Film Guide *for N!ai, The Story of a !Kung Woman*

The San in Transition

The Kalahari Desert of northeastern Namibia and northwestern Botswana is a harsh land. In November and December, temperatures soar high above 100 degrees Fahrenheit; in May and June, the mercury may drop below freezing. For many thousands of years, groups of hunters and gatherers have made this land their home, adapting to its physical extremes and utilizing plant and animal resources. These foraging peoples once numbered hundred thousand, and lived throughout the whole of southern Africa.

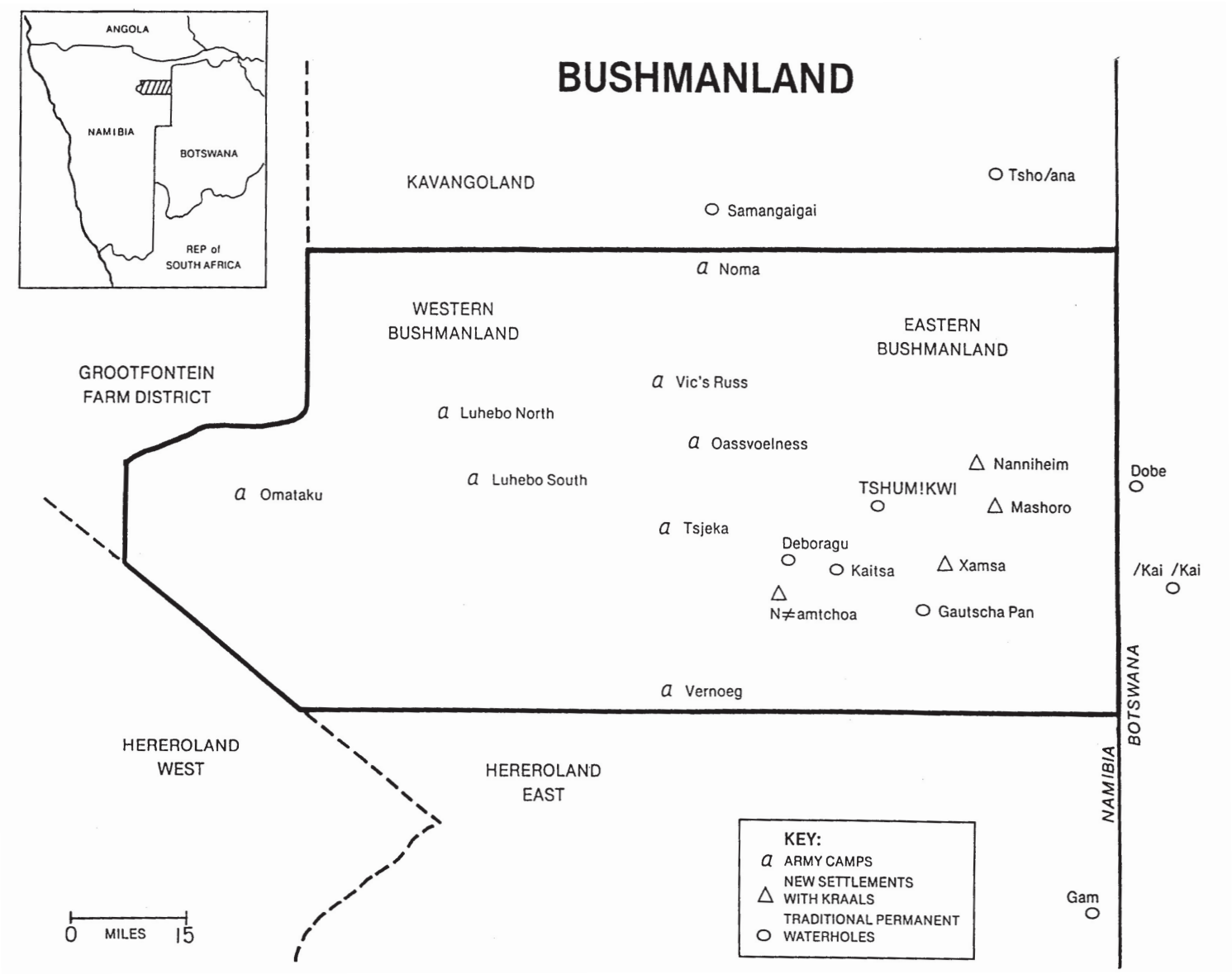
When Dutch settlers first arrived in southern Africa in 1652, they called the original inhabitants "Bushmen." For the next two centuries, the European newcomers waged a grim and successful war of extermination in the south, in what is presently the Republic of South Africa. To the north, the "Bushmen" of the Kalahari Desert escaped the fate of their southern cousins, probably because of the inaccessibility and relative uselessness of their dry land to the European settlers. Today, only about 40,000 "Bushmen" remain, living in the Republic of Botswana (formerly British-ruled Bechuanaland), Namibia (the South Africa-ruled territory that was formerly German South West Africa), and to a lesser degree in Angola, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The term "Bushmen" is rarely used today by scholars because of its derogatory connotations. It has been replaced in the literature by "San," a word the cattle-herding, nomadic Khoi-Khoi (also known as Hottentot) use to refer to their neighbors. As anthropologist Richard Lee points out, however, even this word is not really satisfactory, meaning "rascal" as well as "aborigine" in the Khoi-Khoi language (1979:30). In fact, there is a great diversity in both language and self-appellation among the San people~ now divided by linguists into three broad groupings: southern San, Tshu-kwe speakers, and northern San.

The northern San, who number over 15,000, live largely in Namibia, Botswana, and Angola. All northern San speak a language known as 'Kung. !Kung speakers are themselves divided into three major groups. One of these groups includes 6,000 San in Namibia and Botswana who call themselves *Ju/wasi* (or *Zhu/twasi*), "the true people." In the Kung language, *ju* means "Person;" *w*a mea'ns "true, pure, real ;" and *si* is the plural suffix. *N!ai, the Story of a !Kung Woman* was filmed among the Ju/wasi of northeastern Namibia.

Before 1950, the Ju/wasi of the Kalahari Desert had little sustained contact with Europeans, although they had traded and occasionally fought with Bantu peoples in the area, particularly Herero pastoralists to the east. In 1951, the first Marshall family expedition visited the area: retired Cambridge businessman Laurence Marshall, his wife Lorna, and their children Elizabeth and John. The Marshalls found the Ju/wasi living much as their ancestors had, hunting antelope and other game, gathering wild plant foods, and moving with the seasons from camp to camp. During their initial visit, the Marshalls spent six weeks with a Ju/wasi band that lived around a large, permanent water pan known as Gautscha. There they met ≠Toma, a respected leader of the band, who was to become a valuable contact in future expeditions. There too they first encountered little N!ai, then an engaging and rambunctious nine-year old, along with other members of ≠Toma's band.

N!ai As A Young Girl



The intent of the Marshall expedition, sponsored by the Peabody Museum of Harvard University and the Smithsonian Institution, was to study one of the last remaining groups of hunting and gathering peoples in the world. In the years that followed the initial expedition, John Marshall returned several times to film at Gautscha (1952, 1955, 1958). This was the beginning of an extended film portrait of a culture and a way of life, and of a single individual, N!ai. Twenty years later, Marshall again received permission to visit the !Kung in Namibia. Returning to the field in 1978, he sought to capture on film the tremendous changes that Ju/wasi society had undergone by focusing on the life of N!ai. N!ai was then 38 years old, the devoted wife of /Gunda, and the mother of five children. She was also thoroughly absorbed in life on the government reservation at Tshum!kwi, a life about which she spoke with bitterness. "Death is dancing me ragged," she sings.

What was the quality of Ju/wasi life in the 1950's, and how had it changed by 1978? Images of San hunters tracking a giraffe, conveyed in Marshall's 1958 film, *The Hunters*, have been inexorably affected by other, jarring images of contemporary San realities. *N!ai., The Story of a !Kung Woman* documents a kind of change that is occurring throughout the world as hunters and gatherers, like tribal peoples and other ethnic minorities, are forced to adjust to the more powerful peoples, classes, and institutions that surround and no longer ignore them. Adjustments take a multitude of forms. In the case of the Namibian Ju/wasi , sedentism, horticulture, and pastoralism appeared to be attractive possibilities in the 1960's and 1970' As the film reveals, however, life at Tshum!kwi in 1978 was filled with fighting and sickness, demoralization and dependency.

This guide to *N!ai, The Story of a !Kung Woman* is intended to provide background to the film and to suggest some of the issues and complexities of change at Tshum!kwi, implicitly raising similar questions about change in small-scale, indigenous societies elsewhere. Specifically, we hope that a discussion of the Tshum!kwi situation and its history will deepen film viewers' understanding both of N!ai and of her people's struggle--or lack of it. The guide is also, in a sense, an epilogue to the film, for much has changed again since 1978. John Marshall and co-researcher Claire Ritchie returned to Namibia in 1980 to conduct a demographic study of the !Kung at Tshum!kwi. As of this writing (October 1982), their research is still in progress. Through their accounts from the field vie have been able to trace the ongoing transformation of !Kung society and the erosion of cultural traditions within the past four years.

The Ju/wasi in the 50's

By the 1950's, many groups of San had become incorporated into the larger society: working as laborers or squatting on European farms or Bantu cattle-posts, raising cattle and goats, or, in the case of one group, fishing. The Ju/wasi, at this time, remained to a large extent autonomous. Like other hunters and gatherers, the Ju/wasi lived in flexible bands, numberinq about thirty persons. A band formed around a core group of relatives, usually siblings or first cousins and their spouses and children. Parents and affines might attach themselves to the core group for periods of a year or longer. Bands moved according to the season: when water was scarce, groups coalesced around the few permanent waterholes, such as Gautscha, that graced the scrubby sand and thorn desert. When the rains came and filled the semipermanent and occasional waterholes, groups dispersed to move across a wider territory. This was a time of visiting between friends and family, a time to exchange gifts and gossip, and perhaps to arrange the marriage of one's children. Even without environmental pressures, however, movement was common, as band members came and went according to their pleasure or group discord.

The immediate family, consisting of parents and their children, generally lived and ate together. Men brought home meat from the hunt, while women gathered plant foods. The latter constituted about 75% of the diet. Women gathered in groups, enjoying each other's company, and divided the gathered food among members of their immediate family. If they chose, they could also share some gathered food with other relatives and friends. Meat, on the other hand, was distributed formally to all members of the band. Although it formed a small portion of the diet, it was valued most and often craved. People spoke of having "meat-hunger." The traditional diet was both varied and nutritious, ranging from protein-rich *mangetti* nuts, berries, wild melons, and water-bearing roots to giraffe and various forms of antelope (kudu, gemsbok, wildesbeest, duiker), as well as numerous small animals such as warthog or tortoise. In spite of its nutritional value, this diet did not ensure good health or long life. One-third of all !Kung children died before the age of five, and half did not live to be fifteen years old.

The literature on traditional San life is rich and varied. Lorna Marshall's *The !Kung of Nyae Nyae* is a detailed ethnography of the Ju/wasi in the Nyae Nyae area of Namibia, including ≠Toma's band at Gautscha. Among other things, Marshall deals with events from the life of N!.ai and the kinship relations of the Gautscha band. Elizabeth Marshall Thomas' *The Harmless People* is a popular account of the same people. The Harvard Kalahari Research Group, which began studies of the Botswana !Kung in 1963, has produced numerous important publications, including *Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers*. Edited by Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore, this is the first book-length account of the Harvard team's research on themes ranging from ecology to child development. Richard Lee's *The !Kung San* is a more recent ecological and historical examination of a !Kung group in the Dobe area of Botswana. A Dobe !Kung woman is also the subject of Marjorie Shostak's *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*, which combines Nisa's self-account with the author's commentary. Nisa's story provides a lively counterpoint to the life of N!ai, who was interviewed by Shostak as well Although Nisa lived across the border in Botswana, and although she was born twenty years before N!ai, their experiences and reflections are strikingly similar.

In addition to these works, and others listed in the bibliography, there is also an extensive body of film that explores and documents the traditional hunting and gathering society of the !Kung. These too are listed here, in the filmography. To date, however, there have been few available sources that address the contemporary situation of the !Kung. One exception is Patricia Draper's study (1975) of changing sex roles among the settled !Kung of western Botswana. In this guide we shall concentrate on the Ju/wasi as seen and recorded by John Marshall and his film crew in 1978, and by Marshall and Claire Ritchie from 1980 to 1982. To understand the dilemma of the Ju/wasi in the present, vie must first look briefly, as does the film, at N!ai and her background. Following this general discussion, the guide provides a transcript of the film with explanatory comments.

N!ai

N!ai was born in April of 1942, the only child of Di!ai and Gumza. Di!ai, her mother, had been married once before to a man named ≠Toma. They had had two children, both of whom died, and ≠Toma was murdered in a fight in 1938. In 1940, Di!ai married Gumza, N!ai's father, a man from a group across the border in Botswana (then Bechuanaland). Soon after N!ai was born, her parents were divorced, in part because Gumza did not get along with Di!ai's older sister, a sharp-tongued woman named !U. Di!ai also said she felt lonely for her own people, and so she went home to Gautscha when Gumza returned to Botswana. In 1944, Di!ai remarried, to a man named Kxao. Kxao already had a wife, but because he was considered a steady man, Di!ai was willing to accept the role of co-wife. Kxao died of tuberculosis in1975. By the time of filming in 1978, N!ai was living with her mother, her aunt !U, !U's husband ≠Toma (the informal band leader), and various other relatives and

half-siblings.

N!ai's was a typical Ju/wasi childhood. As a girl , she played with her friends in the band, such games as melon-tossing, or imitations of "house" and "gathering." Occasionally she went gathering with adult women. Judging from Nisa 's account, some of this early play may have been sexual , although by the time N!ai was married at the age of eleven she had no interest in sex with her young husband / Gunda. Her marriage, like all !Kung marriages, had economic implications. Parents tried to marry their children to members of bands with access to good resources, for in times of scarcity one could visit and eat with relatives elsewhere. A son-in-law was particularly desirable, as he performed brideservice for his wife's parents, proving his hunting skill and providing his in-laws with meat for at least several years.

A son-in-law usually formed strong ties with other men in his wife's group, toward which he had an enduring social responsibility. Upon marriage men acquired obligations to distribute meat throughout the band, to forge a network of cooperative relations beyond the conjugal family. Marriage for girls, on the other hand, as Collier and Rosaldo have argued (1981 , did not really represent a change in status. Girls' principal obligation as new wives was to provide their husbands with gathered foods. Women's roles became more circumscribed in marriage; men's roles expanded. This, Collier and Rosaldo suggest, may be the reason why !Kung girls seemed to desire mar all the crucial ecological and social flexibility that it provided, began to be limited in radically new ways after 1959. In that year, the first Bushman Affairs Commissioner, Claude McIntyre, arrived in Ju/wasi territory. N!ai's life, and the lives of /Gunda and other !Kung at Gautscha were to be dramatically affected.

McIntyre represented the first official South West African government presence in the area, although he had visited unofficially eight years earlier. A professional civil servant with a long standing interest in the "Bushmen," McIntyre had escorted the original Marshall expedition in 1951 . At that time he told the Ju/wasi that someday the "government" would come. In fact the government did intervene on several occasions in the 1950's, when Herero pastoralists tried to settle with their cattle on !Kung lands. During this period white farmers also came to the area, persuading the Ju/wasi to come to farms and forcing them to remain as laborers. (This "blackbirding" of the Ju/wasi is the subject of the film *An Argument About a Marriage*.)

In 1959 Claude McIntyre and his wife Beryl entered the area, with a small budget, a two-wheel-drive pick-up truck, and little else. The Marshalls gave them a four-wheel -drive vehicle and strong expedition tents. A decision was made to settle at a site called Tshum!kwi, where a Ju/wasi band was already living, because of its centrality in relation to other settlements . McIntyre began to visit groups in the area to encourage people to join him at Tshum!kwi, where he hoped to help them begin a new life of pastoralism and gardening. He spoke of goats and a "mealie land," a large garden in which to raise the corn known in South Africa as "mealie." He also promised that the new government would protect the Ju/wasi from the encroachments of the Herero.

Among the groups that McIntyre visited was ≠Toma's band at Gautscha. At first ≠Toma declined McIntyre's invitation. These are our lands , he said, and besides, he did not want to become McIntyre's headman. Eventually, though, ≠Toma was persuaded to give the new settlement a try. He and other members of his band left their waters at Gautscha and went to Tshum!kwi, about 17 miles to the north. There they helped to clear the land for the McIntyres' tent, and in return were given mealie (ground corn), tobacco, sugar, and coffee.

Why did anyone choose to follow McIntyre? For many years, according to John Marshall, they Ju/wasi had been aware that their hunting and gathering subsistence was ultimately a dead-end. Contact with their Bantu neighbors had been sustained for decades through trade of metal , knives, tobacco, beads, and other items. Many of their San cousins were already closely intertwined with the Bantu or white economy, whether cattle-raising or farming. Fear and envy probably mingled with a complex of attitudes toward their more powerful and wealthy black neighbors, for whom cattle were the obvious and substantial sign of being "somebody." One !Kung man, when asked in 1952 if he had an image of God, replied "God is a man on a horse with a gun."

A tale told to the Marshalls in the early 1950's reflects the 'Kung sense of their relationship to the blacks. According to this story, the San and the blacks were originally a single nation, until their creator proclaimed a tug-of-war. The rope they pulled had two parts: one made of long, pliant strips of cowhide, the other of coarse grass. The black people pulled the cowhide, the San pulled the grass. As a result, the blacks were given cattle, sheep, goats, and the knowledge of hoeing and planting. The San got only "things of the Bush." If we could repeat that tug-of-war, a Ju/wasi told the Marshalls, we would be sure to pull the better half! (Thomas 1959).

When the McIntyres appeared, promising a better life and a future in which the !Kung would not be intimidated by the Bantu, at least some Ju/wasi were willing to give the new life a chance. In the early 19601s, a total of four bands, or over 100 Ju/wasi, settled at Tshum!kwi, including ≠Toma's group, the band already living in the area, and two additional bands. In the first year, a mealie garden was cleared, and mealie came to constitute almost a quarter of the diet. Over the next few years the Tshum!kwi settlers began to create their own gardens, although not all of their horticultural experiments succeeded. Potatoes, carrots, and beans, for example, were consumed by rabbits. Mealie, squashes, peanuts and melons were more successful. McIntyre also encouraged pastoralism, beginning in 1964 with the introduction of goats. Within five years, half of Tshum!kwi's residents raised and milked goats. During this period, Beryl McIntyre established and ran a medical clinic, as well as her own large vegetable garden that was worked by the Ju/wasi.

By the end of the first decade, when the McIntyres left, the settled population of Tshum!kwi had grown to about 700 Ju/wasi. The 1970's were marked by a series of white administrators with continually shifting policies. Hatting, for example (1969-71), tore up Beryl McIntyre's vegetable garden and during his time the number of goats declined. He was followed by a certain Roberts, whose short-lived stay at Tshum!kwi was more devoted to mining bat guana from Botswana than to the welfare of the !Kung. He in turn was followed by Jonker, the administrator filmed in 1978. In spite of administrative inconsistency, however, the population of Tshum!kwi continued to grow after 1970. In part this may be attributed to the declaration of "Bushmanland" in 1970.

The delineation of borders for "Bushmanland" was part and parcel of South Africa's apartheid system, which until this time had virtually ignored the !Kung. Even during the McIntyres' days, Tshum!kwi had simply been a neglected, borderless government settlement. The declaration of the homeland in 1970 removed two important hunting and gathering areas from the !Kung (see map). To the north and south of Tshum!kwi, vast tracts of well-watered land along the limestone ridge that separates Namibia and Botswana were lost, respectively, to "Kavangoland" and "Hereroland East." Until 1978, when pass laws were revoked in Namibia, a person could not legally leave a homeland without risking arrest and imprisonment. The reduction of Ju/wasi ancestral lands and waters in 1970 only served to further concentration at Tshum.kwi, as traditional subsistence possibilities declined. The dependence of the !Kung on the new government and alternative forms of livelihood continued to grow.

The new forms of livelihood included a little gardening, goatherding, and cattle husbandry, but none of these were universally accepted or successfully practiced among the Tshum!kwi Ju/wasi. Other forms of labor were also introduced by McIntyre, as Ju/wasi men cleared fields, built roads, and did a variety of menial chores. At first payment for such labor was in kind (mealie, sugar, or tobacco), but after several years McIntyre began to pay with cash. The more general use of cash spurred the development of the trade store, and Tshum!kwi people discovered that they could rely on purchased supplies, rather than spend days digging roots or tracking spore in the bush. The administration also initiated a ration system, whereby laborers as well as old people and tuberculosis patients were given name tags which entitled them to fixed quantities of mealie, salt, sugar, and tobacco. The film opens with the scene of rations distribution: a "colored" employee of the administration spoons out mealie meal. N!ai, a tuberculosis patient, receives rations.

Changes in settlement and subsistence that began in the 1960's were accompanied, from the beginning, by the accoutrements of "civilization" in the form of church, school, and store. Ferdie Weich, the first Dutch Reformed missionary, arrived soon after McIntyre. In 1961 Weich built a house in which the store was located, and a church which also housed the schoolroom. Weich studied the Ju/wasi language, and translated the *Gospe According to St. Matthew*. No one, however, could read it. The church never became a significant local institution, to Weich's disappointment, except for a short flurry of popularity during several months in 1971 and 1972, and again in 1973 when about 200 people converted. The latter mass conversion took place following a church-sponsored ritual drama, in which a man was covered with dirt, blindfolded, and bound hand and foot. He was then cleaned up and dressed in fresh white clothing, illustrating (to the faithful) the transformative powers of Christianity, and (to some) that if one joins the church one receives free white clothing(*Die Suidwester*).

Conversions such as these were, however, short-lived. Interest in Chri.stianity apparently waned when Weich tried to correct the common impression that Jesus had three wives. The Ju/wasi were also extremely skeptical about the truth of Mary's immaculate conception. Eve, on the other hand, was admired as the discoverer of foods of the bush. Weich, disillusioned, stopped holding church services at Tshum!kwi in 1974 (and now missionizes among the !Kung at South African army camps). Weich was replaced by Reverend Swanepole and a Kavango acolyte who translated the sermons (both shown in the film). The acolyte was arrested in 1981 for transporting liquor to army camps and selling it for 200% profit.

The school, which was taken over from the church by the government in the early 1970's, did not fare much better. Attendance in the late 1970's varied between three and forty children, all boys. Most children who attended did so sporadically, even with the added attraction of a government lunch program. Five grades were taught, concentrating on Afrikaans literacy and counting. With the exception of one popular, Ju/wasi -speaking black teacher, who was quickly dismissed by his white supervisor, all the other teachers have been white Afrikaans-speakers.

If church and school had problems, the store did very well. From the beginning, it clearly had something to offer. The store is now owned and operated by a single Kavango entrepreneur with financial backing from the First National Development Corporation. Sugar, mealie, eggs, canned chicken, and many other foodstuffs may be bought there, as well as blankets, clothing, even chairs and tea sets. In 1981, the store began to carry liquor.

Tshum!kwi: 1978 and After

By 1978, when John Marshall and a film crew returned to Namibia, close to 900 Ju/wasi had settled around the administrative center at Tshum!kwi and virtually no one continued to hunt and gather full-time in the bush. At Tshum!kwi, many people continued to build !Kung-style huts or scherms, little more than curved branches covered with grasses. A few !Kung built more substantial, Bantu-style houses with mud walls and thatched roofs. To a large extent band members still settled near each other, so that Tshum!kwi at this time had the appearance of a massive settlement composed of 17 fairly distinct units.

Two years later, in 1980, band composition remained fairly stable, but Tshum!kwi's architecture was far more eclectic. There were three large compounds of concrete houses and huts made of corrugated tin and bits and pieces of other materials, in addition to traditional scherms and Bantustyle huts. ≠Toma's group, the largest, occupied 23 houses. The two earliest concrete clusters were painted with murals of local wildlife (the work of the artist Kxao Tekene), "giving the air of a run-down safari camp," in Claire Ritchie's words. Even here, apartheid existed. All Tshum!kwi blacks, primarily Kavango people who worked for the police, school, or store, lived in an area behind the school, far from the administrative center.

Architecture and apartheid were not the only signs of change at Tshum!kwi. The increase in population density since the 1950's was staggering. In 1958, the Nyae Nyae region stretched north to south along the present Botswana border, and covered an area of 14,000 square miles. About 1,260 !Kung foraged in this territory; density was approximately one person per 11.2 square miles. Not only was the land extensive, but it also provided water: there were seven permanent waterholes and eight or nine semipermanent ones on the Namibian side, and seven permanent waterholes in Botswana. The semipermanent water sources failed only in times of severe drought.

When Bushmanland was established in 1970, the new borders reduced the size of !Kung territory in Namibia to 5,560 square miles. Three of the seven permanent waterholes were gone, and most of the population (excluding the Botswana !Kung) was concentrated into the eastern half of Bushmanland where the four remaining waterholes were located. Eastern Bushmanland, which covered 1,690 square miles, contained 1,000 !Kung, or most of the Namibian !Kung population by 1981, according to information provided by Marshall and Ritchie. Density in this area was approximately one person per 1.7 square miles. The densest population clustered around Tshum!kwi, where over 900 'Kung lived within a twelve-mile radius of the settlement in 1981.

The increase in population density was due primarily to the restriction of !Kung lands and waters and to the shift from foraging to settled reservation life. Immigration from surrounding areas (Botswana and Kavangoland) also accounted for population growth in recent years. The birth rate increased as well during the years at Tshum!kwi, probably a consequence of sedentism, dietary changes, and altered child-care patterns. Traditional !Kung nursing of children lasted several years. The frequent and vigorous sucking of children may have suppressed ovulation in their mothers, serving as an effective natural means of spacing births. Nancy Howell (1979) found that birth spacing among the Dobe !Kung in Botswana was 4.7 years. With dietary and subsistence changes, such as weaning with soft porridges, nursing patterns apparently shift as well. The interval between live births at Tshum!kwi is now 2.6 years. In spite of immigration and increased birth rates, however, the !Kung population has barely grown. In 1980 and 1981, the rate of growth was only .03 percent. Growth has been offset by a high death rate.

The high death rate reflects the overall deterioration in health of Tshum!kwi. Tuberculosis, for example, had become a pressing problem. As formerly mobile people, the !Kung had little awareness of sanitation and hygiene in a sedentary situation. And, perhaps more importantly, serious dietary changes contributed to poor health. The diverse and nutritious foraging diet had been replaced by mealie meal, which by 1978 had come to constitute 70 percent of the diet, supplemented by great quantities of homebrewed mealie beer. Men hunted infrequently, and women rarely gathered, although the surrounding countryside abounded in plant food. Gathering that did take place often depended on the schoolteacher's truck. The teacher would drive a group of Ju/wasi to the mangetti nut forest where they spent several days collecting nuts before the teacher picked them up to take them home. Generally, however, people preferred to buy food at the store, even shopping for tinned chicken and eggs rather than eating the hundreds of chickens that roamed about the settlement.

More than physiological well-being was undermined at Tshum!kwi. The concentration of so many people in so small an area contributed to rising tensions, tensions that could no longer be dealt with, as in the past, by the departure of some members of the band for a distant camp. A more subtle source of tension was the availability of large quantities of unequally distributed material goods. This problem is painfully vivid in the film, as N!ai is accused of hoarding her possessions, hiding her wealth. Formerly, there simply was not so much material baggage to accumulate or envy. The traditional possessions of a mobile !Kung family--and all families were mobile--weighed less than sixty pounds. Social as well as ecological pressures mitigated against excessive accumulation by an individual . Gifts such as ostrich egg shell beads, for example, were continually exchanged, not held for life. Resistance to exchanging such goods would have been met with mockery and criticism. Meat and plant foods were shared, formally and informally, among the band. If this sharing had a practical function, in that food, particularly meat, was perishable, it also had important social and cultural value, affirming the interdependence and cohesion of the group. "Lions eat alone, not people," the Ju/wasi said. And yet they also said, "We are a jealous people."

The growth of a cash economy at Tshum!kwi , however small in scale, stimulated inequalities that revealed a darker side of !Kung sharing and reciprocity. Money, unlike fresh meat, need not be divided. Neither perishable nor visible, money is easily stored, hidden, hoarded. Although like gathered plant foods money may be distributed informally to relatives, unlike roots and tubers it does not grow abundantly in the bush, nor is it easi1y accessible to all .

Indeed, as of 1982 only about fifty men of Tshum!kwi's average population of over 900 were employed by the white administration, receiving average monthly wages of R190 (approximately US $175). In 1981, Consolidated Diamond Mines, the only industry in Bushmanland, hired !Kung men from Tshum!kwi to clear bush for roads, a project that lasted only several months. A few women such

as N!ai earned cash from their work with film crews or tourists, and a Ju/wasi in the Ministers Council earned the unprecedented salary of R900 a month. Curiously, this man's residence at Tshum!kwi consists only of a grass scherm wrapped in a sheet. However, as Claire Ritchie notes, "he is hardly ever at home, having as he does a house in the fashionable suburb of Klein Windhoek, paid for by the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance. When he is in Tshum!kwi, he parks his Mercedes (or rather his chauffeur/bodyguard does) next to his grass hut!" In recent years, the South African army has contributed to the flow of cash and inequalities, paying wages of R500 a month to !Kung recruits.

Money by 1978 had created new kinds of problems for the Ju/wasi. N!ai for example, typically spent what she earned on great quantities of blankets and clothing, highly visible acquisitions that flaunted her relative wealth and provoked the resentment of many of her fellow !Kung. Other Ju/wasi invested in cattle. When slaughtered, beef was sometimes sold to other Ju/wasi as food. The contrast between the older ideology of meat as a symbolic tie between band members and even outsiders, and the commercial sale of slaughtered, privately-owned cattle could not be more striking. Meat had become the object of a new kind of economic and social transaction.

The impact of the new economy and society on the symbolic value of meat and meat-sharing was but one aspect of changes that had begun to occur in other, less tangible dimensions of the culture. Healing, for example, continued to be practiced through traditional trancing at Tshum!kwi in 1978, and the inner healing force called *n/wn* was felt to be extremely powerful. Yet trance curing had also come to be objectified as a cultural curiosity. At a government-sponsored evening of entertainment, South African tourists photographed the natives who mimed a curing trance. The Ju/wasi, who received a small payment for their services, willingly performed.

The performance aspect of traditional culture at Tshum!kwi is revealed not only in the film scenes where the Ju/wasi mime trance or don loincloths and pose with bows and arrows for tourists, but also in the making of the feature film within the film. Marshall happened to be in the field when a South African film crew arrived to shoot *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, now a box-office hit in South Africa. The film concerns the contamination of the Bushmen's simple lives by an intrusive object from the modern world; a Coke bottle, tossed carelessly from an airplane, brings the corruption and discontent of civilization to the pristine bush. After much turmoil among the natives, a lone hunter journeys to the edge of the world (the mountains), where he throws away the bottle. The scene-in-progress here shows the hunter returning from his mission. Nothing about this suburban-style family reunion resembles the quiet way in which a Ju/wasi. would return from the hunt.

Militarization

The !Kung may view such cinematic exercises as somewhat amusing, even desirable for the cash they provide. More deadly, however, are the implications of another recent introduction in Bushmanland: the military. In July 1978, as Marshall and his crew were preparing to leave Namibia, the first South African army recruiters arrived at Tshum!kwi.

The background to the militarization of the San begins with the colonial history of Namibia, until 1920 a German colony known as South West Africa. Following World War I, the territory was given to the Republic of South Africa as a League of Nations mandate. Not only the San were affected by South Africa's control : thousands of Hereros, Namas , and Ovambos were forced off their land, some into the desert, others to become laborers for white farmers, or migrant miners and railroad workers. In 1948, South Africa extended the principle of apartheid to the one million people of Namibia.

Whereas other League of Nations-mandated territories have long since gained independence, South Africa has consistently refused to relinquish control of Namibia, a land rich in diamonds, uranium, and other mineral resources. The South West African Peoples Organization, or SWAPO, was founded by black Namibians in 1960 as an anti-colonial movement. By 1966 SWAPO became engaged in a guerrilla struggle with the South African army, and gradually won support throughout the world and throughout the Namibian population. The World Court invalidated South Africa's mandate three times (1950, 1966, 1971). In 1966 the United Nations General Assembly voted to terminate the mandate; in 1972 the General Assembly recognized SWAPO as the "sole legitimate representative" of the Namibian people; in 1976 the Security Council passed a resolution demanding the withdrawal of South Africa's illegal administration. To date, the South Africans have resisted both local and world pressure.

In the early 1970's, as SWAPO escalated its armed struggle, South Africa moved 50,000 troops into northern Namibia, and built a massive base and airfield at the town of Grootfontein, 145 miles west of Tshum!kwi . In 1975, a secret army base called Omega was established in the Western Caprivi strip, offering food and shelter to San refugees from the Angolan war across the border to the north. Many of these San had fought with the Portuguese against the Angolan insurgents, and were forced to flee following Angola's independence. At Omega, the San were utilized for their expertise as trackers, and also trained in counterinsurgency and the use of automatic weapons. This base became the nucleus of the 31 , or Pied Crow Battalion.

The South African campaign to expand the recruitment of the San continued in July 1978, with the opening of a base at Luhebo (see map) , to which Angolan and Caprivi San were also recruited. Soon afterward a base was set up at Tsjeka, about 30 miles west of

Tshum!kwi. This became the center for a newly formed 36 Battalion of Namibian !Kung. Initial recruitment brought about 50 !Kung into the ranks, and by September 1981, 140 Tshum!kwi men, or 47% of the men between the ages of 15 and 45, had joined the army. The men brought their families to the camps. Elsewhere, several hundred San, including Angolans, were stationed at seven major bases in Bushmanland. According to the army's own figures, one out of every four !Kung San in Namibia is now linked to the army, either as a member of the military or as a dependent. Richard Lee has noted: "In relative terms, this is the highest rate of military service of any ethnic group in the world, much higher, for example, than that of the Gurkhas of Nepal or the Montagnards of Vietnam" (1982:7). Marshall and Ritchie report that the rate is even higher, estimating that 39% of Bushmanland's population is supported at army camps, while indirect support in the form of food, clothing, and money is spread throughout the whole of Bushmanland and several communities in Botswana.

The !Kung, once popularly known as "the harmless people," are now receiving intensive military training. The homicide rate, according to Lee, has tripled in the post-military era. As if to compound the irony, only the army appears to be concerned with the "development" and welfare of these erstwhile hunters and gatherers, running a "farm" at one camp at which 300 cattle and nearly 100 goats are owned by !Kung soldiers. With this development scheme goes a cultural imperialist ideology that coexists with military strategy, as revealed in the following passage from the *Windhoekk Advertiser*, quoted by Lee (1980:1-2).

Deep in the dense Caprivi bush a colony of Bushmen are being taught a new culture and a new way of life by the White man. More than a thousand Bushmen have already discarded the bow and arrow for the RI rifle and their wives are making clothes out of cotton instead of skin. Gone are their days of hunting animals for food and living off the yield. They now have "braaveis" [sic. barbecue] and salads with salt and pepper while the men wear boots and their ladies dress in the latest fashions. Their children go to schools and sing in choirs ... The men are being trained as soldiers while their womenfolk learn how to knit, sew, and cook. Well-built wooden bungalows in neat rows are their homes although some of them still prefer to erect shanties next to them ... It is an open camp and the people may come and go as they please, but most of them prefer to stay.

One does not have to look far to find out why. In 1981, a soldier's average pay was R350/month; in 1982, the wage rose to R500/month, plus rations for three additional family members. Around Tshum!kwi's administrative center, the average monthly wage for labor was R200. Until January 1982 there were two army doctors (now both are gone), and each army camp has its own (slightly trained) medic. The educational standards required for joining the army have been lowered for the San, as a special dispensation since they are such excellent trackers. !Kung men have chances for training and advancement within the army; in 1982, for example, there were 3 !Kung medics. In contrast, the !Kung at Tshum!kwi are restricted to the most menial jobs, such as building firebreaks or roads, while more highly paid construction workers, Bantu and "colored," are brought in by white contractors. A further attraction of the army is the banking plan it offers. Some !Kung have begun to save money, buying cattle and goats, or occasionally old jalopies (which they do not know how to repair).

In spite of these obvious enticements, not all Ju/wasi are eager to join the army. Many, such as ≠Toma, say they simply do not want to fight the white man's wars. Yet fighting is increasingly the role of !Kung soldiers. Originally recruited by the South Africans because of their skill in tracking spore across the desert, the early San soldiers were used to track SWAPO guerrillas. Even non-recruits were sometimes hired for a day or two, particularly older men who were picked up by helicopter from Tshum!kwi and dropped in the middle of the desert, surrounded by a phalanx of white soldiers, to detect the guerrilla trail. Many of the younger recruits, however, no longer have intimate knowledge of the bush or their fathers' expertise in tracking. These men are trained in all aspects of infantry work, and, according to *Armed Forces*, a South African publication, such soldiers are valued and respected for their skill in the field and their extraordinary endurance. The *Armed Forces* report (1980) notes:

Perhaps surprisingly, the Bushmen have generally taken to the military life like ducks to water. They have adapted easily to discipline and parade-ground work--the bane of life of most soldiers--is a source of delight to them.

A few San have even been trained as paratroopers, as Ray Smuts' story, "Bushmen Leap into the Space Age," proclaims, commenting on their transition:

Since joining the Defense Force, the process of Westernization has been rapid for the parachuting Bushmen. Everyday chores, such as brushing teeth or polishing boots, now come naturally. Army food, rather than nutrition from the bush, is now the order of the day, but the men still yearn for wild honey and other delights...

Nonetheless, the article assures the reader, the Bushmen are receptive to change: "'Falling through the air was a nice sensation,' said Herman."

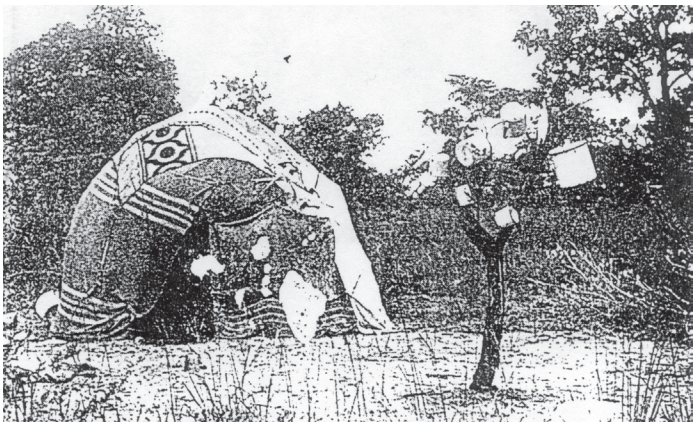
While the South African press remains charmed by the image of "agile little brown men with razor-sharp senses and a killer instinct" (Smuts 1981) parachuting out of the Stone Age, the SWAP0 Chief Representative at the United Nations had this to say in 1977 (quoted in Lee 1980:2-3):

The Bushmen being traditionally hunters are being used by South Africans as trackers. In the process they become victims of landmines and guerrilla ambushes ... These ancient people ... are lured with tobacco, dagga (marijuana), and meat to do the dirty job ... Since they always walk in front of patrolling soldiers in most cases they receive much of the punishment intended for racist soldiers.

Their population being small, our concern is that they might be exterminated.

Even without the threat of physical extermination, what does the future hold for the San, particularly for those San who have become economically and politically dependent on the army? Probably even those !Kung who hesitate to fight the war have not appreciated the potential consequences of the increasing dependence on army rations, clothing, schools, subsidized cattle, and weapons. When rations were stopped for old and tubercular people at Tshum!kwi, most of the rationers simply moved to Tsjeka, where they could live with relatives and enjoy a share of the material bounty offered at the army camp. At the camps, notes the report in *Armed Forces*, women no longer bother to gather bush food, for the army is busy supplying rations: "with, as yet, no real notion of housekeeping, they are left with little to do but watch their centuries-old lifestyle fade away around them."

In a period of a decade or two, many !Kung have moved from self-sufficiency to virtual economic helplessness. Although the army captain in the film announces that he expects to remain in Bushmanland indefinitely, clearly a black-ruled Namibia may become a reality in the not-too-distant future. It is difficult to assess the likelihood of retribution against the San counterinsurgents should army withdrawal and an independent Namibia be realized. Many anthropologists fear this possibility; others, such as Lee, argue that SWAPO knows that almost every ethnic group in Namibia has been recruited to fight the South Africans' war, and that the San will not be severely penalized. Nonetheless, like their Angolan brothers who were forced to flee their homeland when it achieved independence



Milk and Milk Products Are Now Part of the Diet of Gautscha

from the Portuguese, the Namibian San are being drawn into a war which means little to them, and yet on which they are unknowingly staking their very survival and their land.

The Liquor License

There are other, perhaps more immediate threats to survival in Bushmanland. Since filming in 1978, alcoholism has become a pressing problem. For many years, the Ju/wasi had been buying

Milk and Milk Products Are Now Part of the Diet of Gautscha

sugar and mealie meal at the Tshum!kwi store, from which they easily manufactured a home-brewed beer.- The effects of mealie beer on the !Kung at Tshum!kwi may be suggested by Lee's description of the situation of the Dobe !Kung, in Botswana, where drinking began with the creation of a store in 1967 (1979:418):

Drinking is confined to the hottest hours of the day, beginning at 10 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 2 in the afternoon. !Kung 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. By nightfall the party-goers have finished for the day and disperse to eat the evening meal or to sleep off a drunk.

In 1973, Lee witnessed the arrival of a supply truck which was greeted with jubilation as its cargo was unloaded. "Of a total of four tons, almost three tons consisted solely of bags of sugar for making beer--enough sugar to make almost 3000 buckets of home brew!" (1979:419).

The frequent fights and accidents that Lee witnessed as a result (in part) of drinking were also typical of Tshum!kwi in the 1970s. At Tshum!kwi, however, the alcohol problem acquired a new dimension with the approval, in March 1981, of a liquor license for the store. With the license, the store could sell everything from gin to brandy. The granting of the license was the subject of great controversy in Bushmanland for most of the previous year, with opposition ranging from the local to the national level . Local support came from the Ju/wasi *rada*, a council of old men appointed by a government ethnologist in 1968, and from the highest ranking !Kung politician, Jo/oa (known as *"Geelboi"* or "Yellow Boy" in government circles). Jo/oa, the man with the Mercedes and a sheet-covered grass scherm, is Minister of Water Affairs in Windhoek, and one of two !Kung representatives in the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) Cabinet. Jo/oa succeeded in persuading the authorities that

they could not "discriminate" against the Bushmen. Since March 1981, by John Marshall's account, Tshum!kwi has been the scene of increasing drunkenness and fighting. N!ai is among those Ju/wasi who drink.

Uncertain Futures

While the liquor license was hotly debated, less attention was paid to another proposed change that may have equally devastating consequences for the survival of the !Kung. This is a government plan to convert the entire eastern half of Bushmanland into a "Nature Conservation Area," or "meat-country" in the Ju/wasi translation. The plan, if realized, would severely restrict both hunting and cattle husbandry throughout the only habitable part of Bushmanland. Only bow-and-arrow hunting would be permitted, in fact encouraged, as a tourist attraction. Although hunting no longer retains the importance it once had in !Kung society, it does provide an occasional and nutritious supplement to a diet of tinned food and mealie meal. And the possibility of hunting still offers an alternative (if unutilized) to absolute dependence on handouts or cash. The effects of the game reserve on husbandry would be to prevent the !Kung from watering their cattle at any waterholes other than Tshum!kwi. In short, the plan would further ghetto-ize the Ju/wasi into the already overcrowded settlement. The plan is strangely contradictory to the army program of subsidizing cattle purchases by the !Kung, and in fact the army is not in favor of the proposed reserve. Among the Ju/wasi themselves, however, there has been little opposition until recently.

In August 1981, ≠Toma and about 30 members of his band returned, without their cattle, to their traditional, permanent waterhole at Gautscha, in the middle of the proposed game reserve. For years the Ju/wasi had talked of.returning to their lands. The impetus to finally do so may have been the realization that rights to use these ancestral lands and waters were in danger of being lost forever to the "meat country."

The initial move was short-lived. Two months later, all the members of ≠Toma's band returned, despondent, to Tshum!kwi. In December, however, the group left again, this time consisting of 54 people and bringing 42 head of cattle. N!ai remained at Tshum!kwi, although she encouraged her husband /Gunda to go with ≠Toma. Arriving at Gautscha, the people immediately built an enclosure, or *kraal*, for their cattle. When elephants trampled it, they replaced it with another, stronger kraal. When the shelters or scherms became termite-infested, the group moved some distance away and began to build more solid, Bantu-style huts. The men quickly returned to hunting. In the initial weeks, the diet seemed to improve dramatically: three kudu were shot with bow and arrow, and other food included wild pig, porcupine, game birds, and nine different kinds of bush food. At the beginning, only a little mealie meal and no beer was consumed.
Since the move to Gautscha, four other groups have followed ≠Toma's example, returning to their lands and attempting to settle with cattle, in a kind of mixed subsistence combining herding and hunting/gathering. The N≠amtchoa settlement consists of a huge, sturdy kraal of closely spaced poles, and fourteen houses. Another group, led by the artist Kxao Tekene, established themselves at Naaniheim. The other two groups, as of this writing, have built flimsy kraals; it is too soon to tell how viable these pioneer settlements will be.

In understanding these moves back to the bush, it would be a mistake to imagine that there ever existed a total separation between Tshum! kwi and the surrounding countryside. The population of Tshum!kwi has always been fluid, as people occasionally visited the bush to hunt or gather. In early 1982, gathering still supplied between 10 and 15% of the diet. Its techniques were sometimes novel, for example, the schoolteacher's organized mangetti-nut expeditions. Other foraging trips were longer lasting. For example, during the rains from November 1980 to March 1981, four groups of Ju/wasi lived in the bush, returning to Tshum!kwi only when the rains ceased.

One of the factors that has made more enduring stays in the bush a possibility is the growing interest in and availability of cattle. In part this is due to the efforts of John Marshall, who believes that the Ju/wasi must reclaim their lands although not by merely returning to a culture and an economy that is now quite past. Through a "cattle fund" established by Marshall, the !Kung are able to obtain cows from the administration, provided that each owner builds a good kraal , milks the cow, and works free for the administration on anything related to the administration herd.

"Returning to the bush" is therefore not a matter of returning to an ancient way of life. Nor does it necessitate a total separation from the Tshum!kwi settlement. Gautscha, for example, at 17 miles from Tshum!kwi, is a half-day's ride by horse, donkey, or bicycle, or a walk that even old people, such as N!ai's aunt !U, can accomplish without much strain. Relatives at Tshum!kwi are not out of touch, nor are its conveniences out of reach. Radios and gramophones, for example, found their way out to Gautscha not long after its settlement. All the children of Gautscha people, both boys and girls, attend school in Tshum!kwi, visiting their parents in the bush on weekends. Other, less attractive features of Tshum!kwi life have also found their way to Gautscha. Diet, for example, which had improved in the initial weeks, has begun to decline as Gautscha's population grows. In a recent survey, Ritchie found kudu, steenbok, wild pig, and even a giraffe, but far less of it than before and with many more mouths to feed . For the first time, great quantities of milk and milk products were being consumed; but almost no bush food was reported. Women, it seemed, had simply stopped gathering once again. And mealie meal was back in large quantities, along with beer.

Many at Tshum!kwi have told Marshall and Ritchie that it is mad, senseless, to stay at a place of disease and death like Tshum!kwi. Yet the inertia to remain is powerful. N!ai, who has had another

child since the filming in 1978, is among the most entrenched in Tshum!kwi life. When asked why she will not leave in spite of her unhappiness there, she replies: "My chest is killing me."

It remains to be seen whether the moves led by ≠Toma and others to reclaim ancestral lands and rebuild a healthier society will in any way influence N!ai, her fellow Tshum!kwi dwellers, and the future situation of the "true people" of the Namibian Kalahari. Will Gautscha gradually become a suburb, even a slum, of the Tshum!kwi nucleus, plagued by the same lethargy and, dependency, mealie meal and money, alcohol and arguments? Or will the attempt to combine husbandry and hunting prove so viable that a cultural regeneration may slowly occur? How will the wider unresolved political drama of South Africa, SWAPO, and other groups in Namibia affect the lives of thousands of !Kung?

Transcript

In 1970, the South African government established a reservation on the Namibia/Botswana border which restricted 800 !Kung to an area one-half the size of their original territory.

The reservation lacks sufficient food and water for the !Kung to continue their gathering/hunting life.

Filming for this program took place over 27 years, beginning in 1971 when the !Kung were an independent people.

TSHUM!KWI, NAMIBIA/SOUTH WEST AFRICA, 1978

Man's voice *They're hungry, they're hungry*

2nd man *People with tags get rations.*

N!ai *I get mealie meal for five kids. And I'm a tuberculosis person too. We're all T.B. people.*

3rd man *Yes, that's a T. B. tag.*

4th man *Here's for your five.*

N!ai *Yo! Too much.*

Me--o N!ai. I am N!ai.

Yes, and I carry for everybody too.

When the white people first came, I was already a young woman with breasts. Before the white people came we did what our hearts wanted. We lived in different places, far apart, and when our hearts wanted to travel, we traveled. We were not poor. We had everything we could carry. No one told us what to do. Now the white people tell us to stay in this place. There are too many people. There's no food to gather. Game is far away and people are dying of tuberculosis. But when I was a little girl, we left sickness behind us when we moved.

I'm N!ai Short Face. People called me Little Squirrel. Little Squirrel, Short Face. Little Squirrel, Short Face.

Short Face. They said, "That woman doesn't know ugliness." My sister said, "Hey you, give me your face! Mine is too long." We sang about my face, my sister and I.

Young N!ai Shares a Drink With Her Baby Brother

Commentary

The scene is the monthly distribution of rations: mealie meal , tobacco, sugar, salt, and tea, to the approximately 70 !Kung at Tshum!kwi who are officially "old" or tubercular. N!ai, who suffers from tuberculosis, receives mealie meal for her five children., In the background, the administrative complex is visible: a court, a meeting hall , offices, a generator, and a police station. In 1978 the complex was still under construction. A private white contractor hired "colored" and black Ovambo workers, who lived in Tshum!kwi for the duration of the project. No construction jobs were available for the Ju/wasi, who were employed at Tshum!kwi only in unskilled capacities.

N!ai's narration, here and throughout the film, was culled from a series of interviews conducted with her by Marjorie Shostak in 1975, and further interviews, which drew on Shostak's work, conducted by anthropologist Patricia Draper in 1978. N!ai also spoke frequently with John Marshall , whom she knew well, as he was filming behind the camera. Because of the extensive narratives, it was decided to combine N'ai's own voice (with subtitles) and an English voice-over. N!ai's "English voice" is spoken by Letta Mbulu, a black South African singer now in Los Angeles. N!ai and other !Kung speak throughout the film in the Ju/wasi language. Only about fifteen Ju/wasi speak enough Afrikaans to work as translators, in such places as the medical clinic.

Tshum!kwi 1952

N!ai *We were a people who had waters. Even in the season /um, the cold dry season, we had water. Even in the driest years some of our water stayed fresh in the rocky places. We lived where we could fill up with water--fill our ostrich eggs and tummies. When the sun was killing us with thirst, I said, "Mother, I don't want just water roots and melons. Go and get some real water." Sometimes our food was far from the water. But even when we had to travel far to eat, we knew we could come back to water.*

Narration *The San were the gatherer-hunters of southern Africa. San have lived here in the Western Kalahari Desert for at least 20,000 years. In 1952, the !Kung, an independent San people, still occupied an area of 15,000 square miles. We met and talked with !Kung people from 23 separate bands.*

N!ai *When we were all living in the bush., I was a child, just a little child, only so big. Ye gathered so many different things. We picked /oley berries, and struck down n≠a.*

I loved to follow my mother. The two of us would be right beside each other. If my mother went gathering without me, I would cry, because I was just a little girl.

When we hit the n≠a tree, the sweet berries fell. We'd all pick them up and pile them together to take home. I was such a big little woman then. Most things we dug. Our arms ached. We pried out the ≠ubbee root and dug ≠koa, the water root from deep in the ground. In the forest we gathered //ga--mangetti nuts. There was so much tsi in the fall, and maa, the wind fruit. We had to taste things. Some of them were bitter. Some people ate plums. Some people didn't. In winter the berries dried but there was cucumber in the spring. And the beans you call wild coffee, and different insects. And when the year grew warm, the trees oozed sap which we call xum and you call gum. Xum was so sweet.

Narration *!Kung territories had no boundaries. Territories were defined by inherited rights to waters and to places where plant foods could be gathered. From the !Kung we learned of more than 90 edible species of plants.*

N!ai *That was the food we ate. Those were the things that made us good and full and gave us many different tastes. My mother would open the baobab fruit and ask if we wanted some. Even if you hadn't worked, if hunger grabbed you, you could eat. And when we used up all the food and the year turned hard and hot, we traveled to another place. Those things we did long ago, before we knew about money. Now we live at Tshum!kwi. Here we eat one thing-mealie meal. And mealie meal and I hate each other.*

When I was little and men hadn't killed meat, that's when people went out gathering. But when the men went hunting and saw an animal and hit--yah! My father was such an expert. When he'd get up to go hunting because people hadn't eaten meat, the animal was as good as dead. Even a giraffe. We'd be eating meat just like that!

The Waterhole At Gautscha, Following the Big Rains

The Kalahari Desert, as Lorna Marshall writes in *The !Kung of Nyae Nyae*,, is generous in its vegetation and in providing animals for men to hunt, as well as materials for shelter, firewood, and a variety of implements. The desert, however, is not generous in providing water. To support human life, an area must have a permanent or semi-permanent waterhole, close enough to plant and animal foods so that people do not suffer from thirst on their gathering and hunting forays. These waterholes are surface springs in limestone ridges, or, as at the place called Gautscha, pools of deep clear water When traveling some distance from their waterholes, !Kung hunters do not carry containers, but instead drink as much as they possibly can, filling their stomachs. Gatherers do carry water, either in bags made from animals' stomachs, or, preferably, in beautiful , hollowed-out ostrich egg containers. Succulent plants and melons supplement "real water" although, as N!ai remembers, "real water" was more desirable.

In the winter months from May to August, no rain falls, the temperature drops below freezing, and the Ju/wasi stay close to their permanent waters. During the heavy rains from January through March, water.collects throughout the desert in pans, pools, and the hollows of trees. Then people travel more freely through the territory, visiting distant friends and relatives.

N!ai's people at Gautscha are blessed with among the finest waterholes in the !Kung territory. Less fortunate are other San peoples, such as the /Gwi, who inhabit the absolutely waterless central Kalahari. The /Gwi, shown in the film *Bitter Melons*, depend for their water entirely on *tsama* melons, of which they eat up to ten each day, and more rarely on the liquid squeezed from the rumen of hunted animals.

Narration It took four men five days to track the wounded giraffe. The little arrows could hardly make an impression on an ani-

mal that big. The poison on the arrows enters the bloodstream and works slowly. in the winter, the ground is hard, the tracks difficult to see. ≠Toma had to practically think his way to the giraffe. It took three hours to kill the giraffe. She weighed more than half a ton and provided enough meat for 50 people to eat sparingly for 10 days.

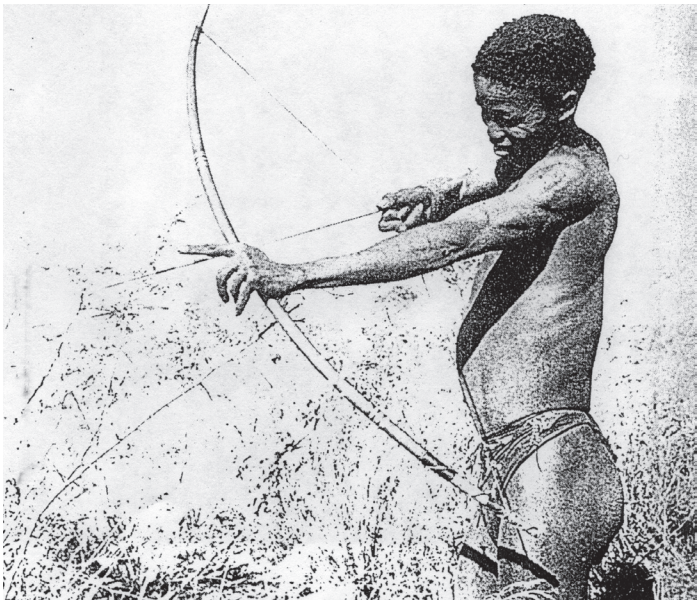
Gathering is women's work, although men may also participate. Children often come along as wel1, depending on their whims. Although every adult woman is responsible primarily for gathering for herself and her dependents, women prefer to gather in small groups of close kin or friends. N!ai's mother, for example, typically gathered with her sister !U and with another pair of sisters. By following her mother on these expeditions, N!ai, like other !Kung children, gradually learned to identify a great variety of different roots, seeds, and fruits. Roots are dug with a simple digging stick made from a sharpened, fire-hardened branch. Men make these sticks as well as the leather carrying bags, or karosses, used by women. These consist of the entire hide of a gemsbok, with the forelegs used to tie and fasten the kross over one shoulder. The women observed by Richard Lee carried from 15 to 33 pounds of vegetable foods in their karosses

D!ai, N!ai's Mother, With Her Co-wife And Two Of Their Children

on their return journeys, in addition to small (and sometimes not-so-small) children. In the course of a day, Lee calculated, a Kung woman walked from 2 to 12 miles; in the course of a year, 1,500 miles (1979:310).

N!ai *When the men came back vith the meat., and the insides of the animal, and the intestines and the heart, they would distribute it to all of us. We would pound it and cook it. Women from other bands would take a share in their karosses. We would have meat to dry and fat to spare to rub on ourselves.*

Although gathered plant foods formed between 70 and 80 percent of the !Kung diet, meat was the most desired food, and the hunt was more highly valued than the gather. Giraffe were actually far less commonly hunted than large antelope (eland, wildebeest, gemsbok, and kudu), warthog, and smaller game including duiker and steenbok. Hunting was the center of men's lives, and, with rare exceptions, all !Kung men hunted. When not tracking spore or stalking game, men talked endlessly about past and future hunts. Women were excluded from the hunt and required to observe avoidances such as not touching male hunting equipment, in order not to diminish the power of poisoned arrows.



Man Poised With Bow And Arrow

Wild animals, according to !Kung thought, were owned by no one and could be hunted in any territory. The meat of large animals was invariably brought home to be divided to all members of the band. Smaller animals did not need to be distributed, and intermediate-sized creatures were sometimes shared among the hunters themselves. Because of the relative scarcity of meat, its distribution was an emotionally charged event. The "owner" of the animal was the owner of the first poisoned arrow that pierced its flesh, and that person oversaw the distribution of meat. The practice of frequently giving and lending arrows diffused responsibility for distribution, as often the "owner" did not even take part in the hunt. As Lee notes (1979:248), the practice also diffused both the glory and the hostility associated with the act of distribution. "The society," writes Marshall (1976:297), "seems to want to extinguish in every way possible the concept of meat belonging to the hunter."

Although distribution could be fraught with tension, generally the !Kung made sure that the meat was shared throughout the band. Hunters often consumed the liver on the spot, if the animal was large, and the animal was butchered in the customary way. The first distribution was then made to the hunters and to the owner of the arrow. A second wave of distribution followed, as the hunters each divided their own meat with their close kin, particularly their wives'

parents, as well as their own parents, wives, children, siblings, wives' siblings, and other relatives and friends. In the following wave, everyone who had received a share gave some away, sometimes in cooked form. Ultimately, everyone in the band, as well as visitors, re6eived some meat (Marshall 1976:299).

A song (Marshall 1976:178) recounts how the god//Gauwau helped hunters to find meat. The men admonish the women:

You must sing well.
We are happy now.
Our hearts are shining.
I shall put on my rattles,
And put on my headband,
And put a feather in my hair
To explain to //Gauwa how happy we are that
he has helped us and that we have eaten.
My heart is awake.
When we do not have meat
My heart is sad from hunger.
Like an old man, sick and slow.
When we have meat my heart is lively.
When the season changed and the rain came, it was best of all.
Some rains were heavy and
strong, really scary. We called them !ga !go
--male rain. Some rains were even and quiet.
That was the female rain that filled the land
with water.

N!ai *When I was little, I just played with my girlfriends. I hadn't taken my husband /Gunda. But /Gunda's mother and father were talking about our marriage. People were talking about giving me to /Gunda. I used to play at his mother's house but once they talked of marriage, I stopped. They gave him a new spear and made jokes which I didn't think were funny.*

We didn't even like to play with little boys. Boys always wanted us to play "getting married." They were after us! They'd steal our ball and we'd have to chase them. We'd say, "You're boys and we don't want you. We only want to be girls playing together. We don't want you boys bothering us all the time."

But my family prepared me for marriage anyway. They washed me and they put fat on and painted me so I would never get thin. My cousin Tsamko said, "Hey, that's your husband over there." 1 said, "That red face? Why are you saying that's my husband?" And when my mother-in-Zaw'greeted me with, "Hey, my little in-law," 1 said, "In-laws I don't need."

You can't imagine how fearful I was of that man /Gunda. They brought him--his friends brought him to the marriage house our mothers had made for us. I thought, "What have people done to me? My heart doesn't want this." But my cousin and my sister came to me and covered me, so the sunlight wouldn't fall on me and make me thin. And they carried me so my feet wouldn't touch the ground, because that could make a girl thin too, when she's getting married.

It was an evening in the early winter when they brought me to the marriage hut. Naturally, I didn't sleep with /Gunda that night. I went home and slept with my mother. And, of course, /Gunda and I didn't live together for many, many rains.

May 1953

A description of Ju/wasi girlhood and early sexuality is found in Marjorie Shostak 's *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* (1981) , as Nisa herself provides a vivid account of childhood games and sexual discoveries. By the time of marriage, Nisa, like N'ai, was unwilling to accept her husband sexually. In 1953 N!ai was eleven years old (not eight as the filmmakers originally thought), but still just a child who would not menstruate for another six years.

The preparations for N'ai 's marriage and her simple wedding rite are described by Lorna Marshal (1976:271 -79) . In the film, the scene in which little N!ai is rubbed with fat and some powdered red stone is actually an enactment (filmed in 1951) of the preparations for a girl's first menstruation rite. An almost identical procedure is used to signify the transition to marriage, and so this footage was used here. The only elements that distinguish the marriage from the menstrual rite are the wait until nightfall to bring the girl to the marriage hut, and the lighting of a fire from the girl 's and the boy's parents ' fires. The marriage footage itself was shot at N!ai 's wedding in May, 1 953. Marshall described her perception of N!ai passage into marriage (1976:276) :

That morning she appeared to turn into a housewife as though it were her next blithe step. When the women went to gather plant foods , she put on her own littl e duiker-skin kaross , took her digging stick, and went with them. At the end of the day, when they

N!ai is to the left of the opening of the Marriage Hut; /Gunda sits to the right.

returned in the slanting sunset light, she had two big roots. She went straight to her own fire, blew on the embers, added wood, and sat down. Her digging stick and three ostrich eggshells full of water were her household goods. These she arranged beside the shelter /Gunda came and sat down opposite her. She smiled at him and set the roots in the ashes to cook. In reality, as N!ai experienced it, the transition was far more difficult.

February 1958

Narration N!ai and /Gunda were married in 1953, when she was 8 and he was 13. By 1958 /Gunda had begun to live with N!ai and hunt for her parents in brideservice.

N!ai When we finally had to live together, /Gunda and I, we slept with my bottom near his head., his head near my bottom so there was everything between us. I refused him! I said in my heart, "Give me someone else. This /Gunda I don't want." Maybe it wasn't /Gunda himself I rejected. I just didn't want a husband. I thought that when I was grown up, I would find another husband. Somebody I myself had chosen. I refused to sleep with /Gunda or even play with him under the blanket. My heart refused it.

When we girls get our breasts and begin to grow, our mothers praise us. "Hey, " they say, "Look at you showing. Now you're doing what women do." They encourage us about being women. We tease each other and joke about what's happening to each other and compare. But we're scared. Many of us are scared about sleeping with men and having babies. Because of the pain and danger--women die. My friend Shag//ai was afraid of childbirth. Her stomach was lying there. I didn't know what the matter was, but I thought, "That woman is terrified of the childbirth."

Healing

A Young Woman Called !Ungka

My uncle /Ti!kay and her brother went to her to lay on hands in medicine. It was as if she was dying. My mother said, "Don't go there. A woman who is going to have her very first child shouldn't be afraid of the childbirth. Girls like you who haven't given birth mustn't watch a woman who fears." But I went and I watched.

Narration Curing is a religious act. God comes to the people himself or sends his agents, the spirits of the dead, to bring sickness and death. But God also provides the spiritual power, the n/um, which is an inner curing force. N/um can be activated within certain people to fight against God's will and sometimes to cure disease. Trancing can be dangerous. People have died in trance, probably from heart failure.

Shostak describes the process whereby the healing force, *n/um*, begins to be "hot" and available to serve the community (1981:292):

In trance, a healer lays hands on and ritually cures everyone sitting around the fire. His hands flutter lightly beside each person's head or chest or wherever illness is evident; his body trembles; his breathing becomes deep and coarse; and he becomes coated with a thick sweat--also considered to be embued with power. Whatever "badness" is discovered in the person is drawn into the healer's own body and met by the *n/um* coursing up his spinal column. The healer

gives a mounting cry that culminates into a soul -wrenching shriek as the illness is catapulted out of his body and into the air.

An all-night healing ceremony is the subject of the film *N/um Tchai: The Ceremonial Dance of the!Kung Bushmen*. !Kung healing is also the theme of Richard Katz's recent study, *Boiling Energy* (1982).

N!ai *My uncle and her brother went into half-death to cure Shag//ai - They tried so hard. She lived but the baby had died inside her. Mother told me I mustn't fear because when a woman fears childbirth, her baby dies. Her own blood kills it. I thought and thought about that, but I didn't become brave right away. Even my uncle /Ti!kay chided me because I still refused my husband.*

/Ti! Kay Aren't you ever going to stop teasing?

N!ai *I'm going to get my digging stick. Let me go so I can beat you!*

Ti!kay *Your husband should do this.*

N!ai *And when I was older it got worse with my husband because I did not choose him myself. I slept with other men. I cheated. People were furious. My husband wanted me, but I said, "No. I am going to love the man I want." My husband did not know for years. My husband suspected but he did not know.*

I did the tasks of a young wife, but I felt terrible inside. I didn't laugh or smile. Sometimes he would have food. I didn't want to touch it. I tormented him. People told me, "He's your husband." Once the two of you know one another, his thoughts will be to you like your mother's and father's thoughts. I didn't listen to that.

And in those same years /Gunda began to find his medicine. He began to trance. And when /Gunda began to trance, it was worst of all. I thought, "He Is crazy!" I watched and thought, "I'm living with a madman. My husband has gone insane and I am married to him." I'd look at him in half-death and think, "This man is positively dangerous."

N!ai I was so scared of this man.

/Gunda You gave me such a hard time.

N!ai Was it really that bad?

/Gunda You left me for other men!

N!ai But your face looked so crazy.

/Gunda You thought I was mad.

Actually, /Ti!Kay is not N!ai's uncle, with whom she would have to practice a respectful avoidance, but a distant relative with whom it is acceptable to joke sexually.

N!ai *Finally this is how my thoughts came to care for /Gunda. The old people took me and said., "Listen, Short Face, this man won't hurt you. Look at him learning to cure people. The owners of*

medicine, the old people, even /Ti!kay himself, are teaching him. " This is how they spoke to me and I began to listen. And so we had our first child. And it died, like Shag//ai 's child. But I was not afraid. And then we had our daughter, Hwan//a she lived. She was born to us before the white people came.

Tshum!kwi 1978

Narration *In 1978, at Tshum!kwi, there were 800 !Kung living in 25 square miles.*

T.B. RATE – 10%

N!ai *Don 't come to me now. Don't look at my face. Death is dancing with me now.*

N!ai's daughter, Hwan//a, was actually born in 1962, and by 1972 N.'ai had given birth to five children. Such two-year birth spacing is unusually close for !Kung women. Although the !Kung practice no artificial contraception, the interval between births for a foraging woman was typically four to five years. This naturally low fertility was a highly adaptive solution to the problem of mobility, as children were carried by their mothers throughout their first four years. Extra small children were clearly no insignificant addition to a woman's workload!

In the absence of artificial contraception, it is thought that the !Kung achieved this exceptionally long birth spacing in part because of the frequent, vigorous, and prolonged nursing of children. Such nursing, which often lasted three or more years, probably suppressed ovulation and therefore helped to maintain the low birth rate. When nomadic peoples become sedentary, however, it has been observed that fertility rises. As noted on page 10, the interval reported by Marshall and Ritchie in 1981 was only 2.6 years between

births. The fact that women no longer have to carry their children enormous distances could not explain such a rapid change. Dietary changes, on the other hand, have reduced the previously extended years of nursing, as milk, soft porridges, and other weaning foods are now available at Tshum!kwi. Whatever the precise mechanism by which fertility changes are effected, it is clear that they may lead to unprecedented population growth within a formerly mobile society (see page 11 for a discussion of the high death rate, however, which offsets population growth). Less measurable consequences may also ensue. If nursing is reduced in frequency and duration, for example, how does this affect the emotional structure of the family, the traditionally close bonding between mother and child? How does a greater number of children affect women's work?

N!ai, sitting in front of her daughter-in-law's Bantu-style house at Tshum!kwi, picked up a stringed instrument, a pluriarc, and spontaneously sang the song that she had apparently been composing for some time. The use of song to express emotions and the invention of original compositions on the pluriarc were characteristic of Ju/wasi tradition in former days as well. The pluriarc, called a *//gwashi*,

Tshum!kwi, 1981

is made from a hollowed-out log of mangetti wood to which four or five strings of sinew are attached. Women's songs recorded in the 1950's ranged from laments about lovers and loneliness, to songs about gathering tsi berries, or the greenness of the mangetti forest.

Mr. Jonker *These Bushmen don't work. They loaf around all the time. If they should be paid for the work they actually perform., they won't draw 95 Rand a month, even less. And then we have a crowd around here, cleaning up all the time, you know, the yard and the garden and the office which is in the process of being completed now.*

Woman off camera *We were all born here but some do better than others.*

N!ai *I didn't eat yesterday either, so lay off me! You got as much mealie meal as I did!*

Young mother *Some people get mealie meal while others starve. But nobody's begging from you, N!ai.*

N!ai *Well I don't have anything.*

!U *Oh, you lie to us. Nobody shares anymore, even with their parents.*

N!ai *I'm getting out of here!*

That's how it is now. People claw at me. When white people take pictures of me and pay me, everyone is jealous. They are hungry for food and money. You see, today we are not eating. Hunger is grabbing us all. Now we must go far to hunt. Tsamko, my cousin, was already a man when his father bought a horse. Now he is a horsehunter.

Young !Kung woman *You argue like the old people!*

!Kung woman *We're arguing about meat before we have it.*

N!ai *But we are afraid. When we hunt with a horse, the white people say we steal the meat. They say the hunters may go to jail.*

Mr. Jonker, the Bushman Affairs Commissioner at Tshum!kwi from 1976 to 1978, sits with his wife behind his massive desk and complains about the Bushmen's laziness. At payday, average wages were R30 a week, or about US$28. These wages were used primarily to buy mealie meal, great quantities of which were brewed into beer. At the time of filming, about sixty men were on the payroll , the majority employed to clear trees and grass for fire-breaks in the fire-prone countryside. A few men, such as ≠Toma , were more steadily employed and received higher wages. ≠Toma cleaned the yard, fed Jonker's geese, and received between R60 and R100 a week. Another permanent employee, seen inside the Commissioner's house, was /Gishay, dressed in white and dusting the administrator's artifacts. /Gishay began as "houseboy" for the first administrator, Claude McIntyre, and maintained his job through successive administrations. The artifacts consist of Kavango tourist art and a !Kung *//gwashi*, probably decorated to heighten its tourist appeal.

In the yard, moments later, the sounds of urban, South African pop tunes fill the air, as !Kung children dance around a battery-powered victrola .

Narration We asked the game warden to explain government policy about hunting. He said, "A while ago I drove to ≠Xaolwa to see the giraffes. I could see them perfectly and take pictures. They are very rare and beautiful. That was before the horse. Today I saw three. I saw many vultures. And I know if the Bushmen go on like this, you'll see no more giraffes in the land. The Bushmen themselves must decide if they want their grandchildren to see giraffes."

Tsamko *If I try to spear her again she'll kick the horse. She isn't running now. She'll kick! She'll fall just now.*

Narration *"If you steal, you are guilty. If you break the law, you're guilty*

Tsamko *I am Tsamko., ≠Toma's son. This land is my garden. I harvest my meat to fill our bellies. We are hungry people with no other garden*

Tshum!kwi Game Warden Last year's budget was a total sum of 595,420 Rand and under that you get different divisions, like "Fire-breaks"--10,000 Rand; "The Development of Human Potential" like the school--2,000; "Infrastructure for Administration"--200,000; "Re-settlement of People"--1,000 Rand. Then we have "Reticulation"--that's special treats like dances and things we give to the Bushmen--1,000 Rand. That's for, you could say, it's a kind of human relations between us and them. "Social Services," like health and maintenance of the clinic--2,500. That's the lot.

N!ai *Maybe my T.B. is back. They said I was healthy. So now health is killing me?*

Narration We told the doctor that this baby had been sick since she was born. We asked what the infection might be.

Tshum!kwi Doctor As far as I'm concerned., there's no obvious evidence of any infection in that child's chest at the moment. Clear enough that child is coughing. I think the main problem being is living in their little grass huts their fires within the huts and this constant exposure to respiratory irritants is probably the biggest causative factor as far as the coughing in amongst the Bushmen is concerned. I think the Bushman accepts coughing as being something that's quite normal whereas we tend to regard it as a pathogenic symptom. In other words, all that they really need is just some form of a cough mixture just to try and depress the irritation. That is the way I see it.

/Gunda *The baby isn't hearing me. I can't reach her. A terrible illness!*

N!ai *If it's in her heart, she won't live.*

The baby died within the month. Our oldest son died like this, here at Tshum!kwi., here in my arms. But my son was almost a man.

He was of the age, the difficult, lazy age we call ≠edi kxausi, the "owners of the shade."

Death is ruining me. Death is stealing from me. Death is dancing me ragged.

Narration *In August 1978, the South African army established the first military base near Tshum!kwi. They came to recruit and to carry out operations against the guerrilla forces of the South West African Peoples' Organization, or SWAPO.*

Soldier *Look, we want three of those arrows. And we can give all these tins of meat.*

N!ai *They're so beautiful. For something so big you'll get a lot of money*

Artist *I hope so. Hunger is grabbing me.*

Soldier *We're looking for three bows and arrows. Get me two more bows and arrows.*

2nd Soldier *You take all that.*

3rd Soldier *Those soldiers are Bushmen too. They fight SWAPO. How come you're scared? You think SWAPO will shoot you?*

Artist *I really have too much work.*

3rd Soldier *Just grab a gun and shoot.*

By 1978, diseases previously unknown or uncommon in the area had begun to afflict the Ju/wasi at Tshum!kwi . Increasing contact with whites and Bantu peoples, as well as poor diet, overcrowding, and lack of sanitary facilities had led to widespread gastro-intestinitis, tuberculosis, diphtheria, malaria, diarrhea, bronchitis, and

In Preparation For Imitation of A Trance Dance, Small Boys Fasten Rattles To a Friend's Ankles

emphysema, the result of increased use of tobacco. At the time of filming, Tsa, the sick baby, was about two months old and had been suffering from a severe chest infection since her birth. Gao, her grandfather, had tuberculosis. Gao repeatedly sought help at Tshum!kwi's clinic, where an Afrikaans-speaking nurse offered cough medicine, but he refused to take the infant to the hospital at the edge of Bushmanland in Grootfontein. The army doctor, on one of his periodic visits, clearly had little else to offer. With interven-

tion from the concerned film crew, Gao allowed his granddaughter to receive an injection of antibiotics but was unwilling to continue the treatments, seeing little difference between antibiotics and the useless cough syrup. Gao and the family then turned to older forms of healing as the baby's condition worsened, and /Gunda entered trance in an effort to grapple with the spirits and save the child's life. Both Western and traditional medicine ultimately failed, and the Ju/wasi explained the child's illness and death as a result of sorcery.

Artist *SWAPO will shoot me.*

Ist Soldier *You're just chicken.*

3rd Soldier *We'll teach you to lie in the grass. When SWAPO walks by you shoot him.*

Artist *I'll just stay home. I'm a cook too.*

3rd Soldier *Yah! Just a cook!*

N!ai P*eople are saying I have many things and they have nothing. They say these South Africans take my picture because they think I am beautiful. That's why I get paid.*

I'm supposed to be the wife in the hut. Do they want the hunter with me? They never make sense.

Director *Yah, just take it slower*

N!ai *Is the boy supposed to be my son? Why is he way over there?*

Assistant Director *That's your wife over there. Got it?*

Actor *Yeah, I got it.*

Director *Can we have a look at one?... Go!*

Actor *Little son! Haven't you woken up yet?*

Director *Just once, understand? Just pick. him up once.*

Assistant Director *Just up and greet him. Then right down!*

Actor *Hey, you little creep! My little son, my little son. You greet me by yourself. Do all the others hate me? Greetings, everyone! Greetings, everyone! Greetings, everyone!*

The artist Kxao Tekene was encouraged by Claude McIntyre. McIntyre introduced Kxao to a Windhoek man who brought him to the city to attend art classes. McIntyre also tried to encourage other people to work in copper, but only Kxao has continued to create unusual objects: carved and painted boxes, drums, walking sticks. His products are sold to local whites and army men. He would gladly sell to tourists but these are few and far between.

!Qui, The Son Of /Gao Music in Toma's Band

The South African feature film, *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, is in progress. White South African directors, shielding their faces from the dust with masks, shout instructions to the native actors, including N!ai (the "wife in the hut"), another woman probably chosen for her large breasts, a little boy whose face is washed by a member of the film crew, and a crowd of men dressed in loincloths. N'ai 's "husband," returning from his mission, is greeted in a most un!Kung-like fashion as the group, seated around a neatly thatched shelter, rises in unison to welcome him. Normally a returning hunter would have quietly joined the group, taking care not to call too much attention to himself or his exploits.

!U, N!ai's Aunt and ≠Toma's Wife

N!ai *From these white people in one day I made three Rand. I am a woman who can buy things. But people say I am hiding things. Sometimes I share but sometimes I don't want to give to other people because my children are full of wanting to eat.*

/Wi *You run around drinking beer while I starve!*

N!ai *I sit around like everyone else.*

/Wi *You're hiding things from me!*

N!ai *I'm not hiding anything! You see all I have. These are my children's blankets!*

/Wi *Buy me some blankets and shoes.*

N!ai *I've given you enough money.. We all need many things.*

So now, when people are jealous, they remember. They are saying that my daughter has slept with a stranger--for money. I am a person who has work. That's why people lie about my daughter, to hurt me.

//Gau *You had to go whoring around.*

Hwan//a *You won't even ask what they saw*.

//Gau *Your mother N!ai taught you whoring. You'd screw your brother.*

N!ai *That's what I was talking about. But people are really yelling at me because of the work I have with you and other white people.*

Those people didn't see my daughter fool around. Her husband believes it.

//Gau *I'll kill those liars... then get you.*

/Gunda *He's crazy. He's killing us.*

//Gau *Me? You mean me? I didn't cause this crap. I'll shoot and let them kill me.*

/Gunda *I'm her father and I know who caused this.*

N!ai *Yes, I'm Short Face and my husband blames me. Those people are jealous. But I fear my husband.*

!U *We're not jealous! You're insulting us!*

N!ai *Hey, !U, wait!*

!U *We don't need anything from you., N!ai. Are you and your daughter both in heat?*

N!ai *Look! I don It know if my daughter screwed around. People say it. My husband thinks it. I know people are jealous because I work. But I fear my husband! Maybe I am to blame.*

Woman's voice *Hwan//a, your mother's coming.*

Hwan//a *No, mother! I'm going to hit them!*

Young mother */Gunda, leave your daughter alone!*

/Gunda *Filthy daughter! Filthy wife!*

My wife, it Is over now. Don't cry.

!Unka *You're all just fighting about hiding things. We never used to hide things.*

N!ai *I'm not hiding anything. I'm just frightened for my child.*

Narration *We joined N!ai at church. The lesson was John IV, the story of the Samaritan woman:*

"Jesus and his people had traveled far and came to the well. Jesus sat alone. But he had no cup to get water. While he waited, a woman came from the village to get water. Jesus asked her for water. She said, 'I can't give you water, you're Jewish. I But Jesus had looked closely at the woman. Before Jesus asked for water he looked deep into her heart. He saw she was a bad woman. 'You must help this woman.' So he spoke with her, saying, 'Go call your husband.' 'I have no husband,' I she replied. 'I know,' said Jesus. 'You have five men. You take a man to help you, and fight with him, then take another. People abuse you. People make you grieve. I Jesus doesn't want to give us just food and clothes and water. Jesus says, 'You know who God is? You can ask for anything. God can give it to you. He can help you.' Jesus said, 'I am God. I am God's son.'"

Arguments of this kind had become increasingly common at Tshum!kwi by 1978. Money, blankets, shoes, and food were objects of bitter contention. N!ai's own relationship to John Marshall's film crew presented problems, for her extra income of five rand a day exacerbated jealousies and charges of hoarding. "I am a person who has work," N'ai says. "That's why people lie about my daughter, to hurt me." Before settled life at Tshum'kwi, with its store, handouts of mealie meal , cash, and the army, every Ju/wasi man and woman had "work." Only in recent years did the idea of life without work, now a scarce and specialized activity, become a possibility.

The issues of sharing and hiding, of unequal distribution of goods, money, and work, are intertwined with sexual accusations in this argument. The story behind this particular argument concerns a young Ovambo man, assisting John Marshall, who liked to take !Kung children for rides in his truck. He once took N!ai's daughter Hwan//a, and gave her a piece of candy. A maternal relative of N!ai,

People Gather At Nanniheim, Resettled In 1982

Xama, took advantage of this incident to vent her own jealousy of N!ai, which had been inflamed when a gift was given to N!ai by a member of the Marshall film crew. Xama was jealous and accused Hwan//a of sleeping with the Ovambo man, knowing that Hwan//a's husband was an extremely suspicious person. Indeed, he became enraged. Like some of the other Ju/wasi involved, he had been drinking at the time, which only served to aggravate his temper and the level of the brawl. In the heat of the argument, /Gunda attacks N!ai : "Filthy daughter! Filthy wife!" referring to their own past in which she was unfaithful to him.

Minister *For this morning I wanted them to know that Jesus Christ not only gives us water and bread and food and things like that, but as for the woman at the well, he asked her for water and he sort of promised her something else in the place of that. Another water, that means real life.*

N!ai *Now really! Those two at the water hole had never even met before. How can a woman go down in a water hole with a perfect stranger calling himself "God's son!" it would have been very bad. Her husband would have punished her for being alone with such a man. That man was fooling her.*

Minister *That means that I will have--what do you call it--I must come in and live a good life with other people and with God also.*

Narration *We visited the military base and asked the Captain where he and his soldiers came from.*

Captain *Before I met these people in the Western Caprivi I tried to train a few of these Bushmen people in gardening and farming with sheep and cattle and pigs and those kinds of things. And the younger people we accept in our permanent force and we train them like the whites are trained before. They are good fighters. They are brave men. I think in that kind of war we are fighting in the bush* they are a little bit better than most of our whites, which most come from the cities. *For the Bushmen are used to the veZdt and especially to tracking and survival. They are brave, they are really brave. But at this stage, they look up to, to white leadership in action for they believe that the white men are more intelligent and the white man knows all and the white man knows what to do. They believe in the white man.*

The sermon, which followed the argument about N!ai 's daughter, seemed to be explicitly directed at N!ai, Typically, the Dutch Reformed sermons are exceedingly somber and moralistic, admonishing the people not to fight or commit adultery. Typically, the white Reverend Swanepole delivers his message in Afrikaans and the Kavango acolyte, Celestino, translates. The white schoolteacher and his wife sit at the back of the church. What is somewhat atypical in

A Young Woman, Kwan//a, Plays A Five-stringed //gwashi

this scene is the number of people in the church, many of whom probably came because of the filming. More commonly only five or six people come to services, and Marshall knows of about eight Ju/wasi at Tshum!kwi who profess Christianity. The donations given may also have been larger than usual, each one the equivalent of about 35 cents. After the services, Marshall asked /Gunda what he thought about the Minister claim that God gives not only food and clothing but also something spiritual, "something else." /Gunda replied, "God doesn't pay us, we pay God."

Narration *We told ≠Toma, a !Kung leader, what the captain had said, and asked him what he thought about it.*

≠Toma *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.

Narration *We told the captain about some of the aggression we saw and asked him to compare his soldiers with the people at Tshum!kwi.*

Captain *This I also take back to the training. I think it's the only reason they are much more developed and more educated than the people at Tshum!kwi.*

Marshall *And you're going to have people at Tshum!kwi also in the army?*

Captain *I start them Monday morning. I start with fifty.*

Marshall *What's going to happen when you go? The South Africans--what's going to happen to these people?*

Captain *Well, I never thought of going. I intend to stay here all my life. I can't see that we will go. And if we had gone, I suppose that the Bushmen will go with us. For in the whites they find friends and they find help. They find a future living.*

≠Toma was visiting the army camp on the invitation of the officers who still hoped to win his approval. ≠Toma watched, but he did not change his mind about the "experts at anger, the owners of fighting."

Captain Coetz became a Major in the South African army, and was the hiq'hest-ranking officer in Bushmanland until he was removed from the area in 1981. The Captain is gone, but the South African army remains and the war continues. What does the future hold? Surely, notes the *Christian Science Monitor* (1981), the "future living" Captain Coetz foresaw for the Bushmen cannot be helped by white journalism that labels them as "mercenaries" with a SWAPO kill-ratio of 63-1. At Omega Base in the Caprivi, South African Lieutenant Ben Wolff admitted, "They do sometimes ask what's going to happen to them." "But," added Wolf, "at this stage I can't tell them anything. I'm here for the fighting part, not the talking."

N!ai *Death, yes. Death is stealing from me. Will death steal me, too?*

/Wi *And my niece, take care of her. We'll have some coffee when I get back.*

Marshall *How long are they going to be, how long do they sign up for?*

Soldier *Ah, yah. As long as they want. Most of them will stay the rest of their lives there.*

!Kung voices *I won't be seeing you for awhile ... Go well ...*

N!ai *Now people mock me and I cry. My people abuse me. The white people scorn me. Death mocks me. Death dances with me. Don't look at my face. Don't look at my face.*

≠Toma, 1952

≠Toma, at Tshum!kwi, 1978

Film Credits

Produced by: John Marshall and Sue Marshall-Cabezas

Executive producer for ODYSSEY: Michael Ambrosino

Directed and edited by: Adrienne Miesmer and John Marshall

With: N!ai Short Face, /Gunda, Gao Lame, /Wi Crooked, ≠Toma Word, !U, Tsamko

English voice of N!ai: Letta Mbulu

Field anthropologist: Patricia Draper

N!ai interviews based on fieldwork of: Marjorie Shostak

Consulting anthropologists and translators: Marjorie Shostak, Patricia Draper, Megan Biesele, Lorna Marshall

Camera: John Marshall , Ross McElwee, Mark Erder

Sound: Anne Fischel , Adrienne Miesmer, Stan Leven

Assistant camera: Stan Leven

Assistant sound: Patricia Draper

Assistant editor: Carol Towson

Production assistants: Michel Negroponte, Anne Fischel, Ross McElwee, Stan Leven, Bonnie Deutsch, Barry Dornfeld, Sarah Goodman, Jonathan Haar, Martha Lightfoot

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Awards

Cine Golden Eagle
American Film Festival, Blue Ribbon
International Film and Television Festival of New York
Grand Prize, Cinima du RjeZ., Paris
News Coverage Festival, Luchon, France

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Filmography

In addition to *N!ai, The Story of a !Kung Woman*, John Marshall has directed a number of other films about the !Kung San. All are available from Documentary Educational Resources, 101 Morse Street, Watertown, MA 02472, (617) 926-0491, unless otherwise noted. Background and film descriptions are to be found in Films From D.E.R., available for $3.00.

*An Argument About a Marriage** (color, 18 minutes)
*Baobab.Play** (color, 8 minutes)
*Bitter Melons** (color, 30 minutes)
*Children Throw Toy Assegais** (color, 4 minutes)
A Curing Ceremony (bw, 8 minutes)
Debe's Tantrum (color, 9 minutes)
A Group of Women (bw, 5 minutes)
The Hunters (color, 72 minutes. Available from Films Inc., Wilmette IL)

A Joking Relationship (bw, 13 minutes)
!Kung Bushmen Hunting Equipment (color, 37 minutes)
*Lion Game** (color, 4 minutes)
*The Meat Fight** (color, 14 minutes)
The Melon Tossing Game (color, 15 minutes)
Men Bathing (color, 14 minutes)
*N/um Tchai: The Ceremonial Dance of the !Kung Bushmen** (bw, 20 minutes)
Playing with Scorpions (color, 4 minutes)
*A Rite of Passage** (color, 14 minutes)
*Tug-of-War** (color, 6 minutes)
*The Wasp Nest** (color, 20 min-tes)

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Toby Alice Volkman
Documentary Educational Resources

Note on Orthography

There are four "clicks" in the !Kung San language, produced by pressing the tongue against specific areas on the roof of the mouth or the back of the teeth., and sharply pulling it away to create an ingressive air stream. The standard click symbols, as described by Marshall (1976:xx), Are:

/ dental click The sound produced by release of the tongue may be compared to a mild reproach in English or "tsk tsk."

alveolar click Marshall describes the sound as a "snap," sometimes accompanied by a slight sucking sound.

! alveopalatal click Results in a "loud pop."

// lateral click A fricative sound, similar to that used in spoken English to urge on a horse.