

- uffajee, Feral. 1994. "Bringing Comfort to SA's Women." *The Weekly Mail and Guardian*, 28 January to 3 February.
- rschmann, David. 1993. *Democracy and Gender: a Practical Guide to U.S.A.I.D. Programs*. Genesys Special Studies No. 9, 16-17. Washington DC: USAID Office of Women in Development.
- rschmann, David. 1994. *Urban Women and Civil Society in the Eastern Cape*. Grahamstown: Rhodes University Institute of Social and Economic Research Working Paper No. 63.
- aatjies, Daniel, and Philip Bailie. 1993. "The South African Politics of Transformation and the Implications for Non Governmental Organisations." In *Development in Transition: Opportunities and Challenges for NGOs in South Africa*, ed. Paul Styger and Martin Cameron, 20-31. Pretoria: Development Society of Southern Africa Conference Papers.
- odder Newsletter 5, no. 1 (1993).
- obinson, Pearl, T. 1994. "Democratization: Understanding the Relationship between Regime Change and the Culture of Politics." *African Studies Review* 37, no. 1: 39-67.
- hmitter, Phillipe. 1991. "Society." In *The Transition to Democracy. Proceedings of a Workshop*, ed. National Research Council, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, 16-25. Washington DC: National Academy Press.
- epan, Alfred. 1988. *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- ipp, Aili Mari. 1994. "Gender, Political Participation and the Transformation of Associational Life in Uganda and Tanzania." *African Studies Review* 37, no. 1: 107-31.
- 'alters, Shirley. 1993. "Strengthening the Position of Women in NGOs in South Africa." In *Development in Transition: Opportunities and Challenges for NGOs in South Africa*, ed. Paul Styger and Martin Cameron, 281-89 Pretoria: Development Society of Southern Africa Conference Papers.
- 'altzer, M. 1991. "The Idea of Civil Society: A Path to Social Reconstruction." *Dissent* 19 (Spring): 293-304.
- ama, Linda. 1991. "Theories of Equality. Some Thoughts for South Africa." In *Putting Women on the Agenda*, ed. Susan Bazilli, 57-61. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.

Human Rights and Democratization in Namibia

Some Grassroots Political Perspectives

Megan Bieseke
Rice University

LOCAL LEADERS AND LAND RIGHTS FROM AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

When the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) came to power in Namibia's first post-independence election in 1990, many Namibian minorities expected a great deal from campaign promises they had heard. They assumed that their voices would be enfranchised at last in areas like regional representation and environmental planning. Hoping for political participation on a national scale, newly formed grassroots political organizations and their enthusiastic but inexperienced leaders first practiced their skills at home by organizing their own communities. But for many of these people, long regulated by kin-based consensus and by moral, rather than hereditary or elected leadership, community organizing presented direct contradictions to their accepted egalitarian practices. New patterns of leadership which seemed to be required, thus posed engrossing social problems both within and among communities.

One grassroots group that brought quite a few communities together was the Nyae Nyae Farmers Cooperative (NNFC), an organization of over 1000 Ju/'hoansi—once hunter-gatherers living in small groups of 30 to 50 people—in far northeastern Namibia. Begun in 1986, it evolved in tandem with a mentoring organization, the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia (NNDNF), an NGO founded originally in 1981 with overseas backing. This article traces the activities of the NNFC in regard to establishing minority political power around the time of Independence.

Social Change, Development, and Rural Peoples: International Perspectives

The article concentrates on the view upward from the grassroots represented by the NNFC and by other minority organizations, such as that of the Himba pastoralists in the northwest. However, it is useful to begin with a downward view toward such groups from a national and international perspective. The perspective taken on grassroots groups by governments and development organizations, I believe, has a strong effect on what these struggling local entities may ultimately be able to achieve in the way of salience and effective power.

In particular, I have in mind a broadly accepted stereotype of what emergent local leadership should "look like" once it is in the post-colonial position of trying for enfranchisement in a nation state. "After apartheid" is a ready catch-phrase in Southern Africa, denoting a supposedly open horizon for indigenous peoples to make their mark "in their own way." International awareness of the problems and political challenges faced by indigenous minorities in Africa and worldwide has increased exponentially in the last decade. However, there is a way in which international liberal/left ideology may sometimes impose a single procrustean view of effective leadership on a myriad of diverse local traditions. Local communities and their leaders try to fit in with this stereotype lest they risk invisibility. In doing so, they may lose sight of traditional strengths on which they could have built, and may cause themselves undue conflict and confusion in the process.

The Ju/'hoan people are a case in point. They are understood to be fiercely egalitarian by anthropologists, a characterization supported by the understanding that they have very particular kin-based altruism and resource distribution patterns as well. Nevertheless, they are expected by the development community to make a quick transition to representational leadership and a regional political vision of sharing, once the obstacles of colonialism and Apartheid are cleared away. Formerly, the Ju/'hoan *n!ore kxaosi*, oldest men or women core-group siblings in whom stewardship of resource and habitation areas were vested, maintained coordinating relationships with other *n!ore kxaosi* which involved balancing giving and strategically withholding access to key environmental resources. With independence in Namibia, both national and developmental expectations

were that these leadership and resource management attitudes would vanish overnight and give way to smoothly functioning democratic structures and attitudes of commitment to the health of the region as a whole.

The application of an international stereotype of leadership and community management in the Ju/'hoan area of Nyae Nyae was a long and subtle process.¹ Briefly stated, its effects have been confusion of various sorts among the *n!ore kxaosi* and their communities between newly elected leaders and their constituencies, and, perhaps most tellingly, between the struggling new Ju/'hoan polity and the space tenuously saved for it in the Namibian governmental arena. A specific example is the potentially dangerous feud over land and power that has been fostered between the extended families of two formerly cooperating *n!ore kxaosi* by the very process of selecting leaders for the NNFC and defining leadership roles. Worse, as the Cooperative has become in the eyes of the Namibian Government the local traditional authority in the absence of a headman tradition, the political representation structure for the area as a whole is now threatened by this same process.

A politically correct rhetoric of "coming from the people" has been used in this case both by the Ju/'hoansi's NGO mentor and by the Namibian Government. It is widely said that the people have created a new democratic structure to serve the interests of their people—now living in some 35 communities in Nyae Nyae—as a whole.²

This hopeful rhetoric has served to mask quite deleterious effects. It has been unrealistic to expect that Ju/'hoan leadership would rally without conflict to a regional or even ethnic cause. New Ju/'hoan leaders have been expected to transcend both the long-tenured social attitudes of their relatives toward non-self-aggrandizement and their own past altruism practices as they forged new public selves and organizational functions. Individuals have suffered mightily in this process, and communities' early faith in the new leaders has been steadily eroded by seeing the widening gap between old and new social values.

Yet the pressure to conform to outside expectations of efficiency and altruism increases every day. The danger of distortion by expectation must be taken into account as we assess the well-intentioned mentoring processes now becoming widespread in development efforts. Unconscious models as well as conscious ones can affect developing local political structures, and in some cases spell disaster for peoples with internal governance still functioning.

This view from above reflexively introduces my topic of grassroots political views of democratization from below. New leadership and decision-making structures are implied in every new response being demanded from Ju/'hoan and other minority communities by national reorganization after independence and the end of apartheid. Many of the most pressured responses have occurred around the basic demand to hold on to the land base, felt as the prerequisite to all other areas of development.

My story goes on in the form of a brief narrative regarding Namibian land deliberations in 1991. These deliberations and the events that surrounded them had profound effects on the NNFC and its leadership. The stresses this leadership in turn was experiencing as it tried to forge new patterns of community organization in Nyae Nyae had complex effects as well upon the outcomes of the all-important land allocation process.

"They WERE informed about the allocations: it was on TV!"

The above quote came in January 1991 from the white schoolmaster of a tin-roofed school on the remote border between what were then called Eastern and Western Bushmanland. He had been questioned in connection with surprise land arrangements made by the new government in the West which caused an outcry in the East.

Between independence in Namibia in 1990 and the National Conference on Land Reform and the Land Question there in 1991, certain land allocations were quietly made to inhabitants of Western Bushmanland by the Lands Ministry prior to articulation of policy or legislation. The people living in this area were for the most part ex-soldiers, Khoe, and Vasekela Bushmen, who had worked for the South African Defense Forces (SADF) against SWAPO. They were literally starving after the departure of the SADF—and they had very few televisions. The allocations made were in the form of five-hectare plots to male heads of households. Many of the Western Bushmanland people went along with the allocations, thinking they were being given garden plots to use in addition to "the bush" in general, never dreaming that these plots were both their first and final chance to have and use land in Namibia.

Later, during the Land Conference and its aftermath, this allocation model was called into question by local groups and by NGOs. They argued that local, traditional land use patterns and extended-family distribution of resources were much more likely than this model to produce a living on Kalahari sand. They pointed out that the new Ministry of Land,

Resettlement, and Rehabilitation may have been generalizing from a Namibian model, but one that presupposed a riverine environment such as the Okavango, far to the north. They asked for long-tenured patterns such as hunting-gathering to be given status as recognized forms of land use. They also pointed out the social and gender implications of the five-hectare policy, and asked for attention to varying ethnic family arrangements in land allocation.

Today, however, more than four years later, it is questionable whether the environmental, social, and gender dimensions pointed out at that time have informed the thinking of Namibian ministries to any practical extent. To all intents and purposes, ongoing attempts at uniformitarian policy for communal lands are still modeled on agricultural and fishing communities along rivers. There, high rainfall, river irrigation, fish supplies, and the familiar stratified social structure and agricultural work ethic of the Ovambo population majority combine to make a reliable subsistence possible. For other areas of the very arid country, this model may be regarded as an inappropriately imported one.

In the Western Bushmanland case, as in many other cases for potential allocation in Namibia, this model was inappropriate for at least four reasons. The Bushman' groups there and to the east shared social characteristics of complex, rather than atomistic, extended-family relationships to land and of gender—and general—egalitarianism. They shared an economic background, generally stated, of extensive rather than intensive land use based at least partly on foraging, of relative mobility of lifestyle, and of intercooperating, interlocking patterns of land use based on local resource territories—*n!ores*—with environmental specificity. "How could we find our food if our neighbors fenced it off from us?" one resident of nearby "Eastern Bushmanland" (Nyae Nyae) protested. "We have to know the land well and be able to look for our food when it ripens, if necessary in all directions."

The gender implications of the five-hectare policy were even more inappropriate for some of the "least sexist" (Draper 1975, p. 77) people ever described in anthropology. Ju/'hoan' ("!Kung") Bushmen living just east of the Khoe and Vasekela were incensed at the idea that this policy might be extended to them, and awareness of the threat it posed to their society spread quickly just before the 1991 Land Conference. Because of the protest that arose at that time, the first wave of allocations

was not allowed to proceed further east toward Nyae Nyae. After the conference, the Nyae Nyae delegates were rewarded by hearing from the then-Minister of Lands, Marco Hausiku, that their own *n!ore* system—along with its gender egalitarianism—would be used as the model for allocation in their area.

Soon afterwards, however, Hausiku went to another ministry, and his successor's team has proved resistant to the idea of alternative models. To date, no local alternatives have really been considered, despite efforts to diversify thinking on environmental and social grounds. Some of these efforts have been derailed as "romantic anthropological conservatism;" others have been just plain invisible due to their being mounted by ethnic groups with little clout.

This story of land-use modeling introduces my topic of bottom-up perspectives on democratization in Namibia. I have called these perspectives "bottom rung," but they can be thought of as "grassroots" as well. In fact they are doubly "grassroots" in presenting the view from a peripheral minority while also taking an on-the-ground perspective on what is possible in a given local ecology. Where grazing and other agricultural use is contested ground, "grassroots" is an appropriately concrete metaphor.

Ju/'hoan and other Bushmen, though long at the bottom of an apartheid-structured society, are not the only Namibian minority who had to face discrimination against ancient land-use patterns. Like them, many others had to face non-recognition on the part of the government and development community, that tried and true ways of life on the land represented legitimate forms of land use in the first place. The examination of core-periphery issues and their environmental consequences comes down, in the end, to a study of whose social arrangements, whose relatedness to the land, will have political salience as new democracies engrave their policies in writing. Following are some of the specific social processes affecting enfranchisement of minority voices and local environmental ideas in Namibia as it continues to emerge from apartheid.

The "Dismantling" of Apartheid?

Apartheid social relations and formal political structures were liberalized in theory about a decade before South-West Africa became Namibia in 1990. In actuality, racial and ethnic stratification persisted

strongly until independence, when the incoming SWAPO government challenged itself to quickly raise new democratic relations from a complex colonial legacy. Ju/'hoan and other Bushmen, treated as a bottom rung even below other non-Whites on the Apartheid ladder, were one of 11 ethnic groups a new multiracial democratic ethic was going to have to include—at least according to SWAPO rhetoric and international expectations. Today, four years after formal independence, many real democratic gains have occurred, but there is a deep underlayer of economic structuring that is racial in nature.

An excerpt from a 1993 interview⁷ with Gwen Lister, publisher of *The Namibian*, the newspaper that performed powerful fourth estate functions for the democratizing country, alludes to these groups and their expectations. Lister was asked by Andrew Perrin about a possible downside to "what many people have argued is SWAPO's best point, that it's ended up being probably the most democratic new government in Africa." While lauding Namibia's consensual adoption of its admirable new Constitution, she nevertheless said:

...People like the former combatants, like many of the former have-nots before Independence, still haven't really gained from this independence now. And I think that this is a pity because if SWAPO had been slightly more socialistic, we might have been able to bring those people along with us...Democracy is one thing and capitalism quite another...[At the Land Conference] about all they could come up with out of a set of recommendations was that they would try and discourage checkbook farming...and people who have monopolies and owned twenty farms to kind of reduce the amounts. But nothing was really done to fulfill the aspirations of the people who really want land. And I think there's no doubt that the reason they haven't done that is because they are afraid that they are going to jolt the white business community.

In his thesis, Perrin speaks of a "revolutionary anemia" which became apparent in Namibia after its internationally acclaimed Independence process. Though in many ways the new government was to be applauded for its adherence to liberal expectations in the human rights arena, "something about Namibia looked strange" (Perrin 1994, p. vii).

Economic and social apartheid continued to hold de facto sway long after the "white flight" to South Africa, and many minorities, particularly those living on communal lands, found revolutionary rhetoric increasingly empty as one after another of their hopes for a new society were disappointed.

Between 1991 and 1993, communal lands dwellers witnessed the dismaying spectacle of land-hungry people from other marginalized communal lands, as poor as they themselves were, traveling around the country looking for land. In so doing they perforce had to completely bypass the great national percentage of commercial land—some 60 percent (Marshall 1989, p. 7)—long ago sequestered to white land ownership, on which a mere 5 percent of the Namibian population lived. These realities pitted communal-lands inhabitants and landless squatters against other communal-lands inhabitants on the remaining 40 percent of the land in the country. Until the Lands Ministry and President Nujoma himself were challenged to put teeth into their assurances of reasonable protection for local authority on new settlement, a free-for-all period occurred during which there was local civil unrest over illegal land seizure and occupation.

GRASSROOTS PERSPECTIVES ON LAND, RESOURCES, AND REPRESENTATION

Particularly shocking and disappointing to communal-lands dwellers were the new national processes of geographical delimitation and of the establishment of regional representation. In 1991 two Commissions were established to study and recommend on these topics—one on "Delimitation" and one on "Chiefs and Headmen." Though attempts by these Commissions over the next years to consult with local communities were themselves laudable, the results were patchy and confusing, and in the end decisions from on high were handed down to a mystified population. These decisions took few environmental or ethnic realities into account, and have been criticized as serving the prominent national majorities. To date, regional representation eludes both Eastern and Western Bushmanland, for example, though from the years of discussion and meetings on this topic between people's groups and government there was vibrant expectation of a worthwhile outcome.

The hopes of the Ju/'hoansi and other Bushmen in the areas east and west of Tjum!kui (Tsumkhwe) administrative center to have the Delimitation Commission consider their local needs were dashed in 1992 when the Commission's report came out. Tjum!kui was lumped with much of former Hereroland in the new Region of Otjozondjupa. Though for population reasons neither Western Bushmanland nor the Nyae Nyae area could have hoped for regional autonomy, the very different land use and leadership patterns of Herero pastoralism pose a great challenge to Bushman enfranchisement in local politics. Bushman groups in many other new regions created at the same time have experienced difficulties in establishing local political voices. They not only have very low populations relative to their neighbors in the same regions; there is also the language factor (Khoesan or "click" languages are widely regarded as unlearnable by other Namibians, and are consequently rarely chosen as a language for interethnic communication). Besides this, Bushman groups often have very modest cultural styles regarding making their voices heard through representative leadership.

Both regional delimitation and regional representation had repercussions in terms of practical land rights. The government of Namibia is still, in 1994, in an extended process of establishing land tenure policies. Two technical committees (for communal and for commercial lands) have been considering the various options for dealing with land management and administration. One area of continuing vagueness is management of land in the communal areas (such as the former "Bushmanland") which comprise nearly 40 percent of the country.⁶

Improvement of livestock and crop production and provision of services in these areas is a stated goal. It is clear that local people in the communal areas and in areas surrounding national parks and game reserves wish to have greater access to natural resources, including wildlife and veld products. Efforts have been made by the government of Namibia, including the Planning Unit in the Department of Wildlife, Conservation, and Tourism, various non-governmental organizations, and local communities, to come up with policies that will increase the benefits flowing to rural communities from natural resource utilization. A policy framework is supposed to be structured to deal with issues such as trophy hunting, community-based resource management, and establishment of conservancies in which local people will manage resources

and retain benefits. Tourism is seen as part of this process: progressive, locally administered programs such as one set up even prior to Independence by the Himba in Kaokoland are seen as having potential in providing local communities with benefits from the presence of tourists.

But these locally sensitive programs require much more locally responsive administrative structures, ones that will have to be created whole-cloth out of racially structured former situations. In order to abolish the token homeland local government legacy of the colonial administration, the government of Namibia embarked upon its new system of local governments and regional administrations. As a result of the Delimitation Commission study, mentioned above, the former tribal and ethnic homelands structure has been eliminated and replaced with new regions that have been defined on the basis of a number of factors including population, infrastructure, presence of municipalities, and economic viability.

The former racially divided municipal governments have been merged into single municipal councils, and the communal administrations and former regions have been replaced with 13 new regions, of which Otjozondjupa is one. Each region has a regional commissioner who serves as an officer of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, a chief administrative officer, and an elected council.

The regions have advisory and planning authorities, and limited taxing capacities. The regional governments are not intended to fulfill a service provision or production function, which are still the responsibility of the central government ministries.

Though the report of the Delimitation Commission has been submitted, and the regions were officially proclaimed in March of 1992, evidence of the new structure was only unevenly apparent, in late 1994, although regional elections occurred early in 1993. Legislation to define the new structure completely is still in process. Many Namibians, whether at government or bottom rung level, agree that local government continues to be in a formative state. One can assume that new regional power bases will be formed, but at this time more questions than answers remain: How exactly will the local government structure be implemented? What will the relationship of the regional councils be to the national government? How will the headman/ward system be incorporated into the new structure? How responsive will the regional councils be to local constituencies? What relationship will local Land Boards, if any are indeed established, have to the regional councils?

The continuing state of indecision contributes to a sense of insecurity for local institutions, especially those in communal areas whose land tenure has also not been established. As with land tenure, indecision regarding the official status of local government creates disincentives for sustainable resource management. These issues will have to be resolved so that local communities will be able to embark on development and resource management programs with the full knowledge that they will receive the benefits from them.⁷

The delays in full deployment of regional governmental plans have had a good side to them, however: they have allowed time for politicization to occur among a number of bottom rung groups, and for both intra- and intergroup organizing to take place. This process has been led to some extent by the example of the Nyae Nyae Farmers' Cooperative, one of the first grassroots groups to organize. Formed in 1986, it has managed to gain a voice in local and national forums and to inform itself substantially about both participation in, and securing of, government services. This process has been in line with the contemporary realization by other world indigenous minorities that they can and must demand their political rights by becoming vocal on their own behalf. The 1991 Land Conference was the first in a series of national and international venues to prominently include Namibian Bushmen peoples and their concerns.

Alternative Land Use Models

The Land Conference provided minority peoples an unparalleled chance to have their voices heard on the specific topic of alternative land use models, and some of this material has had a chance at least to be incorporated into usable records. The Ju/'hoan Bushman people of Nyae Nyae, former "Eastern Bushmanland," had a well-prepared delegation which came to Windhoek with effective speeches and even graphics to illustrate their suggestions. Their map of their *n!ores* (resource and habitation areas) presented at the Conference *did* have an impact, partly because it was clear the Ju/'hoansi were making a *creative* approach to their own, very old resource rules. One year after the Conference (July 1992) and largely due to their participation in it, the Nyae Nyae people became the pilot group for a national project in local land use planning.⁸

Along with their map, the Nyae Nyae delegation pointed out to the Land Conference that:

- a. Land in Nyae Nyae is not overgrazed because Ju/'hoan settlement patterns supported the health of land.
- b. Ju/'hoansi plan to use the *n!ore* system creatively, not just conservatively.
- c. There are over 200 named *n!oresi* in Nyae Nyae, reflecting the availability of bush foods, breeding game, water, soils, vegetation types, and hydrogeology.
- d. Development can build creatively: aid funds have provided additional water points and income-generating activities.
- e. Sustainable development and a logical mixed subsistence can expand the number of families supportable on the same land area.

Delegates went on to explain the environmental concerns they were discussing in their grassroots group, and these concerns struck some responsive national chords. Here is one of the Land Rights Conference statements by Nyae Nyae Farmers Cooperative Chairman /'Angn!ao /'Un: "Pastoralists in one area of communal land, such as Hereroland, should not think in the new Namibia that they would be able to expand into other people's traditional areas and proceed to ruin them with large cattle herds." This sentiment endeared the Nyae Nyae delegation to the post-independence legions of overseas consultants and the media-conscious politicians they were influencing, even while angering pastoral interests which had been covertly eyeing Nyae Nyae's unspoiled grazing. However, it had the effect of underscoring the need for the participation of traditional local authorities in the regulation of new settlement and carrying-capacity issues.

What has followed in this story is the inevitable working through of the drama between these two opposed sets of interests, environmentalism and uncontrolled pastoralism. The tale is far from told even yet. To a great extent marginalized peoples have been, and will be, passive observers of this high-stakes drama. But the new government's democratic ideals, commitment to consensus on a national level, and inclusion of

splinter groups in consultative planning stimulated local attempts at organization in important ways. To understand the high expectations with which people like the Ju/'hoansi left the Land Conference, let us look back at the assurances they were given there in 1991.

The conference resolutions can be consulted on the one-page document appearing in *The Namibian* newspaper, 2 July 1991. Of most interest to NNFC/NNDFN were the following:

- a. No. 13, "Disadvantaged Communities." Special protection for "San" land rights was unanimously adopted by the Conference.

The NNFC decided that by giving inputs to the Lands Minister and the "technical committee" it should make sure that

1. This special protection can't be co-opted by some future government for reasons of economic expediency. They pointed to the disappointing example of Botswana, where game reserves and special statuses fell prey to pressure from commercial ranching, mining, and tourism. Legislation would eventually take place, it was clear, but the NNFC felt the specifics of these "protected" land rights must be put down in writing. The feeling was that these special protections should make communal land rights as secure as those being accorded to other Namibians, else Bushman people would be once again entering into some sort of "wardship of the state." Security of tenure, they pointed out, shouldn't depend on politics.
2. The concepts of "their land rights," "the San," and "special protection," they said, should be carefully defined.

These two problems were mentioned personally by the delegation to Moses Garoeb, the head of SWAPO, and to the President. All in NNFC, it was felt, should be aware of them and should speak actively in aid of solving them.

- b. No. 4. Government control of "Underutilized Land" applied only to commercial, not communal, land. (This was a relief to NNFC members.)

c. No. 2. "Ancestral rights." Restitution in full was felt impossible because of the historical complexity of the issue. It was felt politic for NNFC not to ally itself with the more conservative forces—such as Rehoboth—that were calling for things like this. Clearly the Conference was aware that Bushman peoples have the most extensive ancestral rights, and applauded the stance of NNFC in making modest demands based on historical realities and population numbers. The NNFC was rewarded for its creative, not conservative, promotion of the *n!ore* system, and there was national recognition of the fact that Nyae Nyae is not overgrazed, unlike adjacent areas.

To date, none of the above assurances and clarifications has meant much in actuality for the Ju/'hoansi or other minorities.

This disappointment has been of a piece with other failures in Namibia to realize early dreams of an equitable cultural and environmental mosaic to be built on the ashes of a complex but apartheid-strangled ethnic diversity. New ethnic awareness, to be sure, flourished in the exuberance of the removal of overt racial strictures, but it has been increasingly suppressed in practice by the various balancing acts necessary in both national and international politics.

JU/'HOAN WOMEN, ETHNICITY, AND DEVELOPMENT

Women's issues in Namibia were signaled by the events of early 1990. Women of all colors marched down Kaiserstrasse, renamed Independence Avenue on Independence Day, March 20, that year, under a banner which read "It is Unconstitutional to Oppress Women." Several women's cooperatives and media groups had long been active in underground fashion, and after Independence they had the opportunity to spread the word on a national scale.

Namibian Ju/'hoan women are relatively powerful in their society, in comparison to Namibian women in general. They embraced the outreach they experienced from Namibian women's groups, but were faintly puzzled by some of the supposedly mutual issues raised. In many nations of the world in the last few decades, the "oppressed" sisterhood of women has tended to be emphasized and the actual and differential

accesses to power they possess—because of what remains to them of tradition or what they have fought for—have been minimized.

Gender politics, and community relations in general, have a realistic ethnic dimension to be considered, particularly when competing visions of a democratic future are being negotiated in a single national context. Community organizing, whether by insiders or outsiders, builds, if it is effective, upon long-standing understandings. Similarly, gender activism by outsiders to a community can run aground by importing and organizing around gender inequities from the First World which do not in fact exist at the same level in the community. Gender inequities may in fact be unwittingly introduced by the development process itself.

In the Nyae Nyae case, sexual egalitarianism was still substantially the rule, although women's participation in formal public circumstances was the subject of proactive work by Ju/'hoan men and women alike, as well as by an NGO concerned with their development. Most of the proactive work, generally exhortative in nature but also involving conscious structuring, was focused around reversing the subordinate role expectations for women caused by the last few decades of exposure to Afrikaner, Herero, Tswana, and other male-dominant cultural models. Starting as early as 1987, development workers in the area tried to use comparative material from other societies to illustrate the need for Ju/'hoan women to be active in maintaining the extraordinarily high degree of social status they had traditionally. Development programs like subsidized cattle-purchasing, women's cooperative brick-making, needlework classes, and crafts outlets provided affirmative encouragement to Ju/'hoan women in Nyae Nyae.

These kinds of programs are springing up all over Namibia, as well, thanks to the influx of feminist ideas made possible by the end of apartheid media control. All Namibian societies are participating to some extent in the worldwide gender revolution, which is a vital part of the democratization of the national society. But there is always a balance to be considered with the old maxim, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Many marginalized societies retain vital social strengths (such as social insurance systems) precisely because they have had to, in making their accommodations within the world system. There is always the danger that while vectors of development may have sometimes unwittingly imported inappropriate gender conflict, they may have introduced problematic models of human relationship in general, as well.

Western Competitive Models in Development

Perhaps the most problematic part of the "view from below" of Namibian democratization has to do with the insidious reward structures of capitalism and their distorting effects on local social structures such as extended families. In the case of Nyae Nyae, family conflict and incipient core-periphery problems have emerged within the society partly as a result of well-meaning development efforts by Americans and Europeans.⁹ Many of these have to do with the inadvertent privileging of certain parts of the population (through employment, training, and education) at the expense of others.

Problematic exposure, also, to the competitive western model, which values "individualism" and "getting ahead" of others over communal values, has been an unintentional side-effect for the Ju/'hoansi of the close relationship with their development organization. It seems that competition, so thoroughly guarded against in the Ju/'hoan scheme of social and spiritual values, has posed an enormous cognitive problem for those Ju/'hoansi who would like to better themselves. They have to ask themselves, "Is this the only way to get ahead?" If the only models they see are divisive, if the only available answer to their question is, "Yes," the result will be, and has been, growing social dislocation.

Mechanisms long accessible to the people to promote and continuously restore harmony and sharing, like their healing dance, their *hxaro* gift-giving ties, and their emphasis on young people's learning ascetic disciplines to underscore their responsibility to society as a whole, are disappearing quickly as viable recourses. Observers feel the development process should be attending to, and building upon, rather than ignoring, these social strengths of Ju/'hoansi. This is true particularly now, when thanks to their efforts at building their own democratic organization and holding onto their land during the run-up to Independence, they have relative leisure to expand creatively on their heritage for the future.

Ways in which competitive models may have been unknowingly fostered by the development efforts themselves include:

- a. disproportionate elevation of "gifted" young people through training advantages, educational opportunities, and leadership promotion

- b. encouragement to disgruntled individuals to solve personal problems by disputing communal decisions
- c. premature labor organizing
- d. encouragement of youth disaffection with elders for its own sake
- e. inappropriate use of praise and rewards, particularly in education programs, which may have encouraged divisiveness and neglected the growth and learning potential of cooperating groups
- f. encouragement of consensual decision-making without regard to the responsibilities of those who break consensus for personal reasons.

These mistakes may have had the effect of polarizing the Nyae Nyae community along age, sex, and activity-preference lines. Importantly, the modes of thinking that caused them may have a tendency to be echoed in the larger relationship of the Ju/'hoansi to their national context in Namibia. Some factions within their NGO advocate encouraging them as a people, as it has unwittingly encouraged their youth against their older people, to pit themselves against cooperation in the national life, in the mistaken impression that they will only succeed as an enclave.

Others feel such a course is unrealistic, and will cause confusion and loss of political effectiveness for the people both internally and externally.

"Divine Discontent" and Democratization

Both national policies and development efforts originating overseas can unintentionally promote divisiveness in a small-scale society. Newly democratizing societies such as Namibia, making enormous changes in an era of unprecedented exposure to international media, fall prey to unrealistic expectations that cause community dissension. A pitfall related to the one above concerns inspiring inappropriate desires—for Western lifestyles or goods—which cannot realistically be fulfilled, or cannot be fulfilled without creating unequal privilege. Nineteenth century missionaries called this "divine discontent," feeling that the yearning for the material wealth of the developed world would have the effect of bringing savages into the Christian fold. Wanting Third World people to share

in a First World competitive value structure is every bit as culturally imperialistic as the missionaries' efforts. The mercenary focus of this approach is often deeply shameful to people for whom traditional sharing is the key to happiness. Participating in it then sets up unresolvable contradictions for them, and sometimes shunning by their neighbors. Chronic dissatisfaction itself can wreck formerly peaceful communities.

Western "political correctness," designed to rectify mistakes such as those the missionaries made, can itself be blind to what is really going on in developing societies. It is easy for an ideological perspective to see everything in its own image. In the case of Nyae Nyae, well-meaning gender activism and the promotion of individualism, especially since Independence, to name but two examples, created straw men which did not exist, or existed to a lesser extent, in Ju/'hoan society. The process of knocking them down, in turn, caused them to surface as problems artificially grafted onto the real situation. Vital energy was used in the process, which could have been turned to the service of a diverse but still intercooperating society.

Politically correct attitudes did here, as in other parts of Namibia, dictate a mentoring process between NGOs and peoples' groups. This was a good idea in itself, but contained little actual insight as to the genuine current situation of the people to be mentored. Anthropological information was rejected as conservative and irrelevant, and consequently a number of significant social mistakes were made in consultation and planning. Political correctness also called for consensual decision-making, but paid little attention to the actual communicative mechanisms long used for this purpose by the Ju/'hoan people. Unnecessary confusion was caused in the process, as well as widespread distrust of development programs' intentions. The resultant disorganization is all too obvious: current reports¹⁰ confirm an impression of increasing community disorganization.

A good argument can be made, of course, that the internal stresses and confusions the Ju/'hoansi are experiencing, even those with some roots in their relationship to outside agencies, are all part of the democratic process and must be allowed to proceed unhindered. The Ju/'hoansi seem to be making a necessary course correction for themselves right now, due partly to the problems they have sagely observed arising among individuals in their NGO. But certain mistakes made by all of us

in that organization have deeply shaken the foundations of current Ju/'hoan stability and may even threaten their credibility on the Namibian national level. Though rhetoric like "part of the process of democratization" have been used in Namibian government circles to gloss over the disruptive effects of certain kinds of development, neglect of the power of inappropriate models has in some cases had a clearly disabling effect.

In the long run, choosing and achieving appropriate models—social, environmental, educational—is what democratization is all about. Namibia as one of Africa's newest democracies is facing international pressure and international examples to an extent much greater than many faced by previously democratizing countries, just because of increased world communication, transportation, and aid financing. At the same time, it has had the advantage of exposure to current world thinking on environmental issues; witness President Nujoma's speech at the Rio Earth Summit, hailed as one of the most forward-looking environmental stances ever taken publicly by an African leader.

Namibia is also very different from neighboring countries like Botswana in that much of its current leadership was educated abroad and had the advantage of seeing and studying other forms of economy, resource planning, and land tenure. While Botswana's leadership was at home amassing personal investments in cattle ranching, Namibia's was in exile developing professional expertise. Some of this larger perspective has extended to indigenous politics, as even pre-independence, the influential Dr. Kaire Mbuende could write that Bushman societies were to be seen as particularly disadvantaged among Namibian societies due to the violence with which apartheid had transformed them. This he wrote in a SWAPO position paper which he is even now, as Deputy Minister of Agriculture, occasionally called upon to uphold in a practical way.

Environment and Indigenous Politics

In Botswana government dealings with marginalized peoples there has been massive resistance to anthropological considerations and/or special pleadings on behalf of Bushman peoples. The Namibian government, at least thus far, has been reasonably receptive to learning specifics about local communities and taking a respectful stance toward people openly acknowledged as the original inhabitants of the country. This openness

has been particularly notable in terms of planning for environmental conservation and resource use, if not yet in terms of actual communal lands allocation.

Because of enlightened attitudes toward environmental education, there is a chance that local communities in Namibia, such as the Ju/'hoan Bushmen, can share with fellow Namibians the enormously complex and rich heritage of their semi-nomadic foraging knowledge. "People's science" is a concept which is circulating in education and conservation circles there, as is the realization that the environmental information known to Ju/'hoan culture, though unwritten, constitutes precious intellectual property. There is the chance that oral knowledge that has long preserved their way of life can continue, in written form as school and adult literacy curriculum, to be a source of identity and of intricate environmental coping even in a changed future.

These and other progressive ideas were shared at a second Land Conference held 4-8 September 1994 in Mariental, south of Windhoek. This time local development trusts, aid organizations, and Namibian NGOs invited peoples' grassroots groups to what was called "The People's Land Conference." An estimated 400 to 700 people attended at different times, more in fact than at the first Land Conference, and they represented complete ethnic and geographical coverage of the country. Flyers advertising the meeting read thus:

LAND...THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF OUR LIVELIHOOD!

1. We had a big debate on land reform in June, 1991. Isn't it? What has happened ever since that big Land Conference?
2. Government is currently planning to finalize a Bill on Land. What is the content of that given Bill? Does it reflect our aspirations? Will we be allowed to have an input?...

Join us to discuss these and many other issues...Come and assist one-another for the design of action-plans that may lead to the speedy implementation of a meaningful Land-reform programme....

The language in this flyer (which includes colloquial Anglicized Afrikaans expressions appropriate both to the changed official language

of Namibia and to the previous majority language which was forced on all the ethnic groups) is a far cry from the uninformed stances of most of the original Land Conference's marginalized participants. Organizations supporting the new conference included many which were either formed or grew to prominence largely since Independence, such as the Namibia Development Trust, the Namibia Housing Action Group, the Namibian National Farmers' Union, and Samstaan Housing Cooperative. It had the support of both Oxfam Canada and Oxfam UK and Ireland, of the Desert Research Foundation, and of the former Programme Manager of the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation.

The NNFC participated along with Herero pastoralists in the delegation from Otjozondjupa Region and, as a former translator for the NNFC, I am happy to say they had no need at this conference for translators with white faces. The specific social processes of recent Namibian history, events like this one, have increasingly included many of those, like the Ju/'hoansi, who were once "on the bottom rung." This seems to give modest hope that their ideas and traditional models have some chance to persist—or to change organically by their own initiative, a pretty good indicator of democracy at work.

CONCLUSION

Thanks to newspapers like *The Namibian* and to general media exposure, the eyes of the world are on Namibia in ways previously unknown in post-colonial Africa. In the multicultural emphasis of the times we can be cautiously optimistic about the democratic outcome of this second land conference.

NOTES

1. I have dealt with this process in other writings: see Bibliography as well as unpublished reports to the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia.
2. I myself have participated in this sort of wishful thinking, but now believe it important to reassess the impact of such imported models and expectations.

3. "San" and "Bushman" as labels for a general group in Southern Africa are the subjects of ongoing debate among the peoples themselves, as well as by scholars and development workers. At present, some leaders of grassroots movements advocate "ennobling" the previously pejorative term "Bushman." This article follows their lead, especially since at several recent meetings of different groups in both Botswana and Namibia, no consensus on the matter of a group appellation could be reached. No group recognized "San" as its choice, either, and there is some feeling that this label may be even more pejorative.
4. "Ju/'hoan," meaning "real or ordinary people," is the name the people previously called !Kung in anthropological literature use for themselves. It is written here in the new orthography commissioned by the people's group, the Nyae Nyae Farmers' Cooperative (NNFC), which has been adopted by the Namibian Ministry of Education and Culture as the official orthography for schools.
5. For use of his interviews with Gwen Lister and other key Namibian figures around the time of Independence, I am grateful to Andrew Perrin. I commend his unpublished Swarthmore honors thesis, "Come the Revolution: Movement Politics and Namibian Independence," to the attention of interested readers.
6. For further information (here summarized) on traditional land management models in Namibia, exemplified by the Kaokoland Himba and the Ju/'hoansi of Nyae Nyae, see Hitchcock, Bieseke, and Green, 1993.
7. For discussions and material on regional government reflected on this page, I am grateful to Robert K. Hitchcock, whose knowledge of democratization processes in a number of southern African countries is extensive. I commend to the interested reader a comprehensive document by Dr. Hitchcock called "Communities and Consensus" (1993), which is a report to the Ford Foundation and the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia about the situation and view of the national context from the local perspective of the Nyae Nyae Ju/'hoan Bushmen.
8. For a detailed discussion of the environmental planning and consultation the Nyae Nyae community undertook with Ministries of the Namibian Government, and the process which led directly to the land use planning project, see Bieseke, 1992.

9. More detailed accounts of this process exist in the form of unpublished papers prepared by this author.
10. Personal (fax) communication, 24 October 1994, from educational evaluators (Windhoek) after a visit to the area, 14-16 October, paints a most disheartening picture of confusion and conflict.

REFERENCES

- Berger, Peter. 1965. "Towards a Sociological Understanding of Psychoanalysis." *Social Research* 32 (Spring): 32.
- Bieseke, Megan. 1992. "Integrated Environmental Development in Namibia: The Case of the Ju/'hoan Bushmen." Paper presented at the 91st Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association, San Francisco, California, December.
- Bieseke, Megan. Publication pending. "Eating Crow in the Kalahari: Leveling Lessons Taught by the Ju/'hoansi to their NGO." In *Indigenous Knowledge and Contemporary Social Issues*, ed. Susan D. Greenbaum.
- Draper, Patricia. 1975. "!'Kung Women: Contrasts in Sexual Egalitarianism in Foraging and Sedentary Contexts." In *Towards an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna Reiter, 77-109. New York: Monthly Press.
- Hitchcock, Robert K. 1992. *Communities and Consensus: An Evaluation of the Activities of the Nyae Nyae Farmers' Cooperative and the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation in Northeastern Namibia*. Report to the Ford Foundation and the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia and New York, 1992.
- Hitchcock, Robert K., Megan Bieseke, and David Green. 1993. "Development, Decentralization, and Natural Resource Management among the Ju/'hoansi of Namibia." *Society and Natural Resources*.
- Marshall, John. 1989. "The Constitution and Communal Lands in Namibia." Unpublished manuscript, 7.
- Mbuende, Kaire. 1989. "The San Minority." SWAPO Position Paper (unpublished).
- Perrin, Andrew. 1993. Gwen Lister, personal interview. Windhoek, Namibia, 2 August 1993.
- Perrin, Andrew. 1994. "Come the Revolution: Movement Politics and

Namibian Independence." Honors B.A. thesis in Anthropology, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.

ADDITIONAL GENERAL READINGS

Bieseke, Megan et al. 1993. "Land Rights, Local Institutions, and Grassroots Development among the Ju/'hoansi of Northeastern Namibia." *IWGIA Newsletter* 93, no. 2: 23-29.

Lee, Richard B. 1993. *The Dobe Ju/'hoansi*. Fort Worth: Harcourt, Brace College Publishers.

Solway, Jacqueline, and R.B. Lee. 1990. "Foragers, Genuine or Spurious? Situating the Kalahari San in History." *Current Anthropology* 31, no. 2: 109-46.

Multiparty Democracy and Ethnic Politics in Botswana

Grassroots Perspectives

Jacqueline S. Solway
Trent University

On 15 October 1994 the citizens of Botswana went to the polls for the seventh time since independence. While many people anticipated a rise in the number of opposition parliamentary seats (previously 3 of 40 seats) few expected a change of the magnitude that occurred. The opposition party (Botswana National Front - BNF) took 13 seats and for the first time in Botswana's political history posed a serious threat to the ruling party (Botswana Democratic Party - BDP).¹ They also increased substantially their number of local council seats. The leaders of the Botswana Democratic Party were shocked (Moeletsi 1994, personal communication). The opposition's strong showing reflects the political maturity of Botswana's multiparty system; it also reflects simmering discontent with the status quo.

Botswana has been singled out as amongst the most successful of African countries in sustaining multiparty democracy.² It has held free and open elections every five years since independence, which have occurred with minimal controversy. However, the reality of multiparty democracy has been compromised by the fact that the opposition parties have never been strong. They have suffered from internal disunity and a tendency to splinter; their poor showing means that they have never had the opportunity to put their policies into practice. But this has changed and with one-third of the parliamentary seats, many more local council seats than they had in the past, and a very strong showing in several other constituencies, the opposition will now have a significant influence in government.