

**'WE WORK TO HAVE LIFE': JU/'HOAN WOMEN, WORK AND SURVIVAL
IN THE OMAHEKE REGION, NAMIBIA**

by

Renée Sylvain

**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Anthropology
University of Toronto**

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Ph.D. Anthropology
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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I provide an ethnographic account of the lives of the Ju/’hoansi by examining three broad topics: 1) the historical and ideological dynamics of rural class formation and sexual division of labour on the farms; 2) the living and working conditions and farm class politics; and, 3) Ju/’hoan kinship and community dynamics.

The first section offers a ‘top-down’ perspective of white settlement, frontier conflict and the encapsulation of the Ju/’hoansi into the political economy and cultural world view of the European settlers. Ideological attitudes toward gender and sexuality are fore-grounded in this examination of the construction of a ‘Bushman’ underclass. I argue that the process of rural class formation and encapsulation was shaped as much by gender attitudes as by racial ones.

The second section provides a ‘bottom-up’ perspective of farm work and class politics. I focus on how the Ju/’hoansi cope with their material conditions, how they understand the value of their own labour, and how they understand their relationships with their employers. I then examine how the paternalism inherent to farm politics is shaped by patriarchal models of family government, and how the farmers’ paternalism is accommodated by Ju/’hoan ideas of proper ‘helping’ and challenged by the Ju/’hoansi’s commitments to

their own families and community. I argue that paternalism is more particularly a feature of class relations between men: while racial attitudes justifying exploitation and paternalism are more easily challengeable, gender subordination, being a requisite of farm employment, is more deeply hegemonic.

The third section examines Ju/'hoan kinship relations, marriage patterns and community dynamics. I focus on how women mobilize support from kin in their dealings with domestic conflicts and in their struggles to cope with their material conditions. I argue that Ju/'hoan kin networks provide a field of relative autonomy and that women's kin-based mutual assistance strategies provide the infrastructure for a broader Ju/'hoan community.

For my Mother

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Heartfelt thanks goes to my interpreter, Besa Abuse, who for eighteen months sometimes followed and sometimes led me around the Omaheke. His friendship and

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ABBREVIATIONS

M mother

F father

S son

D daughter

OZ older sister

YZ younger sister

OB older brother

YB younger brother

W wife

H husband

ws woman speaking

ms man speaking

GLOSSARY

Baas	Boss
Baasskap	'Boss-ship', authority, dominance
Bakkie	pick-up truck
Baré Tshu	corrugated iron house
Bywoner	poor farmer, tenant or 'squatter'
Kamasi	marriage gifts
Kierie	(also 'knob kierie'), walking stick; also a traditional weapon
Mielie Meal	corn-meal
Miesis	madame; mistress of the house
Mielie Pap	cooked corn-meal; porridge
Omaramba	dry river bed
Plakkersdorp	squatters' village
Sinkhuis	corrugated iron house
Sjambok	whip
Stoep	veranda
Veldkos	veld food; 'wild' food
Werksoek	job-hunting
Witvoet	informant for the farmer

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about the lives of the Ju/'hoansi who live in the Omaheke Region of Namibia. In this account, Ju/'hoan women take centre stage. Little is known about the lives of the approximately 6,500 Ju/'hoansi ('San' or 'Bushman') who live and work on farms in the Omaheke. The most important and extensive work on farm San has been conducted by Mathias Guenther on the Nharo farm workers in Ghanzi, Botswana (1976; 1979; 1986a; 1986b). The only other research conducted on the Omaheke Ju/'hoansi is James Suzman's (1997, 1995a, 1995b) excellent work on Ju/'hoan class identity. Although the work of both Guenther and Suzman provides invaluable ethnographic material, and is drawn from and engaged throughout this thesis, in their work the lives of San women remain largely in the background.¹ The aim of my research was to fill part of this gap in our knowledge by investigating Ju/'hoan women's class experiences, their roles in household survival and subsistence strategies, and their roles as community managers — through their participation in and maintenance of kin-based mutual assistance networks — and their status as women within their own kin community and in the broader political economy. My goal in gathering this information was to provide as much detail as I could about the lives of both Ju/'hoan women and men in the Omaheke and bring them out from under the shadow of other Namibian Ju/'hoansi, who do not live and work on farms, but who are often treated as representative of 'the San' community in Namibia. My focus on Ju/'hoan women's class

¹ There are good reasons for this. Even though the fact that I am a woman enabled me to develop fairly close relationships with key female informants, I still had difficulties overcoming the shyness of many Ju/'hoan women I spoke to (especially the younger women).

experience and survival strategies is set in the broader context of an examination of their material conditions as they are shaped by the ideologies and hegemonic attitudes of the farmers. These material conditions are also described in terms of how the Ju/'hoansi respond to their circumstances - responses which at once enable them to survive and form the boundaries of Afrikaner hegemony and carve out space for the world the Ju/'hoansi make on their own terms.

The National Context

Namibia is one of Africa's newest states, having achieved independence on March 21, 1990, after a lengthy liberation struggle led by the South West African Peoples Organization (SWAPO) against illegal South African occupation. After a brutal colonial experience under German rule (1885-1915), Namibia (then South West Africa) was mandated to South Africa in 1920 as a Trust Territory. South Africa proceeded to organize the socio-economic geography of the colony according to the logic of apartheid, eventually establishing ten Bantustans (including Bushmanland), instituting a contract/migrant labour system to supply the agricultural and mining sectors with cheap labour, and sectioning off sixty percent of the land area for white use.

The effects of apartheid on women in South Africa have been well documented (see, for example, Barrett et al. 1985; Berger 1992; Bernstein 1978; Cock 1980; Friedman 1994; Lawson 1985; and Simmons 1968). Namibian women under apartheid lived through many similar experiences, such as: relegation to marginal subsistence production in the Bantustans; subordination under apartheid law, which defined them as legal minors, and under 'traditional' legal systems distorted by the apartheid Tribal Authorities; and, marginalization

into highly exploitative domestic service and labour on white farms (Girvan 1995; Bornholdt 1992; Economic Commission for Africa/Organization of African Unity 1984). However, the research on Namibian women living under and struggling against apartheid has tended to treat African women as an ethnically homogeneous group (see for example, SWAPO Women's Council 1988; SWAPO Women's Solidarity Group 1988; Unterhalter 1988, Allison 1986; Becker 1995; Cleaver and Wallace 1990; Hansen and Ashbaugh 1991), and the effects of colonial rule on Ju/'hoan women have yet to be explored.

Like other frontline states, especially Zimbabwe, Angola, and Mozambique, Namibia faces the challenges of repatriating and resettling refugees, rebuilding a war-damaged infrastructure, regenerating the economy and promoting territorial integration (Sidaway and Simon 1993:18). Also, like its former colonial power, South Africa, Namibia must address the issues of land and labour reform, unemployment, rural poverty and the marginalization of women (Tapscott 1993).

Presently, Namibia's nation-building efforts are hobbled by its dual strategy of reconciliation and redistribution and, like many developing countries, one aspect of this tension is the contradiction between the need to maintain or increase production levels while encouraging greater equity. The somewhat problematic conclusions of the 1991 Conference on Land Reform included, *inter alia*: 1) that land nationalization was unconstitutional; 2) that ancestral rights were not to be the basis for the redistribution of land, and; 3) that priority should be given to the landless sector of the population (Brown 1991:7-9; Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit 1991). An encouraging level of consensus was reached; however, there was little follow-up activity and delays in policy formation and action have led to doubts about the government's will to tackle the issues of land redistribution and

exploitative labour relations (Simon 1993:3). One significant step forward for the Ju/'hoansi in Nyae Nyae (in what used to be Bushmanland to the north of the Omaheke) was occasioned when their traditional land tenure (n!ore) system was officially recognized (Megan Biesele, personal communication).

The unique relationship between the Ju/'hoansi in Nyae Nyae and the South African regime has been characterized by South African attempts to 'develop' the Ju/'hoansi by setting up farming initiatives, installing them in a Game Reserve as human fauna and eventually training them for combat against SWAPO (Lee 1988; Biesele 1990; Lee and Hurlich 1982; Gordon 1984b; Ritchie 1986; Marshall and Ritchie 1984). More sincere efforts to improve living conditions among the Ju/'hoansi at Nyae Nyae met with overwhelming structural and political constraints. Farming activities in the communal areas (former 'homelands') are generally inhibited by the fact that extension services, marketing outlets and research facilities were all designed for white farmers (Duggal 1979:26-28; 1984). Van Rooyen (1991/91) describes how recent efforts to establish a self-sufficient cattle-ranching operation at Nyae Nyae were hindered by poor infrastructural facilities, inadequate training and by marketing constraints associated with the fact that Nyae Nyae lies beyond the cattle control line.

These apartheid-entrenched systemic constraints are confronted by a group who have access to their own land. The kinds of issues and options that would be relevant in the Omaheke, where the Ju/'hoan are living on land owned by other ethnic groups, remain to be explored. A particular issue challenging conventional development theory and practice, which predominantly assumes sedentarism, is the problem of how to accommodate the development goals and priorities, and distribute development resources, to a community

which is mobile and landless.

As the most marginalized ethnic group in Namibia, the Ju/'hoansi are largely excluded from national-level political processes. The only Ju/'hoan organization active in the Omaheke is the recently formed (January, 1996) Working Group for Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA), which is currently developing a regional network of San organizations throughout southern Africa (le Roux and Thoma 1995; Brörmann 1997, 1998; and Thoma 1996) and efforts to establish the Omaheke San Trust are currently underway (Axel Thoma, personal communication). Because the Ju/'hoansi remain politically marginalized, the main avenue available to them to advance their political interests in the national arena and influence policy (especially concerning land and labour reform) is through NGO networks. The Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke share many of the same problems that the San in the rest of Namibia face, particularly a lack of political representation. However, they also face their own issues as a landless underclass encapsulated within an Afrikaner-dominated farming economy.

The Field Site

The Omaheke Region lies on the edge of the Central/Southern Kalahari Sandveld and was historically divided by the Herero into four geographical zones: the *Kaukouveld*, north and northeast of the Eiseb Omaramba; the *Omaheke* ('Sandveld') extending between the Epukiro and Nossob rivers; the *Ovitore* ('Potatoveld') between Gobabis and Buitepos; and, the *Omargua* ('Saltveld') south of Gobabis in the Aminuis area (van Rooyen and Reiner 1995:1; Köhler 1959:1). Most of the Omaheke is fairly flat, slightly undulating sandveld, except for the far west, where the sandveld meets the Central Namibian Highland at the

Okambaraberg hills. The Omaheke has a sub-arid climate with a mean maximum summer temperature of 31.5°C and a mean minimum winter temperature of 3.4°C. The mean annual rainfall is 370.9mm, but rainfall is highly localized and varies dramatically from year to year and place to place. The most important river is the Nossob. Its two tributaries, the White Nossob and Black Nossob, flow in a southerly direction to the Molopo bed, but are dry for most of the year. The other two rivers, the Eiseb and Epukiro, flow east into Botswana and are also dry most of the year. The Omaheke's low and erratic rainfall, poor soils, but favourable grass conditions, make it best suited for stock raising, and in fact the Omaheke is the biggest cattle producer in Namibia; cattle are raised primarily in the north and central areas and mixed cattle and small stock are raised in the more arid south (International Development Consultancy 1995:2-6, 18).²

The Omaheke is made up of the former Gobabis Magistrate District and the former reserve/homeland areas of Aminuis, Tswanaland, and the greater part of Hereroland East. These former reserve and homeland areas are now known as the 'communal areas' and comprise about 35 percent of the total land area of the Omaheke. Although Afrikaans-speakers make up only about 8 percent of the population, they dominate the economy: they occupy about 65 percent of the land area, farming on approximately 900 farms (averaging about 7 000ha) in the area known as the 'commercial block'. The town of Gobabis is the only real urban centre and is the administrative and infrastructural heart of the Region.

According to the 1991 census, there are 52 735 people living in the Omaheke (Central

² The carrying capacity in the north and central commercial block is 8 to 10ha/LSU (large stock unit) and 12ha/LSU in the south. Overgrazing in the communal areas has led to bush encroachment and it is therefore likely that these figures over-estimate grazing conditions in the communal lands (International Development Consultancy 1995:20).

Statistics Office 1994:19) and, with a surface area of 84 732km², the population density of the Omaheke is .61 persons per km². The largest language group in the Omaheke is Otjiherero (43 percent), the second largest language group are Nama/Damara speakers (24 percent), the Ju/'hoansi are the third largest language group (12 percent). There are approximately 6 500 Ju/'hoansi in the Region and most work as farm labourers and domestic servants on white (Afrikaner and German) owned farms. There are two groups of San speakers in the Omaheke: those in the north and northeast are *Au//ei speakers (//Khou //esi, Auen, Makaukau or 'southern !Kung'), and those in the central and eastern areas are Nharo speakers (Aukwe, //Ai-Khoe, Naron) (Barnard 1992:39; Gordon 1992a:7; Köhler 1959:25-26). The San in the region, both *Au//ei speakers and Nharo speakers, generally refer to themselves collectively as 'Ju/'hoansi'.

No land in the Omaheke is owned or controlled by the Ju/'hoansi, and the importance of this fact in structuring Ju/'hoan life cannot be overestimated. Residency on a farm is tied directly to employment, and unemployment often translates into homelessness. Primary employment on a farm is usually restricted to men and women are given employment, or are allowed to live on a farm, only if they are the kin of a male worker. This link between residency and employment, and the gendered nature of farmwork itself, highlight the extreme conditions of dependency the Ju/'hoan women face.

Today there are only four alternatives for the Ju/'hoansi to living and working on white farms: First, about thirty percent of the Ju/'hoansi are found in the communal areas, where they work for Herero and Tswana farmers, usually receiving little or no wages, very meager rations, and sometimes only alcohol for their work (Suzman 1995a, 1995b, and personal communication). In the communal area land has been designated for the use of

traditionally pastoral peoples, who raise substantial herds of cattle on communally owned land. Much (technically illegal) fencing is underway while the communal farmers await clarification of government land use policies. Unemployed Ju/'hoansi are drawn into the area in the hope of occasional piece-work building fences or tending cattle. Within the communal areas there are several small villages, along the outskirts of which Ju/'hoan families settle and beg for food and alcohol. The women and young girls at these sites are often the victims of ongoing sexual exploitation by the villagers.

Within the communal areas there is, however, one project which, if successful, may hold great promise for the Ju/'hoansi. In a remote corner near the Botswana border, the Working Group For Indigenous Minorities (WIMSA), has received permission from local Herero chiefs to establish two Ju/'hoan villages - Donkerbos ("Darkbush") and Sonneblom ("Sunflower"). Two boreholes have been dug, and solar pumps and a small number of cattle and goats have been donated in the hope that the Ju/'hoansi will be able to establish a basis for self-sufficiency and autonomy. When I stayed at the project from June to August 1998, approximately 150 people had settled in the two neighboring villages. This is the only project currently underway in the Omaheke which promises the Ju/'hoansi some opportunity for self-determination, but their tenure on the land is very insecure. Surrounding Herero pastoralists are making concerted efforts to reclaim the project's 13,000 hectares of land for their own use. However, this project does not represent a residency option for the Ju/'hoansi who live in other sites in the Omaheke since the settlement's carrying capacity, for both people and livestock, has reached its limit.

Thirdly, Ju/'hoansi also live in the government resettlement camps, which were established just after independence as a place to settle indigent people, and where monthly

distributions of drought relief food are available. However, here the Ju/'hoansi have few prospects for earning money or engaging in subsistence agriculture, and must contend with the non-Ju/'hoansi who illegally graze their cattle in the camp and marginalize Ju/'hoan stock-raising efforts.

Finally, there is a squatters' village on the outskirts of the former black township of Epako, where a small, but fluctuating population of urban Ju/'hoansi live.³ The squatters' village, like the resettlement camps and the communal areas, provide the Ju/'hoansi with marginally more autonomy than the commercial farms, but only at the price of a significant reduction in their economic security.

The Ju/'hoansi recognize the communal area, the resettlement camps, and the urban squatters' village as poor alternatives to living on white farms. All four sites are elaborately interconnected as the Ju/'hoansi negotiate hardships as a landless and impoverished underclass by maintaining extensive kin-based networks throughout which resources are shared and mutual assistance is provided. Ju/'hoan survival strategies link all four sites because participating in these kin-based networks involves widespread visiting, an activity in which Ju/'hoan women are the main actors.

Field Methods and Issues

This thesis is based on research conducted over eighteen months. Most of the data was gathered during my first fourteen month trip to the field (June 1996 to August 1997).

³ Unlike other ethnic groups, such as the Herero and Tswana, the Ju/'hoansi were not allocated sites (or 'blocks') in the township where they could live, and so many 'squat' along the outskirts of the location. The Epako township is the only truly urban squatters' village in the Omaheke Region itself.

During this time I travelled extensively among the farms in the commercial area, and paid regular visits to two resettlement camps and the squatters' village outside Epako. On the farms I visited, I sometimes stayed only for an afternoon or a morning to interview a particular subject, and sometimes stayed for as long as a week. I was not permitted to stay overnight in the resettlement camps, but was able to manage more extended visits by camping on an abandoned farm outside the borders of one resettlement camp. The squatters' village was the home of my research assistant and interpreter, Besa Abuse, who left a job on a commercial farm to work for me. Thanks to him, I was able to work in the squatters' village whenever I had time off from the farms and camps. During my second trip to the Omaheke (May to August 1998) I conducted research in the San village project of Donkerbos/Sonneblom in the communal area, where the villagers allowed me to set up camp and welcomed me as a neighbour.

Techniques for gathering quantitative data included: 1) collecting census data; 2) surveying and comparing income levels among households; 3) recording male and female subsistence/labour activities; 4) recording the tasks and hours in a male and female 'work day'; and, 5) surveying the demographic and kinship characteristics of Ju/'hoan households. Methods for collecting qualitative data included: 1) participant-observation; 2) conducting both formal (taped and transcribed) and informal individual and group interviews; 3) interviewing farmers and their family members; and 4) collecting life histories of Ju/'hoan women and men and farmers and their wives. I also spent two weeks in July 1997 and one week in August 1998 conducting research in the Namibian National Archives.

My primary data-gathering strategy was loosely structured interviews with a large life-history component. My purpose in collecting life histories was to relate historical context

with individual experience, to gain insights into what kind of past events (national, local and personal) were considered significant by the individual in shaping her/his life, to provide a subject-centred point of view, and to access possible 'counter-hegemonic' discourses (see Personal Narratives Group 1989:4-13). The ways in which the Ju/'hoansi remembered their past experiences provided important insights into how they understand their current political and economic circumstances, their relationships with their white employers and how they envisioned their future opportunities (see Fentress and Wickham 1998).

Altogether I conducted 73 structured (taped and transcribed) individual and group interviews and interviewed 87 Ju/'hoan informants (36 men and 51 women) ranging in age from 17 to 97, although most of my informants were in their 30s and 40s. These interviews were conducted in Ju/'hoan with my interpreter, Besa Abuse. I visited and conducted interviews on 19 farms, 2 'Bush Schools' (Gqaina and Hippo), 2 Resettlement Camps (Skoonheid and Drimiopsis) and the Donkerbos/Sonneblom San village Project. Throughout my stay I gathered information on household income and expenditure patterns in the squatters' village in the Epako location and, in May 1997, I conducted a house-to-house survey of the Epako squatters' village in order to gather information on household demographics, ethnic composition and household kinship connections.

Most of the qualitative data I gathered came from informal discussions and participant observation with 18 main informants (9 women, 9 men), whom I visited regularly: 6 key informants lived on 3 different farms, 5 lived in the 2 resettlement camps, 4 lived in the Epako squatters' village and 3 were unemployed 'wanderers' with whom I kept in contact and who often visited me. The more personal details, especially of women's lives, were provided in conversations (in Afrikaans) with 4 main informants with whom I had developed

close and friendly relations.

Developing close relations with the Ju/'hoansi, earning their trust and gaining acceptance was quite tricky. On the one hand, I needed the permission of the farmer to enter a farm and speak to the workers, which required maintaining good relations with the farmers; on the other hand, being seen to get along well with the farmers gives their Ju/'hoan workers good reason to distrust me. Since my language skills when I first arrived in the Omaheke were less than adequate, Besa was invaluable in explaining to the Ju/'hoansi why I was visiting them, what my research interests were and in receiving their informed permission to conduct interviews. Even after I was able to communicate on my own (in Afrikaans), Besa facilitated introductions to and rapport with my informants by bringing me into his community of kin and friends. By opening this door for me, Besa provided me with opportunities to earn the trust of the Ju/'hoansi and gather information about their lives and opinions that I would not have been able to collect without him.

Because the need to earn the trust of the Ju/'hoansi was crucial to the success of my project, interview opportunities with farmers were limited. Quite a few farmers would not agree to be interviewed at all, and many would not allow me access to their farms, while others were eager to supply their point of view about the nature the 'Bushmen', what they were like as workers and the difficulties they themselves faced farming in adverse ecological and economic conditions. This thesis, however, is dominated by the Ju/'hoansi's side of the story. Since my goal was to produce a thesis that contained information relevant to the Ju/'hoansi's most pressing concerns and preoccupations, the emphasis is on the *problems* that they face as farm workers and domestic servants. It is not my intention, however, to demonize the farmers; many of whom are genuinely concerned with the plight of the

Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke and struggle to solve the problems produced by poverty. For example, some dedicate a great deal of time and energy to facilitating the education of their workers' children, helping their workers overcome addiction to alcohol, assisting them with medical care and finding strategies to reduce paternalism in their relations with their workers.

Theoretical Issues

Left-wing South African historiography has followed a broad pattern of moving from a focus on structure to a focus on agency, which entailed a parallel shift from a 'top-down' to a 'bottom-up' perspective. In the 1970s, reaction to structural-functionalist frameworks (e.g. Wolpe 1972, 1988) and versions of underdevelopment theory that emphasized economically-determined social arrangements (e.g. Legassick 1974, 1975), produced a shift in focus toward the role of African agency and internal community dynamics in the process of rural class formation (e.g. Marks and Atmore 1980; Bundy 1979; Palmer and Parsons 1977; Beinart and Bundy et al 1987; Ranger 1983, 1988). The concern became relating human agency to structural constraint and examining how on-the-ground struggles and micro-level social cleavages contributed to the collective construction of South Africa's unique class system (Bozzoli and Delius 1991:21). This focus on human agency naturally shifted away from structuralist conceptions of class, which treated 'class' as an entity, toward a focus on the cultural aspects of class relations (ibid:21-22; e.g. van Onselen 1976); and with this shift came a new interest in how cultural consciousness and class consciousness are related, and what new perspectives on the historical development of South Africa's political economy may be provided by adopting a subject-centred, or 'bottom-up' perspective (e.g. van Onselen 1996).

The tension between structure and agency is also present in Kalahari hunter-gatherer studies, where there is currently a debate about how far removed from the forces of global capitalism the San have been. On the one hand, the 'revisionist' camp, influenced by underdevelopment and world systems theories, argues that the current poverty of the San is evidence of an historical continuity of exploitation and marginalization, and that hunting and gathering was (and is), in many cases, a product of the historical process of peripheralization and class formation (see Wilmsen 1998a, 1989b; Denbow 1984; Wilmsen and Denbow 1990; Motzafi-Haller 1994; Gordon 1984a). Stronger statements of this position suggest that the San — or 'Bushmen' — are an ethnographic category rather than an ethnic group and that their own modes of self-identification are derived from their underclass status and the stereotypes imposed upon them (Wilmsen 1989a, 1989b; Gordon 1992a; Suzman 1997). On the other hand, there are the 'traditionalists', who argue that the present state of poverty and subordination does not represent the entire historical experience of the San, and emphasize agency in terms of the San's ability to resist, accommodate and adapt to a variety of political economic circumstances, while still maintaining a level of cultural integrity and autonomy (Solway and Lee 1990; Guenther 1986b, 1997; Lee and Guenther 1991, 1993). I am in broad agreement with the traditionalist position in this debate. Although political economy, class relations and racial stereotypes profoundly influence the lives of the Omaheke Ju/'hoansi, it is also important to recognize that the Ju/'hoansi are more than just artefacts of the western imagination or a community who owe their cultural existence to the forces of global capitalism. The unique responses of the Omaheke Ju/'hoansi to their material conditions are owed as much to their ingenuity and creativity in drawing from their own cultural repertoire to accommodate or resist the forces and agents of their oppression and exploitation.

However, the focus on agency — both within Kalahari hunter-gatherer studies, and in southern African historiography generally — remains incomplete: the ‘bottom-up’ perspective, reflects primarily the experiences of males (Schmidt 1996:2; Bozzoli and Deluis 1991:23).⁴

Although the ‘traditionalist’ school has a much stronger record in terms of focusing on gender relations and women’s experiences (see, for example Draper 1975; Shostak 1981; Marshall 1976; Lee 1979, 1982; Guenther 1986a, 1981; Barnard 1980), very little work has been done, in either camp, on how San women experienced colonialism and the development of capitalism or how gender featured in rural class formation. Although southern African historiography has benefitted from a growing body of literature focusing on the role of gender and women’s activities in the process of rural class formation (see, for example, Bozzoli 1983; Schmidt 1996; Beinart 1987; Walker 1990a), within and Kalahari hunter-gatherer studies, rural class formation is analyzed as a primarily male phenomenon, and the role of gender — as an ideological construct and as a political relationship — in the culture-bound process of class formation has received little attention (the exception being Motzafi-Haller 1994). My own approach to the relationship between structure and agency is therefore twofold: first, I follow the example of Genovese (1972) and focus on the way dominant and subaltern groups inter-act — though a combination of domination, coercion, resistance and accommodation — to create a unique cultural and class system with particular attention to the gender politics involved in this process; and, second I place female agency in the foreground, particularly in terms of the roles Ju/’hoan women play in coping with their material

⁴ Some recent work on women’s oral history is now challenging this male-bias in southern African studies (see, for example, Bozzoli 1991; Marks 1987).

conditions as workers, and as household and community managers.

Reconciling the dualism between structure and agency also involves overcoming a subtler distinction, detectable within the present hunter-gatherer debate, between culture and class. The question about whether or not the San are an underclass or a cultural community becomes less urgent once we recognize that class is a relationship and not a 'thing' - that class is more than just a 'location' within a structure, but is also a *cultural* formation (Thompson 1963:10-11). Once we recognize that class formation is also cultural process, the ways in which gender is implicated in this process may be revealed.

The theoretical perspective of this thesis is therefore informed by the work of feminist theories of political economy (for example, di Leonardo et al. 1981; Etienne and Leacock 1980; Bozzoli 1983; Sacks 1979; and Afshar et al. 1991), and attempts to move beyond functionalist frameworks by examining how production is gendered in ways more profound than suggested by task-specific sexual divisions of labour (see Scott and Tilly 1978; Safa 1986; Wong 1986). With these points in mind, I have integrated two theoretical premises into my research: 1) political economies are cultured, and therefore gendered (Roseberry 1988; di Leonardo 1991); and 2) gender is a social and political relationship that shapes, and is shaped by, race, class and kinship relations (Rubin 1975; Silverblatt 1991; Stoler 1991; di Leonardo 1991; Collier and Yanigisako 1987; de Groot 1991; 117, 122-123; Elson 1991:5; Leacock 1981:8).

The agency of Ju/'hoan women as household and community managers must also be put into context. Household composition and 'family' arrangements are shaped by the political and economic structures in which they are embedded. It is therefore important to examine household dynamics in relation to institutional arrangements and social structures

beyond the household. This requires sensitivity to the fact that the context within which the household operates is not itself gender-neutral and that gender relations and constructs are expressions of power relations between men and women (Cardinal, Costigan and Heffernan 1994:415; Moser 1993). Because of the pervasiveness of gender as a power-relation, household bargaining and 'co-operative conflicts' should also be seen as struggles over meaning, for example, in terms of defining the value of gender-based responsibilities and contributions (Sen 1990).

The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis divides into three broad sections, with two chapters in each. The first section provides both the historical and ideological setting. I provide a selective history of white settlement in the Omaheke Region, focusing on the processes by which the Ju/'hoansi became incorporated as a farm labouring underclass, and on the historically deep race and gender ideologies which produced the profoundly male-dominated economic structure in the Omaheke today. My aim in the two chapters of this section is to locate the place of Ju/'hoan women in the history of the region, and to foreground gender ideologies which can be so easily overlooked in the context of powerful and conspicuous racial ideologies. This has important implications for the exclusion of Ju/'hoan women from public and political realms.

The two chapters (three and four) of the second section of the thesis are concerned with Ju/'hoan life — particularly, economic and political life — on the white owned commercial farms. In order to give Ju/'hoan life on the farms a more tangible presence, I begin with a narrative account of a day at the farm worker's quarters. I then discuss the economic aspects of subsistence on the farms, emphasizing the ways in which racial and

gender stereotypes are used to justify poor working and living conditions, while providing a forum in which the Ju/'hoansi answer some of these stereotypes. Chapter Four examines farm politics and the unique class relationship that exists between the Ju/'hoansi and the farmers. I focus on the gendered logic of paternalism, and on how the Ju/'hoansi both accommodate and subvert the political structures on the farms.

In the third section, I turn to issues involving Ju/'hoan families, households and community linkages. Chapter Five focuses on how the dynamics of Ju/'hoan kin relations provide for autonomous social interaction among the Ju/'hoansi themselves, and examines Ju/'hoan women's status within this kin-based community by focusing on changes in marriage patterns and how these changes reflect Ju/'hoan women's strategies for negotiating their marginal status within the broader political economy. Chapter Six takes us off the farms and into the lives of those Ju/'hoansi living 'on the road', looking for work or coping with chronic unemployment. This allows us to examine how mobility and visiting patterns contribute to household fluidity and outline the kin-based trajectories of mutual assistance strategies that link households together to form the contours of a broader Ju/'hoan community. Intra-household politics are compared and contrasted between different sites to illustrate how political economic and kinship context influence gender relations within households. The focus on kin-based mutual assistance and inter-household linkages also reveals the subversive potential of Ju/'hoan kin and community networks, in terms of providing both the motive and the means for escaping particularly exploitative situations on the farms, and for forming 'counter-hegemonic' modes of self-identification.

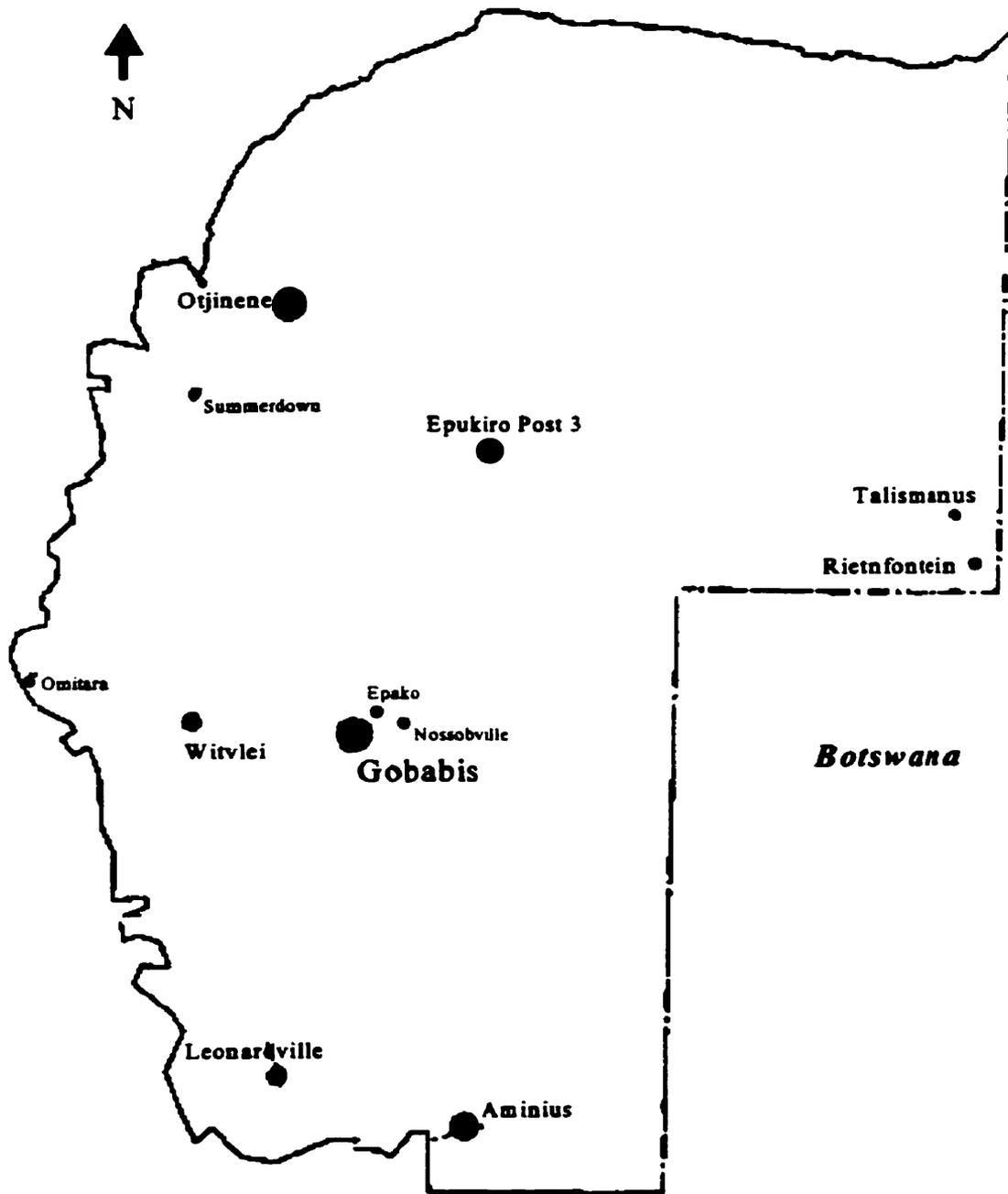


Figure 1. The Omaheke Region

SECTION I. HISTORICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

CHAPTER ONE

SETTLEMENT AND CONFLICT

It was only the Ju/'hoansi who were living here in the old times and there were no white farmers and no Hereros - just Ju/'hoansi. And when they came, they took the Ju/'hoansi to work for them.

- /Uiya

Introduction

What follows is a selective history of white settlement of the Omaheke Region, and of the conflict between the white settlers and the Ju/'hoansi. This history is presented in two parts: the first concerns the often violent processes of frontier justice and the quasi-military engagements between the Ju/'hoansi and a predominantly poor class of Afrikaners who arrived in large numbers in the late 1920s to transform the Omaheke into farmland; the second concerns the transformation of the Ju/'hoansi into a pool of cheap labour for the farms. My purpose in this first part is to highlight and challenge an equally selective, but more common way of telling this same history - one which views the eventual subjugation of the Ju/'hoansi as the result of military defeat. This version of the history of white settlement obscures our view of two important matters. First, it runs a serious risk of accepting a perspective according to which the 'Bushmen Problem' faced by the white settlers was primarily the problem of subduing aggressive and 'wild' natives and, to that extent, it risks sharing the perspective of the white settlers themselves - a perspective which obscures the concerted effort to transform the Ju/'hoansi into a class of cheap labourers. Second, by pitting men with guns against 'bandits' with poisoned arrows, this more common version of the history of settlement can find no place for Ju/'hoan women, either in the Ju/'hoan resistance to white settlement, or in the eventual subjugation of the Ju/'hoansi.

When we are able to see the ‘defeat’ of the Ju/’hoansi in more economic terms, we will also be able to bring the women into clear view.

In the second part of my selective history of settlement, I focus on labour shortage problems faced by poor white settlers, and on the creation of an underclass of Ju/’hoan farm workers as the solution to these problems. An examination of the various means by which the Ju/’hoansi were transformed into farm workers, unlike the perspective which sees the subjugation of the Ju/’hoansi as a military conquest, cannot afford to ignore the highly gendered nature of the farming economy. There is nothing natural, and nothing typically ‘African’ in the way that farm labour was gendered in the Omaheke.

Part One: Colonial Cleavages and ‘Bushman Banditry’

i) The Omaheke of the Nineteenth Century

/Uiya’s statement provides the most comprehensive account of the Omaheke’s precolonial and early colonial history I was able to collect from my Ju/’hoan informants. For most Ju/’hoansi, the ‘old times’ refers to the early years of Afrikaner settlement in the 1920s and extends back to the earliest childhood memories of the oldest Ju/’hoan around. Most historical sources and my non-Ju/’hoan informants agree with /Uiya’s claim that the San¹ were the earliest inhabitants of what is now the Omaheke Region. A few Herero informants even went so far as to claim that the Rietfontein block (in the northeast corner of the Omaheke Region) had always been, and remained up until the 1960s, ‘San territory’.

¹ In this brief history I use the term ‘San’ to refer collectively to the different groups living in the Omaheke in the nineteenth century. The term ‘Ju/’hoansi’ is the collective term the San use for themselves today.

Nineteenth century accounts of the region, mostly from European hunters, traders and missionaries, did not distinguish different groups of 'Bushmen'. However, early twentieth century sources report the presence of a number of different San groups in the area, including: 1) the ≠Au//eisi (also Makaukau, ≠Ao//ein, Auen or ≠Aukwe) who occupied the Omaheke sandveld in the east and northeast of the Omaheke Region, from Sandfontein (now Buitepos) to /Gam; 2) the Nharo (also Naro, //Ni-khoe, or //Aikwe) who occupied the territory from Ghanzi to just west of Sandfontein; 3) the !Xo in the southwest; 4) the /Nu//en (also //N//ein, Nusan) in the south; and 5) the Hei//om, who were scattered around the farms west of Gobabis (see figure 2) (Fourie 1928:82-83; Bleek 1928:3; Gordon 1992a:7; Schapera 1930:32-33, 35).² These distinctions no longer seem to play a very large role in the self-identification of the Omaheke Ju/'hoansi. I met a few who claimed !Xo ancestry, but they called themselves 'Ju/'hoansi'. Similarly, informants who identified their ancestors as Nharo or ≠Au//ei referred to themselves simply as Ju/'hoan.

In the eighteenth century, two culturally and linguistically related groups of cattle-herding pastoralists, the Herero and Mbanderu, arrived in what is now Namibia. They ultimately migrated from the Great Lakes region in East Africa and possibly split up during their trek. The Mbanderus were the first to arrive in the Omaheke Region, likely settling in the area between Gobabis and Windhoek in the mid-nineteenth century (van Rooyen and Reiner 1995:5-6; Guenther 1997:126). The Hereros claimed the territory west and northwest

² The ≠Au//eisi are !Kung-speakers, closely related linguistically and culturally to the Ju/'hoansi in Dobe and Nyae Nyae. The Nharo are linguistically and culturally related to Khoe-speaking Namas. The Hei//om are also described as 'Khoe-speakers' because of linguistic and cultural similarities to Namas. The other two groups — the Ta'a-speaking !Xo and the !wi-speaking /Nu//ein — are referred to as 'Cape San' (see Barnard 1992:22-26).

of Gobabis and their encroachments into the region were largely a result of power struggles with Mbanderus (although there were some Herero living in the area along side the Mbanderus, often called 'eastern Herero').

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the San appeared to have maintained a significant level of autonomy. Those groups in the east and northeast of the Omaheke Region, the Nharo and ≠Au//eisi, were particularly notorious for their fierce independence. They were organized and formidable enough to keep Tswanas (from Botswana), Herero and Mbanderu intruders — all of whom shared a healthy respect for the 'Bushman' poison arrow — out of their territory (Wilmsen 1989a:97, 103; Guenther 1997; van Rooyen and Reiner 1995:5). The San were somewhat less successful in resisting the next wave of settlers, coming this time from the south - the Oorlam Namas.

The indigenous Nama inhabitants likely migrated to Namibia about 2,000 years ago after migrating to the Orange River from Botswana, where they separated from a larger body of Namas who turned south at the Orange River (see Elphick 1977). Lau describes the original Namas as "numerous, entirely self-sufficient, nomadic pastoral people, living off huge herds of cattle." (1987:6). Their territory was largely in the south-central parts of Namibia.

The Oorlams³ were a group of 'racially mixed' Namas (i.e. of Khoisan and European descent) who spoke Cape Dutch and English and who had lived with and worked for Boers in

³ 'Oorlam' is believed to be a derivative of the Malay words 'Orang Lama', which means 'man of experience' or 'one who knows the world thoroughly' (Lau 1987:19; Vedder 1938:171*n*). Informants in the Omaheke today say it means 'clever'. The Oorlams established themselves as the politically dominant group in the country, largely by incorporating the indigenous Namas into their 'mini-state' system.

the Cape Colony (many as slaves) (Legassick 1979; Marks 1972). In the eighteenth century, they rebelled against their European 'masters' and, merging with runaway slaves, other dispossessed Khoe and a variety of frontier bandits, began trekking north (Lau 1987:20-21). The group of Oorlams who settled in the Omaheke Region were the Khauas (Gai-//khaun or Gei-khauen), also called the 'Amraals' after their leader, Amraal Lambert (Köhler 1959:16; Lau 1987:23; Vedder 1938:172). Amraal Lambert left Clanwilliam in the late eighteenth century and reached Naosanabis⁴ in the southern part of what is now the Omaheke Region in the early 1840s. Between 1848 and 1856 the headquarters of Amraal's people shifted from Naosanabis to Gobabis (Elephant's Fountain). From the 1840s to the mid-1860s, the Khauas rose to become the most powerful group in the area.

The Oorlam Namas built up their economy by raiding the cattle of their Herero and Mbanderu neighbours and they developed a reputation for being 'cattle and sheep hunters'. This predatory expansionism was integral to their political and economic life. The primary political and economic unit was the 'commando'. Power rested with a chief (kaptein) and a 'raad' (leaders of the commandos). The hunting/raiding function of the commando became increasingly tied to Cape trade networks as the Oorlam exchanged cattle, tusks and ostrich feathers for arms, ammunition and horses (Lau 1987:88). Lau states that "from mid-century onwards, commando group hunting obviously became an activity similar to cattle-raiding in both its form and in its purpose, vital in procuring commodities, not subsistence." (1987:45). As commando activities became increasingly oriented toward external trade, cattle-raiding replaced cattle-breeding as the primary means of securing stock holdings (ibid:passim).

⁴ Naosanabis (also called Wesley Vale) is now Leonardville.

The Oorlam internal economy was based on a 'cattle post system', which Lau describes as an 'ancient institution' (1987:65). Stock was scattered throughout a number of different posts to accommodate scarce water resources and sparse grazing, and to protect the stock against theft and disease. 'Servants' or dependants were in charge of minding the stock at these posts (Lau 1987:65-66), and some of these servants were San. During a visit to Naosanabis in 1840, Cook noted that the population of Amraal's settlement included:

...servants and poor people, numbering 200, working one to ten miles away from the village [as well as] Bushmen and Hottentot dependants who did not possess any cattle and lived near them in constant traffic with them, numbering 1 000. 1 000 Bergdamara⁵ were in a similar position. Amraal reigns over these people of different tribes like a little king...(cited in Lau 1987:67-68).

However, when Reverend Tindall arrived in Naosanabis in 1842, he describes the San in the area this way:

Bushmen are numerous. They generally live in the plains where no water is, except that which the wild melon yields; with which they quench their thirst. Their diet is varied and may to them be rich. From the jackal to the ant, scarcely an animal or insect is rejected as food. Gum, roots and berries are their bread...(1959:31).

Tindall did find San servants in the Khauas settlement. For example, describing the composition of Amraal's cattle farm in 1846, he states: "The village contained 69 huts of

⁵ Information about the Damaras is scarce and speculative. They are described as both nomadic hunter-gatherers and as stock-herders living in permanent settlements (see Vedder 1928:42; Lau 1987:5). Early ethnographic reports suggest that they lost their original language and culture after they were enslaved by various Nama groups (Vedder 1928:41-43). More recently, Lau argues that they were "part of the Nama language and cultural community, but had become historically distinct from the larger body of the Nama for reasons yet unknown" (1987:4). Early sources refer to the Damara as 'Bergdamara' (mountain Damara) and refer to the Hereros (and Mbanderus) as 'Damaras', probably as a result of the influence of the Nama distinction between 'Mountain Damaras' (called choudaman) and the Hereros, who were called 'Cattle Damaras' (gomava-daman) (Vedder 1938:60). The Ju/'hoansi today call the Hereros 'Dhama' (or 'Dhamasi', plural). The Damaras call themselves 'Nu-khoin' or '≠Nu khoen', meaning 'Black People'. In the Omaheke today, they are often referred to a 'Nama-Damaras'.

Cattle and Berg Damara [Herero and Damara] and also Bushmen.” (1959:96). However, many of his descriptions of the San in Khauas settlements suggest that they were passing through or visiting to attend church services (1959:63,64,68), which may indicate that where the San were the ‘servants’ of the Khauas, they may have been engaging in a form of ‘freelance clientage’ (see Marks 1972:59), rather than as conquered ‘serfs’. Also, the San were known to conduct raids against the Mbanderu and Hereros in the area. In 1846, Tindall reported:

I have just heard of a number of Bushmen having attacked a Damara kraal. They killed 5 women and drove off much cattle. It is said that the Bushmen have fled. They came from the east, but it is not known to what tribe they belong (1959:82).⁶

By this time Gobabis was a stop-over point for European hunters and traders seeking to make their fortunes hunting big game and supplying the growing world ivory market (Gordon 1992a:33-40; Wilmsen 1989a:105-123). According to Lau, the Khauas held a highly strategic position in the region because they controlled the eastern hunting veld and the important trade route connecting Walvis Bay to Lake Ngami; their hegemonic position was enhanced by their ability to establish themselves as the ‘overlords’ of “several thousand dependants in the area, Damara or Bushmen” (1987:35). The Khauas certainly controlled the movements of traders and hunters in the area, however the extent to which they were able to establish ‘overlordship’ and control the entire territory should not be exaggerated.

First of all, Amraal’s claims over the eastern territories were limited by the more powerful Batswana in the east, who also claimed “Gobabis, Rietfontein, Ghanzi and the Lake

⁶ San also attacked Mbanderus closer to the Khauas settlements. In 1844, Tindall describes ‘examining’ a Bushman in Naosanabis to investigate the killing of a ‘Damara captain’ and his son during a Bushman cattle-raid (1959:67).

veldt [as] their property”); they also claimed that the San in their territories were their “rightful subjects” (Guenther 1997:127). However, Amraal’s territory did not extent even as far as Rietfontein, as Francis Galton and Charles Andersson discovered in 1851 after Amraal refused to accompany them into the Rietfontein area (Guenther 1997:128; Vedder 1938:300). This would significantly diminish the strength of Khauas claims to any meaningful sovereignty over the San in the area.

Secondly, the Khauas’ strategy for establishing hegemony and building economic power was to destroy the economic base of neighbouring groups — specifically by cattle raiding — which undermined political cohesion and reduced many to a class of serfs. This strategy was quite effective in subjugating the cattle-raising Mbanderu, however, it would have been ineffective at undermining the economic base, and thus the political cohesion, of the hunting and gathering San. It is likely that the Khauas benefitted from the hunting and tracking skills of the San people they either enserfed or traded with, however, the San also traded with and guided Europeans on their own initiative, often against the wishes of Batswana and Oorlam ‘overlords’ (Guenther 1997:128-129; Chapman 1971:23-25).⁷ Even during the years of Khauas hegemony in the region in the 1840s and 1850s, the subjugation of the San people in the Omaheke was at best partial and uneven.

Khauas overlordship fell most heavily on the Mbanderu and Herero in the region,

⁷ Unlike the Batswana groups, who co-opted San hunting skills to take advantage of new economic opportunities presented by the ivory trade (see B. Morton 1994; Guenther 1997; Wilmsen 1989a), the Oorlam’s hunting techniques were less labour intensive, relying instead on capitalized inputs, such as guns and horses (Lau 1987:45), and so the process whereby the San in Botswana were enserfed — that is, through the appropriation of their hunting skills in the service of Batswana ‘masters’ — was likely not paralleled in the Omaheke.

whom Vedder describes as having been “thoroughly trounced” as Oorlam hegemony grew to its height under the leadership of Jonker Afrikaner (1938:196).⁸ Lau argues that Oorlam hegemony was based on their access to trade links with the Cape, their superior stock of arms and ammunition, their strategic alliances with more powerful Herero groups and their subjugation — “extracting tribute, labour and cattle” — of the weaker ones (1987:68; *passim*). The Hereros and Mbanderus in the Omaheke Region were among these weaker groups. While travelling from Lake Ngami to Gobabis in 1855, Chapman met with Hereros and Mbanderus whom he described as “poor, emaciated, and scabby creatures, equaling the most wretched Bushmen I have yet seen”, and who were reduced to “grubbing for roots and tubers” (1971:166). The Mbanderus he met when he arrived in Gobabis were impoverished serfs, living amid the ruins of an old mission house (*ibid*:166-170). Chapman provides an interesting contrast between the Mbanderus and Herero he met on his way to Gobabis, and the San whom he met living along the Epukiro omaramba in 1855, near what is now the Rietfontein block:

The inhabitants of these parts are a much finer race of Bushmen than we had generally met with. Freedom, and the enjoyment of their own game for food and skins for clothing are the main causes. They acknowledge no chief, and are in the habit of defending themselves against oppressors and intruders, either from Lake Ngami or the Namaqua regions; in former times they have often combined to resist marauding parties sent out by the Batwana and other tribes (1971:165).

Even at the height of Oorlam hegemony in the 1850s, Khauas dominance seems to have been barely felt by many ≠Au//eisi in the north. As late as 1864, when Oorlam hegemony was

⁸ Beginning in the 1830s, Jonker Afrikaner developed alliances with various Oorlam>Nama groups, as well as with several Herero leaders, including the powerful chief Tjamuaha, with whom Jonker controlled most of the south and central areas from his base in Windhoek.

beginning to decline, Thomas Baines reported that San people lived independently “in a country where neither Hottentot nor Bechuana dare permanently settle” (cited in Guenther 1997:122). And as late as 1877, after the Khauas had lost their dominant position in the region, the ethnologist Theophilus Hahn noted that the San groups in the area north of Ghanzi and around Aminuis (in the southern part of what is now the Omaheke Region) did not acknowledge the overlordship of any other group (Wilmsen 1989a:103). The Oorlams did conduct raids against the San, but as Wilmsen states, “Nama military commandos ranged pretty much at will, but these were raiding forays, not conquests” (ibid).

Finally, the strength of Amraal’s leadership among his own people may have been less than absolute. Vedder states, in his rather unsympathetic description of ‘Nama tyranny’, that “Amraal was wise and upright, but the people who had joined him were uncontrollable and rapacious” (1938:172). In 1861, Chapman describes Amraal as “sincere, but the poor old man has not all the power one could wish him” (1971:231). Particularly after the 1850s, Khauas control over the trade route through the Omaheke was owed less to the power of a centralized Oorlam ‘mini-state’ than to the effectiveness of individualized raiding parties. The harassment of traders, hunters and travellers in the region actually escalated around the time Khauas hegemony was disintegrating.

As the game around Gobabis depleted after the 1850s, Khauas power in the region also diminished. Most hunters and traders passed quickly through Gobabis to get to Lake Ngami (Guenther 1997:128). While the Cape-based ivory trade was reaching its height in the 1860s and 1870s, Oorlam power had essentially ended (Lau 1987:88). Chapman offers a fairly prophetic statement about the condition of the Khauas in 1861:

The Hottentots [Namas] at Elephant’s Fountain, owing partly to the profit of a

successful hunt last year, are much better dressed than formerly...This will continue while Amraal lives, but at his death, or after the decline of the ivory trade or the coming of lung sickness, I expect a great falling off in their temporal and spiritual state...It is painfully visible that the Hottentots' cattle are fast diminishing and that many are impoverished (1971:231-232).

In 1864 Amraal Lambert died, along with most of the adult members of his family, in a small pox epidemic that devastated most of the country. The Khauas faced a leadership crisis as different factions in the community supported two different leaders - Andries Lambert and Fredrick Vlermuis. Although both leaders decided to co-operate, the unity of the Khauas was irreparably undermined, and so too was their control over the other groups in the region. Meanwhile, Oorlam hegemony in the country as a whole disintegrated after the death of Jonker Afrikaner in 1861. Jonker's nephew and successor, Jan Jonker, came into conflict with other Oorlam chiefs, "sapping the strength of the Oorlam Afrikaner empire at its core" (Lau 1987:137).

In April 1865, Damara and Mbanderu serfs took advantage of the Khauas' vulnerability and rose in revolt, just as other Hereros all over the country began 'the Herero war of liberation' against the Oorlam, under the leadership of chief Kamaherero. This struggle ended with the 'Peace of Okahandja' (1870) where the Oorlams and Hereros "quietly renewed their old alliances, this time with reversed roles" (Lau 1987:140). According to the terms of the treaty, Jan Jonker was 'co-regent' with Kamaherero, who claimed ownership of Gobabis and Rietfontein. Andries Lambert was allowed to retain jurisdiction over the Khauas' former territory, but only as chief Kamaherero's subordinate (ibid).

Shortly after the Khauas' reversal of fortune, the first group of white settlers in the region, the Dorsland (Thirstland) Trekkers arrived. Dissatisfied with Burgers' government,

they had trekked from the Transvaal, through the Kalahari to Lake Ngami, and then on to Rietfontein, where they arrived in January 1876. Their 'commandant', Gert Alberts, asked Andries Lambert for permission to settle in the Rietfontein area, and the request was granted. It was not, however, the Khauas that the Dorsland Trekkers actually had to contend with. They were highly dependent on the San in the area for their basic needs, especially water, and they were often vulnerable to attacks and stock theft from San groups resisting this encroachment into their territory (Wilmsen 1989a:123). After a second group of Dorsland Trekkers arrived in Rietfontein in 1878, Alberts asked Andries Lambert for permission to buy land and settle permanently. Under pressure from Kamaherero and the Special Commissioner for the Cape Colony, William Coates Palgrave, Andries refused this request. After two years of living in Rietfontein as hunters, traders and stock herders, the Dorsland Trekkers moved on to Angola.⁹

The peace established at Okahandja barely lasted a decade. The Khauas did not acquiesce to the new order and disrupted travel and trade through their territory. In 1880, war broke out between the Hereros and Oorlams. Gobabis remained virtually unoccupied as the Khauas retreated to Naosanabis and the Witbooi Oorlams raided Mbanderu settlements around Gobabis.

South West Africa was officially proclaimed a German protectorate in 1884 and German colonial agents extended their sphere of influence by forming 'protection treaties'

⁹ The government of the Cape Colony instructed Palgrave to agitate against the settlement of the Dorsland Trekkers, especially among the Herero, in order to prevent the establishment of a Boer Republic which could connect with the Free State and Transvaal Republics and cut the Cape Colony off from the rest of Africa (van Rooyen and Reiner 1995:15).

with various African leaders in the country. There followed a series of conflicts and shifting alliances - German and Herero against Mbanderu, Khauas and Mbanderu against German, then Nama, Herero and German against Mbanderu and Khauas. Defeated in May 1896, the Mbanderus were placed under the authority of Herero chief Maherero while the Khauas scattered and were absorbed into other Nama groups. Gobabis was transformed into a small garrison town, with a few farms allocated to German ex-schutztruppe outside town. Then, in January 1904, the German-Herero war broke out. In the Omaheke, the Hereros attacked the Witvlei police station and killed three German farmers along the Nossob river outside of Gobabis. In the same month, 400 schutztruppe were stationed at Gobabis to prevent Hereros from escaping into Botswana and to drive them northwest, toward Waterberg (van Rooyen and Reiner 1995:28-29). From February on, the bulk of the war was fought in the area west of the Omaheke Region. However, the Omaheke would be the stage for the darkest phase of the war.

In June 1904, General Lothar Von Trotha was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Colonial Forces and took over military operations, and the Governorship.¹⁰ After a decisive battle in August at Hamakari (Waterberg), the Hereros fled into the Omaheke sandveld. Von Trotha then ordered a 250 kilometre long cordon to seal off the Omaheke, preventing the Hereros from returning from the sandveld and forcing them to flee along the waterless Epukiro and Eiseb omarambas and into the Kalahari. Those who did not make it to Botswana died of thirst in the desert (Drechsler 1980:155-156). Since some Hereros were able to slip

¹⁰ Von Trotha had served as Deputy Governor and Commander of German troops in east Africa and had gained a reputation for being an effective and ruthless military leader during his career suppressing uprisings in east Africa and east Asia (Bley 1971:159).

past the cordon and escape the dry sandveld to the west, von Trotha issued an 'extermination order' on October 2, 1904, which read: "Within German boundaries, every Herero, whether found armed or unarmed, with or without cattle, will be shot. I shall not except any more women and children" (cited in Drechsler 1980:156).

When news of the Herero massacre reached them, the Nama leaders were convinced that they faced a similar fate, and rose against the Germans, transforming the conflict into a protracted guerrilla war which lasted until 1908. The Herero-German war (also called the 'War of National Liberation') resulted in the annihilation of seventy to eighty percent of the Herero population and thirty-five to fifty percent of the Nama population. The survivors had their land and cattle confiscated, were banned from breeding cattle or owning land, and those who were not placed in concentration camps or deported to German colonies in other parts of Africa (i.e. Cameroon and Togo), were pressed into slave labour (see Drechsler 1980; Bley 1971; Katjavivi 1988).

The virtual annihilation of the Herero and Nama people and the large-scale land theft that followed the war, opened the way for white settlement in German South West Africa. The number of white-owned farms in the colony increased from 271 (in 1903) to 1,587 by 1914 (Lau and Reiner 1993:52). But economic activity soon came to a stand-still as German men were called to fight in the First World War. 'Gains' made by Germans in South West Africa were essentially reversed during the course of WWI; stock theft was rampant and farm workers reclaimed land by squatting on abandoned farms. In July 1915, German forces surrendered to South African troops. Martial law was established until the League of Nations mandated South West Africa to the Union of South Africa in 1920.

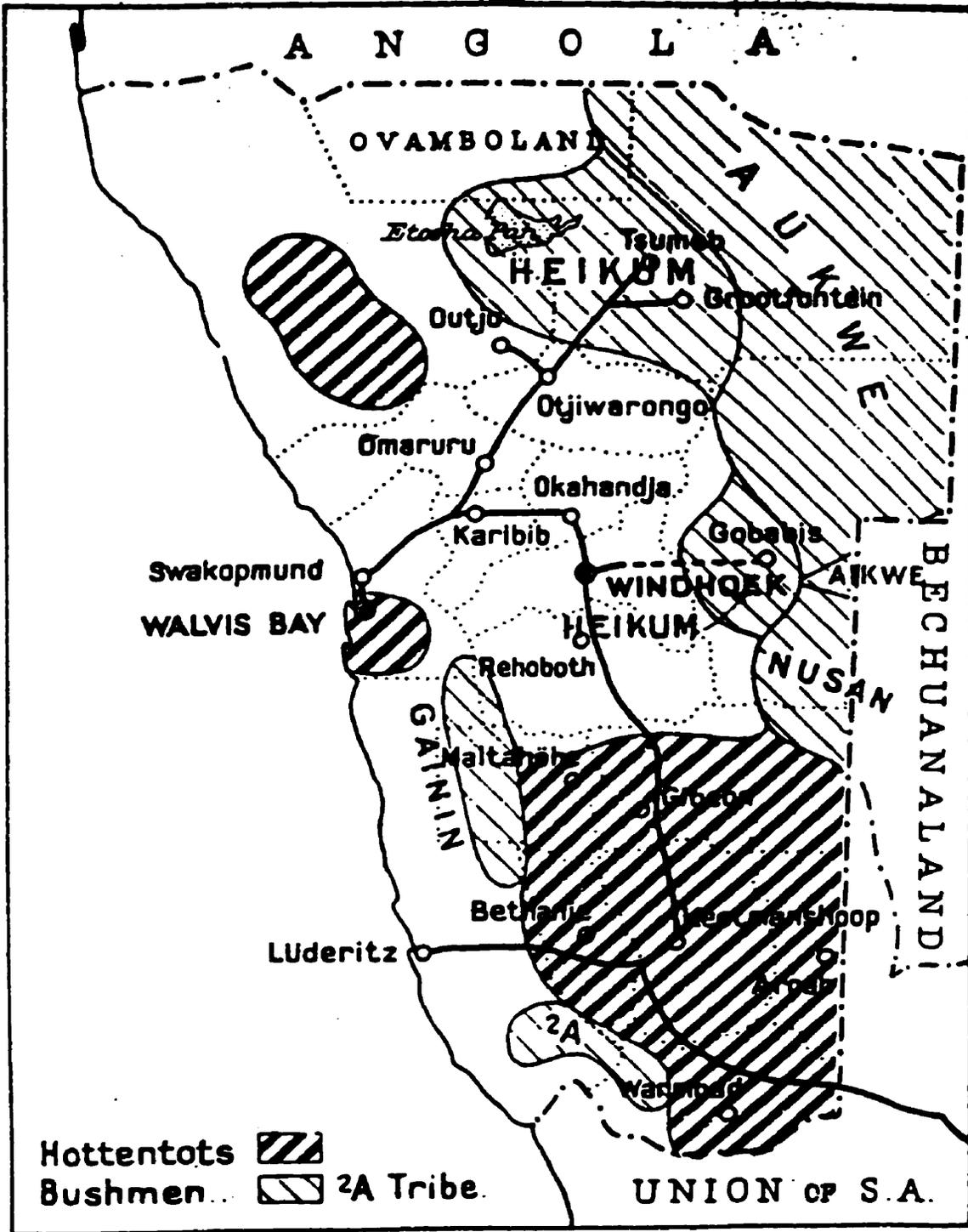


Figure 2. Distribution of the San
 Source: Namibian National Archives: Native Tribes, Hottentot and Bushmen, 1925. Map #1564.

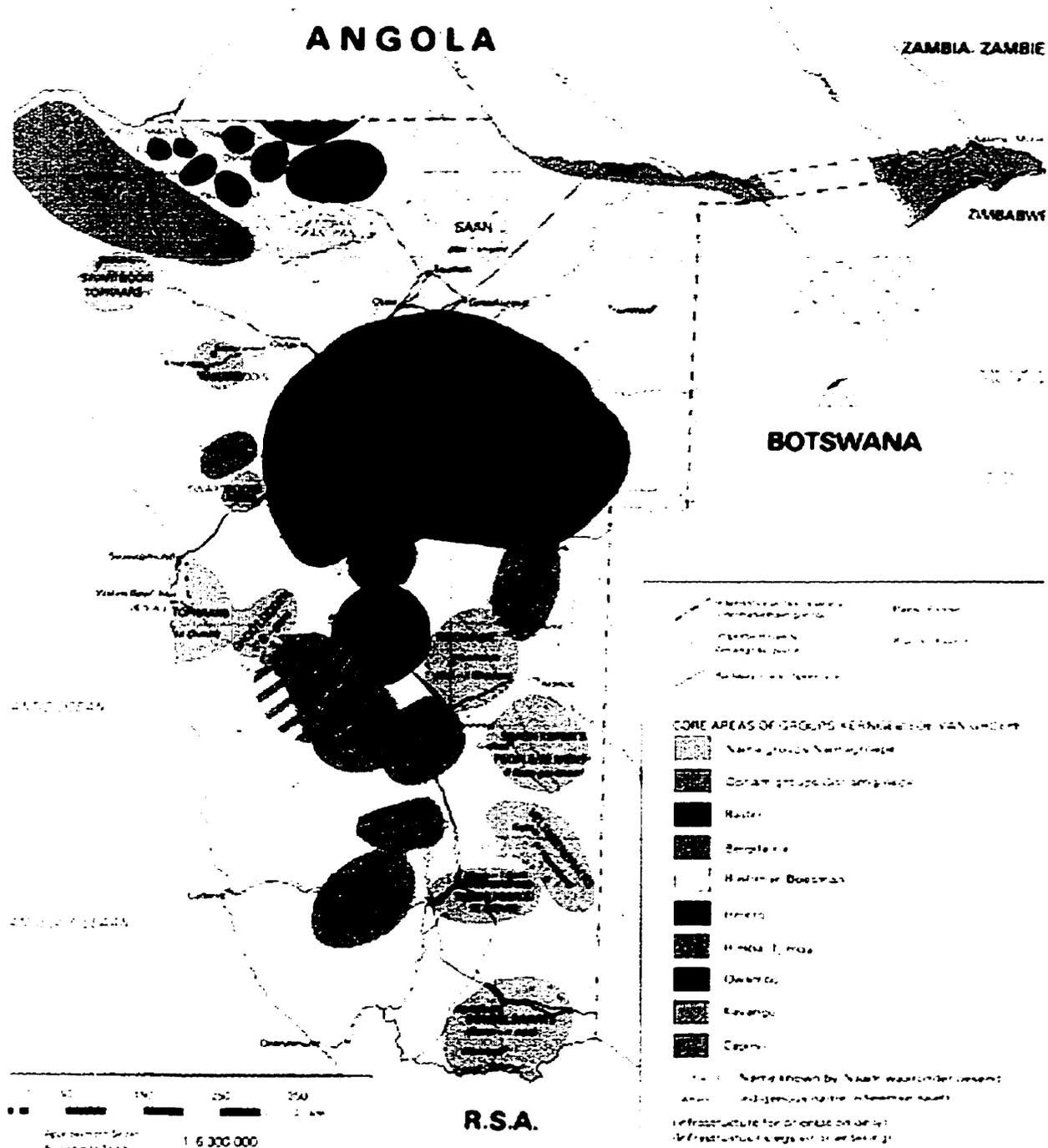


Figure 3. Precolonial Occupation.

Source: Modified from The National Atlas of South West Africa (Namibia), 1983. Map #30.

Implications for the San in the Omaheke

What this brief sketch of the pre-colonial and early colonial history of the Omaheke demonstrates is that no one group in the region was powerful enough for a long enough period to fully subjugate the San prior to the League of Nations mandate. The Germans represented the most powerful, and destructive, presence in South West Africa as a whole, but their impact on the political and social life of the San in the Omaheke appears to have been minimal, since German settlement in the area was cut short after the First World War. The Khauas were the most aggressively expansionist pre-colonial group the San faced in the region, however, as Wilmsen notes, they “did not attain anything approaching the status achieved by the Batswana” (1989a:98). The San were not incorporated into the mercantile economy as a subaltern class to the same extent that their San neighbours had been in Botswana. While the Batswana were more successful at enserfing the San and maintaining their hegemonic position throughout the nineteenth century, and even into the twentieth century, the Khauas were most successful at enserfing non-San groups. Where the San were enserfed, this process was very uneven and, at any rate, short-lived. Nor were the Mbanderu and Herero in the region powerful enough to subjugate the San. Thus, in the midst of nineteenth century mercantile trade, political intrigues and upheavals, and twentieth century conquest, the San in the Omaheke were the only people not “thoroughly trounced” by any invading group.

This lack of definitive defeat was not only due to the relative weakness and brevity of non-San rule, it was also due to the strength of San resistance. The *!Au//eisi* and *Nharo* were well organized, militant groups led by ‘kapteins’ who were known to subjugate neighbouring San groups and extract tribute, primarily game products (Guenther 1997:123; Bleek 1928:36-

37). It is difficult to reconcile two pictures of the San: one portrays them as “big-game hunting, politically organized and independent war-like quasi-chiefdoms led by bellicose leaders” of the nineteenth century (Guenther 1997:121); and the other portrays them as egalitarian, hunting and gathering people whose political organization was characterized by fluid composition, informal land ‘ownership’ (based more on claims of the resources within a territory, or more, than the land itself), a minimalist conception of private property, a political system based on achieved, rather than ascribed status differentiation, and a lack of strict gender, age or craft-based stratification (see Lee 1979, 1982; Guenther 1980; Silberbauer 1982; Draper 1976; Shostak 1981; Cashdan 1980; Barnard 1980). In the 1920s, Bleek (1928) found that the Nharo and *Au//eisi in around Sandfontein followed a foraging subsistence pattern and held an egalitarian, and distinctly non-combative cultural ethos. Bleek’s findings correspond quite closely with those of ‘traditionalist’ ethnographers writing about the San people in the Dobe and Nyae Nyae areas, which suggests that these cultural attributes are fairly strongly entrenched and were reverted back to once the San were no longer confronting conflict and land encroachment by outside groups.

Guenther (1997) suggests that the San’s political organization was the result of their encapsulation within the expanding mercantile economy and their conflict-ridden contact with expansionist groups, such as the Batswana and Oorlams who, to take advantage of new economic opportunities provided by trade links with the Cape, sought to subordinate the San and co-opt their labour in the process. To cope with these conditions, the San adopted a “bellicose and ‘territorial’ ethos”, accompanied by an elaboration of male power, which was itself a result of the combination of Tswana and Oorlam expansionism, a “robust and independent foraging economy based on big game hunting” and opportunities provided by

external trade in game products (1997:71). However, Guenther also notes that

a specific Bushman society displaying non-foraging traits — say stock ownership, or prolonged aggregation, trade with or labour for white and blacks, patrilineality or inherited headmanship — may at the same time be capable of retaining its basic stamp as an egalitarian band society, in terms of its overall structure and ethos (1996:82).

If political ranking, centralization and militarism were a response to encapsulation, contact and conflict, and we recognize that contact with and participation in the mercantile economy does not inevitably result in the destruction of the San's cultural and social systems (Solway and Lee 1990), then it is plausible that the condition of the San in the Omaheke just prior to large-scale white settlement resembled, in its fundamental features, the egalitarian economic and cultural traits described by Lee (1979), Shostak (1981), Marshall (1976) and others.

Guenther's point is especially applicable to the San in the Omaheke Region, where the power of non-San invaders prior to colonialism was temporally and territorially quite limited.

The ethnographic evidence we do have indicates that a foraging mode of subsistence, social recognition of the value of women's work, and a general lack of elaborate systems of private property (and therefore no conception of women as a species of property) that characterize many San groups all encourage a greater level of gender egalitarianism (for a discussion of the connections between property and personhood see Whitehead 1984).

Although any ethnographic statement about the cultural condition of the San prior to colonization must be speculative, as Kathleen Gough notes, "it is better to speculate with than without evidence" (1975:51). Aside from the ethnohistorical arguments which suggest a fundamentally egalitarian social system, but which unfortunately rely on sparse evidence, there may be reasons from the direction of theory that would lead us to expect greater gender egalitarianism among pre-colonial San. Women's work not only supplied an important —

and possibly, after the depletion of game, even the most important — source of subsistence for the San but, critically, there was likely no relegation of women's work to a discrete and subordinated 'domestic' realm, simply because the division between 'domestic' and 'public/political' domains were likely non-existent. Also, they could have no separation between public and private domains rooted in the institution of private property (see Draper 1975; Lee 1979, 1982; Shostak 1981; Leacock 1972, 1978; Etienne and Leacock 1980; Sacks 1975, 1979).

As we will see in the following chapters, there are political and economic factors that weigh heavily against anything approximating gender equality among the contemporary Ju/'hoansi, and those factors were all imported into the Omaheke with colonization and increased settlement. Whether or not the pre-colonial San were more egalitarian with respect to women's decision-making roles, or the value assigned to women's work, factors introduced since the 1920s would make even approximate gender equality impossible to sustain in the Omaheke. What historical and ethnographic evidence we have bears only indirectly on questions concerning the degree of egalitarianism that existed among the precolonial San, and the theoretical considerations that can be invoked by feminist theory are only suggestive hypotheses in need of more evidence than we have. Nonetheless, however inconclusive, both point towards a higher degree of egalitarianism than we find among the Omaheke San today. Finally, there is abundant evidence that the factors needed to explain gender inequalities — the gendered nature of the farming economy and of political decision-making, the sharp division between economic and domestic spheres — are owed to colonial influences. Thus, it is possible to say that political and economic conditions in the Omaheke since colonization are responsible for the forms of gender inequality among the post-colonial

Ju/'hoansi. We can leave open the difficult question of whether contemporary political and economic conditions produced or originated inequalities from a prior egalitarian condition, or whether they merely sustain and recast inequalities that were historically prior to colonization. What we can still be confident about is that any inequalities that might have existed prior to colonization would have taken very different forms, since the particular forms that inequalities take in the Omaheke today are owed to political economic forces that were not in operation prior to colonization, but are conspicuously in operation today.

As our brief history of the Omaheke brings out, there was only incomplete and temporary subjugation of San groups throughout the Omaheke during the nineteenth century. No non-San enjoyed a sufficiently powerful and sustained hegemony to reach into the veld and encapsulate the foraging bands which had been described by travellers from the early nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. The complete incorporation of the San into the broader political economy as an underclass had to wait until white settlement in the 1920s to get underway.

ii) White Settlement and the Angola Boers

White settlement in the Omaheke began in earnest just after South West Africa was mandated to the Union of South Africa by the League of Nations in 1920. South West Africa was regarded as a partial solution to the 'poor white problem' in the Union itself and impoverished Afrikaners from the Union were encouraged to relocate to the newly mandated territory. The Land Settlement Proclamation of 1920 made the Union's settlement legislation applicable to South West Africa and opened up vast tracts of land — which had been expropriated from indigenous groups — for white settlement. Settlement in the Gobabis

District proceeded in fits and starts between 1920 and 1925, but accelerated between 1926 and 1930, when the Gobabis district led the territory in new farm allocations (van Rooyen and Reiner 1995:40).

The white settlers were not advancing into the Omaheke from a position of strength, but were actually economically weak and highly dependent on the Administration. This was especially true of the Angola Boers, who were the recipients of the largest and most expensive resettlement and financial aid scheme in the territory's history. These were the descendants of the Dorsland Trekkers who had passed through the Omaheke en route to Angola fifty years earlier, and who returned in 1928 and 1929 to constitute the largest single influx of settlers into the district.

Dissatisfied with life in a Catholic Portuguese colony, where they were denied firm land rights and cultural autonomy, the Angola Boers petitioned the Union government to be repatriated, sending deputations to the Administration of South West Africa and to the Union's Ministry of Lands. Their request occasioned something of a fracas in the Union's Legislative Assembly as opponents to the scheme protested the expense of resettling such a large number of 'good-for-nothings' (van Rooyen and Reiner 1995:40).

The Administration ultimately agreed to resettle approximately 300 families, about 1 900 individuals altogether, in the districts of Otjiwarango, Gibeon, Grootfontein and Gobabis - with Gobabis receiving the bulk of them. The block of farms allocated to the Angola Boers in Gobabis, where the largest proportion of the trekkers were resettled, was known as the Hertzog Blok. About 121 new settlers teamed up to manage 87 large farms (van Rooyen and Reiner 1995:42).

The Union government paid £500 000 for repatriating the Angola Boers and provided

them with farms averaging 7 000 to 8 000 hectares.¹¹ The Administration also had to assume the cost of replenishing the settlers' stock holdings. To avoid introducing stock disease from Angola, the Administration purchased the settlers' cattle in Angola, at generous prices, to enable the settlers to purchase new stock when they were resettled.¹² The Administration incurred additional expenses associated with building basic infrastructural facilities and schools (Lau and Reiner 1993:53). Since many settlers arrived with nothing they also had to be supplied with food and clothing.¹³

Semi-official versions of the Angola trek described it as the re-enactment of "the Great Trek", a nationalistic assertion of 'rugged individualism' and commitment to Afrikaner Nationhood:

And so history repeats itself. The spirit of the Voortrekker lives again. The stage is set and the characters, like the creatures of a remembered dream, move through the strange drama to their appointed end. They are not puppets pulled by strings out of their control. They are strongly individualistic in a standardized world (Cape Times, October 12, 1929; cited in *Namibian* April 25, 1997).

Semi-Official Nationalistic interpretations aside, however, the repatriation of the

¹¹ Financial aid to the Angola Boers also included generous subsidy schemes for land and stock purchases: land was leased at 2 shillings per hectare, payable over 30 years at 4 percent interest - if the Administration was satisfied with productivity, the lease was waived; £400 was advanced for stock purchases, less the amount due for stock sold in Angola; £250 was advanced for pumps and windmills and £150 for building a house (van Rooyen and Reiner 1995:41-42; Lau and Reiner 1993:53; Rawlinson 1994:23).

¹² This sale also meant that the settlers had no draught animals, and so the Administration had to purchase 300 donkeys to pull the carts, which had to be replaced with 45 trucks to get the settlers through the waterless Kaukouveld (van Rooyen and Reiner 1995:41).

¹³ Much of the money advanced to the settlers was never recovered because proclamation no.205 of 1932 essentially forgave most of the settlers' debts (Lau and Reiner 1993:53-54).

Angola Boers was an event which aggravated class-based tensions within South West Africa and the Gobabis District in particular. The resettlement of the Angola Boers coincided with severe drought, global recession, falling market prices and the outbreak of stock diseases especially in Gobabis (Rawlinson 1994:23; van Rooyen and Reiner 1995:43). Given these difficult circumstances, it is not surprising that this huge aid effort was resented by local farmers who were also suffering from adverse economic and ecological conditions. Despite the fact that many of the Angola Boers arrived in Gobabis in a “deplorable condition” and were “half starved and practically without food” (LGO 3/1/1, June 5, 1929), they were not always met with sympathetic welcome by the local farmers; some local farmers even refused to allow the trekkers to water their stock and draught animals on their farms as the trekkers passed through from Outjo to the camp at Welkom farm (LGO 3/1/1, March 15, 1929). Racial solidarity was not the over-riding principle governing the formation of a white settler society in the early days, when the economic conditions instilled notable class-based tensions within the white community.

The white colonial community was itself divided along ‘ethnic’/national and class lines. Antipathies were often expressed in nationalistic terms between German settlers, who were slightly more affluent than Afrikaner settlers, and both of these groups were under the jurisdiction of ‘upper-class’ British-South African administrators (Gordon 1998:73). The particular class status of the Afrikaner settler community as a whole in Namibia is important to consider in order to understand the nature of farm politics as they evolved in the Region. The early settlers were generally described as

mostly illiterate, poor Afrikaner 'bywoner'¹⁴ families, an economically and politically troublesome group who repeatedly came into conflict with both established European farmers and Nama communal farmers (Lau and Reiner 1993:53).

That the Angola Boers were considered to be of 'inferior stock' to the rest of the 'bywoner' settler population speaks volumes about their perceived 'poor white' cultural attributes. The Administration's attitude toward 'poor whites' is implied in a memo from the Superintendent in charge of resettlement to the Gobabis Magistrate concerning a destitute widow and her family:

Her son is quite capable to go and earn something but prefers hanging about the place doing nothing...[the widow] has on several occasions been receiving food and other supplies and support without the least effort on her or her brother's part to alleviate the situation, and my proposal that young ----- might go to work at one of the boring machines was disregarded (LGO 3/1/1, letter from Superintendent, Angola Settlement, Gobabis to Gobabis Magistrate, August 6, 1929).

In 1935 the Administration ruefully noted that it "finds on its hands a number of the unemployable class with whom it is difficult to know what to do" (cited in Lau and Reiner 1993:54). Economic conditions improved between 1935 and 1940, and many of the Angola Boers who stuck through the difficult first years became permanent residents of the District. By the 1950s, settlement in the district was essentially complete.

Sectioning off land for white settlement also meant sectioning off mostly inferior and inadequate land for the African populations, and so the Administration turned its attention to consolidating a reserve system. In the Gobabis district 'natives', not including the Ju/'hoansi, were relegated to three sites: 1) the Roman Catholic Mission farm of Epukiro,¹⁵ which was

¹⁴ 'Bywoner' is Afrikaans for 'subfarmer' or 'squatter'.

¹⁵ Epukiro is a corruption of the Herero name 'au pukiro', meaning "country where one gets lost" (Köhler 1959:35).

first established in 1903 and provided a place to settle some of the Tswana living in various parts of the district; 2) the Epukiro Native Reserve, established in 1923 on what were essentially Ju/'hoan foraging grounds, where Hereros and Mbanderus from all over Namibia were (forcibly) resettled; 3) the Aminuis Native Reserve, which was established in 1914 when the German Governor set it aside for the Tswana, was formally proclaimed in 1923 and shortly after was taken over by Herero and Mbanderu.¹⁶ The Aminuis and Epukiro economies were based on small-scale stock raising and supplying cream to the Gobabis creamery (Köhler 1959: van Rooyen and Reiner 1995:44-47). However, the reserves were established on marginal, largely waterless tracts of land, far removed from infrastructural facilities. Particularly in the Aminuis reserve, poor pasturage and scarce water resources threatened to force the inhabitants to relocate. The Epukiro reserve enjoyed slightly more success at borehole drilling, however the pasturage was unsuitable for large stock, and even small stock could only be grazed in narrow strips along the omarambas (dry river beds) (Adams and Werner 1990:34). Agricultural activities were tightly controlled by the Administration: grazing fees were imposed to inhibit independent stock raising; the sale of livestock was regulated by the reserve superintendents; private dairying was banned and residents were forced to participate in communal dairy schemes (ibid:37). Since there was no

¹⁶ A Native Reserves Commission was appointed in 1920 to report on the size of, and conditions in, the reserves, and to examine the availability of native labour. The report recommended consolidating the reserves (i.e. to remove 'black islands' from the 'European areas'). The Union recognized six of the smaller reserves established by German treaties, and set up ten more between 1923 and 1926 (adding another three in 1932, 1947 and 1951). The Aminuis and Epukiro reserves were established through the Native Administration Proclamation 11/1922 (Adams and Werner 1990:29). The Eastern Native Reserve was established in 1947 to "settle Herero who had worked on farms or in towns when they grew old" (van Rooyen and Reiner: 1995:47; see also Köhler 1959:88).

way to generate an adequate income within the reserves, residents — mostly men — were forced to find employment on the white-owned farms. To save the cost of financing inputs (such as for dairy operations), the Administration's development strategy for the reserves was to encourage the residents to invest their earnings from wage-work (ibid).

The rural economy in the Omaheke evolved as an articulated system of reserve farming and commercial farming, wherein the commercial, white owned sector was developed at the expense of the African reserve sector. Underdeveloping the African subsistence sector facilitated the development of the commercial agricultural sector. Beginning in the 1920s with the creation of the native reserves, and then in the 1960s with the creation of ethnic 'homelands',¹⁷ Herero and Tswana reserve inhabitants were forced to eke out a living on inadequate land and so formed a pool of cheap labour as working-age men from the reserves were compelled to work in the white economy to make ends meet. As working-age Herero and Tswana men left the reserves to seek work on white farms, Ju/'hoan families moved in to fill the labour gap in Herero and Tswana homesteads.

¹⁷ Following the Odendaal Commission's recommendations, published in 1964, two of the district's reserves, the Epukiro and Eastern Native Reserve, were to be amalgamated to form the Hereroland homeland. The Aminuis Reserve was converted into government land and the corridor separating Aminuis from Botswana was turned into a homeland for the Tswana (van Rooyen and Reiner 1995:62). The report recommended amalgamating the existing reserves, reducing the number, but increasing their overall size. Seventeen existing reserves in the Police Zone were turned into seven ethnic 'homelands' (four more were created beyond the Police Zone), to which were added land from government holdings, game reserves and white farms, increasing the 'black areas' from 22 million hectares to 32.7 million hectares. However, this expansion did not represent a real improvement in landholdings since most of the added land was desert or semi-desert, containing little water resources (Werner 1993:146). The Odendaal Report represented the first official allocation of land for San people in the country, however, for the Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, it meant further land dispossession since a large portion of the Rietfontein block -- considered traditional San territory by most of my informants in the field -- was incorporated into the Hereroland homeland.

iii) 'Getting Used to Hard Work'

In the Omaheke, Ju/'hoansi incorporation into the rural class system was in many cases filtered through the geographically-ordered, racially-based class structure of the reserve and migrant labour systems. A significant aspect of the Ju/'hoansi's unique ethnic-class status in the Omaheke comes from their having been historically a 'second-tier' labour force - a trend which continues today. From the early years of white settlement until at least the 1950s, many of the Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke filled a labour vacuum created in the Aminuis and Epukiro reserves and Epukiro mission farm when Herero, Mbanderu and Tswana men left to work on white farms or in town. In the 1950s Köhler found on the Aminuis reserve that

The few Bushmen living in the Reserve when my census was taken in 1956 were employed by Herero and lived close to them. Many of these Bushmen seem to have been living with the Herero for a long time, and relations were friendly in spite of the Herero's undeniable feeling of superiority (1959:78).

Where the Ju/'hoansi worked on the reserves, they worked only during the dry season, and maintained a significant amount of autonomy, even, according to Köhler's description, up into the 1950s (1959:passim). In the early years of white settlement, the Ju/'hoansi participated in the farming economy by adopting a 'dual' subsistence strategy, working on white farms or Herero farms part-time and living in the veld during the rainy season, according to much the same pattern found in the reserves:

A number of Bushmen who formerly worked for the Herero, are also said to have left the Reserve. Some of them entered employment on farms adjoining the Reserve [Epukiro] in the south and west. It is likely therefore that the number of Bushmen present in the Reserve at the end of the dry season is gradually decreasing. Many Bushman families have also left the Reserve for good as they prefer a life of complete freedom, albeit with hardship, to any other (Köhler 1959:44).

During this period, the Ju/'hoansi's own work rhythms influenced the way production

was organized on the farms and, in this way, settler farming became 'Africanized'. Initially, the new Afrikaner settlers had little choice but to accept the Ju/'hoansi's seasonal work habits. After they became accustomed to farming in the Omaheke and were no longer so vulnerable to Ju/'hoan life-style choices, this state of affairs began to be a source of irritation for many farmers.

Beginning in the 1920s, farmers attempted to consolidate a stable farm labour force and became more aggressive in their attempts to bind the Ju/'hoansi to the farms year-round. One of the more underhanded methods employed by the farmers was the 'apprenticing' of Ju/'hoan children, which not only provided cheap labour, but also kept the parents either on the farms or nearby and was meant to ensure the 'good behaviour' of the 'wild Bushmen' (Gordon 1992a:137).

Farmers could rely on the Administration to legitimate forced labour, even if legislative support did not go as far as they believed it should. In the early days of settler farming, the issue of labour recruiting, including the issue of controlling the Bushman, was not only about creating an economically viable farming enterprise, but was also a vehicle for asserting settler political hegemony. Therefore, arguments about the 'nature' of the Bushmen and how they should be handled — that is, how they should be forced to labour on farms — should also be read as power struggles within the white colonial community. A 1923 letter from Grootfontein farmers to the *Swakopmund Zeitung* complained that "present native legislation" was "a farce in the eyes of the native" which would ultimately bring about the "ruin of the country"; that is, colonial legislation did not instill the proper respect for white power and authority in the natives, and was ineffective in compelling the natives to perform farm labour. According to the authors of the letter,

a new [law] must be enacted, let the gentlemen at the green table, with their eyes on the League of Nations, try to wriggle out of it as much as they like. The situation must be grappled with an iron hand... Why is it not possible to enact a law empowering the Magistrate — or better still forcing him — to send idle natives or those who have offended against the laws requiring passes to some farm for a definite period where they would have the opportunity of getting used to hard work? Unfortunately nothing can be looked for in this respect so long as we have the infamous “One Man Government” and have no say ourselves and here too we see with irresistible [*sic*] clearness the necessity of a form of Government in which the resident white population has a decisive voice...(SWAA A521/3, November 10, 1923, draft of letter to administration, p.1335/12).

The needs of the farming community were gradually met with the development of the contract labour system which was installed in the mid-1920s, and would begin to make its presence felt by the 1930s.

During the first five years of South African occupation the territory was under martial law and the South African Administration had little control over the dissemination of justice or the handling of ‘Natives’. Frontier justice was the order of the day as military police and farmers, with a fair amount of impunity in the farming districts throughout the territory, meted out “summary punishment” in the form of floggings. This trend continued even after martial law was lifted, and formed the basis of frontier culture in the Omaheke.

For example, in 1915, after the South African army occupied the territory, a German farmer in Gobabis reported repeated stock thefts by Bushmen, prompting a patrol to be sent to his farm, where three officers administered illegal “summary punishment with a sjambok”. The Administration’s response was to dock the officers’ seven days pay and put them in jail for one day. The Ju/’hoansi who had been beaten were released, while their accomplices, who had not been beaten, were sentenced to four and a half years in prison (SWAA A521/3, Report to the Secretary for the Protectorate, from the Office of the O.C, Union Forces, September 23, 1916).

Military officers in charge of the farming districts offered a variety of reasons for administering extra-judicial justice: they didn't want to overcrowd the jails with natives charged with "petty offences"; the Administration would "incur great and unnecessary expenses" in bringing offenders all the way to town to attend trial, only to have the offender fined a small sum; it would be a "great nuisance" to the farming community to require farmers to abandon their work to attend a court hearing; and, furthermore, putting offenders in jail would draw scarce labour away from the farms.¹⁸ The justification of inconvenience and expense to the Administration would be later echoed by police as a reason for the Administration to allow the farmers to handle the 'Bushman problem' themselves.

The fact that the Administration attempted to curb summary punishment shows that it was defined as a problem, but the fact that such attempts were largely ineffectual indicates that the justice system in the farming frontier was largely out of state control, and so, subject to extremes.

Police brutality remains an important part of the Ju/'hoansi's historical consciousness today. One Ju/'hoan man described the situation in the Omaheke when he was a child in the 1920s:

At that time the police rode horses and camels and they got you at Epukiro, tied your hands behind your back and you must go [jog] all the way to Gobabis [in front of the horses]. If you killed a cow, they will catch someone who didn't kill the cow and hit him and say "it was you! It was you!" and the man will say "it was not me!" until he later would say "it was me" so they would stop hitting him. In the old times we were very afraid of the police. When there were police horses, we would run into the veld...even if you are a child, you will run away because you are afraid.

Men were the primary targets of summary punishment, but summary punishment was

¹⁸ Communication from Sgd. L.J. Frederick van Maltitz Lieut. 3rd Troop, "D" Squadron to the Officer Commanding, "D" Sqdn. 2nd. M.C., n.d., SWAA A521/3.

not limited to men. There was, however, a significant difference between the floggings meted out to men and those meted out to women: where men would be beaten typically for some provable offence, such as stock theft, women were more often the victims of assault by military police on the basis of subjective complaints made by their mistresses, such as being ‘cheeky’, or for not doing their work to their mistress’s satisfaction.¹⁹ As we will see in more detail in chapter four, from the early years of settler farming to the present, women who work on white farms were, and are still, subject to intimate and profound control at the hands of the *baas* and *miesis*.

The subordination of the Ju/’hoansi was not the result of a direct confrontation with an overwhelmingly powerful and unified settler-colonial force. It was rather the result of an intermittent collusion of interests between the settler community, the colonial Administration and the defeated African groups — particularly the Hereros — all of whom required cheap labour.

As the farmers became increasingly intolerant of ‘desertions’, the Ju/’hoansi became increasingly militant in their opposition to encroachment on their territory and farmer labour management practices. Year-round farm labour was a threat to the Ju/’hoansi’s autonomy and as white settlement advanced, the foraging territory where the Ju/’hoansi could engage in a relatively autonomous life-way was becoming increasingly restricted. Increased resistance took the form of widespread stock theft as the Ju/’hoansi applied a strategy which had been so effective in keeping previous intruders at bay: attacking what was seen as the basis of the intruder’s economy, namely their stock.

¹⁹ Communication from Sgd. L.J. Frederick van Maltitz Lieut. 3rd Troop, “D” Squadron, to the Officer Commanding, “D” Sqdn. 2nd. M.C., n.d., SWAA A521/3.

However, the colonial society was not of one mind when it came to defining the emerging 'Bushman problem'. In 1928 the Native Commissioner warned the Magistrate of Gobabis of the possible consequences of white settlement in the following way:

In your district a large area has been surveyed into farms and in course of time will be occupied by Europeans. That area forms part of the territory of two or more groups of Bushmen. If the old policy is to be continued it will mean that the groups concerned will have a restricted area available to them...In the northern part of this country the killing of European and native cattle by Bushmen is increasing to an alarming extent. As is well known, the Bushman by instinct is not a thief but changed circumstances are driving him to slaughter cattle when game and "veld kos" are not available (SWAA A50/67, minute from the Native Commissioner to the Magistrate of Gobabis, November 3, 1927).

Colonial reaction to Ju/'hoan stock theft reflected competing stereotypes held about the 'wild' Bushmen. The existence of a few 'sympathetic' descriptions and explanations of Ju/'hoan activities and 'instincts' reflects the divergent class interests that divided the white settler society and Administration and directed their interpretations of the 'Bushmen'. Where a few administrators — mostly British South Africans occupying a more privileged social status in South West Africa — could afford to assume a 'benignly paternalistic' stance toward the Ju/'hoansi, the poor, illiterate Afrikaner settlers were struggling to advance their economic interests and jockeying for political power; control over the definition and treatment of farm labourers — particularly the Ju/'hoansi — was a central issue in the contest of political power and economic survival among the various groups within the white community.

Increasingly coercive tactics for recruiting labour and handling stock theft were rationalized by an elaborate system of stereotypes centred on the distinction between 'tame' and 'wild' Bushmen. According to Afrikaner mythology, the wild Bushmen were untouched by civilization and lived in the bush like animals. The tame ones had been 'uplifted' into

civilization through work on the farms. The brutality of the settlers and police, although in part a product of struggles within the colonial community, also reflects the settlers' attempts to impose a system of forced labour in a context where colonial policy and legislation were inadequate for the task. Native and labour policy (which were ultimately the same thing) rested on a system of reserves and passes, and Masters and Servants and vagrancy laws, which was not only designed to control movement and ensure a constant supply of cheap labour, but was also a reflection of underlying ideological convictions about 'the nobility of work' (Gordon 1998:54).

Thus it is not surprising that what appeared to outsiders as brutal treatment could also have appeared to the settlers as part of their contribution to the 'uplifting' of the natives. Even today, coercive and exploitive labour practices are too often seen by those who establish them as for the 'improvement' of the Ju/'hoansi workers, who still have difficulty "getting used to hard work".

iv) Frontier Conflict and Resistance

Although important work has been done to demonstrate how colonial administrators and farmers created a rural political economy and, in the process, recreated the Ju/'hoansi as 'Bushman' in varying degrees of 'domestication', (see Gordon 1992a, Suzman 1997) it is also true that the Ju/'hoansi played a major role in shaping the frontier conditions which characterized the early days of Afrikaner settlement and which eventually came to shape the cultural landscape in the Omaheke today. This is the case because the Ju/'hoansi were very effective in their efforts to resist colonial domination and so it happened that colonial policy and the behaviour of colonial agents and farmers were as much a reaction to the Ju/'hoansi as

Ju/'hoan behaviour was in reaction to the colonizers. The farmers came to interpret their Kalahari world as a rough and violent frontier — the Bushmen being the central symbolic agents in this violent wilderness — and fashioned themselves according to this violent frontier setting. This attitude to their frontier environment was a natural extension of the Afrikaner national identity as it had been forged out of the Voortrekker experience in the Union. However, the further into the hinterland the farmers trekked, the more extreme became the expression of this 'rugged' frontier attitude (see Suzman 1997).

Gordon notes that "it was not only banditry that flourished in such circumstances of underdeveloped communications but also informal retributive justice from the settler farmer" (1992a:141). The details of the connection between banditry and informal retributive justice appear to have gone something like this: the brutality of the farmers was encouraged by the lack of effective state mechanisms for controlling the 'natives' — the Ju/'hoansi in particular — and reached levels more extreme than could be justified officially; farmer brutality prompted the Ju/'hoansi to retaliate by stealing and mutilating stock, which the state could not effectively curb. This, in turn, convinced the farmers of the innate depravity of the Ju/'hoansi and of the indifference of the state to their plight, thereby legitimating even more extreme brutality when the farmers felt compelled to take the law into their own hands. The Administration was unable to cope effectively with Ju/'hoan militancy and so did its best to avoid direct conflict with the Ju/'hoansi, instead giving the green light to the settler community to deal with the Ju/'hoansi in their own way. (Gordon also notes that the Administration allowed the farmers to mete out summary punishment because of the expense involved in police patrols [1992a:101-102]).

The farmers in the Omaheke were not only strategically weak vis-a-vis the Ju/'hoansi,

they were also economically weak and had the most to lose when the Ju/'hoansi threatened their interests. Their zeal for taking extreme retributive action against the Ju/'hoansi was a result of this vulnerability. So, while the Administration was reluctant to engage in an outright war against the Ju/'hoansi, and was discouraging summary punishment on the part of the police officers, the farmers were clamoring for more extreme measures and loudly expressing dissatisfaction with the Administration's ineffective methods for dealing with the 'Bushman problem'. The extreme abuses perpetrated by the settlers and police patrols were a product of racist attitudes which defined the Ju/'hoansi as sub-human, but were also compounded by frustration with administrative weakness in the face of Ju/'hoan retributive activities. The Ju/'hoansi were not easy to catch, let alone pacify because their access to and knowledge of the veld allowed them to out maneuver the SWA Police more often than not. The relationship between the farmers' economic vulnerability, their frustration with the Administration's ineffectual efforts to handle the 'Bushman problem' and their resulting zealousness for more extreme retribution against the Ju/'hoansi, is best illustrated by a specific case of Ju/'hoan resistance .

The most significant episode of Ju/'hoan resistance in Gobabis was the famous 'van Ryneveld Affair', in which the Gobabis Magistrate, Fredrick van Ryneveld was killed by a poison arrow in a skirmish with the Ju/'hoansi in 1922. The incident involved a Ju/'hoan 'kaptien', Zameko, and his band who worked intermittently for a farmer named Bullik on the farm, Alexeck, which was situated a good deal further in the northern hinterland than any other white farm at the time. After Mr. Bullik died in 1921, relations between Zameko and the rest of the Bullik family deteriorated to the point where Mrs. Bullik appealed for police assistance, claiming that stock theft on the farm was escalating dramatically and that she and

her daughter had been physically threatened by Zameko.²⁰ Van Ryneveld decided to journey with a six-man party to Alexeck to discuss the situation with Zameko. Upon meeting up with Zameko's band, van Ryneveld's party was attacked by the entire band, including the women and children, and van Ryneveld was shot with a poison arrow in the skirmish. Van Ryneveld died, likely more as a result of his racist refusal to allow a black man to treat his wound than as a direct result of having been hit with a poison arrow (Gordon 1992a:95).

Gordon (1992a) and Suzman (1997) argue that the killing of van Ryneveld brought the full force of colonial coercive power down on the heads of the Ju/'hoansi, and was key to breaking the Ju/'hoansi's ability to resist being fully incorporated into the settler political economy as a farm labouring underclass. I suggest however that the role attributed to the van Ryneveld affair, as the primary catalyst behind the Ju/'hoansi's ultimate defeat and subjugation, is overstated. I do not wish to argue that the process of Ju/'hoan incorporation was not brutal and coercive, but by neglecting the often divergent attitudes and agendas of the Administration and the farmers, Gordon and Suzman are led to exaggerate the extent to which the Ju/'hoansi were 'tamed' and subordinated by military conquest, and thereby obscure the degree to which Ju/'hoan resistance was successful.

Suzman argues that the van Ryneveld affair "convinced the SWAA that it should take a harder line on the Bushmen" (1997:51). Gordon argues that the van Ryneveld affair had "immediate dramatic effects" and "far-reaching implications" (1992a:95) and cites Voigt

²⁰ Van Rooyen and Reiner suggest that the cause of the rumpus boiled down to hunting legislation that had been recently passed, compounded by drought conditions and subsequent lack of veld food (1995:39). van Ryneveld suggested that Zameko was causing trouble both because of the lack of veld food and because Mrs. Bullik was a lone widow (Gordon 1992a:94).

on the consequences of the affair:

After van Ryneveld was murdered by an unknown Bushman, an evil time emerged for the entire Bushman population. Everywhere in the Protectorate the British-Boer soldiers and the police were instructed to prepare to flush out the Bushmen and destroy the hordes...None of them remained alive: neither man nor woman nor child were spared...the Bushman plague in the settled part of the territory has been eradicated completely, and the farmers, even those of German extraction, are not angry about the change (cited in Gordon 1992a:97).

It is surprising that Gordon doesn't comment on his report, immediately following this quote, that "after serving a *short* sentence, Zameko was reported to be living near Alexeck in June 1924" (ibid, emphasis mine). According to Gordon's description, the far-reaching and dramatic effects of the affair amounted to the dispatch of a strengthened police patrol (which was initially unsuccessful), resulting in the capture of eighty-eight Bushmen (sixty of whom were women and children), and the killing of seven Bushmen altogether (see Gordon 1992a:95). Although this is certainly dramatic and definitely traumatic, a total of ninety-five Bushmen captured or killed would not 'flush' the Ju/'hoansi out of the territory. Zameko alone was said to have followers numbering anywhere from 150 to 300 people.

I suggest that, rather than committing to a strategy of 'flushing them out' or 'taking a harder line against the Bushmen', the Administration appeared to be quite reluctant to get into an out-right war with the Ju/'hoansi. For example, shortly after van Ryneveld's death, a petition, signed by thirteen farmers in the Gobabis District, dated December 20, 1922, arrived at the Magistrate's office, which read:

We the undersigned settlers of this district wish to draw your attention to the following — That during the past few months, stock thieving has become a curse down these parts and has made farming very near an impossible task, on account of the bushmen which roam about and occupy the various water holes.

A Mr. Lemcke who occupies a farm on the outskirts of this district lost 75 head of his stock in the past few months...and many are walking about the farm with their breasts cut open, which appears to be, if the animal is not fat enough they let it

go...Several of the thieves have been caught, and on questioning them it was found that they slaughtered up to ten head of stock per day (SWAA A50/25, petition from Gobabis farmers to the Administrator, December 20, 1922).

Suzman suggests that these farmers need not have worried because the killing of van Ryneveld “had firmed the SWAA’s resolve to deal with the ‘Bushman problem’ in the white farming areas of the Omaheke” (1997:49). However, in a communication to the Secretary for South West Africa based on the Gobabis Magistrate’s response to reports of stock theft, specifically on Mr. Lemcke’s farm, it does not appear that there was a particularly strong resolve to assume a ‘hard-line’:

I think it must be admitted that all the present trouble has arisen through Mr. Lemcke’s own fault in not feeding his boys properly. Lemcke was brought before the court for brutally assaulting the 5 Bushmen...I am not at all satisfied that Lemcke has lost 92 head of cattle as alleged by him, the majority have probably strayed after greener grass. As regards a Special Constable for this area, I consider there is no necessity for such an appointment. The farmers must assist the Administration by acting as far as possible as their own detectives...The area is now regularly patrolled each month by means of special Patrols (SWAA A50/25, Acting Magistrate of Gobabis to the Secretary for South West Africa, January 12, 1923).

This exchange gives us a good indication of what the Ju/’hoansi were retaliating against: brutal assaults, summary punishment, being ‘caught and questioned’ — likely beaten and interrogated — and poor working conditions. However, even if the farmers were naive about the meaning of mutilated or stolen cattle, the Administration was not and often took a fairly cynical attitude toward many farmers’ complaints, suggesting in some cases that the farmers along the hinterland were remiss in tending their cattle, allowing them to stray and that the “cry of stolen stock by Bushmen” was an attempt to get the police to help recover them (ibid, also SWAA A50/67 April 20, 1928).

Although Special Patrols were sent out to track down the Bushman stock thieves, it does not appear that the Administration was particularly enthusiastic about pursuing an all

out crack-down against the Ju/'hoansi. A communication from the Gobabis Magistrate to the Secretary for SWA in 1925 gives some insight into the Administration's strategy for dealing with the Ju/'hoansi:

The Patrol has approximately covered 1 000 miles and carried out its investigation in a most efficient and thorough manner. The danger of exciting and bringing on a conflict with the wild bushmen was foreseen and avoided. *That no disturbance of any kind has occurred speaks well for the commander in charge of the patrol* (SWAA A50/26, July 22, 1925, emphasis mine).

Suzman argues that after the killing of van Ryneveld, the Ju/'hoansi around Gobabis were reluctant to challenge the Administration and farmers and that "while settler farmers were becoming more aggressive and authoritarian in the dealings with Ju/'hoansi, Ju/'hoansi themselves were becoming more submissive in their dealings with farmers" (1997:54). That the farmers were becoming increasingly more violent is certainly true. However, this increased aggression and the ultimate subjugation of the Ju/'hoansi is not completely attributable to the farmer's ability to draw on the "powerful resources" of the Administration which they "could summon when challenged" (ibid).

Up to three years after the death of van Ryneveld, Zameko's movements were, if not always successfully monitored, then at least subject to much fearful speculation and any episode of perceived Bushman militancy occasioned a flurry of memos between farmers, the Magistrate, Superintendents and the SWA Secretary. However, this Zameko paranoia did not mean that police attempts to crack down on Bushman stock thefts were effective - in fact, police patrols proved costly, frustrating and a general waste of time, as indicated in a report by a Special patrol Sergeant sent out to investigate stock theft in the "uninhabited country north of Steinhausen", which highlighted a series of events, including:

...although every effort was made to locate them [Bushmen] and effect their arrest,

this could not be done...; a search was made at Traugott's Vlei for the bushmen who were responsible, but without result...; repeated search was made at Epukiro for the offenders, but no trace of them could be found...; it would not serve any useful purpose to make further search for the bushmen in question, as patrol work in that area is very much hampered by the bush and a lack of water (SWAA A50/26, July 19, 1925).

The report goes on to state:

I beg to bring to your notice the misleading report furnished by Mr. Barnes of the Epukiro Native Reserve...Zameko the bushman leader responsible for numerous thefts, etc., in the District, is at present not taking part in any such disturbances, as far as I could ascertain he is residing with his tribe in a peaceful way near Alexeck...I submit, had the original report from Mr. Barnes not been received, the Administration would not have gone to such trouble and expense in sending a large police patrol from Windhoek to investigate the matter (ibid).

The police Sergeant's solution to the Bushman problem faced by the Mission Station at Epukiro echoes the suggestion of the Magistrate above, that the farmers 'assist the Administration' and 'be their own detectives'. The justification for suggesting that the farmers, missionaries and Hereros handle the Bushmen in their own way echoes the justifications provided by the military police in the days of martial law:

...as police patrols result in considerable expense and inconvenience to the Police Administration, I beg to recommend that 10 Modle [*sic*] 71 rifles and 100 rounds of 71 ball ammunition be issued on loan to the Rev. Father of the Mission Station at Epukiro (ibid).

Rifles were to be issued to the Herero mission station residents when they went into the veld to look for their stolen cattle, as a way of evening the playing field in a conflict with the Ju/'hoansi. This suggestion was endorsed by the Magistrate, who 'passes the buck', so to speak, to the Hereros as well as to the farmers.

The fact that the Ju/'hoansi targeted Hereros as well as white farmers suggests that their treatment at the hands of the Herero was comparable to their treatment at the hands of whites. But what is remarkable about the case of Ju/'hoan stock theft against the Hereros is

the extent to which, first, the Ju/'hoansi were continuing in their 'banditry' even after the death of van Ryneveld and, second, the reluctance on the part of colonial officials to deal with the Ju/'hoansi themselves.

In May, 1927, the Herero Headman Haveka of the Epukiro Reserve led a deputation to Windhoek to complain about three things: Bushman stock theft on the reserve; the killing, by a Bushman poison arrow, of a Herero man who was trying to recover his stolen cattle; and the release, by the Superintendent of the Reserve, of the Bushman 'culprits' who had confessed to the stock thefts. The Hereros were not inclined to adhere to a weak administrative justice system that was lenient toward the Ju/'hoansi and requested permission to kill the Bushman who had slain their comrade. To this proposal, the Officer in charge of Native Affairs in Windhoek stated: "Gov't could not agree to the killing of people in such circumstances and further that such action would start a feud which would mean, for a long time at any rate, the Hereros getting the worst of it" (SWAA A50/26 May 25, 1927). That the Administration feared the Hereros would get the worst of a feud with the Ju/'hoansi, nearly five years after the Zameko affair, only casts further doubt on Voigt's claim that the "Bushman plague" had been "completely eradicated". The Hereros were instead instructed to continue to round up Bushman stock thieves, and the Superintendent was instructed to cooperate in sending them to trial.

This case also provides an example of how the colonial society was tangled in the contradictions of its own discourse on the 'Bushmen'; the Superintendent's view that the Ju/'hoansi were "wild" and "stupid", rather than providing grounds for abuse, instead provided the justification for letting them go. Headman Haveka caught the Superintendent in his own ideological contradiction:

I asked the Superintendent, "Here are the Bushmen who are caught every day. Why cannot they go to Gaol." The Superintendent replied, "The Bushmen are still wild and stupid. We must teach them. If they continue to steal then we will send them to Gaol." I replied "If small native boys steal they are taken to Gaol. Why are the small native boys not taught" (SWAA A50/26 May 16, 1927).

The economic articulation of the reserve economy and the settler farming economy created an environment in which the Hereros and the white settler community came to have a common interest in controlling the Ju/'hoansi and 'taming' them into a cheap labouring class. It is not surprising, therefore, that there was a collusion of ideologies about the Ju/'hoansi. Many Hereros claimed that "Bushmen should be classed in the same category as wild dogs" (SWAA A396/7, Report of the Welfare Officer, Epukiro Native Reserve October 9, 1952). A Herero headman of the Epukiro reserve stated: "the Bushmen are snakes and we don't want them. We used to want them but not now. Tame Bushmen are the ones who have murdered my people and killed our stock" (SWAA A50/26, May 1927). Here the Hereros are far more aware of what was going on: where white settlers were ideologically myopic in blaming depredations on 'wild' Bushmen, the Hereros were aware that the real trouble was coming from the 'tame' ones.

That the Ju/'hoansi had an impact on their colonial situation is evidenced by the fact that by 1935 the Administration had shifted its tactics from chasing them futilely through the veld to trying to 'befriend' them. The situation and consequences are described in the following way:

Specific cases [of stock theft] were rarely dealt with, as this was impossible, and a general clean up was usually indulged in, which in a number of cases led to clashes in which some of our men and Native Affairs officials...were killed or dangerously wounded by poison arrows...In short, we learned by experience that our methods, instead of bringing them within the scope of the administration's Native Policy, drove them into the bush, and under cover; consequently we could not procure the result we aimed at, namely that of domesticating the Bushmen (SWAA A50/67, April 3, 1947,

memo from the Deputy Commissioner to the District Commissioners).

The Administration's policy of 'befriending' the Ju/'hoansi, took the form of supplying mielie meal, salt and tobacco at the police posts to distribute to the Ju/'hoansi in return for doing odd jobs. This should not be seen as evidence that the Administration assumed a generously benevolent attitude toward the Ju/'hoansi, but rather that the Ju/'hoansi were not passive, inert objects on the receiving end of a unified and all-powerful colonial structure; they had some leverage, and they used it for all it was worth.

Gordon and Suzman, as we have seen, claim that there is a direct link between the van Ryneveld affair, as it represents a military defeat of the Ju/'hoansi, and the official policy of "using 'settlement' as an instrument for 'taming' the Bushmen". Gordon claims this is clear from a statement made by an administrator a few years later:

We make no attempt to civilize the Bushmen. They are untameable. They are the savages who shot Magistrate van Ryneveld a few years ago. They attack parties of natives from Ovamboland on their way to work on the mines. I have had to send two punitive expeditions against them this year, and more by good luck than good management, we captured some of them and punished them severely. The territory is so large and the Bushmen so cunning that an army might seek them in vain. But it is all fine country, splendid for sheep and cattle farming; and it is only because there is so much unoccupied space in the uninhabited areas that we are not contemplating any large settlement in the north at present (cited in Gordon 1992a:98).

This quote does not imply that the van Ryneveld affair is linked to the policy of taming the Bushmen, but rather that they are 'untameable', and that, as I have suggested, campaigns against the Ju/'hoansi were largely ineffectual. Gordon interprets the process of Ju/'hoan incorporation in militaristic terms, emphasizing the role of the Bushman poison arrow in the Ju/'hoansi's attempts to resist settler encroachment (1992a:98). The poison arrow may explain how the Ju/'hoansi managed to keep outsiders out of their territories for as long as they did, but it does not explain their success at hiding in the veld and evading arrest - the

archival records above describe the inability of the Administration to find the Ju/'hoansi, not an abundance of poison arrow and rifle fire exchange (although this did occur). Given this situation, it appears as though the veld, more than the poison arrow, was the Ju/'hoansi's most effective weapon of defense. Furthermore, as game in the area was likely found in fewer numbers than in pre-colonial times, and since hunting was outlawed and difficult to conduct in 'white' areas without punitive responses from police and farmers, it is likely that during the early years white settlement veldkos gathering would have become proportionately more important for subsistence.

I believe Gordon comes closer to the truth when he notes that "the major reason for the Bushman success in maintaining their banditry for so long lay in their ability to split up into small groups and survive off the land" (1992a:98). Here, Gordon gestures toward what I consider to be the central process behind the eventual incorporation of the Ju/'hoansi as an underclass; that is, 'settlement', which means land encroachment and geographical marginalization, and which gradually placed increasing ecological stress on a foraging way of life. In the early days of settlement the Ju/'hoansi adapted to the new political economic conditions by following a dual subsistence strategy, foraging in the veld during the rainy season and working on farms during the dry season. The lack of overwhelming archival evidence to support the view that the Ju/'hoansi were defeated in a military conflict with the colonial Administration, and evidence that the Ju/'hoansi had been able to largely frustrate colonial efforts at military 'pacification', suggests that they were not truly 'defeated' until they had been dispossessed of their land. However, we should elaborate on Gordon's point about the Ju/'hoansi's ability to survive in the veld: ethnographic evidence found that survival in the veld relies primarily on *women's* gathering activities (see for example, Lee

1976; Marshall 1979). This may have been an even more important activity when we consider the fact that one of the measures the Ju/'hoansi were retaliating against was the criminalization of their hunting activities.

The Administration had outlawed hunting by the 1920s and even banned 'Bushman' bows and arrows, making hunting difficult in or around the white farming areas (see also Gordon 1992a:129-130; 1998:58). Gobabis court records show that Ju/'hoansi caught with game products could be liable to three months in prison with hard labour (sec. 1 of Proc. 2 of March 10, 1917) (LGO 1/1/1-16, Records of Proceedings). Given that in a context where foraging was not interfered with, women's gathering provided up to sixty to seventy percent of the subsistence resources to the band (Lee 1979:205, 450-51), it seems safe to say that in the early days of white settlement in the Omaheke, where hunting was under stress from police patrols and farmers, women's gathering activities would have been all the more important in maintaining a veld-base. While conducting research in Sandfontein in the 1920s, Bleek found:

They [the Nharo] eat three meals a day both meat and other foods, when obtainable, but very often now there is no meat, as the game laws get stricter every year. The people are gradually being forced into a vegetarian diet, against their will (1928:6).

Although by the 1940s, the confiscation of Ju/'hoan bows and arrows was no longer officially sanctioned, it was still practiced as a means of subordinating the Ju/'hoansi within the Police Zone (SWAA A50/67 Report of Native Commissioner, Runtu July 22, 1947). Thus, even though women are largely invisible in the archival record, it may be reasonable to infer that the Ju/'hoansi's highly effective veld-based 'guerilla' tactics against the farmers relied heavily on the activities of Ju/'hoan women: women's roles in maintaining their life-way in the veld enabled the Ju/'hoansi to use the veld as a power-base. This suggests that the

process whereby the Ju/'hoansi were incorporated as a rural underclass was also the process whereby women's economic activities were undermined. As we shall now go on to see, the 'defeat' of the Ju/'hoansi was marked by the same process where Ju/'hoan women were reduced to extreme dependency in a farming economy, an economy which largely excluded them from participation in subsistence. It is fairly obvious that the farming economy of the Omaheke was organized according to a system of racial oppression and class exploitation; however, these interwoven processes also involve systematic gender oppression and exploitation. Indeed, the subordination of the Ju/'hoansi as an ethnic underclass could not have taken the form that it did if there did not exist a concomitant system of gender subordination. I suggest that the incorporation of the Ju/'hoansi was fundamentally a process by which women were denied any significant access to the means of subsistence and, so, were robbed of their central place in a veld-based life-style - what Suzman describes as the "final vestige of Ju/'hoan material independence and political autonomy within the region" (1997:54).

Part Two: Manstealing, Migrant Labour and the Creation of a Male Economy

Labour shortages had always been a problem in the early years of settler farming. The Union of South Africa's main interest in South West Africa was as a place to settle poor whites, and so little attention was paid to developing the agricultural sector in the white commercial areas and, especially, the African reserves and homelands (Lau and Reiner 1993). Therefore, as I described above, settler farming in the Omaheke was dependent and marginal. For this reason, cheap labour was crucial to the economic viability of commercial farming in the district. A resolution adopted by the Windhoek Farmers' and Settlers'

Association put the matter bluntly:

The Native question is always becoming more difficult, which in the first place can be ascribed to the lack of sufficient labour...It is not enough to advise the farmer to introduce better industrial methods...Only by procuring sufficient and efficient native labour is the agricultural development of the country possible. As the individual farmer is not in the position to obtain this labour, an organisation on the part of the authorities is necessary...Many farmers [complain that] the punishment of an insubordinate native results in all the natives giving notice to leave their master's service and the farmer will then be facing ruin because he cannot get other natives to work for him. At present the farmer is for the greater part left to the whims of the native (SWAA A521/13 August 22, 1928).

When the farmers complained of labour shortages, what they were actually demanding was *cheap* labour. Nama-Damaras and Ju/'hoansi were proving to be adequate workers, however the Ju/'hoansi were still able and willing to desert service during the rainy season to forage in the veld, a habit the farmers were growing increasingly intolerant toward. The farmers required, and clamoured for, two things: 1) an alternative source of labour, namely contract workers; and 2) the means to bind workers, especially the Ju/'hoansi, to the farms. Strategies to facilitate both were eventually adopted, but because of the economic insecurity of the settlers, the costs associated with hiring contract workers were largely out of their reach. Therefore, the primary concern came to be controlling the movements of local workers. At this point the 'Bushman Problem' and the 'labour shortage problem' boil down to the same issue: controlling mobility. Because the Ju/'hoansi were the most incorrigibly nomadic, yet offered the cheapest source of labour,²¹ efforts to control the native work force were

²¹ A combination of factors colluded to help set the value of Ju/'hoan labour: first, it was assumed by many in the settler community and in the Administration that the Ju/'hoansi's traditional subsistence activities could supplement their wages and rations (which in reality meant Ju/'hoan women's gathering activities underwrote subsistence on the farms); second, the Ju/'hoansi were being increasingly dispossessed of their foraging territories, but were not assigned reserve land, as were Herero and Tswana groups in region, (continued...)

ultimately efforts to ‘tame’ and ‘domesticate’ the Ju/’hoansi, opening the way for the Ju/’hoansi to become targets for extreme forms of control, which were in turn justified on the grounds that they were more animal than human.

i) Manstealing and ‘Wailing Women’

In 1924 a letter from a Gobabis farmer was published in the *Windhoek Advertiser*, questioning the Administration’s policy of encouraging more white settlers into the territory when there were no workers to be had, since the “natives are all running to the Reserves” and “no inducement can get them back to work” (SWAA A521/3, August 7, 1924). The Gobabis Magistrate noted, in a letter to the Native Commissioner, that this farmer “has frequently had trouble with his natives, but what is exciting him now is that the natives moving from Orumbo Reserve to Epukiro pass his farm and he considers that he should have the right to force them to take service with him” (ibid). Many farmers shared his opinion (see Marshall 1976:60; Marshall Thomas 1958:15-21).

Farmers in the Omaheke, especially those with reputations bad enough to present problems in recruiting local workers, engaged in ‘manstealing’. Gordon notes two dramatic episodes that occurred in Gobabis in the 1920s: in one case twenty-eight Ju/’hoansi were kidnaped and brought to the farm of the Boltman brothers, where they were essentially kept

²¹(...continued)

and thus became encapsulated in ‘white’ territory were they became increasingly dependent on farm labour; and, third, racial/ethnic stereotypes were (and are) prominent in the rationales for lower pay for Ju/’hoan workers. As I describe in more detail in the following chapters, such stereotypes created a racialized labour hierarchy and justified lower wages for Ju/’hoan workers on the grounds that ‘Bushman’ had no grasp of the concept of money and their nomadism made them innately ‘inferior’ and ‘unreliable’ workers.

as prisoners; in another, three farmers teamed up to kidnap fifty Ju/'hoansi, who were driven in front of the farmers' horses back to the farm and divided between the farmers (1992a:139).

There were less dramatic episodes of manstealing though, which may indicate that this was more widely practiced than sensational examples suggest. An elderly farmer, who had trekked from Angola with his family when he was a small boy in 1928, proudly told me:

That old Ouma [grandmother], I caught her. She and her brother and her father. My father and I found them sitting under a tree, so we took their bows and arrows and they just followed us home. They are very gentle people. They don't make trouble - they'll just follow you.

Suzman describes how 'manstealing' became somewhat professionalized, as "teams of experts" would, for a price, stage armed and mounted expeditions (later with bakkies) into the veld to capture Ju/'hoansi to be brought back to the farms (1997:55). Gobabis farmers travelled as far as Nyae Nyae to capture Ju/'hoansi and bring them back. However, in this case it is noteworthy that the farmers were very particular about which workers they wanted to kidnap, as the first Bushman Affairs Commissioner, Claude McIntyre, described during a visit to the Nyae Nyae area, where he was "assailed by wailing women":

The Bushmen claim that their men-folk had been removed by Europeans...Apparently what happens is that the Europeans arrive in the area and spend a few days talking to the Bushmen, persuading them to come to work on the farms. The Bushmen steadfastly refuse and then the Europeans choose a time when a few men are present and hustle them onto their cars and drive off (SWAA A659, To Chief Native Commissioner, November 11, 1955).

The practice of manstealing amounted to slave-raiding, and illustrates how the process of rural class formation represented, in the case of the Ju/'hoansi, the creation of a semi-slave/semi-serf underclass of farm workers. However, manstealing was not only indicative of the unique underclass status of the Ju/'hoansi, based on racist notions of their perceived quintessentially 'primitive' attributes, it also says a great deal about how the settler economy

was being structured along gender lines. The role of gender in the historical formation of a rural underclass in the Omaheke is revealed in the way manstealing in this context breaks with the slave-raiding traditions of southern Africa generally.

Robertson and Klein (et al) (1983) examine why most slaves internal to the sub-Saharan African slave trade have historically been women (with the exception of the European export market).²² They attribute the preference for female slaves to the fact that it was women, both as free and unfree labourers, who performed most of the productive labour. In sub-Saharan Africa, slave women did the same kind of work free women did (agricultural and domestic) and so the value of female slaves came out of a system which assigned more productive labour to women generally (Robertson and Klein 1983:11-16). In the system of frontier slavery in the Cape colony most slave raids mounted by Boers captured women and children (many of whom were San). Commando raids against Khoi groups targeted women and children, and a system of 'apprenticeship' was defended on the grounds that the children's parents (or at least their fathers) had been killed, and so the 'apprentices' (*inboekeling*) were orphans. This justification, of course, neglected to mention that the reason the children were orphans in the first place was because their parents had been killed in these slave-raiding expeditions (see F. Morton 1994b:254-257).

Barry Morton (1994) describes how the pattern of slave raiding conducted by

²² This would include, to some extent, the slave trade that went through Cape Town. Cape slavery is primarily associated with 'plantation slavery' (Morton 1994a:2; Ross 1983). However, Fred Morton also notes that as the Cape plantation economy declined and the internal economy — which was tied to 'household production' — developed, female slaves were in higher demand (1994b:257). According to Morton "no later than 1740 skilled domestic slaves were in far greater demand than unskilled field hands" (ibid; see also Shell 1994) and female slaves comprised a larger proportion of the slave population "than in other Atlantic slave societies outside of Africa" (ibid).

BaTswana groups against San in the nineteenth century targeted women and children, who were taken as tribute, agricultural workers, domestic servants and concubines - this was especially the case when revenues from the ivory trade started to dwindle in the late nineteenth century, which reduced the value of San male 'slaves' as hunters. Boer slave raiding in the Kalahari also targeted women and children more than men. By the 1880s this system of slave raiding was restricted to major cattle producing areas of the northern Kalahari, where, in 1894, the Resident Magistrate in Bechuanaland reported from Lake Ngami:

I heard a good many Bushmen have been killed recently around the Ghanzi veldt by the Tswana because they, the Bushmen, objected to giving up their women and children as slaves (cited in Morton 1994:235; see also Russell 1975:185).²³

During the days of German colonialism, an influential academic, Franz Seiner, suggested that the only way to 'tame' the Bushmen was to have the men deported and to place the women and children on farms where the children could be 'rehabilitated' (Gordon 1992b:194).

Slave raiding for *men* is not pre-determined to be the solution to labour shortage problems on the farms. As previous patterns of slavery suggest, there is nothing inevitable or biologically determined about which sex will be recruited (or stolen) for which work.

Although no one would argue that the neglect on the part of Gobabis farmers to kidnap Ju/'hoan women is an example of women's oppression, it did represent the formation of a

²³ In an official report to the Resident Commissioner of the Bechuanaland Protectorate (1894), Captain Fuller explained why he believed San groups were following his caravan of Boer Trekkers in the following way:

I believe the principal reason for wishing to be near us is that we may protect them from Segkomes people who they accuse of taking their women and children...and often kill the men in addition. It is said that parties of Lake people come down occasionally purposely to get slaves, etc from amongst the Bushmen (cited Russell 1975:185; Guenther 1997:129).

long-term trend of structuring production on the farms along gender lines and provides a clear illustration of the value placed on work sex-typed according to European ideologies. The legacy of this process is that what now counts as 'men's work' is the only work available with any pretension of providing a living wage.

ii) Legislative Measures

Measures occasionally taken by contemporary farmers in the Omaheke to control labour are historically continuous with legislative measures instituted for that purpose in the 1920s. One informant related the story of his recruitment by the farmer he worked for when I met him: In June of 1991, //Umte, who was 'between jobs', decided to visit his father on a farm just outside of Gobabis before he 'went on the road' to look for work. The farmer was known to be uncongenial about allowing visitors on his farm so //Umte decided against asking the farmer for permission to stay with his father. The farmer eventually discovered him and told //Umte to report for work. //Umte preferred to take his chances on the road and declined the 'offer' of employment. The next day the police arrived from Gobabis and packed //Umte off to jail, under the charge of 'trespassing'. He remained in jail for three months until the farmer came to visit him. "Are you ready to come to work?", the farmer asked him. When //Umte said "yes", the charges were dropped and the farmer returned from town with //Umte in the back of his bakkie. Most of the Ju/'hoansi who squat on this same farm simply agree to work there when they get caught, to avoid being charged under the contemporary equivalent of the 'vagrancy laws'.

Although manstealing also reveals the difficulties the Administration and farmers faced in trying to bring the Ju/'hoansi within the sphere of legislative control, the Ju/'hoansi

were not completely immune to the legislative net forming around them. The legislation most relevant to the Ju/'hoansi were the Masters and Servants Proclamation and the vagrancy laws. When the Union was given the Mandate, old German law was replaced by the 1920 Masters and Servants Proclamation, which remained in place for the next fifty-five years, and with the 1920 Vagrancy Proclamation.²⁴ The Masters and Servants proclamation was often invoked by farmers in order to get police assistance in recovering errant workers, particularly the Ju/'hoansi, many of whom were not even aware that they had entered into a labour contract subjecting them to the terms of the proclamation (Gordon 1992a:140). Old //Umte (the maternal grandfather of the //Umte who went to jail for 'trespassing'), describes how it was when he was a young man in the 1930s:

The ones who didn't want to work would leave and go stay in the veld. In the old times, when they ran away, the farmer would call the police and then they caught them and put them in jail...In the old time, when you quit your job and looked for a job on another farm, you'll have it - a pass. Then you'll show it to the farmer and he'll say 'this man is looking for a job' and he'll help you.

The passes also provided a way for the farmers themselves to monitor the working habits and performance of the Ju/'hoansi. As one older Ju/'hoan man explained:

If you leave a farm, then the farmer will write a pass for you...When I left that farm [the third farm he worked on], the farmer gave me a pass and I came with a pass to this farm. Some farmers will write on your paper saying 'this is a very good worker and he works very well'...And the farmer will offer you a job.

Most of my older Ju/'hoan male informants reported a fairly informal pass-system where farmers were largely unconcerned if a Ju/'hoan man looking for a job was not carrying any documentation. For the most part, carrying a pass was less important in dealing with the

²⁴ In 1975 the Masters and Servants Proclamation was repealed and in 1977 some of the pass laws were also repealed.

farmers than in dealing with the police. Since it was largely male labour the settlers and Administration sought to control, women were exempt from carrying passes. Although this may be seen as evidence of female autonomy, Gordon notes, first, that in fact, if not in law, women's movements were still subject to an informal (and perhaps more invidious) control, and second, that women's legal invisibility made them more vulnerable to abuse since their invisibility meant that they also had no recourse to legal protection (1998:56).

The significance of this labour-control legislation for my purposes here, however, is the legacy it left of Ju/'hoan women's economic and political marginalization in the Omaheke. This legislative framework was not only designed to coerce the Ju/'hoansi into farm labour, it also functioned to subordinate women (including Ju/'hoan women) in their relations with their own men-folk as well as to the 'master' class (African and white). Indeed the legislative structure tied female subordination in their relations with their own kin to the patriarchal authority and control of the farmers and the Administration. Political disempowerment was buttressed by the parallel effect of economic marginalization as Ju/'hoan women were excluded from wage earning opportunities altogether or pushed into under-paid and largely invisible domestic service.

According to the terms of the Masters and Servants proclamation, male servants required to live on their employer's premises — which included all farm workers — could not have their wives or children live with them without the approval of the employer. This link between Ju/'hoan women's access to residency on the farms and their association with a male worker remains a central feature of their lives to this day. Although the proclamation prohibited the farmer from claiming the services of a worker's wife and child, this practice was and is widespread. This is not surprising considering that the Ju/'hoansi could hardly say

“no” to such a demand when the presence of Ju/'hoan women and children on a farm relied (and still relies) on the goodwill of the farmer.

According to the terms of the proclamation, female servants who were required to live on their employer's premises could be dismissed if they married or if pregnancy or childbirth interrupted their service. The proclamation also defined ‘woman's work’ — domestic labour — as less skilled, and therefore less valuable, than ‘men's work’.²⁵ Furthermore, the husband of a female worker had the right to dissolve her contract and claim her wages (Social Sciences Division/Legal Assistance Centre 1996b:14-15). The Masters and Servants Proclamation not only structured the relationship between master and servant, but, in this way, it also structured the relationship between male and female members of the servile class. It is not clear how successful farmers were in holding the Ju/'hoansi to the terms of this proclamation. However, such legislation was primarily a formal articulation and sanctioning of widespread attitudes and practices and so even if the it lacked practical force, the day-to-day practices on the farms very likely adhered to the gender principles reflected in the colonial policies.

The 1920 Vagrancy Proclamation provided an effective means of forcing natives into farm labour by making it a crime for anyone to be “without visible lawful means of employment” — that is, without employment in the white economy (Cronje and Cronje

²⁵ This is illustrated by a section of the proclamation regarding apprenticeships, which states that a minor over the age of sixteen could voluntarily apprentice himself, provided it was in an occupation where a “particular art or skill is required”. No such art or skill was required in the case of women apprenticed as domestic servants (Social Science Division/Legal Assistance Centre 1996b:15).

1979:31).²⁶ The proclamation stipulated that “any person found wandering abroad and having no visible lawful means, or insufficient lawful means of support...[who] cannot give a satisfactory account of himself...shall be liable to be imprisoned for any period not exceeding three months” (cited in Gordon 1992a:254). However, in many cases, people found in violation of the proclamation were sent to public work programs or were sent to work on a farm (for a wage set by the magistrate) (Gordon 1998:52). Gordon argues that these laws were not only the means of recruiting labour, but were also designed to control the “Bushman Danger” (Gordon 1992a:103). Considering that the Ju/’hoansi in the Omaheke were for the most part landless (in the sense that they had no land specifically designated to them), they were by definition ‘vagrants’. The proclamation however, reveals more about the settlers’ and Administration’s goals and social visions than about the way things likely worked in the district, since at least until widespread fencing occurred in the commercial block in the 1950s, it was very difficult to enforce this proclamation against the Ju/’hoansi.

The pass law system reflected the Administration’s and the settler community’s shared vision of the racial and sexual ‘order of things’, and even if disagreements existed about rationale and means, the goal was the same: maintaining white privilege through the

²⁶ The 1924 Native (Urban Areas) Proclamation was also used to force ‘idle’ natives into farm work. This proclamation provided for the establishment of native locations and required all natives working in urban areas to reside there. Any native (male or female) found to be ‘idle’ could be brought to the Magistrate’s office and ordered either to return to their reserve, or to be put to work on a farm. The Ju/’hoansi, not having a reserve, would by default have been sent to work. In the 1950s and 1960s the pass laws were tightened and the Urban Areas Proclamation of 1951 was amended in 1954 to stipulate that no native (male or female) could stay in an urban area for more than seventy-two hours unless: 1) they were born and permanently reside there; 2) have worked for the same employer for at least 10 years (or resident for at least 15 years); or 3) were the wife, or unmarried daughter or son of a native lawfully resident (Social Sciences Division/Legal Assistance Centre 1996b:25).

creation and control of cheap labour. Achieving this goal had the effect of undermining the basis of women's independence and power both within their own community and within the political economic system as it developed. Control of the Ju/'hoansi required undermining the basis of a foraging subsistence strategy - which was the same thing as undermining women's relatively equal access to the means of survival and undermining the basis of their social status as recognized and valued contributors to the group's subsistence. In short, key to the process of incorporating the Ju/'hoansi as an underclass was undermining relative gender egalitarianism and subordinating Ju/'hoan women to their male kin.

iii) Migrant Males and Marginal Females

As early as the 1920s farmers in Gobabis were clamouring for migrant labourers, but complained that the costs associated with such workers were too high. In particular, contract workers who had worked in the mines "expected too much". Farmers worried that if contract workers were paid higher wages, they would be compelled to offer similar wages to old servants "who had for years been satisfied with less" (SWAA A521/3 Secretary to Native Commissioner, October 3, 1925). During the depression and its accompanying drought, demand for labour fell and the scale of wages also fell, until in some cases farm workers laboured only for food (SWAA A521/13). However, when economic and ecological conditions improved, farm productivity increased and this, coupled with the expansion of the Karakul industry, increased the demand for labour - yet wages remained at depression levels. The Administration recognized that this was the main reason Gobabis farmers had such difficulty recruiting local workers (*ibid*).

The Gobabis farmers were unable to tolerate any kind of wage competition from other

industries, even though the Administration ran the contract labour system, and subsidized the cost of labour, at next to no profit.²⁷ Within the Police Zone natives were allowed to look for work on their own account. In the reserves, anyone intending to look for work was required to register with the official Labour Bureau office and obtain a 'work-seeker' pass, which was good for fourteen days. The migrant labour system, while meant to shelter weaker industries from wage competition between employers, did effectively introduce wage competition between local workers and 'extra-territorial' workers, as the lower wages of local workers put downward pressure on the wages of contract farm workers, and contract labourers from outside Namibia threatened to undercut the wages of Namibian workers.²⁸

Ovambo contract workers began coming into the Omaheke in small numbers in the 1930s, but did not make a significant impact in the composition of the labour force until after the institution of a 'homeland' system following the Odendaal commission's recommendations.²⁹ Once contract workers began coming into the Omaheke, labour

²⁷ Two recruiting organizations were established in 1926: the Northern Labour Organization and the Southern Labour Organization, the latter supplying labour to the farms in the Police Zone. These two organizations were amalgamated in 1943 and became the South West African Labour Administration (SWANLA)

²⁸ In 1934, the Herero headman Hosea Kutako, protested against Barotse labourers from Rhodesia being hired for one year at 6/- per month, saying "we as a tribe, regard with alarm the fact that extraterritorial natives are from time to time allowed to be brought among us and contracted for wages much lower than we are able to work for in order to provide for our wives and children" (SWAA A521/13, Secretary to Administrator, October 25, 1934).

²⁹ The Odendaal Commission was appointed in 1962 to inquire into (inter alia) 'the conditions of the non-white inhabitants'. Its recommendations, published in 1964, were designed to facilitate the extension of apartheid into Namibia. The reserves were to be consolidated into 10 ethnic 'homelands', 11 black authorities were to be established along with a Council for urban 'Coloureds' and a Council for the 'Bastards'. All key services to non-whites would be controlled by ministries in South Africa, while the 'white' areas would
(continued...)

hierarchies began to emerge on the farms and workers began to be ranked according to ethnically-based 'aptitudes'.

The fact that migrant labour was a male system had a profound impact on the status of non-San women: they were marginalized in reserves, and later in ethnic homelands, where they were expected to subsist, assume the burden of 'domestic production' and subsidize the reproduction of the labour force on inadequate land. Both outside and inside the reserves and homelands the migrant labour system entrenched the structures of extreme economic dependence of women on male wage earners. Women who did move to town were barred from most jobs except domestic service.

One of the first studies to notice the inherently gendered nature of the migrant labour system was Wolpe's important (1972) essay. Wolpe demonstrates how apartheid created a gendered economic system in which a racialized class structure was maintained by dividing the entire South African economic geography into 'productive' and 'reproductive' spheres writ large. The 'reproductive' sphere of the 'homeland' functioned to subsidize the cost of maintaining and reproducing the labour force. Although there are many problems with Wolpe's structuralist account,³⁰ the fact that the economies are inherently gendered was an

(...continued)

fall under the administrative jurisdiction of a white legislative assembly. The Odendaal Commission's recommendations were implemented by the Development of Self-Government for Native Nations in South West Africa Act (1968) and the South West Africa Affairs Act (1969) (Katjavivi 1988:72-73).

³⁰ The 'Wolpe-Legassick' thesis (inspired by Meillassoux [1981]) goes something like this: the migrant labour system originated in capital's need to extract surplus labour value. To achieve this, the capitalist system only partially penetrated and rearranged pre-capitalist social systems. By keeping some of the pre-capitalist social institutions intact capital could reap the benefits of the capacity of these institutions to maintain and reproduce the labour

(continued...)

important insight. One crucial shortcoming of Wolpe's thesis is that it assumes that such a gendered division of the economy is 'natural' (Bozzoli 1983; Walker 1990a and b). Bozzoli (1983) points out that there is no 'natural' logic to proletarianization that dictates that men are the first to be drawn into wage labour. Rather, such an outcome must be seen as the result of gender-based struggles between and within the colonial and indigenous communities. My own difficulty with Bozzoli's analysis is that she describes 'domestic struggles' without examining how the domestic sphere was shaped by the very struggles she is referring to; in her analysis, the 'domestic sphere' is also treated as a 'natural' category. Furthermore, indigenous African communities are represented as having been historically uninterfered with by the agents of colonialism. The picture is one of an 'articulation' of discrete and separable patriarchal systems, each buttressing the other, but playing no real part in their mutual creation. The issue of race, colonial reinventions of 'African traditions' and the process of creating ethnic entities are left largely out of the picture (see Vail et. al. 1989; Spiegel and McAllister et al 1991).

However, both Bozzoli (1983) and Walker (1990a and b) make the important point that the migrant labour system was not simply a method of labour recruitment which set 'domestic production' in a highly dependent and marginal position within a white capitalist economy. Rather, it was a system which involved the subordination of *women to men*.

Migrant labour required the collusion and co-operation of two — broadly speaking —

(...continued)

force. In this way, indigenous social institutions subsidized the extraction of surplus labour value (Wolpe 1972; Legassick 1974). Criticisms of this argument note that the model is overly functionalist, that it attributes omnipotence to the capitalist system, that it fails to take regional differences into account (Delius 1980).

systems of patriarchy (African and white), in combined strategies to control women's labour power and mobility.

All of these points are relevant in the case of the Omaheke as well, where the development of the migrant labour system institutionalized female marginalization. The gendered order of production — including migrant labour — in the Omaheke is a reflection of the colonial vision of what was 'naturally' women's work and what was 'naturally' men's work.

The migrant labour system reflected and adhered to colonial definitions of domestic womanhood, which was in turn adopted by many male leaders (i.e. chiefs or headmen) within African communities to enable them to take advantage of income-earning opportunities provided by proletarianization. However, the gender attitudes inherent to the migrant labour system — and in the broader political economic system — were not adopted only by labour exporting communities, but also by local labour-supplying communities, such as the Ju/'hoansi, who today insist that Ju/'hoan women are the '*baas* of the house' and that women must be 'under' men. The migrant labour system and the male-dominated political economy in which it was embedded imposed a definition of domestic 'womanhood' on African women which often conflicted with economic necessity, and carried social sanctions for women who contravened this definition. For example, in South Africa — and in the Omaheke historically and presently — 'town women' are seen as 'immoral', 'irresponsible' and 'independent' (Walker 1990b:179). Gender subordination is entrenched through economic marginalization, yet it is given its social force through attitudes stigmatizing women who are not appropriately 'domestic' (see Bonner 1990).

Migrant labour reinforced the informal socioeconomic processes already defining the

farm as a male domain. In the chapter to follow I will discuss how, within this system, Ju/'hoan women are subjected to a web of interlocking patriarchal relationships with men from the dominant classes (both African and white), and how the roles and stereotypes of domestic and sexual servitude shape the cultural and political economic context within which Ju/'hoan women live and work. This trend continues today in resettlement camps and in the smaller villages (such as Pos 3 and Tallismanus in Hereroland), where Ju/'hoan women are taken as temporary 'wives' by male members of other ethnic groups. In these cases Ju/'hoan 'wifeness' becomes a form of economic and sexual servitude.

The official rhetoric of the South West African Administration justified forced labour on the grounds that 'hard work' had a 'civilizing' influence. Although it was recognized that native labour was essential to the development of the agricultural and mining sectors of the economy, official (and conventional) wisdom saw work as a means to promote "*to the utmost [the] material and moral well-being and social progress of the inhabitants of the territory*" (i.e. the terms of the mandate) and "to assist the native in his advancement to civilization" (SWAA A521/13, ND, NA). 'Work' was and is what men do, and therefore only men are given the means to 'progress' and become 'civilized'. Ju/'hoan women, who are not seen as doing 'work', may be regarded as standing outside the forward movement towards 'civilization'.

Conclusion

The history of the 'Bushman Problem' that afflicted the white settlers in the Omaheke can be told as a story of violent conflict between settlers and 'wild' natives, or it can be told as a story of labour shortages, and the coercive, often violent means by which labour was

obtained. That the two problems are at bottom identical is seen in the simple fact that 'civilizing' or 'taming' the wild Ju/'hoansi was identified with getting them used to hard work.

But the system of farm labour that was brought to the Omaheke was highly gendered, and the result was that the Ju/'hoansi women were denied access to what, in the eyes of the colonizers, was the means to civilization. As we will see, a dominant image among many farmers of the Ju/'hoan women in the Omaheke today (and in Namibia in general) still portrays them as without civilization or humanity. Although the gendered labour practices on the farms provide the basic material circumstances which bar them from access to full 'humanity', before we turn to the description of Ju/'hoan life on the farms we will trace some of the important strands of ideology which run relatively unbroken from the nineteenth century into the contemporary Omaheke, and which shape the contemporary image of Ju/'hoan womanhood. Those entangled strands of ideology will be the subject of the next chapter.

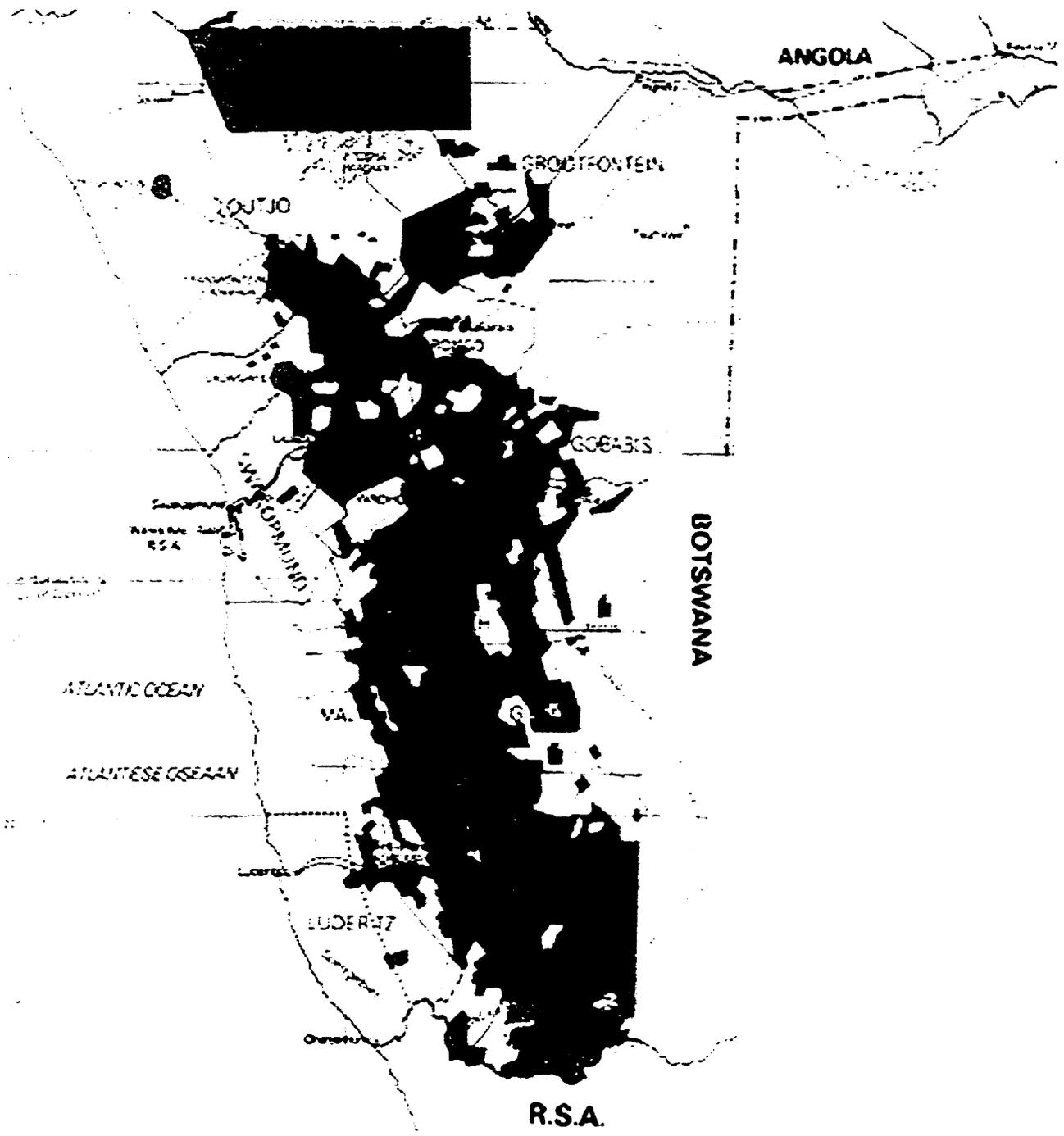


Figure 5. Settlement, 1921.

Source: Modified from The National Atlas of South West Africa (Namibia), 1983. Map #37.

SOUTH WEST AFRICA

SHOWING
NATIVE RESERVES

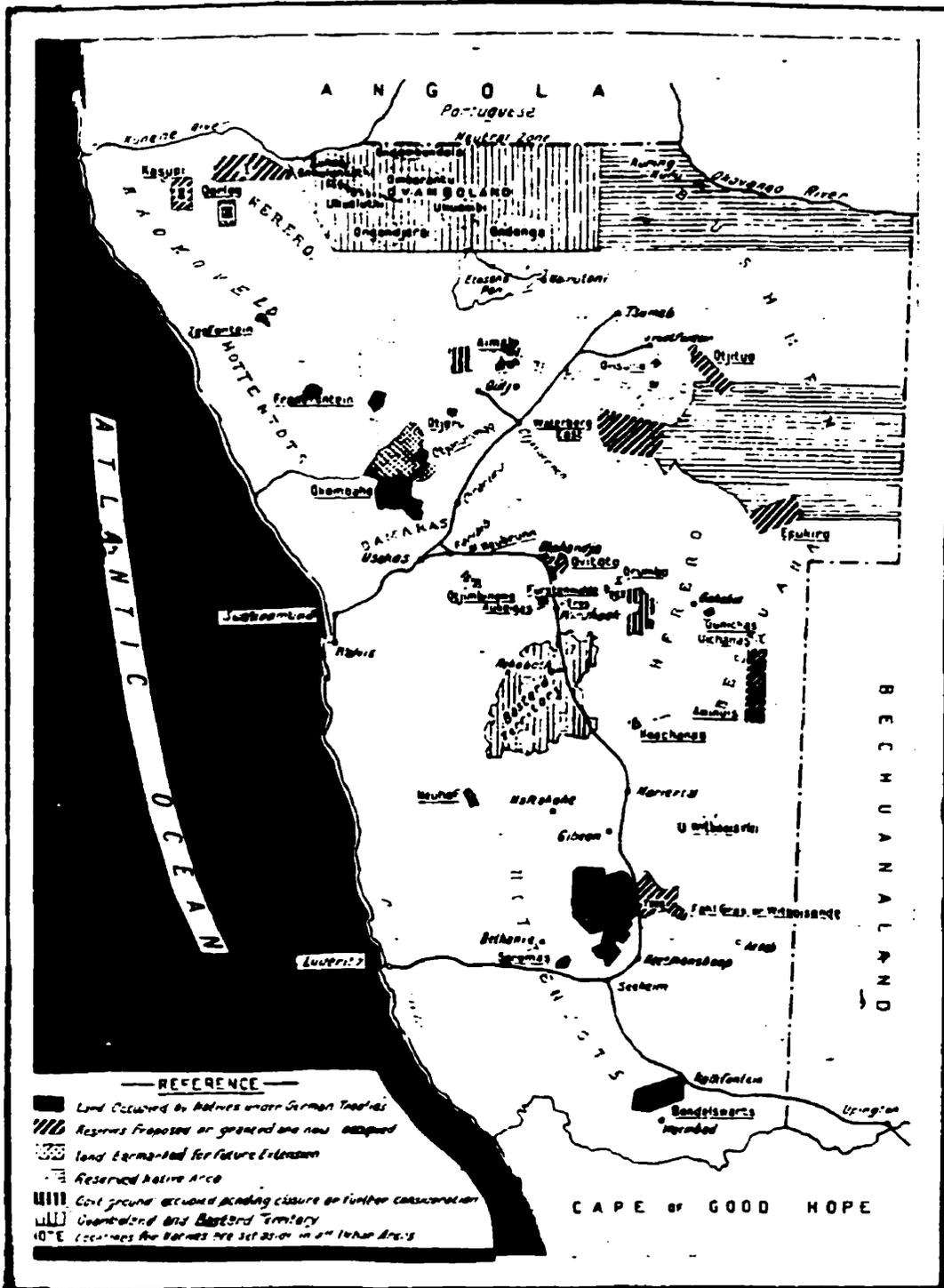


Figure 6. South West Africa Reserves, 1923 (drawn in the Surveyor General's Office).
Source: Namibian National Archives, Map #531.

CHAPTER TWO

'NOT LIKE ORDINARY NATIVES'

These people are not like ordinary natives, they are wild, suspicious and elusive.

*- Station Commander, SA Police, Tsumeb
(SWAA A50/67 July 7, 1941)*

Introduction

Before leaving Windhoek for the Gobabis District, I was cautioned by many that it would be very difficult to gain access to Afrikaner farms in order to interview workers. The farmers were said to be very leery of 'outsiders', especially North Americans, whose well-known liberal attitudes and meddling were perceived by rural Afrikaners as having already wreaked havoc in southern Africa. Although I was denied access to some farms, access to many other farms was made significantly easier when local farmers came to understand that I was interested in learning more about the lives of the Ju/'hoan women. That interest, I soon learned, was regarded as harmless and unintrusive simply because any interest in women was automatically counted as "not political". My declared interest in what were merely women's issues not only made for easier access to the farms, it also inspired one elderly Afrikaner farmer to say that he could save me a lot of trouble: "All they do", he said, "is breed." These two ideas — that Ju/'hoan women are only breeders, and that any interest in them was automatically apolitical — are closely linked. Any effort to appreciate contemporary Ju/'hoan women will need to unravel a historically tangled knot of mythologies.

A common view about the production of ideologies, or 'conventional wisdom', is that they are produced 'from the top down'; from intellectuals to the lay population. Dubow notes that it is not always necessary for a white public to have access to the esoteric debates

of 'specialists' in order to justify white supremacy; merely knowing of the existence of 'scientific' information is enough (1995:9). An alternative view is that they are generated 'from below' and that academics and administrators merely give formal expression to popular views in more sophisticated languages, in 'scientific' or 'medical' jargon. A more accurate picture might be one of reciprocity. There are always competing agendas, fissures and conflicts within and between the intellectual (academic), political and lay communities and so the production of 'knowledge' is best understood as an ongoing argument or conversation -- often mediated by newspapers, novels, films, etc -- between the communities empowered to describe, define and objectify "Others".

In Part One of this chapter, I will discuss some of the many ways in which these women have been, and are still, located within a convoluted 'scientific' mythology concerned with their sexuality. A broad examination of the basic contours in racist thinking is ethnographically relevant because it provides important insights into how present images/stereotypes of the Bushmen in the Omaheke echo academic discourse and how the legacy of scientific and pseudo-scientific racism continues to shape the material conditions of Ju/'hoan life. Although in Part One of this chapter I focus on the 'professional' discourse, especially colonial academic discourse about the Bushmen and 'primitives', the main components of this discourse will also provide some insight into the ways that the racist politics affecting the Ju/'hoansi as an underclass were gendered. In Part Two I will discuss the implications this pseudo-scientific mythology has for the exclusion of Ju/'hoan women from public and political realms.

As the autonomous foraging life way of the Ju/'hoansi was undermined, their autonomous self-identification as a people was also undermined. Their incorporation into a

colonial political economy meant their incorporation into a European social vision subjecting them to European definitions of “primitive”, “Bushmen”, “inferior races” etc. The Ju/’hoansi became actors playing out the role of the ‘wild savage’, as required by the colonial society’s own program of constructing a coherent racial community out of the divided white population. ‘Bushmen’ came to represent the original, primitive condition of all humanity, and in this way served as a yardstick to measure white ‘progress’ (see Torgovnick 1990), and racially-based class inequalities can be justified on the grounds that Bushmen are ‘behind’ Europeans in their evolutionary development, while artificial unity among whites is forged out of their common identification with a state of ‘civilization’. This is not to say that the Ju/’hoansi did not create their own identity based on self-definitions at odds with European stereotypes (contra Suzman, 1997), but the impact of racist ideologies in structuring the material conditions of Ju/’hoan life cannot be over-estimated (Guenther 1986a, 1980; Gordon 1992a, 1997; Suzman 1997).

The views of the Bushmen share certain key stereotypes with other subordinate groups placed under the rubric of ‘primitive’; namely ‘childishness’ (irrationality), ‘animality’ (atavism), innate criminality (banditry) and lasciviousness (degeneracy). Examining the way the trope of the primitive was formed reveals the ways in which the Bushmen were defined as ‘sub-human’ by a discourse which could with equal accuracy be described as ‘scientific sexism’. The subjugation of the Ju/’hoansi as an underclass was not only a matter of racist attitudes which justified brutal oppression, but was also facilitated by colonial ideologies of female inferiority and subordination which legitimated white male patriarchal (and paternalistic) control (see McClintock 1990:98; 1995). The trope of the primitive was the controlling metaphor in colonial discourse naturalizing segregation and

subordination; inferiority was innate in the 'primitive' races, the 'primitive' classes and the 'primitive' sex. This biological world-view buttressed what Stoler identifies as the two central and powerful fictions of colonial authority: 1) that whites "represent an easily identifiable and discrete biological category"; and 2) that the "boundaries separating the colonizer from the colonized are self-evident" (1991:52). In order to maintain these self-evident boundaries the state must dedicate a great deal of energy to making them 'natural' and to regulating "the sexual, conjugal and domestic life of *both* Europeans in the colonies and their colonial subjects" (ibid:53, emphasis hers). It is perhaps no surprise then that colonial discourse on 'primitives' is shot through with sexual overtones. When examining the politics of Bushman stereotypes it is useful to approach the biological language of racism from the point of view offered by McClintock:

The usefulness of the quasi-biological metaphors of 'type', 'species', 'genus' and 'race' lay in the fact that they gave full expression to anxieties about class and gender, as well as inventing a mode of containing these anxieties, without betraying the social and political nature of these distinctions (1990:100).

In what follows I will examine how Bushman iconography features in the definition of 'primitive promiscuity', how sexuality is implicated in stereotypes of animality, criminality and childishness and how the Ju/'hoansi were caught up in a discursive web of overdetermined categories of race, class and gender which were themselves superimposed on evolutionary schemes structured along gender lines. The Ju/'hoansi were not contending with a colonial cultural political economy which was built according to racist attitudes alone, but also with a system which was at the same time necessarily sexist. The objectification of the Ju/'hoansi within this discourse had (and still has) profound implications for Ju/'hoan women.

Part One: Pseudo-Science and Sexuality

i) Animality and Sexuality

The terms 'Hottentot' and 'Bushmen' were used interchangeably until the mid-nineteenth century and were, as Dubow notes, the icons of Otherness, featuring centrally in eighteenth century notions of the Great Chain of Being, which placed the 'Hottentot/Bushman' at the lowest end of the scale, next to apes (1995:21; see also Gordon 1992c). This fascination with the 'missing link' between humans and apes was recast in nineteenth century evolutionism, which was in many ways a scientized version of the 'Great Chain of Being' and reformulated the ranking of human groups in the naturalist language of biology. The period of 'natural history' ethnology, just before the Darwinian revolution, set the scientific stage for the definition of the Bushmen within the 'natural' scheme (see also Stocking 1987:47). J.C. Prichard wrote, in 1836:

Writers on the history of mankind seem to be nearly agreed in considering the Bushmen or Bosjemans of South Africa as the most degraded of all nations and the lowest scale of humanity...these people are so brutish, lazy and stupid...It is no matter of surprise that those writers who search for approximations between mankind and inferior orders of creation, fix upon the Bushmen as their favourite theme (cited in Gordon 1992a:15-16).

To the minds of nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial observers, it was the Bushmen's 'ape-like' features and consequent animal-like qualities that provided the physical/biological evidence for their status as the 'missing link' between humans and apes. In 1924 Matthew Drennan, a professor of anatomy at the University of Cape Town, restated what was at the time conventional wisdom:

The majority of the physical characteristics of the Bushmen tend toward the simian end of the human scale, and to this extent the Bushman is undoubtedly a member of one of the lowest of the human races (cited in Dubow 1995:47).

Although the bestial image of the Bushmen has been identified as the core symbol of their status as the quintessential primitive (see Gordon 1992a; Guenther 1980; Suzman 1997), few have noted the sexual overtones of this image and how sexuality articulates with other characteristics associated with the Bushman's 'racial inferiority'.

A great deal of the 'physical evidence' for the inferiority of the Bushman, non-whites and, especially after the middle of the nineteenth century, for women generally, came from measuring skulls: cranial capacity, phrenology, facial angles, prognathism, brain weights and various 'convolutions' of the seat of intelligence provided critical evidence for evolutionary status. However, a key method of defining male Europeans as morally and intellectually 'superior' was contrasting the heads of whites with the part of the anatomy believed to govern primitive and female behaviour.

Early 'scientific' evidence of Bushman animality was drawn from examinations of female Hottentot/Bushmen genitalia, which were used in debates about the unity or plurality of mankind. In 1867, William H. Flower advanced a polygenist argument based on 'genital anomalies' found in Bushman/Hottentot female specimens:

The remarkable development of the labia minoria [*sic*], or nymphas [*is*] sufficiently well marked to distinguish these parts at once from those of ordinary varieties of human species (cited in Gilman 1985b:216).

In the 1930s the famous South African physical anthropologist, Raymond Dart, revisited this polygenic view of the Bushmen. He begins by accepting L. Schultze's claim that Bushman (female) genitalia, along with other physical characteristics of the Bushmen, "separates in the same fashion Hottentots as well as Bushmen so clearly from all other races of humanity that both, separated off from them as a unity, should be grouped together under a particular name...Khoisan" (cited in Dart 1937:180). Genital features are more than indications of a

lower evolutionary status; in fact, the farther down the evolutionary scale we descend, the more sexualized, irrational and animalistic we become.¹ Scientific racism developed out of a combination of anthropometric studies, biblical allusions and medical evidence and as such the nineteenth and early twentieth century obsession with body parts produced a definition of 'primitive' out of a blend of "moralism, science and statistics" (Haller and Haller 1974:47)

A significant moment in the history of both Bushman iconography and the iconography of the prostitute occurred in the early nineteenth century when Saartjie Baartman was put on display in London and Paris as the 'Hottentot Venus' (Gilman 1985a), and was described by French paleontologist and anatomist, George Cuvier in this way:

She has a way of pouting her lips exactly like what we have observed in the Orangutan. Her movements had something abrupt and fantastical about them, reminding one of those of apes. Her lips were monstrously large...Her ear was like that of many apes, being small, the tragus weak, and the external border almost obliterated behind. These are animal characteristics. *I have never seen a human head more like an ape than that of this woman.* (cited in Gould 1981:86, emphasis mine).

J.J. Virey, an influential scholar on race in the nineteenth century, draws from Cuvier's description of the Hottentot and her sexual parts, to advance a medical argument that the black woman's 'voluptuousness' is "developed to a degree of lascivity unknown in our

¹ Dubow describes how some very influential scholarship on race in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was generated out of experiences in South West Africa, which were shaped in good measure by Victorian pornographic preoccupations (1995:15). For example, the founder of modern statistics and eugenics, Sir Francis Galton gained his academic reputation from published accounts of his travels in South West Africa, and his efforts to "obtain accurate measurements of the buttocks of a veritable 'Venus among the Hottentots'" were accepted by the broader academic community as among the more 'scientific' elements of his work (Stocking 1987:93-94). Similarly, Eugene Fischer, a leading scholar in the Nazi race-hygiene movement, established his reputation in part on the basis of his study of Bushman genitalia (Dubow:1995:15). Patricia Hayes suggests this sexualized trope influenced 'hyper-masculine' conduct and misogyny among colonial administrators (in this case, the Ovamboland Native Commissioner, Cocky Hahn) (1996a, 1996b).

climate, for their sexual organs are much more developed than those of whites” (cited in Gilman 1985a:212-213) — the Hottentot woman is described as the “epitome of this sexual lasciviousness” (ibid).

Great evolutionary significance was attached to the ‘genital anomalies’ and steatopygia of the Bushwomen, not the least of which was the Victorian notion that they were the stigmata of animalistic, overdeveloped sexuality among primitives generally and Bushmen particularly. Thus, there existed physical manifestations and biological explanations for the ‘moral degeneracy’ of the Bushman who were “immodest”, “passionate”, “fierce” and “lascivious to the last degree” (Theal 1910:41-48).² The fact that this image of hyper-sexuality derives from the *Hottentot Venus* appears to have made no difference to the popular imagination today. Some farmers I spoke to in the Omaheke continue to discuss the racial attributes of the Ju/’hoansi generally in sexual terms. Many reported that Ju/’hoan women on their farms were ‘taken’ or ‘went with’ one man after another without any affection on the part of either party. Some farmers and school teachers see promiscuity as a ‘natural’ distinguishing feature of the Bushmen - which explains why Bushmen girls get pregnant so young. Other farmers I spoke to were more generous in their interpretations of Bushman sexuality, describing it as cultural *laissez-faire* attitudes toward

² The fact that they are seen as the *quintessential* primitive means that the attributes assigned to them are applicable to all other so-called ‘primitives’. While having dinner with some American friends of mine in a Gobabis hotel, two young Afrikaner men told the male member of our group: “I tell you man the blacks in this country are fucked up! They’re like dogs, they’ll fuck their own mothers!” Van Onselen describes how racist attitudes in nineteenth century Witwatersrand were couched in terms of hyper-sexuality: “Partly because of these animal-cum-savage origins, African men were supposed to be highly sexed and uninhibited, and therefore constituted ‘one of the most lustful savage races on earth’” (1982:40).

sex.

That sexuality features in the way tropes of the primitive Bushman get formed is also evidenced by the fact that the size of the Bushwoman's bottom is inversely related to the level of innocence and nobility attributed to the Bushmen generally. The 1918 report on the *Natives of South West Africa and their Treatment by Germany* (the famous South African Blue Book presented to the British government), described the incompetence and brutality of Germany after the First World War, by describing the Bushmen as 'worthy' of more sympathy on the grounds that

Unlike the Hottentot woman, they do not show with increasing years any signs of that very extraordinary and abnormal posterior development which is a characteristic, graceless and enigmatic feature in the Hottentot female (1918:143).

ii) Degeneracy and Criminality

The Hottentot/Bushman woman became symbolized by the 'Hottentot Venus', the icon of 'Primitive Promiscuity' and her physical features provided the blueprint for the stigmata of 'primitive sexuality', as well as the controlling metaphor defining prostitutes of any race and 'lower class' women as 'primitive' or 'atavistic', innately deviant and the agents of corruption and disease. Gilman states that "just as the genitalia of the Hottentot were perceived as parallel to the diseased genitalia of the prostitute, so too the power of the idea of corruption links both images" (1985a:237). Most of the studies of 'degenerate' primitive sexuality focused on female genitalia, which reflected the common view that female sexuality was generally pathological (ibid:218).

Disease and degeneration were medical terms reflecting the colonial anxiety about maintaining the supposedly 'natural' biological units, or races, and as a medical image of

disease and contagion this vocabulary legitimated social control and containment (Stoler 1991; Gilman 1985a; McClintock 1990; van Heyningen 1983). The image of degeneracy was central to the eugenics movement. Dubow states that “the notion that Bushmen were a ‘degenerate form’ of man rested on the idea that the evolutionary process was at times capable of going into reverse” (1995:52).

Gilman states that “miscegenation was a fear (and a word) from the late nineteenth-century vocabulary of sexuality” (1985b:237), which linked morality to racial purity and ‘degeneracy’ to sexual conduct. McClintock suggests that the language of ‘degeneracy’ was crucial to the legitimization of white patriarchal authority; the identification and control of the ‘contagious classes’ (prostitutes, the working class, criminals) were as necessary to the construction of the Victorian middle class “as was the idea of degeneration to the notion of progress” (1990:98-100). The term ‘miscegenation’ reflected, not only fears about inter-racial sexual relations, but more particularly the breakdown of the social order based on race hierarchies. In 1901 the Attorney-General told the South African House of Assembly:

There are certain houses in Cape Town which any Kaffir could frequent, and as long as he was able to pay the sum demanded, he could have illicit intercourse with these white European women. This was a matter of grave importance, for once the barriers were broken down between the European and native races in this country, there was no limit to the terrible dangers to which women would be submitted (cited in van Heyningen 1983:192).

In South Africa the ‘poor white problem’ was couched in terms of degeneracy and the breakdown of the social order. D.F. Malan’s Purified National Party articulated its concerns about dangers of miscegenation and degeneration among poor whites in terms of maintaining racial purity: “the failed poor white on his unhappily low standard of living can so easily

become the companion and roommate of the non-white” (cited in Brink 1990:287).³ Brutal and extreme expressions of racism on the part of poor white farmers may well have been a result of the need to exaggerate racial differences in order to reclaim white class status.

In the colonial mind, to lose sexual control was to degenerate to a primitive condition, where unrestrained sexuality was a form of madness: for those already classified as ‘primitive’ the medical model defined them as innately pathological; for whites who were supposedly civilized, the notion of ‘degeneracy’, coupled with the vocabulary of ‘miscegenation’ and ‘racial hygiene’, reflected anxieties about the ultimate form of madness - going ‘native’ (Gilman 1985a and 1985b; Torgovnick 1990).

Eugenics provided a statistical and biological basis for linking criminality to physique, and criminal physique to degeneracy, or ‘atavism’. The founder of criminal anthropology, Cesare Lombroso, was profoundly influential in connecting criminality and insanity to the primitive. In 1870, Lombroso claimed that the criminal is

an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals. Thus were explained anatomically the enormous jaws, high cheek bones, prominent superciliary arches, solitary lines in the palms, extreme size of the orbits, handle-shaped ears found in criminals, savages and apes, insensibility to pain, extremely acute sight, tattooing, excessive idleness, love of orgies, and the irresponsible craving of evil for its own sake...(cited in Gould 1981:124).⁴

³ ‘Poor white’ Afrikaners, especially rural Boers, were themselves subject to historically deep racial-class stereotypes. For example, in the mid-nineteenth century, ‘cultured Dutchmen of the Cape’ described ‘Transvaal Boers’ as “dirty, ignorant, and arrogant Savage[s]” (Thompson 1971:112).

⁴ The stereotype of ‘childishness’ attached to ‘primitive’ races was not left out of the equation. Lombroso insisted that “one who lives among the upper classes has no idea of the passion babies have for alcoholic liquor, but among the lower classes it is only too common a thing to see even suckling babes drink wine and liquors with wonderful delight” (cited in (continued...))

This definition of criminals as atavistic ‘primitives’ within the European race was not without its class and gender components. In her discussion on domestic petty theft, Jacklyn Cock cites Lombroso and Ferrero’s (1895) study of female criminals in Italy which stated that domestic servants were “badly paid, yet are given money, plate and other valuables to handle, which awake in them the *greed innate in every woman*” (cited in Cock 1980:69, emphasis hers). This study drew on V.M. Tarnowsky’s claim that most female criminals came from the servant class (ibid). Tarnowsky authored a very influential study (1888) of Russian prostitution (the female form of criminality), which involved detailed examinations of the prostitute’s physical characteristics as “signs [pointing] to the ‘primitive’ nature of the prostitute’s physiognomy” (Gilman 1985a:224). Lombroso, with his son-in-law, Guillaume Ferrero, followed directly in Tarnowsky’s footsteps in their studies. Gilman states: “Lombroso accepts Tarnowsky’s entire manner of seeing the prostitute [adding] one further subtext...he regards the anomalies of the prostitute’s labia as atavistic throwbacks to the Hottentot” (1985a:226). Examining stereotypes of women — servants, prostitutes and criminals (which become the same thing) — we find that not only do the characteristics attributed to these groups echo each other, but that we are brought back again to the trope of the primitive female - embodied in the image of the Hottentot/Bushman woman.

Brutishness, innate criminality and overdeveloped sexuality were all linked together in a cluster of characteristics marking the Bushman, the lower classes, women generally (and the ‘contagious classes’) as groups in need of control. When, in 1926, sergeant E. Schwarz

(...continued)

passion babies have for alcoholic liquor, but among the lower classes it is only too common a thing to see even suckling babes drink wine and liquors with wonderful delight” (cited in Gould 1981:121).

insisted to the Grootfontein Magistrate that “it was the duty of the state to protect its citizens” and “control the Bushmen” he offered as evidence for innate Bushman banditry the case of a Bushman, who

[when his wife] refused to have cohabitation with him stabbed her with a poison arrow into the forearm which caused the death of the woman after a few hours...

Implicit in Schwarz’s account is the idea that a lack of sexual control translates automatically into criminal inclinations. Schwarz continues his report:

But as well as the Bushman does not care for the lives of his own tribe, he does not care for the lives of white people or other natives...

In the mind of this officer, the solution in this case followed naturally enough from this sketch of Bushman debauchery: “as native labour is very scarce in this country, especially on farms, it cannot be understood why they cannot be trained as labourers” (SWAA A50/67, report from sgd. E. Schwarz to the Magistrate of Grootfontein, July 2, 1926).

iii) Animality and Childishness

Another physical characteristic linked to animality is the Bushman’s ‘paedomorphism’ (child-like stature), which translates easily into their ‘childish nature’. Important work has already been done on the political significance of this trope in the subjugation and exploitation of the Bushman, especially farm labourers (Gordon 1992a; Suzman 1997; Guenther 1980). However, the connection between the Bushman’s ‘childishness’ and their ‘animality’ has not been made explicit, and this makes it difficult to dismantle the theoretical edifice which defines the Bushmen as ‘sub-human’.

‘Primitives’ were defined as ‘child races’ according to the theory of recapitulation (developed in the nineteenth century by German biologist Ernst Haeckel), which held that an

individual passes through the same stages taken in the evolution of the species (Gould 1981:119). Thus, adults of 'inferior groups' corresponded (in physical and mental development) to the children of 'superior groups'. According to Raymond Dart, the Bushman's skull is,

exactly like the sort of form which the European child's head has at birth and it is the retention of child-like characteristics in adult physique, that characterizes the whole frame work of the Bushman...the face is like that of a child; the small body with its delicate limb-bones, the diminutive hands and feet, the tiny ears, their simple needs, their incessant playing and dancing...whatever the avenue of study - we draw from the Bushman, as it were from the eternal fountain of youth (cited in Dubow 1995:32).

By the 1920s this theory was abandoned in favour of neotony, developed by Dutch anatomist Louis Bolk, which turned recapitulation up-side-down; that is, he argued that the juvenile traits of ancestors develop so slowly that, in their descendants, the same traits become features of adults. If natural selection favours the retention of juvenile traits this explains why one finds that the features of juvenile apes more closely resemble human characteristics (Gould 1981:115-116, 119-122). Neotony obviously presented serious problems to racist programs justifying white paternalism on the grounds that 'child races' needed control since, according to the theory of neotony, 'child-races' are the most advanced. In the 1930s, South African anthropologist, Matthew Drennan, uncomfortable with the implications of neotony, attempted to revive recapitulation theory. He side-stepped the problem of highly neotonous Bushmen by arguing that contemporary Bushmen and proto-Bushmen represented the last stages of human evolution before breaking off from the evolutionary path of the white race - the Bushmen were an evolutionary dead-end and bound for extinction (Dubow 1995:49-51).

Genital anomalies continued to feature in the connection between childishness and animality. Raymond Dart's examination of Bushman genitalia (as indices of evolutionary

heritage) focused in great detail on yet subtler distinctions in the Bushmen's private parts: steatopygia comes in three grades, 'adult female', 'infantile female' and 'adult male' - the 'true' Bush type, possessed a 'pancake' type of rear end; penises are either 'horizontal', 'diagonal' or 'flaccid' - the 'true' Bush type is 'horizontal';⁵ finally, female genitalia were either of the 'wattle', 'butterfly' or 'reverse wattle' types - deviations from these types indicated racial hybridity (Dart 1937:118-226).⁶ In Dart's case the unique genital features of the Bushmen were evidence of an "infantile condition" and were another, very important "simian characteristic" (1937:220-221). George McCall Theal expressed the implicit connection between childishness and sexuality when he stated that the Bushman's "passions were those of an adult" but "his thoughts are no more lofty than those of the dullest *peasant's* child" (1910:15, emphasis mine).

The class allusion here is no accident. Victorian middle class society was characterized by a fairly strong ideology of sexual economy (especially after 1850 and largely due to the influence of Malthus' *Principle of Population*). According to this middle class sexual economy, poverty was the result of the laws of nature, or evidence of evolutionary failure. Linked to this notion was the view that poverty was the result of

⁵ Gordon notes that the "semi-erect penis of the Bushman was a distinctive racial characteristic" which came to characterize the 'real' Bushman since "with the admixture of Bantu blood, it began to droop" (Gordon 1992a:62). The view was restated by two white farmers I met in Gobabis.

⁶ Dart draws on Drennan and Drury's distinctions in the Bushwoman's labia minora outlined in 'The pudendal parts of the South African Bush race' (in the *Medical Journal of South Africa*), where the authors claim that the hypertrophic nymphae of the Bushwoman are an 'infantile' trait and that, despite the suggestion of a pronounced lumbar curve associated with steatopygia, the "lumbar curve of the skeleton, as measured by the lumbar index, is flatter than in most other races, and approximates to the simian condition".

‘individuals among the poor’ not exercising ‘moral restraint’, and so “those who did not submit sexual impulse to the governance of utilitarian economic motive could thus be seen as choosing to be poor” and, like savages, they were “slaves to their own wants and passions” (Stocking 1987:217).

iv) The Interaction of Gender, Race and Class

Race, gender and class are commonly set up as opposing or separate ways of explaining difference and understanding political asymmetries. However, if we treat race, class and gender as discrete ideological constructs and separate systems of subordination, we run into confusion when we try to address situations in which a group of people are subject to all three. It is no accident that we find class and gender allusions in descriptions of the Bushmen. One consequence of framing the issue in terms of separable systems of subordination is that each category — race, gender, and class — becomes essentialized. The view that tends to follow from this is that African working women confront the same race and class stereotypes as their menfolk and the same gender stereotypes as white women. Noticing that analogies cross-cut race, class and gender divisions does not explain how these systems of subordination inter-connect, nor how these subordinate categories get defined, and so it is difficult to examine the discursive politics which shape the status of a particular group — that is Ju/'hoan women — who confront simultaneous systems of subordination.⁷

Alternatively, on a more reductionist tactic, race, gender and class categories are

⁷ Consider, for example, Wiber's statement that “The !Kung San remain *locked along with women, juveniles and chimpanzees, into a category of more ‘natural’ things*” (1997:112, emphasis mine). The question that immediately comes to mind is: are the !Kung San not also women?

“continually juxtaposed, and one is made to serve as a surrogate for all” (Gould 1981:103; see also Brantlinger 1985:181-182). Reducing race (or gender) subordination to an alternative expression of class relationships neglects the important fact that in the colonial context (and even today), class is a *biologized* category, shot through with racial allusions. ‘Class’ does not denote a location in an economic system alone; in fact, the ‘lower classes’ (the working class and the peasantry) are swathed in layers of racialized and gendered stereotypes.

If, however, we recognize the ‘mutually constituting’ (see also Jordanova 1980:43; Wiber 1997:116-120) nature of gender, race and class systems of subordination, then racial stereotypes are seen as fundamentally gendered and gender stereotypes are seen as fundamentally racialized, and the same applies in the case of class. To get a picture of how these distinct categories interact to create stereotypes, consider the following examples:

In 1864, the German anatomists Carl Vogt described the ‘Negro’ in the following way:

By its rounded apex and less developed posterior lobe the Negro brain resembles that of our *children* and by the protuberance of the parietal lobe, that of our *females*...The grown up Negro partakes, as regards his intellectual faculties, of the nature of the *child*, the *female* and the *senile* white (cited in Gould 1981:103, emphasis mine).

Now consider the French founder of social psychology, Gustav Le Bon’s (1879) description of women:

In the most intelligent races, as among Parisians, there are a large number of women whose brains are closer in size to those of *gorillas* than the most developed male brains. This inferiority is so obvious that no one can contest it for a moment; only its degree is worth discussion. All psychologists...recognize today that they represent the most inferior forms of human evolution and that they are closer to *children* and *savages* than to an adult civilized male (cited in Gould 1981:105, emphasis mine).

‘Negroes’ (Africans) are described by reference to children, females, the mentally deficient

and apes;⁸ females (of all races) are described with reference to apes, children, and savages. The essentialized category 'Women' is constructed out of the discursive materials used to define Africans - and vice versa. Similarly, 'lower classes' were also described in terms of primitives and children. In the South African context, R.W. Wilcocks, one of the leading members of the Carnegie Commission (established in 1928-32 to investigate the poor white problem) adopted a psychological explanation for 'poor whitism'. In an attempt to take the middle ground in the nature and nurture debate of the time, he adopted, in part, American eugenicist C.B. Davenport's claim that:

'nomadism' or the 'wandering instinct' was a sex-linked recessive trait associated with primitive races and that this trait was normally inhibited in mentally sound, intelligent adults (Dubow 1995:227).

To avoid a biologically-determined conclusion for the innate inferiority of poor white Afrikaners, Wilcocks opted for an explanation for 'poor whitism' which could accommodate economic factors and suggested that "there must be some hereditary quality or combination of qualities which, given the right economic conditions, would trigger the 'trek spirit'" (ibid). Here we have reference to sex, children and primitives to describe an Afrikaner class. The irony of associating Afrikaner class inferiority with a nomadic 'trek spirit' is especially striking when we consider the degree to which Bushmen are defined as racially inferior -- even by Afrikaner farmers -- on the basis of their nomadic 'instincts'.⁹

⁸ The ape stereotype of the Bushman has already been discussed, and of course, the Bushmen are not the only ape-men in racist colonial discourse. Van Onselen cites an editorial in 1897 which read: "In South Africa in general the Kaffir is a mere naked savage, with not much more intelligence than a baboon, and not much more ambition." Another editorial in 1912 stated: "If the Kaffir is brother to anything...it is to the anthropoid ape" (1982:40).

⁹ Dubow notes that 'degeneracy' became a central topic of concern "During the inter-
(continued...)"

The trope of the primitive justified gender subordination at the same time and in the same way that it justified class and racial subordination. The definition of women as the 'primitive' sex -- as windows to a primitive past, or 'living fossils' -- naturalized patriarchal political programs. For example, in 1864 Carl Vogt argued:

Just as, in respect of morals, woman is the conservatory of old customs and usages, of traditions, legends and religion; so in the material world she preserves primitive forms, which but slowly yield to civilization. We are justified in saying, that it is easier to overthrow a government by revolution, than alter the arrangements of the kitchen...In the same manner woman preserves, in the formation of the head, the earliest stages from which the race or tribe has been developed, or into which it has relapsed. Hence, then, is partly explained the fact, that the inequality of the sexes increases with the progress of civilization (cited in Haller and Haller 1974:56).

Race, class and gender categories were inter-connected and overdetermined in part because gender and gender roles were implicated in the formation of the evolutionary map outlining the natural position of 'lower' races and classes. According to some evolutionary schemes, racial groups were themselves gendered. For example, in Raymond Dart's diffusionist account of Bushmen racial evolution, the global typological map is divided by gender: Armenoid facial types are 'gerontomorphic' (adult/masculine) and are associated with Boskop proto-Bushmen, while Mediterranean and Mongolian facial types are pedomorphic (child-like/feminine) and are associated with Bush proto-Bushmen (193-192). Dart concluded that racial types were also sex-linked:

The correlational analysis of head and face revealed an unexpected linkage of race and sex. The linkage of the Boskop type to the male sex and the Bush type to the female sex is outstanding; there is also evidence of the linkage of the gerontomorphic

(...continued)

war years" because "the visible poverty of 'poor whites' became a major campaign issue for the developing Afrikaner nationalist movement...But, given the overwhelming prerogative to maintain white prestige as a whole, any association between white poverty and Afrikaner racial incapacity was potentially highly divisive" (1995:166).

Armenoid with the Boskop type to the male sex and of the linkage of the pedomorphic Mediterranean and Mongolian with the Bush type to the female sex (ibid:228).

Dart is noting an unsurprising tautology that female Bushmen looked like racial groups that looked 'feminine', and male Bushmen looked like racial groups that looked 'masculine' - yet such tautological reasoning characterized scientific racism and eugenics.

Considering the extent to which gender is implicated in the formation of 'scientific racism' and especially in the racist ideologies shaping class relationships in southern Africa, and considering the centrality of 'femaleness' in definitions of 'primitive', it is surprising that few scholars examining stereotypes of 'quintessentially primitive' Bushmen have had much to say about Bushman women. But after being buried under so many metaphors of 'inferiority' it should be no surprise that in the general shift, after the Second World War, toward a more romanticized definition of the Bushman, one sees few visible female images of a Noble Savage.

v) Noble Hunters and Unnotable Gatherers

Gordon (1992a) and Guenther (1980) both describe how differing agendas of the colonial class, at different times, shaped and modified definitions of the Bushmen by reference to two dichotomous stereotypes: the Bushmen as 'Brutal Savages' (Bandits) on the one hand, and the Bushmen as 'Noble Savages' (Harmless People) on the other. According to both models, the 'real' Bushman is defined as the primitive 'wild' one. The ethnic and cultural 'authenticity' of the Bushmen was pegged to their wildness, animality and primitive status. The only significant shift in the style of reasoning was that 'wild' and 'primitive' were redescribed in a 'positive' light. When 'wild' was redescribed as 'innocent' and 'noble' there

followed more earnest efforts to 'save' this 'dying race' -- in game reserves as human fauna (Gordon 1992a:160-167) -- yet the only Bushmen who were worth saving were the genuine 'children of nature'; that is, those Bushmen who conformed to Western definitions of Bushmanness (Gordon 1992a; White 1995).

The fact that the romantic view of the Noble Savage Bushman is oppressive and exploitative in its own way is clear from the work done by others in the field (see for example Gordon 1992a, 1997; White 1995; Suzman 1997). However, there is also a gendered dimension of this stereotype which is rarely commented on in examinations of how the Ju/'hoansi are objectified and exploited. The romanticized view of the Bushman as Noble Savage is linked to the image of Man the Hunter. Thus, the 'positive' (or at least sympathetic) image of the Bushman is a profoundly gendered one, and the romantic re-description refers to the male Bushman.

In her book *Erect Men, Undulating Women* (1997), Melanie Wiber traces the ways that the academic and popular-academic discourse on Man the Hunter reflected and reinforced androcentric views of human evolution and the development of culture. She argues that narratives about human evolution, particularly from the 1950s on, began to focus more narrowly on a hunting way of life:

Hunting was assumed to be both the most important adaptive behavioural change in the history of human evolution and the causal factor in a unitary cultural lifestyle which did not vary in any significant way across boundaries of space or time (1997:129).

Thus a central assumption in the Man the Hunter model -- what Wiber calls the 'third *idée fixe*' of the Sherwood Washburn school of physical anthropology -- is that "the transformation from nature to culture is primarily a male accomplishment" (1997:31). Wiber

herself carefully traces the various trajectories of debates and shifts in this discourse.

Although very important challenges and revisions of the Man the Hunter model were advanced by feminists in the field (see Dahlberg et al 1981; Slocum 1975; Haraway 1988; Zihlman 1981), the Man the Hunter model, in an exaggerated form, remains firmly fixed in the popular imagination both in the West and in the Omaheke.

Elizabeth Marshall Thomas' (1958) ethnography supplies a colourful, very humanistic account of Ju/'hoan life in the Kalahari in the 1950s, and is unique in its attention to the details of personal relationships and Ju/'hoan individuality. However, here, too, we find Ju/'hoan women represented primarily as a physical presence: the character and competence (or incompetence), leadership, hunting and oratory skill of the men are described in great detail; physical features ('pretty', 'beautiful', 'ugly') are the defining features of the women. One woman, 'Beautiful Unngka', is worthy of extended discussion because of her desirability as a wife. She is described as "a girl of remarkable self-possession and composure" when she is abducted by a "masculine, forceful" admirer, however, this 'composure' turns into "shrewishness", "maliciousness" and pride when she insists on retaining her independence (1958:168-171).

Marjorie Shostak (1981) supplies one of the few examples of a 'Noble Savage'-style female protagonist. Shostak foregrounds women's lives and experiences and focuses on their personal strength, independence and influence in their communities, and is therefore a valuable counter-point to dominant images of inert, passive Ju/'hoan women. However, the fact that Shostak's feminized picture of a 'harmless', 'noble' Bushmen did not achieve nearly the same iconographic status as Man the Hunter is revealing of the way in which the stigma

of femaleness on Ju/'hoan women is difficult to ennoble.¹⁰

During discussions I had with farmers in the Omaheke, Ju/'hoan women were featured, at the farmer's initiative, only when reproduction, morality (or lack thereof) and sexuality were being discussed. The Ju/'hoan woman is tenaciously fixed to her natural/biological/animal functions. 'Woman the Gatherer' enjoyed none of the same 'elevations' in popular iconography, but remained a childish, over-sexed animal - for breeding, prostitution and rape. She is still an 'ignoble', pre-Man-the-Hunter primitive. This is perhaps less surprising in light of the gendered nature of farm work and the processes of proletarianization, and thus of the 'civilizing' effects of colonization, within the Omaheke. But what I think the preceding discussion of scientific racism suggests is that the ignoble forms of primitiveness -- animality, criminality, and childishness -- so inextricably involve femaleness that the 'Bushwoman' could not be easily disentangled from it.

¹⁰ Although Shostak's work is clearly — and self-consciously (1981:5) — a product of concerns raised by the Women's Movement in the 1970s, the feminist agenda of her ethnography may make it more vulnerable to dismissal. Gordon claims that *Nisa*'s success was owed to 1) the success of John Marshall's film, *N!ae* 2) the fashionability of ethnographies that 'paternalistically' 'speak for' the 'Other', and 3) the fact that it appealed to middle-class fantasies and concerns (1997:124). First, it is difficult to establish that the success of a female ethnographer is owed to the prior success of a male colleague. Second, responding to the call of postmodern critics for greater 'polyvocality' and a greater recognition of importance of integrating the 'voices of the people' in the text will leave any ethnographer open to the charge of 'paternalistically speaking for' their subjects (interestingly, this criticism is applied despite the fact that Shostak's ethnography was dominated by 'Nisa's' own voice). Finally, ethnographies are by their nature a genre of writing monopolized by members of those classes in a position to be educated and well-travelled, and will therefore most likely appeal to an educated audience. Interestingly, Gordon describes other ethnographies, which are arguably equally 'bourgeois', as 'elegant'.

vi) *From Scientific Racism to Commodity Racism*

The 'real' Bushmen were thought worth preserving because they held significant cultural and scientific value. 'Living fossils' and 'scientific specimens' could shed light on the 'civilized condition'. Laurens van der Post was one of the first romanticists to clearly express this particular desire for the existence of a Bushman 'Noble Savage':

Perhaps this life of ours, which begins as a quest of the child for the man, and ends as a journey by the man for the child, needs a clear image of some man-child, like the Bushman, wherein the two are firmly and lovingly joined in order that our confused hearts may stay at the centre of their brief round of departure and return (1958:13).

The cultural and scientific value of the Bushman image is becoming increasingly commoditized in late twentieth century capitalism, where the old-style pseudo-scientific, voyeuristic event of the exhibit is broadened and reformulated as a tourist attraction for post-colonial 'amateur anthropologists'. As Gordon notes in his study of the 1925-26 Denver Expedition to the Kalahari

Part of the success of the marketing of the bushmen as pristine people must be attributed to their successful popular-anthropology role as spectacle (i.e. in mass-produced photographs and public exhibitions). Spectacles such as these are part of the shift from scientific to commodity racism (1997:133).

That the tropes about Bushman primitivity and animality are still relevant and powerfully present today is illustrated by an article entitled 'The Search for Authenticity' in *The Nation* (October 1997) examining the pros and cons of ecotourism in Africa. After describing his disappointment at failing to find 'authentic' Bushmen at the Kagga Kamma site in South Africa, where the Bushmen were wearing "Mets baseball caps and Nikes", the author goes on to describe his journey to find 'real' Bushmen:

My search for authentic Bushmen finally took me to the northern extremity of the Kalahari Desert, near the Tsolilo Hills, where Sir Laurens van der Post had the encounter with the last wild Bushmen immortalized in his book *The Lost World of the*

Kalahari. Like Sir Laurens van der Post and many others before me, I had hoped to make some contact with “*the wild Bushmen in all of us*” - the free spirit that once resided in all men and that all men still hanker for; the way we were, *uncomplicated, uncluttered, at peace*. I’d been told that the Ju’wasi Bushman in this desolate outpost [which turns out to be Tsum!kwe] were as close as I would get, and this turned out to be true (Boynton 1997:19, emphasis mine).

As this passage reveals, Boynton, like many colonial and neo-colonial writers, academics and administrators before him, is more interested in seeing himself in the Ju’hoansi than in seeing the Ju’hoansi themselves. Thus, predictably, his description of the Ju’hoansi is more a reflection of the use the image of the Bushman is meant to serve -- that is, as a ‘primitive’ to be held up against ‘modern man’ -- than what he actually found in the field. What is particularly alarming about this continuing trend of objectification from colonial to neo-colonial Bushmanology is that this use-value of the Bushmen is today being reformulated to serve a profit-driven tourism industry; this self-oriented objectification of the ‘Bushmen’ is now linked to an industry that profits from keeping the Ju’hoansi silent when it comes to defining their own ethnic identity. The manipulators of Western discourse remain the agents empowered to ascertain who is a ‘real’ and ‘authentic’ Bushman.

Continuing in the tradition of colonial discourse, Boynton pegs the ‘authenticity’ of these Bushmen to their animality:

Any doubts I had about their authenticity were obliterated the day I went hunting with the village elder, a wiry man in his late 60s named Old Kaece...They say a true Bushman twangs with the bush and watching Old Kaece *sniffing and twitching and sensing everything around him*, I understood what they mean...*it was as if he was a part of the natural world himself* (1997:19, emphasis mine).

Old Kaece’s ethnic authenticity derives from what Boynton describes as distinctly animal movements and activities; his authenticity was proven by a perceived blurring of the distinction between ‘Man’ and ‘Nature’. Thus, Boynton laments that “the last of the real

Bushmen, the Ju/'wasi, are unlikely to survive in any coherent form" because they will "drift away to towns and cities in the south, find jobs, intermarry and disappear into the new multicultural Africa" (1997:20).

In his ethnographic study of the Kagga Kamma Bushman settlement in the Western Cape, Hylton White (1995) describes how the commoditization of 'Bushman culture' is generated out of economic necessity on the part of impoverished Bushmen and perpetuated by the Bushman's inability to control the discourse that traps them into exploitative relationships with the agents of the tourism industry: the Bushmen at Kagga Kamma are not paid wages for the same reason some of the farmers in the Omaheke give for not paying their Ju/'hoan workers - Bushmen are too primitive to handle money, and besides, 'real' Bushmen have no need for it (White 1995:42). Also like the Bushmen of Kagga Kamma, in order to be entitled a share in the financial, technological and political life of Namibian society the Ju/'hoansi of the Omaheke are expected to forgo any role in the construction of their own cultural identity. Instead, they are expected to assume the cultural identity of the archetypal model of 'primitive', which is tied to the lack of all things modern and, thereby, to their underclass status.

Farmers in Namibia, and the Omaheke, are presently adapting to changing economic conditions by diversifying into the tourism industry, setting up guest ranches, game farms and hunting farms. A recent brochure for Bona Safaris of Gobabis provides the following description of the Omaheke Bushmen for potential customers:

Amid these desolate expanses [of the pristine Kalahari] the Bushman clans have wandered for thousands of years...This race of people is ancient - as shown in their ability to store fat reserves in their buttocks, to be used when food is scarce. Bushmen live on game and wild fruit. They are still mainly hunters and gatherers...They are unable to comprehend what happens beyond their world. Bushmen live in compete

harmony with their desert which they never defy. Only civilized people attempt to change their environment and leave their imprint on it.

According to the itinerary, tourists will visit -- not the pristine Kalahari -- but a lion *farm*, a leopard *farm* and an ostrich *farm*. This tour is careful to perpetuate a mythical image of the hunting and gathering Bushman, and this requires that the real Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke -- the farm workers and domestic servants -- remain invisible. One elderly Ju/'hoan man I became acquainted with during my field work was removed from a resettlement camp and brought to a lion farm, where he traded in his old rags for a loin cloth and was put to work showing tourists various bushcrafts. I had collected a life history from him before he left the resettlement camp - he had been a farm worker from the time he was a child.

In the preceding sections, I have explored features of the central trope which has come to define the Ju/'hoansi generally, and Ju/'hoan women in particular. White (1995) describes how oppressive and exploitative conditions develop out of the ways Bushmen are coerced into fulfilling the fantasies of the Western imagination by acting out the role designated to them - by being trapped in a trope. But the problem assumes a more intimate dimension when we examine how these images situate and define Ju/'hoan women. In the sections that follow, I will consider what happens when women who have been defined in terms of animalistic sexuality are assigned a place within a racialized and gendered political and economic order. This will then position us to examine, in the chapters to come, the details of their lives in the contemporary Omaheke.

Part Two: Politics and Sexuality

The perceived animalistic sexuality of Ju/'hoan women was a central and historically

deep trope in terms of which they were, and are, understood. I will now examine some of the many ways in which this trope plays itself out in defining and limiting the social 'spaces' permitted to Bushmen women in particular and to African women generally. My concern here will be only with inter-ethnic relationships between Ju/'hoan women and non-Ju/'hoan men. Intra-ethnic relationships between Ju/'hoan men and women will be considered in a later chapter. What follows is, then, a macro-level survey of the territory carved out, within a highly gendered and racist political and economic order, for underclass women who have been defined by their 'primitive' sexuality. Attention will be given to the political meaning of rape, prostitution and concubinage, as these both produce and are produced by the political invisibility of Ju/'hoan women.

In sections i) and ii) I discuss rape as a means of policing the boundaries of the social territory assigned to Ju/'hoan women; I use schools to illustrate the role of sexuality and reproduction in the exclusion of Ju/'hoan women from public spaces. In section iii) I discuss how prostitution, concubinage, and domestic service blur together to define, in sexual terms, the social territory set aside for Ju/'hoan women within the Omaheke economy. Then, in iv), I briefly discuss the view of Ju/'hoan women as breeders - as domesticated sexual animals.

i) Rape and Animality

Gordon notes that during the early years of white settlement in South West Africa, police 'control' took extreme and brutal forms, which were often justified on the grounds that the Bushmen were sub-human. In this context, Gordon observes: "although [the police] often dehumanized the Bushmen they were not averse to elevating them to human status in order to

commit the occasional rape” (1992a:106).¹¹ Gordon’s bitter irony is perhaps misplaced in this case. We get a better understanding of sexual violence and sexual exploitation, as they are directed at Ju/’hoan women, by seeing how rape and exploitation are tied to the subversion of their claim to humanity, rather than as a brutal acknowledgment of their humanity. Sexual violence is best understood as a means of denying humanity, rather than as a cruel and momentary elevation to human status. Rather than see sexual violence as a mere reflection, or consequence, of political oppression, it should be seen as an integral instrument in the establishment and maintenance of political asymmetries (contra Gordon 1992a).

On Saturday May 31, 1997 an eighteen year old female Kxoe student was attacked and almost raped in a girl’s school hostel by two male Mbukushu students. Two other female students were awakened by her screams and came to her aid. When the Mbukushu boys saw that the two students assisting their victim were themselves Kxoe, they “unleashed a volley of insults” at the Kxoe chief, Kippie George, declaring “you Bushmen will never have a headman, you are just dogs.” The victim declined to lay charges with the police, citing her friends’ experiences with fruitless attempts to lay charges against their attackers. (Chris Inambao *Namibian* June 5, 1997).

This incident might have passed unnoticed by the media had it not been for well-publicized escalating tensions between chief Kippie George and Mbukushu chief Erwin Mbambo. The Kxoe community is now battling to prevent the removal of its ecotourism projects at Popa Falls to make way for the government’s expansion of the Divundu

¹¹ Ju/’hoan women were not only subject to sexual violence at the hands of male colonial agents; there were reports of “forceful persuasion” by African men charged with overseeing Bushman communities in the territory (SWAA A50/67 Native Commissioner, Runtu, to the Chief Native Commissioner, August 29, 1950).

Rehabilitation Centre. It is widely agreed that the eviction of the Kxoe ecotourism project is a sign of the government's support for chief Mbambo's expansionist intentions to subordinate the Kxoe. The Kxoe have launched a high court action (January 1998) to block these plans, and, *inter alia*: to reverse a (May 1997) position taken by deputy Ministers demoting chief Kippie George and to reverse a government decision (May 1997) requiring chief Kippie George to recognize chief Mbambo as his superior, from whom he must seek approval for land allocation and — through unilateral actions on chief Mbambo's part — collect his government pay cheque (*Namibian* June 13, 1997; July 16, 1997; January 6, 1998).¹²

Although the *Namibian's* report attributes the attempted rape to a lack of parental control and alcohol abuse among the youth — which are no doubt important factors — the overtly political character of this rape attempt was obvious. It led to a two day boycott of the school by the Kxoe students. This incident highlights the ways in which sexual violence and exploitation can have political meaning (“you Bushmen will never have a headman”) and are an effective means of degrading and oppressing political opponents - linked, often explicitly, to demoting subordinate groups to a sub-human status (“you are just dogs”). The incident also illustrates how political subjugation and economic subordination are advanced and actualized through sexual violence and exploitation - a point which is already well recognized in the broader context of the Namibian liberation struggle (see Cleaver and Wallace 1990; Allison 1986).

Rape is an expression of the articulation of racial/ethnic and gender oppression. As

¹² Chief George also noted that the government did not honour its promise to increase his monthly salary from N\$297 to N\$1,000, which is the amount paid to non-San chiefs. Furthermore, San chiefs in Etosha, Tsum!kwe, Haikom, Mariental, and the Omaheke are not paid a salary at all (*The Namibian* June 13, 1997).

Angela Davis notes:

Rape bears a direct relationship to all of the existing power structures in a given society. This relationship is not a simple, mechanical one, but rather involves complex structures reflecting the interconnectedness of race, gender and class oppression that characterizes a society (1984:47).

In her discussion of rape as a weapon of war, Claudia Card describes the function and social meaning of rape in both civilian and martial contexts: “If there is one set of fundamental functions of rape, civilian or martial, it is to display, communicate, and produce or maintain *dominance*, which is both enjoyed for its own sake and used for such ulterior ends as exploitation, expulsion, dispersion, murder” (1996:3).

Colonial discourse defined ‘native’ women, and especially *Bushman* women, as existing in a ‘naturally’ sexually depraved state, and they were therefore not entitled to state patriarchal protection (which was reserved for white women). This is clear from an example provided by an inquest into the death of a Bushman woman, who was beaten to death in 1948 when she tried to prevent her son-in-law from beating her daughter. When reviewing the case, the Chief Native Commissioner suggested more efficient ways of handling crimes “in which *only* Bushmen are involved”. Cases “of a less serious nature...such as the rape of a Bushwoman [or any native woman]...need not be reported for police investigation but may be disposed summarily by the Native Commissioner...” It almost went without saying that any case of rape involving a European woman “should be reported immediately” (SWAA A528, memo to the Attorney-General, June 15, 1948).¹³ Racial asymmetries segregating women into violable and non-violable classes are key to systems of racial oppression and class

¹³ The Attorney-General rejected these suggestions, but they likely reflected the way episodes of sexual violence against Ju/'hoan women were actually handled; they certainly reflect the historical and contemporary attitudes toward Ju/'hoan women generally.

exploitation.¹⁴

These views about Bushman sexuality (as ‘animalistic’ and amoral) made it possible for a farm school teacher to tell me about a recent incident in which a young Ju/’hoan girl was raped by two school boys (both Ju/’hoan-Nama), all the while insisting, with sincere concern, that she “wasn’t hurt”, and so the boys need not be punished. The sexualized trope of ‘primitives’ contributes to the form racial oppression takes, especially given that, according the racist ideologies, promiscuity is the norm in primitive societies. No form of sexual encounter with a Ju/’hoan woman will fully count as rape, and they can therefore be violated with impunity. Farmers and school teachers I spoke to in the Omaheke consistently insisted that Bushmen have sex openly and indiscriminately and in front of their children, thereby teaching their children to be sexually and morally ‘loose’: this is why, in their view, ‘Bushgirls’ are always so ‘willing’ to have sex, get pregnant and leave school so young.

ii) Sexual Pass Laws

The sexual stigmatization of a racially identified group of women facilitates more than one form of systematic control. The first is the widely noted form of medicalized regulation (van Heyningen 1983; Hyam 1986a; Walker 1990a; Stoler 1991; Gilman 1985a and b). In 1938 the South West African Administration enacted a regulation designed to address the problem of widespread venereal disease, requiring every native woman in Windhoek to undergo a compulsory medical examination every six months, unless she was

¹⁴ Genovese describes a similar situation in antebellum America: Rape meant, by definition, rape of a white woman, for no such crime as rape of a black woman existed at law. Even when a black man sexually attacked a black woman, he could only be punished by his master (1972:33).

living with a husband to whom she was legally married (Social Sciences Division/Legal Assistance Centre 1996b:16). Marion Wallace argues that the imposition of compulsory examinations in 1938 was the Administration's response to the 'threat' that the mobility of African women represented, and states:

Fears of black - in particular female - sexuality formed part of a shifting web of ideas which meshed together the perceived necessity to secure labour with that to control 'morality', infectious disease and space in an urban context. Thus, one of the focuses of official concern during this period was the 'single woman' in the location who, as in other urban areas of Africa, was painted as resisting entry to formal-sector employment through brewing beer, living 'immorally' and communicating disease...[this thinking] interlocked with local colonial ideas, which represented Namibia's black population as 'indolent' and 'degenerate' (1998:82-83).

This regulation echoes the nineteenth century Contagious Disease Acts in Britain and South Africa, which subjected *known prostitutes* (of any colour) to compulsory medical exams (Hyam 1986a; van Heyningen 1983). The fact that a similar regulation would surface in South West Africa seventy years later, with its scope broadened to include *any single native woman*, reflects the politically-driven conflation of different categories of people for the purposes of domination: "the colonial mentality which sees 'natives' as needing control is easily transferred to 'women' - but women as exemplified by the caste of the prostitute" (Gilman, 1985a:237).

A second form of control brings us back to the issue with which we started, and which is generated out of a system of race and class hierarchies marking women as sexually violable. The state's institutionalized control over the movement of the native population — the pass law system — was augmented and shadowed by an informal system of geographical control through sexual violence. A number of Ju/'hoan women I spoke to mentioned that it is only very recently that they have felt free to leave the farm and go to town as often as their

menfolk (on weekends with permission, or when the farmer takes them). It should be noted that Ju/'hoan women were not subject to the pass law system, or at least not as rigidly as other members of the rural underclass. The reason for their restricted movement has to do with the threat of sexual violence. One woman told me "we didn't go to town, it's only nowadays that we go to town. The young girls don't like the problems - like what the young men will do to them." This fear is not without foundation. Women, especially Ju/'hoan women and girls in the township of Epako and in the village 'locations' are at an extremely high risk for rape.¹⁵ Three rapes I was given details about all occurred in the urban or village areas. Here, assaults on the young Ju/'hoan women are commonly associated with (illicit) socializing at the 'tombos' (shebeens), and so one often hears the question asked "but what were those girls doing in such a place?"¹⁶ This rhetorical question reflects a general social sanction by which female conduct and movement are 'policed' by the threat of sexual assault.

Susan Brownmiller suggests:

¹⁵ The women I spoke to expressed their awareness of the threat of rape as it affected their mobility more in terms of past situations, such as during the height of the war when there was a more active military presence. However, statistics seem to suggest that rape is increasing in Namibia. Studies have found that reported rape cases in 1988 were 352, rising to 384 in 1989 to 419 in 1990 to 445 in 1991 and to 741 in 1994. It is estimated that only 1 in 20 cases are reported. These same studies suggest that, based on estimated rates, one woman in Namibia is raped "each hour of the day, each day of the year" (Hubbard 1991:2,6; Tapscott and Hubbard 1991:4; *Namibian*, special supplement, July 11, 1997). It is difficult to determine whether these statistics indicate an actual increase in rapes, or an increase in reportage. However, the brutality of many of the rapes that have been reported (especially rapes of toddlers and infants) would suggest that violence against women and children at least increasing in intensity.

¹⁶ The attitude that women 'ask for' sexual violence is still disturbingly prevalent. Members of Women's Solidarity and *Sister Namibia* took the Woman/Child Abuse Centre to task for being reluctant to assist rape victims who had "attended disco's" or walked alone at night (*Sister Namibia* 1996:10).

A world without rapists would be a world in which women moved freely without fear of men. That some men rape provides a sufficient threat to keep all women in a constant state of intimidation, forever conscious of the knowledge that the biological tool must be held in awe for it may turn to weapon with swiftness borne of harmful intent (1975:209).

It is widely recognized that rape is a form of control (especially of women's conduct and wardrobe), but in the Namibian context, its geographical aspects resonate with the ghosts of brutal and racist systems for controlling mobility. Rape functions here as a sexual pass system, carving up the social geography and marking public territory as a 'male' domain. This sexual pass law is quite effective against Ju/'hoan women, who are already marked for sexual service by their 'primitive' sexuality, and are therefore largely believed not to 'feel' violated, and who, as Bushmen, are sceptical about the concern of the legal system and so are unlikely lay charges. It is at this point of geographical regulation and control that we find sexual assault, sexual extortion and harassment coming together to lock Namibian women generally out of the public world.

Other and subtler forms of control are facilitated by the sexual stigmatization of Ju/'hoan women. It is unfortunate that the clearest example of such control is in the case of the educational institutions. The problem of sexual extortion, harassment and rape is widespread in the Omaheke and many informants I spoke to pointed, as a major culprit, to a school associated with a resettlement camp with a high concentration of Ju/'hoansi residents. As more female students, San and non-San, are assaulted in schools, they become educationally marginalized and the already prevalent notion that learning is not for females is brutally enforced. However, it is not only out-right assault that serves this function - all forms of sexual exploitation do. During a group interview at Otjiuanebo, near Otjinene, a young woman told an Oxfam researcher:

Most of the time we are in a dilemma. We are here with neither food nor proper accommodation. It is either the community around or the teachers who accommodate and feed us...We end up begging from people. Most of them take advantage of our situation and demand to have sex with us (Kisopia:1996:36).

Another young woman stated:

Here in the centre some of the teachers accommodate some of us. Unfortunately they also demand to sex from us. Some of them have more than three girlfriends among the students (ibid).¹⁷

Unfortunately, although the general problem of sexual exploitation and violence in the schools has come to public attention and is now widely criticized in the media, cases of sexual violence and exploitation of *Ju'hoan* girls are still not defined as problems (as the case of the young *Ju'hoan* school girl who "wasn't hurt" testifies).

I spoke with a young (17 year old) *Ju'hoan-Nama* woman who had been forced to drop out of school because she became pregnant. I asked her if it was possible for her to return to school if her mother would agree to look after her child, and she said:

The principal doesn't want it. Girls get pregnant but they wait until the baby is almost born before they leave school. They don't ask the boys to leave. It's only the girls who leave school.

The *Ju'hoansi* themselves suggest a fairly pragmatic solution to the problem of how to keep their pregnant daughters in school. One woman's suggestion, should this happen with her daughter, was fairly typical:

If when she grows up it happens to her then maybe it is possible for her to leave the child at home for somebody else to look after and then she can finish her schooling.

The young *Ju'hoan* women I met who had become pregnant at school were not stigmatized

¹⁷ The ethnicity of these informants was not specified, however, the issue of sexual marginalization in the schools is widespread and affects young women and girls of every ethnic group.

by their kin group, and there were strong expectations of paternal support - unless the father happened to be a non-Ju/'hoan, in which case it was generally recognized that these expectations would be disappointed. Accompanying these paternal expectations is a fairly communal sense of child-rearing responsibilities. When discussion turned to the situation of young women who got pregnant at school, it was generally described in terms of regret over the fact that she had 'lost her schooling' because of the unfortunate attitude of school administrators. As young women get locked out of educational opportunities because of pregnancy, the attitude that women's reproductive roles are completely incompatible with public life gets perpetuated and reinforced.

iii) Women's Place: Sexual Service and Domestic Service

The underclass status assigned to Ju/'hoan women in the Omaheke today, in virtue of their sexuality, is not atypical of what now is, and historically has been, assigned to San women throughout Namibia. The socio-economic territory allotted them has three sub-regions -- prostitution, concubinage, and domestic service -- but the borders between these regions are so blurred by the trope of Bushmen animal sexuality that it is difficult to locate any clear boundaries between them.

As the migrant labour system encouraged male proletarianization, many rural African women became impoverished, marginalized, and often abandoned and had little choice but to engage in beer-brewing and prostitution to survive. Thus, their own survival and resistance strategies publically linked African women to 'deviant' sexuality (Brink 1990). There has been some important work done on the migrant labour system's impact on the gender and household relations of the communities from which migrant labour was drawn (see Murray

1981 and Hishongwa 1992). However, less has been said about the way this system affected gender and household relations on the farms where migrant labourers were assigned.

Although a few farmers related to me how they smuggled the wives of their Ovambo contract workers onto their farms, the more common practice was for contract workers to enter into marriage-like, or *liefmeid* (literally 'love-servant') arrangements with Ju/'hoan women for the tenure of their contracts. These arrangements rarely involved the exchange of traditional Ju/'hoan marriage gifts (*kamasi*), bridewealth or any form of public/ceremonial recognition or negotiation. They were (and are) primarily informal, 'live-in' arrangements (see also Ramphele 1993:78). Such temporary liaisons left many Ju/'hoan women vulnerable to abandonment, poverty and isolation. Some Ju/'hoan women related that Ju/'hoan 'wives' of Ovambo contract workers were usually compelled to stay on a farm when her kin left to seek work on another farm, because she was 'married'. Once her Ovambo husband left for his own home in Ovamboland, she was on her own to locate her kin again (having no independent access to employment on the farm), and often to raise the child (or children) of her Ovambo husband by herself. Although marrying an Ovambo man is considered materially advantageous, many Ju/'hoan women I spoke with insisted that doing so is very risky because "he will only leave you with the children to struggle and go home to Ovamboland." Beyond introducing an ethnically-based labour hierarchy in farm politics, the presence of contract workers also introduced an inter-ethnic dimension in the gender politics of Ju/'hoan farm residents. This practice also enables many farmers to substantiate their view that Ju/'hoan women exist primarily for sexual service.

We can return again to the politically volatile Western Caprivi for a glaring example of the historical legacy of the sexual side of political disempowerment and economic

marginalization. An article in the *Namibian*, entitled “Caprivi’s teen ‘sex slaves’: poverty producing numerous child-brides” (June 6, 1997) describes a situation that is also widespread among the poorer Ju/’hoansi in the Omaheke: “poverty is forcing young Kxoe girls to give their bodies away for money and other material benefits”. Here, girls as young as eleven years old are being taken as ‘brides’ by non-Kxoe men, usually migrant workers. In addition to being a way of surviving in conditions of extreme poverty, sexual service is also an effect of social expectations and demands: there is a market for sexual service, and since San girls are ‘natural’ servants, they are expected to meet the demand. When a trend of sexual exploitation as a form of survival is entrenched, it becomes a self-perpetuating system. One researcher in the Caprivi stated that “some parents have come to me complaining that their children are not being paid after having sex with certain people” (ibid).

The same situation is also found in the poorer areas of the Omaheke region, such as the villages in the communal areas and on resettlement camps. A number of resettlement camp residents, during a group discussion, described how Ovambo men, working temporarily in the camp to build houses, gave Ju/’hoan girls food, and “bought them things which they needed, like shoes or dresses.” Young Ju/’hoan girls adopt the role of temporary wife -- to provide domestic and sexual service -- in exchange for food and money:

They will just give them fifty cents to go drink beer. The money which they get from the Ovambo men is just fifty cents and then they buy some beer to drink. It’s the only money he gives her and it’s the beer which the Ovambo people make for themselves. They sell it to other people to drink. Also he goes to the garden to get vegetables to give her.¹⁸

¹⁸ The Ju/’hoan women in the resettlement camp work in the communal garden in return for shelter and drought relief (although I was told by the Senior Chief Control Officer at the Omaheke Ministry of Regional and Local Government that the resettlement camps were not
(continued...)

Shortly before I arrived, an Oxfam researcher, Peter Kisopia, also noted the problem on this same resettlement camp, and its consequences:

The people themselves expressed that since 1995, when the builders from the development Brigade Corporation came to construct houses for the families on the farm, co-operation started going down. The reason was that the construction workers offered money to the Bushmen women [to stay] with them as their wives. This caused a great division among the people such that they no longer meet to discuss anything seriously. People no longer have time for each other. The relationship between men and women has gone so bad that it is quite difficult to unite the people unless the issue is resolved. What has made it worse is the fact that the construction workers introduced beer brewing on the farm (1996:48).

By the time I was conducting interviews on this camp, this situation had become the norm, and one would not have easily guessed that there was a time when the community had been actively co-operative.

In Tallismanus, a small village in the northeast section of the communal area, Ju/'hoansi struggle to make ends meet doing odd-jobs for Hereros, such as gathering wood, drawing water and doing laundry. They are often paid only in beer and many of the Ju/'hoansi are struggling with alcohol addiction and malnutrition. Here, poverty and the sexual stigmatization of Ju/'hoan women collude to push them into providing the only service they can offer for money. Conditions in Tallismanus were described to me by one young Ju/'hoan man during a group discussion with Ju/'hoansi living in a village project in the communal area in the following way:

[it is] only men who fetch firewood and get water. And the women are selling themselves for money. The women are selling their bodies. Some of the poor women also have bad problems with drugs and they do it maybe for cooking oil or dagga [marijuana]. Some women who have small children can do this to get food for their

(...continued)

supposed to operate on a food-for-work program). The women themselves are not entitled to the vegetables, which are meant to be sold outside the camp.

children. They are charging maybe just for \$10 - if he wants to sleep for the night, it's N\$10 and just to use her is N\$5. It will be Ovambos and Hereros, and you will see a Ju/'hoan woman carrying a black child on her back and you won't know whose child it is.

Another young Ju/'hoan man added:

Here in Tallismanus if you meet her and you stand to greet her, an Ovambo man will maybe come and beat you. Any Ovambo man can do this. He'll beat you and he will ask the woman and say "I bought you beer yesterday" or "today I bought some beer for you, why are you talking to that guy?" In Tallismanus, you won't know who the woman's husband is, because you will see her first with this one, and then again with another one and later on with another one again. Maybe in the evening with another bunch of Ovambo men going to her house.

When I asked what their opinion was about this situation, one young man told me:

We don't like that kind of thing here among us. And we won't get close to them [the women] if we hear stories that they are like that...The men are also from Tallismanus, who buy the women. [They buy Ju/'hoan women because] they don't have wives anymore...It is mostly Ovambo who do this to the Ju/'hoan women, and from their side saying that the San men don't have money, it's why they prefer Ovambo men...Herero women are also like that. The young [Herero] women, if they see an Ovambo man who has lots of money then they will want him. With the Herero women it's different [i.e. the relationships are longer lasting]. But the men will maybe just come to sleep at the house of the Ju/'hoan woman and then go back, and it's mostly Ju/'hoan women who are doing it for money. They say the Ju/'hoan women are cheaper than other people.¹⁹

The patterns of sexual exploitation in the resettlement camp discussed above and in

Tallismanus are recognizable in their historical continuity with past patterns of sexual politics

¹⁹ This conversation began as a discussion, with about five Ju/'hoansi, about working for Hereros in Tallismanus. As the topic shifted to prostitution, more Ju/'hoansi began arriving, sitting on the edge of the group. It was only the men who voiced their opinions about prostitution in Tallismanus. Some women nodded in agreement when the men spoke, however when I saw that other, younger women were beginning to hang their heads and look uncomfortable, I changed the topic. The noticeable discomfort of some of the women about this topic indicated that they felt this kind of transaction was degrading. However, when the reasons why Ju/'hoan women would 'sell themselves' were discussed, most of the informants agreed that the women were poor, had little choice in the matter, and therefore should not be judged too harshly.

involved in class domination.

Historically, concubinage²⁰ was a method of subjugation, and in some situations it was a continuation and modification of pre-colonial class systems. For example, in nineteenth century BaTswana society, female 'malata' ('bothanka' or 'bolata') -- some of whom were San women -- were often used as concubines. This practice eventually led to a common proverb according to which "the male servant is a serf, the female is your countrywoman" (or the BaNgawato equivalent "the real Masarwa is the male one; the female is Mangwato") (Morton 1994:236). The malata system provides an interesting contrast with colonial concubinage; in the malata system, the sexual servitude of a San woman marked her class status in such a way as to ambiguate her ethnic status. In the colonial case, sexual servitude was a significant component of the process of conquest which accentuated ethnic/race differences, and was part of the process of securing and protecting white male supremacy.

Russell and Russell's description of liaisons between Bushman women and white farmers in Ghanzi, Botswana is very reminiscent of the kind of sexual servitude of black women in antebellum America, where white men often used slave women as a means of sexual experimentation and initiation:

Liaisons with Bushman women were very common in the early nineteenth century: 'in the old days we all did it'. It remains more typical of the older generation of men,

²⁰ Very broadly, 'concubinage' "Generally denotes the co-habiting of a man and a woman who are not legally married; the practice of having or the state of being a concubine: that form of sexual mating to which the term marriage is denied in a given society, but in which the woman has a socially recognized position in the household of the man"; and anthropological use of the term "applies to sexual unions which are distinguished from marriage as 'matings' of inferior status in the social scheme of values". (The Social Science Encyclopaedia, Kuper and Kuper, eds. 1985:122)

many of whom keep Bushmen concubines, some of whom have never married white wives...This behaviour is particularly condoned by men, the subject of sly boasting between them. Bushmen regard this matter with philosophical resignation, taking care that it is their daughters but never their wives who are drawn into such relations...The liaisons vary from prostitution ('he gives my daughter three rand to sleep with him when his wife is away') to marriage in full accord with Bushman norms, which, in the propertyless society, do not carry the implications of life-long fidelity and commitment that Afrikaners expect from one another (1979:89).

A key link between class exploitation (i.e. in slavery) and sexual exploitation is the definition of one's personhood as a species of property, and, as we will see in later chapters, the Ju/'hoansi's *lack* of such property-based conceptions of personhood represents one of the most serious challenges to Afrikaner hegemony. Even so, the fact that they are impoverished means that they can still be compelled into quasi-exchange relations where sexual relations are a means of securing necessities ("Bushmen...take care that it is their daughters but never their wives who are drawn into such relations").

Although it has been suggested that inter-marriage can contribute to levelling and improving relations between the colonial and indigenous classes (e.g. Hyam 1986a and b), it is difficult to see how concubinage could perform this function. Relations between Afrikaner men and Ju/'hoan women are often a means of re-enforcing class asymmetries. One informant, N!osi, described a fairly well-known relationship between an Afrikaner farmer, who frequently travelled into the communal area, and his Ju/'hoan domestic servant:

It is only the thing of here in the bush - if he goes to town, then he has his white wife. When he is here out in the bush [in the communal area] that [Ju/'hoan] woman will also be with him, in the front of his car. But when he goes into town, she has to sit in the back of the truck. He will just buy her dresses and everything...He said nobody can touch her.

The institution of concubinage, which is as much a class relationship as a personal/gender relationship, gives intimate substance to racial and class inequalities. The possibility that

inter-racial liaisons, in the form they have historically taken, function to harmonize race relations is made doubtful when we recognize that the direction of authority in inter-racial sexual relations follows the direction of authority in colonial race relations generally.

Furthermore, mixed marriages could result in the loss of jobs, property and social standing for white men and in this way the combination of 'immorality laws' and white public opinion served to ensure that sexual experimentation would be permitted across the race boundaries, but not respect or affection.²¹

Although concubine-taking on the part of white farmers ceased to be a major topic of discussion after South African occupation, it would not be unreasonable to assume that, to whatever extent the practice continued, it was less overt, given the developing 'racial hygiene' sensibilities central to the formation of an apartheid system and the threat that such liaisons presented to white 'racial purity'. Cases of African men taking Ju/'hoan concubines, however, were not a taboo topic and, in the eyes of many administrators, such a practice was simply the unfolding of the natural process of inevitable extinction:

While their men are apparently not in much demand by women of other tribes, their women frequently become the concubines of men of other tribes. It is not unreasonable to conclude therefore that in time, they will, as a race, practically cease

²¹ The evolution of South Africa's immorality laws reflects the extent to which white male supremacy, grounded in structured sexual relations, was essential to the formation of apartheid. The first immorality law in 1685 forbade marriages between whites and "full blacks", but marriages between whites and people of 'mixed race' were acceptable. In 1902 the immorality laws banned sexual relations between a black man and a white woman, but not sexual relations between a white man and a black woman. The 1927 Immorality Act banned extra-marital sex between all blacks and whites and in 1950 this was amended to include people of mixed race, "Indians" and "Asians". One of the first pieces of legislation passed by the newly elected Nationalist Party, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, made inter-racial marriages illegal, which is not surprising when we consider the extremely subversive potential of inter-racial marriages to other 'corner stones' of Apartheid, such as the Group Areas Act (Omand 1985:30-37).

to exist, at any rate within the Police Zone (SWAA A198/26 memo from Magistrate of Grootfontein and Mr. Schonfelder February, 1939).

The colonial sexual political economy influenced the way gender relations shaped the formation of a rural class system in the Omaheke. Ju/'hoan women were, and are, subject to a system of gender subordination that is a result of a collusion of white and African 'ethnic'-gender ideologies. Walker states that, in the South African context, "by the early twentieth century...the arguments in favour of a staunchly patriarchal interpretation of customary law, as the foundation for the edifice of pseudo-traditionalism that was being constructed, had largely won the day" (1990b:182). It is within the context of colonial reinventions of 'traditional patriarchies' that we should understand colonial class relationships. Although both Walker (1990b) and Bozzoli (1983) argue that such colonial reinventions altered the nature of gender relations, or enhanced gender asymmetries *within* African communities, their observations about the influence of colonial gender attitudes can be applied as well to relations *between* African communities. Some insight into how gender relations were being reformulated in patriarchal terms is provided by the description of Bushwoman concubinage in the South African *Blue Book*:

At other times [stock theft] has been a means of revenge on the German settlers, whose ideas of *the property of the Bushman in his wife* were about as nebulous as the Bushman's idea of the rights of the settler to the land and his cattle (1918:146, emphasis mine).

The implication is that San male-female relationships would be more worthy of respect, and properly inviolable, if San women were seen as 'property' of their husbands. What was worthy of respect was, then, male property rights. This implicit redefinition of San women added a specific capitalist and colonial dimension to San women's oppression, since as 'property' they can be commoditized. At the same time the Ju/'hoan women were

experiencing their incorporation into the colonial political economy as an underclass, their status as women was also being shaped by a system which defined their sexuality as marketable.

The underclass status of Ju/'hoan women today is marked by sexual servitude (concubinage) and sexual saleability (prostitution) to the point where, in 'marriages' to non-San men, concubinage and prostitution tend to blur together. The distinction between prostitution and concubinage, both of which are referred to by saying that the man has taken a (temporary) 'wife', now appears little more than a matter of degree: in the duration of the relationship, which may be anywhere from one or two nights to a year, and in the amount of 'compensation' received by the women, which may vary from enough money for beer to gifts of clothing, food, and a (temporary) place of residence. But whether we place a relationship on one end of this continuum or the other, it typically involves more than mere sexual service: in even the briefest liaison, a Ju/'hoan woman is also expected to do housekeeping work. In this way, the already nebulous blend of prostitution with concubinage blurs into domestic service.

The concubine/prostitute underclass status of Ju/'hoan women was a central feature in the way the ethnically-based colonial class system was formed around patriarchal principles. This historical process is illustrated clearly by the case of Rex vs Link. On January 7, 1919 a very drunk German police sergeant, Albert Link, rode his horse into the native location on the outskirts of Gobabis looking for Simon, a Herero constable. Simon's son took Link to the communal mielie garden where Simon was working with the help of his "Bushgirl" servant, Suzanna. Simon and Link sat down and negotiated the acquisition of a woman for Link, whereupon Simon offered Suzanna's services. According to Suzanna,

Simon took a blanket and laid it down and told me to sleep with him [Link]. I did not want to do so, but Simon told me to sleep with accused and I slept with him...Before I slept with [Link] Simon told me that I had to as accused had given me three shillings. I refused. Simon took me by the arm and took me to the bed (LGO 1/1/1-16, Record of Proceedings, Criminal Cases, 1919-1969).

Link and Suzanna were found by two police troopers at three in the morning under a tree in the mielie garden. Link was originally charged with being in the location between dusk and dawn, but was later charged with 'carnal knowledge' of a minor.²² This case reflects how the colonial class system was shaped by the fundamental principle of 'male proprietorship over female sexuality' (Walker 1990b:182) and the way that male proprietorship over female sexuality gave substance to class asymmetries.

Ju/'hoan women were entangled in a number of parallel 'storylines' (Gordon 1997:134) - not only stories about 'pristine primitives', but also colonial analogies which associated 'Hottentots' with prostitutes and gender ideologies which associated domestic service and sexual service. As the case of Suzanna illustrates, for Ju/'hoan women on the extreme periphery, domestic service, concubinage and prostitution tend to blur together when they cross race and class boundaries.

From the nineteenth century on, it was common lore that prostitutes came from the servant class (Hyam 1986a:45; see above), and in the colonial mind this was largely a result of the innate criminality and sexuality of the lower classes and races. Such a view fit well into the South West African Administration's agenda for controlling native labour. A 1921 Report of the Native Commission speculated that the movement of female domestic servants

²² That this case went to court is noteworthy, and is likely attributable to the fact that Link was a German who got himself in trouble when South Africa had the territory under military rule.

“from place to place was largely for the purposes of prostitution” (cited in Social Sciences Division/Legal Assistance Centre 1996b:16). The association between domestic service and prostitution was likely the result of the fact that these were the only two income-earning opportunities available to African women in the emergent colonial capitalist system.²³

Domestic service and sexual service are implicitly associated, and so female members of the servile classes were regarded as innately prone to prostitution. Their class status was shaped by gender and race attitudes which marked them as sexually available. In southern Africa, the sexualization of domestic servants is an example of how class and race-based gender stereotypes of ‘promiscuity’ blend. What this means for Ju/’hoan women is that domestic employment, their sole employment in the rural Omaheke, is not a means of *escape* from the narrow social spaces -- such as prostitution and concubinage -- that have been defined for them. Their perceived primitive sexuality ensures that all the social and economic opportunities allotted them in the Omaheke get defined in terms of their sexuality or, by extension, their reproductive roles.

iv) Breeding a Better Labourer

When we examine the interconnected politics of sexual exploitation and marginalization

²³ In nineteenth century Cape Town, local prostitutes were, as van Heyningen suggests, “probably the daughters of farm labourers who had come to Cape Town to enter domestic service” and many had actually started out as domestic servants (1983:182). When the depression of 1906-08 forced thousands of African women from the rural to the urban areas to seek work, white women resisted the trend toward replacing ‘houseboys’ with female domestics on the grounds that African women were ‘immoral’ (van Onselen 1982:17 vol I; see also van Heyningen 1983; Ross 1989). Hyam suggests that one of the reasons male domestic servants were more prevalent in nineteenth and early twentieth century South Africa was because Africans generally believed the “Black maids in European houses would be seduced by their employers” (1986a:61).

it is important to remember, again, that these processes are integral to the construction of race and class hierarchies. So it is not only the attitude that women's reproductive capacities naturally exclude them from public life that is oppressive; women's reproductive capacities are also described in ways that facilitate the broader systems of oppression and exploitation based on race and class. Collins notes that "race becomes the distinguishing feature determining the type of objectification women will encounter" (1990:163) and draws from Alice Walker's distinction between 'objects' and 'animals' in sexualized (pornographic) representations of women across race boundaries:

Within the mind/body, culture/nature, male/female oppositional dichotomies in Western social thought, objects occupy an uncertain interim position. As objects white women became creations of culture - in this case, the mind of white men - using the materials of nature...In contrast, as animals Black women receive no such redeeming dose of culture and remain open to the type of exploitation visited on nature overall (1990:170).

Given the definition of their sexuality as animalistic, Ju/'hoan women did not escape the racist description of 'breeder'.²⁴

During the days of German colonialism, it was suggested that Ju/'hoan women be separated from their menfolk -- who would be deported to the coast -- and placed on farms where they could 'miscegenate' with 'local blacks', leading eventually to an "overall better

²⁴ This was a conspicuous aspect of racial oppression in the American antebellum South, where advertisements for female slaves used such descriptive terms as "breeder woman", "childbearing woman", "too old to breed" and "not a breeding woman" (see hooks 1981:39-40; Brownmiller 1975:154; Collins 1990:178; and Davis 1981). Brownmiller states that: "The appointed roles of concubine and breeder woman forcibly progressed to outright prostitution in the last decades of slavery. Traders dispensed with pretense and openly sold their prettiest and 'near-white' female chattel for sexual use on the New Orleans market" (1975:168). Collins notes that "in some slave settings selective breeding and, if that failed, rape were used to produce slaves of a certain genetic heritage", specifically for breeding mulattos who "at that time brought in a higher price" (1990:178) - both in the slave and prostitution markets.

type of labourer” (Gordon 1992b:194).²⁵ One argument McIntyre advanced for ending the practice of manstealing in Nyae Nyae, and establishing ‘proper’ labour recruiting mechanisms, referred to the Ju/’hoansi’s potentially valuable contribution to the labour pool, couched in evolutionist/eugenic terms of ‘mixing blood’ to ‘improve the stock’:

Not the wilder Bushmen...but there are a lot of semi-civilized Bushmen, many of them with Bechuana blood in their veins living in the Bechuanaland hinterland...who could perhaps be drawn off for labour (SWAA A659 to Chief Native Commissioner, October 21, 1955).

As it happened, the deliberate breeding of Ju/’hoan women with non-Ju/’hoan men was unnecessary because it was noticed that Ju/’hoan women ‘frequently become the concubines of men of other tribes’, and so natural selection already favoured the widely anticipated eventual extinction of the Bushmen race, or their absorption as farm workers - or a combination of both:

The only solution for the Bushmen, if there is one, is their absorption in other tribes or apprenticeships to farmers who will give them a square deal and get children to settle down as stock herds, otherwise they must die out (Secretary for SWA, 1939, cited in Gordon 1992a:137).

Many have noted how the formula that “animal sexuality + servitude = breeders” has been applied to African American slave women in the United States. In Namibia, however, this formula applies especially to Ju/’hoan women because, in the minds of the white farmers, and unfortunately, in the minds of many non-Ju/’hoan people I spoke to, the Ju/’hoansi are the archetypical sexual primitives.

Patricia Hill Collins argues that what underlies both the literal breeding of slave women

²⁵ Morton describes how in the nineteenth century Botlhanka system, the Basarwa serfs of BaNgwato masters were described as “beasts...bulls and cows, heifers and calves. In speaking of a female they say she has calved” (1994:226).

and the label 'breeder' was the related biologically-loaded aim of domestication, which is a "state that can be accomplished through breeding", and where "for animals the goal of domestication is manageability and control" (1990:178; see also Tillotson 1997). Defining women as breeders "reinforces the theme of Black women's passivity, objectification, and malleability to male control" (ibid:167). The definition of Ju/'hoan women as "breeders" buttresses the systematic strategies used to enforce and perpetuate their subordination and 'passivity'.

Conclusion

Claudia Card's description of the function of rape, which can be extended to include various forms of sexual extortion and exploitation found in the Omaheke, is as follows:

I now find that an important aspect of both civilian and martial rape is that it is an instrument of domestication: breaking for house service. It breaks the spirit, humiliates, tames, produces a docile, deferential, obedient soul (1996:2).

The social territory that is then defined for Ju/'hoan women to occupy blurs expected borders between prostitution, concubinage, and domestic service. At the same time, the boundaries of this broad territory is policed by sexual assault and exploitation, and the sexuality of Ju/'hoan women is targeted in order to restrict movements outside their physical and political territory. Ju/'hoan men were 'civilized' by being made 'used to hard work', and thus partially lost their 'animality'. They could then be ennobled by an ideological transformation from bandits to noble savages. But the gendered nature of farm work prevented Ju/'hoan women from being similarly 'civilized' or ennobled. Instead of being civilized, they were more literally domesticated.

From the point of view provided by the discourse on 'primitives', women and sexuality, and from a macro-level survey of the sexual politics of objectification and domination, it would appear that Ju/'hoan women should be utterly oppressed, thoroughly disempowered. However, although through a variety of brutal historical processes, they were in a sense 'broken for house service', they still possess a remarkable level of personal strength and autonomy, in terms of their ability to understand and criticize the dynamics of their exploitation, and in terms of their abilities to cope with their material conditions and to assert their dignity and humanity in ways that defy these layers of stereotypes. This becomes apparent when we see, in the following chapters, the ways in which Ju/'hoan women understand and subvert their 'domestication' as domestic servants on the farms.

SECTION II. WORKING LIFE AND CLASS POLITICS ON THE FARMS

CHAPTER THREE

‘OUR HANDS MADE THEM RICH’: WOMEN, MEN AND WORK ON THE FARMS

In the old time you go to the farm and milk the farmers's cows for him. In the old time there were no cars and the farmers used donkey carts. The Afrikaners who came from Angola, the old people who are now dead milked their cows. Our hands made them rich. Our fathers made them rich and we are still working for them, to make them richer.

- Damm

Introduction

The effect of seeing the Ju/'hoansi through the distorting lens of racial and gendered stereotypes has been, first, to 'naturalize' the underclass status of Ju/'hoan workers and provide farmers with a range of 'justifications' for low wages, poor rations and poor living conditions. A second effect, one felt directly by Ju/'hoan women, has been to prevent their recognition as wives, mothers, and as women struggling to maintain their own homes and families. The importance of Ju/'hoan family and familial bonds (the subject of chapter five) is nearly invisible to many farmers. My concern in this chapter is to confront work on the farms, as it is intimately shaped by stereotypes of Bushmen, with the expressed attitudes of the Ju/'hoansi to their work and to those stereotypes. Farm work and domestic work, and their value and meaning, are thus confronted from several different perspectives, and the disparities among those perspectives are highlighted.

One antidote to the distorting effects of stereotypic vision is familiarity; but despite often living their entire lives within a few hundred metres of their Ju/'hoan workers' homes, many farmers remain largely unaware of what, beyond the labour they supervise themselves, makes up the daily lives of their workers. In Part One of this chapter, I provide a narrative

description of a single, not atypical day in the workers' compound. By providing a narrative account of a day in the life of the workers, from within the setting of the workers' compound, I hope to provide a tangible portrait of the domestic lives of the Ju/'hoansi whose work and attitudes to work are discussed in the remainder of the chapter.

Farm work is, in the Omaheke, men's work, and subsistence in the commercial farming block depends upon men's access to the farms as labourers. Labour in the veld, building and maintaining fence-lines, windmills and pipelines, tending to cattle or goats, or work done within sight of the farm buildings, such as repairing machinery or slaughtering, is exclusively the domain of men. It is here that labour is conspicuously part of the productive economy of "Cattle Country". Women's work is, 'naturally', in the home: in the farmer's own house, or around the kitchen fires at the workers' quarters. Work on the white farms brings with it a clean separation of a public, economic realm and a private, domestic realm. It is not surprising, then, that Ju/'hoan men and women have very different attitudes towards the meaning of the work they do.

In Parts Two and Three, I describe in detail the work done in both realms, the remuneration received in the form of wages and rations as indicators of the ways in which the work is valued, and how the Ju/'hoansi supplement their often inadequate rations in order to subsist on the farms. My focus, in these parts, is on the economic constraints faced by the Ju/'hoansi on the farms (in the next chapter I will consider constraints that are more political in nature).

In Part Four, I discuss some of the ways in which racial and gender stereotypes are used to justify poor working and living conditions, and describe the Ju/'hoansi's own reactions to these stereotypes, as well as their consciousness of the role of such stereotypes in preserving

their status as an underclass. As we will see, the Ju/'hoansi themselves frequently conceive of their situation in class terms and are well aware of the role that farmers' perceptions of them play in preserving their underclass status.

Part One: A Day on a Farm: A Portrait of Living, Working and Playing Together

Just as the sun rises people begin tumbling out of their crumbling brick houses. Piles of blankets scattered on the ground begin to stir as those who sleep outside are awakened by the cacophony of coughing and hacking, farmyard animals noises and the banging of metal doors as people begin getting ready for work. From deep inside one pile of blankets old //Umte declares "My blankets are wet - those children must have pissed on me in the night!" The children think this is hysterical and are laughing and playfully punching him while he struggles to get off the ground. Old //Umte, at 97 years old, is the farm's mama !go or oupa; he provides the comic relief in any conversation or situation on the farm, and is a particular favourite with the children. The young children are always near him to pound playfully on his frail old body. //Umte dislodges two children from his back and shuffles over to his son's fire, the heart of one of three households in the workers quarters, to wait for a cup of the coffee his son's wife is preparing.

The men mill about, roll cigarettes and blink at each other while the women shuffle back and forth between the water tap and their fires preparing coffee and heating up last night's left-over mielie pap for the children. When the coffee is ready everyone huddles around their fires, bundled in blankets, steaming mugs warming their hands, stomping their feet to get their blood moving.

As the others are drinking and smoking, old Kaqècè returns from the farmer's house. He

has been with this farmer's family since he was a child and has always occupied the favoured position of gardener. He wakes up every morning at four to start the fire in the farmer's stove and have the coffee ready for when the farmer and his wife wake up. Now he joins the others in their morning coffee and prepares to return to work in the farmer's garden when the others leave for their jobs.

Cups of coffee and cigarettes — raw leaves of tobacco crumbled and rolled in newspaper — are passed from person to person until breakfast is finished. Wash tubs are filled at the single tap in the yard, and everyone takes turns at a cold, brisk splash before work. By seven o'clock the men begin trickling away. On some farms, where the farmer is more actively involved in the daily routine, the men report directly to the farmer's stoep to receive their schedule for the day. But on this farm the men are left pretty much to their own devices and so wander off in different directions. #Oma, the foreman, is the first to leave, making his way to the veld with a few of the younger men following behind, to tend the cattle, check the lick and inspect the dams. A few minutes later Debe, a senior male worker, and two other younger workers head toward the sheds behind the farmers house to repair a piece of machinery.

At around seven thirty the women who work as domestic servants chatter and laugh their way up to the farmers house. Over our coffee //Asa told me that they are expecting a light housework day, because today is Thursday and there will be no laundry or ironing to do. The first order of business in the morning is to make the beds and cook breakfast for the elderly farmer and his wife. Once breakfast is finished and the dishes washed, the younger women who don't work in the kitchen processing food and washing floors will disperse throughout the house to sweep, dust and scrub. At around eleven it will be time to start lunch for the farmer and his wife. //Asa says she expects to have a two hour lunch break today, beginning

at around 12 o'clock.

Meanwhile back at the workers' quarters the women who are too young or too old to work for the farmer, and those women who are 'squatting', begin preparing food for today's meals. Di//xao, who lives part-time in Epako with her unemployed husband, is squatting on the farm for a few days to visit her father, to get some food and to get away from the general stress of life in the former township. She must be careful not to be seen by the farmer since he doesn't permit women whose husbands don't work to stay on the farm. Besides, her husband and the farmer had a falling-out about a year ago and neither would be given permission to visit. Her father, old Kaqècè, is a widower and so he appreciates her assistance with the house cleaning, but his many unemployed children who alternately visit him with their children will be a source of trouble if they are caught on the farm, so they must not stay for too long. As the domestic servants leave for work, Di//xao begins to clean up around her father's house, making his bed and sweeping the stoep.

Her father has a bed — so too does her sister who lives three doors down with her own husband — but most of those who sleep inside wrap themselves in blankets on the concrete floors. Di//xao is not sure that this is an improvement over the way things were before 1990, when the farmer had them manufacture bricks and build proper 'houses' in order to satisfy the government's demand for better living conditions for farm workers. Before 1990, at least they had the more yielding sand under their bodies; regular raking was still needed, but no one had to try to keep away the always moving dust and sand armed only with a flimsy broom of ostrich-feathers bound to a stick. Their houses then were makeshift sinkhuise, sheets of corrugated iron, feedsacks, discarded pieces of lumber, all thrown together to keep off the August winds and the February rains.

The post-independence workers' compound contains six one-room 'houses', their bricks already crumbling back into sand, lined in a row facing the farmer's house from across the lucern field. Each house has a corrugated iron roof, a metal door and a small 'lapa' which is built by adding low 'walls' of scrap pieces of corrugated iron to the front of the house to make a front yard of sorts. Other pieces of corrugated iron are sometimes balanced on top of the lapa walls to create a shelter where surplus people can sleep, and food be cooked, in the rainy season. In the open area in front of the houses there is a single water-tap, one large camelthorn tree and a small ablution block - nothing more than a brick outhouse, but since there are no pipes to carry away sewage, it is no longer used. Besides, the veld begins only a few feet behind the houses. Old Kaqècè's house holds his bed — a single cot under the small back window, a small stool that serves as a table beside the bed, a pile of blankets, clothes and scraps of cloth that have accumulated in the corner, and he still has just enough space to stand a lop-sided shelf on which he keeps his few metal plates and cups.

When it is not raining, cook fires are located between the first and second house, the third and fourth house, and the fifth and sixth house, indicating that there are three 'households' in the workers' compound. The fires are the centres of activity; they are the places to which water, wood, and raw food are brought and around which small clusters of women cook, mend clothes, make carrying bags and jewellery. All of the day's work eventually converges on the fires, and those who regularly contribute to the work at a fire belong to that fire. Kaqècè shares his fire with the residents of the house next to his own - and, of course, with the numerous kin who, like Di//xao and her children, are squatting. Di//xao's sister N!ae eats at the next fire down with her husband, /Kunta, and his parents. At the far end of the row of houses, another sister begins to prepare food at the fire of her own husband.

The rains have been very good in the last three months so there is a variety of food to prepare. The young women and small children drop cobs of corn from the gardens onto the hot coals of the cook fires and pick them out again once they start popping. A few bites are taken and then the cobs are passed along so that everyone has something to eat. The corn and wild cucumbers (toa) from the veld are snacked on throughout the day.

//Auka, who is also squatting on the farm for a few days, sits nearby at her own father's fire surrounded by young girls who help her separate the leaves of "*lumpies*" — a leafy, spinach-like vegetable — from their stems. Once all the leaves are separated they are placed in a mortar and pounded with a pestle until a green paste is produced, which is then mixed with the mielie pap. Another favourite way of preparing lumpies, which are found nearby in the veld, is to boil them in water and mix them with packages of powdered chicken soup, and sometimes 'wild potatoes' (//Ore) are added. Just before the domestic servants return from the farmer's house for lunch the young girls begin boiling water to wash last night's dirty dishes. The young men, who are 'squatting' on the farm sit and smoke, talk and play home-made instruments, such as a //oq'acè or a !hao.¹ A few are sitting in a circle dividing mielies between them, which will later be pounded into meal.

There are not many children on the farm since most are away at a nearby farm school, where they live in a hostel during the week and come home — often walking up to 40 km through the veld — on the weekends. It is not uncommon, however, to find some Ju/'hoan

¹ A //oq'acè is a guitar-like instrument built by attaching two rectangular metal cans, their bottoms cut off, end-to-end to form a large hollow body. Four sticks protrude from one end of the hollow body, and are strung with fence wire tied to the opposite end. A !hao consists of one open-ended metal can placed on top of a thick bush-stick with one strand of fence wire strung the length of the stick. It is played with a small horsehair bow.

children at home. The Ju/'hoansi are for the most part very liberal parents (it is unusual to see a Ju/'hoan child being scolding harshly or hit), and so, if the child resists going to school, he or she is rarely forced. Also Ju/'hoan parents, being quite permissive, strongly disagree with the practice of corporal punishment, which was more common in the past, but does still occur in the schools. Finally, many Ju/'hoan parents cannot pay for the school fees and only a few farmers are willing to assist their workers with this expense. Thus, many children attend school intermittently, either when they agree to go or when their parents have managed to save enough money for a term. The children who do stay at home are not pressured into helping out with any work, although the young girls tend to make themselves available to help gather water or rake the yard.

At about eleven o'clock the workers reappear, driving the milk cows into a corral beside the workers' quarters. After the calves have suckled and are tied to the fence, the workers get down to the milking, which takes about forty-five minutes. The senior workers return home with buckets of milk for their own families and a junior worker carries two buckets of milk up to the farmer's house.

At about noon, the domestic workers begin returning home. Today they are not carrying a load of firewood from the farmer's yard on their heads, which means they will be taking a trip to the veld later to collect their own - the supply is running low. Once they return to their own houses they take over the cooking tasks from the other women, who either start gathering and washing the dishes or sit in the shade and smoke. N/haokxa begins cooking a porcupine her husband killed the night before. The porcupine will not be ready until dinner time, so in another pot she begins a lunch of mielie pap mixed with pumpkin from the garden. After these meals are started she allows Beh, her husband's first wife, to finish the

job while she sits to knit a sweater for the child she's expecting. Beh and N/haokxa are not exactly "co-wives", since Beh and N/haokxa's husband divorced long ago, but Beh's son also works on the farm and so Beh, who was abandoned by her second husband and too is sick with tuberculosis to work as a domestic servant in the township, often comes to visit when she needs food and a place to stay. Relations between Beh, her ex-husband and N/haokxa are very cordial, however, and when Beh comes to visit N/haokxa has a good help-mate around the house.

While the lunch is cooking some of the women begin their laundry. They try to get as much finished during their lunch hour as they can so the clothes will have time to dry in the sun. The women put up a valiant fight against the encroachment of dirt that constantly invades their lives. The children's clothes and the worker's clothes always have layers of Kalahari sand encrusted on them and the women put in hours of bicep-breaking work to get the clothes as clean as the clothes in the farmer's house.

After she has finished sweeping, raking and tidying the area around her father's fire, Di//xao begins washing the clothes of the people who are now staying in her father's house. This week there are five people living with her father — herself, her husband, her sister //Uce, //Uce's small daughter, and her nephew — the son of her oldest sister, N*isa — who also works for the farmer. She borrows two extra wash tubs from her sister and sister-in-law, who also work in the farmer's house, and adds them to her father's wash tub. The young girls help her fill two of the wash tubs with water, one of which is filled with laundry soap. After Di//xao submerges the first pair of trousers into the sudsy water the wash tub is full of mud. Because water is at a premium in the Omaheke, it is only after the first pile of clothes have had their turn in the soapy-muddy water, and then are rinsed in the clear water in the second

tub, that Di//xao instructs the young girls sitting beside her to clean and refill the tubs. While the girls are at the water tap, Di//xao takes the third wash tub, now full of clean clothes, to the wire fence encircling the workers' quarters to hang them to dry. When the girls return from the water tap, the process begins again. Di//xao is facing five more piles of clothes, each item requiring a great deal of scrubbing in the dirty water, and so this job will take her all day.

While Di//xao is doing the laundry, N!ae begins explaining to me that she is expecting the farmer's son and his family to visit for the weekend — she overheard the phone call in which arrangements were being made. She sighs with some resignation because that means she will be working at the farmer's house all weekend and have no time to clean her own house or to finish her laundry. However she qualifies this complaint with the point that she hasn't been able to buy any laundry soap now for a month, so she wouldn't be able to do laundry anyway. The conversation turns to when the last time any of the women were able to wash their clothes and whose clothes are the dirtiest, each woman trying to out-do the other.

When lunch is ready the children are the first to help themselves, followed by the first batch of adults. There are not enough dishes to go around and so often the women wait until the men have finished eating and then use the dishes once they are free. The women eat about half of whatever is on their plates and then pass the rest to the children, who huddle together to clean the plates off. A few of the adults eat only a cob of roasted corn and drink some coffee quickly, preferring to use their lunch break to catch a quick nap instead of eating.

After lunch the women sweep the stoeps and rake around their front yards and then, at two o'clock, return to the farmer's house to wash the lunch dishes and finish the house cleaning. The men return to the veld to check the stock, the water system and the fences. There are no major tasks left to do in the farmer's house, so the women expect to return home

between three and four in the afternoon. The men will return at their usual time, around five-thirty or six o'clock.

Now Di//xao is the only one doing any heavy work. While the young women are tidying up around the fires, old Ouma is resting in the shade by her fire sharing my cigarettes. She remembers when, as a girl, the white people first arrived in their trucks in the area near Epukiro, where her family had been living in the veld and working during the dry winter for the Hereros. This white *baas* was only a small child then, and he came with his father to take her family to work for him.

Some of the young girls want to teach me a game called 'chasing the tsamma' (n!o'ân-tamah). The children find an appropriately sized tsamma melon in the veld. They no longer eat the tsamma as much as they had in the past because it is too bitter — but it is good for tossing. The young girls, who are about 12 or 13, started clapping and singing and dancing in a circle. The first young girl with the tsamma skips and tosses the melon high into the air over her head, spins around and claps while the melon is still air-borne, catches it, turns, skips and tosses it, underhand, high in the air behind her. The girl behind her dances toward the airborne melon, catches it, tosses it straight over her head, skips, dances, crouches to touch the ground, catches the melon as it falls and tosses it again, underhand, behind her and claps, dances and sings. The girl behind her dances toward the flying melon, catches it, and on it goes. They catch, toss and pass the melon with only one hand as they dance and sing. This continues until finally one of the girls drops the melon. The one that drops it is laughed at and teased by the other girls.

Old //Umte, seeing that the young girls are trying to give their best performance picks a badly battered old tsamma from the ground, scuttle-dances into the girl's circle, mimicking

their singing and shouting ‘aarrgh!!’, tosses the melon at one of them, disrupting the rhythm of their dancing so that their own melon falls to the ground. This prompts gales of laughter from everyone and one young girl chases him and beats him about his head and back while he runs away laughing. Old //Umte continues to disrupt the game, and so finally a frustrated young girl chases and catches him, picks him up, throws him to the ground and smacks him about the head a few more times. She didn’t beat him hard — it was actually more of a playful pummeling — but I was still astounded to see a 97 year old man rolling around on the ground rough-housing with this girl and without breaking a hip. After harassing the girls to his satisfaction, //Umte sat down beside me, and I asked him why the young girls beat on him. He said “it’s because they see that I have no wife to beat me, so they must do it.”

After n!o’àn-tamah, the girls brought out a jump-rope. It was actually not a ‘skipping rope’, but rather a gigantic elastic band (some kind of farm equipment I was unable to trace the origin or function of). It was a little too light to turn in the wind, so they tied a plastic feed sack to it. ‘Jump rope’ here was familiar from my own school days. They play with the same kind of songs and ways of jumping - running in, jumping, running out; jumping rapidly, running out; running in, jumping on one foot, running out. Their game also involved familiar endurance tests, such as: ‘how old will you be when you get married?’ - the rope turned rapidly and everyone shouts “1, 2, 3, 4!”, etc. until the girl collapses, exhausted. Some of their chants are in Afrikaans, some are in Nama which they say they learned in school. One jumping technique was a particularly impressive display of strength. One young girl lay down on the ground with her legs stretched to her side and one hand under her head, supporting her upper body. She managed to thrust her body off the ground about 8 or 10 times as the rope passed under her before she got too tired and collapsed. Every now and

then, their rope would break and they would have to tie it together again.

These games were as much entertainment for the adults as they were recreation for the girls. The young boys meanwhile were busy further away building roads and camps in the sand with pieces of wood and small stones. The small girls, who are too young to play the n!o'ân-tamah or jump rope, sit together with small dolls their mothers made from old scraps of clothes. Eventually the girls get tired and sit down beside Beh, who is making a carrying bag out of a plastic feed sack and wool. They watch intently for a while until Beh hands the bag to one of the girls to finish. This is the time when the unemployed farm residents relax, occasionally check on whatever is cooking over the fire, tidy up here and there, and wait for the others to return.

When the domestic servants return home they prompt a new bustle of activity. It is not time to sit down and rest yet. There was no firewood left up at the farmer's house and so the women must take a trip out to the veld to collect some. Almost all of the women and young girls join in this task. They quickly duck into their houses to grab some extra scarves, which they wrap over the scarves they are already wearing to give some extra cushioning against the heavy load they will be carrying home. After they have prepared their head gear, we head out to the veld and walk for about half a kilometre to a place where the women know there is a dead haakbos tree. Haakbos is the best firewood - it lights easily, but burns slowly and leaves good coals. Camelthorn is the second choice, but yellow wood is avoided whenever possible because it burns too quickly, necessitating more frequent trips to the veld.

Once we arrive at the haakbos tree the women attack it with gusto, pulling off branches, breaking them up and placing them in neat piles. I make myself useful by jumping up, with my greater height, and swinging from the higher branches to pull them down to where the

women can grab them and break them off - this also provides the entertainment portion of the expedition. We are all careful to keep our eyes open for snakes and scorpions. Once the branches are divided into piles of smaller branches for the younger girls and piles of heavier branches for the women, the women take off belts and ropes they had been wearing around their waists and tie them around the piles. We help swing the heavy bundles onto the each other's heads. I get ready for my turn, but the women are too concerned that I may injure myself trying to carry wood on my head, so they hand me a single twig to carry back.

When we return home the women take their bundles to their own fires, put some more wood on the fire and begin boiling water to prepare dinner. I have my own fire, which N!ae helps me to tend. She also insists on doing most of the cooking, which is a good thing because I am not a good camp cook (even if my interpreter is too kind to say anything). The younger women associated with N!ae's household are put to work bringing us water or cutting and peeling vegetables. While we watch the cook pot and add twigs as needed to keep the fire alive, N!ae talks about this farm, which for all her travels always seems to have been her home.

When N!ae was about thirteen, she came here with her parents and her younger brothers and sisters, where she and most of her closest kin now live. When she first arrived she continued to attend Hippo farm school, about thirty kilometres away, where she lived in the school hostel during the week. On the weekends she walked or hitched-hiked home to visit her family and work part-time in the farmer's house, in return for some food and sweets. At fifteen she left school to work for the farmer for a short time and then she and her older sister, /Uiya, found another job on a nearby farm where their 'uncle' was working. N!ae and /Uiya were hired to do general housecleaning while the older, more experienced women cooked

and did the laundry. There, each sister earned R12 per month plus rations, which was a good wage during the mid-1970s, especially for young domestic servants. However, N!ae soon got married and so had to leave that farm - her husband took her to live on two other farms where he had found work. However, N!ae says this husband had /hosa ≠hi (many faces, i.e. he pursued other women), so she left him and returned to this farm to live with her father, old Kaqècè.

While she was living with her father she went back to work in the farmer's house and here she married her second husband, /Kunta. Shortly after N!ae and /Kunta got together, the farmer sent them to work for his daughter and son-in-law in Windhoek. There N!ae cooked, cleaned, did laundry and ironing while her husband worked in the garden and did odd jobs. Although N!ae's duties required many more hours of work, she and her husband earned the same wages - N\$130 per month. N!ae recalls working in Windhoek as the worst job she ever had, saying "I did very hard work in Windhoek! We didn't have a rest on weekends and we didn't receive food." The wages they were paid were barely enough to cover food expenses, and nothing was left over to buy other things.

For N!ae, the most onerous aspect of her job in Windhoek was the informal work schedule, which subjected her to long hours and kept her constantly 'on call'. When I asked her what her working hours were in Windhoek, she replied:

It is anytime, you work anytime. If they call you, you must come. I didn't have time to have my lunch break because I waited for them [her employers] until one. I would go quickly to my room for coffee and a sandwich and then went back to work until dark. I'd go back again to finish my job because there are too many clothes to iron. I had to start early for work because I must be inside the house to answer the telephone because anytime the people would call and I must answer to say they are not at home. When she prepares herself, I must be in the house to answer the telephone because she's in the bath. I stopped working at nine or ten at night.

After about a year in Windhoek, N!ae and her husband left to find work on another farm. They were lucky enough to find work on a farm owned by a German, where N!ae's sister, //Uce, was already working. Here N!ae worked in the kitchen and was paid N\$200 per month which, according to N!ae, was a reasonable wage on a farm where she and her husband were expected to buy most of their own food. Unfortunately, their tenure on this farm was short-lived. N!ae recalled losing that job with some regret - she rolled her eyes and sighed "I don't know why /Kunta couldn't wake up in the morning for work." They eventually returned to the farm where both N!ae and /Kunta's family were living — their own 'home' farm, so to speak — and now N!ae works as a domestic servant, earning N\$30 per month, /Kunta makes N\$40 per month and they get some rations. N!ae speaks constantly about returning to the German farm. However her husband is unwilling to give up his job on this farm, so for now she is content stay here at the fire of her husband's father, only ten metres from her own father's fire which she took care of when she was a girl.

Once the food is cooked N!ae and I dish up the meal. When I visit I usually bring 'exotic' food like rice or macaroni, since my hosts appreciate a change of fare, and N!ae and I try to spread the supply as far as possible. The young women who helped us get a portion first, then N!ae's father and husband each get a small plate and then the people who eat at my fire, my interpreter and his family, are served. The food that is left is distributed to the people who eat at N!ae's husband's father's fire — her father and mother-in-law, *Oma and //Uce, and their daughter and granddaughter, who take a few bites and then pass the plate to the fire of *Oma's other son, Besa, where he, his wife and children each take a small portion. N!ae's father also only takes a small helping and then passes the plate around to the people at his own fire. If there is enough food, I also receive helpings passed from the other fires - some

pieces of goat meat or dishes of veldkos. When food is in good supply, dinner time is an active social event as people move from fire to fire chatting and sharing food. However, when food is scarce, it is still shared, but etiquette requires that everyone sit at their own fire and pay less attention to the food at the other fires.

Once we finish eating we enjoy an after-dinner smoke and then someone, usually /Xabe, who is very pretty, lively and always social, brings out her radio and turns it to full volume. The younger women immediately begin to dance and sing, followed by the children. After the others have rested, they too join in the dancing and soon everyone is shuffling and spinning to Nama 'Long-arm' music. The dancing can go on for a few hours until the employed adults start to get ready for bed at around eleven o'clock. Gradually the music and laughing die down and soon only the young men are left sitting around the fire outside old Kaqècè's house. They talk and laugh well into the night, until two-thirty or three o'clock in the morning, when they too decide to retire.

As the sun rises people begin emerging from under their piles of blankets or out of their houses. The men mill around and roll cigarettes while the women make the coffee. Old Kaqècè returns from the farmer's house and sits down by his fire. As he rolls himself a cigarette he begins to loudly expound on how terribly tired he is because *some people* were up all night talking and laughing outside his door.



Figure 9. Playing the !hao



Figure 10. Making a carry-bag



Figure 11. Playing n!o'àn-tamah



Figure 12. A worker's house

Part Two: Farm Labour in the Beginning

i) Historical Continuities

In the first chapter I described how, during the early years of settler farming in the Omaheke, the Ju/'hoansi adapted to land encroachment and marginalization by adopting a dual subsistence strategy: working on farms (both African and White) during the dry season (or during periods of drought), and returning to the veld to live a foraging life during the rainy season. Because the farmers' and Administration's attempts to force the Ju/'hoansi into farm labour largely targeted the men — in part by undermining male hunting activities — there is good reason to believe that the Ju/'hoansi's initial ability to selectively participate in farm work was owed in no small measure to the economic activities of Ju/'hoan women, which provided the basis for a foraging life.

Many Ju/'hoansi entered farm labour as a second-tier labour force in the reserves, where they filled a gap left by Herero and Tswana men who had been drawn into wage labour on white farms. Work in the reserves seems to have prolonged Ju/'hoansi autonomy, since the largest reserve, located deeper in the Kalahari in the northeastern hinterland, to this day remains an unfenced 'communal area'. Writing in the 1950s, Köhler reports:

Certain Bushmen families were more or less attached to certain Herero families or ozonganda: they live near them and help them fetch water and herd small stock. When the rains came they left their settlements for the desert, but usually returned to the same families (1959:49).

Women I interviewed in their 60s, 70s and 80s also described how their mothers worked for Hereros in the reserves; very often these women were initiated into domestic service by helping their mothers perform domestic tasks for Herero women. Just as the Ju/'hoan men became incorporated into the settler political economy by supplying a 'second-tier' labour

force in the reserves, so too did Ju/'hoan women become incorporated largely through supplying domestic labour to Herero homesteads suffering from labour shortages. N=isa, who is in her late 80s, described how things were in the Epukiro reserve when she was a child:

The men would go to the veld to cut wood for the Hereros to build houses and they would make the skins soft and the women would do laundry and shake the milk for the Hereros and make the cattle dung soft for the houses. They would then give us milk to drink and some old clothes...the Hereros and the whites did the same. We received mielie meal to cook and milk to drink.

The Ju/'hoansi's 'serf-master' or 'patron-client'-like relationship with Hereros undoubtedly shaped initial labour relations on the white farms, as the Ju/'hoansi undertook part-time farm work on much the same terms as they worked for Hereros and Tswanas. But as the white farm labour relationships became 'Africanized' in this way, so too did the Ju/'hoansi begin to view their relationship with the settler farmers in terms of their experiences with Hereros.

By the 1950s, when white settlement had filled the available land and widespread fencing had begun, selective participation was no longer an option. None of my Ju/'hoan informants under 60 years old reported living in the veld part time in the past. Most of the older informants reported moving from the reserves into the white area to look for work. When white settlement reached its peak in the 1950s, three decades after the reserves had been consolidated, the Ju/'hoansi were left a completely dispossessed, landless underclass and had little option but to engage in farm labour. In the early years of white settlement, the Ju/'hoansi began working on farms located on land that had been their traditional foraging grounds (n!oresi) (Gordon 1992a:98-99; SWAA A50/67 from the Magistrate of Gobabis to the Native Commissioner, April 20, 1928). By the 1960s, most of the Ju/'hoansi had been

born and had grown up on a farm (Köhler 1959:25-26; Suzman 1997:35,36,39).

The transformation of the Ju/'hoansi into generational farm workers, who are now born and grow up on the farms where they will eventually marry and seek employment, is recapitulated in the initiation of Ju/'hoan children into farm work. Most Ju/'hoan men have been trained as farm workers, or at least for general service to whites, from early childhood. Child labour, euphemistically called 'apprenticeship', was common in the days of German colonialism and continued under South African Administration. Besa is a 97 year old Nharo man who came to Gobabis with his parents from the Ghanzi side of Sandfontein (now Buitepos) around "the time of the big war between the Germans and the Hereros" (1904-1907). When he was about 8 years old, he began working for a German store owner, accompanying him to Windhoek and back to get supplies, a journey Besa says took about a month:

At that time I didn't wear shorts. I only wore a shirt and a gae [loincloth- !gae, Nama/Damara; n/ho, Ju/'hoan]. I was only this tall [pointing to an eight year old child] and was a piccaninny...I went with the farmer and he would drive the donkey cart and we were the people who looked after the donkeys. You must hold the rope and walk in front...for nothing! [no pay]. It was very hard. And when it is winter, you will only just wear a shirt and the farmer will say "hey Bushman! Hurry up!" and you run, burrr, burrr...When the train came [1930], we stopped and then the train was moving the load and we started doing farm work. Then we had jobs to fix fences and saw wood.

When Besa began working as a full time farm labourer, he was about 30 years old and reports earning 5 shillings per month plus rations.

Most of the men I interviewed, old and young, reported starting out as children, helping their fathers. /Kunta, who is in his late 60s, describes his first job:

The first job I did when I was too young to milk was to stand at the gate and when they needed a calf to bring to the mother for her milk, I brought the calf. That was the job I started with. It was the work we did when we were too young to do the hard work...At that time we didn't receive money, just trousers and a shirt. That's all. That's your

pay...At that time we didn't get food. The only thing we got was sweets.

More recently, a Ju/'hoan man in his early twenties described how he worked for the farmer during a hiatus he took from school when he was 11 years old. His duties were to water the farmer's vegetables and the trees and flowers in the farmer's yard and to feed the goats. He was paid N\$5/m.

Young boys continue to do odd jobs around the farm, such as opening gates, picking up trash and chasing small stock at dosing time. They are given sweets in return for helping out. I witnessed no occasion where a farmer actually recruited children to work. Typically games are briefly interrupted to perform a small chore in return for a candy and then the game is resumed.²

Ju/'hoan women were similarly initiated into domestic work from childhood. N/haokxa, a Ju/'hoan woman in her mid-60s described her working experiences in the early 1940s:

When I started working, I was looking after the farmer's children. At that time I was very young. I was looking after the children and working in the garden. When I got older, I started to help my mother with the laundry and ironing. I was ironing pillow cases. Then after I was working in the kitchen.

Older women described starting out working as domestics by helping their mothers. When adolescent girls started working they were usually given 'light' chores, such as working in the garden, child-minding (which was done more in the past) and 'light' housework, such as dusting and sweeping. Thus, just as in the case of male farm workers, the development of a

² Under section 108(2)(b) of the Namibian Labour Act, child labour is defined as "forced labour" and "any person who causes, permits or requires...any work performed by any child under the age of 18 years of any employee of an employer in terms of any arrangement or scheme in any undertaking who is for any reason required to perform such work in the interests of such employer" will be subject to the penalties "imposed by law for abduction" (Labour Act 1992; see also Hubbard and Corbett 1993:33).

generational underclass involved the use of female child-labour.

ii) Women's Dependencies

Farming in the Omaheke is a male activity (I heard of only two women farmers) and farms are passed down from father to son, or from father-in-law to son-in-law. Thus, as Ju/'hoan women were drawn into the settler political economy, they also became entangled in a web of colonial gender ideologies that defined them as appendages of men and relegated them to the domestic sphere - the 'female' zone of the colonial economy and social world. Ju/'hoan women became 'housekeepers' in their own homes (they are now referred to by their menfolk as 'the *baas* of the house') and domestic servants in the homes of their white employers. The Administration's efforts to 'domesticate' the 'wild' Bushmen held profound, and quite literal, implications for Ju/'hoan women.

One important, and often overlooked, aspect of Ju/'hoan incorporation into the settler economy is the extent to which transformation into an underclass required, and produced a radical rearrangement of gender roles and gender definitions in the Ju/'hoan community: Ju/'hoan women were subordinated, not only to the white '*baas*' and '*miesis*' on the farms, but also to their own menfolk. Their relatively equal access to the means of subsistence was undermined and their access to a livelihood within the settler economy became contingent upon their association with a male worker. Furthermore, their gathering activities, once central to a foraging life way, were reduced to an activity which subsidized the farming economy by compensating for sub-subsistence wages. The fact that Ju/'hoan women were central economic actors in a foraging economy does not translate automatically into the relative gender egalitarianism so widely noted in foraging contexts (Lee 1979; 280,453 and

pasism; Shostak 1981; Draper 1975).³ The pronounced gender asymmetries found among the Ju/'hoansi in the farming block today must be understood as a result of their incorporation into a *cultural* political economy that devalues 'women's work' and women generally - especially women of racially 'inferior' groups.⁴

Pushing Ju/'hoan and other 'native' women into service historically required that women be subordinated, not only to the dominant class within the broader political economy, but also within their own communities. The 1921 Native Reserves Commission described the 'unsavory' disposition of native domestic servants in this way:

...this disposition is that of *independence* and *insolence* and the opinion has been expressed on all sides that this attitude is greatly accountable for the demeanor their men at times exhibit towards their European employers (cited in Social Sciences Division/Legal Assistance Centre 1996b:16, emphasis mine).

Women who were not appropriately submissive were not only 'poor' or inferior servants, but also a threat to the creation of a 'docile' male labour force. It seems plausible, then, to suggest that the Administration's desire to 'domesticate' the Bushmen required, as a crucial component, 'domesticating' the Bushman woman.

Subordinating 'native women' also required specific changes in family structures and male/female domestic relationships. The 1921 Native Reserves Report discussed the problem

³ Indeed, women throughout sub-Saharan Africa provide sixty to eighty percent of the subsistence resources to their communities without enjoying political, social and legal equality with men (see, for example, Boserup 1970; Bay and Halfkin 1984; Hay and Stichter 1984).

⁴ A similar process is described by Diane Bell (1986) in her examination of the cultural meaning of Kaititj women's work in central Australia where their work in a 'traditional' context had ensured them full recognition as members of their society. However, as capitalist development marginalized and impoverished the community, their status in the community also diminished.

of polygamy in the following way:

It was pointed out that although there was no shortage of native women upon the farms, the men in many cases had two or more wives and that the attitude of the latter was so *independent that it was often with the greatest difficulty that they could be induced to render any service to the farmer's household...*As a check to this it was proposed that only one wife should be exempt from the operation of the control regulations...(cited in Social Sciences Division/Legal Assistance Centre 1996b:17, emphasis mine).

The development of a farming economy was thus facilitated through interference in the domestic arrangements of the native work force in order to create a familial structure which reflected European, capitalist arrangements - that is, nuclear families, female subordination and the demarcation of a female 'domestic sphere'. As Jacklyn Cock notes, there is an explicit link between "the ideology of domesticity that was rooted in European gender roles [and] an ideology of domestication generated by the problems of controlling a colonized people" (1990:85). Incorporating Ju/'hoan women into domestic service as a subordinated gender working in a subordinated job category facilitated the colonial agenda of racial subordination.

Not all of the female kin of a male worker are employed as domestic servants on a farm. Furthermore, where men are hired to work the farms of absentee farmers, there is no need for domestic servants, and so the women remain with no source of income of their own. The women thus collect on the farms as cheap, surplus labour. Nonetheless, all of the (adult) Ju/'hoan women I met in the Omaheke either were presently or had been domestic servants at some time.⁵

⁵ Younger women on the farms, in resettlement camps and villages, are also recruited by farmers to work as casual labourers in the maize and bean fields between March and May. Farmers often approach other farmers who may have a surplus of women on their farms to recruit these younger women for field work.

Although many women I spoke to said that it was possible for a woman to approach a farmer for a job in her own right, I only encountered one example of a woman hired on a farm without being associated with an employed kinsmen, and this was a case of a much older Nama-Ju/'hoan woman who had been originally apprenticed as a young girl to look after the farmer's children.⁶ It is unlikely that a Ju/'hoan woman would be successful in getting a job on a farm where she had no male kin, and jobs are more scarce for men since independence when dramatic downsizing resulted from drought, the loss of government subsidies and the prospect of new labour legislation. Furthermore, farmers usually have access to a pool of unemployed female kin of their male workers, and so would not be likely to hire a woman who was 'on the road' (i.e. looking for work). Most of the women I spoke to reported having been recruited by the farmer, who had approached her father or husband to offer the job and negotiate her terms of employment. Therefore, it is safe to say that Ju/'hoan women in the Omaheke are extremely dependent on male kin for income-earning opportunities and the means of survival.

Part Three: Farm Work and Domestic Service

i) Men's Work

Most of my informants between 60 and 80 years could not remember accurately what they earned as young men, but they all seemed agreed on at least three points: the work was

⁶ The only other time I saw women hired in their own right was in the case of three Griqua women who were hired to work in a quilting co-operative run by an Afrikaner woman. However, this case is atypical because the *miesis* on this farm was uniquely sensitive to the dependency of the women on her husband's farm and dedicated quite a bit of energy toward creating opportunities for the women to earn 'own-account' money.

harder, wages went further and the food was better. Besa described his working experiences in the 1930s and 1940s, loudly enough for the younger men nearby to hear:

The work of the past was very hard work. This day's work is not hard. You must work hard to make fences and you have no lunch break and only Sundays in the afternoon you have a rest. Then the next morning you start working again, with no lunch break. These kinds of jobs of today are not hard jobs...In the old days, any kind of job was hard and difficult. Then the farmer will also beat you. In the morning you must saw some posts and when you finish you want to stand up, but you cannot because your back will stay like a bow. If you want to stretch your back, you'll fall down.

Debe, a retired farm worker in his late 60s describes working as a young man in the 1940s and 1950s:

We worked so that this country could have a life. It was hard and difficult, but it was nice. [The difficult thing] was there were no fences in the past and you had to look after the cattle and the goats. Sometimes we worked into the night.

Debe eventually moved, in the 1970s, to a farm closer to Gobabis where he worked in the garden and helped construct the farm buildings:

After that [building] I worked again in the yard and did the milking. But there was no garden there, just a small garden. That garden is very big now because of my hands.

Although construction work is rarely cited as standard farm work, many older men I spoke to who were living on the same farm for more than 10 years could point to the farmer's house, the fences, the outbuildings, workers' quarter, dams, etc., and tell me approximately when they had built them. After independence, farmers began providing their workers with brick houses but, since farms were excluded from the government's housing programs, the farm workers themselves built them, and more often than not they also manufactured the needed bricks right on the farm.

Today the Ju/'hoansi men are expected to do a wide variety of skilled and unskilled tasks including:

Working with livestock: herding, counting, monitoring the health of the stock (especially at calving time); checking lick and feed; milking and making cream; slaughtering; castrating, dehorning, branding.

Garden Work (also women): planting, harvesting and weeding the maize, bean and lucern fields; tending the farmer's flower and kitchen gardens; planting flowers and trees; feeding the farmer's dogs.

Maintenance/Construction: fence/camp building (chopping droppers, cutting fence posts, clearing fence lines, digging post holes); chopping firewood (for use on the farms or for sale); clearing bush; drilling boreholes; maintaining windmills, generators, farm vehicles, fences, pipelines and dams; making bricks (for use on the farm or for sale); constructing outbuildings.

The Social Sciences Division/Legal Assistance Centre (hereafter SSD/LAC) farm workers' survey found that the Ju/'hoan (San) worked an average 11 hour day (1996a:67), which corresponds closely with what I found. However, this figure does not reflect the 'on-call' nature of farm work. Often farm workers will work until a particular job is done — slaughtering for example — which can make for a working day well over 11 hours. Each farm, and each farming family, has its special needs. On many farms, water is heated for the farmer's house in a wood-burning tank ('donkey'), and one worker rises early to start the fire and ensure that the farmer and his family will have hot water when they awake. On one farm, a Ju/'hoan worker was put in charge of turning off the generator after the farmer had gone to bed, and so had to stay awake at night to watch the farmer's house until the television and

lights went off. No farm worker or domestic servant reported earning overtime wages.⁷

The LAC/SDD report also found that the typical work week for San workers lasted 5.5 days (1996a:68). On the farms I surveyed, the Ju/'hoansi also worked a 5.5 day week, however, every worker was required to work weekend 'service' on a rotational basis, in order to keep the farmer's water heated and to check the stock. Thus, on any given week, one to three workers are putting in a seven day week. Farm workers are also called upon to accompany the farmer and his guests on weekend hunting expeditions. However, the Ju/'hoansi I spoke with did not mind this work, since they would likely be given the head, feet and innards of the kill, and therefore have a meat ration for that week.

There is also a small class of Ju/'hoan casual labourers, who do 'stukwerk' (piece work), which is usually fence-building. This work is very insecure, because they must travel from farm to farm offering their services, but they claim it pays more. Stukwerk is undertaken only by the most marginal groups, and so I met only Nama/Damara and Ju/'hoan stukwerkers. The stukwerkers I interviewed preferred work as independent casual labourers to regular farm work, suggesting that the additional autonomy made up for a lack of job security and the constant moving. N!aisi, a retired stukwerker, explained:

I made fences. But at that time I was my own *baas* and for 1,000 yards it was R200 or R300, because it was my work...if the ground is soft, and has no rocks [1,000 yards] will maybe be one month. If I finished the job, I would water the garden for the

⁷ Section 33(2)(c) and (d) of the Labour Act provides for domestic servants and farm workers to be required to work Sundays and public holidays (Namibian Labour Act 1992). Workers who work on Sundays or public holidays are to be "paid double pay or one half pay plus time off in the following week equal to the amount of time worked on Sunday or a public holiday" (Hubbard and Corbett 1993:17). Farm workers and domestic servants are not included under the list of workers who can be required to work overtime (more than 45 hours a week), however, where overtime falls on a Sunday or a public holiday, workers must be paid "double the normal hourly pay" (ibid:15).

farmer for R5.

/Ukuri, also a retired stukwerker, described how he took on stukwerk after he quit the employ of an elderly German woman farmer and was unable to find a job on another farm:

I left and then came back and the old farmer woman took me in to do stukwerk. I had my two sons...To work on a farm is easy, but stukwerking is difficult. But if you are clever for it, it's easy. On a farm the wages are low. For 500 yards from the bok [corner], its maybe R150 [two weeks to complete 500 yards].

While /Ukuri was building fences, his wife cleared bush and received N\$150 'when she finished'. Stukwerkers cover their own living expenses and buy their own food from the farm store on credit. They typically travel in teams, usually of related men and their wives. /Ukuri and N!aisi paid their fellow stukwerkers out of their salary at the end of the job, which in /Ukuri's case was R100 each (for three workers), minus whatever was spent on food at the farm store. It is difficult to determine whether or not stukwerk offers better income opportunities, because the work depends on intermittent demand from farmers and earnings will depend on farm store expenditures. It is true though, that stukwerkers are very vulnerable to exploitation. I met one young Ju/'hoan man, then visiting his family on a farm just north of Gobabis, who had spent a month in a small village in the communal area waiting for his Herero employer to pay him for a three-month fencing job he had finished. He went to visit his family only after he had given up hope that he would ever see his money.

In some cases the wage is not fixed at the outset and so the stukwerker will not know what he will earn until the job is finished. This makes it difficult to keep track of expenditures on credit. It is often very difficult for the wife of a stukwerker to find work for herself and so she is dependent on her husband for all her needs.

ii) Women's Work: The Double Work Day

Domestic work in the Omaheke, both paid and unpaid, differs significantly from that described in more urban/industrial contexts (see, for example, Katzman 1978, Luxton 1980; Cock 1980). Conditions are austere and a great deal of the work done in the farmer's house is not mechanized (on some farms wood stoves are still used and laundry must be hand washed). Food is processed and prepared from scratch, and much of what is needed in the farmer's household is grown, slaughtered and processed on the farms with the help of farm workers and domestic servants. Furthermore, farmers' houses are typically quite large (e.g. 8 to 14 rooms), and every inch of every farmer's house is kept spotless. Keeping a house clean in the Kalahari introduces its own set of dusting, sweeping and laundry horrors: on the farms in the Omaheke, housework is a demanding job.

The rhythm of domestic work on many farms segregates major tasks by day. So, for example, Monday is laundry day and Tuesday is the day to iron. Whole days may be set aside for specialized or seasonal jobs such as making butter or preserves or processing and storing meat (which is also a job men do). Younger, less experienced domestic servants proceed with the daily chores, such as making beds, sweeping, dusting and tending the garden. The laundry and ironing were typically cited as the worst jobs. Although some farmers have washing machines, hand-washed laundry is thought to be cleaner and more desirable. Furthermore, many farmers' wives keep an immaculate household, and more than a few Ju/'hoan women reported ironing every item of laundry, including towels, pillowcases and wash cloths. Besides laundry, many Ju/'hoan women did not count any particular task as more difficult than others. For the most part domestic work is by its nature generally tiring and difficult. One Ju/'hoan woman put it this way: "there is no job which is bad, it is just hard to be

working all day.” Another woman echoed this comment, saying: “The way which it is difficult is to work the whole day long, and then after you must also do work at your own home.”

It is very difficult to determine the working hours for many for the Ju’hoan women in a survey since few own watches or clocks. Usually they would point to the places in the sky where the sun would be when they started and finished their work day. Furthermore, work schedules are not always fixed. If there is a special chore that needs doing (e.g. making butter) the women simply continue to work until the job is finished. On the farms where I was able to clock the working hours of the domestic servants myself, I found that the normal wage working day was 8 to 10 hours (e.g. 6:30 or 7:30 to 17:30 or 18:00 with a two hour lunch break).⁸ However, working hours were not always so long. It was not unusual to find Ju’hoan domestic servants returning from work at 15:30 or 16:00.

Domestic service, like farm work, is also by nature ‘on-call’. Weekends are not always a good time for the women to get their own laundry and housework done because they usually put in a half-day on Saturdays and are very tired by the time Sunday arrives. Furthermore, farmers often entertain guests on weekends and so the women must make themselves available to cook larger meals and serve tea and snacks throughout the day. On one farm the farmer’s wife also requires the women make themselves available to do the laundry for her grown children’s family, who bring a large pile whenever they come to visit.

⁸ The SSD/LAC Farmworkers survey found that domestic servants on commercial farms worked on average 7.8 hours a day (1996a:67). The SSD/LAC Domestic workers survey found that 52 percent of domestic workers (primarily urban) work 5 to 8 hours a day, 45 percent more than 8 hours a day, and the rest worked only a few hours a day (1996b:xvi;104).

Of course, Ju/'hoan domestic servants put in a double work day, returning from their jobs at the farmers house to tend to their own homes. It was quite difficult to acquire detailed information from the women about the work they do in their own homes. Their responses to my questions were reminiscent of a comment made by one of Meg Luxton's informants in Flin Flon, Manitoba: "it's a bit startling to try to think about it as something more than just me living my life" (1980:12). The most common response I got from questions about housework was "I just clean up". Tasks are rarely distinguished or itemized and so little attention is paid to how much effort and energy is dedicated to each task - although Ju/'hoan women are abundantly aware of how tired they are at the end of the day.

Clocking the housework activities the Ju/'hoan women do around their own homes was enormously frustrating since household tasks are rarely done at one time, because domestic service or other duties interrupt the job. Also, many tasks are on-going (cooking a goat head over a fire can take up to three hours). Furthermore, many tasks blend together or are done simultaneously. However, after months of chasing Ju/'hoan women around their living spaces writing down everything they were doing, and by clocking the working activities of the women on one farm over a period of three weeks during different months, I was able to develop a composite picture of an 'average house working day' on a farm. So, for the sake of illustration, here is a sketch of the work Ju/'hoan women do in their own houses on farm X:

Breakfast: Starting the fire; boiling water; washing dishes; heating left-over mielie pap (or cooking a fresh batch of mielie pap); making coffee; washing dishes again; tidying food preparation area. *(On farms where women cook breakfast fairly regularly, rather than just*

settle for morning coffee, the task takes longer and the work is often done by women who are not employed in the farmer's house. When the breakfast is cooked, they take it out to the male workers, if the men are not too far out in the veld. In these cases breakfast can take up to 3 hours).

Time: 1 hour

Cooking/Food Preparation: Sifting mielie meal; tending the fire; preparing meat (boiling and scraping off hair, cutting and cooking); cutting and peeling veldkos and garden food; roasting veldkos; boiling/roasting garden food. *(During periods of good rain, when food is in relative abundance, women who do not work as domestic servants will dedicate the whole day, off and on, to preparing and cooking veld food and garden vegetables to be eaten along with the mielie pap at lunch or dinner time. When domestic servants return home on their lunch break or when they are finished for the day, they join the other women in the food preparation and cooking activities).*

Time: 1.5 - 2 hours (altogether)

General Cleaning: Sweeping floors and stoeps; raking the yard; making beds or pallets; putting away clothes; picking up garbage. *(This job is usually done two or three times a day. The unemployed women do general cleaning between other tasks or just before they take a rest. Domestic servants clean their own houses at lunch time and after work).*

Time: 1 hour (altogether)

Lunch: Boiling water; washing dishes; cooking mielie pap; tidying food area. *(As the veldkos and garden foods are being cooked, the mielie pap is put on the fire to cook, the dishes are washed, and after the mielie pap is ready, lunch is dished out. If she is the primary woman associated with the fire, often a domestic servant takes over cooking the lunch when she*

returns for her lunch break. Other women associated with her fire, but who do not work for the farmer, continue to assist, by fetching water, washing dishes, fetching more firewood, etc. Some of the veld or garden food may be eaten at lunch time, and the rest saved for dinner).

Time: 1 hour

Sewing/Handicrafts: Mending clothes; sewing new clothes out of old scraps; knitting; making carry bags; making household tools.

Time: Constant

Firewood gathering: Women are not always required to gather firewood (see below), however, when it does have to be done, they must travel far enough into the veld to find the better quality wood.

Time: 45 min - 1 hour

Dinner: Boiling water; washing dishes; processing food; cooking mielie pap; washing and rotating dishes; tidying food area. *(By dinner time, veldkos, meat and garden vegetables have been cooked during the day and so cooking dinner is only a matter of boiling a pot of mielie meal. However, in cases where meat or vegetable foods were not prepared during the day by another woman, a domestic servant may have to spend a great deal more time with this meal).*

Time: 1.5 - 2 hours

Laundry: Usually done at lunch time by a domestic servant or started or done completely by a woman associated with the fire. This job requires multiple trips to the water tap and multiple washing and rinsing for each item of clothing.

Time: 3 - 7 hours (for a household of 5 to 8 people)

This list does not include veldkos gathering expeditions, which the women will undertake if they are able to find a free half hour or free hour sometime during the day.

The cruel irony of poverty is that if veldkos and garden food are not available, or if meat is not supplied, or if they have no floors to sweep and have no beds to make, Ju/'hoan women have less work to do. For Ju/'hoan women, housework can take between 9.25 to 14.5 hours in a day. Usually the laundry is spread out over the entire week, so adjusting for a laundry task of approximately 45 minutes to an hour every day, Ju/'hoan women face 7 to 8.5 hours of housework every day of the week (7 days). For Ju/'hoan women who are also domestic servants, working 8 to 10 hours a day for the farmer's wife, a working day might be 15 to 18.5 hours long. Thus a "working week" (5.5 days) is 44 to 55 hours long in paid domestic work, plus 38.5 to 47 hours non-paid domestic work, which is 82.5 to 102 hour working week in total. Given that Ju/'hoan women must still perform the same household tasks outlined above during the weekends, we can add an extra 7 to 8 hours for half of Saturday and all day Sunday (89.5 to 110 hours of work in a 7 day week). Figures 13 to 16 give some idea of the hours of work that are usually required to maintain the workers' compounds — not the number of hours that are actually worked by any single woman — in order to indicate the extent to which mutual assistance between women on the farms is essential for maintaining relatively clean and comfortable living conditions on the farms.⁹

⁹ Lee found that Ju/'hoan women in Dobe devoted 22 hours in 'housework' each week, seven hours more than men. However they also only spent about 12 hours engaged in subsistence work per week, while men dedicated about 21 hours toward subsistence tasks each week. Lee also noted that women's house-working activities are also on-going, and generally include the bulk of child-care duties (1979:277-280).

Fig. 13 Hours of Work in a Day for Women (low and high calculations):

Working Day (Paid)	Working Day (Unpaid)	Total
8 hours	7 hours	15 hours
10 hours	8.5 hours	18.5 hours

Fig. 14 Hours of Work in a Day for Men and Women (high calculations):

	Working Day (Paid)	Working (Day Unpaid)	Total
Women	10 hours	8.5 hours	18.5 hours
Men	11 hours	3 hours	14 hours

*Men's chores around the house include: chopping wood, repairing donkey carts, digging garbage pits, building small garden fences and chicken coops and making household tools (out of fence wire), such as cooking instruments (e.g. a n!abo for cooking mealie pap).

Fig. 15 Hours in a Woman's "Working Week" (5.5 days):

Paid	Unpaid	Total
44 hours	38.5 hours	82.5 hours
55 hours	46.75 hours	101.75 hours

Fig. 16 Hours in a Woman's Regular Week (7 days):

Paid (5.5 days)	Unpaid (5.5 days)	Unpaid (1.5 days - Sat and Sun)	Total
44 hours	38.5 hours	7 hours	89.5 hours
55 hours	46.75 hours	8 hours	109.75 hours

Of course, many Ju/'hoan women are not able to keep up a 7 to 8 hour per day housework routine; first of all, domestic servants come home tired; and secondly, when they come home from work at about 17:00 or 17:30 there are only one to two hours of daylight

left. Thus, assistance from other female household members who do not work in the farmer's house is essential. Most housework is done tag-team style and so very few Ju/'hoan women I spoke to actually put in such long hours in their own housework. What actually happens is that Ju/'hoan domestic servants spend about 4 to 5 hours a day doing their own housework (1 to 2 hours at lunch and about 3 hours after work). Either other women in their household pick up the slack, or the housework simply accumulates.

Women I spoke to expressed frustration over the fact that they never feel as though they are really finished with any of their work. For example, if a woman cannot get the laundry done in one or two days, it becomes a never-ending job since, after they have washed one half of the laundry and started the other half, the first half is dirty again. Furthermore, when money is short, as it so often is, laundry soap is one of the first items eliminated from the list of things to purchase. Thus, the Ju/'hoansi work and live in clothes that remain unwashed for weeks at a time. The farmers for whom they work complain that they are always dirty. Ju/'hoan women at least are not insensitive to their personal hygiene and are very aware of the attitudes white people hold about their cleanliness, or rather lack of cleanliness.

One job Ju/'hoan women are occasionally spared is gathering firewood. Some farmers supply firewood for sale (e.g. in petrol stations) in Gobabis, and in some cases farmers sell firewood to distributors in Cape Town. When farmers market firewood, gathering and chopping wood becomes incorporated into male wage labour. When men engage in these activities, firewood is supplied to the worker's houses as well. On other farms, where the farmer does not sell firewood, the farmer may send the men out to the veld to gather wood if it is a slow working day.

Gathering firewood is still defined as 'women's work', even when Ju/'hoan men do it themselves. When gathering firewood is a part of men's wage work gender asymmetries are revealed: first of all, providing their families with firewood is paid labour when men do it, but is unpaid labour when women do it; secondly, when men gather firewood as part of their paid work, they have access to technology - tractors, bakkies, axes and saws - yet when women gather firewood the only tools used are hands, heads and feet; finally, even when supplying their households with firewood in their free time, men typically use donkey carts, whereas women usually walk. Men use a donkey cart and assist the women in firewood gathering if the wood is too far away for a woman to bring back an adequate amount on her head. When I asked women why they didn't use donkey carts to gather firewood I was told that it was possible to use a donkey cart, if the woman asked her husband for permission.

iii) Remuneration: Wages and Rations

In the Omaheke commercial farming block each farm is run according to the individual farmer's own style of farm and labour management. The number of workers and residents, wages, rations, pay schedules and housing conditions vary according to the farmer's productive strategy and economic circumstances. Farms tend to fall along a continuum from an 'old fashioned', very casual mode of farm management, to a more 'rationalized' or 'business-like' farming system (for a comparable distinction in Ghanzi, Botswana, see Guenther 1986a and Russell and Russell 1979). 'Old fashioned' farms are usually run by older Afrikaners who tend to view the Ju/'hoansi more as 'Bushmen' and less as 'workers'. Farmers, particularly those of the 'old fashioned' variety, often express a paternalistic concern for 'their Bushmen'.

Remuneration for work consists in a balance of wages and rations, and the ratio of wages to rations varies according to the degree of rationalization on the farm. On more 'rationalized' farms, wages tend to be higher, but rations tend to be lower or even non-existent, and workers must spend seventy to eighty percent of their income on food. On farms where more rations are given, wages tend to be accordingly lower.

Men's Wages

In chapter one I discussed how settler farming in the Omaheke began as an economically dependent and ecologically marginal activity. The marginal nature of settler farming in the Gobabis district meant that farmers could hardly afford the kinds of wages and 'benefits' considered standard and appropriate in the Union,¹⁰ even if they were inclined to do so. Unlike in other industries in the territory, sanitation facilities, rations and water supplies were not regulated. Except for their Ovambo workers, farmers were not responsible for providing medical treatment, and they were entitled to dismiss workers who were too sick to work or dock wages "in proportion to the time during which he fail to render his services" (SWAA A521/3 Native Commissioner to Secretary for SWA, July 17, 1923).

In 1937, the Assistant Native Commissioner pointed out that farm wages were extremely low and the only 'benefit' offered was rations, which hardly counted as adequate remuneration, let alone as a 'benefit':

An appreciable number [of farmers] think that a small mielie ration, plus a little salt,

¹⁰ According to the Assistant Native Commissioner, in his critical report of the farm labour situation in SWA, farm workers in the Union of South Africa received stock, agricultural produce, land and grazing entitlements in addition to their wages and rations (SWAA A521/13 March 30, 1937).

and meat when an animal dies is all that is necessary...I have heard of farmers feeding their workers on separated milk only (SWAA A521/13 , to Chief Native Commissioner, March 30, 1937).

Some insight into the conditions on the farms is provided by Gobabis court records, where one finds the testimony of Bushman farm workers accused of stock theft claiming "it was hunger that caused me to kill the calf" (LGO 1/1/1-16, Records of Proceedings, Criminal Cases, 1925). Although stock theft was (and still remains) a means by which the Ju'hoansi exact retribution against farmers who mistreated them, stock theft was also (and still is) a way of warding off starvation. Stock theft provides a means of combining retribution and survival. Many Ju'hoansi told me that a goat tastes much better if it belonged to a farmer who beat you.

Wage levels reported by the Gobabis magistrates between 1928 to 1937 remained fairly constant between 5/- to 10/- per month and it was recognized at the time that 5/- was insufficient to support a 'grown native male' (SWAA A521/13 memorandum from the Chief Native Commissioner, 30/3/37). In 1934, the Secretary for South West Africa recommended that 5/- should be a starting wage for 'piccanins', and should be increased by 1/- every three months (SWAA A521/13, 25/10/1934). This recommendation reflects only the official view of appropriate wages levels, and was largely ignored. The highest paid workers, Ovambo contract workers, started at 8/- per month, which was increased by 1/ every four months over a one year contract (ibid; Gordon 1992a:142). That these wages were insufficient becomes still clearer when we consider that local labourers were also required to support any kin living with them on the farm.

Even then, these wages do not reflect what farm workers actually earned. Farmers had devised a variety of 'cost recovery' schemes to avoid paying full wages. For example,

farmers would dock workers wages to cover farm store debts, dock pay to cover the cost of lost or stolen stock, and deduct grazing fees from workers who had stock of their own. These ‘unauthorized deductions’ were technically illegal, but not subject to criminal sanctions (SWAA A521/13, memorandum from the Chief Native Commissioner, 30/3/37). Such deductions meant that “in some cases natives work for years without ever getting out of their employer’s debt” (ibid). In this respect, little changed over the next forty years. In 1975, the Turnhalle Constitutional Conference proposed introducing a minimum wage of R54 per month, however, farmers opposed the wage increase and the SWA Agricultural Union conducted its own research into farm conditions. They found that prices in farm stores were so high, and wages so low (e.g. R12 per month)¹¹ that farm workers were perpetually in debt to the farmers and often received no wages at all. Also, farmers would give workers gifts of clothing only to deduct the cost of the gifts from wages at the end of the month. Finally, the oft-touted ‘perk’ of farm working — free grazing entitlements — were in fact not free since farmers would deduct grazing fees from the price of stock they purchased (often coercively) from their workers (Cronje and Cronje 1979:65-69; see also Katjavivi 1988:94-103). The minimum wages that were introduced at this time did not apply to farm workers or domestic servants. The reason for excluding farm workers from minimum wage legislation was that they could ‘live off the land’ to supplement wages (Cronje and Cronje 1979:65-66).

Gordon records Ju’hoan male wages staying fairly constant at 4/- (per month) between 1925 to 1940 (an actual decline in real wages), at half of what contract workers

¹¹ An agricultural census conducted in 1970-71 found the average wage for farm workers was R10.25 per month; Ju’hoan farm workers and women workers received less than this (SSD/LAC 1996b:33).

earned (1992a:141). This is consistent with wages reported to me by older male informants who had worked in the 1930s and 1940s (although I only received estimates). In any case, it was true, and remains true today that

Bushman wages, if they receive any at all, are always less than those paid to Hereros or Ovambos and their food rations too are less and of inferior quality. The reason for this is that Bushmen are regarded as a vastly inferior being to the Bantu and that he is lazy and unreliable (SWAA A198/26 Native Commissioner, Ovamboland to Chief Native Commissioner 5/9/1940).

Ju/'hoan workers were subject to more extreme forms of economic exploitation in a sector of the economy already noted for its exploitative labour relations. Even Administrators were forced to admit that "the tame Bushmen who have given up their nomadic life or those who are in the transitory stage who have 'settled' on farms, are often exploited by certain types of farmers" (ibid).

The recent SSD/LAC survey found that San men were paid, in mid-1995, a cash wage of N\$130 per month¹² (a 37 percent increase from the 1994 level) - the range varied from N\$50 to N\$300 (1996a:69).¹³ My own sample of 27 Ju/'hoan men found an average wage of N\$82.00 per month (none earned weekly wages), ranging from as low as N\$10 to as high as N\$400 (mode = N\$100). A foreman (called a "go and hear", *he tsa*) may receive an extra N\$5 to N\$20 per month. I found no cases where a Ju/'hoan foreman worked on a farm with non-Ju/'hoan workers, and the Ju/'hoan foremen I did meet never earned wages comparable to non-Ju/'hoan foremen.

¹² Sixteen of their sample of 25 earned a monthly wage, the remaining 5 were earned a weekly wage equivalent to N\$81 per month (1996a:69).

¹³ This compares to a monthly cash wage of N\$166.12 for non-Ju/'hoan farm workers (1996a:x), or N\$300/m if payment is made in wages only (ibid:23).

It is difficult to be completely accurate, however, because many workers were not clear about how much they earned. This has to do with ambiguous terms of employment on the farms; few workers are told clearly what they will earn and many work for the farmer for a full month before they find out what their wages are.¹⁴ Furthermore, many Ju/'hoan informants had difficulty keeping track of their wages since they were perpetually in debt from buying on credit at the farm store. Finally, on some farms the wages reported by the workers were at odds with the wages reported by the farmers (where the latter were willing to disclose this information).¹⁵

Women's Wages

Gordon records wages for Ju/'hoan women between 1925 to 1940 at 2/6 per month (1992a:141), which is about two-thirds the wages he records for Ju/'hoan men (4/-). As early as 1921, the Native Reserves Commission recommended setting monthly minimum wages at the following levels: 15/- plus food for 'native adult males'; 10/- plus food for women in domestic service; and 5/- plus food for 'milkmaids, boys and girls under 16 years' (i.e.

¹⁴ Farmers are only now beginning to use contracts, although infrequently for domestic servants. Where contracts are not used, the terms of employment are often mysterious to the Ju/'hoansi. Yet, even where contracts are used terms of employment remain ambiguous, since most Ju/'hoansi are unable to read. One older Ju/'hoan woman told me simply: "On that farm the money was good, but I can't count, so I don't know how much it was."

¹⁵ It would be too simplistic to assume that the farmers always misrepresent what they pay. On one occasion a worker told me he earned "only N\$55", but had agreed to N\$250. On further questioning I discovered he is supposed to earn N\$55 *per week* (x 4.5 = N\$247.50/m), yet he never received the money 'in his hand' because the farmer made debt deductions. Distrust, helpless indifference to wages and resentment on the part of the workers result from the lack of clear communication about terms of employment.

'piccaninnys") (SSD/LAC 1996b:16).¹⁶ These recommendations were largely ignored. Instead, farmers adopted the attitude expressed by the Williston Cape Magistrate's advice to the Secretary for SWA: "should the wife also work, she would get something reasonably extra" (SWAA A521/13 August 18, 1927). My own research found that what was considered 'reasonably extra', at least up until the 1950s and 1960s, was no wages at all, but only payments made in kind, such as food and old clothes. Of the women I surveyed between 60 and 80 years old (11 out of 38), only three reported earning a wage in the 1930s and 1940s, and they received wages only after they were married. Judging from the reports of the older Ju/'hoansi, men and women, female domestic servants did not generally start getting paid wages until the late 1960s. /Xabe describes her working experience as an adolescent in the mid-1940s:

The first job I had was to water the flowers in the morning. In the afternoon I worked in the house sweeping the floors and washing the floors. When I was older I cooked for them. At that time we didn't get money. They just gave us clothes. The work we did, out of that work, they bought your needs. We didn't get money.

Another older woman told me:

At that time we didn't know about money. They just gave us clothes. Clothes and food. And we ate at the farmer's house. We didn't have a way to get money.

Labour relations, hiring practices, and payment practices on the farms not only

¹⁶ By 1945 the Native Labourers Commission examined the desirability of recruiting female domestic servants from the reserves within and outside of the Police Zone. The Commission recommended that a minimum wage for female domestic servants at 5/8s that of an able-bodied local male worker (SSD/LAC 1996b:24). Thus according to official views, female labour was worth 66 percent (1921) and 63 percent (1945) of the value of male labour. Gordon's recorded wages for the Ju/'hoansi corresponded to this estimation (1992a:141). In the case of Ju/'hoan women, who earned sixty percent of Ju/'hoan male wages, they earned sixty percent of a lot less than women who were earning sixty percent of non-Ju/'hoan male wages.

structured the relationship between the Ju/'hoansi and their employers, but also structured relations between Ju/'hoan women and men themselves, establishing and perpetuating Ju/'hoan women's marginalization and dependency. When N/haokxa was working as a young woman, before she was married, she relied on her father to provide her with what the farmers would not: "[my father] didn't give me money, but when he got paid, he just bought me things which I needed." In /Xabe's case, only her husband received wages and she did not always get an opportunity to exercise much control over her husband's income:

When it was payday [the farmer] just took the men to town and paid them in town. And the men bought things for themselves and for us. And for our work we did for the farmer's wife, she just bought some of our needs and gave them to us.

Thus, a trend was established in which Ju/'hoan women are enmeshed in multiple layers of dependency. Ju/'hoan women's livelihood depends on: first, good relations between her male kin and the farmer; second, good relations between themselves and the farmer; third, cordial relations between themselves and the farmer's wife; fourth, on agreement and co-operation between the farmer and the farmer's wife; and finally, on amicable relations between the Ju/'hoan woman and her husband (or other male kin). Two of the five relationships are beyond a Ju/'hoan woman's control. Added to this are complexities associated with the socio-political relationships between the workers themselves (this is explored in chapter four and five).

On farms I surveyed, wages for domestic servants ranged from no pay at all to N\$180 per month.¹⁷ From my small sample of domestic servants I found that the average monthly

¹⁷ Twenty out of the 38 women with whom I conducted survey interviews worked as domestic servants at the time of the interview. Eleven were retired and 7 were not working because they were either living on a resettlement camp or on a farm owned by an absentee (continued...)

wage was N\$45.00 (mode = N\$40). On average, Ju/'hoan women received N\$37.00 less than male Ju/'hoan farm workers (or earned 54 percent of Ju/'hoan male wages). However, the situation differs from farm to farm and case to case. On one farm, for example, a Ju/'hoan domestic servant and her husband received the same wage (N\$40), while her sister earned N\$10 less than her own husband. On another farm, a Ju/'hoan domestic servant earned \$20 while her husband earned N\$50. On the farm where the domestic workers were paid no cash wages, they were young (20s) Ju/'hoan women who were married to well-paid Ovambo and Damara farm workers. On no farm did I find domestic servants paid wages comparable to senior male workers. Rather, they received wages comparable to younger, junior male workers (e.g. gardeners) - even in cases where the Ju/'hoan woman was older, more experienced and had been working on the farm for a much longer period of time. In general, Ju/'hoan women's wages are seen as only supplementary to male wages.

I am, again, not confident that I received an accurate picture of the wage levels for many of the reasons outlined above. Statistics on monthly wages are inaccurate anyway since very few Ju/'hoansi actually receive this pay because of farm store debts. Furthermore, while working out household budgets with some Ju/'hoan women, I learned that occasionally farmers offer what appears to be a weekly 'food allowance' and the Ju/'hoansi sometimes purchased most of their ration package out of this allowance. This created some difficulties because sometimes an informant would report x amount in wages and y amount of rations, yet on some farms the farmers only supplied a few free ration items (i.e. mielie meal, milk and occasionally meat) and sold everything else to the Ju/'hoansi which they bought with

(...continued)

farmer - none of the women I interviewed had never worked as a domestic servant.

'food money'. Hence, 'food money' would occasionally get counted as wages, and rations bought with this 'food money' would occasionally get counted as (free) rations. It took quite an effort to sort this issue out. On some farms it appears that 'food money' is actually another form of credit.¹⁸

As far as 'benefits' go, many of the domestic servants and farm workers I spoke to were given yearly vacation leaves, usually for one month, on a rotational basis. Other benefits include gifts of livestock, which are given only to men. Livestock is seen as an important resource by the Ju/'hoansi who often describe it as a means of 'bringing themselves up'. However this form of remuneration also perpetuates gender inequalities since men are the de facto 'owners' of livestock, and any monetary gains made through the sale of livestock is treated as 'men's money'. Another benefit domestic servants are legally entitled to is maternity leave. According to the section 41 Labour Act, after the first twelve months of service, domestic servants are entitled to unpaid maternity leave for four weeks prior to and eight weeks after confinement, and must not be retrenched during or after their leave. However, many Ju/'hoan women I spoke to claimed that they did not take maternity leave until after their confinement, and even then only for a few days. In most cases, when a Ju/'hoan woman takes time off to care for a new-born, she is replaced by another unemployed woman on the farm and she may not get her job back.

¹⁸ It also turned out to be almost impossible to quantify information about rations packages. Quite often farmers distribute rations loosely in buckets, pails, tins, etc, sometimes full to the brim, other times a little more than half full. Also, the amount of mielie meal given, for example, may change from one week to the next at the farmer's whim.

Perceptions of Wages

One of the biggest complaints made by the older men was that money does not go as far as it used to. One of the main reasons wages seemed to go further in the past is that the Ju/'hoansi were given ration packages, and were rarely required to purchase as much of their own food from the farm store as they do now:

It is not better since independence...In the old times you got rations on the farms. But it has changed now and you must buy your own food. In the old times, you received R50 or R80, but you received food. Now, when a farmer gives you NS200 or NS300, you must buy your own food. Mostly the money is spent on food.

Debe claimed that in the mid-1970s he earned R30 which “was not enough, but I also got food and it was okay for me.”¹⁹ The Ju/'hoansi often comment with irony on the most conspicuous changes since independence: “Sam Nujoma took the beatings and the money away.”

Many agree with Damm that “at that time [before independence] everything was cheap...that was a good time.” His wife, who claimed to have made £1 for domestic service²⁰ in the 1940s added: “we bought three meters of material with that money...at that time everything was cheap.” Gashe, who is in his late 60s, described how he and his co-workers received 10 shillings in the 1930s:

¹⁹ Debe's wage seems to have been fairly high. The Agricultural census conducted in 1970-71 found that the average wage for a regular farm worker was R10.25 (SSD/LAC 1996b:33). In 1976 the average starting wage was R12.50, which was raised to R15 after eight months (Cronje and Cronje 1979:65; see also Gebhardt 1978:158-9)

²⁰ Both the Union of South Africa and South West Africa used the Pound Sterling until 1935. In 1936 South Africa switched to the South African Pound. South West Africa continued to use the Pound Sterling until 1937, and then switched to the South African Pound in 1938. South Africa and South West Africa switched to the Rand in 1961. After independence, Namibia switched to the Namibian dollar (United Nations Statistical Yearbook, New York, 1955, 1960, 1961).

We tried to save it because at that time for trousers it was 10 cents, for a shirt also. And from that same money you maybe bought some sugar, coffee, sweets and it was enough for everything you needed...But now things are expensive. You can't buy shoes. Shoes are N\$70.

Sisaba describes his income in the 1950s:

In the old times, it was a lot of money [R5], because the farmers gave you food. The money was enough for clothes, shoes, everything. This money of today, it is not much money. If you have 100 dollars, you will have 5 cents in your pocket.

These observations are not just indicative of inflationary pressure in the Namibian economy (although perhaps there is some nostalgic 'mis-remembering'). Part of the justification for low wages, past and present, is that workers are paid 'in kind' - which includes old clothes. However, many Ju/'hoansi purchased old clothes from the farmers (and only very occasionally bought new clothes from stores in town).

Given that such payments in kind represent no cost to the farmers (since old clothes are either given away or thrown out), the present increase in the cost of living for the Ju/'hoansi could be interpreted as the farmers' unwillingness to provide such 'benefits', especially since independence, when farmers reacted to pressure for higher wages by withholding such items as used or cheap clothing. Bau complained one evening that the farmer's daughter had tried to give her a pair of (desperately needed) old shoes, but the farmer intervened and charged her N\$40. Older women, who are accustomed to receiving old clothes and other such gifts — as their payment for service — are particularly disillusioned by this change in the farmers' attitudes, and the apparent ill-will it signifies. N*isa could not understand the change in the behaviour of a *miesis* she had served for nearly 15 years: "We buy old clothes from them. She must just give them to us, but I don't know, she makes us buy them...I don't know why. She sells some and buries some."

Workers associated with one fire will often hand over at least some of their wages to the 'woman of the house', who is usually a domestic servant. It is the women's job to keep track of household needs and ensure that necessities are acquired. According to Bau: "it is the woman who decides what to buy because she's working at the house, making coffee and she will know if there's no soap or matches, because a man doesn't work with things in the house." Ju/'hoan women's household management roles provide them with some leverage in spending patterns - when husbands or male kin need money, they must ask for it. However the scope of their influence should not be over-estimated. Keeping the money affords women only a nominal say in how it is spent - she does not control it. Since sixty to eighty percent of their income is spent on essential items anyway, this offers little strategic advantage to Ju/'hoan women. The only significant conflicts over money concerns spending on alcohol, and here a Ju/'hoan woman, if she is not also spending the money on beer, usually loses the struggle.

Wages are so low that they do not represent a significant source of struggle or concern. Wages are not seen as anything important enough to keep close track of. I experienced some frustrations when I tried to accumulate information about income and spending patterns: few Ju/'hoan women could provide concrete household budget information and offered no specific figures for what they spent or saved. However, during one interview on this topic my Ju/'hoan informant turned to her sister and laughingly said "she must be thinking this is big money!" I felt slightly ridiculous when I realized I was asking these women to account for what amounts to pocket change. Many farmers wonder at the Ju/'hoansi's 'inability' to save money, yet the answer is actually no great mystery: in many cases their wages go to that same monetary nether world where one's pennies usually

end up. Indifference toward small change is often a defence against the psychological effects of extreme poverty: if the Ju/'hoansi tried to keep very close track of their low wages, they would be in a constant state of despair.

Rations

The most common ration package reported by older informants included weekly supplies of mielie meal, coffee, sugar, tea and tobacco, and occasionally meat. This is still the standard ration package today, although the Ju/'hoansi claimed they got more of each item in the past. 'Good' farmers, especially in the women's estimation, also supplied cooking fat, bread flour and powdered soap, but this was exceptional. All were agreed that farmers in the past supplied more, but still not enough, of their most valued food item - meat. In fact, the presence or absence of meat is a key issue for the Ju/'hoansi in distinguishing a 'good' farm from 'bad' farm. One woman stated:

If you don't eat meat, then it is not good and I don't like to eat porridge. That's why this farm is not nice. When I came here, I didn't get meat and now I'm feeling sick.

Ration packages for employed women were less than those given to the men, and in some cases the women received no independent rations but were expected to rely on the rations of their male kin. Bau's household provides some insight into a household budget on one farm, where the workers get a mixed package of free and purchased rations. This list only records the bare necessities. The mielie meal, coffee, tea and sugar are supplied free on a weekly basis, however, the amounts of each item are so small that they only last for a few days, and so Bau must go to the farm store, once a week or once every two weeks (e.g. for mielie meal) to replenish her supply. The number of farm store purchases will also depend on how many

people (squatters or visitors) are eating at Bau's fire at any given time:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Purchased Per Month</u>	<u>Total monthly</u>
*Mielie meal (5kgs)	\$9.00	x 2	= N\$18.00
Milk (daily)	-----	-----	-----
*Coffee (125g)	\$3.00	x 4.5	= N\$13.50
*Tea (50g)	\$1.00	x 4.5	= N\$ 4.50
*Sugar (1kg)	\$3.00	x 4.5	= N\$13.50
Laundry soap (15g)	\$2.00	x 4.5	= N\$ 9.00
Matches (1pk)	\$0.25	x 4.5	= N\$ 1.25
Bath soap (1 bar)	\$1.00	x 4.5	= N\$ 4.50
Tobacco (various)	\$3.00	x 2	= <u>N\$ 6.00</u>
* free items supplied weekly		Total per month:	N\$70.25

The combined income of Bau and her husband is N\$90 per month (Bau makes N\$40 and her husband N\$50) and so, even with weekly ration packages, they spend about 78 percent of their income on food and other necessities.

Bau and her husband are also in debt to the farmer, so usually they do not have a full N\$90 per month to spend on the food items they need each week. They, and other Ju/'hoansi on the farms, adopt three strategies to deal with this shortfall: 1) they may continue to buy food on credit and fall deeper in debt to the farmer; 2) they will refrain from buying less essential items, such as laundry soap, bath soap or tea; 3) they also sometimes cultivate small kitchen gardens, which are usually attached to a fire, where they grow corn, green beans, tsamma melons, water melons, pumpkins and have domesticated the potatoes that grow in the

veld (occasionally the Ju/'hoansi will provide the farmer with some of their produce in exchange for water); and 4) they pool resources with kin on the farm. In Bau's case, she shares money and resources with her mother and father-in-law, Di//xao and Oba, who also work for the farmer. Bau, her husband and her parents-in-law function as a single household on the principle of 'sharing a fire'. On this farm, when times are fair, only those who share Oba's fire pool resources. However, when times are tough, they also share resources with kin members belonging to other households.²¹ On this farm, the women do not get their own rations and so the ration situation is fairly extreme.

The Ju/'hoansi complain about the poor quality of their rations consistently, and are particularly dissatisfied with the monotony of eating mielie pap all the time. One woman told me that the only problem she had on the farm was the inadequate food supplies. She said: "It's just about the food and if you ask them [the farmers], they will be angry with you." Some farmers assert that mielie pap is the only food their workers will eat, and one farmer even went so far as to insist that mielie pap was the only food his workers needed and that they would likely die without it.²² The poor quality of the rations on many farms translates into more work for the women, who are responsible for feeding the members of their households and making the rations edible. For example, on quite a few farms I visited, the

²¹ On this farm, the residents are members of two families who have intermarried to produce one large family. This is not uncommon, but differs in important ways from farms where two or more discrete kin groups are found.

²² He backed up this assertion with an example of a Damara woman he had sent to work for his daughter in Windhoek, where his daughter fed her new domestic servant 'kitchen food'. It turns out that the poor woman was wasting away for want of mielie pap and as soon as she was returned to her regime of mielie pap, she "got fat and healthy again". I was unable to ask the woman in question what her thoughts on mielie pap were, but two women who lived on his farm expressed their opinion quite definitively: "We *hate* mielie pap!"

mielie meal was infested with small insects the Ju/'hoansi preferred not to ingest and so the women spend anywhere from 15 to 45 minutes sifting the mielie meal through a sheer cloth in order to remove the unwanted matter from their food. As N*isa, a retired domestic worker, sifted her mielie meal she turned to me and said "we are ugly on the outside, but inside we are beautiful and we don't like to eat ugly things." She then picked up the pail of mielie creatures and tossed them to the chickens.

In addition to pooling resources, the Ju/'hoansi cope with food shortages by reducing the number of meals they eat per day. Many of the Ju/'hoansi on the farms have only coffee for breakfast. On some farms they will eat a quick snack of mielie pap around 10:30 or 11:00, which the men either pack and take to the veld or have brought out to them by women who are not working in the farmer's house. This small meal must hold them until 17:30 or 16:00 when they quit work and eat dinner. Many Ju/'hoan men and women claim not to be hungry during their lunch hour and allow the children to eat. This ensures that there is some food left for dinner. Alternatively, the Ju/'hoansi stretch their mielie meal supplies further by halving the ratio of mielie meal to water, making a soupy liquid porridge (rather than mielie pap), which is then put into a plastic jug with some sugar (if available), which may last for two or three days. This 'mielie drink' can be the main meal for the younger men and women on a farm for days at a time, until their next ration package is due.

iv) Hunting and Gathering

The Ju/'hoansi do not simply acquiesce to this deprivation. They will engage in stock theft and hunt game. Stock theft is resorted to by resettlement camp residents and squatters in the 'locations', while game hunting is done by farm residents and occasionally by

resettlement camp residents. The Ju/'hoansi hunt springhares, porcupines and warthogs with dogs and spears (!ku!ku). On some farms springhares are still hunted with a hooked probe to extract the animal from its burrow (see Lee 1979:139-140). Generally, though, hunting is a dangerous activity and few will do it unless they are driven by extreme hunger. One man told me:

If a farmer caught you, it doesn't matter if this country is independent, if he caught you in the camp, he will beat you.

Hunting is done when farmers are absent for extended holidays or visits to the city, or on farms with absentee landlords. On one such farm, remote from Gobabis, I was taken far into the veld and shown a entire thorn tree, which drooped nearly to the ground under the weight of long strips of meat (biltong) hung along its branches to dry. There was so much meat that two visiting relatives from a squatters' village were able to fill large feedsacks with meat to carry home to their families without significantly reducing the weight on the tree. The bones of the animals, I was told, had been buried farther out in the veld.

Some farmers state that they would not mind if resettlement camp residents or other hungry and desperate people hunted on their land, if they could be assured that it was only game that was being hunted. But many farmers now open their farms as quasi-guest lodges, where tourists (mostly from South Africa) can come and, for a price, camp and hunt. Thus, game animals are a source of income for the farmers as well as a source of much of their own meat, and so they do their best to protect the game from hungry Bushmen.

Attention to the inadequacy of wages and rations provides some insight into how the Ju/'hoansi historically coped with the conditions on the farms. In 1928 the Gobabis Magistrate reported:

The average Bushman is underfed and many persons particularly native, consider a supply of tobacco, some milk and veldkos, the latter by the way he has to find for himself, sufficient for a ration (SWAA A50/67 to Native Commissioner, April 20, 1928).

Gordon notes that veldkos gathering was economically rewarding to the farmers since it subsidized farming profits by covering some of the subsistence requirements of the workers, helping to maintain and reproduce a cheap labour force (1992a: 143). However, what Gordon does not mention is that the burden of subsidizing the farmer's profits in this way fell on the shoulders of Ju/'hoan women. //Umte, a former farmer worker in his mid-80s, described veldkos gathering on the farms when he was a young man:

At that time on the farms there was enough wild food. Like wild cucumbers (toa) and marambas. At that time there was enough wild food. At that time, when there was enough wild food, the women got big bags of berries and laid them on the ground.

Veldkos gathering remains an important source of subsistence. However, from descriptions given by older informants, it is decreasing in availability, possibly because the veld is being denuded. Furthermore, veldkos is only available during periods of good rain, which makes it an unstable food source in a region prone to drought.²³

While I was in the field, I had occasion to accompany Ju/'hoan women on a number of veldkos gathering expeditions. After a particularly good rain a group of women and children took me to the veld to gather as many kinds of veldkos as we could find. This expedition was arranged specifically for my education and took about one hour, which was longer and more intensive than those which had not been arranged for my benefit. The older women brought along their digging sticks: two women had wooden sticks with one end cut

²³ While I was in the field the Omaheke experienced the best rainfall on record and so there was an abundance of veldkos available. However, the year prior to my arrival, during the worst drought in living memory, veldkos was not available at all (Suzman, pers com).

flat and the other woman had a state-of-the-art metal digging stick with one end pounded flat. The younger women and the children pulled branches off a camelthorn tree to use as digging instruments.

We took my bakkie to a spot in the veld where the women claimed there was an abundance of veldkos. As soon as we arrived the children dispersed into the veld and immediately began digging. The older women took their time, looked around briefly, and then proceeded to various spots under thickets of brush and started breaking up the ground around the small plants. After the ground was broken, they carefully scooped out the dirt and extracted a root, or a tuber from the hole. They then presented the veldkos to me, saying with evident pride “this is what the Ju/’hoansi know about” and “this is how the old-time Ju/’hoansi lived”. During this expedition, the women and children gathered the following items:

//Hore	root; boiled; used to treat diarrhea
Disa	root; cooked/boiled and made into tea; used medicinally for childbirth and to treat diarrhea
≠He ka	bulb; eaten raw
!Au	bulb; eaten raw
Toã	cucumber; eaten raw or roasted in the ground
//Ore	potatoes (5 different kinds); eaten raw, boiled or roasted on coals
/Ha a	fibrous root; cooked in the fire
!Xoa	fibrous root with milky sap; eaten raw

After we had finished our expedition, the women returned to their own fires with the food that had not been eaten in the veld. They took bags of veldkos first to their own fires, but it was then freely distributed among the fires. On other farms, where the Ju/'hoan farm residents did not comprise a single extended family, I noticed that the veldkos tended to stay at one fire, or was only exchanged among the fires of immediate kin.

Veldkos gathering provides a valued source of alternative, tasty food and a welcome break from the monotony of mielie pap. It is also an activity that contributes to a sense of cultural and class identity - but importantly, a sense of cultural and class identity that is not self-deprecating. Veldkos gathering is what Ju/'hoan women are experts at and the women (and even a few men) I spoke to expressed great pride in their knowledge of the veld.

Suzman argues that the experience of generational farmwork and underclass status confers a specific sense of cultural/class identity upon the Ju/'hoansi: "...the Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, like many other peoples of southern Africa, became 'generational farm workers' and came to draw their identity from this status" (1997:202). I agree, for the most part with this point, however, it is also slightly overstated. Class is not a category that is culturally sterile. Or, to put it differently, 'class' is not merely a 'location' within an economic system. Class-culture, and class-cultural identity is shaped not only by the political economic context in which the Ju/'hoansi find themselves, but also by the cultural identity the Ju/'hoansi hold based in their sense of 'tradition'. In short, there are components of their cultural identity which are not owed entirely to their status as farm workers. Furthermore, their cultural practices, and their own interpretations of their cultural practices contribute in important ways to how they identify themselves as an ethnic class.

Women's veldkos gathering is a good example of how 'class consciousness' is not

simplistically transferred from working environment to worker consciousness, but is rather filtered through specific relationships and activities central to Ju/'hoan self-identification. Veldkos gathering is a major cultural activity which identifies the Ju/'hoansi vis-a-vis other ethnic groups, and in this way is also key to their class identity. When I asked some of my female Ju/'hoan informants if women of other ethnic groups also gathered veldkos, I was told: "mostly the Ju/'hoan women gather food and sometimes other nations, except Hereros - they are //aihani [bosses, high people]." In this case, veldkos gathering was an activity that marked them as members of a 'lower' class, yet at the same time the women's awareness of their class position was expressed in terms of knowledge and skills they possessed which 'boss women' did not.

However, at the same time, Ju/'hoan women can experience their class status as something which denies them the opportunity to engage in an important subsistence and cultural activity. Quite a few women I spoke to described how their wage work prevented them from gathering veldkos as much as they'd like:

In the old times women went gathering wild food a lot and when they collected wild food, they would make a fire and eat it. They will eat it all at home. The women of today don't have a way to collect veldkos (tsasi msi) because they also like to eat veldkos. It's because of the work of white farmers, that's why they don't have time to go to the veld to collect veldkos.

Women's veldkos gathering is just one example of how their roles as household providers and managers combine with their roles as domestic servants to create a double work day.

Much as hunting and stock theft became a combination of subversive protest and survival, so too does gathering blend into a form of political subversion. Occasionally, even on farms where Ju/'hoansi grow their own vegetable gardens, women on veldkos gathering expeditions help themselves to the mielies of unpopular farmers. As in the case of stock theft,

food tends to taste better when it's stolen from a farmer known to abuse his workers. Crop theft is only an occasional activity in the case of farm residents. For the most part farmers complain about people in the resettlement camps and the Epako squatters' village sneaking into their mielie fields to steal their corn. Again, the people do this out of desperation and hunger, however, they typically target farmers known to mistreat their workers.

Part Four: The Value of Work

Although the remuneration received for their work in the form of wages and rations may be indicators - albeit very poor indicators, skewed by the unfree labour situation - of how farmers and their workers value the labour done on the farms, remuneration conveys nothing about what the Ju/'hoansi's work means, either to them or to their employers. How the Ju/'hoansi's labour is valued (or, to be accurate, undervalued) by the farmer is strongly influenced by the stereotypes of the Bushmen that were discussed in Chapter Two. What their work means to the Ju/'hoansi themselves is determined, in part, by their own reactions to farmers' stereotypes. Importantly, work has a vastly different significance for Ju/'hoan women than it does for Ju/'hoan men.

i) 'The Call of the Wilds'

The white farmer's views of the Bushmen as farm workers are still largely faithful to historically deep racial stereotypes of the Bushmen. A variety of uniquely Bushman racial characteristics — associated with their extremely 'primitive' status — have long been used to justify lower wages for Ju/'hoan workers. For example, it was believed that the Bushmen were by nature 'too wild' to be farm workers:

[He] is independable [sic] as, after the rains have fallen, he often *cannot resist the call of the wilds* and simply deserts from his master's service. For this reason farmers prefer the more reliable native labour, although at a considerably higher wage (SWAA A198/26, memorandum, Magistrate of Grootfontein, February, 1939, emphasis mine).

Even those who reported very low remuneration attributed Bushman desertions to innate, 'wild', impulsive behaviour:

In times of stress, the Bushman would offer his services to the farmers, who in those days would make use of them for a wage which amounted to merely food, tobacco and salt. But being so attached to the veld he could not resist the call of the desert when it rains and would leave his service without any indication of such intent; this again brought numerous complaints of desertion from that quarter and it took the farming community a long time to realize that they could not depend on these nomads (SWAA A50/67 Deputy Commissioner, S.A. Police to District Commandants, memo April 3, 1947).

Although the settler community could see the movement of the Ju/'hoansi onto the farms as a result of hunger "in times of stress", they could not recognize that the Ju/'hoansi left the farms for the same reason - leaving the farm was given a racialist explanation. The original dual subsistence strategy was interpreted by the colonial society as evidence of an innate 'wildness', the primitive and 'impulsive' nature of the Bushmen, and their innate attachment to their primitive life ways. Now, even when there is no unfenced veld to return to, but only other farms and other jobs, this interpretation still features centrally in farmers' understandings of Ju/'hoan mobility.

In his research on farm Bushmen (Nharo) in the Ghanzi District of Botswana in the 1970s, Guenther found that full-time farm work actually inhibited the establishment of a viable subsistence base. Because wages and rations were so low, the Bushmen engaged in part-time hunting and gathering to subsist (1986a:139-140). The Omaheke Ju/'hoansi of the 1920s to the 1940s similarly adopted a dual subsistence strategy, not only moving to the

farms to cope with the marginalization of a foraging life way, but also returning to the veld to cope with marginal conditions on the farms. The reasons for leaving the farms today do not differ significantly: the Ju/'hoansi cite poor wages, poor rations, or a farmer's cruelty as their reasons for leaving a farm. The difference is that now leaving one farms typically means going on the road to find work on another, hopefully better, farm. (See chapter six for more on this.)

For all that Ju/'hoan labour was devalued and denigrated, it was still crucial to the farming economy. The colonial community was therefore required to balance contradictions in their stereotypes in order to promote the use of Ju/'hoan labour (i.e. 'tame' them) while still defining them as innately inferior workers (i.e. as incorrigibly 'wild'). Such contradictions are evident in the following statement made by the German academic, Fritz Rädcl in 1947:

[The Bushman] is not good at working with cattle because it is out of his range of experience. Because of his nomadic existence, he is most suited for sheep and cattle herding (cited in Gordon 1992a:154).

The Bushman's 'nomadic existence' at once disqualified him from higher paid, more skilled jobs (because it was beyond his experience), while at the same time qualified him for lower paid, 'unskilled' labour, such as herding (which he was 'naturally' suited for). Thus, stereotypes not only justified sub-standard living and working conditions for the Ju/'hoansi, they also served to place them at the bottom rung of the labour hierarchy - where they remain today.

Since the 1930s, when Ovambo contract workers began playing a larger role in the Gobabis economy, ethnically-based hierarchies began to crystalize: Ovambos were

considered to be more 'professional' and more highly skilled;²⁴ Herero were expert cattlemen, but were 'arrogant' and not prone to accepting authority; Nama/Damara workers appear to be the workers of choice; however, Damaras are said to be too 'ill-tempered' and 'cheeky' (see Gebhardt 1978:168; SSD/LAC 1996b:33; and Suzman 1995a and 1997; Gebhardt and Suzman found that farmers labelled Damara workers 'docile').

Today, non-Ju/'hoan workers still earn more money than the Ju/'hoansi (see also Suzman 1995a, 1995b and 1997). Ju/'hoan workers are still paid less than their non-Ju/'hoan counterparts for two reasons: 1) on farms where both Ju/'hoan and non-Ju/'hoan workers are employed, the non-Ju/'hoan workers typically occupy positions of authority over the Ju/'hoan workers (i.e. foreman) or are hired in higher-paying, 'skilled' job-categories; and 2) farmers who are willing to pay higher wages, usually running their farms along more rationalized or 'business-like' lines typically prefer to hire Ovambo, Nama/Damara, or Baster workers.

A second compelling stereotype that made the Ju/'hoansi appealing labourers was the notion — related to views that they are 'stupid' and 'childish' — that Bushmen had no idea of the value of money and so were content to be paid in "trifles, such as bright buttons, beads and pebbles" (SWAA A198/26, memo February 1939). The contemporary version of this justification for the ethnically-based differential pay-scale has a slightly modern twist: it is that the Ju/'hoansi are (racially) predisposed to drinking heavily - or at least getting drunk easily. The Ju/'hoansi are now regarded as less reliable because they drink (and are still prone

²⁴ Although after the 1970-71 strike general strike, Ovambo workers were said to be 'too political' and 'full of communism' (Cronje and Cronje 1979:64; Gebhardt 1978; see Moorsom [1977, 1980] for the general strike of 1970-71)

to simply disappearing without notice). A common, more paternalistic version of this line of argument says that the Ju/'hoansi lack a proper sense of the nature or value of money, lack the foresight to save money, and waste whatever money they do have on alcohol. On one farm I visited, the farmer explained to me that he deliberately paid his workers next to nothing (N\$20/m) in order to keep them from drinking. Because this farmer lives on his second farm, and only visits this farm once a week to open the farm store, paying extremely low wages was the only way he could find to 'protect' his workers from entrepreneurial Hereros who visit farms run by absentee farmers with bakkie-loads of alcohol for sale. But as in the past, the 'disadvantages' of Ju/'hoan farm labour are still balanced against the 'advantage' of the lower wages that the Ju/'hoansi will settle for.

The Ju/'hoansi I spoke with were well aware that the reason they are paid less is that they are considered by the farmers to be 'stupid':

The wages of the Damaras will be higher because they are black, because their skin is not light...because the Damara is always clever and the Bushmen are stupid.

Another Ju/'hoan man explained:

The farmers say that the Bushmen are stupid because they didn't go to school and we don't get the money which the black workers get. It's very small money, but we must buy our food with that money.

I would hesitate to say that the Ju/'hoansi have internalized this stereotype. Rather, they take the greatest offence at being labelled 'stupid' and often regard this stereotype as evidence of mental deficiency on the part of the farmers. The Ju/'hoansi both recognize that the farmer's view of them as stupid is responsible for their treatment by the farmer, and dismiss the farmer's view. As one young Ju/'hoan man noted:

I think that a Ju/'hoan is a Ju/'hoan and it's why the farmers don't like them and treat them badly, because [the farmers say] they [the Ju/'hoansi] are stupid, very low ... But

I think that they would be intelligent if they would have an education because I also see that if a Ju/'hoan child goes to school, then he's almost smarter than a white person [adult]. Even in his own work, a Ju/'hoan will be smarter than him about it. If they are working on a truck, and they take it apart, the white person won't know how to put back the parts, and the Ju/'hoan will show him where to put back the parts. It's where I saw the Ju/'hoansi are more intelligent.

At the very least some Ju/'hoansi turn this stereotype against white people, anthropologists included, as a subversive form of irony. When I asked an elderly Ju/'hoan man how old he was, he grinned and said "but Bushmen are too stupid to know these things!"

Nor do the Ju/'hoan accept that their position on the lowest, unskilled rung of the racial labour hierarchy can be explained by their "stupidity". Of the more highly paid Hereros, who are sometimes their own foremen, one Ju/'hoan farm worker said:

The Herero people ... I think that they are stupid too. A Herero won't know how to make a fence, and a Ju/'hoan will show him how to do it, teach him. Even the equipment, which you pull the wires with, he doesn't know how to hold it. A Ju/'hoan is better than a Herero.

The justifications for lower pay continue to be underwritten by reference to 'traditional' Bushmen culture: as descendants of hunter gatherers, they have no natural pastoral skills - as if even those workers born and working on farms their whole lives are working with cattle only against their 'natures'. Furthermore, just as their ancestors were said to have gorged themselves after a hunt, and then gone without proper nourishment for months before another kill, so too the contemporary Ju/'hoansi are said to be fated to spend all their wages on payday, and are unable to save anything for the days to follow. These justifications hark back to the perceived ethnic/racial character of the Ju/'hoansi in such a way as to 'naturalize' their class status. The farmers are still unable to see the Ju/'hoansi in terms of their class status, and so they often miss an important part of how the Ju/'hoansi see themselves. Even when good work is recognized by a farmer, his acknowledgment does not

address the concerns of the Ju/'hoansi. As Gashe, who was proud of the skill he had acquired as a farm work, told me: "He will praise me, then he will just praise me and give me nothing. What will praise help?"

ii) Work Suited for Women

Domestic labour historically ranked, and still ranks, at the bottom of the labour hierarchy.²⁵ Domestic service is the least valued job category in the Namibian economy, and the women who work in this sector are the lowest paid and least appreciated workers in the country. Women's domestic service was, and is, not only devalued because it is considered 'unskilled', but rather domestic service is considered 'unskilled' and menial work largely because women do it. Domestic servants are therefore undervalued as *women* as much as they are devalued as members of a labouring class. The 1921 Native Reserves Commission reflects this attitude:

Female native labour is extensively used throughout this territory in domestic and light farm work. If the complaints made to us are to be regarded as any criterion it is safe to say that this type of labour is by far the most unsatisfactory. Native women do not seem to be possessed of any sense of responsibility in respect of their contractual obligations (cited in SSD/LAC 1996b:16).

These comments illustrate how race-gender stereotypes of unreliability and irresponsibility converge at the class nexus; that is, derogatory gender, race and class stereotypes all converge here at the point of domestic service.

Although Ju/'hoan male farm labourers are also largely classed as 'unskilled'

²⁵ This is reflected in the ranking of jobs by wages offered in the migrant labour system, which descended in value from mine work, to industrial work, farm work, 'light' town work, finally, domestic service (SSD/LAC 1996b:24); for comparable description in the case of South Africa see Cock (1980).

workers, according to development reports, as farm workers, they

may have attained little schooling, or might even be illiterate...[yet they]...know how to repair engines, maintain and repair bakkies, build fences, deal with cattle, and so forth. All these experiences allow [them] to find casual work from time to time. They also provide valuable professional assets on which vocational training can build (Brits, Franz and Uanguta 1996:32).

Domestic work, however, is considered 'unskilled' labour which provides no basis for upgrading in the job market. Therefore, neither enhancing domestic labour skills to command a higher wage, nor using those skills to move out of domestic service altogether, are viable options, especially for the ethnically marked *Ju/'hoan* women who are the most stigmatized according to derogatory racial attitudes. Although domestic service is defined as 'unskilled' all former and present domestic servants I interviewed reported 'graduating' up to different tasks as they got older and more experienced, and after they had been trained by the farmer's wife, older co-workers, or in sewing and cooking classes at school. This indicates an unacknowledged awareness that domestic service does require important skills.

Although *Ju/'hoan* women's experiences of domestic service share some important features in common with those of domestic servants from other ethnic groups, the fact that *Ju/'hoan* women's 'identity' is so profoundly wrapped up in racial stereotypes of 'primitive' Bushmen means that their experiences and working conditions are unique to this perceived racial status. One of the ways in which racial stereotypes create unique living and working conditions for *Ju/'hoan* women is the way in which they mask *Ju/'hoan* women's labour behind notions of primitive female 'idleness' and 'promiscuity'. Thus, when examining the working conditions of *Ju/'hoan* women on the farms, it is necessary to analyse how the undervalued and invisible nature of this work combines with the fact that *Ju/'hoan* women are undervalued and invisible members of an ethnic underclass.

In her historical study of the early years of German colonization Lau notes that “[w]omen’s oppressed status most clearly manifests itself in the fact that they are not mentioned. Their work is not valued according to its scope, importance, or degree of skill” (1987:72). This historical invisibility is especially true of Ju/’hoan women and has largely persisted into the present. In a study conducted by the Legal Assistance Centre on domestic workers in Namibia, the author commented on the difficulties of collecting information about domestic service, particularly historical data, stating that domestic work “has tended to be invisible and undervalued” (SSD/LAC 1996b:8). The situation of Ju/’hoan women is more extreme: first, they are members of a largely invisible ethnic underclass; secondly, when the Ju/’hoansi are seen as historical actors in a political economy or as workers in a settler economy (see Wilmsen 1989; Gordon 1992a; and Suzman 1997) the women remain largely invisible; and, finally, Ju/’hoan women on the farms work in a job category that is particularly invisible to researchers, since most research on domestic service in southern Africa focuses on urban contexts (see Cock 1980; van Onselen 1982; SSD/LAC 1996b; Østreng 1997). What goes unsaid about Ju/’hoan women creates gaps in the discursive context that are often filled with much that is assumed.

One example of this blind-spot can be found in the SSD/LAC farm workers’ survey (1996a) which contains a chapter entitled “San and Women Farmworkers”. In this chapter, data was gathered from 25 ‘San’ respondents and 46 ‘Women’ respondents, very little of it reflecting the experiences of *San Women*. This report is not unique in its approach. Very often ‘minorities’ in Namibia are described in such vocabulary as ‘the San and Women are the most marginalized members of society...’, or ‘the San were paid very low wages, and women paid even less...’ (see, for example, Gebhardt 1978: 158). Thus, the ‘San’ becomes a

generically male ethnic group, while 'Women' becomes an essentialized, ethnically monolithic gender category: tactically categorizing Ju/'hoan women under the rubric of 'the San' denies them their gender identity and tactically categorizing them under the rubric of 'Women' denies them their ethnic identity.

The invisibility of Ju/'hoan women and the work that they do allows certain historically-based misconceptions to stand unchallenged. For example, in 1939 a retired German officer made the following observation:

How different is the life of a Bushwoman in the farm location. She gets plenty of food without any extraordinary exertion together with sugar, tobacco and clothes. She has only to fetch wood and keep the fire going (cited in Gordon 1992a:141).

This view of an 'idle' life for Ju/'hoan women on the farms is still tactically assumed today, particularly by many of the farmers, and it is perpetuated by a consistent blind-spot when it comes to Ju/'hoan women in Namibia as a whole. A very revealing complaint against farmers, made particularly by Ju/'hoan women is that the farmer "doesn't see me" (/oa se mi).

Ju/'hoan women are of course broadly subject to the same stereotypes as their menfolk, however, they are also enmeshed in a political economic context that is gendered, and so shapes their gender roles according to hegemonic definitions of 'women's work' and racial hegemonic definitions of non-white women. Racial stereotypes of 'stupid' or 'childish' Bushmen articulate in important ways with gender stereotypes. The same attributes (i.e. 'childishness' or 'stupidity') are used in both race and gender stereotypes serve to divide 'women' along race and class lines, and the Ju/'hoansi themselves along gender lines.

Cock (1980) describes how the working relationships between domestic servants and their madams in the eastern Cape were characterized by race, class and gender attitudes

which defined the domestic workers in terms of familiar attributes of ‘stupidity’ and ‘childishness’. Informants in her survey described their perception of their madams’ opinions of them:

We get no respect (83).

She thinks I am not fully grown. She treats me like a baby (90).

She accuses us of stealing if she can’t find something (93).

She treats me like a stupid child (94).

She talks to me as if I was a stupid child (97).

Cock states that “‘stupidity’ and ‘dishonesty’ are both class-based components of hegemonic ideologies” (69). However, in the Omaheke these labels are applied to the Ju/’hoansi in general as an ethnic group. Ju/’hoan women, like the men, recognize that they are considered stupid, but rebut the stereotype with a keen awareness of their own skills:

The white woman will teach the Ju/’hoan woman about some kind of work. But when she gets to know it, she will teach the white woman again, to say “in the past, we did it like this” and “do this job like this - did you forget?” ... The white women are smarter, but sometimes she forgets. Like when she is cooking, she will look at a recipe book, to read from there, while she is cooking. But a Ju/’hoan woman will not use the recipe book. While I was on that farm I baked bread, and the farmer’s daughter-in-law didn’t know how to do it.

In my interviews with domestic servants, few stated that they were treated like ‘children’, or as ‘stupid people’ because they were *domestic servants* or *women* - more often comments on this aspect of their relationship with white farmers took the form of ‘they think *Bushmen* are stupid’. This reflects the extent to which denigrating stereotypes of class, race/ethnicity and gender are not experientially separable to the Ju/’hoan women subject to these definitions. A number of farmers I spoke to did make these distinctions and described Ju/’hoan women as ‘idle’, ‘lazy’, ‘irresponsible’, etc - stereotypes that apply to them as

'Bushmen', but especially as 'women', since the farmers largely see Ju/'hoan women as merely 'idling' about the farm, producing babies.

Just as Ju/'hoan male workers are situated in a stereotype-based ethnic labour hierarchy, so too are Ju/'hoan women. Many farmers I spoke to claimed that Damara women were good domestic servants, but they were 'cheeky' and prone to stealing; Herero women are 'too proud';²⁶ Ju/'hoan women are 'docile' and more 'trustworthy' than domestic servants from other ethnic groups, but are 'very lazy' and slow at their jobs; Nama women appear to be the domestic servants of choice, being both 'docile' and more energetic at work. Ju/'hoan women are aware of how they are situated within this ethnic scheme. I met one Ju/'hoan woman who had landed a domestic job in town by 'passing' as a Nama (both her parents are Ju/'hoan). She recognized that as a Nama woman she would be more likely to get a job and would receive better pay.

On finer points of comparison with female members of other ethnic groups, Ju/'hoan women are described as the least industrious, and most irresponsible, of all African members of their gender. In particular, the industriousness of Herero women (as homestead-heads in the communal areas) provides the farmers with a striking contrast to Ju/'hoan women, who they typically describe as being content to rely on their husbands' support. During discussions with farmers about Ju/'hoan domestic servants, I was often told that Ju/'hoan women are given jobs in the farmer's house to keep them from 'idling' about down at the workers' quarters. Thus, in the case of Ju/'hoan domestic servants, working for the farmer is not seen as much as a service the Ju/'hoan women provide to the farmers, but rather it is seen

²⁶ I did not meet any Herero domestic servants, although I was told that there are some, and I met only one Tswana domestic servant.

as a service the farmer provides to the Ju/'hoan women, to keep them busy where they would otherwise have nothing to do and nothing to improve their 'moral' condition.

iii) Work and Womanhood

A specifically gendered component of racial justifications for class exploitation is the attitude diminishing the status of non-white women as *women*. Such disparaging or dismissive attitudes toward non-white women contribute to the way domestic servants are defined as a *class*; specifically, they are not seen as possessing roles typically associated with womanhood, such as wifehood and motherhood (see Cock 1990; Cleaver and Wallace 1990:18-19).

Although Ju/'hoan women are situated within the political economic order largely in terms of their reproductive roles, and so work in the 'naturally' female 'domestic' sphere, the ways in which their reproductive roles are defined strongly influence how Ju/'hoan women will experience their relegation into this sphere. One of the unique components in the definition of Ju/'hoan women's reproductive roles rests on a general denigration of Ju/'hoan familial bonds. A fairly typical attitude was colourfully expressed by one Omaheke farmer, who stated:

I will tell you man they are animals...Also they do not know love and that is what makes *us* people...If a Bushman wants sex and he sees two Bushmen women, they must just give him sex, there and then. Because it doesn't matter (cited in Suzman 1997:70, emphasis his).

This attitude is historically deep and is an important component in how the 'wildness' of Bushmen was demonstrated according to the notion of 'primitive promiscuity'. Many farmers seem to still hold the views expressed by the South African historian, George McCall

Theal: “Chastity, however, was unknown and uncared for and any disagreement was sufficient to cause the separation of man and woman, when new connections could be made by both” (1910:47). ‘Primitive promiscuity’ is antithetical to the Western notions of a nurturing family and so this stereotype contributes to the fairly common idea that the Ju/’hoansi, as a ‘sub-human’ group, are not bound by kinship-based bonds of mutual obligation and support. For example, Theal cites a report from Reverend J.J. Kitchener, which read:

They are total strangers to domestic happiness. The men have several wives, but conjugal affection is little known. They take no great care of their children, and never correct them except in a fit of rage, when they almost kill them by severe usage (cited in Theal 1910:18-19).

‘Bushmen’ and ‘Bushwomen’ who ‘don’t know love’, are ‘strangers to domestic happiness’, ‘take no great care of their children’ and are ‘animals’ are not seen as mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, or generally as members of kin networks, with familial bonds and obligations. The distance such a view creates between the Ju/’hoansi and the farmers cannot be overstated, since the Ju/’hoansi’s own self-identification is profoundly connected to kinship relations. The Ju/’hoansi’s own universalistic kinship system — in which the Ju/’hoansi invoke a name relationship to establish kin-ties with people who may not be genealogically related — dilutes the significance of Ju/’hoan kinship from the farmer’s point of view. Often farmers say, rather dismissively “they are all related to each other”, yet because the Ju/’hoan notion of kin is not exclusionary, farmers often do not attach any special significance to Ju/’hoan familial bonds.

In chapter two I examined how ‘Bushmen’ had been defined as ‘Brutal Savages’ and that implicit (and often explicit) in this definition were notions associated with primitive

promiscuity. However, even romanticized redescrptions of Bushmen ‘Noble Savages’ left intact the view that ‘Bushwomen’ were locked in their natural/biological/animal functions. Ju/’hoan women, in contrast to white women,²⁷ are not only denied recognition of their womanhood — in this case as mothers — but they are often described in zoological vocabulary, as ‘breeders’; their familial roles are not only dismissed or ignored, but are actually denigrated. Many Ju/’hoan women I spoke to expressed a unique consciousness of the impact of living in dehumanizing conditions. For example, during a conversation about childbirth, N*isa, a woman in her mid-60s, described her experience: “I did not go to the hospital. Nobody helped me. I had my babies like a goat.” She said this with no small measure of resentment.²⁸

²⁷ We are familiar with how female roles and characteristics were sentimentally redescrbed so that in late Victorian America, women were seen as “creatures inferior to men, yet somehow kin to the angels” (Haller and Haller 1974:48). In the southern African context — especially during the early years of the rise of the Nationalist Party — hegemonic definitions of Afrikaner womanhood were oriented around the feminine ideal of the ‘*volksmoeder*’. This image retained many Victorian notions about the primacy of women’s reproductive roles, yet these roles were redescrbed in such a way as to exalt Afrikaner womanhood to patriotic political and spiritual significance, as ‘Mothers of the Nation’ (Brink 1990). I am not suggesting that Afrikaner women in the Omaheke are all *volksmoeders* — although there is a proud tradition of strong womanhood associated with the spirit of the Great Trek. My point is simply that the possibility of such redescrptions in the case of white women is revealing of how the womanhood of female Others is shaped according to white racial attitudes. The political potential of motherhood roles is not confined to white women, even if white motherhood does tend to be more aggrandized. Walker (1982) describes how, during early anti-pass campaigns, and especially in the 1950s, African women protested on the strength of their roles as mothers. (For a comparable study of the Namibian case see Soiri, Iina [1996]). The assertion of motherhood, however, seems to be limited to nationalistic movements or large-scale protest campaigns and so the assertion of Ju/’hoan motherhood takes a more muted form, actualized in daily activities.

²⁸ Among Ju/’hoansi in Dobe and Nyae Nyae, women often went to the veld to deliver their babies alone (see, for example, Shostak 1981) and the ability to give birth unassisted and without fuss was a source of great pride (Lee, personal communication). N*isa’s

(continued...)

Racially-based denigrating views about the womanhood of Ju/'hoan women facilitates their exploitation: their work as domestic servants can go unnoticed and remain undervalued because it is not seen as involving any familial sacrifices; and their care-giving and maintenance activities in their own homes can be subordinated to the needs of the farmer's family with little attention paid to the human consequences of the living and working conditions of the Ju/'hoan families on the farms.

iv) Work and Survival

Damm, a retired stukwerker (piece worker) living on a resettlement camp, told me that the work they did enabled the farmers to enrich themselves: "our hands made them rich". A number of men put their sense of their own working life in terms similar to those used by Debe, a retired worker still living on a farm: "we worked so that this country could have a life". In these ways, men tended to express a well developed sense of their role in the broader political economy. Women, on the other hand, expressed a more immediate personal sense of their work as a means of subsistence for themselves and their families, often using the common phrase "you work to have life".

For Ju/'hoan women working means simply surviving. They do not view their labour as contributing to the development of a broader economic system. Instead, many Ju/'hoan women expressed a keen awareness of their role in maintaining the distinction between the

²⁸(...continued)

comment may indicate that she has internalized European attitudes toward childbirth. However, it is more likely that Ju/'hoan women are reluctant to give birth unassisted because many of them are malnourished or are sick (e.g. with tuberculosis) and so childbirth represents a greater danger than it likely did among their hunting and gathering counterparts.

labouring and leisured classes, particularly in terms of their relationship with the farmer's wife. When I asked a group of Ju/'hoan domestic servants what the *miesis* did in the house while they worked, one woman replied:

She will just sit! And we will also cook for her and if she wakes up in the morning, we will make her bed for her so in the night she will just go to sleep. She will wake up in the morning and wash herself and we will do her laundry because you are working for life. If she likes, she will sew with machine, or maybe read book.

Domestic service as a source of paid employment only provides a very limited ability to purchase necessities and occasionally personal items (i.e. head scarves, shoes, 'things to make you beautiful'). Domestic service does not represent, nor is it discussed as a means to increased personal power or leverage, as a worker or as a household decision-maker: work is done just 'to have life'.

Many women I spoke to expressed feelings of being trapped in an under-valued, difficult job, and were particularly concerned that their domestic service required them to sacrifice their own care and the care of their families, to the needs of the farmer's family. I asked N!osi which job she would like to have if she could have any job she wanted. She replied:

You asked me which jobs I would like to do, but I would like to do my own things for myself. I'd sit at my own house and sew. But if I do this and then do that [at the *miesis*' beck and call], then it is not good. I must leave my job at my home and work down there [at the farmer's house]. Then I must leave my job at home.

In an urban context, wage employment can sometimes represent release from a domestic prison and a source of political and economic empowerment. For Ju/'hoan women, however, where domestic work is done simply 'to have life', wage labour represents another form a domestic entrapment (see, for example Nakano Glenn 1987). N!osi is a single mother living with her retired parents. Her father still works in the farmer's garden in return for water and

grazing rights for his small herd of cattle, and receives a small government pension. Her mother does odd jobs for the *miesis* in return for some money and is still waiting for her 'papers' to be 'finished' so that she may also get a pension. When I asked N!osi if she would quit her job even if it meant that she would not have money for herself, she shook her head and said:

Then you'll also worry about yourself, if you stay at home and just ask other people for food and money. Then it is not good to just stay at home. It's why we are doing this job - to have something.

N!osi is also working to pay her daughter's school fees and hopes that her daughter will be able to escape domestic work — and perhaps become a doctor "like the farmer's daughter" — or in any case, not have to depend on a husband to provide for her. (The father of N!osi's own daughter, an Ovambo worker, has long since left.) Younger Ju/'hoan women are very aware that their options are limited. When I put the same question (what job would you most like?) to a young woman in her early 20s, she replied:

I don't know of a good job that would be the best job for a woman...Because if a Ju/'hoan woman finds a job, it is always a bad job which she can't receive money from.

Although the farmers tend to treat the wages of women as supplementary to men's wages, and the Ju/'hoansi themselves stress the importance of having their menfolk employed, the reality on most farms is that household survival requires more than one income. Wages are so low and rations so few that the combined income of domestic servants and farm workers is necessary to keep the household just at the subsistence line. This is especially true in the case of households headed by older Ju/'hoan men who are steadily employed, since these households generally have a larger number of pre-pubescent children to support — including children fostered to the household from kin living elsewhere and who are unable to support

their children (this is elaborated in chapter six).

Ju/'hoan women perceive wage work as what they must do just to barely survive and this work is dependent on the goodwill of the farmer and the farmer's wife and upon the job security of their male kin. But even more importantly, their survival depends on the perpetuation of an institution that is the central symbol of the distinction between rich and poor. They do not see their domestic labour as directly crucial to the operation of the farm as a business, nor do they see this work as crucial to the development of the broader political economy. However, domestic service is crucial for maintaining race and class asymmetries and therefore the cultural order in the Omaheke: domestic service reproduces the socioeconomic order through early socialization into service, promoting (or attempting to promote) a particular work ethic among the labouring class (see also Cock 1990:89; Whisson and Weil 1971) and, domestic service reproduces and maintains race and class etiquette at the level of domestic interpersonal relations (see also van Onselen 1982). Furthermore, Ju/'hoan women are intimately aware — more so than their menfolk — of the vast disparity between their own standard of living and the standard of living enjoyed by the farmer and his family since they are the people who maintain and clean the domestic symbols of the farmer's status and wealth. Most Ju/'hoan men never see the insides of the white farmer's house.

The Ju/'hoan women I spoke to expressed their sense of class oppression with reference to their living conditions. Since they are the ones primarily responsible for keeping the workers' quarters livable, Ju/'hoan women often expressed a sense of injustice that focused on the state of the housing and on how the farmers' defined the 'basic needs' of Ju/'hoan families on the farms. N!osi, for example, expressed her experience of being a member of a marginalized underclass by focusing on her frustrations at being poor and living

in cramped, constantly dirty conditions. When I asked her what she thought was the biggest problem for the Ju/'hoansi on the farms she said "it's the poverty - you can see for yourself what our houses look like inside!" H//xoana, a woman in her late 80s, expressed a similar sentiment:

I was born here and I got old here and now they must treat me nicely. But, if you go inside my house, you will be afraid and you'll think "this person is working here years and years, but her house looks like this inside! And her house looks like this!"

Ju/'hoan women who battle to keep their living spaces comfortable possess a very intimate sense of class exploitation.

Even in the best conditions for the Ju/'hoansi on the farms — e.g. living in brick houses — the living areas are difficult to keep clean. People who live in improvised shacks tend to worry a lot less about housework, for good reason. They do, however, develop ingenious ways of integrating the natural environment into their living space: a tree stump or a large rock becomes an eating table and a place to process food; fence wire is pounded into trees to hang cooking equipment; fence wire is also strung from one branch of a tree to another to hang buckets of milk; and, small structures are made from bush sticks to create a shelter to sit under for shade and to use as shelving for dishes and clothing. On every farm old oil cans are used as chairs and cook fires are burned on old drum lids to keep the ground from being covered in soot and to make it easier to carry away the ashes.

If housework is demanding in the case of the farmer's often luxurious house, it is all the more difficult in the women's own houses. In their own homes, Ju/'hoan women rarely enjoy the assistance of cleaning supplies. They own washtubs, brooms, some which are made out of ostrich feathers, pieces of old cloth, and sometimes laundry soap. Whatever needs scrubbing is cleaned with 'elbow grease'.

More often than not, workers' houses are too small to accommodate a family beyond the minimum 'nuclear' size, and so many Ju/'hoan farm residents must sleep outside. The common view among farmers was that the Ju/'hoansi, being 'wild Bushmen', prefer to sleep outside, and would not sleep in the house if one were built for them. The Ju/'hoansi, however, complain about the lack of adequate sleeping and living space - especially during the rainy season.²⁹

Most houses lack a covered stoep area where the women can cook when it rains. On many farms I visited during the rainy season (especially from January to March), the Ju/'hoansi pointed out that they had no covered area to cook or store their firewood. When I asked them how they coped with this problem, they said that they would eat food that didn't need cooking for as long as it lasted, and hope that the rains didn't last longer than two days. The dilapidated state of the housing on the farms makes it all the more remarkable that Ju/'hoan women are able to make their living spaces as comfortable as they do.

The sharp contrast between their own homes, and so their own living conditions, and the homes of the white farmers is acutely registered in the consciousness of the Ju/'hoan women each day. They struggle with few resources and little time to maintain their places, as women, in their own households and families. But in the eyes of the farmers, the Ju/'hoansi live more in nature than in culture, and they have no more need of familial bonds than they need shelter from the weather. Yet the day-to-day lives of the Ju/'hoansi on the ground, where there is an abundance of co-operation, care-giving and familial assistance and bonding,

²⁹ Ju/'hoansi living in the veld did in fact prefer to sleep outside because 'houses' were often infested with termites. I also noticed Ju/'hoansi sleeping outside when it was a particularly hot night. However, they generally appreciate the option of sleeping in a sturdy house (especially a brick house) when the weather is bad.

provides a very different picture of Ju/'hoan life.

Conclusion

The historically deep stereotypes through which the farmers describe their workers are largely ethnic and racial stereotypes; but the Ju/'hoansi men see themselves as agents, albeit of a subjugated and exploited class, within the wider economic history of the Omaheke. The ethnic and racial perspective of the farmers has two effects: first, it naturalizes the class status of the workers, making it seem inevitable, and it shifts the responsibility for Ju/'hoan poverty to the incorrigible racial traits of the Ju/'hoansi themselves; second, it keeps the humanity and womanhood of the Ju/'hoan women invisible to the farmers. As a result, they are largely unaware that a rich and complex family life thrives in their own backyards.

Work on the farms and in the houses of the farmers is not, in economic terms, rewarding for the Ju/'hoansi. The poor wages and rations which are given in compensation for long hours of work are inadequate, yet the Ju/'hoansi, as a landless underclass, have no obvious alternatives but to endure as best they can. As my concluding discussion of the men's illegal hunting and the women's gathering only begins to suggest, the Ju/'hoansi have found ways to endure, and those ways of enduring are also forms of resistance.

In chapters five and six we will consider how Ju/'hoan kinship networks and visiting and sharing practices provide additional forms of accommodation, subsistence and resistance. In the next chapter, however, I will complete my discussion of life on the farms by addressing what may be broadly called the 'political' relations between Ju/'hoan workers and the white farmers.



Figure 17. A Ju/'hoan woman cooking lunch



Figure 18. Milking the cows at lunch time

CHAPTER FOUR

'THE COUNTRY'S INDEPENDENT, BUT NOT THIS FARM': PATRIARCHY, PATERNALISM AND VIOLENCE

People say that SWAPO is doing good things. We don't see those things happening...the country's independent, but it is not independent on this farm.

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Introduction

Farms in the Omaheke evolved into fairly discrete socio-political entities; historically they developed with very little state interference, which enabled the farmers to exercise a great deal of personal power. The exercise of this personal power is often shaped by the following factors: paternalistic attitudes about the Ju/'hoansi as a labouring class; patriarchal attitudes about legitimate forms of family and farm government; and racial-evolutionary attitudes about the various degrees of civilization and innate worth within the ethnically heterogeneous farm-labouring classes. Thus, the salient features connecting class, gender and inter-ethnic relationships on the farms are as follows: 1) the extent to which the relationships between the Ju/'hoansi and Afrikaners go beyond a simple wage-based working relationship; 2) the rather rigid sexual division of labour and ideologies of female dependency and domesticity that regulates the relationship between men and women, within and between ethnic-classes on the farms; and 3) the racial hierarchies that relegate the Ju/'hoansi to the bottom of the skill and pay-scale.

However, the personal power of the farmer is not absolute. There are many aspects of farm politics that are owed to confrontation and accommodation between the farmers and the Ju/'hoansi, and not simply to the dictates and whims of the farmers. The Ju/'hoansi argue with the *baas* and *miesis*, manipulate points of conflict within the farmer's family, and they

critique the Afrikaners' conduct and challenge their control and racial views simply by living their daily lives in ways that do not conform to the farmer's expectations. Similarly, although the sexual division of labour and attitudes of female domesticity and dependency built into the farming economy strongly influence the balance of power between Ju/'hoan women and men, the relationships between Ju/'hoan women and men is not governed solely by the gender ideology of the farmer. Ju/'hoan men may benefit from systemic advantages favouring the authority of male household heads, but decision-making, resource management and familial interactions are sites of negotiation and power-struggles among the Ju/'hoansi themselves. These interactions are influenced as much, or more, by the Ju/'hoansi's own views about kinship and gender relations as they are by the farmer's views.

This chapter examines the scope and limits of the farmer's personal power, how labour relations connect with gender and inter-ethnic relationships in the day-to-day lives of the farm residents and how the Ju/'hoansi both accommodate and subvert the political structures on the farms.

Part One: Domination and Accommodation

i) Class Ambiguities

One of the first things one notices about the class politics on the farms is the Ju/'hoansi's ambiguous class status. One of the theoretical challenges presented by the commercial farms in the Omaheke is that of classifying the kind of labour the Ju/'hoansi represent: specifically, are they best described historically, in their relationships with white 'masters', as 'rural proletarians', 'serfs' or 'slaves'?

Various definitions of slavery, serfdom and peonage (debt-bondage) tend to focus on

three main issues that serve to distinguish unfree labour from proletarianization: 1) methods of remuneration (eg. payment in kind rather than wages); 2) methods of recruitment and control (eg. capture or sale rather than the 'free' sale of labour power); and 3) definitions of the labourer's personhood (eg. as 'sub-human' or a species of property rather than as a seller of labour power).¹ Slavery and serfdom are typically associated with pre-capitalist or non-capitalist economies, and are contrasted with proletarianization, a process involving a transformation of labour into labour-power within a capitalist mode of production.

When we examine methods of remuneration, it appears that the Ju/'hoansi can be fairly described as rural proletarians by virtue of the fact that they were, and are, paid wages. However, the past and present emphasis on payments 'in kind' (gifts and rations) has outweighed the significance of wages as a defining feature of the labour relationship between the Ju/'hoansi and the farmers. Furthermore, this criterion must be applied with caution, since standard definitions of class categories tend to be gender-blind. 'Proletarianization' and shifts in underclass status tend to focus on the degree of exposure to wage-earning opportunities for men.² If we focus primarily on methods of remuneration (or 'surplus extraction') to define

¹ For discussions on problems of definition See Miers and Kopytoff et al 1977; Ross 1983, 1985; Genovese 1989; Mintz 1979; for a discussion of San serfdom in Botswana see Kuper and Silberbauer 1966; and Russell 1975; Tlou 1977.

² For example, Wilmsen (1989b) follows Motzafi-Haller's description of Sarwa women as the biological reproducers of the Sarwa underclass. As Basarwa men found work on distant cattle posts or in South African mines, Basarwa women became vulnerable to the 'demands of other men'. In this way Basarwa women functioned to reproduce and maintain the labour pool at no cost to the ruling class (277). This is a useful point, however it continues to rely on a standard reduction of San women to biologically-based roles, while neglecting the broader relationship between the *San women themselves* and the regional political economy. Furthermore the result of this sexual vulnerability is that Basarwa women are significantly distinguished from their menfolk in their class relationship with BaTswana
(continued...)

the class status of the Ju/'hoansi, we find that a great deal of the substance of the serf-master relationship still found on the farms in more recent times is owed to the historical lag in women's wages, which leaves them in a serf-like situation while their men folk are transformed, to a slightly greater degree, into rural proletarians.

As I described earlier, the Ju/'hoansi were often recruited and held by force, which suggests a close kinship with slavery. It must be remembered that farm labour has its roots in child 'apprenticeships', which was a euphemism for 'slavery' in the southern African context. However, there were, and in some cases still are, elements of 'slavery' that go beyond apprenticeship arrangements. As I described in chapter one, the process of incorporating the Ju/'hoansi into the settler economy as a labouring underclass in many instances resembled slave-raiding (manstealing). Presently, Ju/'hoansi are subject to forceful recruitment by farmers: the wives of Ju/'hoan workers must agree to work in the house, or face eviction and the possibility of jeopardizing her husband's job; and, 'squatters' on a farm, should they be caught by the farmer, are often only able to escape a charge of 'trespassing' and a visit to the Gobabis jail if they agree to work (as //Umte's case in chapter one illustrates). Furthermore, some Ju/'hoansi are still kept on the farms by force. One Ju/'hoan woman I met desperately wanted to leave the farm where she was living to escape beatings at the hands of the farmer, and was even strongly inclined to take the farmer to court. However, she was not free to leave the farm:

²(...continued)
 'ruling classes': "The real Bushman [serf] is the male one; the female one is Mongwato" (your countrywoman) (ibid); this fact should problematize standard descriptions of San serfdom as a paternalistic relationship with BaTswana masters who regard them as their 'children'.

If you try to go and charge him [or] hitch a ride to town, he will go and bring you back, [and say] “what’s the problem with you?” Then he will take you back and beat you. Can you see that big tree? We move over to there and then he takes his truck and brings us back.

Finally, Ju’hoansi may be ‘hired out’ to other farmers, unilaterally moved from one farm to another and arbitrarily ‘given’ to the farmer’s grown children who need workers on their own farms and in their own households. In the case of the Ju’hoansi in the Omaheke, we find that remuneration retains aspects of serfdom and debt-bondage and that methods of recruitment and control echo the more coercive tactics of the days of manstealing and apprenticeships. Thus, the Ju’hoansi may best be described as semi-proletarianized serfs.

Although the rationalization of farming operations and the present labour reforms promulgated by the SWAPO government are encouraging a shift toward commoditizing labour power, the most important feature influencing labour relations on the farms — especially in the case of Ju’hoan workers — is the Afrikaners’ ideology of the Bushmen’s racial inferiority, which keeps a fundamental denial of equality central to their relationships with their workers. The significance of Afrikaner racial ideology in determining the ambiguous class status of their Ju’hoan workers becomes clearer when we ask why the class relationship between the farmers and the Ju’hoansi has been so resistant to the democratizing and proletarianizing influences of independence and the recent liberalization of regional markets. I will offer two inter-connected reasons.

First, the confusion over ‘hybrid’ social relations on the periphery of the global capitalist system — in this case the semi-serf, semi-proletarian status of the Ju’hoansi — may result from a standard association of slavery and serfdom with pre-capitalist, or non-capitalist, modes of production. However, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese (1988) and Eugene

Genovese (1989) point out that slavery in the American South largely developed in *response* to the emergent global capitalist market (see also Mintz 1979). In other words, there is no reason to assume that capitalism is democratizing.

The Omaheke demonstrates how unfree labour is not wholly incompatible with a capitalist economy. White settlement in the Omaheke was largely a result of the effects of South Africa's explosive industrial development on the South African agricultural sector, which combined with a variety of ecological disasters and the aftermath of the Boer War, to create a class of poor whites in need of assistance and resettlement (see Thompson 1971; van Rooyen and Reiner 1995). The agricultural sector — specifically commercial farming — in Namibia developed in response to South Africa's industrial development as a captive market and a dependent live-stock and beef exporter (Lau and Reiner 1993). These macro-level capitalist trends, coupled with an economically weak and dependent farming sector, encouraged coercive labour recruitment and management strategies as the primary way of maintaining a cheap labour force and ensuring the viability of farming operations.

Second, although the Afrikaner farmers are connected to the global capitalist system through commerce and trade, they participate in and respond to this system on their own terms and in accordance with their own social relations and cultural world-views (see Fox-Genovese 1988; Genovese 1972). In the Omaheke a central feature of this world-view is a complex and often contradictory racial mythology of the 'Bushman'. For all that this racial mythology was and is discordant, one feature seems to be a matter of consensus: the Bushmen represent the ultimate child race. The farmers' dealings with the Ju/'hoansi are therefore couched in a paternalistic vocabulary where the farmers claim to 'staan Pa' (i.e. stand as father) to their Ju/'hoan workers. The rather heavy-handed control of Ju/'hoan

labour was, and is, rationalized on the grounds that the Ju/'hoansi are like 'children' and it is the farmer's duty to take care of them or punish them. Farmers tend to justify the continuation of these practices on the grounds that they are 'uplifting' and 'protecting' the Ju/'hoansi; for example, farmers claim that they pay the Ju/'hoansi low wages because they are irresponsible with money, and farmers insist that they recruit the Ju/'hoansi on their farms, particularly the women, because it is morally harmful to be 'idle'. Thus, a fundamental feature of farm class relations is the farmers' paternalistic attitude toward the Ju/'hoansi.

The three criteria for distinguishing unfree labour from proletarianization — methods of remuneration, methods of recruitment and control, and definitions of the labourer's personhood — all leave the class status of the Ju/'hoansi ambiguous. Neither independence nor capitalism were able to bring about a full proletarianization of the Ju/'hoansi. The farmers' farm-management practices and their dealings with their Ju/'hoan workers is neither a direct product of state legislation, nor a determined outcome of a regional or global capitalist market; rather, as we will now see, it is in large part the product of a variety of interactions among the farm residents themselves, and the Ju/'hoansi are themselves important agents in the creation of farm politics.

I now turn to an examination of how paternalism works on the farms in the Omaheke; specifically, how it is connected to gender politics and how it is accommodated and influenced by the Ju/'hoansi's own ideologies about their relationship to the *baas*.

ii) Paternalism, Patriarchy and Baasskap

One afternoon, while we were sitting the spacious dining room of a farmhouse just outside Gobabis, an older Afrikaner farmer — a descendant of an Angola trekker —

smilingly detailed the genealogical and life history information of all of the Ju/'hoansi on his farm: "That young Jan was born on this farm, I knew his father - what a rascal!" and "That ou Sisaba worked for my father. He left a while ago, but he came back home." Like many other farmers, he claimed to 'know' the 'Bushmen' because, not only had the older Ju/'hoansi on his farm been his childhood playmates, but many of the children of these former playmates had been born and grew up on his farm. Upon finishing his biographical accounts of the Ju/'hoansi on his farm, he proudly proclaimed "These are my Bushmen - I am the Papa!" The relationships between the farmers and the Ju/'hoansi are so complex precisely because they extend well beyond the wage nexus: the Afrikaners and the Ju/'hoansi are enmeshed in webs of emotional ties. The complexity and ambiguities of this relationship were expressed by one of my younger male informants when he described being hit with a sjambok by the farmer who had 'raised' him. He said: "I don't know if I should love him or hate him."

Previous studies of the paternalism between the San and the Afrikaner settler communities in Namibia and Botswana focused on the degree to which paternalism encouraged or discouraged violence on the farms (see Suzman 1997; Gordon 1992a; Russell 1975; Guenther 1986a). Although I will also be examining this problem later on, it is useful to follow van Onselen (1992) in first examining the logic of this paternalism in order to determine how it intersects with other farm relationships. The first — often overlooked — element of paternalism that needs further elaboration is its gendered component. Van Onselen states:

The concept of paternalism is predicated on the notion of a *male* of legal standing who enjoys the right — without having to seek recourse to the law — of exercising traditionally sanctioned authority over minors within his 'family'; that is, over the

'women and children' on his property (1992:134; 1997:196 emphasis mine).

Thus, a first step in examining the logic of paternalism is to examine how power falls along gender lines, or more specifically, how paternalism and patriarchy are connected in this context.

'Patriarchy', according to a traditional definition, "referred most commonly to the governing of a family group by an elderly male" (Social Sciences Encyclopedia 1985:485). Marxist feminism inherited a definition of patriarchy from Engels who, drawing from Morgan, defined it as "the organization of a number of persons, bond and free, into a family under paternal power" (1985:87-88). One problem many feminists have had with the term 'patriarchy' concerns its connections to other relationships of oppression based on race and class (see, for example, Barrett 1980, German 1997; Vogel 1983; Brewer 1993 [1997]; Joseph 1997; Carby 1997). Another, more abstract, problem concerns how to link patriarchy to capitalism. This problem has led to some to stress the independent nature of patriarchy (for example, various 'dual systems' approaches, i.e. Beneria 1982; Hartman 1981), and led still others to stress the tight articulation or unity of patriarchy and capitalism (see, for example, Kuhn and Wolpe 1997; Young 1997; Sacks 1979; Kelly 1984).

The chief problem with the term 'patriarchy' is its ahistorical and universalistic connotations (see Stichter and Parpart 1988; Edholm, Harris and Young 1977). These problems have led some feminists to abandon the term altogether, and adopt instead the terms 'gender subordination' or 'paternalism' (see, for example, Fox-Genovese 1988). However, the situation in the Omaheke demands a descriptive term that more pointedly refers to *gender*-based systems of subordination. If both gender and class subordination are described as systems of paternalism, we are left with no way to relate class subordination to gender

subordination. The legacy of Engels' definition of patriarchy — which was meant to refer to an evolutionary phase of family government — is perhaps responsible for the mischief of ahistoricism. However, the term is not *necessarily* ahistorical and we need not avoid the term for use in ways that are grounded in ethnographic and historical particularities. Although I do not attempt to solve the problems outlined above, I retain the term 'patriarchy' since gender asymmetries in the Omaheke are so pronounced and, on the farms, are rooted in a political matrix established by strongly male-dominated Afrikaner family and household arrangements. This said, I agree that the concept of patriarchy is of only limited explanatory use, and give a larger role to paternalism in characterizing Afrikaner attitudes towards the Ju/'hoansi.

Van Onselen provides a useful starting point for seeing how paternalism and patriarchy intersect in the context of farm politics in southern Africa: "Paternalism takes as its model the extended patriarchal household" (James Oaks, cited 1992:134). If the patriarchal family provides a model for farm politics, it is useful to have, however superficial, a very general survey of the historical and material conditions which likely gave rise to the particular form of farm and family government one now finds on the farms the Omaheke.

In the early years of white settlement the Administration encouraged poor white settlers, especially the Angola Boers, to settle on farms that were already occupied and to work as bywoners until they became accustomed to farming in the Omaheke (LGO 15/7/7, Circular from Office of the Administration, Windhoek, to Gobabis Magistrate, August 29, 1928). Also, many of the Angola Boers began farming in teams, with more than one family occupying a farm (van Rooyen and Reiner 1995:42; see also chapter one). One elderly Ju/'hoan former farm worker described the farms of his childhood this way:

The Hereros had Ju/'hoansi as their workers. Afrikaners also had Ju/'hoansi as their workers. And also a few Germans. The Hereros were working for each other, white farmers were working for each other. It's how they *baasspeel* [play boss with each other]...At that time there would be five farmers on just one farm. Everyone is *baas*, in charge of the farm.

In the early years, the farmers were economically weak and the power the farmers could exercise was relatively diffuse and collective. After recovering from the drought and depression of the 1930s, and especially after the Administration focused subsidies and assistance toward meat production for export in the 1950s, farming in the Omaheke became increasingly commercialized and individualized, which had the effect of encouraging more nuclear-family household arrangements among the farmers. However, even though the Administration began encouraging farmers to reduce the number of 'natives' on their farms in the 1930s (LGO 2/4/1 circular from Office of the Administrator to all Native Commissioners, 3/9/36), most reports from older informants indicate that farmers did not try to 'nuclearize' the workers' households until around the 1960s — by reducing rations and policing the squatter population more diligently — after commercialization was well under way. As the farms became increasingly commercialized, power became increasingly concentrated into the hands of a single, male *baas*. Also in the 1950s, as land encroachment closed off alternative subsistence options for the Ju/'hoansi, farmer behaviour toward the Ju/'hoansi shifted from recruitment to control, and the farms themselves became an enclosed unit under the authority of a single farmer/household head.

Thus, on one level, the present political structures found on the farms are the product of historical, and inter-connected, transformations in the farm market economy, the household and family arrangements of the Afrikaners, and the 'enclosure' of farm production. On the farms today one finds that the chain of command emanates from the

farmer's household: the farmer is the father and the '*baas*', his son (or sons) is '*kleinbaas*' and, under the authority of her husband, the *miesis* oversees the work in the farmer's house. The conflation of the farmer's role as '*baas*' and 'Papa' produced a principle of labour management fairly unique to farms in southern Africa, known as '*baasskap*', which is described by Guenther as "European economic domination combined with the racist values and practices of apartheid" (1979:135; 1986:51). Suzman describes the paternalism inherent to *baasskap* in the following way:

Baaskap was an explicitly paternalistic model of and for farm relations, one which was seen to lend itself particularly well to the "childlike" Ju/'hoansi...[the farmer's role] required them to "train, to educate, to financially and otherwise assist, to care for, and in the final instance, punish and discipline." (1997:78).

The level of personal, patriarchal control the farmers enjoyed over labour enabled them to create a fairly distinct society and assert their world view as the dominant one in the region. Furthermore, such patriarchal power relationships on the ground provided the basis for public patriarchy. As van Onselen notes: "[p]ower on the farms flowed through the microcircuitry of patriarchy and paternalism before being fed into the national grid of political life" (1992:140). The concentration of patriarchal power into the hands of a single *baas* 'father figure' provided the paradigm of inter-racial class relations both on the farms and in the regional and national political arenas, and was in turn easily naturalized according to "the Darwinian phrases that seem to lie so close to Boer hearts" (van Onselen 1996:142). A patriarchal order in the household serves to legitimate male supremacy in the broader political economy, while bourgeois-evolutionist discourse mystifies and naturalizes family and household arrangements under capitalism. Unmasking the naturalizing tendencies of evolutionist discourse sheds a Foucauldian light on Carl Vogt's statement (cited in chapter

two): "...it is easier to overthrow a government by revolution than alter the arrangements of the kitchen." As we will see later, however, the Ju/'hoansi's own views about 'domestic' and family arrangements are at variance with those of the Afrikaners and this serves to limit the force of the Afrikaners' views and produce a counter-hegemonic discourse.

I have outlined the (Afrikaner) cultural and political economic forces that encouraged the formation of a family-based form of farm government. However, this form of farm government is not just the result of the farmers imposing a method of governance on the Ju/'hoansi - the Ju/'hoansi are also participants in forming, sustaining and refashioning farm politics. Paternalism is the hegemonic mode of ordering class relations on the farms, yet, as Comaroff and Comaroff note, hegemony cannot depend on domination alone - it requires accommodation on the part of the subaltern groups (1991:26-27); that is, hegemony is the result of 'the dialectics of force and consent' (Gramsci 1971:169).

There are a number of forms accommodation may take. First, accommodation may result from 'habituation' based on what hegemony silences, excludes from debate and confrontation so that certain "signs and practices" become "so deeply inscribed in everyday routine, that they may no longer be seen as forms of control - or seen at all" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:25; see also Williams 1977:109). Second, accommodation may result from a collusion of interests between members of the subaltern and dominant classes, so that the hegemonic assumptions and practices of the dominant class are sustained by situational consent. Third, it may result either from a collusion or compatibility of ideologies or from a strategic acceptance of a few of the basic principles of class-rule which members of the underclass can turn to their advantage (see Genovese 1972).

The first and second forms of accommodation are closely related. Genovese states:

“Hegemony implies, for a given historical epoch, the ability of a particular class to contain those [class] antagonisms on a terrain in which its legitimacy is not dangerously questioned” (1968:25-26). Gender relations provide this kind of ‘safe’ terrain on the farms. Where as the farmers’ paternalism is explicitly expressed and articulated, female subordination is an ever-present, yet rarely articulated principle of organizing farm production - it is tactically enforced more than it is consciously asserted. The patriarchal tendencies of paternalism provide the basis for male collusion, especially since one of the few ways Ju’hoan men are able to accrue power within the farmer-dominated domain of farm politics is by asserting their status as male ‘household heads’.

Patriarchy on the farms provides an over-arching framework for paternalistic class relations. As a gender-based system of subordination, patriarchy segregates the space on the farms into male and female zones. The general trend (but not the strict rule) is that the men’s place is outside the house and the women’s place is inside the house.³ Although female activities in the house, both productive and reproductive, are subordinated to male authority, there is still a level of autonomy and authority ascribed to the women. In the case of the white *miesis*, the paternalism inherent in patriarchal farm politics is diminished for two reasons. First, the competing identity of motherhood — central to bourgeois definitions of white womanhood and Afrikaner nationalist identity — undermines the feminized stereotype of ‘childishness’. Instead, the white *miesis*, as a wife and mother, assumes the authority of the primary care-taker of the domestic space and so occupies a relatively autonomous sphere of activities and responsibilities. Secondly, much of the white *miesis*’ authority rests on the

³ Russell and Russell describe a similar situation in Ghanzi, Botswana (1979:54-55).

class-based paternalistic principle of supervision, guidance, discipline and control of her domestic servants, which is backed by her husband's authority.

The patriarchal class structure on the farms encourages and relies on a sexual division of labour within Ju/'hoan households — in their various forms — where Ju/'hoan women are relegated to the role of primary care-takers of what is nominally their own domestic space. Ju/'hoan men are defined and treated as household heads and breadwinners. For their own part, the Ju/'hoansi insist that women are the '*baas* of the house'. This attitude reflects and legitimates the patriarchal sexual division of labour inherent in farm production, but it also creates a space where Ju/'hoan women exercise authority and are afforded some social recognition (in contrast to the farmer's view that Ju/'hoan women contribute little or nothing in their own homes).

Although the organization of production and the patriarchal class structure on the farms does encourage patriarchal household arrangements among the Ju/'hoan residents — especially in the case of senior male workers who earn more money, enjoy more decision-making power and are treated by the farmers as household heads — the level of patriarchal control afforded to Ju/'hoan men is mediated by the degree to which Ju/'hoan men are subject to the farmer's paternalism (see Carby 1997:115). Furthermore — and perhaps more importantly — Ju/'hoan 'households' tend to form as clusters of extended-kin related houses (residential sites) which come together according to the principle of 'sharing a fire' (i.e. pooling resources and sharing tasks). Thus, the power relations within these households tend to be more diffuse. For example, the power a male worker may exercise in his relationship with wife and children is mediated by the influence of extended kin, especially his parents, to whom deference and respect are usually shown. In cases where Ju/'hoan women have the good

fortune to be living on a farm where her own kin also live and work, she can usually count on some support which equalizes to some degree her relationship with her husband. Although Ju/'hoan women are typically described being 'under' their husbands, this status is moderated by the fact that a Ju/'hoan husband may also be 'under' his wife's kin. One younger Ju/'hoan man, //Au, explained to me that when he and his wife, /Xabe, are living on the farm where he works, /Xabe is 'under' him. However, when they go to visit his /Xabe's family on a different farm, he is 'under' his wife's kin and so must perform any task they ask him to do and be generally obedient. //Au put it like this: "If I am staying with my wife's family and they say 'do this' I cannot say no. I must just do it." The authority a Ju/'hoan man's parents-in-law are able to exercise — particularly their control over his labour — is likely associated with the principles underlying brideservice as a traditional mode of validating marriages. Although brideservice has changed to suit the context of generational farm labour, the principles underlying the practice (e.g. respecting and supporting one's wife's parents) are still powerfully present today (this is described in detail in the next chapter).

The principles of male authority built into the political economy of farm life have been internalized and adopted by many of the Ju/'hoan women I met. During one group interview with women ranging in age from 35 to 85, I was told:

She [a wife] must always listen to him [her husband]. She must do things which he tells her to do...if he says you must do something for him, then you must do it. And you don't come to sit and talk about it. Then it is only fighting...[the husband is *baas*] because you are under him and you must listen to him...it was also like that [in the old times]. You must always listen to your husband...it is right. It's like a rule and it's what the Ju/'hoansi in the old time did.

It is difficult to determine the degree to which male domination is a principle passed on from 'old time' Ju/'hoan practices, but this would represent a sharp contrast to what Lee (1979),

Marshall (1976), Draper (1975) and Shostak (1981) found among the Ju/'hoansi living in a veld context. However, that the Ju/'hoansi are not simply adopting Afrikaner gender ideologies blindly is evidenced by the fact that the *legitimacy* of male dominance is rooted in a perceived Ju/'hoan past. Whether real or not, this perceived past grounds Ju/'hoan consent to the patriarchal ingredient of paternalism. Furthermore, Ju/'hoan women put their own spin on this principle and use it to assert their rights and interests as wives and mothers on the basis of a husband's duty to provide for his family. As I mentioned in chapter three, one rarely finds a female-headed household on the farms.⁴ This is not only because farmers rarely hire women in their own right; it is also because Ju/'hoan women resist being the sole supporter of a household. Whenever I asked any of my female Ju/'hoan informants whether or not it was possible for a woman to support an unemployed husband on a farm, I was emphatically told "it will not work out!" One young Ju/'hoan woman explained the issue this way:

It is not good [if the husband doesn't work]. Then she will stop loving that man later. The woman will divorce him because she is feeding him and he doesn't want to work...It is not right — it's because of him that we have children and he must stand by his wife.

Ju/'hoan gender relations operate within a framework of patriarchy and paternalism, but are still regulated by the Ju/'hoansi's own set of obligations and kinship principles. While the principles of paternalism and patriarchy regulate the class relationship between the Ju/'hoansi and the farmers by emphasizing the white *baas*'s prerogatives of discipline and control, the Ju/'hoansi themselves, particularly the women, impose competing views about the

⁴ Female-headed households are quite common in the Epako squatters' village because women have access to employment in town, independent of their male kin (household dynamics in the squatters' village are discussed in detail in the next chapter).

'fatherhood' of Ju/'hoan men, which emphasize support and solidarity.

The paternalistic attitudes of the farmers towards the Ju/'hoansi, together with the patriarchal arrangement of power on the farms, can easily encourage the idea that the farmers have imposed their version of power and personal relationships on the Ju/'hoan workers. As we will see in the following section, this view of what happens is too narrow. The Ju/'hoansi themselves both assist the farmers in maintaining their paternalism, and regularly challenge this paternalism and turn it to their advantage in their struggles with the farmers.

iii) Growing Up Together: Afrikaner-Ju/'hoan 'Familial' Relations

Paternalism and patriarchy are both concepts that presume, however unsuitably, familial relations (of parent to child, and of father to family). It is useful to examine how this background presumption is manifested in the relationships between Afrikaner farmers and their Ju/'hoan workers. One fact of farm life that lends an air of legitimacy to farmers' claims of enjoying a familial relationship with 'their Bushmen' is that Afrikaners and Ju/'hoansi often grow up together. Many older Ju/'hoansi I spoke with described their childhood experiences in very positive terms, pointing out advantages they gained from their association with Afrikaner children. Kauh, who is in his late 40s, told me:

The first farmer I worked for - I was playing with his children and we were playing like we were all Bushmen. From them I learned how to speak Afrikaans very well.

Sisaba, who is in his late 60s, warmly remembers his childhood association with the farmer's children:

When I was a child, I took the farmer's children to school and back [with a donkey cart]. And from there they taught me how to read. Then after, when I knew how to read, I bought myself a bible and learned more and then I decided to become a Christian.

Childhood is the only time in an Afrikaner's or a Ju/'hoan's life when relatively uncomplicated and uninhibited friendships can form, despite the class differences that set them apart at an early age. Childhood provides an opportunity for a period of positive interaction, when Ju/'hoan and Afrikaner children can learn from each other and develop close relationships. Sisaba described the farmer's children (now adults living in the city) with genuine affection, especially since they were associated with his ability to read, a highly prized ability to the Ju/'hoansi, and facilitated an important conversion in his life.

The educational benefits of childhood associations go both ways. For example, Afrikaner children learn bush skills such as finding veldkos and tracking. Also, just as the Ju/'hoansi benefit by learning how to speak Afrikaans, so too do some Afrikaner children learn how to speak Ju/'hoan. Few Afrikaners learn how to speak Ju/'hoan as well as the Ju/'hoansi learn how to speak Afrikaans — a fact which the Ju/'hoansi point out often and with great delight — however, the few Afrikaners who are able to speak Ju/'hoan well are spoken of with respect. The Ju/'hoansi themselves, most of whom are fluent in Afrikaans, Nama-Damara and sometimes also OtjiHerero, feel justified in making fun of Afrikaners who cannot learn their language. N!ae jokingly describes the farmer she knew from childhood, and his lack of linguistic genius: “his head is hard. If their heads are soft, so things get in, then they could speak like us. But their heads are hard.”

The fact that the Afrikaners and Ju/'hoansi grew up together not only justifies, to some extent, the farmers' claims to ‘know the Bushmen’, it also affords the Ju/'hoansi an equal claim to ‘know the Afrikaners’. Hxoan//a, who is in her mid-80s, explained to me that she knows the *baas* of the farm where she is living ‘very well’ since she had ‘watched him grow up’: “He was here sleeping with us. He didn't sleep in the farmhouse. Each morning he

left our house and went to the farmhouse.” For all that the farmers often claim that they ‘raised’ the Ju/’hoansi on their farms, it is equally, and likely more literally true, that the Ju/’hoansi ‘raised’ the Afrikaners. Hxoan//a described how a farmer had, when a child, stayed with the Ju/’hoansi at the workers’ quarters day and night - which meant the women assumed the responsible for minding him as well as their own children.

Childhood ‘playmate’ relationships with Afrikaner children are, however, primarily a male experience. When young Ju/’hoan girls enter into a relationship with Afrikaner children, it is usually as a child-minder.⁵ Female Ju/’hoan experiences with Afrikaner children fell under the rubric of ‘domestic work’ (see chapter three) and that was more drudgery than play, especially since they were usually in charge of Afrikaner infants and children, male and female, much younger than themselves. No Ju/’hoan woman I spoke to described having Afrikaner playmates as a child. This feature of Afrikaner and Ju/’hoan childhood may explain why few Ju/’hoan women express the same sense of ambivalent affection toward Afrikaners that many of my male informants expressed. It may also explain why very few Afrikaner women I spoke to expressed ‘maternalistic’ concerns for the Ju/’hoansi on their farms; where ‘familial’ attachments were expressed, they tended to echo their husband’s attitudes toward and experiences with, primarily, male Ju/’hoan workers. Associated with this point is the fact that the childhood experiences of Ju/’hoan and Afrikaner girls tended to be house-bound, whereas the childhood associations between Ju/’hoan and Afrikaner boys occurred outside, at the workers’ quarters and in the veld (see also Russell and Russell 1979:55), which gave

⁵ This contrasts with the situation described by Russell and Russell in Ghanzi, Botswana, where young San girls were conscripted playmates for young Afrikaner girls, and were allowed relatively unrestricted access to the house-bound world of Afrikaner daughters (1979:54).

Afrikaner boys an opportunity to become somewhat more familiar with the Ju/'hoansi who live on their farm.

In a few cases Ju/'hoansi were literally raised by Afrikaner families. Childhood apprenticeships created situations where a Ju/'hoan child could be adopted into an Afrikaner family, although only as a subordinate, servile household member. !Xuma describes his childhood in the 1950s:

[When I first saw the farmer] I was with my parents near Tallismanus [in the reserve]. [The farmer and his wife] took me and I stayed close with them. The farmer took me from my parents. When they left, they took me with them. They brought me up...I was sleeping in the kitchen, taking care of the dogs and chickens...They would dish up my food and give it to me and they will eat in the dining room and I will eat in the kitchen...And I and the farmer's son were playing together until he started to go to school and I started working...the farmer's wife said that if I left, she would not have anybody to stay with her. Her son wanted to send me to school, but she refused because then she would have nobody to stay with her.

Although childhood associations, in their variety of forms, tend to reproduce the class, race and gender order on the farms, they foster bonds of affection and appreciation at the same time.

This situation has changed as the younger generation of Afrikaners, finding it impossible to set up their own farming operations, left the rural areas to find work and raise families in the urban centres. Their parents, who are now grandparents, continue to run the farm, sometimes on behalf of a son who lives in Gobabis or Windhoek. Thus, few Ju/'hoansi in their 20s described growing up with Afrikaner children and this younger generation of Ju/'hoansi tend to be the staunchest critics of the Afrikaners' continued claims to share 'familial' bonds with them.

The limits of legitimacy to the farmers' claims of familial bonds with 'their Bushmen' become most obvious, as !Xuma's account suggests, at the time when Afrikaner children

leave home for school. It is at this time that the worlds of Afrikaner children and Ju/'hoan children begin to diverge radically, and the relationship dramatically transforms (see also Thompson 1971:110, 154). The Afrikaner child moves on to a 'white' school in town while the Ju/'hoan child either attends a farm school — a fairly recent phenomenon — or immediately moves into farm labour. The Ju/'hoansi are abundantly aware of the contradictions inherent in paternalism here. One Ju/'hoan man in his early 20s stated:

They do raise some children up, but the only problem is they don't send them to school. If they brought them up, then they will just put them to work - to work for them. If you grew up with his children, and it is school time, then he will just leave you out - send his children and you will stay behind.

The same criticism is also levelled at Herero employers, who tend to adhere to a much more literal form of paternalism, where Ju/'hoan children are taken from their families (a practice now much less frequent on white farms) and are raised in the Herero household as subordinate, servile household members. These Ju/'hoan children eat and sleep and live full-time with the Herero family and are treated, in every respect except material advantage, as a child of the Herero farmer. However, the Ju/'hoansi I spoke to who had worked on Herero farms viewed Herero paternalism as a transparent strategy of exploitation. /Kunta describes his experience with a Herero employer:

He will pay me maybe every two months, or anytime he wants. He always said that I'm his child, that's why he robbed me. He will say that because he will say that you grew up on his farm and you are an adult now and he raised you. They only say that to people who are working for them, to let them know that he really brought you up and helped you, so that you will just stay with him...[But] when you grow up there you will see for yourself and say "this person says that I am his child, but he gives me nothing." It's why you will leave him and tell him to his face - saying "I'm working for you for so many years, but you don't give me anything and I'm leaving you now."

As I mention in chapter one, early forms of labour management on the white farms likely developed as a response to Ju/'hoan work patterns, which were in turn developed through

their working experiences with Hereros and Tswanas. Thus, for all that paternalism on Herero farms and paternalism on white farms have culturally unique contexts, neither system of paternalism developed in complete isolation from the other. Also, the Ju/'hoansi I spoke to did not significantly differentiate their experiences of paternalism — and especially its contradictions — between Herero and white farms.

Paternalism tends to find its clearest expression in class relationships between men. The position of Ju/'hoan women, especially in Herero households, is complicated by the fact that they are occasionally viewed as sexual rivals by Herero women and as potential partners by Herero men and so are treated less like 'children' than their menfolk. Koba describes her experience working as a young domestic servant on a Herero farm:

I don't like Herero women, because of the way they live... You are working for them and you are busy in their kitchen, always they will keep thinking in two different directions, and then she will be worried about you and her husband. And in other ways she will say that you are not working well. The same applies to white people... Later on you'll not understand each other because later on she'll say "you are preparing yourself too much, you are taking care of yourself too much, you are touching water too much and making your head and hair nice too much." From there you will not understand each other. You will ask her "why must I be dirty because of you?"

The Ju/'hoan women I spoke to about the issue of sexual jealousy told me that this is no longer an issue on most white farms. White paternalism is perhaps not made ambiguous by male-female sexual relations because it is rooted in the ideology of apartheid, which attaches the 'natural' supremacy of white males to racial 'purity' through 'separate development'. This apartheid-based ideology is, however, not present on Herero farms, even though some Herero farmers do speak of the Ju/'hoansi as racially inferior (see Suzman 1997)..

Thus, on white farms paternalism tends to be expressed most unproblematically in relationships between men since 'familial' bonds tend to develop more between Afrikaner

and Ju/'hoan men in their childhood experiences. But another reason is the Afrikaners' fairly strict adherence to a patriarchal gender order. The *baas* or *miesis* usually recruits Ju/'hoan women for work by approaching husbands or fathers; and the working relationship between a Ju/'hoan woman and the *miesis* is mediated by the *baas*. Since Ju/'hoan men are usually treated as household heads, there are usually a number of different men who mediate the relationship between a Ju/'hoan woman and her Afrikaner employers.

While the farmers may claim bonds of familial affection for many of the Ju/'hoansi working on their farms, and may frequently point to their childhood experiences to justify those claims, a crucial transformation occurs when those same farmers later come to own and manage the farms. When they become the *baas*, their former Ju/'hoan 'siblings' become their workers and, so, their 'children'. Unlike the farmer himself, his workers never acquire the economic independence of 'adulthood'.

iv) 'Helping Each Other'

As the above analysis suggests, there are important gender and generational distinctions in the way the Ju/'hoansi experience paternalism. Paternalistic attitudes are not applied uniformly by every employer at all times; divisions among the employers themselves will often influence how paternalism is expressed. For example, while /Kunta was describing how his Herero employer used paternalism as a tool for exploiting him, he also mentioned that occasionally this employer's wife would take his side: "Yes, she sometimes helped me, saying 'that child grew up here with us, give him whatever he asks for.'" Paternalism provides for a range of behaviour, from benevolent care-taking to discipline and punishment. I met many farmers whose sense of paternalistic duty meant providing for and looking after

the Ju/'hoansi on their farms. Many farmers are deeply involved in the running of farm schools, such as the Gqaina school (in the Steinhausen District) and the Hippo school (in the Buitepos District). A few farmers even pay the school fees for their workers' children, and work out a schedule to take turns transporting the children to and from school.

Farmers also take turns providing rides to and from church and provide weekly, or bi-monthly trips into town, as well as rides to the clinic when a farm resident gets sick. Also, a few farmers I met are trying to encourage their workers to build up savings accounts. Because many Ju/'hoansi have not yet been issued their new identification documents, they are unable to open bank accounts of their own. Thus, the farmer, or more usually the farmer's wife, must carefully keep track of the workers' saving, which they keep in good faith in glass jars in the house. Furthermore, gifts of stock are sometimes given to a particularly favoured worker in a sincere effort to assist a worker in 'bringing himself up' by building a small herd.

Some farmers take time in the mornings, and especially on Sundays, to read biblical passages to their Ju/'hoan workers (some of whom are devout Christians) in order to promote their spiritual well-being.⁶ Some farmers and their wives show considerable concern for their workers. They examine ways of reducing the dependency and poverty of the Ju/'hoansi on their farm (in some cases, this also includes the Ju/'hoan women); they discuss problems with workers and how they might be justly solved; they worry about the severity of alcoholism among the Ju/'hoansi; or, they just pleasantly reminisce about the first time Ou Johannes or

⁶ Some Ju/'hoansi see the Afrikaners' efforts to proselytize as hypocritical. For example, one Ju/'hoan man told me: "He will come back from church, where they say 'love people' and beat us, saying 'so you think you're clever now?'" However, other Ju/'hoansi consider themselves Christians, even if they are not excessively devout, and appreciate bible readings by the farmer.

Ou Thomas came to work on the farm.

Just as paternalism provides for a variety of practices on the part of the farmers, so too does it provide the Ju/'hoansi with the grounds to make legitimate claims on the farmers and judge their conduct. The first thing to consider in this instance, then, is the ways in which the Ju/'hoansi themselves impose expectations of care and maintenance on the farmers, on their own terms and in reference to Ju/'hoan cultural perspectives. When we earlier asked why farm politics are so resistant to the democratizing and proletarianizing influences of independence and liberalized economic markets, one important part of the answer concerns the extent to which the Ju/'hoansi's own attitudes accommodate, and perpetuate, paternalism.

As I described in chapter three, the Ju/'hoansi's historical experience of working on the farms was framed in terms of 'helping' the farmers. When older women in particular describe their own or their mother's past working experiences with Hereros, they are often described in terms of 'helping' (hui). Even today, Ju/'hoansi who are attached to Herero or Tswana households in the communal areas or mission stations describe themselves as 'helping' in return for food and clothes. It was these client/patron relationships that informed Ju/'hoansi perceptions of their earliest working relationships with white farmers. //Uce described moving from the Epukiro reserve as a child in the 1920s this way: "My parents decided to come here and help the white farmers." 'Working', unlike 'helping' typically refers to waged work. However, the notion of 'helping' still informs the way the Ju/'hoansi understand their wage-working relationships and they still use it to distinguish 'good' and 'bad' farmers. //Uce explained:

A white farmer will maybe help you, but a Herero will not. Sometimes when [a white farmer] helps you, he'll say "take this and go cook it for yourself."

A fairly common description of a 'bad' farmer is one who "doesn't help us very well" (/oa !aise hui e!a). The extent to which an employee/employer relationship is viewed as 'helping' will also depend on the way in which a Ju/'hoan worker began working for a *baas* or *miesis*. If the Ju/'hoansi approached the farmer to ask for work and the farmer hires him, then the farmer is the one who is helping the Ju/'hoan worker, by providing a job. In this case, the expectations of further 'helping' — by providing old clothes, better rations, more meat and assistance with school fees and clinic expenses — is minimal. However, if the farmer approached the Ju/'hoansi to recruit them for work, then the Ju/'hoansi are the ones who are 'helping' the farmer, by agreeing to take the job. Large-scale retrenchments and subsequent unemployment has eroded the use of the Ju/'hoan principle of 'helping' since it is now increasingly the Ju/'hoansi who approach the farmer for work. However, many Ju/'hoansi still work for the farmer who recruited them as children or young adults and in these cases the reciprocal expectations of 'helping' remain strong. But these are also the cases in which the farmer is most likely to insist that he 'staans pa' to his workers. Also women more often view their relationship to their employers in terms of 'helping', since they are usually recruited by the farmer, through their husbands or fathers, to work in the farmer's house.

The Ju/'hoansi's principle of 'helping' places expectations of reciprocity on the farmer. Since the Ju/'hoansi were good enough to help the farmer by working for him when he asked, the farmer ought to be good enough to help them out with clothes, food, school fees, lifts to town, clinic expenses and livestock. The Ju/'hoansi do not view these as mere employee 'benefits', but as their due; money is merely one item among the wide range of gifts a good farmer gives in return for good help. Thus, for all that the Ju/'hoansi would like to see their wages raised, they resist dispensing with rations and other payments 'in kind',

since payments in kind maintain the perceived bond of reciprocity and mutual assistance. Because they understand their relationship with the farmer in terms of ‘helping’, they do not view their labour as something alienated from themselves, a commodity to be exchanged for money. Farmers who attempt to commoditize Ju/’hoan labour power — for example, to reduce their dependency or rationalize production — are regarded as ‘stingy’ and derelict in their obligation to reciprocate and ‘help’. Furthermore, ‘stinginess’, to the Ju/’hoansi, is an abhorrent character flaw — a vice that is almost tantamount to brutality. Besa, for example, describes the character of a farmer he worked for in the following way:

He is a good person and he won’t beat you without a reason. He will always say nice things and laugh with you. But the only thing [that he doesn’t do] is to take out his hand for you [i.e. to give a good wage].⁷

Gashe describes his feelings toward a farmer he worked for in somewhat stronger language:

I hate him because of the low wages. I hate him because of that — to not give you better wages, so you can have the money you are sweating for, to buy clothes you can wear, then you will say that this is a good farmer. Like if you look after his goats, then he has to mark a goat for you. Then you’ll say that this farmer is a nice person who is helping you — his mind is okay. But he is just stingy — he and his wife...I will see that that farmer is not good and that he is stingy. It’s why his workers are poor and he is rich. He’s stingy — it’s not right.

It is not always necessary for the Ju/’hoansi to invoke the precept of ‘helping’ to assert their interests vis-a-vis the farmers. The farmers themselves insist that their paternalistic duties include ‘looking after’ the Ju/’hoansi and so the Ju/’hoansi need only hold the farmers to their own standards of paternalism. The Ju/’hoansi’s principle of ‘helping’ implies obligations on the part of the farmer which mesh well with the sense of duty dictated by the farmer’s own paternalism. When the Ju/’hoansi evaluate and criticize the various

⁷ A common complaint among the Ju/’hoansi is that ‘the farmer won’t take out his hand’ (/a /hua /oa !hxa ha !au) or he has a ‘short arm’ (*na !o).

farmers they know or have worked for, they often do so in reference to farmers who are ‘good’ paternalists. Di//xao’s account of an argument she had with a former *miesis* provides an example of this strategy, and it also reveals the different levels of complexity and ambiguity that colour the relationship between the Ju/’hoansi and the Afrikaners:

[The *miesis*] was telling me that in the old times she was working for [farmer X] and saying “I had a metal house at that time.” When I asked her for fat from her for the porridge, she will say “it’s the same problem I had with [farmer X] at that time.” She will say “[farmer X] didn’t give me fat and don’t ask me for fat for the porridge - I didn’t get fat with porridge at that time.” She will also say, if she gives me bread, that I must just eat the bread like that, without butter or jam, because it’s how she ate hers while she was working for [farmer X]. But then I will answer, to say that “[Farmer Y], who I worked for didn’t give me that kind of food. I was eating nice food when I worked for him - and what kind of a white person are you?” From there the fight will begin.

Di//xao’s account reveals a number of issues tangled in farm class relations. The first issue I have already described above: Di//xao held up the example of a farmer who was more successful at ‘taking care’ of his workers in order challenge her *miesis*’ stinginess. The second issue, which will be examined in greater detail in the next section, is that the Ju/’hoansi are not simply passive recipients of the farmers’ abuse or stinginess — they argue and talk back and often they know that they’re right.

The third issue is the extent to which the Afrikaners’ own class experiences and class status influence how they view themselves in relation to the Ju/’hoansi, and from this, view themselves as a class and a nation. There are two broad trends in Afrikaner attitudes about themselves and their relationship with the Ju/’hoansi that roughly correspond with their class status. The wealthier Afrikaners I met tended to view themselves (and present themselves to me) as more liberal and worldly *employers*. These farmers were generally better able to conform to standards of benevolent paternalism. For these Afrikaners giving ‘benefits’ to

their Ju/'hoan *workers* was done as a reward for long-term loyalty and out of feelings of 'familial' obligation; withholding benefits was justified on the paternalistic grounds of reducing the Ju/'hoansi's 'dependency mentality'. The less affluent Afrikaners I met referred to themselves as *Suidwesters* (South-westers), and talked about themselves in terms of the historical experience of sacrifice and struggle during the trek from South Africa or Angola and in terms of their work as bywoners. These Afrikaners were not in a position to express paternalistic attitudes through material reward, though a few told me they wished they were. Withholding 'benefits' was more often justified by them on the grounds that *Bushmen* have no need for certain kinds of food, shelter or stock, and many insisted they themselves had done without such 'luxuries'.

The fourth and related issue concerns the way that the class status and experience of the Afrikaners influences how their paternalism gets opportunistically applied. For some of the wealthier farmers, paternalism goes only so far as giving them the right to control activities on the farm, but not as far as an obligation to make financial contributions to the maintenance of the Ju/'hoansi. The Ju/'hoansi are expected to spend their wages responsibly so as to take care of their own needs. On the other end of the spectrum, Di//xao's *miesis* attempted to evade her responsibilities as a care-taker by describing herself as a former poor bywoner — a description which diminishes her status as a 'parental' figure and implies class solidarity with her domestic servant. Di//xao, however, foils this effort by reminding her *miesis* of the obligations that come with her skin-colour ("what kind of a white person are you?").

Paternalism, as a principle of conduct and management on the ground, did not develop as a coherent system of ideology and practice. It evolved through experimentation

and trial and error, subject to the uncertainties and variables of particular interactions between farmers and Ju/'hoan individuals and, so, is neither uniformly 'benign' nor uniformly brutal. It also provides the Ju/'hoansi with a framework in which they can struggle to gain some material advantages from the Afrikaners. However, my attempt to describe how paternalism provides for a wide range of different behaviour on the part of the farmers is at this point incomplete. In the next section I will explore the darker side of *baasskap* and paternalism — how it evolved as a justification for discipline and punishment.

Part Two: Coercion and Subversion

i) 'The Fatherly Right of Correction': Paternalism and Violence

Although *baasskap* and paternalism assume a variety of 'benign' forms, the importance of the violent side of farm relations, from the Ju/'hoansi's point of view, cannot be overestimated. The legacy of violence from the early years of white settlement up to, and even beyond, independence, looms large in the Ju/'hoansi's historical consciousness and remains central to how they understand their relationship with the farmers.⁸ Almost all of the Ju/'hoan informants I spoke with had experienced a beating at the hands of the farmer (the exceptions were three women), and all of my Ju/'hoan informants had at least witnessed such violence. It is useful to consider the dynamics of violence on the farms by examining the following issues: 1) the ideological, historical and material conditions that encouraged violence as a form of labour management; 2) the various power struggles that contribute to

⁸ Guenther also describes the importance of 'deprivation' — which in this case includes general experiences of injustice, poverty and violence — in how the Bushmen understand their relationships with Afrikaner farmers and other ethnic groups in Ghanzi, Botswana (1986a:50-54; 1979:130-160).

the perpetuation of violent responses by the farmers; and, 3) the interpretations and responses of the Ju/'hoansi to the forms that this violence takes.

It is fairly obvious that a paternalistic ideology facilitates violent forms of control since it entails an explicit definition of the Ju/'hoansi as 'children' subject to the 'discipline' of a farmer-father figure. Suzman suggests that the presence of violence on the farms is a result of paternalism, which establishes violence as the dominant 'language' between the Ju/'hoansi and the farmers:

In terms of these [paternalistic] narratives, it was understood that if a child does wrong then a child must be punished, not reasoned with, and that punishment must be physical for the child to "understand" it. As a result, beatings, whippings and other forms of corporal punishment emerged as a central feature of farm life for the Ju/'hoansi (1997:71).⁹

There is certainly a lot of truth to this point, however, paternalism, as an ideology, is not always coherent and seamless. The ideological ascription of 'childishness' to the Ju/'hoansi does not, in itself, explain brutality, especially when we consider that violence against them continued into the post-war period when stereotypes of 'frail', 'harmless' Bushmen were in vogue. Also, paternalism does not provide a literal explanation of the treatment of the Ju/'hoansi, since farmers rarely treat the Ju/'hoansi in the same way that they treat their own children (see also Genovese 1991). Furthermore, by focusing only on the ideological aspects of paternalism, we place too much explanatory weight on ideology. It would be simplistic to

⁹ Suzman's point adheres fairly closely with the Afrikaner's own view of violence as a 'language', as a 1947 letter from a South African farmer to the Rand Daily Mail illustrates: To speak of better wages and housing is nonsense. All the wages and housing schemes will not change the native. He will remain dirty, lazy and thoroughly dishonest. He does not understand civilized treatment. He can, and does understand a good hiding. If we want the natives to be law-abiding, let us speak to them in the language they understand: the language of the sjambok, administered frequently and with vigor (cited in Thompson 1971: 162).

assume that the Afrikaners were mindlessly acting out the dictates of an ideology, or that they transplanted a farm institution, such as *baasskap*, intact, into the Kalahari. It is necessary to examine the development of the violent side of Omaheke paternalism in terms of its own historical and material context.

The Afrikaner settlers did not plant the institution of *baasskap* in virgin territory. The foundation for extreme forms of ‘fatherly’ punishment and militant control were laid down by the German colonial administration and farmers and was formalized in the quasi-legal precept called ‘the fatherly right of correction’ (Väterliche Zuchtigungsrecht), which the South African Bluebook described in the following way:

By this means natives were punished by their masters without the necessity of any official record being kept...and the administration of corporal punishment freely took place without being forced on the notice of the authorities to their embarrassment...Every German employer of native labour, except — to their credit be it stated — a few with feelings of humanity, claimed he stood in loco parentis to his native servants...and as such asserted his rights to administer ‘parental correction’ to them (1918:159).

The aim of the South African Bluebook was to demonize the German administration and highlight its atrocities, but this was not hard to do. Judging from the testimonials contained in the Bluebook, a precedent for extreme brutality had already been set before South African settlers began arriving in large numbers.

There is a discernible line of historical continuity from the German ‘fatherly right of correction’ to Afrikaner ‘*baasskap*’, but this continuity is not unequivocal; the ideological ambiguities of paternalism are revealed by the fact that the South African Administration used paternalistic practices to condemn the Germans. That violent forms of labour control continued well after South Africa took over the mandate in 1920 is likely more than simply a matter of ideological hypocrisy. As I described in chapter one, the economic anxieties of the

early Afrikaner settlers, who were struggling against drought, disease and depression, likely inspired them to view their survival as too urgent a cause to risk adopting a 'benignly' paternalistic attitude toward the Ju/'hoansi. This transformation of economic vulnerability into the perceived need to 'discipline' native labourers is expressed in a 1938 letter from an Outjo farmer to the South West African Administration:

Should the herd-boy lose any sheep by reason of his indifference or laziness, or should he be refractory, the farmer cannot take any corrective measures. In what way is the farmer to protect himself?...the administration should allow the farmer to inflict light punishment...As the position is now the farmer is forced to punish his natives in order to be able to exercise authority (SWAA A/51/13, letter to the Secretary for South West Africa, January 25, 1938).¹⁰

Thus, the Afrikaner settlers in the Omaheke conceivably saw themselves as on their own, in a wild and rough frontier, struggling against the adversities of nature — which would include the 'wild' Bushmen, who themselves were not acquiescing easily to the farmers' demands for labour. Such a collusion of environmental, ideological and economic factors is highly conducive to violent conduct.

The Ju/'hoansi today describe German farmers as 'nicer' than Afrikaner farmers, largely because they tend to be more affluent, and therefore pay higher wages and provide better rations. Although, according to the Ju/'hoansi, German farmers do beat their workers, they are less erratic in their fits of temper. It is possible that this contemporary difference in the Ju/'hoansi's perceptions of German and Afrikaner farmers influences their historical memory (see Fentress and Wickham 1988). In any event, the Ju/'hoansi typically described

¹⁰ At about this time, the Administration was trying to tone down corporal punishment on the farms, "not only for humanitarian reasons, but because if the impression gets about Ovamboland that servants can be whipped by their masters recruiting will suffer to the farmer's detriment" (SWAA A/521/13 letter from the Secretary for South West Africa to Outjo Magistrate, March 26, 1938).

the Afrikaner farmers of their childhood as being more violent than the German farmers.

/Kunta, a Ju/'hoan man in his mid 70s, describes the changes he saw on the farms when he was a child:

At that time the German people were in charge of the country. It was good. But then the Afrikaners came from Angola and it was not good. There were problems, like hitting. If we did any little thing wrong, we would be hit.

//Au/ui, a former farm worker in his 80s describes the difference between Afrikaner and German farmers when he was a young man:

German people were better than the Afrikaner people at that time. He [a German farmer] would just hit you with a piece of leather twenty-five times. The Afrikaner people will not play with you. If he is angry, if he hits you, you will be very hurt. Maybe if he hits you, there is blood so that you lay down for a while on the ground.

The younger generation of Ju/'hoan farm workers described violent episodes on the farms during the 1970s and 1980s:

It's better now since independence. But the time of the donkey ears¹¹ was not good. At that time the farmers were beating people and now they stopped, after the new government took the country. In this time of the donkey ears, you didn't do anything wrong. If you did something, a small thing, then you'll die — then he'll beat you. He will use his fist and kick and use something to hit you.

Gordon (1992a) argues, quite convincingly, that violence was an effective mechanism for 'taming' and 'domesticating' the Bushmen but, as Suzman notes, this fails to explain why violence continued to be such a salient feature of farm life after the Ju/'hoansi became

¹¹ The 'time of the donkey ears' refers to the period when the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) governed South West Africa from 1978 to 1983. The DTA grew out of a conference established to design a new constitution to appease the United Nations which, through its resolution 435, demanded that free and fair elections be held in 1978. The delegates included whites and representatives from the 11 ethnic groups according to the homeland system. The conference was dissolved in 1977 and the delegates came together to form the DTA as a political party (now the official opposition party of Namibia). The elections held and 'won' by the DTA in 1978 were not recognized by the international community. 'Donkey ears' refers to the DTA insignia of two fingers held up in a peace sign.

generational farm workers (1997:82). There are likely a variety of explanations that could refer to a particular farmer's personality or to specific conditions on specific farms. However, one general explanation may be that for farm production to continue, in the circumstance of a general lack of less coercive inducements, a certain level of fear must be instilled in the farm labour force. Violence often signals a lack of legitimacy in the political structure, as the Outjo farmer stated: "the farmer is forced to punish his natives to be able to exercise any authority".

It is not just fear instilled by violence, however, that 'controls' the Ju/'hoansi and ties them to a farm. The farmers also benefit from the Ju/'hoansi's loyalty to each other. Very often what keeps Ju/'hoansi on a farm is their reluctance to abandon family and friends who are unable to abscond. A striking example of this kind of loyalty was provided by the case of one Ju/'hoan family who lived on a farm where they were subjected to frequent beatings by the farmer. When I asked them why they didn't just run away, they pointed to a blind and crippled old grandmother and said that she would be unable to run away and they were not going to leave her behind.

Just as the Ju/'hoansi's historical memory provides lessons about the hazards of working for farmers, so too do their own personal experiences, often beginning in early childhood. Gashe describes his childhood experience on the farm where he grew up in the 1940s:

The farmers beat us too hard and sometimes hung us up in trees...It was very hard for us in the beginning. When I was a child, I just started to look after the cows. We were five boys and [we worked] in the rainy season and also in the hot sun. When it got dark, we must get grass for the cows and then the farmer counts the calves and if there is some calf which is lost, the farmer will beat us.

N!osi, a young woman in her early 30s, grew up on a farm west of Gobabis, where she lived

with her parents, siblings and extended kin. Her account of her childhood (in the 1960s) provides an example of how the Ju/'hoansi's perception of farmers (and especially the farmers' tempers) is shaped by early experiences of violence:

He was beating us since we were just children — they were beating our parents when we were still young and then they kept doing it until we got older and started watering the flowers. Then he started to beat us too. Those ones didn't talk to you two times. If they gave you work to do, they'll beat you. He was also beating my father and I saw the tractor would be full of blood...My father left us behind because that farmer beat him...And just after my father escaped from the farmer, he [the farmer] killed his brother...[N!osi's uncle] was standing at the gate and the cattle were wild and when they came running up to him, he gave them room to pass because he was afraid that they will hurt him and the farmer said that he must not give the cattle space to pass and while he kept doing that, the farmer got angry and said that he was just playing...He took him and broke his neck...I was also present. We were all working with the cattle at the time and he was burning us with the prodder...At that time, me and my brother were just children and my mother wanted to cry about that man who died and then he beat her. He was asking my mother why she was crying because this person is gone — he's not here anymore.

When I asked N!osi if the farmer was ever charged, she told me:

What will we do? Because it is a strong man who did it...two of his brothers were police officers...we are people who are always working for mean farmers, until I grew up. I didn't work for nice farmers. That's why I am very afraid of white farmers now because I'm thinking that all of them are the same.

Violence is a tool for instilling fear, which in turn is a means of control. However, as the beginning of N!osi's account illustrates, it is not always effective, since the Ju/'hoansi sometimes muster the courage to attempt an escape, sometimes successfully, even on pain of being beaten if they are recaptured.

There is no reason to suppose that violence on the farms has only one cause. But the farmers' own sense of their lack of political legitimacy and the milieu of violence left behind by their German predecessors no doubt contributed to ensuring that the paternalism practised by the Afrikaner would not always be benign.

ii) Fissures at the Top

Ju/'hoansi are sometimes able to exploit or create divisions within a farmer's family in order to influence the risk of violence against themselves. One important such division is gendered, another is generational.

Violence expresses and perpetuates gendered power relations on the farms.¹² It is fairly gender specific: Ju/'hoan men bear the brunt of violence and the farmers mete out the bulk of it. However, the gendered pattern of violence also reveals the complex trajectories of power struggles within the farmer's family. Assaults at the hands of the *miesis*, which were more common in the past, were and are largely limited to hitting Ju/'hoan women. Farmers' wives rarely beat male workers — in fact I only heard of one case of it when a young woman told me about a *miesis* she knew as a child:

Yes, she also beat the men. One of my uncles was working in the kitchen and she sometimes beat him with a *kierie* [walking stick] until he was bleeding.

For all that Ju/'hoan men tend to be beaten more often than Ju/'hoan women, Ju/'hoan women may be assaulted first by the *miesis*, and then again by the *baas* should the *miesis* insist that he administer an additional beating, even for the same 'transgression'. The *miesis* will sometimes enlist or incite the *baas* to administer punishment where she is reluctant to do so herself.

According to my informants' reports, farmers' wives beat Ju/'hoan women much more in the past, and usually in response to very minor provocations. N/haokxa, who is in her

¹² I focus primarily on gender relations among the Afrikaners because most of the farms I visited were run by older farmers and their wives. Much of the younger generation of Omaheke Afrikaners have chosen a life off the farm and so it was difficult to observe inter-generational relations or the power dynamics of Afrikaner households in early stages of a developmental cycle.

mid 50s and now living in a resettlement camp, describes farmers' wives when she was younger: "Some of them are not very good. If you are a little bit late in the morning, they hit you." Today, Ju/'hoansi are beaten less often but, when they are beaten, the beatings can still be very severe. One woman described the circumstances, experienced by both the men and the women, on the farm where she currently lives:

If he takes you there [to the garage], then you will be wearing a chain...If you go there, he will put a chain around your neck and put a padlock on your neck. Your head also [pow! pow!]. You must be very weak, do not stand up. And you must lie there and you will get water thrown in your eyes. He will start from your legs.

When I asked if they also had problems with the farmer's wife, she said:

She also beats! And there are walking sticks. There are walking sticks for men and for women and if his wife says "come and do this" and if you say "wait, I must do this", then she says "waar is my kerie?" [where is my walking stick?] and if she takes that walking stick, then you must look out. Then she will beat you. That farmer's wife beats!

Again, on this farm the *miesis* only beats the women. When I asked my informants why farmers' wives usually only beat the women and not the men, one fairly typical response was: "The farmers tell their wives that if the workers do something wrong, it is men's problems, not between women and men." But given that the farmers are entitled to 'discipline' both Ju/'hoansi women and men, men's business on the farms obviously includes 'women's problems'.

On the farm mentioned above, the *miesis* possessed a fiercely independent attitude and very strong opinions about how the farm ought to be run and the workers dealt with; she did not accept a purely 'domestic' role on the farm. In fact, her husband had gone so far as to arrange for the sale of the farm so that he could retire elsewhere, but his wife intervened and stopped the sale when he was away. According to one Ju/'hoan woman's description,

beatings on this farm, or their severity, were often the result of power struggles between the farmer and his wife:

If her husband says he's finished [beating], then she will force him and then he will go out and beat somebody. If her husband says he doesn't want to, then she will force him and say "are you licking his shit? Are you licking a black person's asshole?"¹³

Bau describes a similar situation on the farm where she grew up:

His wife was the one who said 'txa, txa', to say 'beat them' or 'do this', to order him...They [the farmer and his wife] didn't understand each other, because both of them were mean people. They were also arguing with each other. And if her husband calls somebody and that person is busy preparing himself to come down — because if you lie down, you must pick up the blanket and put it in the house, or even a pillow, to pick it up and dash it out and hang it up — and if this person finishes all of this and goes down there then she will say that her husband is afraid of that person. They were also always arguing.

Although the farmers usually administer the beating, the farmers' wives sometimes instigate it. The political position of farmers' wives — both on the farms and within the broader community — is ambiguous. They are subject to the patriarchal authority of husbands and fathers, yet they share in this male power and align themselves with it to maintain their relatively privileged position. As the above cases illustrate, an effective way for a farmer's wife to assert her will is to manipulate the power asymmetries between the farmer and the Ju/'hoansi — and, from this, mobilize her husband's authority around her aim. This strategy does not subvert male authority directly, but instead insists on its being asserted. In both examples given above, the wives got what they wanted by accepting traditional gender distinctions and challenging their husbands' manhood. When patriarchal power was challenged in this way, the paternalistic 'right' to discipline took some of its cruelest forms.

¹³ The *miesis* on this farm had a particularly ferocious temper and her methods of manipulating her husband provide a more pointed example of how a farmer's wife may assert her will. Similar strategies among other farmers' wives are more subtle.

As we can see, violent episodes on the farms are rarely straight-forward cases of a *baas* or *miesis* exercising absolute power over the Ju/'hoansi. Rather, the Ju/'hoansi are enmeshed in the politics of the farmer's family and their relationship with the *baas* or *miesis* will be mediated by the domestic struggles that take place within a particular Afrikaner household. The outcome of these struggles might save the Ju/'hoansi from beatings (or from more severe beatings) as much as they may contribute to them. Di//xao's description of an argument she had with a former *miesis* illustrates how Afrikaner family dynamics, along gender and generational lines, influence the course of a conflict:

One day I went down to town with her and the money she gave me wasn't enough for shoes. I begged some money from her to add to that money and I was only asking five dollars because the shoes I saw were a little bit expensive, and she said "no" - I'm just looking for trouble and she said only a few days ago she gave me my salary. She chased me away there in town and I just kept quiet and I didn't say any word again. She said "I already paid you at home and I can't pay you here again." But I said "*miesis*, I'm just going to take it in advance, and when we're back at home I'll work and when you pay me again I will pay it back." But she didn't like it and didn't want to give me the money and started to yell at me and I was just quiet. There in town, she chased me away and because I don't know the way to come back, I just stayed quiet until we came back [together] and I told the farmer about that and he was talking to her about that and she shouted about it and asked her son to beat me. [Also] there in town, she didn't give me food. We were arguing in the morning about the food, and the whole day, she didn't give me food. When we came back I told her husband and she was saying that I'm just lying, and she told her son to beat me. On the other hand, her husband was stopping her son from beating me. That's why I quit the job, and I was just sitting at home.

In this episode, the *miesis* used her authority over her son to initiate a beating, while Di/xao benefited from the farmer's authority to escape a worse beating. This case also demonstrates the variety of ways in which the Ju/'hoansi are not completely helpless in their dealings with the farmers: first, Di//xao had the courage to argue with the *miesis*; second, she immediately told the farmer about what had happened (probably already suspecting that he would be more sympathetic); and third, Di//xao responded to the *miesis*' actions by quitting her job — a

move which turned out to be something of a coup against the *miesis*, who eventually approached Di//xao to ask her to start working again:

I told the farmer's wife "you are doing like this to make your son beat me and I'm just going to stay at home without working and it will only be my husband who will work." But while I was at home, she was also back to me to ask me to come and work, but I said "if I come to help you, you won't help me back. And if I ask you for money again, you will tell your son to beat me." And she will keep asking me with good words, until I come down to help her again with her laundry, to wash it and iron it...

The political dynamics in this case were complicated by the fact that there were two generations of Afrikaner households on the farm, which meant that Di//xao was put into a delicate position, where she had to negotiate the power relations between the *baas*, the *miesis*, their son and their daughter-in-law:

It was three women who worked for the farmer's wife, and the farmer's son didn't have a domestic servant and I was responsible for their laundry. Doing laundry for all of them and ironing their clothes then later on I give it to the owners. The farmer had his own house, and his son had his own house. But just in one yard. While I'm at her house, her daughter-in-law will call me to come and wash the dishes for a while, and while I'm coming back from her daughter-in-law's house, she will say "you must not just go to my daughter-in-law's house if she calls you because you are not working for her, you are working for me." Then I will say "all of you are white people and I must work for all of you. Later on if I refuse, you will be angry and unhappy about it." They were pulling me.

However, Di//xao also benefited from her association with the *miesis*' daughter-in-law, who apparently did not completely accept the *miesis*' authority, nor completely agree with her treatment of Di//xao. Since there were in effect two *miesis* on the farm, Di//xao was able to enjoy a closer association with one, which off-set the severity of the other:

At that time when I was working for her, I was staying at her daughter-in-law's house, and it was only her daughter-in-law who asks me if her mother-in-law gives me food. Then I will say "your mother-in-law didn't give me food", and she will say "why?", then I will say "I don't know, you must ask her." Then, later on, she will realize that if she asks her mother-in-law why she didn't give me food, she will know that I told and she will just keep quiet and give me food from her house.

Di//xao also expressed some confusion over her *miesis*' conduct. She insisted that she always did her work well and, at the time, she was an 'older person' and so should have been shown more respect (which the farmer seemed to appreciate). She describes her relationships with, and feelings toward, the *baas* and *miesis* this way:

I was not feeling good about her, I was feeling unhappy and I said "what am I doing wrong to this *miesis*? And I'm working for her so nicely. Why the does the farmer like me and is good to me?" — and on the other hand thinking — "why is his wife not good to me?" I liked the farmer because he didn't say bad things about me. Because he also said that I'm working very well for he and his wife. I didn't like the *miesis* because she was always yelling at me and at first she didn't give me food. She always let her husband tell her to give me food. If I did something wrong, she would argue with me and yeli. If I did something wrong, her husband will tell her "Sofie is an older person and you must not yell at her, and you know that you let her work even though she's an older person." She will yell at me loudly and say that I'm only a young woman and she said that I'm cheeky with her and I said "I'm not like that - I'm not cheeky at you." I was thinking that "maybe this farmer's wife doesn't like me, maybe that's why she always gives me problems."

The gendered and generational pattern of violence may be a reflection of the Afrikaner's chain of familial authority, but the Ju/'hoansi offer an additional explanation for why a *miesis* usually recruits male kin to deliver a beating for her. Besa offered a fairly typical explanation:

If you do something wrong, then his wife will go and tell her husband and he will come and beat you. Because she knows that you are a man and you will beat her, that's why she'll go and tell her husband who is stronger than you.

This is not an attitude held by men alone. N*isa also told me: "She will want to beat me, but she will think 'if I beat this woman, she will beat me back.'"¹⁴ Thus, for all that a *miesis*'

¹⁴ I heard of no cases in which a Ju/'hoan woman actually did strike back with more than words. Although apparently rare, Ju/'hoan men have sometimes fought with a white *baas* - I heard of several such cases, and interviewed one man who knocked a white farmer out with a punch. He was reluctant to say much about the episode, and has not been able to get any work in the ten years since he delivered the blow.

strategy of recruiting male force may well be an attempt to assert power, it is often seen by the Ju/'hoansi as a sign of weakness. In fact, the power asymmetries between the farmer and his wife provide a fissure in the farm power structure that the Ju/'hoansi often use to their advantage. A few of the farmers I spoke to told me that one of the most frustrating aspects of dealing with the Ju/'hoansi on their farms was coping with the Ju/'hoansi's facility for turning the farmer and his wife against each other.

Reports of arguments with farmers and their wives were actually fairly common and the conflicts described were not always as dramatic as those outlined above. Quite often, the Ju/'hoansi were able to stand up for themselves successfully, as N/haokxa's description of an argument she had with a former *miesis* illustrates:

On a farm where I was married, on a farm where my husband was working, I had problems with the farmer's wife and we had a fight about my tub. She was just borrowing my tub and she fed her dogs out of my tub. One day I wanted my tub back and she didn't want to give me my tub and I just took it and when I was going home, she used strong words to me and I turned back and then we fought. After, we just stopped there and we didn't have any more problems. She didn't use strong words against me. After that she was nice to me — no problems anymore.

In many cases, conflicts are worked out verbally. However, the Ju/'hoansi know from experience that the threat of violence is always present. Thus, when a Ju/'hoan argues with a *baas* or *miesis*, especially one known to batter, it is a particularly courageous act, as Gashe's case shows:

He will maybe stay the whole morning yelling at you, ordering you around. I am tired but he is still chasing me around and yelling at me...If you do something wrong, then he will beat you, yell at you and beat you. And you will do that thing again, the way he wants it.

Despite this experience of violence, Gashe frequently argued with the farmer about money:

He is maybe a farmer who is very poor, because I saw that he only had a few cows and a few goats, but he is living on a farm...Sometimes he will tell me, when we are

arguing about money, then he will tell me that he is disabled and collecting a pension — that's why his arm is so short. I asked him "why did you hire me if you are very poor? Because I am already poor and I don't want to work for a poor person." That's how I asked him.

For the Ju/'hoansi, the most significant change on the farm since independence is the decline in the incidence of violence on the part of the farmers. They attribute this to the farmers' fear of being charged by their workers. Whether the charges will stick is another issue. A few of the more politicized Ju/'hoansi remain cynical about their ability to affect any changes in Ju/'hoan-farmer relations through the courts. One Ju/'hoan man in his late 60s, now living in a resettlement camp, explained:

The farmer knows that if he hits me, he will not go to jail, but if I hit him, he will make a charge against me and I will go to jail. You don't have a right to fight a farmer...He will hit you and afterward say, "go to the police because they will not do anything to me." The police will help the Afrikaners. The courts will help the Afrikaners because the whites have money and have lawyers... You can also have a lawyer to help you, but the lawyer will be a white man and he will not help the Ju/'hoansi very well because he is white and he cannot put a white man in jail.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that the Ju/'hoansi see a life without beatings as a right they now have, and that is an important change in their lives. One Ju/'hoan man, in his early 30s, provides a fairly typical description of the change on the farms since independence:

They took the hitting and the money away. In the old times, if you are busy doing your work, the farmer hits you with a piece of leather. Sam Nujoma took that away.

In fact, the Ju/'hoansi's standard ironic statement about the biggest change on the farms since independence — 'Sam Nujoma took the beating and the money away' — poignantly illustrates their systemic predicament: prior to independence, when farming was backed by large-scale state subsidies and assistance, and there was no pressure for higher wages, the farmers were able to hire more workers, yet they were also entitled to beat them; since independence, commercial farming has lost a good deal of its state-support and so farmers

were forced to down-size operations and retrench workers, yet they are no longer allowed to beat the workers they do have.

Although by the Ju/'hoansi's own accounts the level of violence has declined substantially since independence, the legacy of violence continues to structure their relationships with the farmers, decreasing their ability to negotiate terms of employment or to approach the *baas* with a problem.

iii) Conflict in the Workers' Compound

Baasskap — particularly its punitive and disciplinary aspects — is the prerogative of white farmers only. Many Ju/'hoansi reported that Herero and Tswana farmers in the communal areas rarely beat their workers (instead, violence came in the form of alleged poisoning and sorcery, see also Guenther 1986a:60-67). In the commercial block, on farms run by absentee farmers, the 'de facto' *baas* may be a Herero, Tswana or Baster foreman, who are also known to resort to violence. However, in these cases, the Ju/'hoansi feel less inhibited when it comes to fighting back. One young woman described an incident where Ju/'hoan workers had difficulties with a Baster foreman:

He beat the men, the other workers...He beat them when the farmer wasn't there, and he chased the people away. Maybe he was jealous. He didn't chase us away, but he first beat the women's husbands and then they [the husbands] beat him [the foreman] together. Then after, the Baster told the farmer and said that he told them to do work and then they beat him...The farmer didn't want us to leave and we said "no". He paid us our money and we left.

For many Ju/'hoansi, the only 'genuine' *baas* is a white man. Some Ju/'hoansi even went so far as to refuse to work for Herero or Tswana farmers on the grounds that they have no authority because they are black, as one Ju/'hoan man explained:

A Herero is black and I am brown. Then how will we work for each other? A white person is white and we will understand each other and I will try him, and I will do something for him. But this one [a Herero], must I say '*baas*' to him? What must I say to him? Because he looks like that.

The ethnic labour hierarchy inherent to the Omaheke farming economy shapes inter-ethnic relations in the workers' compound — specifically, it fosters distrust and animosity. There is a great deal of resentment toward this labour hierarchy since it places non-Ju/'hoansi in super-ordinate positions over the Ju/'hoansi, which many Ju/'hoansi see as unjust, especially since the Ju/'hoansi believe that they are much better workers. Power asymmetries between Ju/'hoan and non-Ju/'hoan workers are often expressed in the form of sexual advances toward Ju/'hoan women by non-Ju/'hoan men, which exacerbates the ethnic tensions in the workers' compound. As one Ju/'hoan man explained:

The people of other nations are not good people. Sometimes they will want to have your wife, or a young girl staying in your house and you won't like it — even if he has a wife there. And from there, the trouble will begin.

The Ju/'hoansi often see non-Ju/'hoan farm residents as a divisive and disruptive influence in the workers' compound — not least because they are known to deliberately undermine Ju/'hoan conjugal unions. The Ju/'hoansi claim that Ovambos and Damaras are excessively violent, and that Hereros are 'sneaky' and prone to stealing (mostly the farmer's possessions), which brings about punitive responses from the farmer. Whatever the source of a particular episode of conflict, the Ju/'hoansi consistently attribute social discord to the ultimate motive of jealousy. Gashe provides a typical explanation for conflict between Ju/'hoan and non-Ju/'hoan farm residents:

Black people will always be jealous of the Ju/'hoansi, and if you are working better, then they will be jealous. It's why you'll always have problems.

Jealousy is not limited to relations between ethnic groups. It also explains problems among

the Ju/'hoansi themselves. Beh describes her difficulties with the other Ju/'hoan domestic servants on the last farm where she worked:

I didn't get along well with the women I was working with because they were jealous of me. They said I was the foreman and I am the one who the farmer's wife always praises. It's why we didn't understand each other.

The Ju/'hoansi take great care to avoid being distinguished from their fellow Ju/'hoansi through excessive positive attention from farmers or the accumulation of 'luxury' items, which could get them branded as a 'Big Man' or a 'foreman'.

The Ju/'hoansi's extreme aversion to causing jealousy in their relationships runs against the grain of the farmers' systems of labour management and the general system of capitalist individualized accumulation (see Guenther 1986); as Russell and Russell note, "The goal of efficient, well-fed workers is not exactly attained without the appropriate selfishness on the part of the worker" (1979:85). The Ju/'hoansi struggle to maintain fairly egalitarian social relations by denigrating arrogance and self-aggrandizement (see also Lee 1969). Jealousy is not an emotion that is interpreted as a poor reflection on the character of the jealous person; rather, it is viewed as the appropriate response to one who has presumed to 'rise above' his (and sometimes her) people and, where disharmony exists, the fault lies with the person who inspired jealousy in the first place. To avoid inspiring jealousy, and to maintain egalitarian relationships, the Ju/'hoansi place a very high value on sharing. Guenther describes how the co-existence of the capitalist ethos of individualized accumulation and the sharing ethos of the Nharo produced psychological stress and "pangs of conscience for many a sensitive Nharo individual when he finds himself in a situation where the two economic systems are at odds" (1986a:162).

In the Omaheke, the Ju/'hoansi must negotiate a delicate balance between maintaining

good relations with a farmer, while not being perceived by other Ju/'hoansi to be overly friendly with a farmer. When a Ju/'hoan worker is unsuccessful at maintaining good, yet appropriately distant relations with a farmer, he may find himself accused of being a *witvoet* (white foot). A *witvoet* is, as one informant explained, a person who “walks over to the white farmer with the black people’s business” (see also Suzman 1997:86). Being a *witvoet* is not only a matter of betraying one’s fellow workers in order to gain material rewards (contra Suzman 1997:86-88). The Ju/'hoansi are often put in ethically challenging situations, as Sisaba’s comment illustrates:

On some farms, the Ju/'hoan workers were not good, not working for the farmer nicely and I talked to them but they didn't listen, so I told the farmer and then I left. To steal from the farmer and do wrong things — that's what they were doing.

On ethnically heterogeneous farms, all non-Ju/'hoan farm residents are often believed to be *witvoets*, while on farms where only Ju/'hoansi live, the *witvoet* is most often a foreman. Even though jealousy and *witvoetism* are found on farms where only Ju/'hoansi live and work, these tensions are most pronounced on ethnically heterogeneous farms, where class and ethnic antagonism produce fairly widespread paranoia. Despite problems with jealousy among the Ju/'hoansi themselves, most of the Ju/'hoansi I spoke to claimed that on farms where there are no non-Ju/'hoan residents, social relations were more harmonious. Tchi'o explains why:

If it is only Ju/'hoansi, then it will be nice and when they are fighting, then maybe the other families will try to stop them. It's not nice to stay with other nations.

There are also varying degrees of *witvoet* behaviour: non-Ju/'hoan farm residents are believed to go to the farmer with any and all incriminating information about the Ju/'hoansi on the farm, while Ju/'hoan *witvoets* are said to be more selective about which information

they will pass along to the farmer. It is difficult for a Ju/'hoan foreman to avoid being a *witvoet* to some extent, since part of his job is to assist the farmer in managing the workers. However, a Ju/'hoan foreman also exercises a fair amount of control over what information the farmer is privy to. For example, on one farm I met a Ju/'hoan foreman who felt obliged to disclose how many squatters there were living in the workers' compound when the farmer asked him, yet when the farmer went to Swakopmund for his vacation, this foreman did not feel obliged to inform the farmer that the Ju/'hoansi on his farm went hunting while he was away.

Although the Ju/'hoansi accept, in very general terms, the hegemony of *baasskap* -- as a white male prerogative -- they do challenge some of its day-to-day manifestations. *Baasskap* also provides the framework within which jealousy is articulated: the figure of the *witvoet* not only reflects tensions and jealousies surrounding micro-class distinctions on the farms, it also explicitly refers to the racial order shaping class asymmetries (see also Suzman 1997) and influences the boundaries of social solidarity in the workers' compounds. Accusations of *witvoetism* serve as a levelling device; denigrating the authority a Ju/'hoan man receives by virtue of a favoured position with a farmer operates as a check on social ranking among the Ju/'hoansi themselves and limits the legitimacy of white authority within the Ju/'hoansi's own social world.

iv) Drinking, Fighting and Healing

One justification frequently offered by the farmers for the paternalistic control of the Ju/'hoansi (and, also, as we have seen, for lower wages) is drinking and its associated violence. When I first arrived in the Omaheke, I was warned by many locals to keep off the

farms and stay in town on weekends when the workers would be drinking. This warning concerned the violent and often indiscriminate fighting that breaks out when the Ju/'hoansi drink. Both the farmers and the Ju/'hoansi cite alcohol as the most urgent 'social problem' faced by the Ju/'hoansi in the area, but the Ju/'hoansi, unlike the farmers, see direct links between drinking and poverty. A pail of homebrew in the mornings fills the stomach and, in a phrase I heard repeated all over the Omaheke, it 'kills the hunger'. On many farms, beer brewing and drinking are forbidden on weekdays, but on others it is limited only by the availability of sugar for brewing. On farms in the communal areas, and in the villages within the communal areas, Ju/'hoan workers are frequently paid only with alcohol.

On 'rationalized' farms, where the farmer limits the labour complement to less than five men and their immediate kin, drinking and fighting are less prevalent. On these farms the farmers monitor the activities of their workers more closely and police the visitors more diligently (i.e. checks to see if they are bringing alcohol on to the farm and interviews visitors before giving permission for their visit). The Ju/'hoansi tend to resent this supervision, however they also recognize that they often enjoy greater security. On 'old fashioned' farms, where the farmer is less concerned about regulating the intimate details of the workers lives, squatters come and go fairly easily, beer is brewed more openly and alcohol-related fighting tends to result in more severe injuries. This is also true in the 'locations' and on farms run by absentee landlords. Farms run by absentee landlords are often a favourite visiting site for unemployed men who are on the road. Where there is no farmer to regulate visitors and monitor drinking, alcohol consumption increases dramatically and so does the severity of the fights that frequently break out once everyone is sufficiently inebriated.

One such farm, to which I paid frequent visits, was residence to seven Ju/'hoan adults

— all close kin — and two foster children. Only two of the men earned wages (totaling N\$70 per month), and the farmer visited weekly to deliver rations that were never adequate for the family. The men used their wages to buy sugar and dried vegetables from a nearby farm store, and combined these with a portion of their mealie meal rations to brew beer. The homebrew invariably ‘feeds’ them longer than any food they could afford to buy. One morning I arrived for a visit to find the Ju/’hoan foreman’s skull cracked open, from a blow with an axe, and others with purple bruises, split lips and eyes swollen shut. A fight, which no one could remember clearly, had broken out the night before when they shared their beer with two young Damara men who were making their way to Gobabis to look for work.

It is easy to see how the Ju/’hoansi could fall into the downward spiral of alcohol abuse. First, drinking is also a way of life among the farmers in the Omaheke. Although many farmers expressed a deep concern for the Ju/’hoansi’s ‘drinking problems’, the Ju/’hoansi themselves notice that many farmers also drink quite a bit. One young woman described her experience with a farmer who was known to cause trouble when he ‘lifted his hand’ (i.e. drank):

Every time he drinks a lot on weekends. On weekends, when he was drinking, he would come to our houses and try to fight with the people [the Ju/’hoansi].

Also, many Ju/’hoansi develop an addiction to alcohol when working for Hereros in the communal areas. One young Ju/’hoan man who grew up in the communal area described life in Tallismanus this way:

In the morning they [the Ju/’hoansi] will go around the houses to taste the beer, to look for a good one, and then they will stay there to drink it. And if that one is finished then they will move to another house...[They stay in Tallismanus] because of the beer - to stay close to the beer and drink it all the time because some of them are accustomed to drinking now...They like drinking because some of them are drinking when they are still small and later on they become alcoholics. And when you are an

alcoholic, you are pulled by the drinking.

Working for Hereros the Ju/'hoansi easily get caught in the trap of perpetual unemployment, poverty, alcohol addiction and despair, as //Xari's story illustrates. //Xari worked on five farms before he became chronically unemployed. In the mid-1980s, after being fired by a farmer in the commercial block ("because a cow miscarried"), //Xari journeyed to Pos 3, a small village in the communal area, where he began working for Hereros. He told me:

I was fetching firewood for them. They just gave me five dollars to drink beer.¹⁵ That Herero was not nice. It's why I left. He didn't want to pay me.

By the time he returned to the commercial block to find a job that paid an actual wage — after about a year of being, in effect, paid in beer — //Xari had developed a serious drinking problem. In the commercial block, he found a job on a farm where some distant kin were living. However, in less than a year the farmer beat him with a sjambok and chased him off the farm because, according to //Xari, "I was staying home drinking beer and not looking after the goats." Ill-luck kept his next stint as a farm worker short. //Xari managed to keep his drinking from adversely affecting his job performance, however, the farmer was quite brutal:

I was digging a hole for the garbage and he was beating me. That's why I quit. He said I must work nicely and I was working nicely, digging a hole, but he beat me. I took my money and left.

Eventually, after a few years of job-hunting, //Xari gave up looking for a work altogether: "I didn't want to keep looking for work. If I look for a job, then they [the farmers] will not offer

¹⁵ Money given to Ju/'hoan workers by Herero employers is expected by the employers to be spent on the beer Herero women brew. One Ju/'hoan woman explained that after she was paid the only item she could buy on the farm was homebrew. In villages such as Pos 3 and Tallismanus, there are few stores where people can buy food on a regular basis (with the exception of potato chips). Homebrew is often the only 'food' item Ju/'hoansi can find and afford.

me a job. The farmers just beat - they don't want workers." Since //Xari took up a full-time life on the road, he has ceased to worry about making a living or taking care of himself. He told me: "I'm just looking for beer." Two years before I met him, //Xari's windpipe was crushed when three young Damara friends, with whom he had been drinking, beat him unconscious and stole the little money he had in his pocket. //Xari now breathes with the help of a tracheotomy.

On less rationalized (i.e. 'old fashioned') farms, where there is usually a larger number of residents, Ju/'hoansi often live and work together as an extended family, and this makes alcoholism and fighting an issue of domestic violence, which strains relations between husbands and wives as well as other kin relationships. Alcohol-related violence between children and parents, especially between fathers and sons, is particularly deplored and poses perhaps the deepest threat to their social cohesion since showing respect for one's parents (and elders in general) is a very important principle of behaviour for the Ju/'hoansi (see chapter five).

On a Saturday evening, on one such farm where a large extended family of Ju/'hoansi lived, after some festivities and fairly heavy drinking, a young man named /Kunta stumbled into the shack where his grandmother, /Xaia, was sleeping and stabbed her several times in the back. /Xaia's husband, *Oma, ran into the shack to rescue his wife and began fighting with his grandson. /Kunta's father, Oba, intervened and tried to rescue his son. The fight ended when *Oma speared his son, Oba. /Xaia was hospitalized for one night. Oba was sent to Windhoek for surgery and *Oma and /Kunta were sent to jail for a short time, until the farmer brought the injured parties to town so they could drop the charges. This episode caused great sorrow for the Ju/'hoansi on this farm. I did not witness the fight myself, but

those who discussed it with me were especially dismayed by the fact that a father and son had done such harm to each other. Tensions ran high between the parties involved for about a month. However, after the incident everyone took care not to insult or offend one another and not to discuss the fight. Within a relatively short period of time, the incident was behind them.

It is very rare that a Ju/'hoan victim of such an attack harbors a grudge against his or her attacker, especially when the attacker is a family member. Even after a violent episode the individual who committed the assault is instantly forgiven. When everyone is sober, the victims of the assault join the others in displaying a great deal of affection toward the person who attacked them, comforting them with almost constant physical contact. The Ju/'hoansi's response to alcohol-related violence mystified me, and the Afrikaner farmers I spoke to. The individual is rarely blamed and one often hears "it wasn't his fault, he was drunk". I eventually came to suspect that the Ju/'hoansi's strategy for coping with the aftermath of alcohol-related violence among themselves was an important method of protecting their social cohesion, kinship bonds and support networks. Rather than allowing alcohol to drive them apart and create animosity, the Ju/'hoansi respond by reinforcing solidarity and affection and by making efforts to heal the relationships that are damaged by alcohol-related violence. This concern for healing social relationships may partly explain why alcoholism and alcohol-related violence are also spiritual/supernatural issues.¹⁶

¹⁶ Unfortunately, although I witnessed many expressions of the Ju/'hoansi's spirituality, I was unable to gather a great deal of information about their spiritual beliefs. The questions I did ask about trance dancing, spirits of the dead (*//gauasi*), and Ju/'hoan cosmology were met with very minimalist and vague answers by both the lay people and ritual experts (i.e. trance dancers) I spoke with. It is possible that they were uncomfortable
(continued...)

Frequent and heavy drinking takes place in *tombos* in the Tswana Blok squatters' village ('plakkersdorp') in the Epako location. Although many Ju/'hoansi considered the Tswanas to be 'good' to the Ju/'hoansi, there is a great deal of ambivalent respect for the Tswana's powers of sorcery. In the Tswana Blok plakkersdorp, when the effects of heavy drinking become particularly extreme (i.e. delirium tremens, hallucinations, black outs, violent outbursts, etc.) a Ju/'hoan trance dancer may be called in to determine what is making an individual so sick. Very often the conclusion is that a Tswana woman running a *tombo* is putting poison in the beer, in which case the solution is to patronize a different *tombo*. If the problem persists after changing *tombos*, then it is not the *beer* that is being poisoned; rather, the Tswana woman is said to be placing poison in the tracks of her Ju/'hoan customer, in which case the poison will follow him or her wherever they walk. In these cases, a healing ceremony — that is a trance dance — is required to counter-act the effects of poisoned tracks. When the effects of alcohol abuse become very severe, it is rarely seen as a result of heavy drinking; the problem is caused by sorcery-related poisoning, not the beer itself.

The Ju/'hoansi's assessment of *tombo* beer is not inaccurate, however. But it is not that the beer is *being* poisoned, rather the beer frequently *is* poison. The Ju/'hoansi themselves recognize that homebrew on the farms is a different substance altogether from *tombo* beer. They claim that the main difference is that *tombo* beer is stronger. However, according to many reports from Tswana and Herero informants who live in Epako, and a few doctors I spoke to in Gobabis, *tombo*-owners make their beer with all manner of substances,

¹⁶(...continued)

discussing such important, private beliefs with a white person, especially since their experience on the farms has taught them that white people are generally unsympathetic toward what farmers often describe as 'Satan worshiping'.

including battery acid, to give their beer an extra kick.¹⁷

According to both Ju/'hoan and non-Ju/'hoan informants, drinking has increased dramatically since independence, and along with it so too has fighting. It was not clear to me why drinking would have increased,¹⁸ but it is perhaps no great mystery why the Ju/'hoansi often turn to alcohol. As I mentioned, the Ju/'hoansi often drink homebrew as a way of 'killing hunger' and it is easy to see how poverty can lead to addiction, despair and desperation that alcoholism often represents.

The farmers I spoke to were very confused about why the Ju/'hoansi often get so violent when they drink. There are at least two possible explanations for this. First, the Ju/'hoansi are generally very amiable and good-natured. Within their own social networks there are strong expectations of co-operation, generosity and what Lorna Marshall refers to as 'mannerliness' (Marshall 1976: 355). Reinforcing these expectations of mild-mannered good humour is the fact that Ju/'hoansi do not have the option of expressing anger toward a farmer - they are expected to be subservient, but never surly or 'cheeky'. Even though they argue

¹⁷ Although the Ju/'hoansi are, very literally, being poisoned by *tombo* beer, their own understanding of poisoning, and the effects of alcohol generally, is strongly informed by their relationship to the supernatural world. *G//aushi*, which are mischievous and mildly malevolent spirits of the dead (see also Lee 1993:110-112; and Suzman 1997:162), are also occasionally responsible for the ill-effects of over-drinking. After a short trance dance ceremony performed in Epako for one young Ju/'hoan man who was suffering severely from delirium tremens, the 'doctor' informed the crowd that a *g//aua* was responsible for the young man's illness. The effects of drinking on this young man — getting into fights (which he would usually lose) and suffering from hallucinations, blacks outs and general physical pain — were due to efforts by his mother's *g//aua* to kill him. This was not wholly malicious on the *g//aua*'s part. The *g//aua* was convinced that her son was not being loved and properly cared for and so decided he would be better off joining her.

¹⁸ One young Herero man pointed out that since independence more Tswana and Herero women could afford, and were free to set up *tombo* operations in the Epako location.

with farmers, if they were to shout at one, they would likely face a beating. At the same time, the Ju/'hoansi must cope with a great deal of psychological stress: they must be willing to support kin, even if they are facing hard times themselves; and, they are abundantly aware of the injustices they are subject to, and of the fact that they have few ways of directly challenging these injustices. A state of inebriation is likely the only condition within which expressions of anger and frustration come more easily and are allowable (i.e., forgivable) within one's own group.

The second possible reason for the Ju/'hoansi's quick tempers when they are drunk was offered by a missionary, who, through his development and advocacy activities, has come to know the Ju/'hoansi quite well. During a conversation about Ju/'hoan alcoholism, he pointed out that the Ju/'hoansi's own methods for defusing social tensions are not viable when people are drunk. Lee (1979:372) and Marshall (1976:352-355) describe how arguments among the Ju/'hoansi at Dobe and Nyae Nyae were often sorted out by 'talking' (i.e. a "purposeful discussion") and are expressed as 'hore hore' ('yakity-yak'), which is often ended when somebody makes a joke and the tension is broken by laughter. In the Omaheke also, Ju/'hoansi 'argue' by engaging in serious and energetic 'talking', which is often defused when an on-looker cracks a joke. However, this strategy of relieving social tensions and avoiding a serious fight cannot work when everybody present during a 'talk' is drunk; feelings escalate too quickly and a joke is too easily taken the wrong way.

Since independence, the introduction of new labour legislation has had the effect of reducing the level of violence the farmers commit. However, with the increase in drinking, the level of violence among the farm residents, and the Ju/'hoansi in particular, has escalated. At the beginning of this chapter, Beh told us that the independence of the country had not

translated into freedom and independence on the farms (“the country’s independent, but not this farm”) - farmers still exercise a great deal of paternalistic control over the Ju/’hoansi on their farms. However, Beh’s statement is matched by a comment an older woman, /Xabe, made when we were discussing Ju/’hoan women’s vulnerability to alcohol-related violence and general abuse in the post-apartheid context: “The country is now too free for everybody.”

Conclusion

When the figures of ‘employer’ and ‘father’ merge under the system of *baasskap*, the authority exercised by the farmer over his Ju/’hoan workers fractures into a variety of (often conflicting) forms, from benign assistance to brutal punishment. Conflict within the farmer’s own family, along both gender and generational lines, further complicates how his authority will be exercised over his workers. The Ju/’hoansi themselves critique the farmer’s authority, and manipulate to their advantage both the fissures within the farmer’s family and the contradictions within the ideology of paternalism itself, and sometimes thereby ameliorate the harsher sides of paternalism.

The Ju/’hoansi experience the effects of paternalism differently, again along gender and generational lines, and they often have conflicting attitudes towards the farmer’s expressions of paternalism. The informant cited at the beginning of this chapter put it best: he didn’t know whether to love or hate the ambiguous ‘father/employer’ figure of the farmer. Although many still express their obligations and make claims against the farmer in terms of a perceived ‘helping’ relationship, and thereby assist in maintaining paternalism, they are quick to recognize the hypocrisy of paternalism when discipline takes its harsher forms or when the farmer denies them adequate remuneration on the grounds that it might “spoil”

them. As Comaroff and Comaroff note, hegemony is undermined by contradictions between the world as it is represented, and the world as it is experienced (1991:26). But this is not simply a matter of a contradiction between what the Ju/'hoansi hear the farmers say and what they see the farmers do. The Ju/'hoansi experience their relationships with farmers in terms of their own cultural values, so contradictions also arise out of differences between the farmers' definition of paternalistic duties and the Ju/'hoansi's definition of 'fatherhood', in which a 'right' to corporeal punishment plays no part.¹⁹

One of the predictable ways in which the legitimacy of the claims of paternalism, as the authority of 'parents' over 'children', gets expressed and challenged, is in a struggle for the definition or re-definition of 'family'. As we will see in the next two chapters, it is in this struggle that the Ju/'hoansi most actively resist Afrikaner attempts to redefine the 'Bushmen', and most successfully prevail in the face of both ideological and material adversity.

¹⁹ In eighteen months of fieldwork, I saw no attempt at physical forms of discipline imposed on Ju/'hoan children (see also Draper 1976; Lee 1979; Shostak 1981; Marshall 1976).

SECTION III. JU'HOAN KINSHIP AND COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

CHAPTER FIVE

‘OUR FAMILY WHO MUST STAND BY US’: JU/’HOAN KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE PATTERNS

Introduction

The most significant challenge to the Afrikaners’ paternalistic ideology and patriarchal ‘family-based’ farm government is the vitality and the adaptability of the Ju/’hoansi’s own kinship ties. In the anthropological literature, kinship is often regarded as the basis for social organization in small-scale societies. In cases where ethnic communities, such as the Ju/’hoansi, are encapsulated within broader political economic and state systems dominated by more powerful ethnic groups, this function of kinship assumes subversive potential. On the farms in the Omaheke, the Ju/’hoansi’s own system of ordering their relationships provides a basis for a whole world of social interaction that is not directly under the farmer’s control. Kin ties can provide a motivation and a means for overt rebellion against a farmer’s paternalistic pretensions, as well as the tools for exerting subtler forms of subversion. Kinship ties provide a framework for developing community networks and a field of relative autonomy wherein ‘counter-hegemonic’ views can be articulated and shared. This is not to say that ‘the family’ is solely a site of support and solidarity. In fact, the micro-politics of farm life in the workers’ compounds are often fraught with conflict and tension. However, these conflicts are understood and often resolved according to the Ju/’hoansi’s own values and principles of conduct.

In this chapter I examine some of the dynamics of Ju/’hoan kin relations as they provide for autonomous social interaction among the Ju/’hoansi themselves. I then examine Ju/’hoan women’s status within this kin-based community by focusing on changes in

marriage patterns and how these changes reflect Ju/'hoan women's strategies for negotiating their marginal status within the broader political economy.

Part One: Kinship, Social Organization and Principles of Conduct

i) Proper Behaviour - Joking, Avoidance and Naming

Gathering kinship terminology turned out to be a fairly difficult task. I sat down with six main informants (three women and three men), armed with charts full of circles and triangles, representing consanguine and affinal kin, and asked such questions as "what does one call one's mother's sister's son?" The information I gathered through this method was supplemented by less structured interviews with other informants. For the most part, my information corresponded quite closely with the terminology and principles described by Lee (1986; 1993) and Marshall (1976). Specifically, the Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke follow a pattern of joking with people in their own and alternate generations and avoiding (i.e. showing respect) toward people in adjacent generations (except where one's name alters the arrangement). They also follow a system whereby grandchildren are ideally named after grandparents and these 'namesakes' — who call each other !kun!a (old name) and !kuma (young name) — enjoy a special, affectionate, joking relationship. Similarly, non-kin who happen to share the same name often, but not always, treat each other as close kin (also calling each other !kun!a and !kuma, according to age) and may enjoy a supportive, affectionate, joking relationship with each other.

However, in the matter of terminology, a few differences emerged. The kinship terms I found, and the principles of joking and avoidance, are represented in figures 19 and 20.

Unfamiliar or idiosyncratic terms are italicized and presented in brackets.¹ Many of my informants offered more than one term for the same relationship and provided terms that were unfamiliar to me (i.e. they do not appear in other ethnographies on the Ju/'hoansi or Nharo), such as *ba!oma* for nephews and *di!oma* for nieces (and in some cases, great-grandchildren). The main difference I found was the common use of the terms 'mama di' for MM and FM and 'mama !go' for MF and FF, instead of '!kun!a' (man speaking) for MF and FF and 'tun' for MM and FM (man and woman speaking) and 'txug!a' for MF and FF (woman speaking) (see Lee 1986:85; Marshall 1979:215; and Wilmsen 1989a:175). The term '!kuma' is used universally for grandchildren, male and female, men and women speaking. The term !kun!a is usually restricted to the grandparent after whom one had been named; where a genealogical relationship does not correspond to a name relationship, *mama di* or *mama !go* is used.²

Another significant difference I found in the grandparent-name relation terms was the discontinuation of the female equivalent of '!kun!a' and '!kuma' — 'tun' (old name) and 'tuma' (young name) for grandmothers, granddaughters and female name-sharers. I say that this is a discontinuation because older women I spoke to knew the terms 'tun' and 'tuma' and

¹ I use Patrick Dickens (1992) orthography in the spelling of these kin terms. Unfamiliar terms I tried to sound out using this orthography as well. For name relationships, I follow Lee's (1986) orthography.

² Bleek found that the term 'mama' was used by the *Au//ae between grandparents and grandchildren as a term of affection (1924:62; see also Marshall 1976:246-247). Wilmsen suggests that the particle 'ma' is not just a diminutive marker, but is also a 'reflexive possessive' expressing a relationship with a parent's mother and, as such, indicates an actual kin relation and is not just an expression of affection (1989a:175). Interestingly, 'mama' is a term used to refer to grandmothers and grandfathers among the Nharo (Guenther 1986a:194; Barnard 1992:149). I also found that 'mama di' was a term of affectionate respect for older women generally.

sometimes still used them, while many younger women I spoke to had not even heard of the terms.³ Similarly, the term for 'grandfather' when a woman is speaking (txug!a) is not used, however it is still applied to husband's brothers and sisters' husbands.⁴ Terms of address are usually expressed as evocative forms of the terms of reference: fathers are addressed as 'baba', mothers as 'mama', uncles as 'tsutsu', aunts as '//ga//ga' and so on. Older kinfolk are not addressed by name.

Despite the variations in terminology, the basic principles of joking and avoidance and the principles of conduct attached to name relationships appear to conform closely to those described by Lee (1986) and Marshall (1976), albeit adapted to suit the farm context. The Ju/'hoan kin relations I observed provided for a fairly wide behavioural scope, especially where there are multiple or overlapping relationships. Examining a few examples of kinship in action may illustrate how Ju/'hoan kin relations provide the basis on which they build their own world of social interaction.

³ On one farm I met two elderly, unrelated /Xabes, of about the same age. These women called each other 'tun' and 'tuma'. When I asked how they decided who was to be called by which term, they told me they guessed who was older. The younger 'tuma' /Xabe was a visitor to the farm and the older 'tun' /Xabe was a permanent resident. Since the /Xabes didn't know each other very well and were so close in age, the 'tun' /Xabe's residential status on the farm may have enhanced her prerogative to 'wi' (hui) the younger (see Lee 1986:91-96; and Marshall 1976:227).

⁴ I recorded the term for these kin (spelled as tūn!ga by Marshall and tung!a by Lee) as 'txug!a' in my fieldnotes because I detected a frictive consonant. Wilmsen also spells grandfather and brother-in-law (ws) as txug!a. These terms appear in Dicken's dictionary as Txun!ga, however I did not detect a nasalized vowel when I was listening to my informants. It is possible I missed it. However, I am quite sure they are the same terms indicating the same relationships.

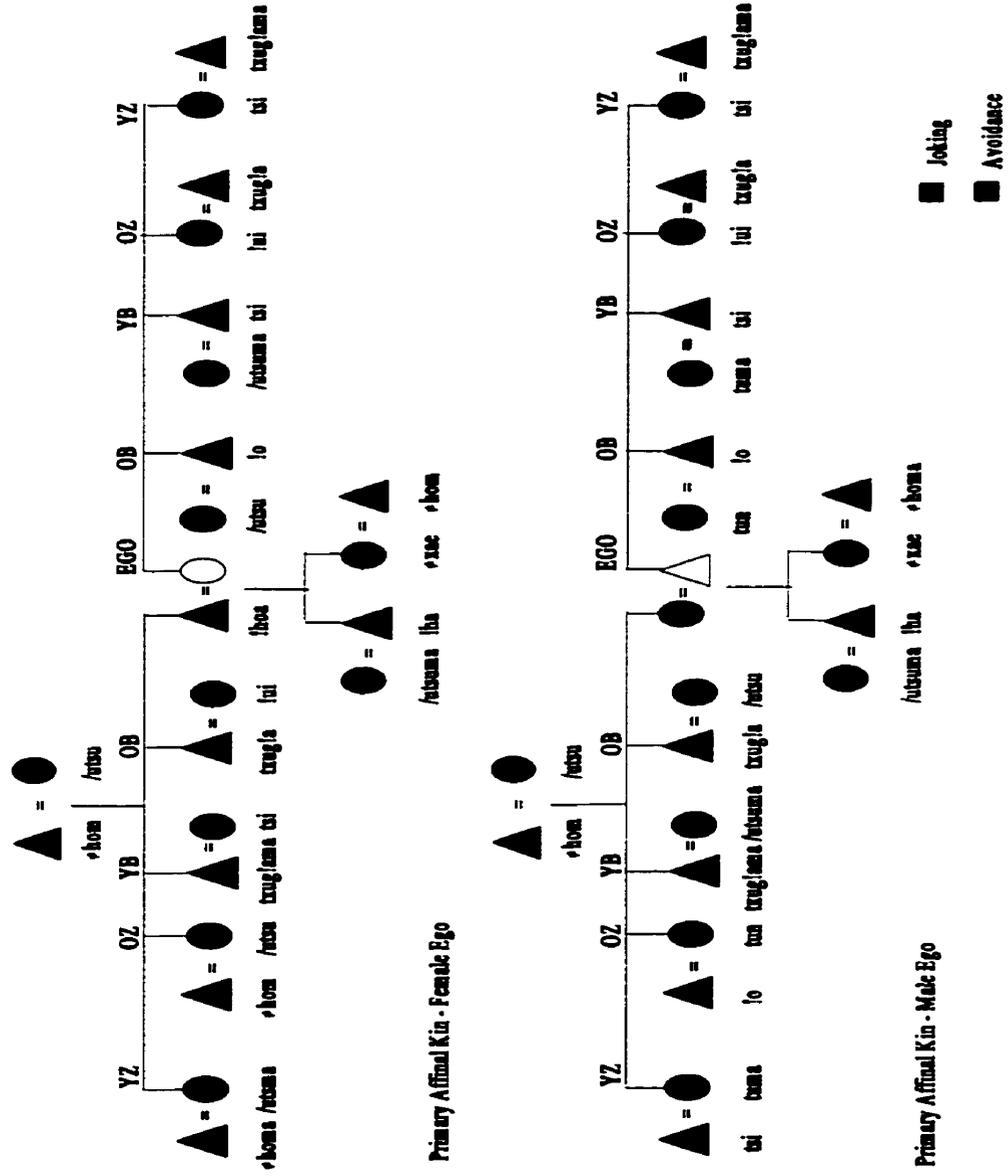


Figure 20. Primary Affinal Kinship Terms

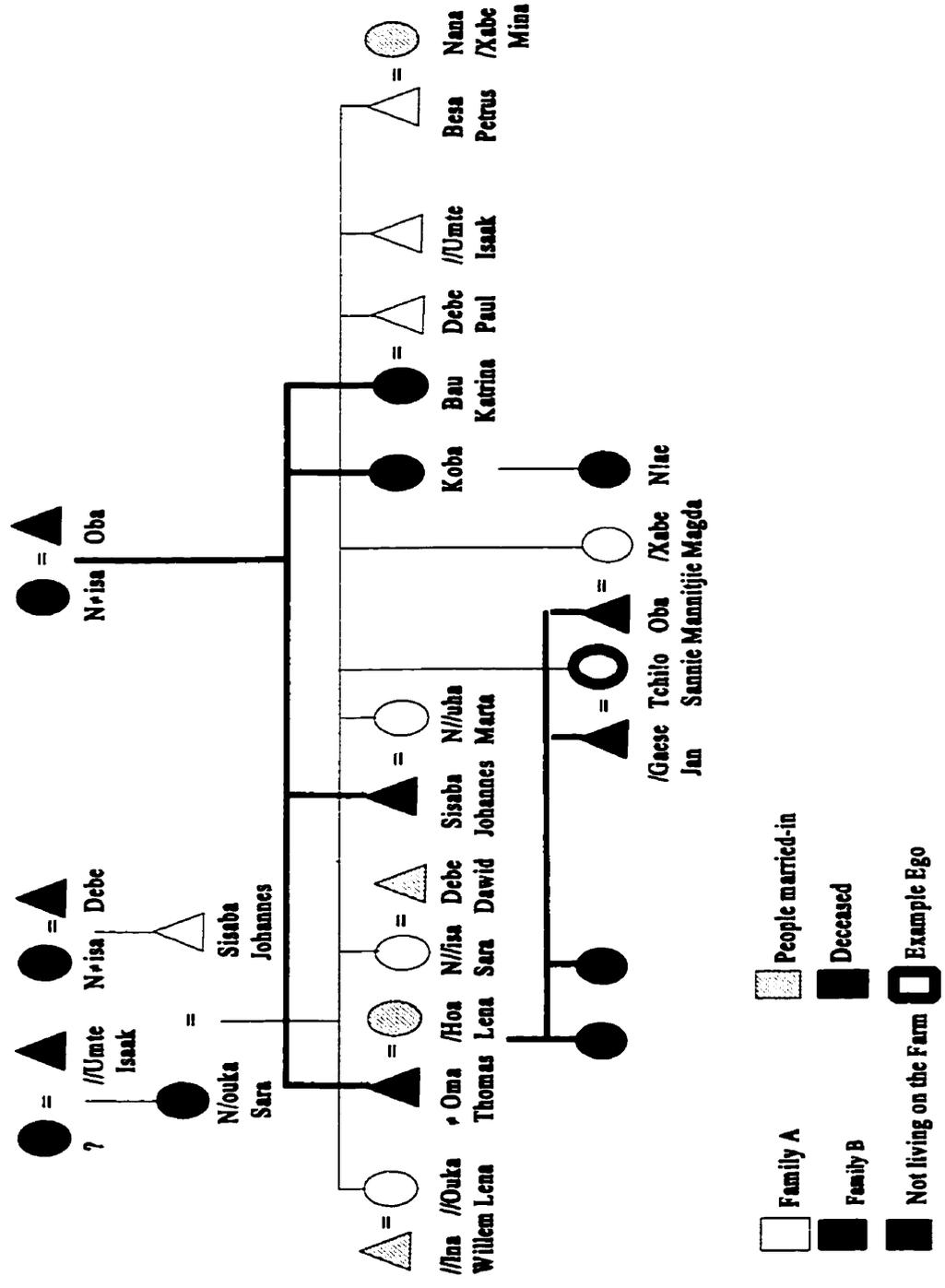


Figure 21. An Extended Family on Farm X

ii) A Case of an Extended Family

Figure 21 provides a representation of an extended Ju/'hoan family on farm X. There are only Ju/'hoansi living in the workers' compound. A Herero man lives on a cattle post to the west of the farm and a Baster family lives on a cattle post on the east end of the farm. This extended Ju/'hoan family is the product of intermarriages between old Sisaba's children and old N*isa's children and grandchildren. Old Sisaba and old N*isa claim that they are themselves 'family' since old N*isa bears old Sisaba's mother's name. He therefore calls old N*isa 'tae matse' (small mother) and shows her respect. But this respect is also tinged with affection since they are also parents-in-law, and in this way are technically in a joking relationship.⁵ From what I saw of their conduct toward each other, I would describe old Sisaba's and old N*isa's relationship as one of affectionate respect — they do not joke. According to the Ju/'hoan naming system, all things being equal, old Sisaba would treat old N*isa's children (*Oma, Sisaba and Bau) like brothers and sister. Old Sisaba and *Oma could, theoretically, be in a joking relationship with each other, given that they are both 'name' bothers and parents-in-law, however, their relationship is sometimes strained because of personal differences associated with *Oma's status as the foreman of the farm. Relations between old Sisaba and old N*isa's son, Sisaba, could theoretically be a joking relationship also, given that they are 'name' brothers and in a !kun!a- !kuma relationship. However, old Sisaba's relationship with young Sisaba is an avoidance relationship because young Sisaba is married to one of old Sisaba's daughters, N//uha (an unusual situation). Old Sisaba also

⁵ My impression was that relationships between parents-in-law are generally very cordial, however, I was unable to observe a broad sample of parent-in-law relationships because on most farms women live away from their own families and there were few instances of parents-in-law living together on the same farm.

avoids his 'name' sister, Bau, since she is his daughter-in-law -- she is married to Sisaba's son Debe.

The principles of joking and avoidance, as Lee (1986:82) and Marshall (1976:204-222) describe them go like this: one jokes with people in the alternate generation from one's own (MM, MF, FM, FF, DD, DS, SD, SS) and with members of one's own generation (cousins and siblings — a man jokes with his brothers and a woman jokes with her sisters). One also jokes with a spouse and the spouse's siblings of the same sex as one's spouse.⁶ One avoids members of the adjacent generation (F, M, S, D, FZ, FB, MZ, MB, HF, HM, WF, WM, SW, DH). By examining Tchi!o's position in the kinship matrix (our example ego in figure 21) we can see that these kinship principles can become quite complex when they are acted out on the ground.

Tchi!o's sister /Xabe married Tchi!o's husband's brother, Oba. Therefore, Tchi!o and /Xabe are in a double joking relationship, both as sisters and as sisters-in-law. The same applies to Tchi!o's husband, /Gaese and /Xabe's husband, Oba. In fact, from what I observed, Tchi!o, /Gaese, /Xabe and Oba were the closest set of spouses and siblings on the farm. Whenever /Xabe and Oba visited the farm, they spent most of their time with Tchi!o and /Gaese and the mood was always festive and jocular. On the other hand, Tchi!o avoids the husband (Sisaba) of her sister, N//uha. Even though, as Tchi!o's sister's husband, Sisaba could theoretically be in a joking relationship with Tchi!o, the fact that he has Tchi!o's father's name, and is therefore an avoidance relation, carried more weight. Furthermore, Tchi!o's husband, /Gaese, is in an avoidance relationship with Sisaba because Sisaba is

⁶ Lee explains that this is so because one's husband's brother or one's sister's husband are themselves potential spouses (1986:85).

/Gaese's father's brother. Tchi!o's sister, N//uha is /Gaese's sister-in-law, and so theoretically, a potential joking partner. However, she is also his uncle's wife, and it is this relationship that takes precedence — he avoids her. Marshall tells us that:

Egos' joking status is the same with both persons of a married couple among kin and affines. In other words, if ego refrains from joking with an uncle, he also refrains from joking with the uncle's wife (1976:207).

Technically, if Tchi!o's husband avoids his uncle and his uncle's wife, Tchi!o should do the same (ibid *n.4*). However, Tchi!o's husband's uncle's wife is also Tchi!o's sister — a relationship which outweighs the affinal connection. While I watched Tchi!o and others on the farm conduct themselves along the lines of joking and avoidance, I realized that in situations where people were related to each other in more ways than one, the decision to avoid or joke with each other could be a matter of mutual choice. Both mutual affection and the need to co-operate in daily chores ensure a joking relationship between Tchi!o and N//uha, even though Tchi!o's husband must avoid N//uha.

The women on this farm, most of whom are sisters, are quite close. They spend a lot of time together and help each other out with their various chores. Relations between them are relaxed and companionable. However, whenever I visited the farm, I always noticed one woman who seemed on the periphery. Bau was not helped around her fire as much as the other women, did not usually accompany the other women on veldkos gathering expeditions or weekend trips to town to visit the *tombos*.⁷ When she was with a group of women (sewing or talking under a camelthorn tree), the group dynamics were markedly more subdued.

⁷ 'Tombo' is the local term for a place where people gather to drink homemade beer (also called 'tombo'). In the communal areas, such places are often referred to using the more familiar term, 'shebeen'.

Tchi!o, N//uha, N//isa and //Ouka all like Bau quite well — they always spoke kindly to and about her. However, it was hard to miss the fact that she was not quite ‘in’ the women’s group.⁸

After I gathered more kinship information, the reasons for Bau’s semi-outsider status became clearer: Bau lives on a farm with her mother (N≠isa) and her brothers (≠Oma and Sisaba), all of whom fall into the avoidance category of kin. So do her brother’s wives, /Hao and N//uha, and her husband’s sisters, Tchi!o, N//isa, //Ouka (and N//uha again). Bau is assisted around her fire by her mother and daughter, but she has no female joking partners on the farm. The other women on the farm, except /Hao and N//uha, joke with Bau’s mother (as a ‘mama di’), and most of them joke with each other. Bau is lucky to be living with her mother and brothers since they ‘stand by her’ in her relationships with the other people on the farm, so she is not completely isolated. However, her participation in the women’s network on the farm is limited. Bau’s situation, which was not completely unhappy, gave me some insight into why many of the Ju’hoan women I spoke to expressed a preference for staying close to their sisters.

Lee notes (1986:86) that the strictest avoidance relationship is with one’s parents-in-law; this is especially so between a woman and her father-in-law and a man and his mother-in-law. Again, Tchi!o’s situation is illuminating. Tchi!o, at her mother-in-law /Hao’s direction, shares a fire with her parents-in-law. Tchi!o was mildly resentful of her parents-in-

⁸ /Hao was also slightly on the periphery. However, she did enjoy friendly relations with her husband’s brother’s wife, N//uha and these two women often assisted each other with various chores. /Hao was occasionally ‘outside’ the group of women both because she married ‘in’ and because she was the wife of the foreman. The latter fact often caused some tension within the extended family when there was trouble between the residents and the farmer.

law's control over her labour and her life. Also, the fact that her father-in-law was the foreman caused some tensions between Tchi!o, /Gaese and /Gaese's parents. However, this 'control' does not translate into marked power asymmetries between Tchi!o and her husband, /Gaese, because /Gaese was also beholden to Tchi!o's father, Sisaba. In fact, both of them were under the authority of their own and each other's parent(s). As Lee states: "the fact that parents (and children) and parents' siblings fall into the avoidance category is indicative of an authority parents exercise over their children" (1986:84). Given the deference men and women must show toward both parents and parents-in-law, it is easy to understand why many Ju/'hoan women I spoke to preferred to stay close to their natal families after they were married. Women benefit from close ties with their natal kin because their support (especially that of parents and brothers) acts to counter the power a husband may exercise over his wife by virtue of his relatively privileged position within the farm economy.

Tchi!o appreciated the support her father's authority gave her in her relationship with her husband (there were occasionally difficulties in the marriage). However, she also struggled for independence. Both Tchi!o and /Gaese wanted to move to the farm where /Xabe and Oba lived; however neither old Sisaba, nor /Gaese's parents, /Hoa and *Oma, would approve and insisted that Tchi!o and /Gaese stay on the farm with them, at least for the time being. For younger Ju/'hoansi, the authority of parents and parents-in-law carries as much, and often more, weight than the authority of a *baas*. On this farm, the farmer benefitted from Tchi!o and /Gaese's labour, not because he had any control over where Tchi!o and /Gaese lived, but because their parents did.

iii) Names, Nicknames and More Names

As Lee describes in the case of the Dobe Ju/'hoansi, names play an important role in determining marriage partners (1986:84; see also Marshall 1976:259). Theoretically, those in a joking relationship — as when a potential spouse bears the name of one's consanguine kin with whom one jokes — are prime potential marriage partners. Of course, their genealogical positions must be appropriately distant⁹ and, ideally, there should be no name-based conflicts on the part of either potential spouse (see also Lee 1986: 90-94; 1993:80; Marshall 1976:254-261). Those in a generationally or name-based avoidance relationship should not marry. However, things are not always so clear-cut on the ground. For example, old Sisaba's daughter, N//isa, married a man named Debe, which would have been a perfect match because N//isa's father's father was also a 'Debe'. However, 'Debe' was also her brother's name, and N//isa avoids her brother, and should also avoid men with her brother's name. Here, N//isa and Debe were caught between a joking and an avoidance relationship. Lee states that when two people are 'stuck in the middle' in such a way, avoidance takes priority and "a marriage is unlikely to occur" (1986:91). In this case though, no one seemed to mind that N//isa had married a man with her brother's name. The Ju/'hoansi told me that the marriage was a good one since N//isa and Debe 'loved each other', and it was a second marriage for both of them anyway. In fact, N//isa's father was more concerned about Debe's inability to keep a job.

High levels of intermarriage between the Ju/'hoansi and Nama-Damaras mean that many Ju/'hoansi and Nama-Damaras have three to four names — a Ju/'hoan name, a Nama-

⁹ Marriages are prohibited between members of a nuclear family, and are discouraged between cousins (although they do sometimes occur) (see also Marshall 1979:235-261)

Damara name, an Afrikaans name and a nickname.¹⁰ So many names sometimes complicates marriage matters somewhat. For example, one young man, Besa of Farm X, married a very pretty young woman whose father was a Nama and whose mother was a Ju/'hoan. She usually went by her Nama-nickname, 'Nana' or her Afrikaans name, 'Mina'. Besa told me: "we were married almost a year before I found out that she also had my sister /Xabe's name — wow!" No one was particularly disturbed by this 'transgression'; they simply called her 'Nana' and avoided using her Ju/'hoan name. N//uha's situation was slightly more serious because she had married a man with her father's name. Here the people told me, in hushed tones, that this was 'a bit of a problem'. There were some mild moral apprehensions, but the biggest concern most people voiced was "what are they going to name their second son?"

The Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke follow the same naming system as that described by Lee (1986:86) and Marshall (1976:224-225). That is: first born sons are named after FF, second born sons after MF, and third born sons after FB or MB or another relative according to preference; first born daughters are named after FM, second born daughters after MM, and third born daughters after FZ or MZ or another relative according to preference. Children are not named after their parents. (Thus, N//uha may not name her second son after her father because this would also be to name her son after *his* father). The person after whom one is named is addressed by their namesake as !kun!a (women and men) and the older !kun!a reciprocates by calling the younger !kuma (men and women). The Ju/'hoansi I spoke to drew a distinction between grandparents after whom they were named (!kun!a) and grandparents with whom they did not share a name relationship (mama di or mama !go). The Ju/'hoansi

¹⁰ Marshall also found Ju/'hoansi with more than one (Ju/'hoan) name and who also had nicknames (1976:226-227).

also made a distinction between a ‘real’ !kun!a — the grandparent after whom they were named — and a !kun!a who just happens to share their name (see also Marshall 1976:203). The most important, supportive, affectionate relationship is with one’s ‘real’ !kun!a. One’s ‘real’ !kun!a gives gifts and pays special attention to their !kuma.

The naming system in the Omaheke, though conforming to the systems followed by the Ju/’hoansi at Dobe and Nyae Nyae, operates with a unique twist. In the past, farmers gave Ju/’hoan servants European names.¹¹ Over the years, the Ju/’hoansi appropriated these names and assimilated them into their naming system. Thus, in the Omaheke, specific ‘Afrikaans’ names (as the Ju/’hoansi call them) are linked with specific Ju/’hoan names. In the Omaheke, if a child is named after a grandmother who is called N#isa-Anna, that child will also be called N#isa-Anna (this is not a strict rule, but it is the common practice). The Ju/’hoansi take their naming system very much to heart and get quite upset when, as sometimes happens, a farmer presumes to give a Ju/’hoan child an ‘Afrikaans’ name.

In the workers’ compound, everyone is known by their Ju/’hoan name. A woman who is ‘Sophia’ to her *miesis*, is N/haokxa to her friends and family. The Ju/’hoansi also address each other by their nicknames, which are sometimes derivatives of Afrikaans names or words (e.g. ‘Sakkie’ for ‘little bag’, a name one young man’s older sisters gave him when he was a baby).¹² In the workers’ compound, even the farmer has a different name. In their dealings

¹¹ Some of these European names carry the diminutive suffix ‘tjie’ — for example, Vaetjie, and especially ‘Mannetjie’ (boy or small man) — which serves to perpetuate the Ju/’hoansi’s ‘childlike’ status and reinforce the farmer’s paternalistic role (see also van Onselen 1992:141-142). Other ‘European’ names given by farmers are actually nicknames, such as ‘Grootmeid’ (Big Maid - woman’s name) and ‘Boesjman’ (Bushman).

¹² Marshall (1976:226-227) and Lee (1986:88) found nicknames which generally refer to
(continued...)

with the Afrikaners, the Ju/'hoansi must always address the farmer's wife as '*miesis*', never by her first name and never Mevrouw (Mrs.). They must also address the farmer as '*baas*', never by his first name, and never Meneer (Mr.) (see also Guenther 1979:131). However, the Ju/'hoansi take great delight in giving the *baas* and *miesis* nicknames, which they become known by among the Ju/'hoansi all over the Omaheke. So, for example, in the workers' compound the *baas* becomes '/Oara !om' (Baboon Leg) or 'Buru n!ai //kxae' (Boer Teeth Grinder) while the *miesis* becomes '/Inxa' (Stingy) or '≠Ga'a' (Small Ant).

iv) Making Friends and Making Family

The meaning and scope of the !kun!a-!kuma relationship for the Omaheke Ju/'hoansi was not always as profound or as broad as it was for the Ju/'hoansi of Nyae Nyae and Dobe. Speaking about the Ju/'hoansi at Nyae Nyae, Marshall explains: "when one is named for a person, one partakes in that person's entity in some way" (1976:203). Lee also describes how, when non-related Ju/'hoansi with the same name meet, the younger !kuma assumes the same relationship the older !kun!a has with the !kun!a's kin, so that the !kuma addresses the !kun!a wife as 'my wife', the !kun!a's brother as 'my brother', etc. (1986:76-78). Similarly, anyone with your husband's name, you may call 'husband', anyone with your sister's name, you call may 'sister', and anyone you meet whose father's name is the same as your father's name you may call by a sibling term. The older person determines which kin terms will be

¹²(...continued)

physical characteristics. I found a few such nicknames, however, when the Ju/'hoansi wish to distinguish one Debe from another, they will usually say 'Debe-of-farm X' or 'Debe-the-foreman'. Fewer women than men had nicknames and those that did usually had shortened versions of their Afrikaans names as their nicknames.

invoked, by employing a principle Lee identified as 'wi' (hui) and kin terms are adopted by the younger person according to where in the older person's kin universe the younger person's name places her (Lee 1986:74-76; see also Marshall 1976:227). In the Omaheke, the !kun!a-!kuma relationship and the broader name-based application of closer kin terms to non-kin (what Marshall calls the 'homonymous method') is not always taken this far. Especially among the Ju/'hoansi I met who lived on the farms, people with the same names did not always invoke a !kun!a-!kuma relationship, nor did they always apply kin terms to non-kin based on name-identification. Although the Ju/'hoansi on the farms did not always 'partake in the entity' of a !kun!a (related or not), name relationships do facilitate 'making family' in cases of extreme poverty and marginalization off the farms.

A number of studies of marginal communities note that people living in conditions of extreme insecurity and poverty often manipulate kinship principles as a way of mobilizing support and mutual assistance within a community of non-kin (Moore 1988:60). The same is true of the Ju/'hoansi, especially those living in resettlement camps, where people struggle to get by on sporadic supplies of drought relief, and in urban and peri-urban squatters' villages. However, they have their own uniquely Ju/'hoan way of employing this strategy. While I was visiting one resettlement camp, I met two older women, Bau and N/u//ae, who described themselves as 'sisters'. They shared household tasks, food, clothes, dishes and what money they could scrape together, and they claimed that the people in their houses 'shared a fire'. When I asked them how they were sisters, Bau told me that her mother was the daughter of N/u//ae's mother's sister's son (see figure 22). Bau's mother (//Uce) had been named after N/u//ae's mother (//Uce), so both of their mothers were '//Uces', which made them 'sisters' (the fact that N/u//ae's mother was Bau's mother's 'real' !kun!a reinforced the relationship).

Such a relationship would be regarded by many farm Ju/'hoansi as too genealogically distant to justify such a close kin bond and the resultant merging of the residents of both houses into a 'household'. Generally, people who are mobile, whether they are looking for work or visiting kin and friends to receive temporary food and shelter, do not depend upon finding or 'making' a name-relation. People who are visiting from farm to farm looking for work can count on food and shelter from others even if no kin relationship is identified. Those who move from site to site to receive assistance generally choose their sites according to where their genealogical kin live (see chapter six). But for those people who live in conditions of extreme poverty and have moved away from their kin, forging social networks is necessary and establishing name-based relationships is an obvious way to do this. Thus, Besa's response to Bau's explanation was: "they are not real family — they are just making family for themselves." Besa grew up and lived most of his life on a farm with his father, brothers and sisters and so did not place as much importance on a name-based relationship. Bau and N/u//ae, on the other hand, were living in a resettlement camp where most of the residents were 'strangers' (many of them Nama-Damara) and were far away from living family members; they thus placed a great deal more significance on their name-based familial tie.

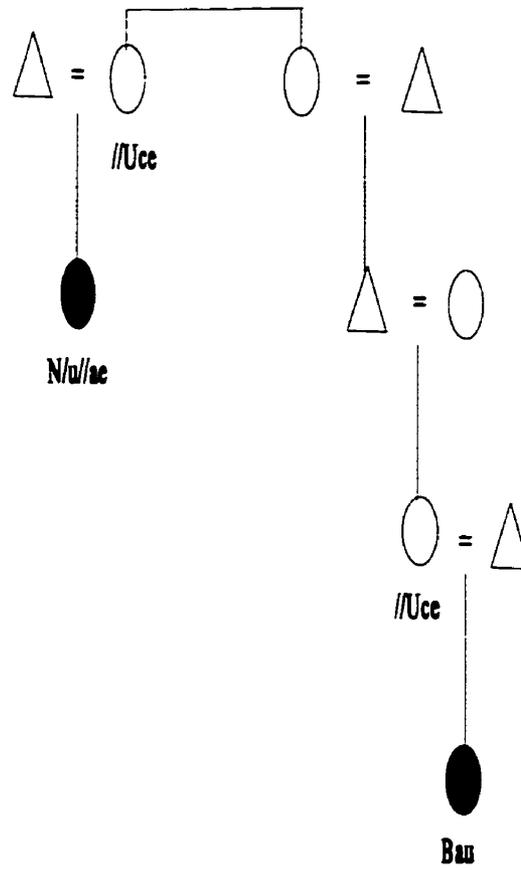


Figure 22. A !kun!-!kuma 'sister' relationship in a resettlement camp

Another example of a !kun!a-!kuma relationship was found in a remote San village project in the northeast area of the Omaheke (in the Herero communal area). The village project is run by a non-government organization, The Working Group for Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) and is the only place in the Omaheke where the Ju/'hoansi own and control their own land. However, the project is still quite new and the Ju/'hoan residents are struggling to survive on sporadic deliveries of food from the government-run food-for-work program. One young man named Gashe moved with his wife into the village to try to start a new life. He travelled a fair distance from the commercial block where he had grown up and so arrived at the project essentially kinless. Almost immediately, young Gashe and his wife were incorporated into the household of an older Gashe. Young Gashe and his wife built a cattle-dung house near old Gashe's house and young Gashe 'shared a fire' with old Gashe's household. Although no genealogical relationship could be traced, old Gashe told me that young Gashe was a part of his household because young Gashe was his !kuma, and therefore "he's like my grandson." This example, like the previous one, illustrates how name relationships are activated among Ju/'hoansi living in extreme conditions of poverty and isolation, where "the name relationship serves to give them common identity and a sense of belonging together" (Marshall 1976:243).

The Ju/'hoansi's universalistic kinship system not only makes family out of all Ju/'hoansi (at least potentially), it also accommodates and incorporates ethnic 'others'. Intermarriage between the Ju/'hoansi and Nama-Damara people results in the common use of two sets of kin terms that Ju/'hoan and Nama-Damara in-laws apply to each other. For example, one young man, Oba, referred to his female cousin, who was living on a distant farm, as his 'sister'. His mother's sister had married a Nama man, and had moved with her

husband and her daughter (Oba's cousin) to a farm where her husband's family lived and worked. According to the Nama kin system, cousins are referred to using sibling terms (see also Barnard 1992:187).¹³ Oba referred to this female cousin using the Nama term for sister — 'ousie'.

A Nama-Damara who marries into a Ju/'hoan family may be referred to by his (and sometimes her) in-laws either by a Ju/'hoan kin term, or a Nama-Damara kin term, depending on the context and who is speaking. My guess is that the older person determines which term to use, possibly according to a principle roughly parallel to the principle of 'wi'(hui) as Lee (1986:91-96) describes it. Older Ju/'hoansi tend to use Ju/'hoan kin terms to refer to younger Nama-Damara in-laws and their children, while younger Ju/'hoansi more often used Nama-Damara kin terms to refer to Nama-Damara in-laws and their children (Oba, for example, was younger than his female cousin). The context of the relationship also seems to be important. In cases where the offspring of intermarriage are living with their Ju/'hoan family, they tend to be referred to using their Ju/'hoan kin term. Conversely, where the offspring of such intermarriages are living with their Nama-Damara relatives, they are referred to by a Nama-Damara kin term — even by their Ju/'hoan family.

In such situations, the terminology is usually not as important as the obligations that

¹³ According to Nama-Damara kinship systems, male cousins are referred to using the sibling term for brother (!gab or aib) and female cousins are referred to using the sibling term for sister (!gas or ais) (see Barnard 1992:187). I did not find these kin terms used very often among the Nama people I spoke to in the Omaheke (however, I also did not spend as much time surveying Nama people to collect kinship information). The Nama people I spoke to commonly used the Afrikaans-derived term 'ousie' for sister (see van Onselen 1992:141) and the term 'abuti' for brother.

are attached to the relationship itself. ¹⁴ Bau and N/u//ae pointed out another older Nama woman living in the resettlement camp whom they sometimes counted on for support and assistance. N/u//ae told me that she was not sure of the exact genealogical relationship, but said

she is our !kun!a from our parents...we call her Ousie. She is family. Our great-great grandparents were family and we are also family.

Intermarriages also produce a level of 'ethnic ambiguity' that people living off the farms manipulate to cope with their economic circumstances. Many people I spoke to who were technically of mixed ethnicity claimed emphatically to be *Ju/'hoan*. For example, one young man I met living with an extended *Ju/'hoan* family in the Epako squatters' village insisted that he was a *Ju/'hoan*, even though his father was a Damara (his mother was *Ju/'hoan*) and despite the fact that he was unable to speak the *Ju/'hoan* language.¹⁵ He even went by his *Ju/'hoan* name, N!aisi. Another man I met, who was in his mid-80s and living in a resettlement camp, was genealogically speaking, Nharo (both his parents were Nharo speakers from Ghanzi, Botswana). However, he rejected such subtle distinctions: "I am not

¹⁴ This kind of 'kinship syncretism' is less common in the case of Herero or Ovambo men who marry *Ju/'hoan* women. For the most part, their higher ethnic-class status puts too much distance between them and their in-laws for kin ties to take hold. This class asymmetry is expressed in asymmetrical marriage patterns. Ovambo and Herero men marry *Ju/'hoan* women, but *Ju/'hoan* men never marry Ovambo or Herero women. Thus, *Ju/'hoan* women who marry Herero or Ovambo men tend to 'marry out' of the *Ju/'hoan* kinship network community while their husbands are rarely incorporated into it.

¹⁵ The *Ju/'hoansi* follow a bilateral system of descent. There is a slight tendency toward patrilineality, insofar as some *Ju/'hoansi* inherit last names from their fathers, or take their father's Afrikaans name as their last name. However, this is not a strict rule and I met many young *Ju/'hoan* children who had their mother's last names on their identification documents. Also, since the *Ju/'hoansi* do not have much property to pass along, nor do father's families claim children as exclusively members of their 'descent group', it is safe to say that the Omaheke *Ju/'hoansi* practice a dual descent system.

Nharo, I am not !Kung, I am not *Au//ae. I am just Ju/'hoan." It appears that in certain pockets of marginality in the Omaheke, Ju/'hoan hegemony dominates. Ju/'hoan kinship networks are fluid and universalistic enough to incorporate and accommodate ethnic 'outsiders', who then participate in Ju/'hoan kin-based systems of sharing and reciprocity (discussed in chapter six).

As we will see in some detail in the following chapter, the kinship system I have described here plays a crucial role in providing the most marginalized Ju/'hoansi with a network of support. When circumstances become increasingly desperate, the claims and entitlements of family become increasingly important, and genealogical remoteness provides no obstacle to the activation of the kin-support system. Family can be found or made as it is needed. It is not surprising, then, that kin have a substantial stake in the alliances that are established or consolidated through marriage. As we will see in the following section, the incorporation of Ju/'hoan men into the farming economy has significantly eroded the extent to which wider family members influence marriage partners. But the long-term benefits that accrue from the widening of kin networks remain largely in place.

Part Two: 'Her Husband is Her Strength': Changing Patterns of Marriage and Divorce

Marxist feminism has remained fairly faithful to Engels in recognizing the connections between women's subordination and the existence of male-owned property as the means of production. However, the institution of private property alone does not explain gender subordination, especially in non-capitalist societies. Marxist feminist approaches to marriage and women's status have therefore sought to examine relationships between production, the sexual division of labour, the transmission of property (e.g. as inheritance

through descent or as an alliance-building mechanism in exchange for rights in people),¹⁶ and marriage patterns (e.g. bridewealth versus dowry exchanges and monogamous versus polygynous unions) (see Boserup 1970; Goody 1976; Meillassoux 1981; Bloch 1975; Comaroff 1980). In other words, women's status is best examined by focusing on the kinship relations within which property, labour and marriage are embedded. This focus on context has led some to emphasize the importance of labour in influencing the status of women; specifically, how kinship and the manipulation of marriage operate to control the allocation of labour, the fruits of labour and access to the labour of others (see Leacock 1972; Sacks 1975, 1979). For example, Sacks (1975, 1979) argues that examining the ways in which kinship and marriage regulate labour is crucial to understanding how women are differently

¹⁶ The focus on the exchange of women is owed to Levi-Strauss' thesis that women are scarce goods and so were as the original medium for exchange between men in early societies (see Levi-Strauss 1961). However, Lee notes that Ju/'hoan women wield more power in Ju/'hoan society because of an imposed scarcity of potential wives (1989:43). Collier and Rosaldo (1981) outline how brideservice expresses how kinship and marriage influence the construction of 'maleness' and 'femaleness'. They argue that brideservice symbolically expresses gender asymmetries: men 'earn' wives through brideservice; wives are a means of social adulthood; male social adulthood rests on parity with other men; in order for men to protect their adult status and preserve social harmony (among men), they must be able to control wives and compel a their in-laws to control their daughters. Men's roles as wife-earners and food providers (both of which involve hunting) enable "all adult men to appear as the forgers of social relationships" because men's food is widely distributed (281). However, there are a few problems with Collier and Rosaldo's attempts to present what brideservice reflects about how people in such societies conceive gender: first, the same data, such as the social significance of meat distribution, could easily be interpreted in the opposite direction. In fact, according to Draper, the control and distribution of veldkos is a source of pride for Ju/'hoan women, while men have much less control over the fruits of their own labour - implying that men are less powerful in controlling subsistence resources than women (1975:84). Also, much of Collier and Rosaldo's evidence for an emic conception of male supremacy is drawn from ethnographic material from Australia and the Philippines, yet their conclusions about the meaning of brideservice and gender are meant to apply to the Ju/'hoansi of Nyae Nyae. By drawing from ethnographic material from three culturally very different groups of hunter-gatherers, the 'emic' point of view represented is unavoidably essentialized.

positioned relative to the means of production. According to Sacks, kin relations, in non-class societies, are relations of production, and the ways in which kinship systems influence women's access to the means of production will determine their status within the community. In a 'communal mode of production' (exemplified by the Ju/'hoansi), women and men enjoy the same access to the means of production, and hence gender relations are egalitarian. In 'kin-corporate modes of production', where productive property is owned by different corporate kin groups, women's status will depend on whether they exist in the community as 'sisters' (i.e. as a member of the property-owning group) or as 'wives' (i.e. as dependants) (Sacks 1979).

Sack's analysis indicates quite clearly that in non-class societies — and in communities encapsulated within a capitalist system (see Stack 1974) — the control over labour, and the kinship context within which this control is exercised, is the most significant issue in marriage patterns. For the Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, labour is the most important resource they possess, and its control is a central process through which kin relationships are actuated (through mutual support) and created (through marriage).

The political economic context of the Omaheke encourages male dominance: the Ju/'hoansi live within a capitalist economy, which is itself predicated on the institution of private property; and, Ju/'hoan men have greater access not only to the means of subsistence (i.e. wage work), but also to productive property (i.e. livestock) — although the latter is limited to the fortunate few who are able to accumulate this property. However, even if these features of the political economy enable men to exercise control over women's labour, men's labour, and particularly the fruits of their labour, are rarely their own. Ju/'hoan men are subject to the demands of kin, particularly parents-in-law and in this way male power in

marital relations is counter-balanced by the obligations of service and support marriage entails.

Brideservice has historically functioned as a check on the gender asymmetries that the sexual division of labour in the farming economy encourages. However, in recent marriages brideservice is being eroded as more young men and women choose to engage in informal unions without the participation of their kinfolk. In this section I will examine how the status of Ju/'hoan women is influenced by this shift in marriage patterns by focusing on the interconnections between the following personal and historical processes: 1) the changing social interactions surrounding marriage procedures; 2) the shifts in kin relationships within which marriages are embedded; and 3) the changing political and economic context within which marriages occur.

i) From Arranged Marriages to Informal Unions

According to my informants' descriptions, there are four main features of the marriage process which have undergone a series of changes over the last 70 years or so.¹⁷ First, parental involvement in arranging, or even influencing, marriages has virtually disappeared. Second, brideservice, wherein a prospective son-in-law works for his prospective parents-in-law for an extended period before the marriage is approved, gradually shifted to 'supporting' parents-in-law through farm work prior to and following the approval of the marriage. More recently, this support, though expected, is often sporadic or even non-

¹⁷ Data is based on interviews conducted about marriage with 31 informants: 5 were 75 years old and over (3 women, 2 men); 14 were between the ages of 45 and 75 (7 women, 7 men); and, 12 between the ages of 20 and 45 (8 women, 4 men).

existent. Third, with greater emphasis placed on 'support' through gifts or money from farm remuneration, the practice of exchanging marriage gifts (*kamasi*) between parents-in-law shifted to gift-giving primarily or only from a son-in-law. Giving *kamasi* eventually merged with 'brideservice' — now conceived of as support through farm work — to become an extended practice of gift-giving from the son-in-law which continues throughout the life of the marriage. Fourth, with the discontinuation of 'brideservice' in the traditional sense, the marriage procedure itself changed from an extended process, marked by a lengthy period of uxori-locality, to a more condensed event, followed by almost immediate viri-locality or neolocality. More recently, marriages are neither marked by public processes (i.e. extended brideservice support and gift-giving prior to the marriage), nor by public events (i.e. ceremonies or 'parties'). Instead marriages are now carried out privately by the couple involved and are often the result of young people being 'caught' with their lovers.

Early Marriages: 1920s-1930s

Although I was only able to interview a handful of people over 70, most of whom were women, their reports suggest that marriage patterns during the early years of white settlement were similar to those practiced among Ju/'hoansi living in the veld (see Shostak 1981:147-166; Marshall 1976:252-279, 168-170; and Lee 1979:452-453, 240-242; 1993:80). Marriages during the early years of white settlement were usually arranged by parents. Prospective sons-in-law worked for their prospective parents-in-law by hunting and gathering and through part-time farm labour. Marriages at this time were also characterized by the exchange of *kamasi* between parents-in-law and lengthy periods of uxori-locality prior to the marriage, followed by fluid residence patterns. Hxoan//a, who is in her mid 80s, describes

how she was married to her husband:

My husband's mother wanted me for her son and she asked me from my parents...My husband was working for them. He hunted for them and in the reserve he also worked and brought food for them, like sugar and bread and he gave it to them...His parents gave him things to give to us and then my parents gave me things to give to him and his parents, like dishes, blankets, clothes...

N*isa, who is in her late 70s, described how her husband's parents approached her parents to discuss N*isa's marriage to their son. N*isa and her parents were living on a white farm in the northeast hinterland of the commercial block, while N*isa's husband and his family lived in the veld in the Herero reserve most of the year. N*isa describes her husband's brideservice and their living arrangements after they were married in the following way:

He did work for my parents. In the old times, before a man would marry, he goes hunting and brings the meat to your parents, or gets wild food for your parents before he marries you...[after we were married] we were sometimes living with my parents and sometimes we lived with his family [in the veld].

After N*isa and her husband started having children, her husband found work on N*isa's 'natal' farm, were they settled more or less permanently with N*isa's family.

Both Hxoan//a and N*isa's accounts illustrate how marriages in the early years of white settlement were agreements between two kin groups and likely functioned to form bonds of mutual reciprocity and support (see also Marshall 1976:267; Shostak 1981:128, 240). Although it was difficult to calculate the age of these women when they got married (my elderly informants all insisted that 'they don't know their years'), it does appear that they were fairly young when they got married (around 14 to 16) and that their husbands were older (late teens or early twenties) (see also Marshall 1976:269; Lee 1979: 242; Shostak 1981:129). 'Trial marriages' did not seem to occur very frequently (see Shostak 1981:127-145). Three of my five informants 75 years and over reported that they remained with the

first spouse their parents 'gave them' until they were widowed.¹⁸

Hxoan//a's description of her husband's brideservice provides some insight into how the historical process of white settlement and the development of the reserve system in the Omaheke influenced Ju/'hoan marriage patterns; specifically, her husband incorporated part-time farm labour into his brideservice duties (see also Lee 1979:240-241). During this period, the Ju/'hoansi's incomplete incorporation into the Omaheke farming economy (in both the 'white' areas and in the reserves) allowed for an extended period of brideservice and an extended period of uxorilocality. Although the historical development of the farming economy definitely influenced Ju/'hoan marriage practices, this influence was not one-sided. N#isa's account of her marriage suggests that farm labour recruitment during this period may well have been facilitated by Ju/'hoan marriage decisions and uxorilocal residence patterns.

Marriages - 1940s to 1960s

From about the 1940s on, as farming in the Omaheke was becoming gradually more

¹⁸ Many of my informants had identification documents of varying reliability which assisted in narrowing or pinpointing birth dates. To ascertain the ages of informants without identification documents (and to double check the birth dates of informants who doubted the accuracy of their documents) I measured their ages against an event calendar, if possible in the company of other informants who were ranked in age relative to my main informant. Most of my older female informants reported having children with only one spouse. Calculations of the approximate birth dates of my informants' children and matching these dates with my female informants' reproductive age span (16-49), suggests that first marriages arranged by parents when the girl was still in her early teens were long lasting (i.e. if young girls were first married close to menarche and bore children with the first husband given to them, then they likely did not refuse the match or change partners). My informants described arranged marriages with adolescent girls and young men. I heard of no arranged marriages involving young children (see Marshall 1976:268-269; Shostak 1981:127). However my sample group was very small and may not be representative of general practices at the time. My informants did say that young girls were not forced to stay in an arranged marriage if they were against it.

commercialized and enclosed, and as the farm labour force was becoming more consolidated and slightly more proletarianized, patterns of kamasi-giving and brideservice became increasingly tied to farm work. Although arranging marriages was still a widespread practice, the most profound changes during this period were in the ways the Ju/'hoansi handled the economic aspects of marital arrangements. Oba describes how he was married in the 1940s:

I asked permission to marry her. But it was not me who asked, it was my parents. I told my parents, "I love this girl, I want to marry her." When I was working and receiving some food, like mielie meal, coffee, tea, I took it to her parents and gave it to them — I gave them those things to eat. At that time, I was still asking permission to marry her.

Such 'brideservice' payments were typically given both before and after the marriage was approved by the young woman's parents. //Uce describes her husband's 'brideservice' in the 1950s:

He worked and got money and gave it to my parents. He was giving things and helping them before we were married and also after...The gifts were mostly things to buy, like clothes for your father-in-law and dresses for your mother-in-law.

Oba and //Uce's descriptions of 'brideservice' are typical for informants over 50 years old and indicate the extent to which the Ju/'hoansi had adapted brideservice to fit with the farm context. During this period, men proved their competence as providers by demonstrating an ability to support a family through farm work. However, supporting one's parents-in-law through farm remuneration did not completely replace 'brideservice' in the traditional sense. Rather 'brideservice' expanded to include primarily material support (gifts) derived from farm labour and secondarily, when it was possible, actual service (labour). Bau, who is in her late 40s, describes how her husband gave gifts and worked for her parents:

He worked for my father and also bought gifts...Blankets, and also sometimes gave money, if he had money. He also made a fence around the house and fetched firewood...Then [my husband's family] came to visit me for a long time [about a

month] and when they left, they took me with them.

Farm labour eventually prevented extended periods of uxoriality, since most young men of marriageable age were already working as farm workers. Thus, the ability to fulfill 'brideservice' in the traditional sense was limited. The Ju'hoansi responded to the threat of diminishing 'brideservice' by expanding parents-in-laws' claims to gifts, support and labour. While older informants told me that brideservice stopped shortly after a marriage was approved, or after the couple began having children (see also Marshall 1976:170), Ju'hoan men who married in the context of generational farm labour described giving gifts, supporting and providing periodic labour to the parents-in-law through the entire life of the marriage. Gashe, who was married in the 1950s told me:

I did kamasi. Buying clothes and dishes for her [to give to her parents]. She will do the same. Her parents will give her dishes for me, to give to my parents. I worked for my wife's parents. We didn't stay together. They [his parents-in-law] were in the eastern part and we were in the western part [of the commercial block]. But when they came to visit, I worked for them.

As Gashe's account suggests, the nature and function of kamasi changed along with the changes to brideservice. Kamasi ceased to be gifts exchanged between parents-in-law and became gifts given from the *son-in-law* to his parents-in-law, and reciprocated by gifts from the wife's parents to the son-in-law's parents. The husband's parents began participating less in kamasi-giving and instead only 'helped' their sons meet their kamasi-giving obligations. As brideservice transformed into support through farm work, given in the form of gifts, the distinction between kamasi and 'brideservice' support became blurred. Oba, who was married in the 1950s, describes his duties as a son-in-law:

You'll kamasi when you are married to her. Anything that belongs to you, you give. Clothes. If you buy clothes, or if somebody gives clothes to you — anything — you must give it to your wife's family. You'll kamasi until you die!

Oba's description is fairly typical and reveals the authority parents-in-law exercised over their son-in-law: they had access to his labour and strong claims to regular gifts and general support. These claims were not limited to the wife's parents alone, but actually extended to the rest of her nuclear family as well, especially her brothers. Such expectations of support, continuous *kamasi* and general obedience are still noticeable in Ju/'hoan marriages today, especially among those who have lived on the same farm or in the same area most of their lives and who know their son-in-law's family well. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for Ju/'hoan sons-in-law to meet these obligations. I will return to this point later on.

For all that marriage patterns shifted from a son-in-law providing service to a son-in-law providing commodities, there is no suggestion that brideservice was transforming into bridewealth.¹⁹ Beyond the fact that most Ju/'hoansi were far too poor to sustain such a system, the son-in-law's gifts from farm work were still couched in terms of his 'working for' his parents-in-law; a son-in-law 'worked for' his parents-in-law indirectly by providing remuneration from his farm labour in lieu of actual service. Also, there was no suggestion that an exchange of gifts for rights in women was being practiced. The woman's parents were not being compensated for the loss of her labour, nor did gift-giving entitle a man's family to exclusive claims over children. Although, as I mention above, there is a slight tendency

¹⁹ Collier and Rosaldo (1981) define brideservice societies as "groups in which gifts of labour by the groom to his in-laws are the expected form of marital legitimization" (278). Through brideservice, sons-in-law establish long-term relationships and obligations with their wife's kin. Bridewealth societies are "groups in which the groom presents gifts of valuables acquired through the labour of someone other than the groom himself...goods given on marriage are seen as payment for rights to a woman's labour, sexuality, or offspring" (ibid). Bridewealth often puts men into debt to a senior kinsmen who supplies the resources to get married and start his adult career. Such debts are sometimes paid in labour (see also Collier 1988).

toward patrilineality (i.e. in name inheritance) this appears to be a recent trend. In terms of reckoning kin affiliation and determining identity, the Ju/'hoansi follow a bilateral descent system (and opportunistically reckon descent, see above). It seems more likely that the emphasis on a son-in-law's gift-giving (both as general support and *kamasi*) was the Ju/'hoansi's response to their immersion in generational farm labour, and the virilocality and neolocality it entailed, which threatened to erode parents-in-laws' authority in marriage matters.

Although marriages in the 1940s to the 1960s underwent changes in terms of the roles and relationships between parents-in-law and sons-in-law, the marriage process itself was still very much a community matter. Also, women were quite influential in arranging marriages for their children and approving prospective sons-in-law (see also Shostak 1981:240; and Lee 1993:80; Bleek 1928:33). As late as the 1960s, parents were still arranging marriages. For example, N!ukga describes how her son's marriage was arranged:

This woman's parents [pointing to her daughter-in-law], they came to me and my husband and we talked to each other and we agreed. They came with her to have a husband, which is why they asked us for our son. They talked with us and we gave our son to their daughter.

If parents were not available to arrange or facilitate a marriage, other family members would assume the duty. !Xuma, as we recall from chapter four, was separated from his parents as a child. He describes how his sister, whom he was visiting while on leave, assisted with his marriage to his first wife:

My sister asked her for me from her family [his wife-to-be's brother and sister]. She realized that I started to love women and she didn't want me to take just any woman...My parents were not around there and it was only my sister who was there and the Afrikaners didn't allow me to go very far away.

!Xuma's was not, strictly speaking, an 'arranged' marriage since his first wife was his own

choice. In fact, quite a number of men I spoke to told me they initiated a marriage when were smitten with a young woman. However, to initiate the marriage, !Xuma recruited the assistance of his sister, his future wife's family and other Ju/'hoansi on the farm. !Xuma told me:

She was my choice - because she was so pretty! I just watched the house the whole day and I'm just looking for her. The first time we met I said, "Hey, I will not leave you behind," and she said, "No, I don't know you." I said, "We'll get to know each other." I tried to get close to her, but she was afraid of me and the older people talked to her too...My friend told me about her. He said, "That girl over there doesn't have a husband," and then I said, "Alright! That's what I'm looking for!" Then he took me to her, when he stopped working he took me to her because at that time she was alone in the house. We *tin kx''ae* and *tin kx''ae* [asked, proposed] and she said "no". And my friend helped me. Then she said "yes" and I was happy. The day I talked to her and she agreed, the same evening, we became husband and wife. Because that time when I was visiting my sister, she also liked me. When I took her as my wife, we only stayed for two weeks. There were too many young boys on that farm and I was afraid of them. It's why we left quickly. Because she was so beautiful and every young man would like her.

As !Xuma's account suggests, arranged marriages were not always arbitrarily designed by parents or other family members. Many of my older informants reported that young men (rarely women) initiated marriages out of attraction and affection. !Xuma's case is atypical in the sense that he escaped brideservice and exchanging *kamasi*, since there were no parents involved (his wife's parents had passed away) and because, as !Xuma explains: "I grew up with white people and I didn't know about *kamasi* and those things." Nonetheless, !Xuma initiated the marriage by going through kin channels and received the approval of his wife's siblings before approaching her with his proposal. Gift-giving, *kamasi* and 'brideservice', when they did occur, signaled the formation of a new relationship between entire kin groups.

Although I was unable to gather detailed information about ceremonial events

surrounding marriages from my informants in their 70s and 80s, I did get the impression that ceremonies were modest (i.e. a ritualistic 'bringing together' of the husband and wife to a new 'house'). Ceremonies in the 1920s and 1930s may also have been curtailed because farmers discouraged (and still discourage) 'traditional' rituals which they believe to be 'Satan worshipping'. Some informants who were married in the 1940s and 1950s reported throwing weekend-long 'parties', which were held once the young woman's parents approved the marriage. The celebration marked the couple's change in status with a great deal of singing, dancing, eating and especially drinking. Special food was prepared, such as meat and bread, and copious amounts of *tombo* (home made beer) would be brewed. Some informants even reported farmers contributing to the festivities by providing 'wine' (the name the Ju/'hoansi use for any kind of strong liquor) and 'tasty food'. However, other informants reported that farmers refused to allow any kind of ceremonial activity, as one woman stated: "If you asked a farmer, or even ask to borrow some money, he won't allow it because he said that we are born stupid and don't know anything." Some informants, who were able to hold 'parties', reported that during the celebration parents-in-law exchanged gifts with each other and gave gifts to the young couple 'to help them start' (see Marshall 1976:267).

My older informants insisted that arranged marriages and 'brideservice' were advantageous to the wife and her family. Regular visits for the purpose of gift-giving or temporary uxorilocality provided opportunities for the young woman's parents to observe their son-in-law's conduct toward their daughter, assess his competence as a provider and benefit from his material support and the extended kin connections such communally-negotiated unions created (see also Lee 1979:452; Marshall 1979:189-170; Shostak 1981:128,240). None of my older female informants reported that they felt forced into their

marriages, rather they described their marriages in terms of their parents and their husband's parents 'giving them to each other'.

Marriages - 1970s to 1990s

From about the mid-1970s to the present, marriage patterns changed dramatically. Although many of my informants who were married in the 1970s still described marriage processes which were similar to past practices, more of my informants began to describe getting married without any parental influence at all.²⁰ Marriages among the younger generation of Ju/'hoansi (25-35) are not marked by pre-marital kamasi, 'brideservice' or ceremonies. All of my informants who were married in the 1980s described marriage as a matter of being 'caught' with a lover. Where prior to the 1970s, most Ju/'hoansi were united through arranged marriages, either initiated by parents or by the prospective husband, by the 1980s such procedures were replaced by secretive courtships between young women and young men.

N!ae met her first husband in 1977, when she was 15 years old. She and her sister had managed to find jobs as domestic servants on a farm, very close to their 'natal' farm, where a distant male relative was working. Within two years of moving to this farm N!ae met and married her first husband with very little fuss; they simply moved in together and lived as husband and wife. They remained together for about a year, until her husband decided to acquire a second wife, at which point N!ae left her husband and went to live with her father.

²⁰ Seven of my ten informants married in the 1970s reported simply moving in with a spouse, without previous discussion with their parents and without any formalized exchange or public validation (such as kamasi and/or brideservice).

On her 'natal' farm, N!ae met her second husband, Debe, who was a good deal younger than N!ae (11 years), and who was working on the farm. The courtship proceeded as Debe began regularly sneaking out of the corrugated iron shack the Ju/'hoansi used as a 'bachelor's hut' to spend the night with N!ae, who was staying in her father's two 'room' shack. This continued for about three weeks until one day the other young men of the 'bachelor's hut' began asking "where is Debe sleeping these nights?" When the answer to this question was discovered, Debe and N!ae were 'married'. N!ae explained how 'modern' marriages work in this way:

When we are in love with a boyfriend and the people know about us, then we are married. Because for us it is difficult to be married in a church. We don't have much money...If he dies, then maybe you'll go marry another man and we don't wait a long time. We just get married if we fall in love and after that we have children. If the people know about us, then we stay together and have children.

N!ae's marriages are slightly atypical insofar as her first husband was living on the same farm where she was working at the time, and her second husband was living with his family on the farm where her family lived. Thus, N!ae did not follow her husbands to a different farm. In most cases, women and men meet each other when men visit nearby farms, usually for the purpose of finding a wife. After the marriage, wives generally follow their husbands back to the farm where the husband works.

Beh, who is in her early 30s and has been married twice, describes courtships and marriage in the 1980s and 1990s:

There are no parties. We just live together. It takes a long time — sometimes three weeks. Then the people will know about you. Only you two will know and you'll stay together for a long time and one day they will see you in one bed and know you are staying together. At that time only, they will know about you. You'll do things which are a bit strange and the people will say "this girl and this boy, what are they doing? They're doing strange things." And from there they will watch you and one day they will catch you.

Both young men and young women take great pains to remain undiscovered for as long as possible and any discussion of marriage takes place only between the man and the woman involved.

Today, as in the past, men are the ones who initiate a marriage. I heard of no cases in which women ‘courted’ men or proposed marriage. Women are not completely passive in the process — they turn their charms on young men they fancy, and this usually works. However, unlike in the past, when a young man initiates a marriage other family and community members are kept out of the negotiations, as Beh explained:

It’s the man who falls in love and asks the woman to marry him. And if he asks you, you will maybe be a little afraid and say, “Leave me alone. What are you talking about with me?” and every time you will chase him away. But while you are chasing, you are thinking of starting to love him also. And later, when he comes again, you will say [to yourself], “This man has been bothering me for a long time now. Today I must say yes to him.”

All of my younger informants described keeping their prospective husbands hanging in doubt before they agreed to marriage or even a tryst, which was an effective strategy in compelling young men to prove their worth to the women themselves. When young men tried to woo young women, they did not usually bring gifts to a woman’s parents, but surreptitiously slipped gifts to the woman herself (e.g. head-scarves, jewelry, or small items of ‘tasty’ food).

The present preference for ‘marrying on the sly’ may be a reflection of the political economic trends during the years leading up to, and immediately following, independence. Beginning in the mid-1970s, as pressure from the international community and the SWAPO liberation movement mounted, the political climate became increasingly unstable.²¹ Many

²¹ In the 1970s, the South African Administration was facing pressure from all sides to withdraw from Namibia. In 1971 the International Court of Justice gave an Advisory Opinion (continued...)

farmers responded to changes in the political structure by leaving the country altogether or by laying off workers to brace themselves for inevitable labour reforms. After independence, farmers continued to downsize their labour complement, as a result of both a change in government and a very severe drought. The liberalization of trade markets also undermined many farming operations (which had previously enjoyed large state-subsidies), and farm work became an increasingly unstable and scarce source of employment.

In the context of these political economic trends, fewer men are able to undertake extended periods of pre-marital support of their parents-in-law and fewer of them are willing, or even able, to 'do kamasi until they die' (see also Niehaus 1988). Secretive marriages limit the scope of parents-in-law's claims to support: first, such marriage patterns effectively eliminate the parents-in-law's prerogative of withholding approval of the marriage because of

²¹(...continued)

stating that South Africa's occupation of South West Africa was illegal. In 1971-72, 2,000 contract workers held a country-wide strike. In 1973 the United Nations General Assembly recognized SWAPO as the 'sole and authentic' representative of the people of Namibia (Resolution 342). In 1975, after Caetano's regime in Portugal was overthrown (in April, 1974), Mozambique and Angola gained their independence, precipitating what South Africa saw as a 'total onslaught' of communism in southern Africa. Meanwhile, in September 1975, South Africa attempted to implement its own plan for Namibia's nominal independence by establishing the Turnhalle Constitutional Conference which proposed establishing an interim government to facilitate the transition to independence. In January, 1976, the United Nations Resolution 385 demanded 'free and fair' elections be held by August of that year. The delegates of the Turnhalle Conference formed a party (DTA) and 'won' the election in 1978 (which was fraught with 'irregularities' and was not recognized by the international community). In 1983 a constitutional crisis dissolved the DTA-interim government and legislative and executive powers were handed over to the Administrator-General. In 1985, South Africa handed power to a new interim government, comprised of a different collection of 'ethnic' parties under the banner of the 'Multi-Party Conference'. During this period of political pressure and procrastination, South Africa was also facing escalating conflicts in the frontline states, particularly with SWAPO's military wing (the People's Liberation Army of Namibia) and wide-spread riots within South Africa, especially in the aftermath of the Soweto uprising of June 1976 (see Katajivi 1988; Fraenkel and Murray 1985).

inadequate support; and second, since negotiations did not involve gift-exchange and agreements between two kin groups, the social pressure on a son-in-law to support his parents-in-law after a marriage takes place is significantly reduced. Secretive marriages do not *entirely* eliminate obligations of support after the marriage — I saw many young men bringing gifts, such as money and clothing, to their parents-in-law — but the strength of the parents-in-law's claims are weaker than they were in the past, and the support that is given is largely at the son-in-law's discretion.

Furthermore, although marriage does provide material advantages (e.g. the support or economic assistance of a husband and access to residency and employment) a young woman may be reluctant to tie her future to a young man whose employment opportunities are uncertain. By conducting marriages secretly, a young woman is able to avoid pressure from her own and her lover's family to marry and stay in the marriage. Although divorce was generally an easy option to exercise in the past, the matter was still open to community discussion and a couple was encouraged to try to 'work things out'. In order to survive in the present economic climate, a Ju/'hoan woman must have the option of independently dissolving a marriage that will 'bring her down' and force her to live in conditions of extreme poverty that come with unemployment. Unlike marriages in the past, where a newly married Ju/'hoan woman enjoyed at least a brief period of uxorilocality and the closer contact with her natal family that came with her husband's brideservice obligations, marriages in the Omaheke today are followed by immediate virilocality or neolocality. This residence pattern, coupled with extreme economic insecurity, means that, should a husband be forced to move further afield to look for work, a woman may find herself detached from her own kin group. This is a situation most Ju/'hoan women struggle to avoid because it increases their

dependence on their husband and subjects them to their husbands' authority (see also Caplan and Bujra 1978; Rosaldo 1974). On the other hand, some young women I spoke to suggested that present marriage techniques afford them greater freedom and independence from their own families. They described 'old time' marriages in terms of parents 'forcing' women to marry men of their parents' choosing.

ii) Relations Between Women and Men

Secretive, 'informal' marriages,²² though often less secure than arranged marriages, can still be fairly long-lasting and, provided the husband is lucky enough to have a steady job, may still entail the same obligations of support and reciprocity as 'old time' marriages. Among younger Ju/'hoansi, there are varying degrees of 'informal' marriages. At one end of the continuum we find marriages which are only informally *arranged*, but are conducted as relationships along the lines of 'old time' marriages; at the other end of the continuum, we find marriages which are both informally *arranged* and informally *conducted*, and look less like 'marriages' per se, than serial monogamy.

The recent trend toward large-scale lay-offs and increased pressure to 'rationalize' production on the farms has led to an increase in socio-economic differentiation within the Ju/'hoan underclass itself. A smaller proportion of young Ju/'hoan men are able to find

²² 'Informal' here means relative to prior, more socially regulated and conspicuously recognized forms of marriage, common among older Ju/'hoansi, and not 'informal' relative to more institutionalized marriages, such as church-sanctioned unions. Despite the influence of Afrikaners' and missionaries, very few Ju/'hoansi place much importance on the church as an agent for formalizing conjugal unions. Many expressed no interest in church marriages. The more Christianized Ju/'hoansi, who did feel that church marriages were more 'proper', did not insist on them, since, as N!ae pointed out, few could afford them.

secure, long term employment and, therefore, a larger proportion are chronically un- or underemployed. Marriages which occur on farms where a young man has a relatively secure job, although still arranged secretly, tend to be more solid. Women living in pockets of more extreme marginality and poverty off the farms tend to opt for unions which are completely informal; that is, they choose either not to live with their husbands, or they practice serial monogamy, or they choose not to marry at all (see also van der Vliet 1981; Ramphele and Boonzaier 1988; Abbott 1975; Allison 1985; Obbo 1980). In the resettlement camps, many Ju/'hoan women live either alone or with their in-laws while their husbands look for work 'on the road' or perform odd jobs for low pay in Gobabis. Many of these women told me they preferred 'staying alone' to following their husbands and 'living on the road' or in the dangerous squatters' village of Epako. In the Epako squatters' village many women opted for serial monogamy or have abandoned the idea of attaching themselves to men through any kind of union. These women have the option of supporting themselves and their children through work as domestic servants in the 'black' township of Epako or in the 'Coloured' township of Nossobville.

Marriages between Ovambo or Herero men and Ju/'hoan women are fairly common, especially among younger Ju/'hoan women. However, many women told me that these are risky marriages since such unions are usually very informal and leave young Ju/'hoan women vulnerable to abuse and abandonment because non-Ju/'hoan men do often not feel beholden to their Ju/'hoan in-laws. N/haokxa, a woman her 60s, explained:

If she [a Ju/'hoan woman] wants to go forward, then she marries a man from another nation. When she wants to leave this one behind, the one who is a Ju/'hoan, because his arm is short, because this one is poor and she's always sleeping in the dirt on the ground. It's why she'll go to marry another one.

However, Ju/'hoan women who chose to marry a more affluent Herero or Ovambo man often must trade an improvement in living conditions for less security in their relationships with their husbands and kin, as N/haokxa states:

If the wife is good, then they will stay nicely together...[But], sometimes if she did something wrong to that Ovambo man, he can kill her — take a dropper and hit her or beat her until she is dead...An Ovambo has a very far heart and not a long time ago one killed one of my relatives. If an Ovambo man marries a Ju/'hoan woman, they will stay together and if they have a baby, always, this time while they are together, this Ovambo man will save a lot of money, and one day he will just leave this woman and child behind and go back to Ovamboland to join his other family there.

N/haokxa's comments are typical of many Ju/'hoan women's opinions about marrying either Ovambo or Herero men; that is, such marriages may be materially advantageous, but non-Ju/'hoan men are considered to be more violent and more prone to abandoning their Ju/'hoan wives and children than Ju/'hoan men.²³ Also, marrying Herero or Ovambo men often means less contact with a woman's natal kin, which leaves a woman highly dependent on a husband who is likely to leave her after a short time.

Informal marriages are not unique to Ju/'hoan women in Namibia. According to a recent report, urban domestic servants are less likely to be married than the rest of the population, but are more likely to be involved in informal relationships. This is thought to be due to "a desire for greater freedom afforded by an informal union" (SSD/LAC 1996b:xv). The desire for greater freedom may be a motivating factor behind many Ju/'hoan women's preferences for informal unions, since freedom from marital constraints may enable them to

²³ Ovambo men tend to have a worse reputation than Herero men, possibly because Ovambo men have been known to take Ju/'hoan wives and then 'disappear' back to Ovamboland. Herero men, on the other hand, have been known to stay with Ju/'hoan women they have married, often living in the communal areas of the Omaheke (although such long-term marriages are said to be rare).

cope with the material constraints of poverty more effectively. However, such a strategy is more effective in urban contexts. The Omaheke is predominantly rural, and this, together with the fact that farming is a male-dominated activity, means that women who chose informal relationships or who do not to marry at all, must either live with their families, or reside in resettlement camps or in the Epako township, where they are typically much worse off. Ironically, Ju/'hoan women's attempts to take marriage decisions out of their parents' hands and opt for 'informal' relationships may in the long term undermine their independence because 'informal' unions leave women's access to a livelihood insecure. Since residency and income-earning opportunities on a farm are tied to the employment of a husband, if an informal union dissolves, as many do, a woman may find herself alone and forced to move back with her parents.

iii) 'Divorce' and Economic Vulnerability

Although marriage strategies are by necessity influenced by economic considerations, this is not to say that Ju/'hoan women are coldly utilitarian in their choice of partners. I met quite a few women who stayed with chronically unemployed husbands. Decisions to stay with or to leave a particular partner are motivated by a number of factors, which include, not only a man's competence as a provider, but also his personal characteristics. Ju/'hoan women told me that 'good' husbands 'support us well', 'treat their wives nicely' and 'look after their children'. When I asked why a woman would leave her husband, N!ae's answer was fairly typical: "If he's not working and doesn't want to work and if he doesn't like you anymore, then you will leave him and look for another husband." Her sister added: "If he beats you and doesn't support you."

Personal experiences of mistreatment also influence decisions not to remarry. Koba, who is in her early 30s, is an example of a young woman who opted for informal unions. She described her experience with marriage in the following way:

We were married only two years. He was a soldier and he was maybe thinking that because he was a soldier he could have everything and that's why he had /hosa ≠hi [many faces, i.e. was unfaithful] and he went from woman to woman. At that time I was a young girl and a little bit stupid and then I got smarter and smarter and I saw him like this...I was working here and he just came and stole me out and then handled me very badly. He hit me and then I came back and started working here again [on the farm with her parents].

Her second marriage was an even more 'informal' arrangement, where her husband worked in Gobabis and came to the farm on weekends. The problems with her second husband were the same as those of her first:

He loved every woman and that's why we divorced — so that I could stay here alone and he also stay alone. When he came to visit me, he met other girls and that's why I divorced him. Because when he came from Gobabis he slept with other women. Then he beat me.

When I asked Koba if she planned to marry again, she said: "Me? No. I don't know. I want to stay alone. It's better for me to stay alone." Koba now lives on a farm with her parents who help her raise her 13 year old daughter.

Many informants claimed that there is more 'wife battering' now than in the past. I asked one woman, with whom I had developed a more intimate rapport, why a husband would beat his wife, and she told me:

If they don't understand each other. If her husband is not good and she is talking to him about it, then they will just fight. He is stronger and he will beat her...If she does something wrong...like if her husband told her to do something for him and she said 'no', or maybe she did not prepare food for him... he will beat her.

Although excessive beatings were cited as a reason why women would leave a husband, the most common reason given for dissolving a union was /hosa ≠hi — that is, infidelity. Very

few women would tolerate adulterous behaviour or consider having a co-wife.²⁴ Although sexual jealousy was an issue, most women were also intolerant of such behaviour on the grounds that “a man can’t support two wives.”

When unions do dissolve, the custody of children is generally worked out amicably. Children are an important part of Ju’hoan life. Even though they do not represent an ‘asset’ as a labour resource, nor are they conduits for the transmission of family resources through inheritance, they are very highly valued in and of themselves. They are assets in two important ways: one is to the community, the other is to their parents. Children are integral to forming social links among the Ju’hoansi all over the Omaheke. It is very common for children to be sent on extended visits to kin living elsewhere. Such fostering practices help to cement kin bonds across vast distances. Child fostering may also have the result of instilling a sense of independence at an early age; children who have spent extended periods away from their parents may grow up to be more at ease moving within the broader Ju’hoan community. Children are assets to their parents as future providers and as a means of conferring social adulthood. Women with children tend to have more leverage in their dealings with their husbands and more social status as decision-makers in their communities. The social adulthood of fathers involves fairly strong obligations of support - of both their children and the mothers of their children. Children are not considered a ‘burden’ and both women and men are usually happy to care for the children as long as their economic circumstances permit it. Bau explained how custody arrangements are sorted out when wives and husbands separate:

²⁴ Older informants were not as militantly against polygyny or polyandry, however I met no Ju’hoansi who were or had ever been involved in such ‘multiple marriages’.

If they divorce, then the man will sometimes keep the children or the woman will sometimes keep the children. Or, the woman will take some and the man will take some. If the woman doesn't have a place to stay, then she will leave the children with her husband.

However, during this conversation, her sister also pointed out that not all men are so reliable:

One husband will support the children nicely, but another one will not support her children. One will support the children even if he doesn't support the woman. Another will just leave her with the children with no support — just throw them away.

Young women who have had children from informal unions and who are living off the farms are more vulnerable to isolation and abandonment than women on the farms. During a discussion with two young women who were living alone with their children in Epako, I was told:

It's very difficult for us women. If you are smart, then you'll make a plan and somebody will help you and your children. But if you don't look for help, you'll just stay like this [gesturing toward her shack] and it will be very difficult for you. Sometimes a man will just give you children and divorce you. Then you are alone. Alone with your children.

Her friend added:

Women have big problems because sometimes when she is pregnant, then her husband will leave her and then say that the child is not his. But the wife will know that it is his child.

The Ju'hoansi generally place a great deal of importance on paternal responsibilities. When a couple has children together, the woman has a strong and widely recognized claim to her husband's support. On one resettlement camp I met two young sisters-in-law, //Aha and Di!ae. Their husbands, who were brothers, were living in Epako doing odd jobs. //Aha and Di!ae were living with their parents-in-law rather than with their husbands in the squatters' village (where they had no family). Both //Aha and Di!ae took my questions as an opportunity to vent their frustrations about their husband's lack of support. Di!ae told me:

If they find a job, then we will go live with them. But they don't work and my husband doesn't support me. We are still together, but we don't have a place to stay [in Epako] and I want them to look for a job. They are only lying on our necks!²⁵

//Aha told me:

My husband is working, but when he gets paid, he stays in Gobabis and I don't see him. After his pay is finished, then he comes here.

Di!ae and //Aha described their husbands as 'lying on their necks' because their husbands return to the resettlement camp about once a month to receive a share of the household's drought relief food, but generally fail to remit a share of whatever income they earned during their absence. Di!ae also pointed out that their husbands were failing to provide money "so that we can feed our children", and she adds, "[the children] must take many things to school. We must buy pens, school dresses and shoes so that the child dresses nicely to go to school." When I asked them if they were able to recruit their parents-in-law's assistance in their claims for child support, //Aha said:

Sometimes [my father-in-law] will talk to his son. If he has respect for his parents, then he would do that [provide support]. But if he doesn't have respect, he will just say 'no'. Then the other people will say "you must make a plan to give this man his children, because it's because of him that you have children now."

//Aha's response indicates that women's claims to support based on paternal responsibilities are backed by the general community. However, her response also indicates that a woman's parents-in-law are not always effective allies in this cause. I did get the impression that parental authority was weaker off the farms; however, in situations of extreme poverty, it is very difficult for young men to meet the demands of their elders.

Di!ae and //Aha also discussed the possibility of going through legal channels to

²⁵ This is a common phrase used by Ju/'hoansi who are supporting unemployed friends and family once these dependents become too burdensome (sua me !ai !nu).

receive child-support (a strategy they had heard that other, non-Ju/'hoan, women were using).

//Aha told me:

If you, the wife, are working and your husband doesn't work, you can make a charge and every month he must pay you some money. We also want to make a charge, but we are sorry for our husbands...[No] we are not sorry for them, but our family who must stand by us is not here. It's because of our children. Because it's a difficult problem for us and it's only because of us that our children go to school.

I met no Ju/'hoan woman who sued their husbands for child support. //Aha's comment

actually reveals a much more common strategy women employ to cope with marital struggles or a lack of support — they rely on their families.

iv) Families, Husbands and Dependencies

Almost all of my female informants insisted that wives are, and should be 'under' their husbands (see also chapter four). From my own observations, I noticed that the relationships between husbands and wives will be more or less equal depending on economic circumstances, the age of the marriage partners and the kinship context within which marriages are conducted. Where couples live in extended kin groups, especially in cases where a wife's family is close by, relations between husbands and wives are slightly more balanced. When a woman marries and moves onto a different farm with her husband, she is said to be living 'under' her husband. However, when the couple stays with a wife's natal kin, her husband is said to be living 'under' his wife's family. Where a husband's authority in a marriage is rooted in his access to income and residency on a farm, a wife's authority is rooted in her family's superordinate position over her husband.

Among older Ju/'hoansi, women tend to be more outspoken and assertive. Although Ju/'hoan women's influence seems to increase as they get older, it may also be true that

because most of my older informants had been married to each other since they were fairly young, the relationship developed out of long-term respect and affection. Also, older Ju/'hoan men tended to be much less aggressive toward their wives. It is difficult to determine whether the difference in gender relations between the generations is owed to differences in time of life or to the different ways each generation was socialized into gender roles. However, the Ju/'hoansi, both young and old, do not hold the opinion that women are *innately* inferior to men. When I asked my Ju/'hoan informants whether they believed women were less or more intelligent than men, Di//xao's response was fairly typical for both men and women:

One woman will maybe be smarter than her husband. Or maybe be equal. But another woman maybe will be less smart. And both of them will be doing things together and it will be right.

The main difference I found between the generations was that younger Ju/'hoansi tended to emphasize a wife's obedience to her husband, while older Ju/'hoansi tended to emphasize co-operation. When I asked N#isa, who is in her 60s, if she thought wives were treated well by their husbands she told me:

I don't know. But the ones I saw are treated well by their husbands and some of them are not. In other parts I saw that men and women are working together, giving each other ideas, to tell each other what to do. One time he will tell her what to do, and she will tell him what to do.

Besides generational differences, there are also economic distinctions that influence gender attitudes and relationships. Generally, Ju/'hoan women and men have different spheres of decision-making power: women tend to have more say in how money is spent (since they are the 'boss of the house'); men tend to have more say in decisions about where and when to move when they are looking for work (since they are the primary wage-earners).

On the farms, women play a larger role in decision-making, since as long as employment is stable, there are no discussions about moving. Off the farms, when a couple is living 'on the road', decisions about expenditures are largely irrelevant (since income is scarce or non-existent). Instead, a man's role as the decision-maker takes precedence and a woman is expected to follow her husband wherever he takes her. Although gender relations on the farms are still unequal, a woman's authority in running her household affords her more influence over her husband than if they are homeless. Also, on the farms, the work that women do as domestic servants and in their own houses is generally recognized as valuable by their husbands. The only site in the Omaheke where gender inequalities are almost non-existent, in terms of decision-making power, was in the squatters' village in the township of Epako. This is largely the result of Ju/'hoan women's greater independence in finding employment (this is discussed in more detail in the following chapter).

Since so many Ju/'hoansi insisted that a woman must be 'under' her husband, I tried to push for justifications that went beyond appeals to 'tradition' (see chapter four). Di//xao's explanation was illuminating:

A woman must be under her husband because her husband is her strength. An unmarried woman is powerless, without strength because she doesn't have a husband and she will rely on her family.

In the Omaheke, where women are dependent on male kin and particularly their husbands for access to a livelihood, this statement is quite true. My own interpretation of Di//xao's explanation is that husbands are a source of strength because only they can secure residency and employment on a farm, and because they are a source of independence from natal kin. However, this statement should be put in context: husbands are a source of strength and power *in relation* to a woman's own family and the broader political economy. During many

conversations with Ju/'hoan women about their relationships with men, I was consistently told that in struggles with husbands, a woman's family must 'stand by her'. Thus, a woman's family, especially parents and brothers, are a source of strength and support *in relation* to husbands. Di!ae, the young woman I met in the resettlement camp, expressed sentiments common among young Ju/'hoan women who were disenchanted with the marital state:

If she doesn't have a husband, then it is good. If she doesn't have a husband but she is working for herself, then it is good. Then she will support her children...She will not stay alone, but with her family — her family or maybe her brother.

For many Ju/'hoan women, husbands are at once a source of strength and vulnerability, and families are both a source of support and subordination (since parents and brothers are authority figures). However, the ultimate source of their dependency is the farming economy itself, where it is difficult (almost impossible) for women to live independent of both husbands and families. For Ju/'hoan women, farm labour is both a source of 'life' (i.e. money, food, shelter, see chapter three) and a source of gender inequality. During one group discussion with Ju/'hoansi ranging in age from 30 to 60, I asked whether or not women and men were more equal in the past. Most agreed that women and men were less equal now.²⁶

When I asked why this was so, one older woman offered this theory:

The reason why some Ju/'hoan people are not equal or husband and wife are not equal anymore is maybe because of the farmers. Because during the day he [a husband] works for the farmer and [the farmer] is actually the one who always orders him in his work and when he finishes that, he will come home in the evening and say, "I am tired now. You were just at home the whole day, now you must do this for me and do this for me." And it's how there is no more equality between them.

All my informants, young and old, believed that marriages are more fragile now than

²⁶ Not all of my informants felt that gender inequality was a recent phenomenon. My younger informants generally believed that women had always been subordinate to men, since the 'old times'.

they were in the past.²⁷ This trend is especially disturbing to older Ju/'hoansi, as N/haokxa complained:

Now, at this time, the young girls and young boys will just meet each other in a disco place and just stay together and get pregnant. In the old times, men must work. His parents must go to my parents to ask permission to have me as his wife. And then he must buy everything for your parents and if your parents are happy with him, they will give him permission to marry.

Older Ju/'hoansi are mildly upset that they do not receive the same level of support that parents-in-law in the past received, although they do appreciate the pressure brideservice places on young men and the difficulties young men have with finding jobs. Oba, who jokingly complained that in his day "you kamasi until you die!", insisted, now speaking as a father-in-law, that "the marriage of the kamasi is better. This thing to just move in, to take a wife for yourself and not help her parents is not good." A few younger Ju/'hoan women who had experienced abandonment or mistreatment by their husbands, also noted the merits of 'old time' marriages. N!ae told me:

In those days, the husband and wife will get together and stay together and die together. But now, the young men don't want to work. They marry you and divorce you.

//Aha also suggested that 'old time' marriages were better for women:

When you just meet each other for the first time and you don't have a baby, that's when you should stay with your parents. After you have a child, then you should go to stay with him [move away with your husband]. Because sometimes the man will just let you be pregnant and leave you and that's why your parents say first you must stay with them, to see how you are doing.

Ju/'hoan women cope with dependency and marginalization by negotiating the

²⁷ This seems like an accurate assessment. Not including widows and widowers, most informants over 50 were married only once or twice. Many informants in their 20s to 40s have been married more than twice. Of course the trend toward serial monogamy may give the impression that incidents of 'divorce' are higher now than in the past.

balance of power between their husbands and their families. They try to attach themselves to reliable, steadily employed husbands, but they also make efforts to maintain close contact with their own kin. The authority exercised by a woman's parents over her husband may explain why women express a preference for staying close to their families after they marry.²⁸ Ju/'hoan women have a large stake in maintaining kin networks, both to maintain a balance of power in their relations with their husbands, and also for the purposes of accessing support and assistance in times of economic stress, abuse or abandonment.

Conclusion

The gradual changes in Ju/'hoan marriage practices, and the correlation between those changes and the development of the commercial farming economy, suggest that the increasingly informal character of marriage arrangements among the Ju/'hoansi is a result of constraints imposed by work on the farms. These changes in marriage practices, especially the reduced role of parents in the selection of appropriate spouses and the disappearance of kamasi exchanges among parents-in-law, might suggest a weakening of other bonds among affinal kin. But, surprisingly, although kin now play a smaller role (and often no role) in arranging marriages, this has had very little effect on the wider obligations that come with family membership.

With kinship, the extent of which is stretched by Ju/'hoan naming practices far beyond what marriage creates, comes expectations of support and assistance. If the means are

²⁸ Only two women I spoke with told me that they married in order to get away from their natal kin. In both cases they gave alcohol abuse and alcohol-related conflict as their reason.

available, expectations of support are satisfied wherever kin are found or made. For members of a landless underclass, many of whom experience long periods of unemployment and, thus, homelessness and dependency on others, kin become a valuable resource. But, as we will see in the next chapter, kin are more than a just means of subsistence and survival.

CHAPTER SIX

'GOING FORWARD': 'WERKSOEK', VISITING AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE

Introduction

The fact that *baasskap* entails almost complete freedom from state interference for the farmers means that labour relations and working and living conditions on the farms depend largely on the personality of the farmer himself. Thus, the Ju/'hoansi who live on the farms should not be seen as living in uniform contexts. Rather, farm Ju/'hoansi occupy points along a continuum of living and working conditions from very exploitative to relatively fair and well-paid. The Ju/'hoansi also exhibit a range of employment and residence patterns: some families stay with one farmer their whole lives and, in some cases, for several generations; other families have lived on so many farms they have lost count. Ju/'hoan employment and residence patterns do not always correlate neatly with farm conditions; that is, the Ju/'hoansi do not always stay on the farms with better working and living conditions, nor do they always leave farms where the conditions are extremely poor and exploitative. Decisions to leave a particular farm are due almost as much to difficulties with other workers as they are to difficulties with farmers. Also, decisions to stay on a particular farm may be owed more to deep roots and familial bonds than to the living and working conditions themselves.

In this chapter I will examine the linkages between the farms and other sites in the Omaheke. In examining these topics, we see Ju/'hoan kinship at work ensuring that, although the Ju/'hoansi are landless, in one important sense they are seldom homeless. Part One examines the fluid boundaries of Ju/'hoan households which, despite receiving their broad shape from their distinctive micro-political and micro-economic contexts, nonetheless owe

their specific composition at any time to their role in providing a kin-based network for re-distributing people according to resources and needs. I provide sketches of household composition in three different sites, and discuss important contrasts between rural and urban sites, all with an eye to the impact of visiting on household composition and fluidity. Since my focus throughout has been life on the farms, little has been said about the urban squatters' village (plakkersdorp) outside Epako where a small Ju/'hoan community lives. The case study of a plakkersdorp household will require some additional stage-setting. I provide this context with a brief economic profile of the plakkersdorp. Then, in Part Two, I turn to a consideration of the motives behind visiting and the forms that visiting takes.

Part One: Within and Between Households

i) Household Fluidity and Mutual Support Networks

In the anthropological literature households are often defined, explicitly or implicitly, as sites of pooling and support, where people 'eat from the same pot', 'sleep under the same roof' and share a common budget (see, for example, White 1993; James 1985; Whitehead 1981; Murray 1981). My own definition of Ju/'hoan households also emphasizes pooling and sharing, and is based on the Ju/'hoansi's own principle of 'sharing a fire', which unites a group of people, typically family members, who eat together, share household tasks on an daily basis, and who share resources and supplies (e.g. money, food, dishes, clothing, etc.). The people share a fire in this way may not share a residential site (e.g. a house or a shack). The strictest definition of a Ju/'hoan household refers to those who share the *same* fire.

In other cases, pooling and co-operation may occur among people who eat at different fires. In the first, stricter sense of sharing a fire, a number of people living in different houses

eat together, pool resources and centre domestic and social activities around a common fire. In the second sense of sharing a fire, each house in the household may have its own fire (or at least, there may be more than one fire), but food, money and assistance nonetheless move freely between the fires. This arrangement is usually motivated by practical considerations, such as when the residents of the various houses are too numerous for cooking and other domestic tasks to be accommodated at one fire. In such multi-fire arrangements, the boundary between household members and non-members is defined by who may avail themselves of the household's resources without asking. One way to recognize such households is that, despite separate cook-fires, they will draw their firewood from a common wood pile. Also, members of multi-fire households may eat at any of the separate fires without behaving like a guest; that is, without following the convention of sitting on the periphery of a group until invited to join in the meal. People who belong to the same household, whether in a single or multi-fire arrangement, share both uncooked and cooked food freely; members of other households may be offered plates of cooked food at mealtime, but must ask for raw food. Outsiders who ask for uncooked food are begging or borrowing, and may be presumed to have their own fire or household at which the uncooked food will be prepared and distributed. When enough food is available, cooked food may be passed on plates to visitors who are not part of the household or to neighboring households. In this way, the distribution of cooked food to neighbors or visitors is determined by the household members who fill the plates.

Although households are commonly identified as sites of pooling and co-operation, feminist critics have pointed out that households are not 'natural units' corresponding with 'the family' and 'the domestic sphere'; that is, it should not be assumed that intra-household

relations are governed by family-based principles of altruism, as opposed to 'public' exchange relations. Rather, household composition, intra-household relations and family arrangements are shaped by the political economic context in which they are embedded, and household and family forms vary dramatically according to historical and cultural context (Harris 1981; Bozzoli 1983; Goody 1972; Anderson 1980). Such critiques call for a closer examination of at least three issues: 1) intra-household gender relations; 2) inter-household linkages; 3) the dynamics influencing household composition.

Examining intra-household relations requires that consideration be given to who consumes more, who controls household resources, and who does the most work around the house (see White 1993; Whitehead 1981; Sen 1990; Harris 1981). Even though 'pooling' and co-operation take place within households, it must not be assumed that the redistribution of resources is even, nor that the distribution of labour is equitable. Bozzoli notes that the 'domestic system' is often a site where struggles take place over the control and distribution of resources (e.g. land, income and property) and that "household members depend upon wider societal legitimating political and economic forces to support them as protagonists in this struggle" (1983:147). Such 'external' forces also often include certain versions of 'tradition' (White 1993; Sharp and Spiegel 1990; van der Vliet 1991; Niehaus 1988). As we have seen from the previous chapters, gender asymmetries within Ju/'hoan households on the farms are encouraged by the gendered nature of the farming economy and the farmers' domestic ideologies. In many cases, female subordination is rationalized by the Ju/'hoansi themselves, particularly younger Ju/'hoansi, on the basis of 'tradition'. On the farms, men are empowered to control women's labour, both within their own households, and within the farmer's household, since farmers negotiate with Ju/'hoan men when they recruit Ju/'hoan

women for domestic service (see chapter three and chapter four). Also, even though women control wages for the purpose of household maintenance, men often have the final say in how money will be spent for personal consumption (e.g. the purchase of livestock, donkey carts, radios, shoes, alcohol, etc). Finally, as I mentioned before, men control women's access to residency and employment opportunities on the farms, primarily because farmers treat Ju/'hoan men as household heads and institutionalize female subordination through their labour management practices.

Examining the influence of relations and structures beyond the household leads us to the issue of inter-household linkages. Harris points out that there is often a great deal of women-centred co-operation and mutual assistance between households (1981:63). Carol Stack (1974) notes that urban African Americans cope with poverty by forming 'domestic networks', which are kin-based household linkages created by mutual support and domestic co-operation among adult kinswomen. Stack describes 'domestic networks' this way:

The material and cultural support needed to absorb, sustain and socialize community members in the Flats is provided by networks of cooperating kinsmen. Local coalitions formed from these networks of kin and friends are mobilized within domestic networks; domestic organization is diffused over many kin-based households, which themselves have elastic boundaries (1974:93).

Domestic networks do not have a visible nucleus, nor definite boundaries; they are mobilized primarily around child-care and are activated and sustained by a cluster of related women (Stack 1974:90-93). This is also true of Ju/'hoan households in the Omaheke: similar forms of 'domestic networks' operate as a kin-based infrastructure sustaining and connecting a widely dispersed Ju/'hoan community, while at the same time providing a pocket of relative autonomy wherein the Ju/'hoansi relate to each other largely on their own terms - and where distinctions between 'public' life and 'domestic' life, which order the white economy, are

undermined. Ju/'hoan households in many sites co-operate with domestic chores and material assistance, often to the extent that the boundaries between the households become blurred; and, high rates of visiting and squatting connect households between various sites around the Omaheke. In this way, fluctuations in household composition reflect patterns of mutual assistance and strategies for coping with poverty.

Studies of household composition are usually approached from three perspectives: 1) by focusing on the effects of political economic forces on household membership (in southern African studies, this usually means focusing on the impact of migrant labour); 2) by examining how household composition reflects strategies for coping with political economic conditions; and 3) by tracing the process of 'developmental cycles'. The most comprehensive studies adopt a combination of all three (see Murray 1981; Spiegel 1982; Peters 1983). The notion of a 'developmental cycle' is useful for sensitizing the researcher to the possibility that statistical variations in household composition and household headship may reflect varying phases of expansion, fission and fusion associated with an individual's life-stages. However, there are a number of problems with applying such a model to Ju/'hoan households. First, it is difficult to identify when changes in household arrangements are owed to 'internal', developmental dynamics since 'external' dynamics are not fixed — especially for the Ju/'hoansi whose employment status is always precarious. Second, the changes in political economic conditions and marriage patterns over the last 70 years means that generational differences likely make the notion of a 'cycle' inapplicable. Also, as Spiegel points out, households in the periphery rarely exhibit 'typical' cyclical patterns (1982:30). Finally, the anthropological model of developmental cycles relies on a biological analogy that seems less useful than examining political economic context, and relies on a distinction between

politico-jural and domestic domains (see Fortes 1958), and both of these theoretical components commit us to the view of households as discrete and 'natural' units. My own approach to Ju/'hoan household dynamics emphasizes strategies for coping with poverty. However, because I was unable to get a depth-sample survey of household organization, the case studies here are unavoidable synchronic. It is possible that households at sites where conditions are relatively stable may exhibit 'developmental' patterns.

My research found that intra-household relations, inter-household linkages and household composition are inextricably connected. For example, the operation of inter-household linkages and household composition often depend as much on the context of a particular site as do intra-household relations; and, intra-household relations are influenced as much by inter-household linkages and household composition as they are by the political economic context of a given site.

By examining the composition of three households, from three quite different sites, we can see more clearly the complexity and variation that is present, and also bring into view the significance of household plasticity for visiting and mobility.

ii) Case One: Households on a 'Rationalized' Farm

On the farms, household arrangements vary within the constraints provided by the farmer's own domestic and labour management ideologies, the organization of production, the ethnic and kinship composition and the physical arrangement of housing. On more rationalized farms, each house tends to have its own fire, and houses tend to correspond with households; that is, only those people who live in the same house share the same fire and pool resources and help each other with tasks.

Figures 23 and 24 illustrate the spatial and social organization of the households in a workers' compound on a rationalized farm. On this farm, five out of the six fires are located in fenced areas, adjacent to the houses. There is very little interaction between the fires and almost no mutual assistance among the residents of the different houses.¹ In fact, child-care duties are assigned by the farmer's wife to //O!obe, a retired domestic servant from house #6. The farmer's wife deducts money from the wages of the women from the other houses to pay //O!obe for her child-minding services. During one visit to this farm, while interviewing /Xabe of house #1, //O!obe came by to enquire about the whereabouts of a stray toddler. /Xabe replied: "It's your job to look after the children."

¹ Spatial organization influences the physical location of fires, but it does not determine the sharing patterns among them. On sites where houses are detached and spread widely apart, the residents of different houses may not share a fire with other houses for practical reasons, however, assistance and resources still flow freely between the fires. On other farms where the houses are arranged in a similar fashion, fires are set up mid-way between the houses to allow residents to share a fire.

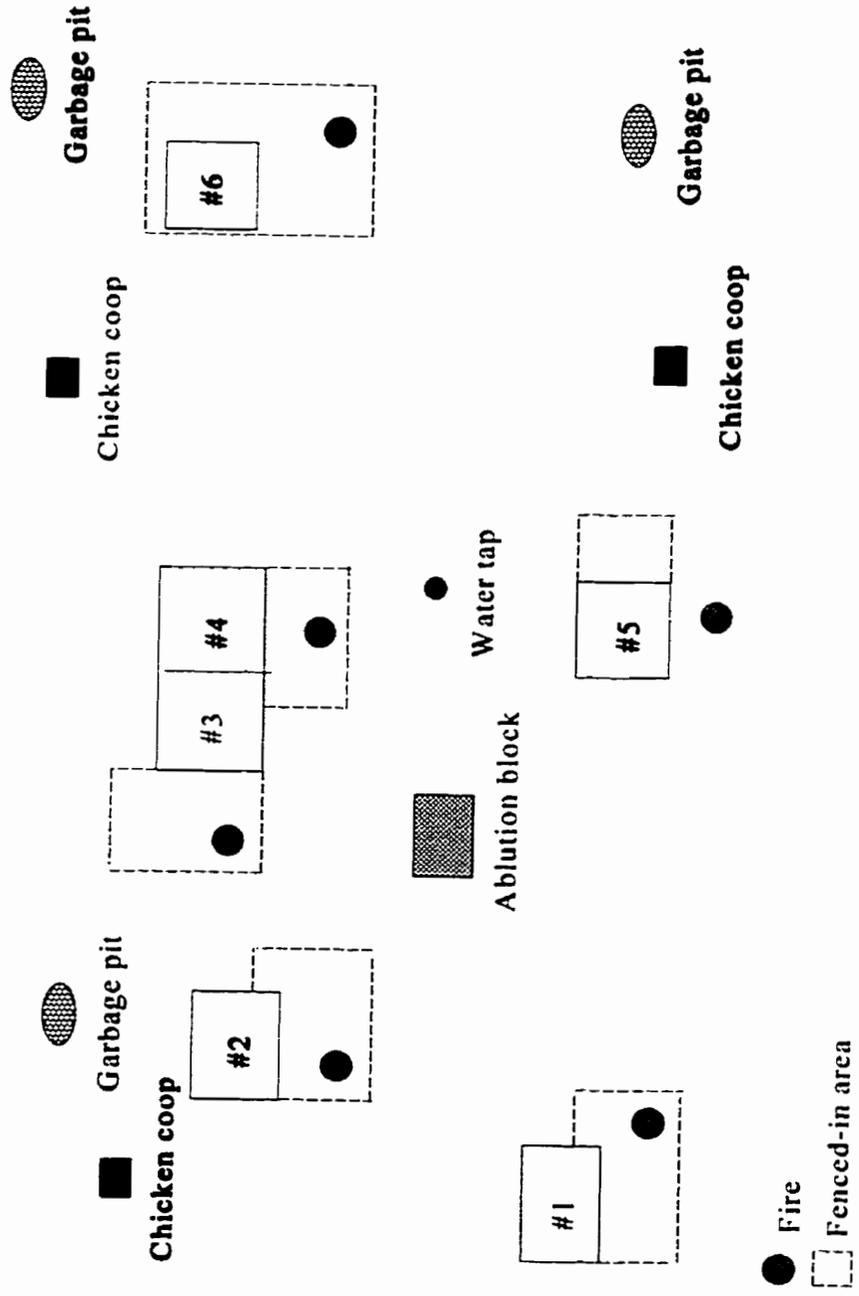


Figure 23. Spatial Arrangement, Farm Y

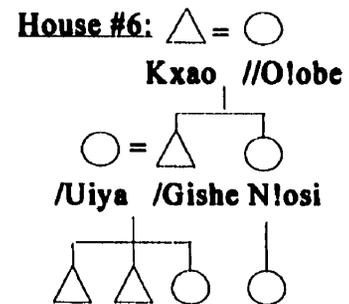
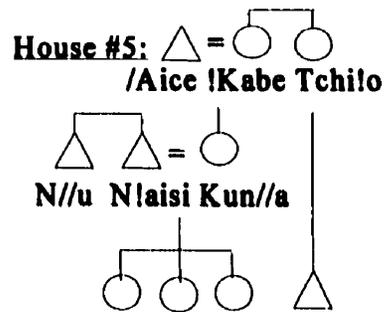
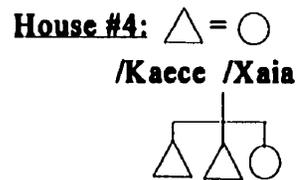
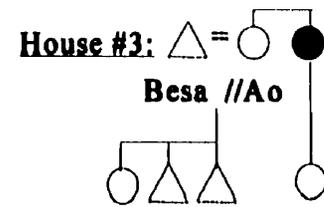
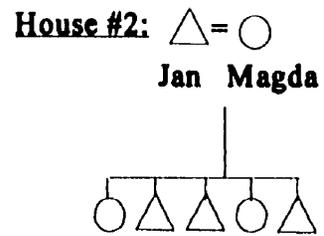
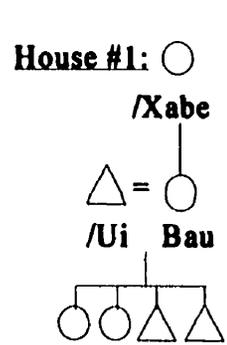


Figure 24. Kinship Composition, Farm Y

The only kinship link between the houses exists between house #6 and house #3: Besa (house #3) is the son of Kxao's (house #6) father's brother. The only inter-household co-operative activities I observed or heard about on this farm occurred between house #3 and house #6 (i.e. Besa occasionally assisted Kxao with pension and identification documents, and //Ao sometimes helps //O!obe with her laundry). Not only are the residents on this farm not genealogical kin, they are also divided along ethnic lines. Jan (house #2) is Herero and his wife Magda is Damara. The residents of house #5 are Nama-Ju/'hoan. On this farm, the households are more discrete, and the residents of the different households assume a more competitive stance toward each other; that is, they express more jealous concern over job-security and pay differences than I found on less 'rationalized' farms where only Ju/'hoansi were resident. There is also a more pronounced labour hierarchy, where pay and responsibilities are based on ethnicity and seniority. The men are treated very conspicuously as the breadwinners insofar as they are paid much higher wages and are given a basic ration package, while the women are paid supplementary wages and must rely on the rations of their menfolk. Because the men make more money, the rest of the food that must be purchased is bought with the men's wages, and conflicts sometimes occurred when the women tried to direct their husband's wages toward household maintenance rather than personal consumption for the men themselves (e.g. shopping and drinking expeditions to town).

Households on rationalized farms tend to be limited to nuclear families, or at least limited in the number of extended kin they contain, and composition tends to be more fixed. Farmers regulate visiting and police squatters more diligently. Late one Saturday afternoon, when I was speaking with the *baas* of the rationalized farm just described, four Ju/'hoan men, all nonresidents, approached with their hats in their hands to ask permission to visit on the

farm. One was a former employee, returning after an absence of several months, and now asking for his job back. One was travelling through, and asked permission to spend the night on the farm *en route* to his destination. The other two men were employed on nearby farms, and sought permission to visit with kin for the remainder of the weekend. All four were questioned carefully by the farmer - who were they related to on his farm? who would they stay with? - and then they were lined up and tested for sobriety, by demonstrating that they could touch their noses with their eyes closed and that they could stand on one foot.

Kinship structures on rationalized farms tend to be less elaborate and, in some cases, the ethnic composition is more heterogeneous. On these farms, the kin-based mutual support network — both among the households on the farm, and between these households and those at other sites — is more tenuous. Significantly, where there is little in the way of inter-household kin linkages, there is also no strong counter-hegemonic field of social relations to modify the influences of the political economic order legitimating male authority, especially the authority of husbands. Although Ju/'hoansi on rationalized farm tend to be better off materially, they are also more socially isolated than the Ju/'hoansi at other sites.

iii) Case Two: Households on an 'Old Fashioned Farm'

On less rationalized farms, usually those run by absentee farmers, or those run by older Afrikaners who see the Ju/'hoansi less as workers and more as 'Bushmen', household composition fluctuates more dramatically, and inter-household linkages are more elaborate. These farms tend to provide the poorest living and working conditions. The farmer is generally more tolerant of visitors and squatters can stay longer on these farms without being detected. These farmers are usually much less involved in the social life of the workers'

compound. It is also fairly common for more than one dwelling to share a single fire and thus form a single household. Houses cluster together to better share domestic tasks, food, firewood and other household resources. There is also a great deal of inter-household co-operation. The decisions as to which tasks — collecting firewood, gathering veldkos, cleaning or food preparation — are shared among which households are largely left up to the women who do the work. It is on these farms that the kin-based social safety net is most conspicuously in operation, and women's task and resource-sharing decisions determine the detailed 'weave' of that net.

Farm X from the previous chapter provides an example of how inter-household linkages, kin-based mutual assistance networks and visiting patterns on an 'old fashioned' farm influence intra-household relations, household composition and the Ju/'hoansi's ability to cope with economic stress. Figure 25 represents the full kinship composition of the farm and figure 26 represents the spatial lay-out and residency of the workers' compound.

The residents of house #1 (≠Oma, /Hoa and their two adolescent daughters) and house #2 (Tchi!o and /Gaese), share fire A. This means that they share rations, firewood, dishes, etc., and that the women share the work of cooking, raking, sweeping the stoep and general cleaning. The residents of these two houses do not share money. This is largely because relations between ≠Oma and /Hoa and Tchi!o and /Gaese are strained: ≠Oma and /Hoa tend to drink too much and ≠Oma is thought to be a *witvoet* (and therefore untrustworthy). Tchi!o only shares a fire with her parents-in-law because they are empowered to recruit her labour. However, Tchi!o's father, old Sisaba, has a strong claim over /Gaese's

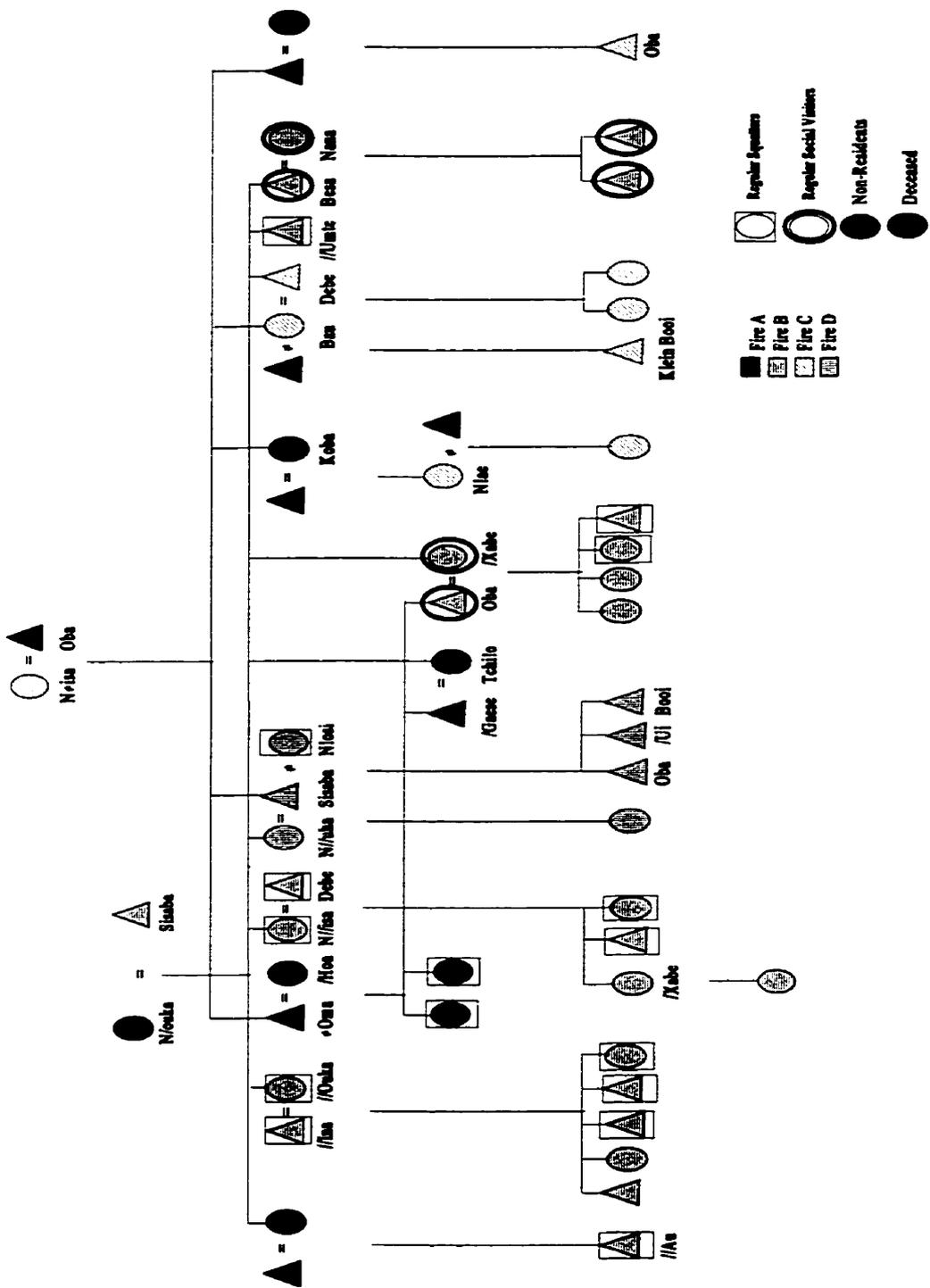
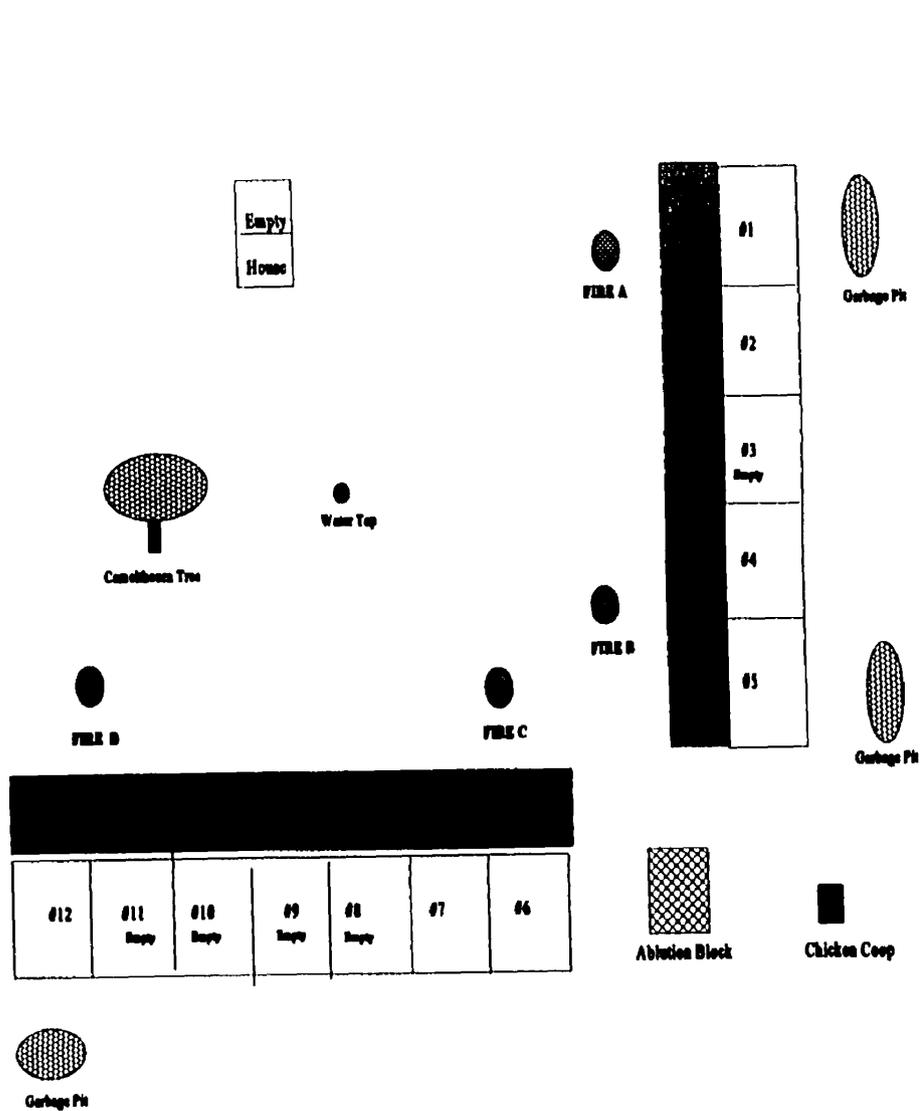


Figure 25. Household and Kinship Composition on Farm X



- Fire A:** House #1 *Oma /Hoa
House #2 Tchi'o /Gaese
- Fire B:** House #5 Old Sisaba 6 children //Ouka //Ina N*isa Debe
House #4 //Umte //Au //Umte !Uku
- Fire C:** House #6 Debe Bau Maria Berta
House #7 N*isa N!ac 1 Child
House #4 Klein Booi Oba
- Fire D:** House #12 Sisaba N//uha 1 Child N!osi
House #4 Oba /Ui Booi

Figure 26. Workers' Compound on Farm X

income. Thus, relations between Tchi!o and /Gaese are equalized somewhat by virtue of their being caught between the claims of their parents and parents-in-law — and each sometimes enlists his or her parent's authority over the other in struggles over work or the use of income. Although being caught between parents occasionally causes conflicts between Tchi!o and /Gaese, they do not usually erupt into a full-scale fight because their kin on the farm interfere before the conflict escalates (see also Draper 1975:109). Also, the power =Oma and /Hoa wield over Tchi!o is kept in check by her father's presence on the farm. Even though Tchi!o pools resources and does the bulk of her domestic work with, or for, her mother-in-law, she generally prefers to work (sew, gather firewood and veldkos and do laundry) with her sister, N//uha — and //Ouka and N//isa when they are visiting.

The residents of house #12 (N//uha, Sisaba and their infant daughter) and some of the residents of house #4 (Sisaba's three sons from his first marriage) share fire D. When Sisaba's first wife, N!osi, comes to visit her sons, she is associated with fire D and helps with the household chores (she sleeps in house #11). N!osi lives on Farm X part-time, and moves from a second farm, where she lives with her mother's sister, to a third farm, where she lives with her brother, to the Epako location, where she lives with her daughter, before she makes her way back to Farm X. When I asked why she moved around so much, N!osi explained:

I don't have a husband and if my family wanted me to go stay with them, then I must. If you don't have a place to stay, then you will go stay with your children. Now I am staying with my children. If they are old enough, then they will look after themselves. You will go around and come visit them again.

N//uha added, "She will come again to borrow things from them." N!osi described her experience of life 'on the road' in terms of her family 'calling for her'. Many Ju/'hoansi send messages requesting visits to family via the 'bush telegram'. N!osi's family is generally

happy to take her in temporarily since she always makes herself useful, however they are unable to support her on a full-time basis.

Money and rations are pooled by N//uha, Sisaba and Oba, /Ui and Booi from the bachelor's house (they also work for the farmer). N//uha is helped around her fire by Tchi!o, and by //Ouka and N//isa when they are visiting. Tchi!o and N//uha also work around their father's fire (B), cleaning, doing laundry and caring for the children fostered to old Sisaba's household.

Fire C is shared by the following people: Debe and Bau and their two adolescent daughters (house #6); old N≠isa, her granddaughter, N!ae, and N!ae's infant daughter (house #7); and Bau's son Klein Booi (from her first marriage) and old N≠isa's grandson, Oba (house #4). Bau, Debe, Oba, and Klein Booi pool their wages and rations and support the unemployed residents of house #7. Bau is helped around her fire by her two daughters, her niece (N!ae) and her mother (N≠isa).

The women on this farm hold onto the wages that are pooled and have the authority to use this money to purchase household necessities (this does not include fire B, see below). Any money left over (which is usually almost nothing), is most often spent at the discretion of the male household heads (≠Oma, Sisaba, Debe). Although the women who work as domestic servants are also only paid supplementary wages, both the women and the men earn very low wages and the gap between them is not very large. The women also receive a ration package comparable to the rations given to the men. Thus, the actual income disparity between the women and men on this farm is less pronounced than on the rationalized farm described above. Furthermore, the fairly elaborate inter-household linkages on this farm modify intra-household power relations; that is, power does not concentrate as much in the

hands of male household head, but is dispersed throughout the kinship matrix within which the households are embedded.

Fire B provides a good example of how visiting and fostering patterns influence household composition. Fire B is the household of old Sisaba, a 68 year old widower who works as a gardener. One son, Besa, is fully employed in town and pays regular social visits almost every weekend, along with his wife and children, and takes home from the farm milk, meat (when a covert hunting expedition is successful) and firewood.² A second son, //Umte, and one grandson, //Au, are occasionally employed on neighbouring farms and during times of unemployment they squat on the farm. They usually sleep in house #4 (the ‘bachelor’s house’) and eat at old Sisaba’s fire. When they are on the farm, they are described as ‘staying with’ old Sisaba. Five more of old Sisaba’s grandchildren and one great-grandchild are permanent foster residents in his house: two of these grandchildren are his daughter /Xabe’s children, who live with old Sisaba so that they may attend a nearby farm school;³ two more of these grandchildren are his daughter //Ouka’s children, who live with their grandfather full-time because //Ouka and her husband //Ina are chronically unemployed and only able to support their two youngest children. The other foster residents include Sisaba’s daughter, N//isa’s daughter, /Xabe and /Xabe’s infant daughter. /Xabe assumes most of the responsibility for the domestic tasks around old Sisaba’s fire — assisted by her aunts, Tchi!o and N//uha — where she does most of the cooking and cleaning. She also helps out around

² /Xabe and Oba are also regular visitors, but are only able to visit every few months.

³ They stay with old Sisaba on weekends and during holidays — and during periods when they refuse to attend school at all, which is most of the time. Many Ju/’hoan children resist being separated from their families to live in a school hostel, and Ju/’hoan parents rarely force them to go.

N//uha's fire.

Sisaba's house is one of the sites on a circuit that //Ouka, N//isa and their husbands follow as they cope with chronic unemployment and poverty. When on the farm, they are illegal squatters and so they are careful not to be discovered by the farmer, yet //Ouka and N//isa, along with their children, provide essential household labour, such as cooking, cleaning and doing the laundry. When they are not on the farm, //Ouka, N//isa and their husbands and children live in a sinkhuis in the Damarablok of the Epako location. N//isa and Debe also visit Debe's sister in a resettlement camp, usually after they have spent some time on the farm. //Ouka and //Ina are slightly less mobile because //Ouka is quite sick with arthritis and tuberculosis — they move between Epako and Farm X, and only occasionally visit other nearby farms for temporary relief from township life.

Another occasional squatter, !Ukuri, a remote in-law of the family, is also a regular squatter on the farm, but because of his more remote relation to old Sisaba, he sometimes moves to other fires to share food, and only affiliates with old Sisaba's fire when old Sisaba's children are not on the farm. Thus, old Sisaba's household has only one core member — old Sisaba himself — and has six foster residents, seven regular squatters (twelve counting young children) and two regular social visitors (four, including young children). The household supports the first seven on a regular basis, the seven squatters on a part-time basis, and supplements the food resources of the social visitors. The Ju/'hoansi on this farm also count on old Sisaba's son, Besa, to provide food and shelter when they go into town to shop or visit the clinic. Old Sisaba himself is a regular visitor to Besa's household in Epako, since he makes frequent trips into town to receive treatment for tuberculosis.

Here, the elderly farmer makes little effort to police the comings and goings of

visitors and squatters. When he takes any interest, it is usually because he needs an additional worker, and then he speaks to the foreman (a suspected *wirvoet*) for information about who is squatting on his land. Threats of imprisonment then transform the squatter into an wage-earning employee.

iv) Case Three: A Household in the Epako 'Plakkersdorp'

Since it is an urban site, the plakkersdorp provides important contrasts with the farms. There are, however, many similarities between the Epako plakkersdorp and the resettlement camps in terms of household organization and co-operative activities. There were actually two plakkersdorps along the edges of Epako. The much larger Damarablok plakkersdorp, on the western edge of Epako, contains only an insignificant proportion of Ju/'hoan residents. Because the Ju/'hoansi view Damarablok as too large, too noisy, and too violent, they prefer to establish themselves in the much smaller Tswanablok plakkersdorp along the eastern edge of Epako. It was here that I conducted a house-to-house survey in May 1997.⁴

Figure 27 provides an economic profile of the Tswanablok plakkersdorp as of May, 1997.⁵ There are a number of features of the plakkersdorp households that reveal the gender

⁴ In June 1997, representatives from the Epako municipality instructed the residents of the Tswanablok plakkersdorp to move their shacks to make way for rows of ablutions blocks that were about to be constructed by an NGO. When I returned to the Omaheke in May 1998, very few of the Ju/'hoansi I interviewed in 1997 were still there. The ablution blocks (containing a flush-toilet and a sink with running water), each attached to a small plot of land just large enough on which to construct a sinkhuis, were being rented out for N\$25 per month, and few Ju/'hoansi could afford to stay.

⁵ In Figures 27 through 32, 'female-headed' households are distinguished from 'male/dual-headed' households rather than simply 'male-headed' households to alert the reader to the definitional problems outlined in greater detail below. Among Ju/'hoansi

(continued...)

and ethnic politics inherent to the urban economy:

- As data from female-headed households indicates, women routinely engage in ‘helping’ activities in return for food, money and water, and in some cases this ‘helping’ is the sole source of income. The same is also true in male/dual-headed households, where women supplement their own and their menfolks’ income through such ‘helping’ activities, or carry their households through periods of male unemployment. Men do perform odd jobs, but much less frequently than women, and usually only if they have been unemployed for a lengthy period of time (see figures 27, 30, 31, 32).

- All of the respondents from female-headed households reported engaging in some kind of activity to get money, food and water, while two of the three male/dual-headed households reported relying solely on assistance from kin and friends (see figures 27, 30, 31, 32).

- Where Ju/’hoan men are formally employed, their average wage is much higher than Ju/’hoan women’s wages. Ju/’hoan men’s average wage is also higher than the average wage of non-Ju/’hoan women, but much lower than the average wage of non-Ju/’hoan men.

(...continued)

households containing both employed men and women are best described as ‘dual-headed’ because women’s wages are comparable to men’s wages, women tend to have primary access to employment opportunities and they tend to have more control income women who live and work on the farms. Data from non-Ju/’hoan households is also provided to illustrate the effects of the Omaheke’s race/class/gender hierarchies. (Headship of non-Ju/’hoan households is listed simply as ‘male’ or ‘female’ since I did not become well enough acquainted with non-Ju/’hoan households to gain an insight into their gender dynamics). Figures 28 and 29 provide average household and per capita income, however calculating expenditures proved difficult since informants were usually unable to recall how much they spent in a week. Expenditures fluctuated dramatically depending on the amount of money household members could bring in through piece work, how many people were resident at any given time, and how much assistance a household was receiving from kin and friends elsewhere.

Ju/'hoan women are at the bottom of the wage scale (see Figure 28).

● Not surprisingly, male/dual-headed households containing both men and women engaged in formal employment, are much better off than female-headed Ju/'hoan households. However, they are in the minority — only 43 percent of male/dual-headed Ju/'hoan households contain such members. Fifty-seven percent of male/dual-headed households reported having no income at all. This compares with 100 percent of female-headed Ju/'hoan households and 75 percent of female-headed and 80 percent of male-headed non-Ju/'hoan households which reported earning a regular cash income (see figures 28, 29).

● Counting all Ju/'hoan households together, female-headed households are better off than male/dual-headed households. Female-headed Ju/'hoan households were also better off in terms of per-capita cash income than female-headed non-Ju/'hoan households, which typically contained more dependent members (see figures 28, 29).

Figure 27. Profile of the Tswana Blok Plakkersdorp

Household	No. of Earners	Household Head	Combined Income/m	No. of Members	Source of Income	Source of Water	Source of Food
Ju/'hoan	2	F	\$30	3	H	H	H
Ju/'hoan	1	F	\$5	3	H	H	H
Ju/'hoan	3	F	\$300	4	W	J	J, P
Ju/'hoan	3	F	\$290	5	W, Pen	J	P, C
Ju/'hoan	1	F	\$80	4	W	P	P, A
Ju/'hoan	1	F	\$50	2	W	J	J
Ju/'hoan	0	M/D	0	6	H	A	A, H
Ju/'hoan	0	M/D	0	3	--	A	A
Ju/'hoan	0	M/D	0	4	--	A	A
Ju/'hoan ^a	1	M/D	0	7	H	P	A, J
Ju/'hoan	2	M/D	\$400	7	W	P	A, J
Ju/'hoan	1	M/D	\$100	4	W	H	P
Ju/'hoan	3	M/D	\$700	10	W	A	P, J
Tswana	1	F	\$130	6	W	A	P, J
Nama	1	F	\$200	4	W	P	P
Tswana	0	F	0	3	--	A	A, H
Damara	1	F	\$130	12	Pen	A	C
Tswana	1	F	\$150	4	W, H	A	A
Tswana	1	F	\$130	1	Pen	P	P
Tswana	0	F	0	4	--	A	A
Damara	2	F	\$300	11	W	P	P
Damara	2	M	\$530	13	W, Pen	P	P
Xhosa	1	M	\$500	3	W	P	P
Damara	2	M	\$760	2	W	P	P
Griqua	2	M	\$630	3	W	P	P
Damara	1	M	\$280	1	W	P	P
Tswana	2	M	\$950	4	W	P	P
Damara	0	M	0	4	--	H	H
Tswana	0	M	0	3	--	A	A
Tswana	1	M	\$120	1	W	J	P
Tswana	3	M	\$850	16	W	J	P

Household Head
F = Female
M/D = Male/Dual

Source of Income
W = Wages
H = Helping
Pen = Pension

Source of Water and Food
P = Purchased J = from Job
C = from Church
A = Assistance from others

^a One man in this household recently found formal employment but was not yet sure what his monthly income would be.

Figure 28. Average Monthly Income Levels for Male/Dual and Female Headed Households (Formal Employment), Plakkersdorp

	Average Income	Mode Income	Low	High
Ju/'hoan	\$121	\$100	\$5	\$360
Male/Dual	\$203	\$100	\$100	\$360
Female	\$71	\$100	\$5	\$240

Non-Ju/'hoan	\$269	\$130	\$50	\$650
Male	\$392	\$400	\$120	\$650
Female	\$135	\$130	\$50	\$200

Ju/'hoan n=15; Male n=4; Female n=11

Non-Ju/'hoan n=21; Male n= 11; Female n=10 n

Figure 29. Average Monthly Per Capita Income and Household Size, Male/Dual and Female Headed Households (with cash income), Plakkersdorp

	Combined Income	# of Household Members	Per Capita Income
Ju/'hoan	\$265	5.3	\$50
Male	\$400	7	\$57
Female	\$125	3.5	\$36

Non-Ju/'hoan	\$366	5.3	\$62
Male	\$449	5	\$107
Female	\$154	6.3	\$24

Ju/'hoan n = 9; Female n = 6; Male/Dual n = 3

Non-Ju/'hoan n = 14; Female n = 6; Male n = 8

Figure 30. Main Source of Income for Ju/'hoan Male/Dual and Female Headed Households, Plakkersdorp

Households	Paid Work		Helping		Pension		No Income	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Ju/'hoan	7	54%	2	15%	0	--	4	30%
Male	3	23%	0	--	0	--	4	30%
Female	4	30%	2	15%	0	--	0	--

Non-Ju/'hoan	13	72%	0	--	1	.5%	4	22%
Male	8	44%	0	--	0	--	2	11%
Female	5	27%	0	--	1	.5%	2	11%

Ju/'hoan n=13; Male n= 7; Female n=6
 Non-Ju/'hoan n=18; Male n=10; Female n=8

Figure 31. Main Source of Food for Male/Dual and Female Headed Households, Plakkersdorp

Households	Bought		Helping		Assistance		Job		Church	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Ju/'hoan	5	38%	2	15%	4	31%	2	15%	0	--
Male	3	23%	0	--	4	31%	0	--	0	--
Female	2	15%	2	15%	0	--	2	15%	0	--

Non-Ju/'hoan	12	66%	0	--	5	28%	0	--	1	--
Male	8	44%	0	--	2	11%	0	--	0	--
Female	4	22%	0	--	3	17%	0	--	1	--

Ju/'hoan n=13; Male n= 7; Female n=6 Non-Ju/'hoan n=18; Male n= 10; Female n= 8

Figure 32. Main Source of Water for Male/Dual and Female Headed Households, Plakkersdorp

Households	Bought		Helping		Assistance		Job	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Ju/'hoan	4	31%	3	23%	3	23%	3	23%
Male	3	23%	1	8%	3	23%	0	--
Female	1	8%	2	15%	0	--	3	23%

Non-Ju/'hoan	9	50%	0	--	7	39%	2	11%
Male	6	33%	0	--	2	11%	2	11%
Female	3	27%	0	--	5	28%	0	--

Ju/'hoan n=13; Male n= 7; Female n=6

Non-Ju/'hoan n=18; Male n= 10; Female n= 8

Ju'hoan women in the plakkersdorp, like those on 'old fashioned' farms, rely on unemployed female members of their own and other households — especially adolescent girls — for assistance with domestic chores so that they may engage in domestic work for some sort of remuneration. Men appear to have more power in mobilizing material assistance (e.g. money and food) from kin and friends, while women tend to mobilize each other's labour to establish mutual assistance networks and make ends meet. This may be so for three reasons: 1) women have less power in claiming money from male kin (although they sometimes do so successfully); 2) many of the women in female-headed households were abandoned by their husbands, are living far from their natal kin and do not have access to extensive kin networks in the location or nearby farms and so it is more difficult for them to claim money from the people who would have some to spare (i.e. male kin); and 3) women may be reluctant to borrow or take money from men (non-kin) because this may leave them vulnerable to sexual extortion. In the context of extreme poverty, insecure employment and high levels of unemployment, women's labour-based mutual assistance is often the most significant and reliable resource the Ju'hoansi utilize in the township.

Within this setting, household composition tends to be much more fluid as residents go on extended visits to friends and family on the farms or in the resettlement camps to receive assistance with food and enjoy a reprieve from the overcrowded and often dangerous conditions in the location. Such visits may lead to employment opportunities on a farm, or decisions to relocate to a resettlement camp. Visitors to the location stay with friends and family when they or a family member must receive treatment at the clinic or state hospital, or get business done at the various government offices (a process which could take a few weeks). Also, children are frequently fostered back and forth between Epako, the farms and

resettlement camps: children are fostered to farms and resettlement camps for care and support during periods of economic stress, and they are fostered to Epako to receive medical treatment (traditional and biomedical) or to attend school. The location is also used as a 'home base' for men looking for work — usually those who have been 'on the road' for quite some time and who have resorted to asking farmers they meet on the streets of Gobabis for work. They are sometimes hired for short periods as casual labourers. Others make trips to nearby farms for a week or two to look for work and return to live with friends or family who will support them while they do odd jobs for low pay in town and in the location. Young men move to Epako to look for work in Gobabis with, but often without, their families. Usually shortly after they build a shack, they are joined by other kin. They may then relocate to a different part of the location, or leave the location altogether, after they have found work, or if the household population gets too high. Thus, houses (improvised shacks) change hands quite frequently as original owners leave and pass the shacks on to kin.

Figures 33 and 34 represent the kinship composition and spatial arrangement of household Z in the 'Tswanablok' plakkersdorp in Epako. In 1995, N//u, who is in his late 60s, moved with his wife Bau, off a farm where he had been working for about five years. When he and Bau arrived in Epako, they stayed with their daughter, Tete and her husband, /Kunta. N//u had meant to be in town only for a short time — to register his wife for a pension — but the process took longer than expected and he lost his job on the farm. N//u's daughter and son-in-law had been living with N//u's first wife's sister's son, Dako, who also built the shack N//u and his wife now live in. Dako has since found a job and has relocated to the western edge of the location (to the much larger 'Damarablok' plakkersdorp).

The houses in this household were perpetually under construction while I was in the

field. /Kunta and Tete often visited a farm where one of N//u's sister's sons lives, and returned with plastic feedsacks and other building materials to add to their shack. /Kunta's son, Keirrie, returned home from work in town with sticks and scrap pieces of corrugated iron for his own and his parents' shack. The shacks were constantly being modified to accommodate residents as they came and went.

At the time I conducted a census and interviewed members of household Z (February, 1997), there were four houses and two fires, but the residents described themselves as 'sharing a fire'. House #1 contained N//u, Bau, and N//u's second wife's great-granddaughter (the child's mother is deceased and her new step-mother was unwilling to support her). House #2 contained /Kunta and Tete, six of their seven children and one foster-child (N//u's brother's son's daughter). Their youngest son was fostered out to a farm to live with Tete's brother. House #3 contained N//u's daughter (by his first wife), //Ao and her husband and N//u's brother's son, Booi, who lives in town to work and returns to a resettlement camp on the weekends to visit his own wife and family, and remit some of his wages. This household also contained an adolescent girl, N//isa, (N//u's sister's son's daughter), who was fostered into the household so that she could receive medical treatment from a well-known Tswana prophet who lived nearby. House #3 also accommodated regular visitors: N//isa's parents, Besa and Di!ao, and N//u's daughter, //Ao's parents-in-law, N/haokxa and Gashe, all of whom visit when food shortages in the resettlement camp are critical or when they have business to do in town (although Besa and Di!ao also visited just to check on their daughter). They usually visited about once a month for a week. House #3 is also the newest addition to the household — it was just being built in August, 1996.

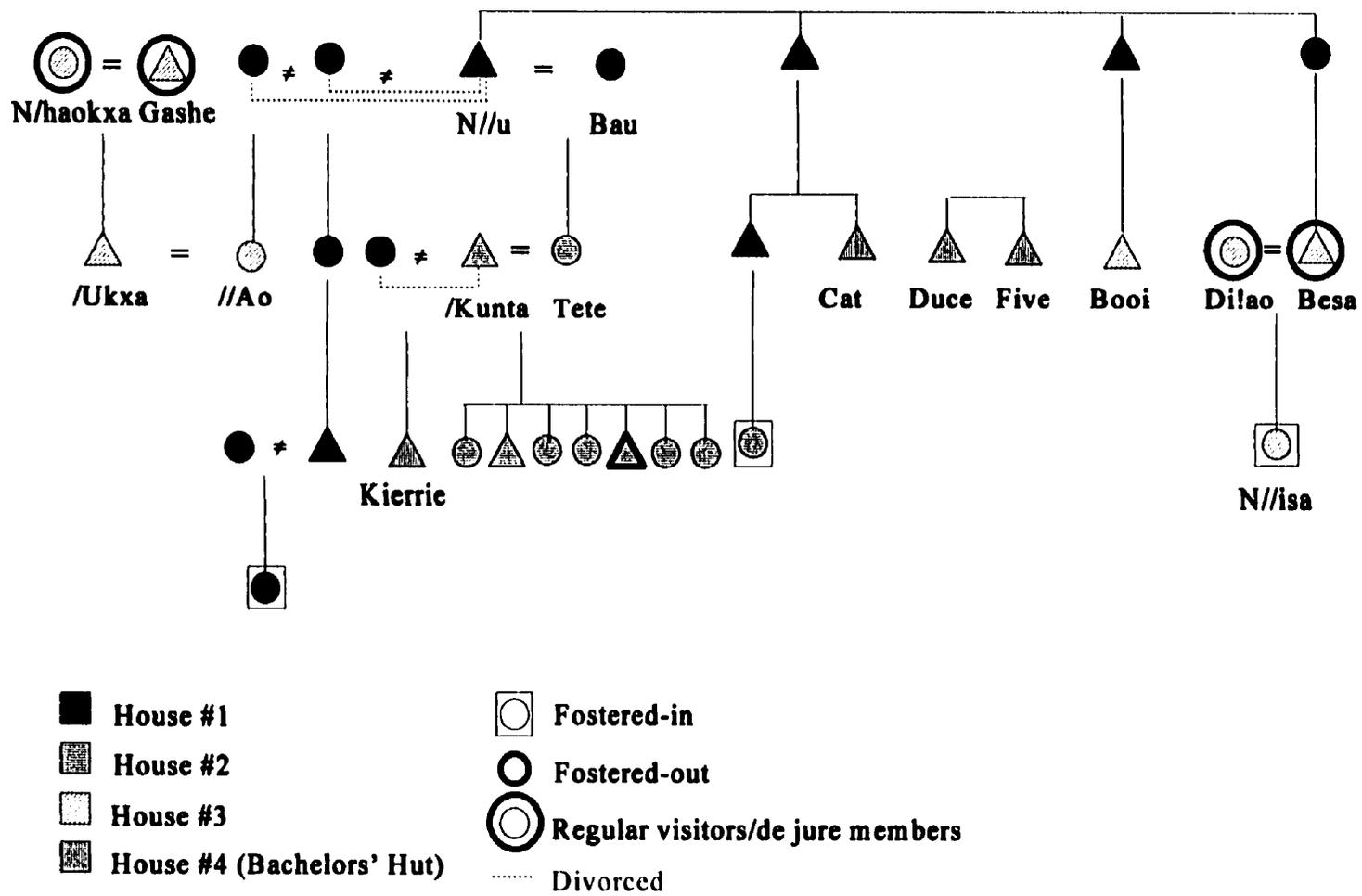


Figure 33. Kinship Composition of Household Z, Epako Plakkersdorp

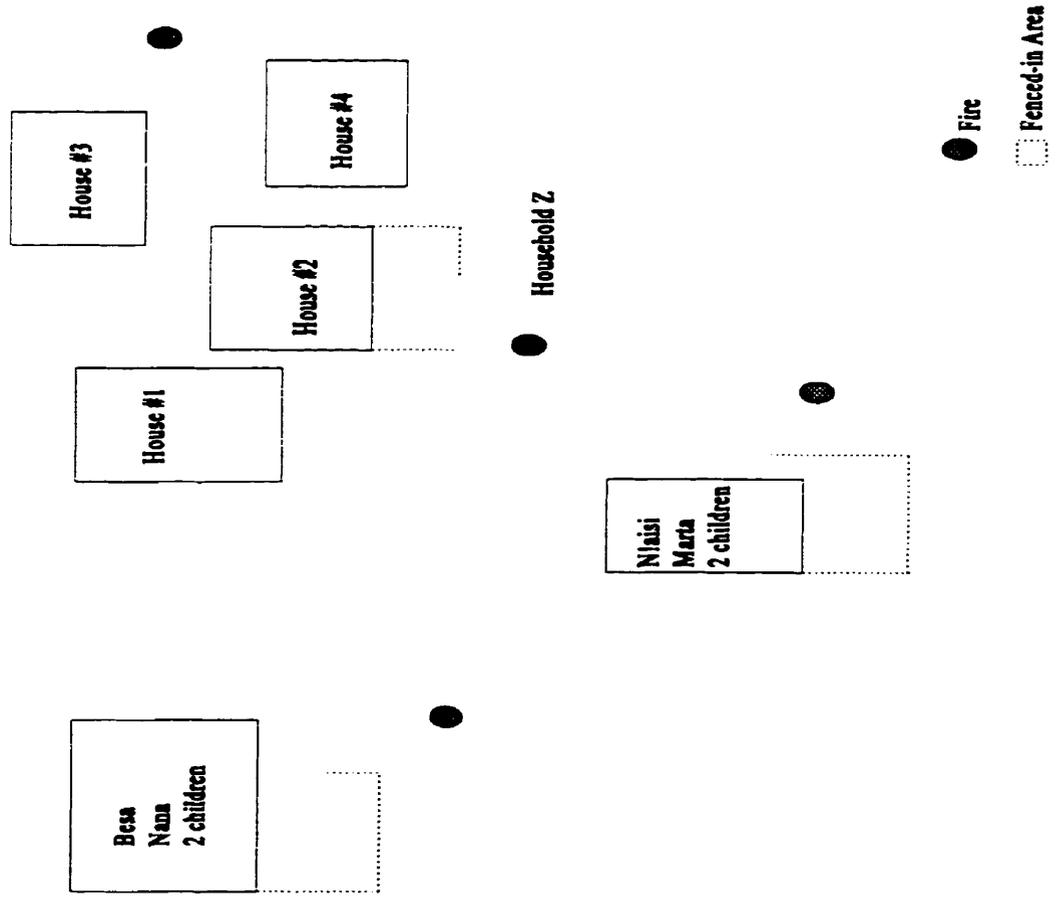


Figure 34. Spatial Arrangement of Household Z, Epako Plakkersdorp

House #4 is the 'bachelor's hut' and contained Tete and /Kunta's son, Keirrie, N//u's brother's son, Cat, and two brothers, Duce and Five, who are friends of the family.⁶ The population of the bachelors' hut fluctuates most dramatically as young men find a job — or a higher paying job — and set up their own hut elsewhere, or leave to go 'on the road', or if they live part-time with friends and family in other parts of the location or on the farms and resettlement camps. Duce and Five moved into the bachelors' hut in November, 1996 and Cat became a regular resident in January, 1997 — they replaced two other young men who had moved out.

Tete and //Ao work as domestic servants, /Kunta works at a vegetable stand in Gobabis, Keirrie works in a garage and Booi, Cat, Duce and Five do occasional odd jobs around the location and in town. The employed household members contribute to the cost of food and water.⁷ Tete, /Kunta and //Ao bring food home from work, but it is usually not enough for the household, so they help each other purchase more. Bau and Tete cook at one fire and //Ao and N//isa cook at another fire. Cleaning and other domestic chores are shared generally by the women and are centred around both fires. Bau, //Ao and Tete take turns with the young men gathering firewood, which is about a six-hour job every day since the residents in the plakkersdorp must travel a great distance away from town to find even the poor, quick burning 'yellow sticks'. The young men are responsible for hauling jugs of water,

⁶ Young men in the township often assume Afrikaans or English nicknames that are similar to North American 'street names'. They also tend to travel in 'gangs', which provides some security in the location, where drinking and violent confrontations are commonplace.

⁷ Like other residents in the plakkersdorp, they buy water from Herero or Tswana people living in houses in 'Tswanablok' proper. The average cost of water for the month is about N\$40.

from a Herero man's house where they buy it, back to their shacks.

This household assisted and was assisted by two newer households directly to the west and to the north of it. The first household contained a Ju/'hoan-Damara man, N!aisi, who had been living in his sinkhuis with some male friends until his wife, Marta, and their children moved off a farm to join him in the plakkersdorp (September, 1996). N!aisi was too sick with tuberculosis to work and Marta was struggling to find permanent work as a domestic servant and was doing odd domestic jobs around the location in the meantime. The other household contained Besa, Nana and their children, two of Nana's unemployed brothers, and a steady stream of visitors and squatters from Nana's natal farm and from Farm X. N!aisi and Marta received regular gifts of food and assistance with domestic tasks from Besa and Nana and various members of household Z — this assistance was not always given without some grumbling since both households had many of their own dependents to worry about, and some resentment was occasionally produced when Marta's family (mostly Basters and Tswanas) squatted at the site, remained inebriated for the length of their visit and ate the gifts of food. Household Z received assistance with food and loans (never gifts) of money from Besa and assistance with household tasks from Nana. Bau and Tete reciprocated by helping Nana with some of her chores and minding her children when she went on errands in town. N//u also provided Besa with 'avuncular' guidance in coping with the depredations of neighbours, the disorderly behaviour of visitors and the general conditions in the plakkersdorp.⁸

⁸ N//u and Besa are distantly related and it is standard for the Ju/'hoansi to address older kinsmen as 'tsu' (uncle), which Besa sometimes did with N//u. In any event, Besa showed N//u respect and generally deferred to his opinion.

v) Points of Comparison: On and Off the Farms

As the above cases suggest, household arrangements and household composition vary according to the different strategies the Ju/'hoansi adopt to cope with the economic circumstances in the different sites around the Omaheke. There are three things worth noting about the various household arrangements described above. First, there are greater similarities between households on 'old fashioned' farms and those in Epako than there are between those on 'old fashioned' and 'rationalized' farms, specifically in terms of composition, intra-household politics and inter-household linkages. As abundant ethnographic evidence from around the world has shown, there are no clear causal relationships between urbanization, the penetration of capitalism and the rise of 'nuclear' family forms and 'nuclearized' households (Moore 1988:123).⁹ Yet much of the focus on changes in family forms and household arrangements is typically directed toward the effects of urbanization. Moore summarizes much of the literature on changes in household and family forms in the following way:

It would appear that in an urban context changing economic circumstance can either encourage 'nuclearization' of family forms in order to protect 'family' resources from the depredations of kin, or promote a very different family structure which depends for its survival on utilizing kinship links as a resource in their own right (1988:124).

The same statement could be made about family and household forms on the farms. The focus on the effects of urbanization implicitly assumes that urban areas are the sites where capitalist penetration is most relevant: urban centres represent local 'capitalist cores', where nuclearized households are most strongly encouraged, while rural areas represent the

⁹ Any such causal formula is problematized by increases in female-headed households, changes in women's marriage strategies, the impact of migration and changing economic conditions (ibid:124).

'periphery', where alternative domestic arrangements have freer play and where households are shaped by, and adapt to the vicissitudes of migrant labour (i.e. in response to conditions emanating from the urban-industrial core). However, from the Ju/'hoansi's point of view, the 'periphery' would be any site — rural or urban — where jobs are scarce or insecure and where making a living is most difficult. Ju/'hoan households are more 'nuclearized' — or at least more limited in membership and enclosed — on farms which are run along commercial lines. It is on these commercialized and 'rationalized' farms that the influence of capitalism, in collusion with the farmers' own domestic ideologies, bears most strongly on Ju/'hoan household arrangements and domestic dynamics.

In southern African studies, changing family forms and household arrangements are examined in the context of migrant labour and forced relocation as well as urbanization (see for example, Murray 1979, 1981; Spiegel 1986; Sharp and Spiegel 1990; White 1993; Manona 1991; James 1985; Hishongwa 1992). Murray suggests that in the context of migrant labour, typological definitions of 'nuclear' versus 'extended' families are applied imprecisely, assuming a smooth transition from "a 'traditional subsistence economy' to a 'western-oriented cash economy'", and that "[t]here is little point in identifying the nuclear family as the basic unit of analysis where thousands of husbands and wives are forced to live apart" (1979:148-149). Instead of using distinctions between households, Murray draws a distinction between types of household members: *de jure* members are those who are regarded as belonging to a particular household, whether they are living in the household or not, as long as they occasionally reside there and draw from and contribute to the household's resources; *de facto* members are those members who are present in the household at the time of the census (1981:49). Although Murray's distinction was designed to measure the effects

of migrant labour on family life in the rural periphery, his distinction may also be usefully applied to the Ju/'hoansi.¹⁰

This brings me to the second point worth noting about Ju/'hoan households: the Ju/'hoansi may be both 'de facto' members of one household while at the same time being 'de jure' members of other households; or, in the case of 'homeless' and chronically unemployed Ju/'hoansi, they may be 'de facto' members of many households, and 'de jure' members of none. Such multiple household membership facilitates the merging of various domestic groups in times of economic stress or when conditions on a farm become unbearably exploitative or abusive — in other words, many Ju/'hoansi try to keep one foot in another household in case they must abandon their own. Murray's distinction applies more literally to households in resettlement camps, where a micro-migrant labour system is emerging as young men leave the camps to work in town and visit their families and remit wages on the weekends.

The third point worth noting is the difference in intra-household relations on and off the farms. On the farms, one may unproblematically refer to households as 'male-headed'. Even where households are multi-generational and elaborately inter-connected with other households, the primary breadwinner and decision-maker is a senior male. Also the 'legitimizing' influence of the farmers' domestic ideologies place household headship upon men. However, off the farms, especially in Epako, the gendered structure of the employment

¹⁰ Murray's use of the term 'periphery' refers specifically to the areas from which migrant labour is drawn (i.e. the Bantustans and frontline states) (1979:139). My own use of the term 'periphery' refers more broadly to Namibia's status as a dependent economy vis-a-vis South Africa, and, more specifically to the Ju/'hoansi's marginal location within this dependent economy.

market is not entirely male dominated and so female-headed households appear in greater numbers. Although Epako is the only site in the Omaheke where I found a significant number of female-headed households, they should not be simplistically opposed to 'male-headed' households.¹¹ In town, one of the most important sources of employment is domestic service. This is especially true for the Ju/'hoansi since Ju/'hoan men have difficulty competing with Herero, Damara and Ovambo men for higher-paying jobs in construction or road work. Most often, Ju/'hoan men find piece work through their female kin who, as domestic servants can recommend their menfolk to employers for odd jobs and inform their menfolk of employers who are seeking gardeners or handymen. Although domestic service is low-paying, it is often the most stable source of income and, unlike on the farms, Ju/'hoan men's access to income-earning opportunities relies largely on the initiative of women.

Given these circumstances, those households which contain both employed men and women are best described as 'dual-headed' because women's wages are often comparable to men's wages (especially when men are only employed in piece work) and women tend to have more decision-making power over how income will be spent than do women who live and work on the farms.¹²

¹¹ A house-to-house survey I conducted in May, 1997 found that two-thirds of the Ju/'hoan households in the 'Tswanablok' plakkersdorp were female-headed, in the sense that there was no regular support from men affiliated with the household, and all of the income-earning and decision-making was up to the woman or women running the household.

¹² These findings are opposite to those of other studies on gender relations in South African townships where it was found that female employment represented a threat to male patriarchal authority, which resulted in men asserting their authority all the more forcefully (see Sharp and Spiegel 1990; van der Vliet 1991). The difference may be owed to the Ju/'hoansi's underclass status, which makes patriarchal authority in the township something they can ill afford and, possibly, differences in Ju/'hoan gender ideologies, which do not
(continued...)

In the location, the primary determinant of the Ju/'hoansi's income-earning opportunities is their position in the ethnic-class hierarchy - and the interaction of ethnic, class and gender hierarchies are especially noticeable in Ju/'hoan women's employment patterns and income levels. Because of their ethnic designation as 'Bushmen', Ju/'hoan women are relegated to the lowest tier of domestic service. White employers in Gobabis prefer to hire non-Ju/'hoan domestic servants. Ju/'hoan women, therefore, tend to work for Herero and Tswana women in Epako, or for Baster women in the 'Coloured' township of Nossobville, and they are paid significantly less than domestic servants who work for white employers in town. Very often, Ju/'hoan women must work at more than one job, or hold one regular job and take on extra odd jobs, such as laundry or general cleaning, to fill a work week and earn an adequate income. Odd jobs — that is, 'helping' Herero or Tswana women in the township — may constitute the sole means of bringing home food, money and water.

Part Two: On the Road; Motive and Means

The preceding sections described the ubiquitous presence of visitors in Ju/'hoan households, and their impact - both in terms of costs and benefits - on hosting households. In the following sections, we will look at these matters from the side of the visitors themselves. Mobile people are the other side of fluid households. I will focus specifically on the following issues: 1) the various reasons the Ju/'hoansi have for leaving a farm and the consequences of these decisions; 2) the gender politics and gender-specific consequences

(...continued)

seem to require extreme subservience and submission on the part of Ju/'hoan women, but rather general 'obedience'.

involved in *werksoek* (job hunting), visiting and squatting; and 3) how kin-based networks facilitate leaving a farm, finding a job and surviving on the road and in the periphery by forming elaborate inter-linkages within and between sites on and off the farms.

i) Myths and Mobility

Before proceeding with a discussion of ‘life on the road’ — job hunting, visiting and household fluidity — it is necessary to address an apparent contradiction between mobility and containment found in reports of Ju/’hoan life in the Omaheke (see, for example, Suzman 1995a:6, 12; 1995b:6-7, 20). In order to understand the logic behind Ju/’hoan mobility patterns, it is necessary to go beyond myths of ‘Bushman’ nomadism and examine the constraints to mobility and what makes undermining these constraints possible.

The image of the farm Ju/’hoansi as nomadic is not unique to the white farmers; it can be seen just below the surface when “clinic nurses complain that the Ju/’hoansi rarely manage to complete a full course of treatment because they have moved on” (Suzman 1995b:20). This complaint is repeated in a study conducted for the “Sectoral Forum on Health in the Omaheke” prepared by the Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU), which says that “[San] high mobility creates certain problems regarding the provision of health services” (Erastus-Sacharia and Werner 1996:3). This point is repeated almost verbatim in a NEPRU report to the “Forum on Education and Skills Development” (Kangueehi and Melber 1996: 4), which echoes that “[San] high mobility creates certain problems regarding the provision of public services.” The ongoing stereotyping of the Ju/’hoansi is evident in the verbatim echoes found throughout the NEPRU reports. Further support for saying that this is little more than stereotyping is found in the fact that the same

report on the health sector recognizes, when the Ju/'hoansi are *not* being discussed, that "lack of access to either public or private transport makes it difficult for villagers to reach health service centres. ... These problems are compounded for both patients and health officials by long distances from outlying areas to the hospital in Gobabis" (ibid:7). Difficulties of access to medical services are blamed on lack of transport when other ethnic groups are under consideration, but on "high mobility" when the Ju/'hoansi are under consideration. This is especially surprising since the same report notes that 22 percent of Otijherero speaking households and 19 percent of Setswana households have motor vehicles, while only 2 percent of Ju/'hoan households have vehicles (ibid: 6-7). If 'mobility' represents the freedom and the means to travel about at will, the truth is more often that the Ju/'hoansi have simply been unable to return to the clinic because of lack of mobility.

In the commercial farming area there is an extensive infrastructure of unpaved roads in varying states of disrepair, but on most days the traffic is light and so hitching, the usual mode of Ju/'hoan transport, is unreliable. Transportation for essential purposes -- whether to town to seek medical attention, to collect pensions, or for travel to and from school -- generally depends on the uncertain charity of the farmers, who are reluctant to give rides. Travel off the roads means entering the farm lands, which requires the farmer's permission, both to enter onto his land and, if one is a resident, to leave it. The picture of Ju/'hoansi wandering freely through the veld must be replaced with a picture of Ju/'hoansi walking and hitching along the roads.

The sense in which the Ju/'hoansi lack adequate mobility is clear when we consider their access to medical services. In the Gobabis district, this means travelling into town, either to the State Hospital, or to the Epako clinic. On farms with absentee owners, injured or

sick workers have no option but to make their way, with the assistance of other workers, to the nearest road to hitch a ride, which takes anywhere from half a day to two days. On farms where owners do reside, medical attention is often needed by squatters, who cannot turn to the farmers for assistance. They must then seek the help of other squatters to reach the roads. When a 'legitimate' resident of a farm is injured or sick, the Ju/'hoansi will ask the farmer for assistance with transportation only if the case is considered very serious. But even in serious cases, farmers provide transportation only sparingly and grudgingly, and so workers are extremely reluctant to ask for help.¹³

Consider, for illustrative purposes, an account of recent medical emergencies on one farm only 45 km from town. There, one worker lost an eye sharpening a drill-bit; he asked the farmer for help, but his injury was not considered serious enough to merit a ride to hospital and, so, after bearing up for two days, he walked out to the nearest crossroad to hitch. Later, an infant died when the workers decided not ask for help because they believed the farmer would be unwilling to go to town at night. In the same month, a woman received several stab wounds and one worker suffered a serious spear wound, and in this case the farmer called the police and let them take the injured to town. A few months later, two women experienced serious complications in pregnancy; only in the second case was help sought from the farmer, who replied: "I am not driving all the way to town for just one woman." Later still, one illegal squatter, suffering from back pains and unable to eat, was

¹³ Some farmers deduct the cost of petrol from a worker's wages when they give rides to town, even in emergency situations, and so the Ju/'hoansi are reluctant to ask for a ride unless the illness is life-threatening. Also, travellers who offer lifts on the road often demand money, and if the Ju/'hoansi happen not to have money on hand (which is most often the case), they may spend several days hitching before they find a free ride.

helped to the crossroads by two other illegal squatters, who were fortunate enough to flag down a ride in a little over four hours. This list does not include travel to town for ongoing medical treatment, such as regular treatments for malaria and tuberculosis. The point of these examples is not to provide a litany of medical concerns but to illustrate that the Ju/'hoansi typically lack mobility even when the need is most urgent.

Although Suzman is right to point out that working conditions are the primary cause of high mobility among the Ju/'hoansi, and that this mobility tends to undermine the farms' function as 'total institutions' (1995a:12; 1995b:6; see also Goffman 1961), the question remains: how can the Ju/'hoansi be at once so tightly controlled by the farmers and at the same time be so highly mobile? I suggest that the tension between mobility and containment is best seen as a reflection of an on-the-ground struggle between the farmers' attempts to control, consolidate and contain their labour force, and the Ju/'hoansi's attempt to subvert this control and assert autonomy (see Solway and Lee 1990). The key to understanding mobility as resistance may be found in examining the role kinship plays in providing the means, and sometimes the motive, for subverting a farmer's paternalistic authority and escaping control.¹⁴

In the two sections that follow, I describe four types of visiting, and then discuss the most common motives for moving - job dissatisfaction and family. It would be too simplistic to see Ju/'hoan mobility exclusively in terms of job seeking and job dissatisfaction; but, worse, doing so obscures how Ju/'hoan families both facilitate and motivate mobility.

¹⁴ Goffman also notes that "[t]otal institutions are...incompatible with another crucial element of our society, the family" (1961:11).

ii) Visiting

Despite serious constraints to their mobility, the Ju/'hoansi nonetheless do move around a great deal. On closer examination we find that mobility patterns are most frequently associated with coping strategies and fall along a continuum of minimal moving for those who are employed to almost constant moving for those who are unemployed. The Ju/'hoansi's ability to move around, either to change job sites or to negotiate the constraints of poverty, depends on extensive social and kin networks which both facilitate and are maintained by widespread visiting.

There are at least four main types of visiting. First, those who are employed on a farm engage in social visits, only during their free time, and only with the permission of the farmers. Short-term social visiting occurs when Ju/'hoansi visit friends and family on nearby farms for a day or two, usually on the weekends. Longer-term social visiting is usually conducted with family members living further away during annual vacations lasting two weeks to a month (for those Ju/'hoansi who enjoy such benefits). Women usually engage in short-term social visits more than men because there are typically more unemployed women on the farms, and because farmers are generally more tolerant of female visitors (men are said to cause trouble). Social visits are also conducted when young men visit nearby farms looking for wives. These visits are often accompanied by an exchange of gifts (e.g. women's handicrafts, such as jewelry or carry bags, food or store-bought items) and these visiting, gift-giving and wife-seeking activities operate to maintain community networks among the widely dispersed Ju/'hoansi.

Women also use social visits as a way of subverting a husband's authority. Because farmers are generally more tolerant of female than male visitors, women are able to leave

their husbands temporarily, and they will do so to express dissatisfaction with their marital relations. If a woman goes to visit with her own kin on another farm, and the visit gets extended, her husband may become uncertain about whether or not she has covertly left him and will eventually go to fetch her, bearing gifts for his wife and his in-laws when he does.

Secondly, there are assistance visits. Such visits are usually of medium duration (i.e. a few weeks). It is typically women who visit farms or other sites to care for a relative who is sick or otherwise in need, to help with domestic chores and child-minding. Visitors to town also seek temporary assistance, such as when Ju'hoansi must take a few days in town to apply for pensions or identification documents, or to visit the clinic or a hospitalized family member. These visitors often count on support and shelter from kin and friends living in Epako while they get their business done.

Thirdly, there are job-hunting related visits, which tend to differ for men and women. On the typical pattern, a man leaves his wife and children (and sometimes other dependents) on a farm where his own or his wife's kin live, so that they will be supported while he looks for work. If the man is 'on the road' for an extended period, his dependents may themselves move along a circuit of farms and resettlement camps where they have family who can support them. The man, in the meantime, moves from farm to farm asking farmers for work. Kin or friends on the farms he visits may provide a place to sleep, meals and may also speak to the farmer on his behalf. N!osi, a young woman who left a farm with her husband, stationed herself and her two young children in a resettlement camp. Sticks and plastic feed sacks were used to improvise a small shack beside her uncle's house. Her uncle helped her with food while her husband was on the road. N!osi described her experience of the werksoek procedure this way:

We heard from some people that a farmer was looking for workers...But it's very difficult for us Ju/'hoansi. If you go somewhere, you do not know how things are [i.e. what the working conditions are like]. We'll go to a new farm and then maybe stay overnight and then the next morning you'll go ask the farmer for a job, and if he says "no", you must go forward to ask other farmers. If you look around and don't find a job, then you go to a place where your family is. You will maybe find a job there.

Her uncle added:

If you go to a farm where your family is, if your family is there, they will help you find a job there. They will go to the farmer and say, "This man is looking for work. He is my relative and a good worker. We have space for him and we need him."

N!osi and her husband, as a younger couple with only two small children, began job-seeking together. However, when it became apparent that N!osi's husband would have to travel further afield to find a job, she went to stay with her uncle. Job-hunting related visits are usually short-term for men, who may spend months travelling from farm to farm, but staying on one farm for only a night or two as they look for work. Often a man will find or 'make' family to assist him on the farms he visits but, even when he cannot, support can be expected for a short term visit. Gashe describes the support expected during job-hunting visits in this way:

Sometimes a farmer will not offer you a job and you must go to another farm to ask. If I don't know the people, I will go to everyone and ask and one will give me food and I will sleep beside his fire. In the morning I will wake up and go forward to look for a job.

Job-hunting related visits are usually longer term for women, who stay at one site for a month or so before moving to a new site while they wait for their husbands to return. Often, even after a man finds a job, his wife remains where she is stationed for an additional month. This allows the man to observe how the farmer treats his workers and to learn how much money he will earn (workers often do not know what their wages will be until they are paid for the

first time — see chapter three). Once the man determines that the pay and rations are adequate, and that the farmer is not excessively violent, he returns to collect his wife and children.

The fourth category of visits are distress visits, where visitors are chronically unemployed and require perpetual assistance. Visitors in this category will usually have two to four sites where they can visit and receive food and temporary shelter from kin. They move along established circuits among sites on farms, resettlement camps, and the squatters' villages attached to the urban and peri-urban areas in the Omaheke. On the farms, they are illegal squatters and so keep a low profile. In this category we find Ju/'hoansi who are perhaps most aptly described as 'nomadic', since they have no single, fixed residence, are described as 'visiting' wherever they settle down for a few days, and seldom spend more than a few days to a week at a site before moving on. Longer visits are only tolerated up to a point by the visitor's host because extended visits cause problems with the farmer and cause economic stress in the hosting household. When these visitors become too burdensome, the Ju/'hoansi say 'they are lying on our necks'. When they hear themselves spoken about in this way, the visitors take the hint and move on — hence the need for multiple visiting sites.

Debe, a man in his mid-forties, has been on the road for ten years. He had worked drilling boreholes and on farms in the past, but an accident at work resulted in his losing sight in one eye, and eventually to his being evicted with his wife and daughter from the farm where he lived. Angered, Debe returned to the farm by night and stole a goat, for which he served several months in prison. Shortly after getting out of prison, he was stabbed by a young Damara boy on the streets of Gobabis, resulting in permanent damage to the muscles of his abdomen, and now he is unable to do much heavy lifting. Debe is now unemployable

and, with a record for stock-theft, he will never receive a farmer's permission to visit kin on the farms. He now stays regularly at three sites: he squats illegally, only a few days at a time, on the farm where his wife's family lives, and there he sometimes leaves his wife and daughter for more extended visits. He and his family also stay in Epako, in a lean-to built in the backyard of a retired Damara couple, where Debe does occasional chores and his wife earns money doing laundry and other domestic tasks for the Damara couple when she is well enough to do so. (His wife has severe arthritis and tuberculosis and, so, is often unable to work.) Debe also pays visits to a sister who lives on a resettlement camp, but her own dire circumstances limit these visits in both frequency and duration. A second sister lives on a small plot beside Gobabis, where she works as a domestic servant, and although she occasionally finds small ways to assist him, the farmer discourages visitors and so Debe may only stay on the plot for a very short period before he must move on. Debe's elderly mother lives on a farm only a short distance from the one he visits regularly, but because that farm is well policed by both the farmer and his workers, he cannot risk a visit and so he rarely sees her. He deeply regrets this fact, and speaks of his mother often. At all three sites, Debe tries to make himself useful by assisting with chores, and is seldom idle. For his relatives on the farm and in the Tswanblok plakkersdorp, Debe's perpetual travelling makes him an invaluable conduit for information. Although he occasionally earns a few dollars searching through trash-bins in Gobabis for soft-drink bottles to sell, Debe depends almost exclusively on his wife's intermittent earnings and his network of kin.

All forms of visiting are important for enabling the Ju/'hoansi to move around to the extent that they do. First, visiting sustains an extensive communications network along which information is passed about which farmers are looking for workers, what sorts of living and

working conditions are found on different farms, and the whereabouts and status of friends and relatives on other farms and sites around the Omaheke. Second, visiting maintains the kin ties between the Ju/'hoansi in different sites upon which mutual assistance activities are based. Visiting also plays an important role in distributing resources. In the case of social visits, gift-giving is common — this is especially so when sons-in-law visit their parents-in-law, or when daughters visit their parents and bring gifts from their husbands. Social visitors from Epako bring coffee, sugar, tobacco and other store-bought items to the farms, and leave with jugs of milk, bags of meat and, if the rains are good, garden food and veldkos (see also Manona 1991).

Although visiting is important for redistributing resources, its primary function is to redistribute people. A significant aspect of kin-based visiting practices is the fostering of children, particularly adolescent girls, in cases where parents are chronically unemployed or the household is under extreme economic stress. The younger children of chronically unemployed squatters/visitors are often left with one of the hosting households that needs assistance with domestic tasks. But even where the child's parents belong to a household nearby, the child may be fostered to a neighboring household that has fewer mouths to feed, and return to her own parent's house to sleep at night.¹⁵ Young children, however, do only

¹⁵ I had first hand experience of this during the months my husband and I set up camp in the communal area at the village of Donkerbos. My nearest neighbor had his niece's four year old son, Gashe, fostered full-time into his household, even though the child's mother and grandfather lived scarcely a hundred meters away. After we became an accepted presence in the village, Gashe was informally fostered into our household. He appeared each morning as soon as we emerged from our tent, and stayed until he was ready for sleep at night (often, he fell asleep at our fire and was carried back to his great-uncle's house). It quickly became obvious that we were expected to feed and care for Gashe and, although he was only four years old, Gashe began to provide assistance around our camp, following and 'assisting' my
(continued...)

very minimal work around the house; as I described in chapter three, the Ju/'hoansi generally do not expect more than basic assistance with light tasks from children. Ju/'hoan women, because more of them are un- or underemployed on the farms, engage in social and assistance visits more often, and in this way they are the main actors maintaining kin networks. Furthermore, because of their position of extreme dependency, they are also the ones most in need of such networks. Women who 'squat' at a particular site fairly consistently become incorporated into the household work routine and in this way assist the hosting household almost as much as the hosting household assists them.

Thus, visiting practices generally form mutual assistance networks by redistributing female labour between households around the Omaheke. Visiting practices, especially job-hunting related visits and distress visits, can contribute so much fluidity to Ju/'hoan households that it often becomes difficult to distinguish between household members and 'visitors'. The great flexibility of Ju/'hoan households — their ability to accommodate often large numbers of persons whose status is ambiguous between household member and visitor — appears both as a consequence of the most indispensable forms of visiting, and as a resource which makes such visiting possible.

(...continued)

husband in all his daily chores, from chopping firewood (Gashe broke up small sticks) and keeping the fire going, to carrying water, assisting in food preparation, and cleaning up the kitchen area. As a result of our relationship to young Gashe - which was well established before I finally met his mother, who had been away for an extended visit to Tallismanus - Gashe's mother quickly began to treat me as a close confidant, discussing private matters and joking with myself and my husband. As a foster-parent to Gashe, I was being transformed into a sister to his mother.

iii) Nomadic Bushmen as Job-Hunters

Labour relations on the farms are often a product of a clash between the farmer's ethnic stereotypes of the 'Bushmen' and the economic and social realities with which the Ju/'hoansi cope. One clear example of this clash is found in the farmer's image of the Ju/'hoansi as perpetually restless and still nomadic 'Bushmen'. Farmers report that Ju/'hoan workers frequently and unpredictably disappear from the farm and may not be seen again for months (or years) when they return asking for their jobs back. The Ju/'hoansi themselves consistently provide job-related explanations for why they choose to leave a farm (see also van Onselen 1979). One former farm worker, who had worked on more than ten farms before relocating to a resettlement camp, summed up the problem nicely:

It's about money. If you are on a farm and they are not very good and don't give you enough money, then you have to go to another farm. If that farmer is not very good, he gives enough money, but the rations are not very good, you leave for another farm. If there is enough food and money, but he is cruel, then you leave his farm and go to another farm.

As to why the farmers are largely unaware that what they perceive as the nomadic character of the 'Bushmen' is an expression of job dissatisfaction, two Ju/'hoan workers explained:

Some of the people do that [disappear] and it is true. They will not tell him and just leave...Because his is afraid of the farmer. That's why he just leaves...It's because of what he [the farmer] will say and he is always on you [always bothering you]. It's why you'll go — leave in the night.

Other Ju/'hoansi I spoke to insisted that they generally feel obliged to give farmers notice before leaving, but that this often results in unpleasant confrontations that they would rather avoid. One farm worker explained:

You must tell him and say, "This kind of thing is not good for me"...Then you will have strong words and at that time he [the farmer] will get angry very quickly and then sometimes he will say, "vok off van my plaas af!" [fuck off of my farm].

Aside from low wages, poor rations, beatings and ‘strong words’, many Ju/’hoansi cited being forced to work on weekends as a major reason for quitting a job. Also, when Ju/’hoansi attempt to build up herds, the livestock often becomes a source of conflict between a Ju/’hoan worker and a farmer. One former farm worker explained why he left a farm:

It was because of the farmer’s son that I left that farm...Sometimes he hit me and he was not very good about my animals. He hit me because of my animals. The farmer said I must stay, but I didn’t like it, so I left.

Conflicts over livestock often arise when farmers unilaterally deduct grazing fees from a worker’s pay or pressure a worker to sell his livestock, either to adapt to drought conditions or to enable the farmer to add to his own holdings by compelling a cheap sale. One former farm worker’s description of his difficulties is fairly typical for Ju/’hoan men who had owned livestock in the past:

That farmer wanted me to sell my cattle [to him] and I didn’t want to sell my animals. When I left that farm, I wanted to leave with my animals, but the farmer told me that my animals would not leave his farm...He bought my animals.¹⁶

Giving gifts of livestock had been a method used by farmers in the past to keep workers on a farm. The fact that livestock does not compel the Ju/’hoansi to stay on a farm despite low wages and exploitative working conditions has been interpreted by farmers as evidence of the Ju/’hoansi’s innate lack of appreciation for the value of livestock. Many Ju/’hoansi I spoke to expressed a desire to build up herds, however, they also recognized that they always stood a good chance of losing their animals, both on and off the farms. Those who are able to take their livestock off a farm often lose them ‘on the road’ and in the resettlement camps, either because they are forced to sell to survive, or because their stock gets stolen. “It’s because of

¹⁶ This informant could not remember how much money he had received from the sale of his cattle.

moving around that I lost all my animals” is a common refrain among Ju/'hoan men who had once owned stock. In fact, leaving a farm and living 'on the road', even temporarily, is an impoverishing experience generally, as one older Ju/'hoan man stated: “For many years I travelled among the farmers to always leave some stuff behind on the farms.”

It is not always problems with a farmer that compel the Ju/'hoansi to leave a farm. The Ju/'hoansi must negotiate a delicate balance between creating and maintaining good relations with a farmer and keeping relations with fellow workers cordial. Too much success with a farmer often causes conflict in the workers' compound, or, worse, suspicions that one is a *witvoet*. Gashe, a former farm worker in his 50s, explained why he left that last farm he worked on:

It was about the jealousy of the people that I quit my job. I was working in the house and also with the cattle and I was doing all that kind of work there. And the farmer liked me and was giving me lots of things. Good wages — he was paying me well and giving me clothes, and the people were jealous of me. They were talking about me, saying that the farmer was giving me things and the farmer wasn't treating them well...It's why I quit my job.

N!osi, a young woman in her early 30s, had a similar experience on a farm where she worked:

The people were jealous of me, the people on that farm. They said that I got a lot of money and I'm eating up the food which they got in the past. The people were paid, but they wasted it on alcohol. My father didn't like the way the people were jealous of me...Every Saturday, they would go to the place where I was staying, when they were drunk, to talk about money and food. When my father heard about this, he came [from the farm where he was working] and took me away.

N!osi was one of the few Ju/'hoan women I met who had found a job on a farm independent of male kin. However, her kinless status on the farm seemed to have made her a target for open hostility from the other Ju/'hoan and non-Ju/'hoan workers. In both of these cases, the conflict was primarily among Ju/'hoan farm residents. Where conflicts occur between

Ju/'hoan and non-Ju/'hoan farm residents, they tend to lead to fighting and open accusations of *witvoetism*. Such conflicts are often worse than difficulties with a farmer since one lives with fellow workers and, when relations are hostile, the tension and social isolation can quickly become unbearable.

Decisions to leave a farm are not made lightly. Aside from the fact that leaving a farm often leads to the loss of the few possessions the Ju/'hoansi do have, there is always a good chance that they will remain unemployed. One former farm worker in his 30s, now living part-time in a resettlement camp, explained the situation this way:

My father also worked on a farm. That time was alright. When a farmer was not good to you, you just told him and went to another farm, because the jobs were not difficult to find. Now, at this moment, after independence, things changed. You can't get a job on a farm now. If you look for a job on a farm, the farmer will say he doesn't have a job for you.

Women generally have very little say in why or when they will leave a farm, or where they will move, however, they tend to resist moving off a farm, as far as they are able. /Xabe, who is in her mid-50s and has lived on five farms since she got married, told me:

On every farm I said, "No, we must stay." But my husband didn't want to hear me. On every farm I said, "We must stay," but he just took me away.

Koba's experience was similar:

The money was not good and my husband decided to leave and this farmer's wife didn't want me to go and I didn't want to leave. But I was married and that's why I went with him.

Two younger women, in their late 20s, explained:

[If her husband leaves] she has no choice, she must go with him...He can force his wife because she is his wife and he will beat her if she doesn't want to go.

Physical force is not always necessary to compel women to follow their husbands.

Particularly for women living far from their natal kin, following a husband is the only way to

avoid abandonment and isolation. When I asked Ju/'hoan women if it was not possible to stay behind on a farm, they consistently replied: "why should I stay alone?" Such a response reveals how important having family or friends to live with is for Ju/'hoan women: husbands provide access to employment opportunities and support through their farm labour; family and friends provide assistance in coping with conditions on the farms as well as companionship and a social life.

Not all decisions to leave a farm are made so arbitrarily. A few older informants described negotiating with their husbands about leaving a farm. For example, Di//xao, who is in her late 60s, describes how she and her husband debated about leaving the last farm they lived on to relocate to a newly created village project in the communal area:

No, I didn't like the idea to come here. It was actually his [her husband's] idea to come here because he said he is tired of moving around on the farms. He said we must come here, so he could have a place to stay and have a rest and have animals. I asked him, "Will it be good to stay there? Maybe we will experience difficulties with food." But he said that the government will support us with food. I argued with him, to say that "it is not our land, it is not the place where our family or relatives are. We don't have a donkey cart. Who will take me back to [Farm Z] to visit my family? Because on [Farm Z] is my brother and aunt and when will you take me there to visit them because you say we are going to a very far place?" I was arguing with him about it. But later on he won the argument by saying, "Do you want me again to be working along every farm — the farm [village] is actually a nice farm and that water is our water there. There we can just sit and rest at that place. Do you want us to move around the farms and, if we go to visit, to hear the farmer asking us 'when will you leave — for how long are you here?', like to say, 'are you here for one week, one month, a few days?'. When will we stop? Would you like to move around always to the farms, always to the farms. Are your legs not tired of always moving around?" It's how he won, and I kept quiet.

Women tend to resist leaving a farm because, if their husbands are unable to find a job on another farm nearby, they may find themselves squatting on farms where kin and friends support them, or living in extreme poverty in resettlement camps or squatters' villages around the Omaheke. For the most part, women are not bitter toward their husbands when

their standard of living declines dramatically after they have left a farm: many women appreciate their husbands' reasons for quitting their jobs. But marital relations do become strained when men are no longer able to support their families. It sometimes happens that women find themselves living in destitution off a farm because of a husband's poor judgement.

One particularly tragic example of this is the case of /Ui and ≠Aisa. I met /Ui and ≠Aisa during the first few months of my fieldwork. They were living on a farm run by a relatively young, affluent and liberal farmer. They shared a two-room brick house with their daughter, daughter-in-law and grandchildren (their son had found a good job in Gobabis and was looking around the Epako plakkersdorp for a place he and his wife and children could live). /Ui and ≠Aisa both collected pensions. ≠Aisa had retired from domestic service, /Ui performed small gardening jobs in return for the right to keep his few cattle and goats on the farm, and their daughter and daughter-in-law both worked as domestic servants in the farmer's house. This farmer provided higher wages and better quality housing than one finds on most farms. The farmer and his wife felt particularly close to /Ui and ≠Aisa because /Ui and ≠Aisa had worked for them for almost 19 years — ever since the farmer and his wife first purchased the farm. However, relations between /Ui and the farmer became increasingly strained as /Ui's drinking problem got worse. The more the farmer tried to stop /Ui from drinking, the more /Ui resented the farmer's paternalistic interference. One day, about six months after I first met /Ui and ≠Aisa, I heard from Ju/'hoansi on a nearby farm that /Ui decided to leave the farm and relocate to a nearby resettlement camp. The Ju/'hoansi who gave me this news all agreed that this was a mistake on /Ui's part. When I met ≠Aisa and /Ui again, they were living with /Ui's cousin — or rather sharing the drought relief food /Ui's

cousin's household received, since there was no room in the small brick house to accommodate the newcomers. When I next visited the resettlement camp, I found ≠Aisa sitting on a blanket beside a large pile of garbage that had become her new home. /Ui was drinking at the *tombo* across the road from the resettlement camp. When I asked ≠Aisa why she and /Ui left the farm, she said:

If you meet my husband, you can ask him. The reason is he is drinking and the farmer didn't like it. They didn't understand each other and that's why he left. But that farmer didn't want him to leave. But it's that farmer's tongue [the way he spoke to /Ui]. The farmer and the people hated my husband and he [the farmer] just looked after the other people and my husband is an old worker of his. It's why my husband left... We came here with our donkey cart and some of our things and that why we're here sleeping here outside and we are staying here with these people... I don't like to stay here... You don't know where to wash yourself or go to the toilet.

The resettlement camp where /Ui and ≠Aisa relocated is a former army barracks, not a farm (as are the other resettlement camps in the Omaheke), and so conditions are overcrowded and dangerous (i.e. there is a great deal of drinking and fighting). /Ui was unable to move his livestock into the camp because of poor grazing conditions and high incidents of stock theft.

When I asked ≠Aisa if she had also wanted to leave the farm, she said:

No! I didn't want to leave. I knew it's very difficult to stay here and that's why I didn't want to come here. I told him to just stay even if the farmer was angry with him and has arguments with him. Even if he says you are letting his workers drink and he is angry with you. Me and the farmer's wife, we understand each other very well and she knows that I am old now and that's why she let me stop working and I started to collect a pension. I stopped working and gave my daughter-in-law the work... But what should I do? Because I stopped working. Must I stay alone there?

≠Aisa's situation was a difficult one. Although her relationship with the farmer and his wife was amicable enough to enable her to stay on the farm without her husband, relying on the support and company of her daughter and daughter-in-law would make for an uncertain future. Both women might leave the farm at any time: her daughter-in-law was due to leave

the farm once =Aisa's son found residence in Epako, and her daughter was looking for a new husband, who, once found, she would follow to where he works. =Aisa's choice was to either separate from her husband and follow her children when they left the farm, or to follow her husband of 30 years.

Women also try to resist leaving a farm because men who change jobs frequently develop 'bad reputations' among farmers in the area they have already worked and so must travel further afield to find work. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, in such cases, women become increasingly dependent on their husbands and more vulnerable to mistreatment as they move further away from their own kin. Also, once a woman has travelled far from her own kin, her situation is especially difficult should her husband abandon her.

Although Ju/'hoan husbands and wives often disagree about moving off a farm, where conditions are particularly abusive concern for each other's welfare usually unites them in a common cause. In fact, women in such situations may initiate a move themselves. One older married couple, Beh and /Ui//au, explained why they both decided to leave a farm they worked on. /Ui//au said:

My wife and the farmer's wife will fight because of the money [low wages] and then the farmer and his son will beat this woman [pointing to his wife]. Then I will get angry when I hear her crying. I run up from the veld — and when I came, the farmer tried to stop me. Then I take her back to our house.

Beh added:

We experienced difficulties with that farmer...Later on, I said that they must add to my wages and they said that I'm a trouble-maker and we fought about it and the farmer's son and the farmer beat me. After that I got unhappy and I told my husband to leave with me because otherwise they will kill me...[When the farmer beat my husband] I was unhappy. I said, "The farmer is beating you — come let's escape."

Although job dissatisfaction, and poor relations with the farmer or with fellow workers, often provide the motive for leaving a farm, a strong positive inducement to occasionally hit the road is provided by family ties.

iv) Family Ties - !Xuma's Great Escape

Suzman echoes conventional wisdom in the Omaheke when he claims that the control farmers exercise over the Ju/'hoansi has caused "families beyond the nuclear group [to] remain on the whole dispersed" and that "as a result of the breakup of kin groups, and the fragmentation of the central defining feature of Ju/'hoan social organization, the Ju/'hoansi have been unable to establish a sense of solidarity" (1995b:7). The view that Ju/'hoan family ties are weak and continually unraveling was also expressed by many of the farmers who were willing to concede that Ju/'hoan familial bonds even exist. Given the pervasiveness of this point of view, it is useful to ask: how strong are Ju/'hoan family ties and do they provide for solidarity and forms of self-identification subversive to the political structures on the farms?

One evening, during my second visit to the field, I was sitting around a camp-fire with my husband, my interpreter and a small group of Ju/'hoansi. We were all listening to !Xuma relate his experiences as a child apprentice on the farm where he grew up (we heard some of !Xuma's story in chapters four and five). !Xuma told us about how the farmer tried to keep him isolated from his sister and the other Ju/'hoansi on the farm and how he felt about being separated from his family:

[The farmer] will tell me that I am not allowed to stay with those people because they will make me dirty. If I want to visit them, then I must go [sneak] around. Then I will go back with the same road around. But if I go straight to their houses, then I will be

beaten...When I'm sleeping in the night, I will think about my people and then I will say "what will it help if I leave to go to my family? Then they will take me to jail."

Relations with the farmer began to sour in the early 1970s, around the time !Xuma was in his early 20s and he began to think seriously about finding a wife:

They [the farmer and his wife] actually didn't want me to have a wife. They wanted me to grow up first, because I was just a youth...I don't know what that farmer wanted from me. [After I was married] I was doing farm work and my wife just stayed at home. Only when the farmer came [to the farm] on weekends did she work...Later, the farmer took me [to his house in Gobabis] and would drop me on his farm on Saturdays and collect me again on Sundays. We didn't live together and later I said to the farmer "I took that woman as my wife and I love her." Then we stayed together in town...I stayed with him. But he didn't want me to go and visit my family because I was now grown-up and I was worrying about my parents and brothers. My wife also asked me "where is your family? Do you not have a family?" Then I said "Yes, I have family, but the farmer doesn't allow me to go visit them." The farmer said I didn't need anything. He gave me everything...He gave me two goats, two horses, four cows and said "this is what you were working for." But my life was very difficult. Even if we are talking about these [other] things, I kept thinking about my family...When I grew up and had a baby myself and saw that those people were wasting me, then I got clever. It's why I left everything behind and escaped. Because for years I didn't see my family...I escaped from them [the farmer and his wife] and then we hitched to Welkom [twenty kilometres east of Gobabis]...We left in the night then went along the tarred road.

By marrying, !Xuma had asserted himself against the farmer who had raised him, and who had kept him from contact with other Ju/'hoansi. His wife's questions about his natal family helped to heighten his already emerging sense that the relative affluence he owed to the farmer's paternalism was poor compensation for the loss of his own Ju/'hoan family. But as !Xuma's narrative continues, he recognizes that he had lost more than his family - he had also been deprived of the knowledge of the veld on which much of Ju/'hoan autonomy and identity depends:

Then always we kept beside the road and we walked and walked and walked and you must know that at that time I didn't know about veldkos and we came to a spot where there were lots of marambas and cucumbers. That day I almost died of hunger. Then I didn't know about wild food, but my wife knew and on our way, she was gathering

marambas and cucumbers and I said “leave those things out, come on, let’s go.” I almost died of hunger - it’s only that woman who helped me. That day she was collecting cucumbers, but I didn’t worry about that stuff. The next day she did the same and she cooked it and they ate it [his wife and children], but I just stayed with hunger, because I didn’t know about this food. The next morning we woke up and continued our trip and I was so hungry I began to tell her it’s time to go back to the farmer, but then I will think that maybe they will beat me to death, because it’s now the third day in the veld. And my wife also said “come, let’s go!”

!Xuma's dilemma — torn between the material security represented by the farmer on whom he has depended since childhood, and his fear of the farmer — reverberates with the contradictions of paternalism. But his wife's urging combines with his fear to carry him onwards:

The next morning she collected the veldkos again. The last night I slept with hunger and that day I was so hungry I become unconscious. On that day I was so weak. I was a very strong young man, but because of the hunger I couldn’t walk. That day I was so weak and she really helped me - gathering wild food. The only thing I did was take the 5 liter jar and go to fetch water. After I drank it I laid down. I don’t know what was wrong with me those days because a car ran over a springhare and I asked my wife “what is that thing?” and she said “it’s a springhare. It’s the thing the San people call /hom.” Then she brought it and I looked at it and said “oh, it’s the kind of thing my father killed.” And she cooked the springhare. It was because of her that I’m still alive. That woman was very smart. That woman helped me to survive, if she was not there, then I would die, or turn back. And then I was just laying while I was eating it and I just ate and ate and then I ate a piece again and drank water as I lay down. Then after a while, I felt my strength was coming back and I’m getting stronger. Then we left.

Here, !Xuma gratefully acknowledges his wife's role in his recovery. But it is clear that she is also helping him to recover his identity as a Ju/’hoansi (“It’s the thing the San people call /hom ... it’s the kind of thing my father killed”). The extent of !Xuma's estrangement from his own people is sharply felt as his story continues:

Then we went to the road and came this way [to what was then the Herero homeland in northeastern Omaheke]. We were on our way to here. We hitched a ride on a government vehicle. I came and stayed with my brother at Tallismanus. But I was afraid of the Ju/’hoansi and I didn’t understand the language. If they speak Herero, I will speak Afrikaans. My wife also didn’t understand Herero. We stayed over night

with them. The next morning we continued our trip with a government lorry. They didn't know where I was going and neither did I. I told them to just keep going and drop me somewhere. They said "where are you going?", but I just said "take me along where you are going." That time it was very difficult for me.

Embedded in !Xuma's account of his struggle for autonomy from the white family in whose household he had been raised and the search for his Ju/'hoan family is the story of his loss, and eventual recovery, of a Ju/'hoan identity. The lorry carried him north, along the fence that forms the border with Botswana, until:

Then they dropped me somewhere where some people recognized me and I said those are the people I worked with [on the farm near Gobabis]. Then I asked them where my parents were, but they didn't know. Then I went through the fence of Botswana. Then I continued my trip close to Ghanzi and from there I took a gravel road. Then I found my father's sister, my aunt, but she also didn't know where her brother was... I'm still looking for my parents. I didn't know where they were and then I found a small dirt road which I followed. When I followed that road, I came to a cattle post and it was exactly the place where my father was living. When I got to them, my children were growing. When they saw me they said "where were you?" I stayed there with them.

As his narrative of his five hundred kilometre journey ends, !Xuma juxtaposes the reunion with his parents with the recognition of his own adulthood: "my children were growing.'

!Xuma eventually returned to Gobabis to find work, but he never returned to visit the family that had raised him.

!Xuma's story is a remarkable testimonial to the strength of Ju/'hoan kin ties (even if some Ju/'hoan families are widely dispersed). What is particularly fascinating about !Xuma's tale is the central role his wife, N!ae, played in facilitating the escape. First, she was a critical actor in destabilizing the ideological childhood imposed on !Xuma by the farmer's paternalism and she was also the catalyst to his eventual decision to leave the farm. Secondly, N!ae's veld skills and determination enabled !Xuma to survive in the veld and stick to his decision. It was !Xuma's wife who facilitated the use of the veld as a means of escaping and

asserting autonomy.

While I was in the field I had occasion to witness less dramatic 'family reunions'. Much of my fieldwork was conducted 'on the road' and I often travelled with a small entourage of Ju/'hoansi. Periodically, one of the members of our party would meet with a long lost relative while we were on the road and much laughing, hugging and excited chatter ensued. Reunions with closer kin, such as siblings and parents, were very tearful and usually meant much loud sobbing. Such episodes impressed upon me the importance of family ties to the Ju/'hoansi. Not surprisingly, the Ju/'hoansi value visiting very highly and travel great distances to visit kin whenever they can, even if only for a week or less. Kin ties not only facilitate such mobility by providing a support network for those living off the farms, either temporarily or permanently, but they also provide a powerful motive for leaving a farm and going on the road.

Conclusion

Family ties provide the main threads from which is woven a net of assistance and support on which the Ju/'hoansi depend for the degree of mobility and security they are able to have. This network extends throughout the farming district, passes through the resettlement camps and urban squatters' villages and into the communal areas. The fluid composition of Ju/'hoan households, and the additional reach of kinship categories provided by the Ju/'hoansi's ability to 'make family', can easily appear as if they were designed to merely facilitate mobility and subsistence in conditions of economic marginalization. Although they do serve those purposes well, this would be an unnecessarily reductionist view of households and kinship networks. Taking to the roads is often an expression of autonomy,

done for the sake of family and not merely facilitated by family. Despite oppressive forms of subjugation and exploitation to which they are subject as landless farm workers, and despite increasing pressures to fragment and nuclearize both families and households as wider economic forces rationalize farming operations, the Ju/'hoansi are able to resist complete domination to a remarkable degree. Networks of kin provide both the means and the motives for resistance, and the mobility they make possible is an assertion of autonomy, not merely means for subsistence.

Because the Ju/'hoansi are the most impoverished group in the Omaheke, mutual assistance arrives primarily in the form of labour, rather than material resources. The bulk of this assistance-labour is directed toward maintaining the household, and this is the work that women do: women co-operate to care for household members and share tasks, which has the advantage of releasing the labour of other women in the household who may then engage in waged work. Women's labour is also distributed between households, to form what may be called 'domestic networks' (see Stack 1974). These networks provide a basis for subversion, resistance and autonomy. First, these networks provide the means for escaping a farmer's control. Second, they undermine the distinction between 'domestic' and 'public' realms within the white economy. Domestic networks are de facto 'public' in the sense that they provide the framework for community life. Finally, this community life is one which the Ju/'hoansi largely make for themselves - it is a field of relative autonomy where the Ju/'hoansi interact with each other in terms of their own cultural values. The post-colonial political economic context encourages a rigid segregation of 'domestic' and 'public' domains, and the subordination of the 'domestic' sphere. However, the operation of 'domestic networks' links widely scattered Ju/'hoansi to form a recognizable community and

is a central resource in their survival strategies and their ability to maintain a level of autonomy: Ju/'hoan women are the crucial actors creating and maintaining these links.

CONCLUSION

“WHEN THE MAN WHO WORKS ARRIVES”

Their child nature shows itself in many other ways. They do not worry. They see their race dwindling, their land being invaded right and left. Yet when the sun shines and food is plentiful, they eat and drink and are merry and dance all night. They never fret about what may happen. That I think is characteristic of all Bushmen....

Few will be given the chance to survive and settle down as workmen. The change comes too rapidly to let them develop; when the man who works arrives, the hunter and food gatherer is doomed.

Dorthea Bleek, 1928

By way of a conclusion I provide, first, a brief overview of the argument of the proceeding chapters, reviewing the complex interplay of material conditions and ideology in how the circumstances of farm life are formed. I then review the methods by which this interplay of material life and ideology produces a hegemonic context through the dynamic interaction between the Afrikaners' world view and the Ju/'hoansi's responses to it. I then offer final reflections on how Ju/'hoan women are central actors in setting the limits to Afrikaner hegemony, and on how Ju/'hoan subsistence and survival strategies become an expression of autonomy and resistance.

Overview

In my first chapter I described how the conflation of the 'Bushman Problem' with labour shortage problems in the emerging settler economy created an environment where coercive labour recruitment strategies dovetailed into efforts to forcefully 'pacify' the Ju/'hoansi. However, the colonial community itself was not homogeneous and few administrators were willing to attempt an out-right conquest of the Ju/'hoansi, who were proving to be formidable adversaries in veld-based guerrilla conflict. It is very likely that, in

the context of large-scale land encroachment and the banning of Ju/'hoan hunting weapons and hunting activities, Ju/'hoan women's veld skills became all the more important in enabling the Ju/'hoansi to maintain a relatively autonomous life-way off the farms.

The system of farm labour that was brought to the Omaheke not only incorporated the Ju/'hoansi as an ethnic underclass, it was also highly gendered. Central in the process of rural class formation was the subordination of women to their menfolk, undermining women's relatively equal access to the means of a livelihood, and denying them access to what, in the eyes of the colonizers, was the means to civilization (i.e. 'work'). The class relationships that evolved in the Omaheke, especially between the Ju/'hoansi and their white 'masters' were (and are) profoundly stereotype-driven, however, these stereotypes are not simply 'racial' stereotypes, but are also integrally gender stereotypes.

As I emphasized in Chapter Two, production in the apartheid economy was not only a matter of regulating physical and economic space on the basis of racial/ethnic segregation and hierarchies, but was also based on the regulation and segregation of gendered spaces: not only is the political economy segregated in terms of male and female 'domains' of productive and reproductive work, it is also regulated by a system of gender-based coercion. In this way, the class system in the Omaheke was shaped by the interaction of attitudes about 'primitive' and female sexuality and proper 'women's work'. Efforts to incorporate the Ju/'hoansi into the farming economy involved relegating men and women into separate zones, wherein Ju/'hoan women were meant to be subordinated to male 'breadwinners'. Thus, the colonial program of 'domesticating' the 'Bushmen' became a much more literal project in the case of Ju/'hoan women.

Despite the powerful presence of these stereotypes in the relationships between

farmers and Ju/'hoan workers, the Ju/'hoansi retain an autonomous vision of themselves, both as agents in the wider economic history of the Omaheke and as agents in charge of their own survival. As we saw in Chapter Three, however, their sense of their own agency differs between men and women; where Ju/'hoan men see themselves as integral to the creation of a cattle-ranching economy and the enrichment of the farmers, Ju/'hoan women understand their own working lives in terms of just barely surviving. But by surviving as they do, both Ju/'hoan women and men continually assert their autonomy and challenge the farmers in at least three general ways.

First, as I described in Chapter Four, they manipulate the ideology of *baasskap* to their own advantage whenever they can and critique the farmers' performance as providers on the basis of the farmers' own standards of paternalism. Divisions within the Afrikaner power-structure on the farms, especially along gender lines, provide leverage the Ju/'hoansi use to gain an edge in conflicts with the *baas* or *miesis*. There are also varying degrees of acceptance among the Ju/'hoansi of the paternalistic behaviour of the farmers. Very generally, Ju/'hoan women, whose childhood experiences typically didn't include close relations with Afrikaner children, tend to reject the Afrikaners' 'familial' definition of the class relationship more thoroughly than the men.

Second, the most significant challenge to Afrikaner hegemony -- particularly their views about 'primitive Bushmen' and their views about their paternal relationships with 'their Bushmen' -- is the Ju/'hoansi's own sense of family and community. Although many farmers (and academic observers) believe that Ju/'hoan family-ties are dissolving, the Ju/'hoansi themselves place a great deal of value in maintaining kin-links and adapt their modes of kinship-creation to accommodate their political economic situation. We saw one

example of such adaptation in Chapter Five, where name-based kin-relations are activated in situations of extreme poverty. Changes in Ju/'hoan marriage practices discussed in the same chapter, and the correlation between those changes and the development of the commercial farming economy, suggest that the increasingly informal character of marriage arrangements among the Ju/'hoansi is a result of constraints imposed by work on the farms. These changes in marriage practices might, at first glance, suggest a weakening of other bonds among affinal kin; however, even though parents and other kin now play a smaller role in arranging marriages, this has had very little effect on the wider obligations that come with family membership.

Third, kin ties provide the main threads with which wider community networks are formed and through which assistance and support is provided. This network connects Ju/'hoansi in the farming district, resettlement camps, in the urban squatters' villages and the communal areas. As described in Chapter Six, the fluidity of Ju/'hoan households in most sites reveals a complex system of people and resource redistribution which enables the Ju/'hoansi to cope with economic adversity. By facilitating the redistribution and support of people, these kin-based community networks enable the Ju/'hoansi to assert autonomy by escaping from farms where conditions are particularly exploitive and violent. Yet, going 'on the road' is often also an exercise of autonomy done for the sake of family, and in this way kin-based community solidarity — although not militant or stridently vocal — is subtly subversive because it provides the cultural resources for modes of self-identification that are not controlled by the farmers' ideologies or popular/academic discourse. While providing the social and cultural resources for support and subsistence, family and community also provides the means and the motives for subversion and resistance. These kin-based

community networks are most often based on the household labour-sharing activities of Ju/'hoan women and, therefore, Ju/'hoan women are central actors in maintaining the means for Ju/'hoan agency and identity.

Persuasion and Accommodation

Any description of how the Ju/'hoansi cope with their material conditions will necessarily be a story of struggle, survival, resistance and accommodation. My aim was to outline the material conditions of existence as they are shaped by the ideologies and hegemonic attitudes of the colonial community and the farmers, to describe how the Ju/'hoansi respond to their context in thought and action, and to identify where the boundaries of Afrikaner hegemony lay and where the world of the Ju/'hoansi begins.

Hegemony is the result of a combination of force and consent (see Gramsci 1971:12-13, 57f; 80f; 106). As we saw in the first chapter, force comes in many forms — military, judicial, economic — which are fairly visible in their machinations. Consent, however, is more complex, since it involves both the agency of the subaltern and the ability of the dominant classes to exercise 'powers of persuasion', or to 'educate consent' (Gramsci 1971:259). Power, Comaroff and Comaroff tell us, operates on two levels: on one level, the dominant classes actively assert their persuasive powers by controlling "the production, circulation, and consumption of signs and objects" (1991:22); on the other level, power operates passively, by 'naturalizing' ideas and conventions, perpetuating unarticulated assumptions, and instilling these assumptions in habits of thought and action (ibid).

Just as there are different forms of force, there are different forms of consent which one may recognize by examining Ju/'hoan responses to their context; specifically, there is

consent based on habituation, and there is consent based on strategic compromise. In the first case, consent is the result of the need to cope with material conditions which are beyond the Ju/'hoansi's control, and where there is no opportunity to openly challenge the hegemonic assumptions shaping these conditions. Even though the Ju/'hoansi often challenge and reject the more explicit expressions of the farmers' racial ideologies, many, especially those of the younger generation, 'naturalize' gender subordination according to their own perception of 'tradition'. This makes gender subordination perhaps the most deeply hegemonic form of inequality within the cultural field of farm relations. Although the Ju/'hoansi did not express the attitude that women are *innately* inferior to men, the Afrikaners' hegemonic attitudes about female subordination gain ground when the Ju/'hoansi strategically consent to the farmers' terms in order to secure the means of survival. In other words, Ju/'hoan men form a consensus with Afrikaner men over the terms on which they can live on a farm and make a living, and these terms include maintaining a superordinate position over their women folk as household heads.

Historically, the notion of 'domestication' is a central metaphor within the hegemonic codes produced by the colonial community, which linked racial, class and gender oppression in the farmers' efforts to secure a cheap labour force. This metaphor of race oppression and class exploitation entailed a world of significations for Ju/'hoan women: the zoological language of 'breeders' and the economic segregation of gendered spheres of labour merged together to form a gender-specific context of exploitation. As socio-economic domains were being carved out, the value attached to the work done in the 'domestic' sphere was influenced, not only by conventional western attitudes toward 'work' performed in the private realm, but also by the Afrikaners' perceptions of Ju/'hoan women's personhood.

The Ju/'hoansi have their own points of view about the value and significance of the work they do: while men view their work as historically central in the creation of the country's economy, women see their work merely as a matter of survival ("we work to have life"). Yet, when one examines what survival involves, it becomes apparent that women's survival strategies mobilize kin-based mutual support networks that provide the infrastructure for the Ju/'hoan community. Their domestic co-operation subverts the ideological aspects of the sexual division of labour inherent to the farming economy, provides Ju/'hoan women — and men — with an autonomous framework for self-identification, and provides the basis for Ju/'hoan public life. While one can easily see the truth of Ju/'hoan men's bitter recognition of their role in helping to create the Afrikaners' world, what is not so visible is the critical role Ju/'hoan women play in maintaining the world the Ju/'hoansi make. Raymond Williams notes that resistance is "in practice tied to the hegemonic", but he also points out that

It would be wrong to overlook the importance of works and ideas, which, while clearly affected by the hegemonic limits and pressures, are at least in part significant breaks beyond them, which may in part be neutralized, reduced, or incorporated, but which in their active elements nevertheless come through as independent and original (1977:114).

Hegemony can set the parameters of opposition: it establishes the problems of survival that subaltern groups must solve. However, it doesn't determine solutions - the people themselves do, and in the case of the Ju/'hoansi, this involves mobilizing kin and drawing from their own cultural resources.

Reflections on Subsistence, Autonomy and Resistance

The Ju/'hoansi are the most impoverished, dispossessed and marginalized group in the Omaheke: they must contend with derogatory racial and gender stereotypes other, more

powerful ethnic groups use to justify their political and economic marginalization; they struggle to subsist under exploitative and oppressive conditions; they often fall into the downward spiral of malnutrition, alcohol addiction, and violence. Both Guenther (1986a) and Suzman (1997) note that the situation of the farm San can be overwhelmingly bleak.

Guenther tells us that the Nharo often described their lives in terms of '*sheta*', which referred to "poverty, unemployment, oppression, impotence, home- and landlessness, despair, sickness and death" (1986a:50). Suzman (1997) also found a sense of helplessness among the Ju/'hoansi he spoke to in the Omaheke, who were disillusioned, 'bitter' and 'defeated' after the elections following independence failed to produce improvements in their lives. I found many similar attitudes among the Ju/'hoansi I spoke to - many were, for good reason, in despair over their plight. However, even though the Ju/'hoansi often despair of their situation within the Omaheke political economy, they place a great deal of hope in each other.

The Omaheke Ju/'hoansi face two broad sets of problems: first, those posed by the adversity of their economic and material conditions which, day by day, set for them the problems of subsistence and survival. Second, the problems posed by the racial ideology of dominant ethnic groups in the region, which represent the Ju/'hoansi as 'animals' or, in its more paternalistic forms, as 'children'. I have tried throughout to indicate that these are not independent problems. Racial ideology and paternalist micro-politics serve to naturalize the material and economic disadvantages, and thereby to justify poor wages and rations, poor living conditions, and limited access to social services. At the same time, the material adversities in the face of which the Ju/'hoansi must find ways to subsist are used to sustain and legitimate the paternalistic and racial ideologies. Their inherent nomadism is 'proven' by the daily sight of unemployed Ju/'hoansi hitching along the roads; their animality is easily

'confirmed' when they sleep outdoors next to their already overcrowded houses and when hungry Ju/'hoansi live off roots that grow in the veld; the child-like nature is made 'obvious' by the inability of these people of diminutive stature to handle responsibly either money or alcohol.

I have emphasized throughout that the Ju/'hoan women are swathed in additional layers of adversity, both material and ideological. The gendered nature of farmwork in the Omaheke has introduced a deep level of dependency on male kin for work and residency, and the only work suited for women is largely unacknowledged and unrewarded. The sexual mythology that surrounds them is 'substantiated' when Ju/'hoan women living on the periphery of towns or in resettlement camps, where their menfolk cannot find work, do not hesitate to sleep with Ovambo contract workers for only a handful of pennies or for a bottle of beer, and then clean their houses for them before they leave.

In the daily struggle to subsist, the distinction between problems posed by material adversity and problems posed by ideological adversity must seem, in the dismissive sense of the term, 'academic'. But if the mutual reinforcement of material and ideological adversity sets the stage for the problems that the Ju/'hoansi face as they address daily issues of survival, then any stable response to those problems must simultaneously address both material and ideological constraints. I suggest that is precisely what the Ju/'hoansi's own distinctive kin-based domestic networks do.

There is ample reason to suspect that the survival of the pre-colonial Ju/'hoansi in the harsh environment of the Kalahari and the surrounding sandveld depended crucially on the kin-based band system and the sharing ethos that it sustained (see Lee and DeVore 1976 et al). It should not be surprising, then, that many of these same cultural adaptations remain the

central instruments of Ju/'hoansi survival in the adverse material conditions they face as a landless underclass in the commercial farming block. But we overlook something important if we see the Ju/'hoansi's distinctive kin-based sharing and assistance networks as merely 'instruments' for survival in adverse material conditions. When people survive *on their own terms* and not according to the terms offered to them by others, survival is itself an expression of autonomy. And when merely surviving becomes, in this way, an expression of autonomy, their daily struggles for survival inevitably become acts of resistance. The kin-based household and domestic networks, and the sharing ethos they sustain, are Ju/'hoansi's own distinctive instruments of subsistence, but also the source of their autonomy and resistance. As I have emphasized throughout, the detailed weave of those household and domestic networks, and their maintenance, is the work of the Ju/'hoan women.

!Xuma's story from the last chapter nicely illustrates these linkages. For !Xuma, his marriage marked his return to the Ju/'hoan community from which he had been separated by 'adoption' into a white family, but it was also an act of defiance; both his marriage and his eventual escape from the paternalism of his white 'father'-*baas*, who tried to preserve !Xuma in perpetual and dependent childhood, were at the same time a journey into the autonomy of adulthood within the Ju/'hoan community. His quest for his Ju/'hoan kin merged, in !Xuma's own words, with a quest to recover his Ju/'hoan identity. Finally, as his story also made vivid, the recovery of !Xuma's family and identity was, whenever !Xuma's resolve weakened, facilitated by both by his wife's persistent reminder of the importance of his family and by her knowledge of the veld. In important ways, !Xuma's story was a success story. He now lives with his surviving kin in the San Village Project in the communal areas, where the Ju/'hoansi are working to build their own farm. !Xuma has recovered his language

and is a respected leader in the community. During the three months I spent in the village, the Ju/'hoansi discussed many of their problems and worries with me, yet they have proven remarkably irrepressible - there were very few nights when the villagers did not gather around someone's fire to sing and dance together.

Although the Omaheke Ju/'hoansi were "given the chance to survive and settle down as workmen", they have survived very much on their own terms. Dorthea Bleek was perhaps right to say that "when the man who works arrives, the hunter and food gatherer is doomed", but the nearly complete disappearance of the hunter and gatherer from the Omaheke should not be taken to signal the disappearance of the Omaheke Ju/'hoansi.

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