

### Conclusion

At the end of the Second World War, anthropology was on the rise. While archaeology as a discipline has always been more local in its concentration of interest, social and cultural anthropology was based on comparison and centred far away from southern Africa, in Europe and North America. Through Schapera's youthful library research and the gradual worldwide dissemination of other writings on Bushmen, the time was right for a North American or European takeover of Bushman studies. It would be North American, but it would begin in a most unlikely manner and most certainly not within the professional tradition of a Franz Boas or a Radcliffe-Brown.

Bernard, Han. (2007). Oxford: Beag

np53-58

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## Amateurs and Cultural Ecologists

Modern Kalahari ethnography has its origins in a melting chocolate bar and the economic failure of the first microwave oven. At the risk of oversimplifying, let me explain the chain of events.

The Raytheon Corporation, founded in 1922, was active in developing radar during the Second World War. After the war, a Raytheon engineer working with a tabletop radar contraption noticed that his chocolate bar was melting, apparently as a result of microwaves. Laurence Marshall, co-founder and chairman of the corporation, was keen to develop peaceful post-war pursuits for his company. The 'radar cooker', as he called it, seemed to fit the bill. However, he had a good deal of trouble selling the idea to railway companies or any other likely consumers. Fellow directors at Raytheon opted to pursue other ventures instead, and Marshall sold up his shares, retired and took his family off to study the Bushmen, who, he believed, lived a more peaceful existence than the 'civilized' societies of the West (see J. Marshall 1993: 22-6).

### The Marshall Family

#### *Lorna Marshall and the Marshall Expeditions*

Laurence Marshall was born in 1889 and died in 1980. His wife Lorna was the proud owner of the prototype microwave oven until 1978, when it was moved to a museum. She was born in 1898 and died in 2002. Laurence and Lorna and their children Elizabeth and John each had a role to play in the family's expeditions and in their work among G/wi and especially among so-called !Kung Bushmen (now known as Ju/'hoansi). Laurence took part in all the family's eight expeditions – the Peabody Museum Kalahari Expeditions (1950, 1951 and 1952-3) and the Peabody-Harvard Smithsonian Kalahari Expeditions (1965, 1956, 1957-8, 1959 and 1961) – primarily as organizer and still photographer. For ease of reference, Lorna preferred to call them simply the Marshall Expeditions. She was there for most of them, though not the first or in 1956 and 1957-8. She acted as the main ethnographer, while Elizabeth wrote as well, and John was responsible for filming.

Lorna once told me that her family's original plan had been to study animal behaviour, but friends at Harvard had warned them that a certain degree of

expertise was required for that, whereas, they said, with virtually no training at all almost anyone could do ethnography. Be that as it may, none of the Marshalls were 'trained' before they went; Laurence had studied civil engineering, and Lorna English literature. That background seems to have been more than sufficient, because what they eventually produced was some of the finest ethnography of any people, with well-ordered detailed accounts of social organization and religious belief and practice far superior to those of many professional anthropologists.

The Marshall Expeditions included a number of other people, some with relevant specializations, such as botanist Robert Story, musicologist Nicholas England, archaeologist Robert Dyson and physical anthropologist Eric Williams, and others with local knowledge, such as Fritz Metzger. To me, Metzger is the most interesting, especially here in comparison with Lorna. Metzger grew up in the area, and he had himself authored a children's book, *Naro and His Clan*, written originally in German but first published in English in 1950, just a year before he joined the Marshalls. Essentially, it is a biography of a Ju/'hoan man, though it is told with some license. While hardly the most cited book on Bushmen in anthropology, it has seen a number of editions, including a new and better English translation (Metzger 1993). *The Hyena's Laughter*, a subsequent book of Bushman fables 'collected by Fritz Metzger' (Metzger 1995 [1952]), plays with the mythology, rather than retelling it verbatim in Bleek and Lloyd fashion. Both are splendid texts, and the irony is that they are undoubtedly more widely read in Namibia today than the works of amateur ethnographer Lorna Marshall, who, by turning professional in at least one respect, that is, in the audience she sought, left any potential large local audience behind.

Lorna's most important articles were the seven published in the journal *Africa* between 1957 and 1969. Together these comprised almost a full ethnography of the Ju/'hoansi. The four on social organization, together with some added material, for example on subsistence and on play and games, eventually formed the basis of her book *The !Kung of Nyae Nyae* (L. Marshall 1976), and the three on religion provided the central material for her later book *Nyae Nyae !Kung Beliefs and Rites* (L. Marshall 1999). *Nyae Nyae* was Lorna Marshall's spelling for the area variously referred to on maps as Neinei, Nyae-Nyae or Nyainyai, a corruption of Ju/'hoan N/hoan!ai (Dickens's orthography). The Ju/'hoan term designates a somewhat more specific area, but Marshall and others have used it broadly for the !Kung or Ju/'hoan area that lies in north-eastern Namibia along the Botswana border.

Lorna's most interesting work is probably that on religion, but she rightly became famous for two significant ethnographic discoveries: Ju/'hoan kinship terminology (including the naming system) and the mechanisms of sharing. The former (e.g. L. Marshall 1976 [1957]: 201–42) is a complicated system which enables each Ju/'hoan to trace their relationship to every other Ju/'hoan in what I later called a universal system of kin classification (e.g. Barnard 1978). Where genealogy ends (or even before, hence the complications), it works through personal names: a namesake

is a grandrelative, and, for example, one's grandrelative's sister is one's 'sister' and one behaves towards her accordingly. Through such systems, hunter-gatherers in the Kalahari and in many other parts of the world maintain social relations. However, where everyone is classified as 'kin', in a sense there are no kin. Mechanisms of sharing thus take over some of the functions of kinship, and Lorna (e.g. L. Marshall 1976 [1961]: 287–312) demonstrated the workings and interrelations of good manners, meat-sharing, gift-giving and social control. The full meaning of all this would have to wait until the fieldwork of Polly Wiessner in the 1970s (e.g. Wiessner 1977), but Lorna's findings were enough to give significant inspiration to Marshall Sahlins in his essays 'The Original Affluent Society' (Sahlins 1974 [1968]: 1–39) and 'On the Sociology of Primitive Exchange' (1974 [1965]: 185–275).

Lorna Marshall's work does not fit precisely into any theoretical niche. In some ways it is more reminiscent of the classic British tradition than the American one, for example in its implied emphasis on the social functions of customs witnessed and in its concerns with social over psychological explanation in ritual. But there was something new as well, at least new for Bushman studies: the recording of details of subsistence activities, including plants utilized, along with material on the relation between environment and social relations. Although not overtly theoretical, then, Lorna's ethnography came to occupy a comfortable position among those interested in unencumbered description (common in American anthropology through much of its history), those who like functional explanation (more common in the British tradition) and those who favoured a more ecological approach. The last was fast gaining favour in North America, especially in hunter-gatherer studies, thanks to the popularity of Julian Steward's *Theory of Culture Change* (1955) and Elman Service's *Primitive Social Organization* (1962).

### *Elizabeth Marshall Thomas and John Marshall*

Elizabeth and John both made their names in time, Elizabeth as a writer and John as a documentary film-maker and activist. As is well known to Kalahari enthusiasts, Elizabeth wrote a popular account of the expeditions called *The Harmless People* (Thomas 1959), but she later also wrote a further travelogue of the family's expedition to Uganda, two works of fiction set in Palaeolithic Siberia, and, in recent years, popular books on dogs and cats. One of Elizabeth's earliest writings (an assignment at Radcliffe College) was an anthropological story that won her a short-story prize, and it is said that it was that experience which led to her taking on a book-length account of the family's travels through the Kalahari. She remains a best-selling author, although unlike her brother she would mainly put the Kalahari behind her and move on in her work to other things – although from time to time she has gone back to her experiences with non-violence among the Ju/'hoansi (e.g. Thomas 1994).

*The Harmless People* remains Elizabeth's most important book for anthropologists and is her only one on Bushmen. Although clearly a travelogue rather than ethnography, the emphasis is on the daily activities of the people she encountered rather than on the Marshall Expeditions. The details of Bushman life given in it have long been cited by anthropologists, including Sahlins. It is interesting that she chooses to talk about the family's experiences among G/wi or G/uikhoë of what was then Bechuanaland (whom she calls Gikwe) as much as among the Ju/'hoansi of what was South West Africa (whom she calls Kung). She even at times makes comparisons between the two groups, although comparison was certainly not central to her purpose.

John Marshall began his film-making career in 1950, when his father gave him his first sixteen-millimetre movie camera. He was only seventeen at the time, but he was in the right place: with the !Kung, as they became known, in the northern Kalahari. He claimed he always just filmed 'people', that he was not an 'ethnographic' film-maker but just made documentaries, and he made them all in the same way, with the focus on people, whether he was in the Kalahari or with the police in Pittsburgh – his other major topic of documentary film.

John's spoken version of the first Marshall Expedition, revealed in an interview with Carolyn Anderson and Thomas Benson (1993: 135–6), emphasizes the chance nature of it all. His father Laurence had been to Cape Town the previous year to try to sell a radar system to the harbour authority there and had met a surgeon called E. van Zyl. Van Zyl was a romantic who wanted to find the fabled lost city of the Kalahari. Laurence returned in 1950 with John, after it had been recommended by J.O. Brew of the Harvard University's Peabody Museum that a search for 'wild Bushmen' might be more fruitful than a quest for a mythical Phoenician civilization.

So we went looking for 'wild Bushmen', with the expedition to find the lost city. We got to a place called Kai Kai and Van Zyl took a final assault in the morning to find the lost city and we all waited at Kai Kai while the doctor and his brother, the senator, went out to find the lost city. And they came back and said the Herero had moved it during the night. So we didn't find the lost city, but Dad met two guys named /Qui !gumsi and a guy named //Ao N//oro. And Dad asked them, if he brought the family back, same time, same place next year, would you be here, would you take us to meet your families, who they explained, lived by hunting and gathering purely. (John Marshall, in Anderson and Benson 1993: 136)

Of course, they returned in the following year, and the rest is history. But what John says about the apparent lack of interest in Bushmen at that time is revealing too about both American anthropology and the unique nature of the Marshall field-work.

We tried to find an ethnographer or a graduate student who wanted to go and study daily life of hunter-gatherers on the plains of Africa. We couldn't find one. Isn't that incredible? We went through Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Chicago, and a couple of other places that Dad called up ... Dad said he'd back them for a long time, for an in-depth, long-term study because he thought that would be unique, and nobody responded. (John Marshall, in Anderson and Benson 1993: 136)

One wonders what might have been the response at Harvard or Yale if he had suggested a search for the lost city instead.

In the 1950s John made many excellent, short documentaries on aspects of Ju/'hoan life. Most were released commercially only many years later, for example *A Joking Relationship* (released 1962), *An Argument about a Marriage* (1969), *A Curing Ceremony* (1969), *Bitter Melons* (1971) and *Debe's Tantrum* (1972). However, his most famous film was *The Hunters*, shot in 1952 and 1953 and released in 1957. This depicts four men chasing after a single giraffe over a five-day period. Unlike the short films, this is not quite literally a documentary. Contrary to popular belief, it is not based on a single hunt. And, to quell another myth, nor did any such hunt end with John shooting the giraffe with a gun, and shooting the film as if the Ju/'hoan had killed the giraffe. In reality, the film was compiled from footage of several different giraffe hunted at different times, with the footage legitimately run together to make one coherent story. It was to influence generations of anthropologists and anthropology students for the better, but, by John's own admission many years later, it did give the mistaken impression that Ju/'hoan territories are based on animal habitats. John was a rarity in anthropology: one who readily admitted his mistakes.

Other famous films include *N/ai, the Story of a !Kung Woman*, shot in the 1950s and released in 1980, and *Bushmen of the Kalahari*, a National Geographic film about John's long-term relationship with the Ju/'hoansi, released in 1974. It was shot in the early 1970s in Botswana at a time when John was not allowed into South West Africa (later Namibia), with additional much earlier footage. Although his father was allowed back and indeed had bought land in the territory, John was, because of his political activism on behalf of the Ju/'hoansi, denied entry for many years. Like a number of other enlightened modernizers, he later tried to encourage cattle herding over other means of subsistence. After Namibia's independence, he argued in lectures that the changes Ju/'hoansi were undergoing should be seen not as a transition from hunting and gathering to farming, but as development from dependency to self-support.

John Marshall supplemented his film-making role with extensive but, as here, often quite controversial work in advocacy. He also held the very noteworthy distinction of the longest experience with San of any ethnographer, having first visited Ju/'hoansi in 1950 and maintaining contact with the same group of people from that time virtually until his death in 2005. While not in general given to print

as a means of expression, he co-authored with Claire Ritchie a splendid monograph (Marshall and Ritchie 1984) which documents the changes that had overtaken the Ju/'hoansi of Nyae Nyae between his last lengthy period of residence there in 1958 and his and Ritchie's further study of the area in 1981. In 1970, the South West Africa Administration had demarcated what was termed Bushmanland, a long east-west strip cut out of Ju/'hoan territory, with the area to the south declared Hereroland and the area to the north earmarked for a game reserve. The Ju/'hoansi strenuously objected, particularly to the establishment of a game reserve, and in reality Ju/'hoansi were confined just to the eastern half of Bushmanland. The western area was never their traditional territory, and it lacked resources. Eastern Bushmanland simply could not sustain the population forced into it, by hunting and gathering alone.

His advocacy came alive in film through the five-part series appropriately titled 'A Kalahari Family', shown in preliminary versions in the 1990s and released commercially in 2002. The family is meant to be that of Lorna's informants Toma and !U and their descendants, whose lives and relations with the Marshalls, with government authorities and eventually with development organizations are traced from the 1950s to the year 2000. The series, and especially the final film *Death by Myth*, provoked great controversy because of its allegedly one-sided portrayal of the dispute in the 1990s between John and the directors of the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia. He had spent his own money and efforts on setting up the organization several years before, but was sidelined by the newcomers among the directorship, and the issues are still not resolved.

Parts of 'A Kalahari Family' depict altercations between Ju/'hoansi and outsiders and arguments among Ju/'hoansi, but those among development workers over the future of Ju/'hoan livelihoods are the most significant. John led the call for modernization, and he had used some of his late father's money in the early 1980s to encourage cattle herding. His opponents, including long-serving development worker Axel Thoma in the 1990s, preferred attempts to enable Ju/'hoansi to regain a hunting lifestyle, for example to circumvent wildlife legislation by tagging game so that it is 'owned' like livestock but still 'hunted' traditionally. The situation has long been far more complicated than that, of course, but John always liked to display his objection, whether in his own films or to journalists, to putting Bushmen into what he so eloquently called 'a subsidized plastic stone age'. Film was, in part, his means to portray the dangerous ironies of political intervention, especially when that intervention aimed at restoring an inappropriate lost world.

### Silberbauer, Lee and the Western Tradition

Interest in Bushmen would grow through the 1950s, thanks to the Marshalls themselves and also to two others: Phillip Tobias and Laurens van der Post. Tobias was

an anatomist, Raymond Dart's successor as Professor of Anatomy at the University of the Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg. In the 1950s he participated in several expeditions to the Kalahari. His influence was significant in South Africa, and in many ways marks a natural transition between earlier times and the modern era exemplified by the Marshalls. He was also important in bringing Bushmen to the attention of a wider anthropological public through articles in general scientific journals like *Nature* and the *South African Journal of Science*, in anthropological journals like *Man* and *Africa*, and in encyclopedias and semi-popular works (e.g. Tobias 1978b).

Sir Laurens van der Post was the face of the Bushman to the worldwide general public, but the interest he attracted rubbed off on anthropology too. There was no love lost between him and the anthropologists who followed, though. He mistrusted 'scientists' with their specialized knowledge and inability to think beyond the confines of their disciplines; and they disliked his mysticism and self-promoting ego, his inability to speak any Bushman language, the short duration of his time in the Kalahari, and his cavalier attitude to differences between Bushman groups (see Barnard 1989; Jones 2001: 211–39). Van der Post wrote a number of books and articles in which Bushman thought or Bushman characters appear, the most famous being his early two-part travelogue *The Lost World of the Kalahari* (van der Post 1958) and *The Heart of the Hunter* (1961). The books were preceded by the six-part BBC series *Lost World of the Kalahari*, aired in Britain in 1956 with viewing figures then second only to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II three years earlier. Van der Post interspersed his travelogue in the country of Naro, G/wi and Ju/'hoansi with accounts of /Xam mythology collected by 'an old German professor' (Wilhelm Bleek), thereby at least resurrecting in the public mind the richness of Bushman folklore. However, anthropological interest was turning to 'scientists': Phillip Tobias, Lorna Marshall and soon the likes of George Silberbauer and Richard Lee.

### George B. Silberbauer

It is hard to know what makes a great ethnography. Bushman studies have been blessed with many, but Silberbauer's (1981) *Hunter and Habitat in the Central Kalahari Desert* remains my own favourite. The book describes an ethnographic present many years before its publication date, when between 1958 and 1964 Silberbauer spent much time at intervals of a few months each visit living with the G/wi. *Hunter and Habitat* is extraordinarily readable, written in a non-technical style but with plenty of detail on habitat and natural resources, hunting and gathering and the use of animal and plant products, band structure and territoriality, and kinship and religion. The original thesis version (Silberbauer 1973) contained a fold-out flow chart with over 200 interconnected boxes, and apparently it