way:

People ate well but . . . sometimes people were eating when others had no food. So they began to fight. When we first started . . . we ate well but got paid only five pounds [\$10 per

month]. We could buy a lot with that, at the store the minister built. The only problem was anger: the Ju/hoansi fought with each other . . . And then the laws got tough . . . And they'd take them to jail, where they'd just sit. And they beat them in jail. And when the laws were fully grown, people were going often to jail . . . That's what we've seen at Tjum!kui.

Ironically it was after decades of forced settlement, rising alcohol consumption, and government paternalism that South African filmmaker Jamie Uys (pronounced "ace") came to Tjum!kui to film what turned out to be a worldwide hit. In a cruel caricature of reality, the feature film *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1984) portrays the Ju/hoansi as pristine hunter-gatherers so "untouched" by "civilization" that the mere appearance of a Coke bottle upsets the equilibrium of the society.

John Marshall's film *N/ai: The Story of a !Kung Woman* (1980) is a useful antidote to the distortions of *The Gods*. It documents the militarization, anomie, and alcohol-induced brawling that characterized Ju/hoansi life at Tjum!kui: it even contains a telling sequence of the filming of *The Gods*.

South Africa had ruled the territory of Namibia (South West Africa) under a League of Nations mandate since capturing it from Germany back in World War I. When it became clear after World War II that South Africa was intent on imposing the apartheid system there, her occupation was declared illegal by the United Nations, and in August 1966 the South West African Peoples' Organization started military action to liberate the country. Until 1978 the war zone was far from Nyae Nyae, but in that year the South African Defense Forces (SADF) upgraded their counterinsurgency measures against SWAPO and began to recruit Nyae Nyae men into the army. Ultimately the 201 Battalion had about 700 Ju/hoan soldiers,³ making the Ju/hoansi one of the most heavily militarized peoples in Africa.

The SADF recruitment campaign brought contradictory responses. On the positive side, the men were happy to finally have "work" (if you could call it that) and good pay; thousands of Rand (in the 1980s, 1 Rand = 40 cents U.S.) poured into Tjum!kui and other communities every month. On the negative side, the people were sharply divided on the morality of the war and which side to support (many Ju/hoansi quietly supported SWAPO, and some soldiers even tried to warn SWAPO units of impending attacks.⁴ ≠Toma, one of the Marshalls' main informants, said in 1978:

SWAPO won't kill us. We're good with SWAPO and good with these soldiers too. SWAPO will shoot the soldiers' airplanes. The soldiers will bring the fighting here. We're good people. We'd share the pot with SWAPO. But these soldiers are the owners of fighting. They fight even when they play, and I fear them. I won't let my children be soldiers, the experts at anger. The soldiers will bring the killing. This I know. (Volkman, 1983:50).

Gradually ≠Toma's view won out as it became clear to the Ju/hoansi that the promises of the SADF were hollow ones; disillusionment became a major theme of

³Most of whom were Angolan !Kung, not from Nyae Nyae or the Dobe area.

⁴Also of interest was the reactions of anthropologists to the militarization of the Ju/hoansi. Kung. Some saw it as an unjust manipulation of a politically unsophisticated group to serve the ends of apartheid (e.g. Lee and Hurlich, 1982). Others saw the recruitment as a perfectly acceptable way of bringing the !Kung into the "modern world," with the army providing good pay, technical training, and even specially down-sized uniforms for the diminutive !Kung, according to one anthropologist (quoted in Kolata, 1981).

discussions among Ju/hoansi concerning SADF involvement: As one Nyae Nyae man recounted:

We thought our young men were being offered a job of work, like any other job. The only difference was the salaries were much bigger. But we came to see it was a job of anger, and of killing, and of deception. The SADF said they were helping us against SWAPO but we found out we were helping them instead. SWAPO never did anything to us. Most of us have asked our children to come home.

Since engagements with "the enemy" were infrequent, far more destructive was the sudden wealth in the hands of so many young men away from their families. Alcohol consumption increased dramatically and payday brawls became more deadly. In a two-year period in 1978-1980, John Marshall recorded seven homicides, compared to an estimated four cases for the previous decade (cf. Marshall, 1984; Marshall and Ritchie, 1984).

THE PLASTIC STONE AGE

Even while the war was going on with all its dislocations, a new threat emerged in the 1980s from a different quarter. The Department of Nature Conservation within the South West African administration was pushing strongly to have the Nyae Nyae area declared a game reserve from which all development, including livestock, was to be excluded. A few Ju/hoansi, for their part, were to dress up in traditional clothes, dance, and sell curios to the wealthy tourists who were to flock in droves to the spectacle.

The Ju/hoansi were appalled by this scheme and opposed it vehemently. As G#Kao Dabe said:

Is it right that we should still be wearing loincloths? [Eating well] is a good thing, but it doesn't mean our women should have to expose their stomachs and buttocks again by wearing skin clothing . . .

To Ju/hoansi the scheme represented an ironic about-face. First the government had done everything it could to wean them away from bush life; now they were pushing them back into it! But the people were well aware that their traditional way of life had been seriously compromised, and their future lay not in being props in what John Marshall labelled a "Plastic Stone Age," but in building up their herds and fields to establish themselves as small-holders with a mixed economy of foraging, farming, and wage labor. They also wanted clear rights to any revenues produced by the wildlife of their area or its products. In the game reserve scheme, by contrast, trophy hunting and tourist revenues would be siphoned off into central government coffers. After years of opposition and protest, locally and in international media, the South African scheme was dropped (Volkman, 1986).

INDEPENDENCE AND AFTER

The Ju/hoansi and their allies won this victory in part because by 1988 the tide was turning in Namibia against South Africa; the SADF had suffered a serious military defeat at the hands of Angolan-Cuban forces at the battle of Cuito-Carnevale. Finally in 1989, the United Nations forces (UNTAG) entered the territory and implemented the

long-awaited U.N. plan for Namibian Independence. With U.N. peacekeepers in place, the people of Namibia could finally express themselves freely and SWAPO won a clear majority in September 1989 elections. The Nyae Nyae area had voted strongly for SWAPO.

The independent nation of Namibia came into being in March 1990. Often heard at Independence and after was the Ju/hoan phrase "Namibia !' oahn!" (Namibia's free!). Choosing '! oahn' to express freedom connotes "broken open to reveal what's good inside," and "cleared up," as of cloudy weather (M. Biesele, personal communication). Western media had widely (and wrongly) predicted reprisals against the Bushmen for their participation in the South African war machine. Reprisals did not materialize, in part because some elements of *all* Namibia's ethnic groups had contributed soldiers to the SADF, and in part due to vigorous affirmative action policies pursued by SWAPO President Sam Nujoma. Nevertheless the most destructive aspect of the war for the Ju/hoansi was the setback they received as "Bushman" in taking their places in postwar nationbuilding. They had to overcome the negative effects of both the propagandizing they had received and the stereotyping (as collaborators) they had undergone.

Fortunately, with the war over and the troops demobilized, SWAPO worked hard to foster a spirit of reconciliation in Namibian society, determining to put the past behind and focus on the tasks of reconstruction. But despite the rejoicing at the end of 75 years of South African rule, Independence for the Ju/hoansi was a mixed blessing. Namibia faced an uncertain future. For all intents and purposes the new nation was broke, without developed energy sources, its minerals systematically extracted, and its former patron, South Africa, disappearing over the horizon. The hasty retreat was thrown into relief by the hundreds of demobilized Ju/hoan soldiers, their livelihood suddenly vanished, lounging around their home communities with a great deal of time on their hands.

At the same time, neighboring ethnic groups began to cast an envious gaze in the direction of the open spaces of "Bushmanland"—its grasslands having been protected from overgrazing by the logic of the apartheid system. Now that apartheid was gone, the neighbors reasoned, they could move in with all their cattle, and in 1990-1991 an advance guard of several families with hundreds of cattle settled at Ju/hoansi waterholes in southern Bushmanland.

THE NYAE NYAE FOUNDATION AND THE FARMERS' CO-OP

With all these forces arrayed against them, the Nyae Nyae Ju/hoansi have had a major ally in the form of the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia (NNDNFN), based in Windhoek. Founded by anthropologists and filmmakers John Marshall and Claire Ritchie in 1981,⁵ the foundation has lobbied hard in the capital, Windhoek, and internationally to preserve the Ju/hoan land base and community organization. Rather than "speaking for" the Ju/hoansi, the Foundation has tried to facilitate Ju/hoan voices directly reaching governments, donors, and the media. Another of its tasks is the promotion of literacy in Ju/hoan and English so the people can

⁵Formally chartered in 1986 as the Ju/wa/Bushman Development Foundation (JBDF).

control their own communications in future. The spelling "Ju/hoansi" and the title of this book is a direct outgrowth of these literacy efforts (cf. Dickens et al. 1990).

The Foundation was a response by anthropologists to concrete initiatives by the Ju/hoansi in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Life in Tjum!kui was becoming more and more dysfunctional, and the people were becoming more and more aware that if they did not re-occupy the traditional areas they had left to join the Tjum!kui settlement, they would lose them to Nature Conservation or other settlers one day.

So in the early 1980s, tiring of the incessant squabbling, hunger and uncertainty at Tjum!kui, small groups of Ju/hoansi began to move away to reestablish themselves on their traditional *n/ores*. By 1986 eight such groups totalling 140 people had recaptured waterholes 15–30 miles from Tjum!kui; by November 1992 over 30 of these "outstations" had established themselves. Drawing upon private donations and later international agencies, the NNDFN was able to provide funds to the newly formed Ju/wa Farmers' Union (later known as the Nyae Nyae Farmers' Cooperative, or NNFC, and today [2001–2002] known as the Nyae Nyae Conservancy or NNC) to drill boreholes and purchase small herds of cattle to sell at subsidized prices to these re-formed *n/ore* groups (Ritchie, 1989).

Even with the Foundation's aid, the road to a semblance of self-reliance for the Nyae Nyae Ju/hoansi has not been easy. Before Independence, the Farmers' Cooperative had to fight interference from the South African bureaucracy that still ran Namibia. The Ju/hoansi's small boreholes and cattle-posts existed at that time in the middle of what was still regarded by the administration as a vast game reserve. Between 1983 and 1986 lions decimated the herds of cattle; and elephants, seeking water, broke down several borehole pumps. At one village the elephants were so destructive that the community had to erect an electrified fence to keep them away from the wind pump and dam. Artificially protected by Nature Conservation for tourism, lions were characterized by some Ju/hoansi as the "dogs" of Nature Conservation, kept alive to do their bidding, which in the eyes of the Ju/hoansi, was to generate tourist revenues for outsiders and kill Ju/hoan livestock.

THE LAND QUESTION: A VICTORY FOR THE JU/HOANSI

Despite all these uncertainties, the future of the Nyae Nyae people and their land took a significant step forward with the convening of the national Land Conference in Windhoek in June–July 1991. The Farmers' Co-op and the NNDFN came to the conference armed with legal opinions, maps surveying the hundreds of traditional *n/ores* (territories) into which Nyae Nyae was divided, a complete set of by-laws and constitution for the NNFC in Ju/hoansi and English, position papers, and other documents. The delegation was accompanied by lawyers, interpreters, and a press kit. Two television documentaries about the Nyae Nyae people and their plight had been made with the support of the Swedish government. The most effective components of the NNFC presentation were a graphic map plotting 200 *n/ores* and a detailed discussion of the traditional *n/ore* tenure system and how it was being adapted creatively to the tasks of economic development. It urged that any land law that came into force should acknowledge these forms of tenure and their legitimacy.

Given only five minutes to present their brief, the Farmers' Cooperative leadership worked hard to distill their position about land in Nyae Nyae and other communal

lands in Namibia down to its essentials. "Royal" Kgau /O/oo, their English–Ju/hoan interpreter from Botswana,⁶ set out their six-point summary:

1. Farmers should not be allowed to overgraze their own land and then move to other people's land and ruin it.
 2. Namibia is now free and open but permission must be asked from local residents by anyone wanting to resettle.
 3. It is not good for the land to have too many cattle: better to take good care of a few cattle, offtake the rest, and use the proceeds to establish water points and support the health of the land.
 4. The land we have is today reduced and we must protect it as best we can.
 5. Those who live on land and know it well are its best protectors.
 6. In the case of Nyae Nyae, taking care of land means that some must be set aside for wild animal breeding and some for wild plant collecting.
- If we protect our land, it will support many more of our people, for example those who were taken to the Gobabis farms as slaves and those who went to South Africa with the SADF (NNDFN Internal Document July 1991).

Royal's presentation received a standing ovation from the conference delegates, and in the end the conference adopted most of the recommendations put forward by the NNFC, which was a major victory for the Ju/hoansi. Immediately after the conference ended the Minister of Land, Resettlement, and Rehabilitation issued a statement that the *n/ore* system had been accepted by his Ministry as the basis for land allocation in Nyae Nyae, and that it would also be used, with local modification, in other areas of Namibia where Bushmen and other foraging peoples were living.

The effects of the Land Conference have continued to unfold: in August 1991 Sam Nujoma, President of Namibia and head of SWAPO, visited Eastern Bushmanland and instructed local authorities to respect Ju/hoan land rights. Most important, the regional commissioner issued an edict that paved the way for the NNFC to negotiate the peaceful removal of the neighboring pastoralists who, with their large herds of cattle, had illegally occupied southern Bushmanland in the euphoria and confusion following Independence. The removals were successfully and peacefully concluded in December 1991, setting an important precedent for traditional authorities and longtime inhabitants in communal lands all over Namibia.

Not all the political problems have come from the outside. In setting up the Farmers' Cooperative, the Ju/hoansi have had to delegate authority and act *collectively* for the first time, a difficult task for people who prided themselves on their egalitarianism (see pp. 58, 110–111). Through their elected leaders they have had to speak with one voice, not as members of one kin group or band. The leadership of the Co-op has crisscrossed Nyae Nyae dozens of times by truck and on foot holding in-terminable meetings. A recurrent theme has been how the Ju/hoansi can meet the challenges of economic and political change without losing their cultural ethos or

⁶"Royal," a nickname he had chosen himself, was one of the four Botswana high school students who had overcome great odds to make their way in life, and also to help their people (pp. 172–173).

"soul." As in other former hunter-gathering groups, holding on to the land is the key to developing both a mixed economy and a unified voice. As one elected officer of the Co-op said:

Land is something you don't divide. It's where your mother and father gave birth to you. All those little things your parents teach you to find and eat, things like *g/ /uia* and *g/o!'o*, all those things nourish you while you grow up. When your parents die, you have children yourself, and pass on what you know. What you know is your *ni:ore*: you don't divide it.

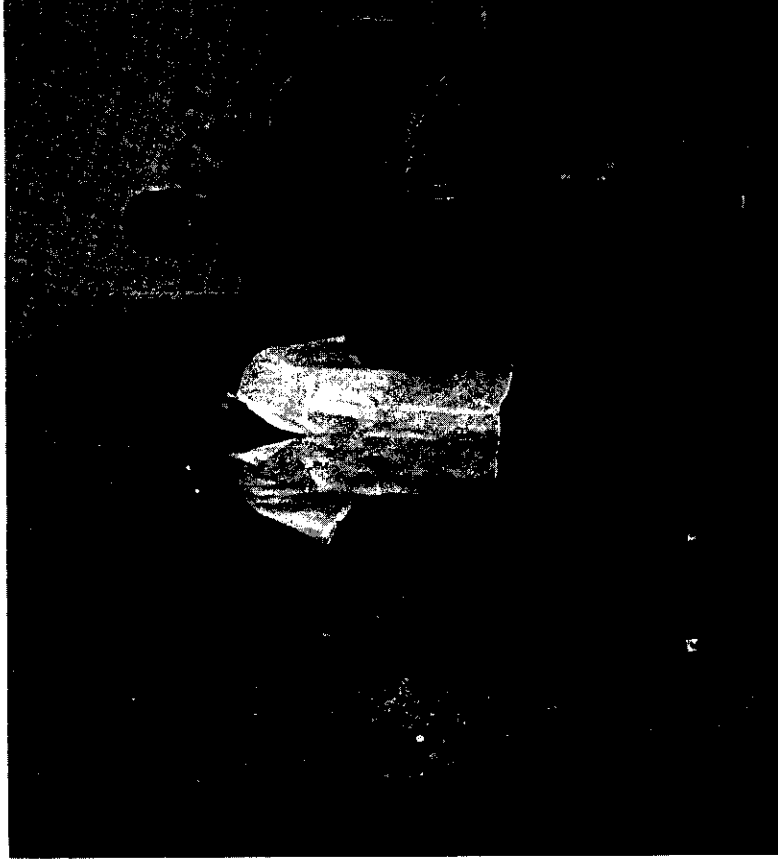
Speaking of how the Co-op can help Ju/'hoan people change, the new chairman encouraged this group by saying:

Look: if you're poor, you're weak, you have very few things—new ideas might defeat you. But things just naturally defeat you if you let them! If we work together with the Farmers' Co-op we will gradually succeed. You have to keep trying day after day to be strong. . . . We have to gather together everyone who has something in his heart to say. Everyone must speak the truth in his heart or he will get sick. But let's make sure that after we talk, the Farmers' Cooperative can speak about our land with one voice.

Becoming successful, or even viable, pastoralists and farmers—given the area's perennial ecological problems—would be difficult enough. But to be suddenly thrust into this brave new world after 30 years of colonial paternalism compounds the problem. The atmosphere of struggle and uncertainty is powerfully conveyed in John Marshall's film *Full Ourselves Up or Die* (1986) and Marshall, Ritchie, and Biesele's trilogy *Death By Myth* (1992) as well as in Biesele and Weinberg's book *Shaken Roots* (1990).

The Nyae Nyae Ju/'hoansi are struggling against long odds to establish themselves as herder-foragers and as citizens in a modernizing state. But the legacy of decades of colonialism and forced acculturation is a bitter one: chronic drinking bouts and anomie are manifest; in the SADF days soldiers would think nothing of hiring a truck to drive them 250 miles to Grootfontein for cases of beer and brandy. Today such easy money is long gone. The 30 outstation communities vary widely in their economic well-being and sense of identity, from bustling villages of 50 to rural slums on the edge of hunger. It is too early to tell whether the battle for self-reliance will be won by the Ju/'hoansi of Nyae Nyae. However, if empowerment is the key to survival, then the Land Conference and its followup *do* offer a modest basis for optimism.

What has been the impact of all this on the Ju/'hoansi of neighboring Botswana, the subject of most of this book? The experience of the NNDFN and the NNFC in Namibia highlights the urgent need for similar organizations across the border. In November 1991 the Dobe and /Xai/ xai Ju/'hoansi, along with Bushmen of other linguistic groups to the south, held a joint meeting with the NNFC, and one of the outcomes is that the Botswana people were mobilizing for action. Through the 1990s they addressed international agencies in Gaborone directly for emergency aid to drill boreholes, so that they could apply as syndicates for grazing land—even if they have no cattle—before they are boxed out of the last land available. In the experience of the KPF and NNDFN, they will need strategic help from outsiders—transport and communications—in order to achieve this. Gaborone is 800 miles—



The Executive of the Nyae Nyae Farmer's Co-op and Dr. Megan Biesele and Richard Lee at a meeting in Windhoek, Namibia.

not 800 kilometers—from Dobe. Until the land base is secured the future of the Dobe area Ju/'hoansi will hang in the balance.⁷

JU/'HOANSI AT THE MILLENNIUM: PROGRESS AND POVERTY

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the people of Dobe continue to travel the road away from their hunting and gathering past and toward an uncertain future. On our most recent visits to Dobe village in 1999 and 2001, both Megan Biesele and myself noted some major changes. First, the long and twisting 90-mile road to the village had been vastly improved, with travel time cut from 6–7 hours to 2.5. At Dobe waterhole, something new had emerged: the 150 residents were living

⁷All the remarkable quotes in this chapter from Ju/'hoan speakers, with the exception of Chicho Nxauwe's (p. 173) and /Toma's (p. 175), were recorded in the field and translated by Megan Biesele in her capacity as professional documentarian for the Nyae Nyae Farmers' Cooperative. In comparison with more conventional anthropological data, these quotes represent privileged communications that could have been gathered in no other way except through Biesele's involvement in a people's grassroots movement. This illustrates the quality of the insights possible through the kind of anthropological engagement discussed in more detail in Chapter 13, pp. 196–197.



Dobe people returning to the village from a day's work on a government road improvement project (1999).

in eight hamlets drawing their water from a new borehole, engine, and water tank. But the space in front of the borehole had created a sort of "downtown" where people congregated. The pride of the village though, was a soccer field, where teams of local and outside youths played a daily pickup game. Nearby, a preschool had been set up to give students two years of preparation before attending the main primary school as boarders, in !Kangwa 20 kilometers away. Dobe had become more cosmopolitan with a dozen outsiders resident: there were border guards patrolling the Namibian frontier two kilometers to the west, as well as veterinary officials, teachers, and construction workers.

On the downside, home-brew sellers, formerly confined to !Kangwa, had brought their trade to "downtown" Dobe, bringing daily drinking parties and social dysfunction. Dobe's most traumatic experience, however, had been in 1996 when a districtwide outbreak of bovine pleuro-pneumonia (which, it should be noted, is *not* mad-cow disease or foot-and-mouth disease) had necessitated destruction of the entire cattle population of the Northwest District. Some 300,000 head were slaughtered, including several thousand in the Dobe area, and their carcasses buried by bulldozers. Ju/'hoansi who were slowly building up their herds since the 1970s, lost everything. Although herd owners were compensated, the process of rebuilding herds has been slow.

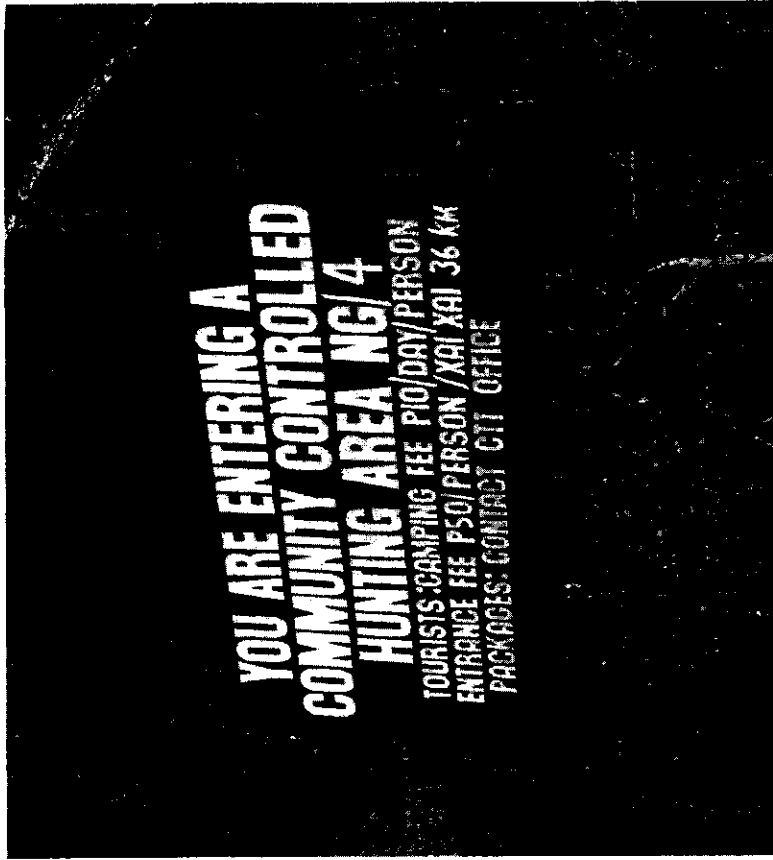


The central borehole and water tank at "downtown" Dobe.



The daily soccer game at Dobe where both local and outside players diffuse tensions and enjoy recreation.

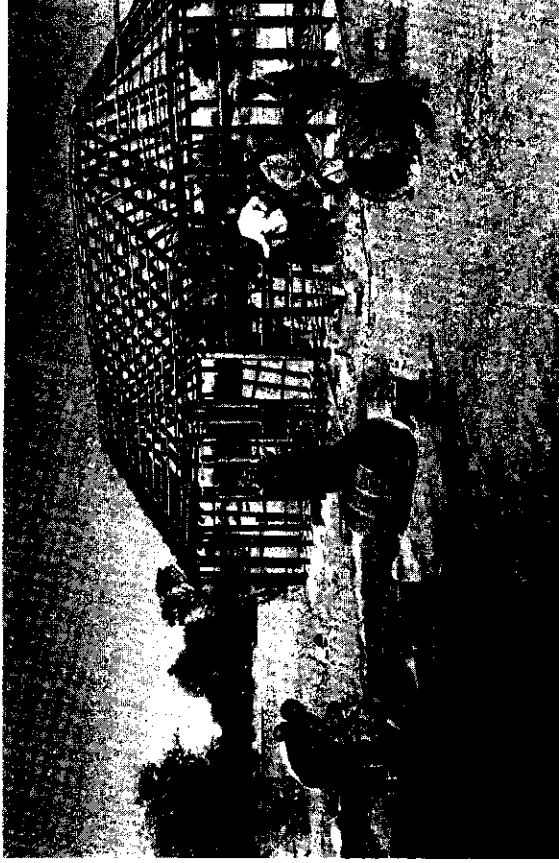
Ecologists however, were heartened at the welcome relief of pressure on the fragile ecosystem by the sudden withdrawal of bovine biomass. The new situation refocused attention on a prime pre-existing "asset" of the Dobe area: the still-abundant game populations. The creation of Wildlife Conservancies, under



The new Community Based Game Management Project at /Xai/ xai posts their boundary marker on the road not far from Dobe.

Botswana's Community-Based Natural Resource Management Programs (CBNRM), is an effort to combine environmental conservation with economic development. Small-scale wildlife conservancies have sprung up throughout Africa, 28 in Botswana alone. At /Xai/ xai, south of Dobe, the Thlabololo Development Trust (TDT) also known as the (CTT), originally with Dutch overseas assistance, has created a wildlife management area controlled by the Ju/'hoansi. The Trust caters to tourists who want to experience Ju/'hoan life and see game, while limited subsistence hunting and gathering by Ju themselves is allowed. The TDT had revenues of P400,000 (About \$80,000 US) in 1999-2000.

The Ju of Dobe are in the process of setting up a similar wildlife conservancy under the guidance of the Kuru Development Trust, a successful Botswana-based NGO with funding from Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and the European Union. In preparation for the Conservancy, a land use and mapping project was instituted at Dobe, making the most thorough study of local ecology since the intensive research of the 1960s. The Land Use Study has demonstrated the feasibility of the Kalahari People's Fund initiative of the 1980s to drill a series of boreholes on Dobe's outer margins. Now successfully revived, the plan will resettle Ju families and secure their



The new branch office of the Kuru Development Trust under construction in "downtown" Dobe, July 1999.

land against the threat of land encroachment by Tswana cattle syndicates. As of April 2001, the Trust's name was changed to the Tocado Development Trust and two boreholes had been successfully drilled. The careful groundwork of the renowned development anthropologist, Dr. Robert Hitchcock, of the University of Nebraska, has been a key to implementation of these plans.

Across the border in Namibia, the 1990s Ju/'hoansi of Nyae Nyae have traveled a similarly rocky road of triumphs and failures. After the independence of development the successful National Land Conference, there was much discussion of development options for the people of Nyae Nyae. After feasibility studies sponsored by the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation, the Nyae Nyae Wildlife Conservancy was set up in 1995. It was the result of a bold initiative called the "Living in a Finite Environment" (LIFE) Project, funded by USAID, that sought to combine conservation, game management, tourism, and rural economic development.

In 1996 the Tsumkwe Lodge opened, offering tours to selected Ju/'hoan villages and, for the first time in the area, lodge-style accommodations. The Nyae Nyae Farmers' Cooperative launched its own eco-cultural-tourism program around the same time.

The early 1990s had been a stormy period for the Farmers' Cooperative and its funding source, the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation. Infighting among Foundation personnel over conflicting philosophies of change and management styles had mirrored dissension within the Cooperative itself. In a dramatic move in 1996 the Ju/'hoansi asked Foundation personnel to withdraw to Windhoek and leave running of the Co-op to the Ju themselves. After a general shakeup of both organizations non-Ju staff were cut back and Ju took over all management positions. The results have been mixed. Despite the efforts of the LIFE project and the NNDFN, the 37 Nyae Nyae villages continue to vary widely in viability. In a recent study, Polly Wiessner

evaluated the subsistence levels of a sample of villages and found over one-third were experiencing a serious shortfall in food supply (Wiessner, 1998). At the Co-op's Baraka headquarters, vehicles have been rolled and rendered undriveable. Recently the Nyae Nyae Farmers' Co-op renamed itself the Nyae Nyae Conservancy in recognition of the importance of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) for the future of the Ju/'hoansi.

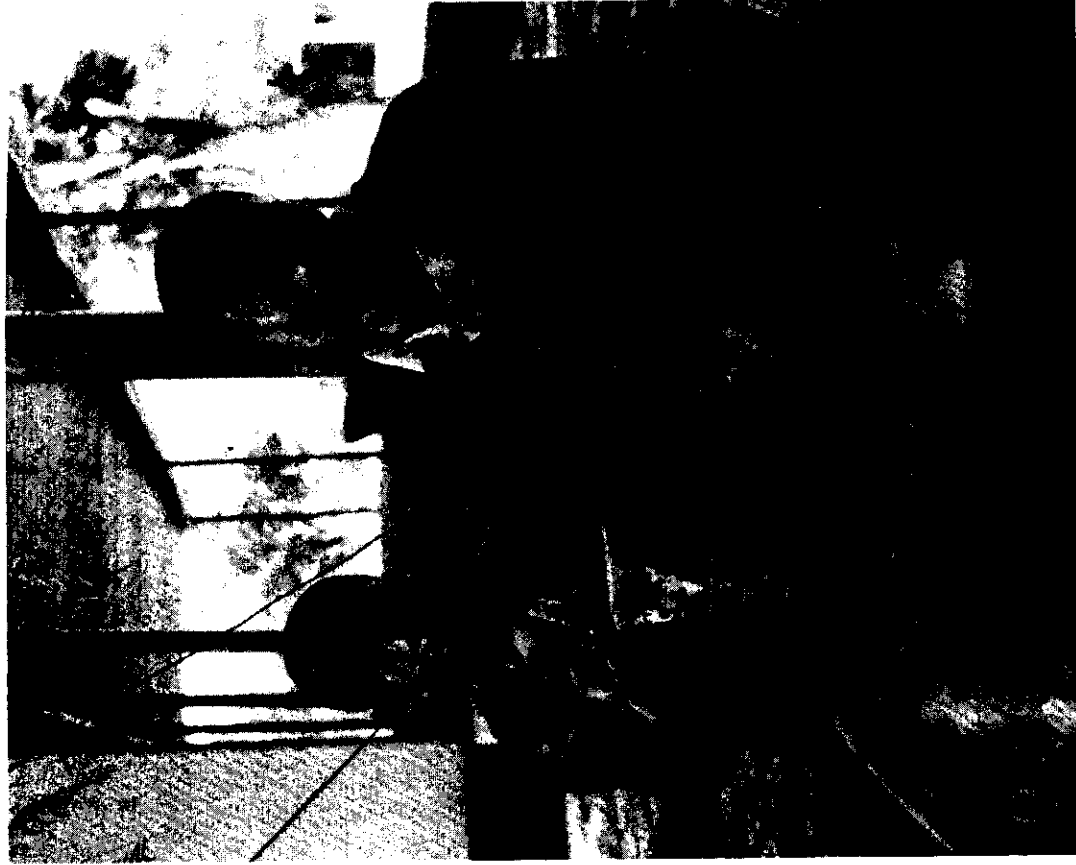
The Village Schools Project has been one of the bright spots in Nyae Nyae. The VSP offers three years of preschool training in their own language and in English for 6-8-year-olds to prepare them for the government primary school at Tsumkwe. Initiated by the Nyae Nyae community with the support of Megan Biesele and others in the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation in 1990, the project has assisted hundreds of Ju children with the culture shock of the transition from village life to life in an African residential school.

Small Victories

To give some life to these broad accounts, let us look at the lives of several individuals. Chu'iko N/auwe (Chiqo Nxauwe), the lively young woman from Bate, had been the first female student from the Dobe area to reach high school. Graduating from a junior secondary school in 1989, Chu'iko was hired as a clerk-interpreter in the !Kung San Works, a craft-buying operation in Maun. After completing several years in that post she then taught school at /Xai/ xai, before going to nursing school to train as a family planning educator. Now in her early thirties, with two children (though no husband) Chu'iko has taken the post of family planning educator attached to the !Kangwa Clinic. She dispenses birth control advice and holds workshops to explain their options to rural women, the first Dobe area woman to hold such a high-status position. Recently Chu'iko has added AIDS education to her job description.

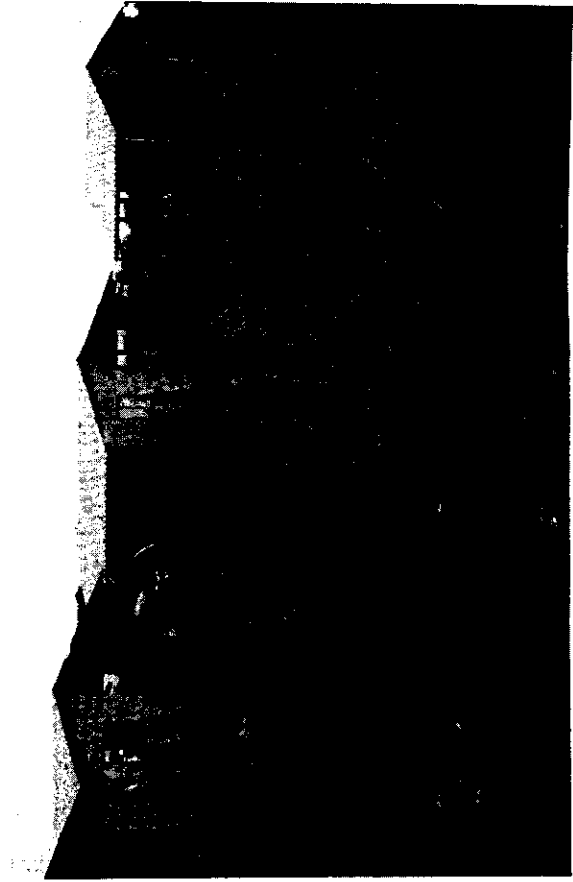
The Gods Must Be Crazy (1984) was filmed on location in the Nyae Nyae area by South African director, Jamie Uys (pronounced "Ace") in 1978. Along with its sequel (1990), it became the highest-grossing non-U.S. film of all time. The role of "the Bushman" was played by /Gaq'o, a 30-year-old Ju man from Tjum!kui (Tsumkwe). Portrayed in the press kit as a leather-clad hunter-gatherer, /Gaq'o in fact had never hunted and was employed in the Tjum!kui primary school as a cook (Davis, 1996:90-91)! Despite the films' grossing over \$100 million U.S., Uys paid /Gaq'o only the equivalent of U.S. \$2,000. The arts and film community of South Africa protested this scandalous underpayment, and before his death Uys gave /Gaq'o \$20,000 U.S. plus a monthly stipend. With the money /Gaq'o built a western style house on the main street of Tjum!kui, where he can still be seen by backpacking tourists on the porch, spending time with his family.

The roller-coaster life of Kgau Royal /O'oo mirrors the ups and downs of the Ju/'hoansi from the 1960s to the 1990s. Born in 1964 (I was present at his birth) Kgau grew up in a close-knit, though unconventional family. His father had been a good hunter while his mother and older sisters had participated in the new home-brew economy at !Kangwa. Displaying a keen intelligence as a child, Kgau was among the very first Ju/'hoan children to attend !Kangwa school after it opened in 1973. By 1985 the youthful-looking Kgau had made it to Maun Junior Secondary School, the first Ju from the Dobe area to do so. After graduation his excellent English got him many jobs



Chiqo Nxauwe, the Family Health Educator with her son, at the !Kangwa Clinic, Botswana (1999).

working as an interpreter with government offices, visiting anthropologists, and film-makers. His personal life was stormy, however, with changing jobs and a succession of girl friends. After Namibia's 1989 move to Independence under the democratic leadership of SWAPO, Kgau /O'oo emigrated to the new nation to answer the demand for educated English speakers. There he made his mark in the Nyae Nyae Farmers Co-op as the presenter for the Nyae Nyae position paper at the National Land Conference (see p. 179), as spokesperson at international fora, and as Namibian President



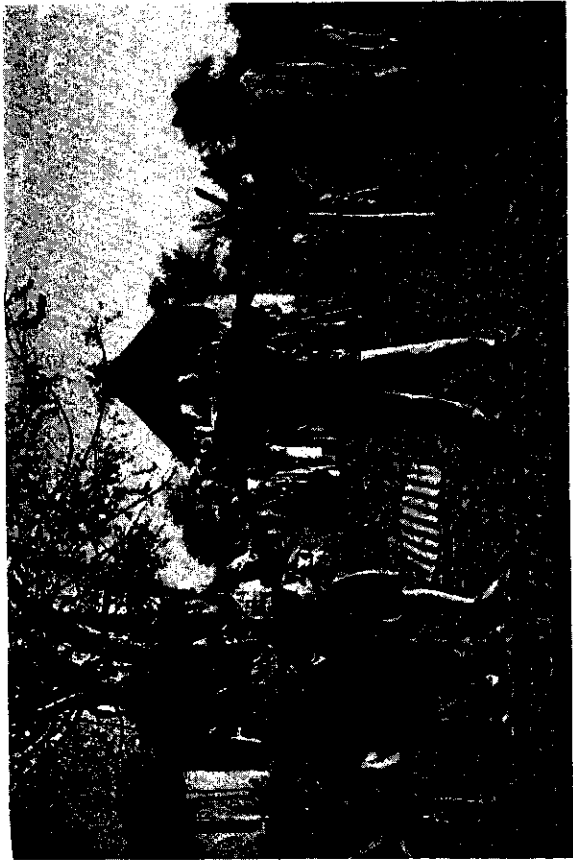
Children at the Bushman "location" at Tjum!kui (Tsumkwe) Namibia. Urbanization comes to the Ju/'hoansi.



The Honourable Royal Kgau /O/oo (standing left), Ju/'hoan member of Namibian parliament, and his family, with R. B. Lee (standing second from right), August 2001.

Sam Nujoma's personal interpreter when he toured Bushmanland. His language skills were key in his co-authoring with Megan Biesele the book *San* (Biesele and /O/oo, 1997).

Despite these successes, Kgau's personal life, like so many of his generation and background, continued to be unstable. Yet after 1997 Kgau Royal /O/oo made a dramatic personal turnaround. Elected to the post of Traditional Tribal Authority at Tjum!kui, he stopped drinking and devoted himself fully to the welfare of his



The elected headman at Dobe, //Kau, jokingly expresses the tensions and frustrations of his office, being pulled in all directions.

constituents. His third wife, Paula, from an Angolan !Kung family displaced by the war, was a major influence in setting him straight. News of his good work spread, and in 1999 he was summoned to Windhoek by President Nujoma. The Namibian constitution permits the president to appoint members of Parliament from under-represented marginalized minorities. Nujoma offered Kgau the seat and he accepted. Now Kgau /O/oo sits in national Parliament, owns a home and car in Windhoek, and stays in touch with his constituents in Tjum!kui by fax and cell phone.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS: MANDELA AND AFTER

The 1990s saw tumultuous changes in the political landscape of southern Africa: the Independence of Namibia, followed closely by the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990 and his coming to power in South Africa's first democratic elections (in 1994). The Ju/'hoansi speak of the recent era as the time of "//xabe" or "opening up," as new political and cultural spaces opened up for San peoples. The founding of the Workgroup for Indigenous Minorities of Southern Africa (WIMSA) as an important umbrella group based in Windhoek has created a forum at which leaders from Dobe, Tsumkwe, Baraka, and many other communities can come together to get a sense of common problems and lobby for change. WIMSA delegations have traveled to Geneva, London, Stockholm, and New York and have received very sympathetic hearings from governments and NGOs. Wildlife Conservancies and schools programs are just two of the kinds of grassroots programs receiving international support. More information on WIMSA and many other southern African Indigenous organizations can be found at the Kalahari Peoples Fund website (<http://www.kalaharipeoples.org>).



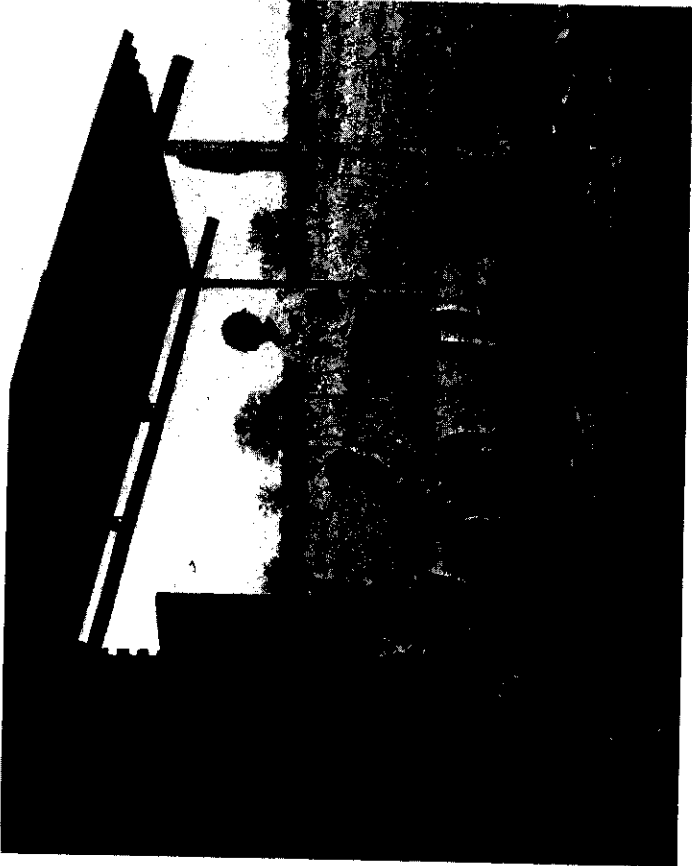
Kgau Royal/O'oo (left), the Member of Namibian Parliament for Tjum!kui (Tsumkwe) District meets with a constituent in his district.

THE CHALLENGE OF HIV/AIDS

In 1994, after successfully surviving the hardships of long-running regional wars, the legacy of colonialism, and the horrors of the apartheid system, the peoples of southern Africa looked forward to a bright future after the coming to power in South Africa of Nelson Mandela's government. For the first time, non-racial democracy had been achieved throughout the region. However, a new and ominous threat was already disrupting the lives of first thousands and then millions in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, and other countries.

Today the countries of southern Africa have the highest rates of HIV/AIDS in the world. U.N. figures for June 2000 show a seropositive rate among adults of 19.54 percent in Namibia, 19.94 percent in South Africa, and a staggering 35.8 percent in Botswana. The epidemic threatens to undo the development gains of recent decades and cause incalculable hardship and suffering among the ordinary peoples of the region. In certain districts in Botswana life expectancy has already fallen from 55 to 37. In parts of KwaZulu-Natal, one-half of all adults are carrying the virus.

Geographically the Ju/'hoansi are located in the heart of the world region hardest hit by AIDS. How has the AIDS epidemic affected the Ju/'hoan people? As late as 1987 there were no cases of AIDS reported from Dobe or Nyae Nyae and the peoples of the region wondered if the disease would somehow bypass them. By the mid-1990s however, cases began to appear; both areas now have many. Although reliable figures are lacking, there may be between 50 and 100 HIV-positive individuals, in a population on both sides of the border of about 2,500 Ju/'hoan people. Although this figure may seem high, it is not. Compared to levels in cities, towns, and along truck routes elsewhere in Namibia and Botswana, the incidence of the



Young Ju/'hoan men and women at the Tjum!kui "location." Home-brew sellers and "she-beens" have become a point of transmission for HIV.

disease is quite low, between 3 and 6 percent HIV positive compared to national averages of 20 to 35 percent.

Since 1996 Professor Ida Susser, of the City University of New York, and I have been studying social and cultural aspects of the AIDS epidemic in Namibia and Botswana. In the course of this work we have traveled widely and interviewed men and women in urban and rural settings (Susser, 2000; Lee, 2001). In Africa AIDS is primarily a heterosexual disease; transmitted mainly through unprotected vaginal intercourse. The most effective means of preventing transmission is condom use. For a variety of cultural and economic reasons, abstinence and/or strict monogamy do not appear to be viable solutions. Recognizing the realities of the situation, governments and international agencies have made condoms widely available for free through clinics and health posts. For example at Tjum!kui, Namibia, the international organization Health Unlimited as well as the government clinic both distribute condoms.

The problem is that despite the known dangers, nationally many Namibian men object to the use of condoms. Men view the condom as implying unfaithfulness and become angry if the issue is raised. This has placed Namibian women in a very difficult situation. Here a striking contrast has emerged in how young Ju/'hoansi women negotiate sex compared to women in other Namibian ethnic groups. Among Ovambo and Damara women, if a husband or boyfriend does not want to use a condom, they say there is little they can do about it for fear of being abused or abandoned. In our interviews, Ju/'hoan women by contrast, told us that whether to have sex with a man

is their decision and is not being forced on them. One said she would not agree to sleep with a man unless he used a condom, while other girls expressed caution in entering into any kind of liaison.

There is a remarkable link here to Ju/hoan women's long-noted sense of empowerment and high status relative to men (see Chapter 6). It has proven to be a valuable defense in the fight against AIDS and certainly contributes to the lower HIV-positive rates noted for the Ju/hoansi. This contrast highlights the high status of Ju women, noted in the more "traditional" past (Draper, 1975), and evidently this sense of autonomy has proven crucial to their avoidance, so far, of the most devastating effects of the AIDS crisis.

Unfortunately, that is not the whole story. Not all Ju women are as thoughtful and prudent as were our informants. There are pockets both in Namibia and Botswana where young Ju women participate in the drinking culture of shebeens and homebrew establishments catering largely to men from outside the communities. These liaisons have created points of entry for HIV infection and from these AIDS "hot spots" the virus may spread to the wider community.

One of the initiatives currently underway by the Kalahari Peoples Fund is to produce AIDS education kits appropriate to Ju/hoan language and cultural values. The KPF is convinced that such materials must be part of all future development work and included in every project from well-digging to schooling to natural resource management. WIMSA (the Workgroup for Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa) has endorsed these initiatives and is extending them to other indigenous groups. The next decade will be crucial in whether the Ju and other San communities are able to develop the coping skills that will enable them to survive in the Age of AIDS. More information on this work will be posted on the Kalahari Peoples Fund website (<http://www.kalaharipeoples.org>).

13/Anthropological Practice and Lessons of the Ju/hoansi

As one of the most thoroughly documented and cross-examined foraging societies in anthropological history, and as the darlings of the mass media, the Ju/hoansi—!Kung have come to occupy a special place in the scholarly and popular imagination as a rich source of models and speculation on past human society. But as we have seen in Chapter 12, with each year the leather-clad, bow-and-arrow wielding Ju/hoansi look less and less like hunter-gatherers. Their remoteness and desert location, so long effective barriers to colonization, no longer protect them. The cash nexus, poverty, class formation, bureaucratic control, and media manipulation, as well as anomie and alienation, are all part of the daily lives of the Ju/hoansi—!Kung people in the 1990s and 2000s. Like other foragers they have become increasingly drawn into the world system.

The changes have been so far-reaching and so rapid that many anthropologists and others have failed to absorb the implications, and this has resulted in a curious schism or division in scholarly and popular perceptions of them.

One school of thought, labelled "traditionalists," attempt to deal with the changes by ignoring them. They see today's dire circumstances and frankly, liked the Ju/hoansi better "the way they were," when they dressed in skins and foraged for a living. Refusing to acknowledge the passing of the old ways, these anthropologists seem determined to focus exclusively on foraging behavior either to build models of the evolution of human behavior, or to perpetuate the romantic image of the "noble savage," even in the face of contradictory evidence. The film *The Gods Must Be Crazy* is an obvious example of this tendency; however, some contemporary models in evolutionary ecology fall into this error, too.¹

But another school of thought, sometimes labelled "revisionist," has attempted to come to grips with the changes in the opposite way; they see in the Ju/hoansi's current poverty and exploitation, evidence not of novelty, but of continuity with the past. They argue that the Ju/hoansi are not hunters and gatherers at all in the conventional sense. Ju/hoan people have been dominated for centuries; thus their recent foraging ways are part of a culture of poverty and can bear no resemblance to the ancestral cultures of the Later Stone Age (e.g., Wilmsen, 1989; cf. Gordon, 1992; Lewin, 1988).

¹Not all such models can be so characterized; but those that treat foragers as isolates and exclude consideration of a broader social context are out of touch with today's realities. One widely cited study of "optimal foraging" for example, barely acknowledged that the foragers in question, whose behavior was the basis for elaborate model-building, spent the greater part of their year living sedentary lives on store-bought rations on a mission station.

I am convinced that neither the traditionalist nor the revisionist position can do justice to the realities of Ju/hoan life today, or in the past. Indeed, one of my goals in this book has been to bring together these shattered perceptions and to restore to the Ju/hoansi a semblance of coherence. To the revisionists I would argue that the dire conditions of today's Ju/hoansi cannot simply be projected onto their entire history. In fact recent research has found evidence for a degree of viability and autonomy for Ju/hoansi as foragers in the last century and well into the 1960s (Chapter 2, pp. 18-22, and Appendix B). And to the traditionalists I would point out that the Ju/hoansi didn't stop being a people when the last hunter laid down his bow and picked up a transistor radio. The Ju persist as a people, embattled and struggling, but a people nonetheless with a strong sense of themselves.

When anthropologists struggle to respond to the dramatic changes in Dobe and Nyae Nyae life, and in the lives of other band and tribal peoples, they are grappling with still larger issues concerning "science," "humanism," and the ethics of fieldwork. Many of the principles that were once taken for granted are now up for grabs. At stake is the broader question of whether a "science-oriented" research strategy with its roots in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment constitutes an adequate basis for the practice of anthropology in the year 2000 and beyond. The Enlightenment, embodied in the ideals of the French and the American (and Russian) revolutions, saw science and democracy as two elements of a program of human emancipation. Scientific progress and political reform were supposed to be the twin bases for liberating the human potential. But things haven't always worked out that way, and many are asking whether this long-potent combination of research strategy and political rallying cry can still do service in the age of the "end of history" and post-modern disillusionment?

There are two responses to this problem: some reject science on political grounds while others, equally sincere, reject political commitment on "scientific" grounds. Practically speaking, both tendencies question the idea that an "objective," "hands-off" science will actually solve the world's problems, and both lead in different ways to an attitude of disengagement. In the discipline of anthropology at large, responses have varied widely: some don't even acknowledge that there is a problem and carry on as if nothing were amiss: the science as business-as-usual attitude of the traditionalists. Others see the changes as so catastrophic that they are grounds for rejecting all previous understandings, leading toward the dark postmodern visions of the revisionists (Lee, 1992a).

But these are not the only possible outcomes. Some anthropologists reject neither science *nor* political engagement; they seek to combine science with a sense of political and ethical awareness which, in current jargon, has been called reflexivity. By and large the members of both the Marshall and the Harvard Kalahari research groups have avoided either of the extremes. In different ways they have been cognizant of change while recognizing continuities and have tried to combine the methods of science with a recognition of changing political realities.

Most of the original researchers have maintained a degree of focus, continuing to remain active in research and advocacy among the Ju/hoansi into the 1990s and 2000s. Lorna Marshall, at age 100, recently completed her second monograph on Nyae Nyae Ju/hoansi belief and ritual (L. Marshall, 1999). John Marshall's ongoing filmmaking has won international acclaim (Kapfer, Petermann, and Thoms, 1991).

Many of the Harvard group continued to do field research in the Kalahari into the 1980s and 1990s. Megan Biesele, Nicholas Blurton-Jones, Alison Brooks, Pat Draper, Henry Harpending, Nancy Howell, Richard Katz, Richard Lee, the late Marjorie Shostak, and John Yellen have all made one or more trips to the area in the period 1984-2000.

Former students such as Robert Hitchcock, Elizabeth Cashdan, Jim Ebert, Helga Vierich, and Jacqueline Solway have produced theses and articles on Kalahari research and have gone on to productive careers in their own right (Hitchcock, 1977, 1982; Cashdan, 1987, 1990; Ebert, 1979, 1989; Vierich, 1982; Kent and Vierich, 1989; Solway, 1990). All their studies have attempted, in different ways, to document the pace of change and its impacts.

My own way of approaching the San has changed over the years and these changes have taken me away from the position I started with. I no longer believe that studies of contemporary hunter-gatherers are primarily a tool for understanding the evolution of human behavior. Understanding hunter-gatherer ecology, however important, is not enough. One has to both build on it and transcend it by looking at adaptation in a much broader sense, including the internal dynamics of foragers and their articulation with wider political economies. This has led to a shift in my thinking, away from an emphasis on hunting and gathering as modes of subsistence and toward the broader concept of Communal Mode of Production (Lee, 1988, 1990a, 1992a; Leacock and Lee, 1982; Lee and Daly, 1999).

A second change has to do with moving away from hunter-gatherers as an "object" of study and toward research as a more collaborative exercise, in which anthropologists consciously give way, allowing the people to take over direction of research and set the agenda in terms of their own priorities. While this is a still unrealized goal for many of us, some anthropologists have moved further in this direction.

An excellent illustration of this change in research strategy can be found in the San research. For some anthropologists, the magnitude of the dislocations experienced by the San has made it morally impossible to continue as before: some researchers have become actively committed to an anthropology of "grassroots" development. Starting in Botswana, Robert Hitchcock has become an internationally known advocate of the rights of indigenous peoples (e.g., Hitchcock, 1988; Morris and Hitchcock, 1992; Hitchcock and Holm, 1993). Also, John Marshall's and Megan Biesele's years of involvement with the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia (along with Claire Ritchie) has brought them into a very different relationship with the Ju/hoansi, one not envisioned by the premises of anthropological research current in the 1960s.² Yet even here, many of the traditional ethnographic field methods—collecting genealogies, land-use surveys, and analysis of political processes—remain vital to the work of the NNDFN (Biesele et al., 1989; Biesele and Weinberg, 1990; J. Marshall and C. Ritchie, 1984).

The Foundation's basic approach has been to provide strategic support to a peoples' movement, the Nyae Nyae Farmers' Cooperative, now known as the Nyae Nyae Conservancy. The anthropologists concerned have made available to development

²An early move in this direction was the formation 30 years ago of the Kalahari Peoples' Fund, a non-profit foundation based in Austin, Texas.



John Marshall (center), co-founder of the NNDFN, and Tsamkxao Tomu, President of the Nyae Nyae Farmers Cooperative (second left) meet with village elders and friends from Dobe.

workers, government bodies, and the people themselves—via the Cooperative—all the social, cultural, and ecological understandings built up by research since the time of the Marshall expeditions (1951ff) and reinforced by the long friendship between the Ju and the Marshall family. Clearly this approach involves more than collecting data and publishing results: it has involved a radically new communication process pursued over years, in tandem with the peoples' own grassroots organization.

Megan Biesele's work with the Foundation from 1987–1994 illustrates the changing role of the anthropologist. Drawing on her skills as a folklorist and student of Ju/hoan traditional ideology, she sought to expand further their already rich and nuanced traditional concepts of land use and social organization and apply them to new settings and new challenges. While other researchers carried out the censuses and land-use surveys, much of Biesele's work has consisted of attending the frequent Co-op meetings and transcribing and translating recordings of these meetings. These transcripts have documented the growth of political self-awareness and the establishment of a Ju/hoan voice in Namibian national politics. Biesele worked closely with Royal O'oo and the Co-op leaders to develop the brief presented to the Namibian National Land Conference of June 1991 (see Chapter 12, p. 179).

As any reader of this book will have learned, the Ju/hoansi have always been eloquent and perceptive. But this eloquence and perceptiveness has only recently extended to a grasp of the realities of current national politics, as this statement by Oza !Amace, a former northern !Kung, at a recent NNFC meeting shows:

It looks to outsiders like Ju/hoansi have no sense. People who can write have come to see those who can't write as being *behind*. Let's make sure our children go to school and learn to write. Today our people have no work, and try to make a living by selling bows and arrows and tortoise shells. . . . But we have to begin to work with other Namibian people

to find a way to live. . . . It seems that the people holding the paper-sticks [pencils] are the ones who have the say over everything, and we who have no pencils are behind. . . . The Black people and the colored people all have been to school and have pencils and have sense and have things to eat, but not the Ju/hoansi.³

The Ju/hoansi in these transcriptions do not appear as uniformly heroic and insightful, along with eloquent calls to action, there are notes of despair, confusion, and "false consciousness," reflecting the complex cross-currents in Ju/hoan life in the 1990s and 2000s.

In situations such as these with the rapid emergence of political consciousness, what can an anthropologist's role be? The role of listener—while people hash out their own problems—may be a large part of it. John Marshall has called this work "a kind of cultural therapy," providing a forum for the exploration of nontraditional political and social issues. Is this to be the anthropology of the future, or at least one version of it? The point at which science and reflexivity meet is perhaps the most compelling feature of this combination of advocacy research with long-term field work in anthropology.

The Nyae Nyae Development Foundation's novel philosophy and goals have been seen by some as a model for anthropology in the future; but others have argued that this is not "science" but "advocacy" and by becoming advocates the scholars forever lose their objectivity. This is a serious charge. Dealing with crises as "advocates" or "interveners" clearly alters the work of anthropologists, but what is the alternative, if what is at stake is the final loss of a secure land base, the loss of which would foreclose any possibility of future self-determination?

To the anticipated charge of conventional science that such intervention creates distortion, I would agree with Biesele's response that human subjects have always been conscious and active on their own behalf; only the *degree* of their involvement in research has varied. We would argue that knowledge produced in a situation where people are fully involved is different, perhaps, but no less important. If anything, it is clearer and more vital.

THE CHANGING IMAGE OF THE JU/HOANSI

In recent years anthropologists have watched with dismay as their traditional subjects, the world's so-called "primitive" societies, have been disappearing with the speed of light. Group after group has been settled, censused, inoculated, administered, and put to work in the fields, sweatshops, and factories of the New World Order. The very idea that anthropologists as recently as the 1950s or 1960s could have spent their time with people who dressed in skin clothing and hunted and gathered for a living is actually a source of embarrassment for many of our colleagues. They seem to take a perverse pride in the fact that the world system has penetrated every nook and cranny and that now even the Ju/hoansi are wearing Levis and drinking Coke.

Others take a different view: for these observers it is a source of astonished delight that the Ju/hoansi and others like them could have resisted the steamroller of

³This quote has an interesting background. It is from a meeting taped entirely by Farmers' Co-op workers and intentionally not attended by Foundation staff. The tape was furnished to Megan Biesele, with permission, for transcription and translation for the Cooperative's and the Foundation's archives.

modernity for so long. In the 2000s observers remain amazed at the creative persistence of Ju/hoan culture in the face of massive outside pressure.

It is these divergent views that underlie the schism in perceptions of the Ju/hoansi discussed at the outset (pp. 193–194), what I have called the “crisis in hunter-gatherer studies” (Lee, 1992a). For some partisans in these often-heated debates there seems to be only two alternatives: either the Ju/hoansi are totally pristine, or if not, they must be totally dominated. But why does living in the present mean that a people must be totally divorced from their past? Modernity and the market are powerful and pervasive; but they are not *that* powerful or *that* pervasive. The Ju/hoansi are enduring but not unchanging; they are adapting to the world system as fast as they can. Their newfound political and technical skills augment a formidable array of knowledge and practices inherited from their foremothers and forefathers: their language, kinship and naming systems, rituals and mythology, subsistence practices, and above all, their ironic sensibility are the firm bases on which they are constructing their future.

What accounts for the ongoing vitality of the Dobe and Nyae Nyae Ju/hoansi and of so many “indigenous” peoples like them? It is obvious that there is no simple answer to this question. However, I am persuaded that one of their “secret weapons” for survival is their adherence to a communal mode of production, an ethic of sharing and egalitarianism; put simply it is *their ability to reproduce themselves as a society while limiting the accumulation of wealth and power*. Their commitment to egalitarian politics and reciprocity gives them a tremendous source of strength and persistence. Communal relations of production are a widespread and well-documented phenomenon, found among the Ju/hoansi and a number of hunter-gatherers in a wide variety of historical settings. They are also found among many “tribal” peoples with mixed economies of foraging and horticulture, among former foragers in peripheral capitalism, as well as in some peasant societies (for example, Andean Peru).

It is unfortunate that for many North Americans the term “communal” conjures up associations with “communism” and that this reflex reaction, a product of the Cold War, has led many people to avoid considering the underlying meaning of the concept at all. But as I have pointed out elsewhere (Lee, 1990a) *primitive* communist societies have almost nothing in common with the heavily bureaucratic and authoritarian state structures of the twentieth century “actually existing Socialism.” In fact they are the precise opposite of the planned, centralized, media-saturated mass societies of the twentieth century—East and West.

If we agree for the moment on the *existence* of communal relations of production in diverse non-industrial settings, the next question is how is it to be explained? Briefly, these societies operate within the confines of a metaphorical “ceiling and floor”: a ceiling above which one may not accumulate wealth and power and a floor below which one may not sink. These limits on both aggrandizement and destitution, on upward and downward mobility, are maintained by powerful social mechanisms, such as “insulting the meat” and other levelling devices (Lee, 1990a:242–245). “Eating Christmas in the Kalahari” (see Appendix A) is a classic example of these levelling devices in action. Such societies therefore have social and political resources of their own and are not just sitting ducks waiting to adopt the first hierarchical model that comes along.

This is not to imply that these non-state, communally-based societies lived in a state of perfect equality. Hunter-gatherers may exhibit some differences in wealth and



Twin'la and Kasupe enjoying a good joke at Dobe in 1987.

power and they are certainly *not* nonviolent. I prefer to follow the argument developed by Harriet Rosenberg in her research on !Kung aging and caregiving, set out in Chapter 7. Rosenberg uses the term “entitlement” to account for the ways in which !Kung elderly were cared for by relatives and nonrelatives alike, such that no one, not even childless people, would be denied access to support in old age. This was part of a general phenomenon in !Kung society in which everyone claimed, and was recognized as being “entitled” to, the necessities of life, by right of being a member of the society.

!Kung elders do not see themselves as burdens. They are not apologetic if they are not able to produce enough to feed themselves. They expect others to care for them when they can no longer do so. Entitlement to care is naturalized within the culture. Elders do not have to negotiate care as if it were a favor; rather it is perceived as a right. (Rosenberg, 1990:29)

Fortunately in the wider world there are signs that people in key places are learning the lessons and recognizing the value of the world of the “primitive.” There are signs of convergence between the Ju/hoan agenda and the changing perspectives among international development agencies, governments, aid workers, media, and scholars. There is recent growth of interest in the notions of “small is beautiful,” of

"tribal wisdom," and "biodiversity," as seen on the cover of *Time*, the pages of *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, the *Millennium* television series, the Rio Earth Summit and in "green" grassroots politics everywhere (Eaton, Shostak, and Konner, 1988; Durning, 1992). The United Nations declared 1993–2003 the "Decade of Indigenous People," and in 2000 Pope John Paul publicly apologized to the world's indigenous peoples for historic injustices committed by the Catholic Church (along with apologies to other oppressed minorities).

Two specific examples may illustrate this point. Long ignored or downplayed, the communal mode of production has recently made a comeback of sorts and has become a serious subject of study. Theories of common property management are now being debated at the World Bank, and by aid agencies, lawyers, social scientists, and development workers in many parts of the world. One sign of this interest is the formation of an organization called the *International Association for the Study of Common Property*, which meets annually in various world centers. The association argues that since many systems of property management and land tenure work this way, and work quite successfully, it makes sense to try to understand them.

A second instance of this new awareness is the worldwide attention and sympathy indigenous peoples in the United States, Canada, Australia, and the Third World have received; the voices of the marginalized are beginning to be heard in the councils of state. To take just one striking example: for the first time in Canadian history aboriginal people were given full status at a constitutional conference in August 1992. Three members of the native delegation were Inuit (Eskimo) women from Arctic Canada, one of whom—Rosemary Kuptana—grew up in a tent with her hunting and gathering parents. The three played important roles in the drafting of new Canadian constitutional proposals, leading the press to call them the "new mothers of Confederation."

All these signs offer some indication that the wheel may be turning in favor of the preservation of "small peoples," not as museum specimens, but through their recognition as repositories of invaluable knowledge regarding plants, animals, and localities, and as living embodiments of alternative ways of being. As the world enters the new millennium, the two most pressing issues are first, how to rediscover "democracy" and a "just" society, and second, how to find ways of living in balance with our finite resources. The lessons of the Ju/hoansi and other indigenous peoples offer insights on both these questions and challenge the current complacencies. Their newfound recognition is a cause for optimism. Let us take heart: ecological and cultural diversity may still have a place on this planet.