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Developing Bushmen: Building Civil(ized) Society in the Kalahari and Beyond

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Introduction

ALTHOUGH OTHER conceptualizations of the term exist,¹ one definition of civil society has predominated in recent debates: that deriving from European liberal philosophy (Hann 1996, 5). Dating to Ferguson and the Scottish Enlightenment, at its most basic this liberal tradition holds civil society to be the process or realm in which society forges the normative basis for its collective political existence.² Some theorists in this tradition—Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, for example—have emphasized civil society's role in the formation of the social contract; others—notably Montesquieu and Tocqueville—have pointed to the importance of civil society in checking the power of the liberal state. In this century, the work of Jürgen Habermas ([1962] 1989), on the pluralist potential of "communicative action" in the "public sphere," has, for many modern analysts, revitalized the relevance of this liberal conception of civil society as the social arena through which governments are rendered accountable to, and consonant with, the values of the people they represent (e.g., Cohen and Arato 1992; Harbeson, Rothchild and Chazan 1994; Keane 1988).

In recent attempts to theorize the emergence of what is often termed global civil society,³ this liberal vision has increasingly been applied to the planetary stage. Like civil society, articulated against the formal structures of state and economy, global civil society has largely been conceived of as a sphere of nonstate, noneconomic global practices and institutions that provide

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a counterbalance to the increasingly integrated power of a world system ruled by nation-states and transnational capital.⁴ The worldwide burgeoning of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) features centrally in nearly all such discussions (see Fisher 1997), for NGOs—mobilized around specific social needs or values, and consciously identified as nonstate and not-for-profit—appear to be almost natural institutional embodiments of the liberal conception of the term.⁵

In spite of the pervasiveness of the liberal idea of civil society in both state and global political discourse, scholars with non-Western sensibilities have often challenged the notion as fundamentally Eurocentric. These critics have argued that rather than being a universally applicable analytic term, civil society is instead an ideologically charged ideal, grounded squarely in the cultural and historical specificity of the European Enlightenment from which it sprang (e.g., Chatterjee 1990; Hann and Dunn 1996). Viewed through such a critical lens, the liberal definition of civil society as occupying the social space between the state and the individual amounts to an assertion that both state-based political organization and Western-style individualism are unproblematic universals. Similar criticisms have also been raised about use of the term in the global context, for as Walker points out, global civil society discourse often tacitly "depends on the assumption that the world itself can be constituted as a bounded political community modeled on the state writ large" (1994, 696).⁶

Surprisingly often, however, scholars who critique the concept of civil society for its Eurocentric underpinnings themselves slip back into Western liberal frameworks in their analyses of the term. Azarya (1994, 93–94), for example, probes the assumption (e.g., Chazan 1992; Ekeh 1975) that associations must be voluntarily chosen, rather than ascriptive, in order to count as legitimate components of civil society. In an African context, he notes, where kinship ties and ethnic affiliations often form the basis for social collectivity, the exclusion of "primordial bases of association" from the definition of civil society is unwarranted:

[E]ven in a primordial public, one witnesses a transcendence to a larger collectivity that in most cases goes beyond family. Common action is taken and responsibility assumed on that collectivity's behalf; action is directed at achieving a common good even at the risk of individual cost. Hence one may see even in such activities a legitimacy for public action. (93)

For Azarya, common action taken on behalf of the collectivity—and not out of individual or family self-interest—marks the essence of legitimate civil society. His efforts to adapt the concept to an African setting notwithstanding, such a conception not only leaves intact a liberal notion of civil society; it also

reaffirms the ideological separation of domestic and public spheres, citizen and state, upon which that notion relies.

One possible reason for the intractability of Western presuppositions (see Karlström, chapter 4 of this volume) in critical analyses of civil society is that scholars frequently slip between discussions of the term as a liberal Western cultural construct—as a reified entity, like “the state”—and usage of the term as an analytic concept. Indeed, even those who are seriously committed to probing the cultural and historical specificity of civil society often seem remarkably determined, at the end of the day, to retain it as a universally applicable theoretical tool.⁷ Such a slippage is not surprising, I suggest, because civil society (the construct), like the state, is a central feature of liberal Western political ideology—and liberalism is the dominant ideology of the current global political system (as Basil Davidson [1992] has noted, there is no alternative to the international state system; and as Akhil Gupta [1997] points out, it is difficult even to think about society without employing liberal categories like “nation” and “state”). Given that, in the liberal tradition, civil society has long been conceptualized as *the* legitimate arena for social transformation and resistance, it only makes sense that liberal analysts, motivated by political concern for people who are relatively disadvantaged within the world system, would want to resuscitate the concept’s viability within the societies they study. To put it another way, civil society—even when recognized as a normative Western construct—has a way of nevertheless seeming like the only viable option for a progressive politics; under such circumstances, scholars have been understandably ambivalent about debunking the term in contexts like Africa.

For a number of analysts, one way around this dilemma has been to look for non-Western *analogues* to civil society—indigenous features of social life that can be seen as alternatives (different but equivalent) to the ways in which Western people negotiate the legitimacy of their governments (e.g., Harbeson 1994, 26). In the Africanist literature, scholars like Vansina (1990) have looked to vibrant precolonial political traditions for evidence of indigenous civil society, while others (e.g., Young 1994; following Mudimbe 1988; Davidson 1992) have suggested that the systematic refashioning of the political landscape by the colonial regimes destroyed these precolonial African structures and practices for the most part, leaving “only furtive, marginal space for a ‘civil’ society” in the present era (Young 1994, 38). Still other scholars (e.g., Bayart 1993) have focused on identifying African modes of producing political legitimacy and accountability in a postcolonial context.

While research along these lines may open up some room for optimism (about the future of democracy in Africa, for example), such an approach does not really represent a solution to the problem of Western bias in the concept of civil society. Since what is sought is an analogue to the Western, liberal notion, it is this latter conception that acts as the standard of comparison for indigenous practices or realms. In the quest for indigenous analogues, the

liberal conception of civil society is naturalized: non-Western modes of “political” practice and meaning are transformed into social “arenas,” “realms,” or “spheres”—all implicitly bounded—in which “individuals” or “citizens” produce legitimacy and accountability from their “governments.”

In the slip from critiquing civil society as a liberal, Western construct to recuperating the notion as a viable analytic category through recourse to such “solutions” as the quest-for-analogues approach, what is prevented is a sustained critical analysis of the ideological dominance of the Western construct in the first place. Hann comes close to recognizing that the dominance of the liberal idea of civil society itself merits scholarly attention, when he calls for anthropological research into

analogues to the discourse of civil society in non-European cultural traditions, and [into] the interaction of these specific cultural ideas with the putative universalism of civil society as this idea is exported across the globe. (1996, 2)

Because of his recognition of non-Western “analogues” to civil society, Hann frames the issue of exporting the “putative universalism” of the concept in terms of its interaction with other cultural traditions, stopping short of calling for a focus directly on the nature and consequences of this process itself.⁸

I pick up where Hann leaves off by examining the impact of the liberal discourse of civil society in a specific African context: the region of the Namibian Kalahari known as Nyae Nyae, home to the Ju/’hoan “bushmen.”⁹ More commonly designated by the broader linguistic term !Kung, the Ju/’hoansi¹⁰ are the iconic hunter-gatherers of southern Africa. Known to anthropology undergraduates everywhere via a series of ethnographic classics—Elizabeth Marshall Thomas’s *The Harmless People* (1959), Marshall Sahlins’s “The Original Affluent Society” (1972), Lorna Marshall’s *The !Kung of Nyae Nyae* (1976), Richard Lee’s *The !Kung San: Men, Women, and Work in a Foraging Society* (1979), Marjorie Shostak’s *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* (1981), and John Marshall’s films *The Hunters* (1957) and *Nlai, the Story of a !Kung Woman* (1980)—the Ju/’hoansi are also familiar to a wider audience through such popular accounts as those of novelist Laurens van der Post and the blockbuster film *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1981).

Needless to say, the Ju/’hoansi are not famous for their civil society. On the contrary, the very term “bushman” conjures an image of humanity at its least civilized, and indeed, its least social. Despite forceful scholarly attempts to debunk the “myths” surrounding people called bushmen (Gordon 1992; Wilmsen 1989a), sentimental ethnographies and novels, films, picture books, and travel guides too numerous to count continue to promote the image of them as occupying one extreme end of a continuum of human sociopolitical development (recent examples include Perrott 1992; Fourie 1994). “Bushman” do not even merit mention in Fortes and Evans-Pritchard’s (1940)

classic taxonomy of African political systems, so lacking are "kinship-based," "band" societies seen to be in any sort of analogue to Western modes of governance. Questions of ethnographic accuracy aside, depictions of people like the Ju/'hoansi as communal, decentralized, peaceful, egalitarian, and nonmaterialistic have rendered them more an appealing foil for the West than a political society in their own right.

While people like the Ju/'hoansi have generally not been accorded recognition as fully political in the Western imaginary, however, "bushmen" have nevertheless played a crucial role in liberal political discourse. Walker, in an attempt to think through the difficulties of extending the concept of civil society on a global scale, points out that beneath much liberal theorizing lies an implicit fantasy about the nature of originary humanity prior to the advent of a civilizing politics:

Once ripped out of its specificity in the civil societies of modern states, this line of analysis seems inevitably to dissolve into an ungrounded ethics or philosophy. Indeed much of the impetus for such a reading seems to draw on a *nostalgia for a fancifully imagined prepolitical world*, a world before the fateful rift between man and citizen. (1994, 696, emphasis added)

Although Walker does not develop the point further, his allusion to a "prepolitical" (and pre-Enlightenment) "world" rightly draws attention to the presocial human subject imagined as the point of origin for the transformative mission of civil society.¹¹ In the modern era, people like the Ju/'hoansi serve as indispensable symbols—nostalgic embodiments of humanity's presocial promise. As such, they are central tropes of the liberal imagination, and of its conception of civil society as well.

The Ju/'hoansi, however, are not merely implicated in discussions of civil society as mythic bushmen; they are also, of course, actual people—people who for the last twenty years have been recipients of substantial efforts on the part of a Western nongovernmental organization devoted to promoting their political and economic development. Thanks largely to the efforts of this NGO, the Ju/'hoansi have become intimately engaged with the liberal discourse of civil society, at both national and international levels. In part as a result of this history of engagement, and in part because their status as "bushmen" frees me from the liberal imperative to look for redeemable cultural "analogues," I submit that the Ju/'hoansi are "good to think with" about the global predominance of liberal conceptions of civil society.

I begin by exploring some of the specific ways in which the Ju/'hoansi have been represented in liberal civil society discourse; I then examine some of the contradictory effects of this discourse on the Ju/'hoan community in Nyae Nyae; and finally, I draw upon a Gramscian conception of hegemony to discuss the relationship that has been and continues to be forged between the

Ju/'hoansi and the liberal apparatus of global civil society. Ultimately, I argue, the sense of civilizedness that underpins the liberal notion of civil society is built on the backs of people like them.

Bushmen on the Brink of Extinction: "How You Can Help"

If bushmen are the canonical markers of premodern humanity, in recent years they have also come to be known as one of modernity's most canonical casualties. Perhaps nowhere are both points more eloquently made than in John Marshall's widely acclaimed film *N!ai, the Story of a !Kung Woman*, produced in 1980 to document the socioeconomic and cultural transformations that had taken place among the Ju/'hoansi in the years since Marshall and his family first conducted fieldwork among them in the 1950s.¹² *N!ai* begins, by way of explanation, with the following ominous lines:

In 1970, the South African government established a reservation on the Namibia/Botswana border which restricted 800 !Kung to an area one-half the size of their original territory. The reservation lacks sufficient food and water for the !Kung to continue their gathering/hunting life.

The opening shot shows a group of !Kung—familiar to most of us as lovely, harmless people—standing in a ragged line, hungrily waiting for rations of mealie meal to be handed out by a white man in military uniform. A female voice-over confirms the viewer's fears:

Before the white people came we did what our hearts wanted. We lived in different places, far apart, and when our hearts wanted to travel, we traveled. We were not poor. We had everything we could carry. No one told us what to do. Now the white people tell us to stay in this place. There are too many people. There's no food to gather. Game is far away and people are dying of tuberculosis.

Through the biography of one woman, Marshall's film traces the story of the !Kung's fall from grace at the hands of "the white people," following *N!ai* from her carefree childhood as a member of an independent !Kung band, to the late 1970s, which found her a melancholic tuberculosis patient, squatting on the outskirts of a grimy South West African administrative post. Contrasting vintage footage of Ju/'hoansi hunting in the 1950s with wrenching scenes of social conflict and despair from the late 1970s, the narrator explains that people like the !Kung have occupied the western Kalahari for at least 20,000 years, but that in recent decades, dispossession and government policies encouraging sedentariness and a cash economy have led to dramatic rises in inequality, jealousy, alcoholism, violence, disease, and dependency. The film ends with the recruitment of Ju/'hoan men by the South African military in

the war against the SWAPO independence forces in Namibia, leaving viewers with the sinking feeling that things will only continue to worsen for *N!ai* and her kin in the years ahead.

Nearly two decades later, more than a dozen sites on the World Wide Web address the plight of the Ju/'hoansi. Often displaying images of bushmen with bows and arrows and loincloths, these hypermodern Web pages reiterate, in large part, the bleak story outlined in *N!ai*. As one page produced by the Cambridge-based organization Cultural Survival puts it,

Thirty years ago, the Ju/'hoansi . . . represented the last totally self-sufficient hunter-gatherers in southern Africa. Held to the land by ancient and intimate ties, they had always lived autonomously, subject only to the law and custom of their own society. Over just three decades, they have lost both their independence and their land.

Citing South African policies promoting settlement and the establishment of bounded ethnic "homelands," the Cultural Survival page continues:

Over the years the hunting and gathering-based economy collapsed under the pressure of large numbers of Ju/'hoansi settled into a small area. There were few jobs and nothing to do. Ill health and hunger gave way to anger and despair. The death and infant mortality rates accelerated. . . . [When] the South African Defense Force began recruiting young Ju/'hoansi for their war against the South West African Peoples Organization (SWAPO), now Namibia's democratically elected government, . . . the high salaries and food rations given recruits caused deep divisions in the hitherto equitable Ju/'hoan community. (Cultural Survival 1996)

For some years now, debates have been raging in the scholarly literature over representations like these, which depict people like the Ju/'hoansi as having lived a timeless, autonomous, and stable existence in the Kalahari until relatively recent times.¹³ Reacting against decades of research on the ecological adaptation and cultural stability of hunter-gatherer societies (e.g., Thomas 1959; Lee and DeVore 1968, 1976; L. Marshall 1976; Lee 1979, 1984), historically minded scholars like Robert Gordon and Edwin Wilmsen have argued that the people called bushmen have been actively engaged in the economic, political, and cultural dynamics of the region for centuries, and that synchronic models of a cultural-ecological or structural-functionalist sort are no more adequate to the study of their societies than they are for any other African peoples (Gordon 1984, 1992; Wilmsen 1989a, 1989b). For writers like Gordon and Wilmsen, representations that depict bushmen as having been suddenly and recently thrust from a timeless, harmonious existence to "the brink of extinction" render invisible centuries of violent colonial policy toward

such peoples (Gordon 1992) and fail to consider wider processes of class formation in the region as a whole (Wilmsen 1989a, 1989b).¹⁴

Ironically, it is clear that neither Marshall nor Cultural Survival had any intention of erasing history in making their respective representations of the Ju/'hoansi's recent tribulations. On the contrary, both *N!ai* and the Cultural Survival Web page appear to have been produced precisely to draw attention to history's ill effects on such populations. History is less absent from such representations than it is located squarely in the realm of the very recent past (beginning, not coincidentally, around the same time that the Marshall family arrived to begin recording it). This presentist history has a very specific, unidimensional content: it is the tale of the Ju/'hoansi's victimization at the hands of "white people." Indeed, in both representations, the Ju/'hoansi appear to have been ushered into history—and modernity—by virtue of their collective experiences of dispossession and colonization. Without doubting for a moment that many Ju/'hoansi have suffered terribly from such processes over the last several decades (a point amply documented elsewhere), I suggest that their recent emergence in Western discourse as fully historical, modern subjects has been crucially linked to their being portrayed as inherently vulnerable, "on the brink of extinction."

My reasons for making such a suggestion have everything to do with what happened next in the Ju/'hoan story, in the years since the bleak circumstances depicted at the conclusion of *N!ai*. Since 1981, Cultural Survival reports, an organization called the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia (NNDFN) has been working to turn the Ju/'hoansi's situation around. Committed to helping them "regain their independence and self-sufficiency and to protect their remaining territories," the NNDFN provides the Ju/'hoansi with "training in cattle management and dry-land gardening"; it "develops water sources," "assists Ju/'hoansi to develop communication and organizational skills," and "provides health-care education, vocational training, and adult and primary education." For those who want to join in these efforts, the Cultural Survival Web page concludes with a section called "How you can help," explaining where to write for further information and how to send money in support of the NNDFN (Cultural Survival 1996).

In describing the work of the NNDFN, Cultural Survival offers a redemptive flip side to Ju/'hoan modernity. In place of the inequality, conflict, and despair brought on by what are framed as the corrupting forces of modernization, the development solutions proffered by the NNDFN are represented in the Web page as the tickets to regained Ju/'hoan "independence and self-sufficiency." More than just their luck has changed in the Ju/'hoansi's transformation from victims of modernization to recipients of modernity's benevolent help. Most significantly, underdevelopment has replaced dispossession and colonization as their primary problem. Rather than regaining their lost land and independence, Cultural Survival's Web page implies that what the Ju/

'hoansi need these days is better "organizational skills," "training in cattle management and . . . gardening," "vocational training," and "health education." Like the World Bank's characterization of Lesotho as a "less-developed country"—rather than a South African labor reserve (Ferguson 1994)—the Ju/'hoansi have emerged in the discourse of Cultural Survival as in need, above all else, of development. As Ferguson argues for the Lesotho context, elided in such constructions of "development subjects" are the many exploitative, racist, and violent historical processes that left them impoverished and disempowered in the first place.

Before I discuss the implications of this "antipolitical," developmentalist reframing of the Ju/'hoansi's problems in the context of Nyae Nyae, I want to consider briefly how such a construction—as well as its dissemination on the World Wide Web—fits together with the emergence of a sense that there is such a thing as civil society on a "worldwide" level. Intrinsic in the notion of global civil society is the fundamental humanist assumption of universality. In order to debate global matters of civility—questions of human rights, for example—the world must first agree that it somehow constitutes one big community, a single "global village," to which all peoples automatically belong. Participation in the universalizing discourse of global civil society, however—like participation in all humanist discourses—never derives in any simple way from a shared, egalitarian humanity. As Althusser (1971, 160–65) has memorably argued, we are always *interpellated* by ideological discourses as we participate in them: we are constituted as *subjects*, as a "we" or an "us." As such, we come automatically to occupy particular, differential vantage points within the whole; and this is true even when—as is the case in the humanist ideology of global civil society—that which the discourse is asserting is the universality of the whole itself.

This process of interpellation, by which different kinds of subjectivities are produced, is one of the main operations at work when people like the Ju/'hoansi appear in the liberal discourse of global civil society. When the U.S.-based organization Cultural Survival, against the narrative backdrop of Ju/'hoan dispossession and colonization, offers visitors to its Web site advice on "How you can help," it hails its readers—"How *you* can help"—as the sort of people who, intrinsically, have help to offer. As Web users, "we" are presumed to belong (indeed are constituted as belonging) to a particular global community of people—a civilized, helpful community, certainly, but clearly not one that is universally inclusive. Excluded, we intuitively understand, are societies like the Ju/'hoansi, people in need of the help that only "we" have to offer: "How you can help (them)."

The process by which such global discourse interpellates some people as aid givers and others as indigent is by no means restricted to this single example. In recent years, innumerable other nongovernmental agencies, government bodies, official multinational organizations, private companies,

journalists, academics, artists, activist groups, and cyber-communities have similarly committed themselves to a responsibility for helping people constructed as "in need" (see Fisher 1997). In the Ju/'hoan case, the NNDFN (the NGO described by Cultural Survival) is merely the most obvious instance of an entity built around a mandate to "help" the Ju/'hoansi. The many international donor agencies and advocacy organizations that fund the NNDFN could also be said to define themselves, at least in part, in terms of their commitment to helping these peoples. Add to this the many ministries within the Namibian government that work closely with the NNDFN on the Ju/'hoansi's behalf, as well as international organizations like the United Nations (involved in helping promote Ju/'hoan participation in Namibian democratization), along with several private corporate sponsors (mainly mining operations and ecotourism companies), and the list of institutional players invested in "helping" the Ju/'hoansi begins to grow dizzyingly long. All of which does not even mention the steady stream of individual development workers, journalists, filmmakers, musicians, writers, and academics (myself included), who have framed their identities (and careers) to greater or lesser extents in relation to the Ju/'hoansi's ostensible need for help.

This sort of translocal pastiche of interconnected, well-meaning agents—individual, institutional, and virtual—is just the kind of transnational "web" or "network" invoked in most current imaginings of global civil society.¹⁵ Within such a framework, the Ju/'hoansi emerge as a sort of node for the political action that constitutes civil society in the liberal sense of the term: they have become a locus for the mobilization of a host of actors around a collective social objective. By first fashioning people like the Ju/'hoansi as victims of modernity—as "on the brink of extinction" due to their cultural vulnerability in the face of colonial dispossession—the West has cleared the way for its own redemptive role in their lives. With the liberal rhetorics of development, human rights, democratization, and the like, the West has effectively obscured its own less-than-civilized colonial history, erasing (or at least, claiming to transcend) its own complicity in the Ju/'hoansi's current problems.¹⁶ Emerging from such a revisionist process is an image of a postcolonial global society that has succeeded in resuscitating a sense of its own liberal civility from the still-warm ashes of its colonial past.¹⁷

Global Civil Society in Action: "Development" in Nyae Nyae

As I have argued, the process by which the liberal discourses of global civil society interpellate the Ju/'hoansi as in need of help is also a process by which they are positioned as external to the world of those able to help them. In this section, I question how this process of discursive interpellation has been experienced by the Ju/'hoansi. Do they, too, perceive themselves as in need

of help from a beneficent global community? What forms has this "help" tended to take? Has it ultimately been beneficial to them?

To begin to answer these questions, I first focus directly on the history of global intervention in the lives of the Ju/'hoansi in the years since the production of *N!ai, the Story of a !Kung Woman* (1980). I begin with *N!ai* because the film marks a watershed in the recent history of Ju/'hoan development. Shortly after producing the film, and deeply troubled by the poverty and social decay he had documented in it, John Marshall and a colleague founded the Ju/wa Bushman Development Foundation (JBDF; later to become the NNDFN) in order to help Ju/'hoansi secure claims to land and improve their economic lot.¹⁸ As Marshall understood them, the root of the Ju/'hoansi's problems in the late 1970s and early 1980s lay in their inability to support themselves by hunting and gathering on their diminished land base. In his words,

In 1970 Ju/'hoansi lost 90 percent of Nyae Nyae and all but one of their permanent waterholes when Bushmanland was established as the "homeland" for all the 30,000 people classified as "Bushmen" in Namibia. . . . About 1,000 survivors of Nyae Nyae were forced to live in Eastern Bushmanland—about 3,500 square miles—where 140 people could support themselves by hunting and gathering. The oldest economy on earth collapsed.

Under the circumstances, the necessary course of action appeared to him to be self-evident:

Ju/'hoansi faced a stark equation: Complete the agricultural revolution in ten years to become more productive on less land . . . transform their hunting and gathering economy, social rules and values in the pressure cooker of a rural slum and immediately begin farming in Eastern Bushmanland. (Marshall 1996)

The Ju/'hoansi, he believed, urgently needed to be brought up to speed technologically and economically, to be ushered into modernity by completing "the agricultural revolution" and transforming their "social rules and values" to match.¹⁹ Economic development alone, however, was not the only thing on Marshall's mind: he also saw the Ju/'hoansi as lacking the political structures and sophistication necessary to enable them to defend their lands against threats from neighboring African groups and the Namibian state. In the words of Megan Bieseke, director of the NNDFN in the years following Marshall,

Traditionally, the Ju/'hoansi had no political organization larger than localized, kin-based living groups. To meet the challenges of self-sufficiency and form a voice on land rights and development, the Ju/'hoansi [needed to begin] exploring the possibility of broadening their

tolerant, egalitarian way of self-government into a version of representative democracy for the entire region. (1993, 59–60)

As these passages indicate, the vision that guided the work of Marshall, Bieseke, and other staff members of the NNDFN in these early years was premised on several key assumptions. First, in keeping with the analysis offered in *N!ai, the Story of a !Kung Woman*, as "bushmen," the Ju/'hoansi were seen to be culturally ill-equipped for their modern circumstances. Reflecting the pervasiveness of Western representations of them as emissaries from the "Stone Age," they were understood to have been—until recently—living in a state of pristine, primitive isolation, with "the oldest economy on earth" and "no political organization larger than localized, kin-based living groups." While such assumptions certainly resonated with ethnographic descriptions of the !Kung dominant at the time (Lee 1979, 1984; Lee and Devore 1968, 1976; L. Marshall 1976; Shostak 1981; Thomas 1959), they bore at most only a partial relation to the actual situation in Nyae Nyae in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when many Ju/'hoansi were employed as soldiers by the South African Defense Force, and most others had largely abandoned hunting and gathering to settle around the military complex and administrative center of Tjum!kui (J. Marshall and Ritchie 1984; J. Marshall 1993). While it seems likely that many Ju/'hoansi did not experience their embeddedness within the South West African state in particularly empowered terms during these years,²⁰ assertions that they lacked experience dealing with this larger political economy—that their subsistence was drawn from hunting and gathering rather than wage labor or government rations, and that their only political relations were localized or kin-based—were clearly based on preconceptions about their temporal and spatial isolation as bushmen rather than on their actual circumstances.

In addition to making assumptions about them on the basis of ethnographic characterizations of "bushmen," the founders of the NNDFN also made a second set of assumptions about the eventual type of society that the Ju/'hoansi would need in order to better deal with the challenges confronting them in Nyae Nyae. At an economic level, farming and cattle keeping were considered crucial strategies for development; in the realm of politics, it was representative democracy that was assumed to offer the best way forward. Needless to say, both agendas reflect normative Western notions: in the first instance, of legitimate modes of labor and land use;²¹ and in the second, of the liberal ideal for political society.

Taken together, the NNDFN staff's insistence on perceiving the Ju/'hoansi as pre-economic and pre-political "bushmen," and their prescriptions for economic and political "development," effectively cleared the way for the liberal action of "civil society" in Nyae Nyae. In the Ju/'hoansi's situation, the founders of the NNDFN saw an opportunity to forge a new society more or less

"from scratch"—to transform people from their (projected) presocial state into a fully modern collectivity, in keeping with the liberal principles of equality and democracy, and with the modernist ethics of hard work, education, and bureaucratic, rational organization. Such an idealistic—not to mention ambitious—project had little trouble sparking the liberal imaginations of people well beyond the NNDFN, and the organization's efforts to "help" the Ju/'hoansi quickly attracted the financial and moral support of people and institutions around the world (see Bieseke 1993).

My own involvement with the Ju/'hoansi began in 1994, when I was hired by the NNDFN as a short-term consultant to work on the development of tourism in Nyae Nyae. Although fairly remote by Namibian standards, the region has become increasingly popular as a tourist destination in recent years, as growing numbers of so-called ecotourists have come in search of cultural contact with "authentic" bushmen. My assignment, given my previous experience developing tourist ventures in another part of Africa, was to work with the NNDFN to establish a strategy for controlling the impact of tourism in Nyae Nyae and for maximizing its benefits to the Ju/'hoansi (Garland 1994; Garland and Gordon n.d.).

When I began my consultancy in Namibia, I had seen *Nlai, the Story of a /Kung Woman*, but had not kept track of the Ju/'hoan story in the fifteen years since the film's production. Holed up in the NNDFN office in Windhoek, reading through stacks of NGO documents, I was amazed to learn how much things had changed. By 1994, the development organization reached into nearly every domain of Ju/'hoan life. In addition to ongoing programs in "income generation" and "natural resource management" (the two with which my tourism work was to be affiliated), I learned that the NGO also sponsored comprehensive schemes for Ju/'hoan health care, primary education, agricultural extension, and job skills training. At the time, I remember being struck by how cutting edge these programs all seemed: the natural resource management program used the latest in "community-based" techniques; the education program was rooted in the methodology of Paolo Friere, with primary instruction in Ju/'hoan as a first language; the health program emphasized education and preventive care; the agricultural program was carefully tailored to the dryland ecosystem of the Kalahari; advocacy efforts by the NNDFN were coordinated with a worldwide network of indigenous peoples' organizations. Everything I read stressed the importance of achieving sustainability in the long run.

Things sounded encouraging within the Ju/'hoan communities as well. Around the same time that the NNDFN was formed, a number of Ju/'hoansi—in what was described in the NGO literature as an indigenous "back to the land" movement—had apparently decided to vacate Tjum!kui to reoccupy their abandoned hunting and foraging areas, intending to begin supporting themselves in small, dispersed settlements through a combination of farm-

ing, livestock keeping, hunting, and gathering. With NNDFN and donor help, I learned, a number of boreholes had been drilled to provide permanent water sources for these settlements. Anthropologists had helped draw up formal maps of community land-use and tenurial patterns, and the combination of the new settlements and these *n/ore* (traditional tenure) maps had provided crucial evidence of the Ju/'hoansi's claims to Nyae Nyae in debates over land rights during Namibia's transition to independence at the end of the decade.

Perhaps even more importantly, I learned that the Ju/'hoansi had established a civic organization of their own, the Nyae Nyae Farmers Cooperative (NNFC), in 1986. At the NNDFN office in Windhoek, I found written statutes (in both English and Ju/'hoan) enunciating the cultural principles underpinning this new structure, as well as frequent references to the debates and elections that had accompanied its formation (discussed in J. Marshall 1993; Bieseke 1993). Over the years, this farming cooperative had sent official Ju/'hoan delegations to a series of national and international conferences on land, water, and indigenous rights policy. In my initial informational meetings with various donor agencies and Namibian government ministries, everyone seemed to recognize this cooperative as the established authority of the Ju/'hoan people. In combination, the NNDFN and NNFC appeared to be a truly model example of an indigenous development project: a dynamic partnership between a progressive, savvy NGO on the one hand, and a vibrant, grassroots, community organization on the other.

Even in those first impressionistic days, however, a few things about the NNDFN-NNFC setup made me wonder whether everything was actually as ideal as it seemed on paper. For one, in spite of the fact that the NNDFN was regularly referred to as an indigenous Namibian NGO, it seemed to be staffed almost entirely by white foreigners, notably Germans, Dutch, white South Africans, Australians, and Americans.²² No Ju/'hoansi worked directly for the NNDFN; the ones affiliated with the project either worked for the Ju/'hoan Farmers Cooperative or were employed by the various development programs run by the NGO staff. The NNDFN is what in Namibia is called a "white-driven" NGO. Its relationship with the Ju/'hoansi (named in its constitution as its "beneficiaries") was explained to me by an NNDFN staff member as one of "mentoring." While the stated long-term objective was to turn over eventual control of development programs and funds to the Ju/'hoansi through the NNFC, it was clear to me that the expectation of most NNDFN staff members was that their managerial expertise and support would be needed for the foreseeable future. While paternalism of this sort is not altogether unusual in development projects, I found it to be strikingly explicit in official NNDFN discourse.

Further, although my job description had assured me that tourism was an issue of urgent concern to the Ju/'hoansi, and that they had specifically requested assistance developing the tourism industry in Nyae Nyae, when I ar-

rived in June 1994, no one in the community seemed to have any idea who I was, or that a "tourism consultant" was coming to work with them for three months. I had been hired entirely at the initiative of the expatriate staff of the NNDFN, not by "the Ju/'hoan community" as I had been led to believe. Indeed, although it was true that there were a lot of tourists in the area, it soon seemed that tourism was just about the last thing on the minds of most Ju/'hoansi.

Instead, it gradually became apparent that the NNDFN was in a state of real institutional crisis. Shortly before my arrival, clashes over management policies within the organization had resulted in the resignations of a number of key expatriate staff. Baraka, the NNDFN base camp in Nyae Nyae, echoed with the ghosts of these people: houses stood locked and empty, untended gardens were reverting back to bush, and food had been left to rot in the communal kitchen. Moreover, signs of the vibrant grassroots partnership I had read about between the NGO and the Ju/'hoan NNFC were nowhere to be found. Instead, the Ju/'hoansi who lived at Baraka—mainly NNFC employees and their families—seemed to steer clear of the few NGO staffers who remained. The camp was literally segregated into expatriate and bushman sections. I was assigned my own house in the white area, and I cooked my meals in a Western-style kitchen with a Dutch woman who worked for the health program. The Ju/'hoansi, ten people or so to a house, lived in an area some distance away and cooked over fires outside. While solar panels provided electricity and pumped water from a borehole to all the houses, the central bathhouse, with flush toilets and showers, seemed to be the exclusive domain of the expatriates.²³

The interactions that I did observe between NNDFN staff and Ju/'hoansi in Baraka startled me with their volatility. On one of my first nights, I witnessed a scene in which the manager of the NNFC, clearly intoxicated, entered the expatriate kitchen and demanded the keys to a project vehicle. The Dutch NNDFN camp manager angrily refused to comply, and lectured the man—one of the most powerful Ju/'hoan members of the Nyae Nyae community—on his irresponsibility and drunkenness. In the weeks that followed, interviews in Ju/'hoan villages revealed that such confrontations were almost commonplace. Community frustration with the NNDFN was running so high that I had a hard time getting people to talk about tourism at all, and eventually gave up trying. Instead, people either refused to talk with me (I was, after all, an NNDFN employee), or used me—via my translator—to vent their anger at the organization.

The complaints I heard in Ju/'hoan villages ranged from matters of common courtesy ("The new manager drives by without even stopping to greet us!") to the inadequacy of NGO service provisions ("Our borehole dried up a month ago, and they still haven't done anything to fix it!"). Most often, though, objections centered on two particularly volatile issues: the control of access to

vehicle transportation in Nyae Nyae, and the control of revenues generated by the development project. Although staff members within the NNDFN have varied as to their attitudes about these issues, in matters of both vehicles and money, the organization has on the whole pursued policies that have been markedly paternalistic, leaving many Ju/'hoansi feeling a lack of control over important aspects of their lives.²⁴

In the first instance, members of the NNDFN staff, concerned about the high costs of operating and maintaining vehicles in the Kalahari, have closely monitored Ju/'hoan access to the keys and fuel supplies for trucks owned by the NNDFN and have similarly sought to supervise the use of vehicles bought by the NNFC (the Ju/'hoansi's "own" organization).²⁵ As there are very few non-donor-funded vehicles²⁶ and no public transportation in Nyae Nyae—a sparsely populated area exceeding 3,500 square miles—access to motorized transportation is a constraint on all but the most localized of activities in the region. With shifts in desires toward consumer goods (fed by development-driven flows of money into the economy), and with the increasing involvement of community members in various regional development ventures, Ju/'hoan demand for "lifts" to and from the central town of Tjum!kui and elsewhere in the region has grown steadily since the inception of the NGO project.²⁷ The expatriate staff members of the NNDFN, in nearly complete control of access to this scarce resource, have drawn continual accusations of mean-spirited stinginess from Ju/'hoansi for refusing to provide transport at requested levels. I witnessed paternalistic clashes over keys and fuel—white expatriates towing the parental line in the face of juvenile "bushman" irresponsibility—on nearly a daily basis during my stay in Namibia.

In the case of revenues from development projects, the NNDFN, citing ethnographic representations of bushmen as fundamentally egalitarian and nonmaterialistic, has frequently emphasized the importance of strictly controlling the distribution of funds to the Ju/'hoan community in Nyae Nyae. In practice, this attempt at "cultural sensitivity" has translated into an institutional policy of resistance to Ju/'hoan efforts to earn income outside the purview of the development project. When I arrived in Nyae Nyae, ostensibly to work on "tourism microenterprise development," NGO staffers told me that I must try to incorporate all existing tourism ventures under NNFC control and discourage individual entrepreneurs from developing new projects without working through this centralized structure so that revenue from tourism could be distributed equally throughout the entire population. Such attempts to contain the local economy within the paternal development apparatus were utterly unenforceable: during the three months I was there, numerous Ju/'hoansi offered their services as translators, guides, and trackers to tourists on a freelance basis, and one of the Ju/'hoan settlements opened its own "community campsite"—an instant success with the ecotourists—in spite of concerted objections to such independent activities by the management of the

NNDFN. Even in the face of such clear evidence of Ju/'hoan entrepreneurship, many NNDFN staff members remained undaunted in their conviction that they knew better than the people themselves what was best for them. When a mining company, for example, opened a new concession in Nyae Nyae and announced that it planned to pay wages higher than those paid by the NNDFN and NNFC, the expatriate director of the NGO—speaking “on behalf” of the people—actually lobbied the company to pay Ju/'hoansi lower wages than other (non-Ju/'hoan) laborers to prevent the development project from losing its most qualified staff! The differential, he suggested, could be pooled and given to the NNFC for “equitable” distribution to all the dispersed Ju/'hoan communities.

By the summer of 1994, many Ju/'hoansi had begun to focus their general frustration with the development project into explicit anger at such controlling behavior by particular members of the NNDFN staff. In July, things reached a boiling point when a semiannual gathering of community representatives called a Rada meeting—itsself an NNDFN and NNFC invention designed to provide a regular forum for democratic local representation—was convened by the NGO to discuss the status of the various local development programs and policy issues. Although the NNDFN and NNFC staffs had worked out a prior agenda for the meeting, the seventy or so Rada representatives immediately insisted that it be scrapped and that discussion focus instead on the deteriorating relations between the NNDFN and the Ju/'hoan community. The complaints that I had heard in my village interviews might be characterized as symptomatic, but the criticisms leveled at the NNDFN during this meeting were direct and systemic. One of the NNFC leaders set the tone in his opening speech: “We were taking care of the land; why do outsiders come and tell us what to do?” Others loudly agreed: “The Foundation makes all our decisions for us!” By the end of the first day, a motion had been put forward to dissolve the NNDFN entirely. About two-thirds of the Rada members lined up behind the proponents of this motion, arguing that what they needed was a new foundation that worked for them, not the other way around. The remaining third coalesced around the more moderate suggestion that particularly objectionable NNDFN staff members be “sacked” but that the organization itself be permitted to remain. Citing the importance of consensus-based decision making to the Ju/'hoan people, everybody agreed that the best thing to do was to sleep on it for a night and reconsider the question in the morning.

By the next day, people were resolved: after a few emotional speeches, the Rada members voted unanimously to retain the NNDFN but to expel two of its key expatriate staff members, denouncing them as “fighting people” who must go at once. At this point, one of the sacked expatriates got up and left the compound; the other seemed too shocked to move from his seat. Next, the professional facilitator who had until then been running the meeting (a non-Ju/'hoan Namibian development expert hired by the NNDFN for the

occasion) announced he would not continue leading the discussion under such revolutionary circumstances and handed over control—symbolized by a magic marker and a flip chart displaying the meeting's agenda—to one of the Ju/'hoansi who had been translating the debates for the expatriate observers.

As the meeting broke for lunch, two other expatriates and I radioed the Windhoek offices of USAID—the donor agency providing the largest financial support to the NNDFN at the time—to apprise them of the morning's events. The program officers there assured us that their agency's commitment was to the NNDFN as an institution, not to particular individuals within it, and that USAID would continue to honor its pledges of support for Ju/'hoan development programs provided that community-NGO relations could eventually be stabilized. This news brought wide applause from the Rada members when the meeting reconvened in the afternoon. For the next day and a half, the council turned its attention to finding ways to restructure the NNDFN and NNFC so that creative and administrative control would remain in the hands of Ju/'hoansi (and not “outsiders”) while also retaining the recognition and support of the Namibian state and international donor community.²⁸ When word came from Windhoek that the NNDFN director—one of the two men fired in the meeting—had called an emergency session of the NGO's board of trustees,²⁹ the Rada council decided to send a Ju/'hoan delegation to this session to ensure that the board members were accurately informed of their wishes. The meeting dissolved as people began to focus on arranging the logistics involved in making this trip.

The Hegemony of Civil Society

When this extraordinary Rada meeting took place, I initially had little trouble interpreting its significance. Although at the time I had been in Namibia just six weeks, I had seen enough of the workings of the NNDFN to assume, elatedly, that the Ju/'hoansi had at last had enough and had finally decided to protest their domination by the neocolonial development regime. These Ju/'hoan Rada members clearly did not perceive themselves as requiring help from some outside source; on the contrary, they had stated loudly and clearly in the meeting that their experiences with “outsiders” had been more disempowering than helpful. It seemed obvious to me that what they wanted, rather than more foreign intervention cloaked in the benevolent guise of development “assistance,” was to regain control over their political and economic lives.³⁰

Many events in the ensuing weeks and months appeared to confirm the relevance of this sort of analysis: the NNDFN staff members who had been sacked, for example, immediately began struggling to keep their jobs by contesting the Rada members' decision. In meeting after meeting, these westerners invoked tropes of bushman vulnerability and immaturity, protesting to

the NNDFN board of trustees, donor agencies, and members of Namibian government ministries that the Ju/'hoansi had been manipulated by disruptive factions within the expatriate community, had been confused about the implications of their actions, and, ultimately, hadn't meant what they had done. Surely this was as neocolonial as development could get: European development workers fighting to defend their incomes and authority by infantilizing and discrediting acts of self-determination by the very African people they were pledged to help.

On the other hand, other factors emerged in the meeting's aftermath that suggested the limitations of my blunt critical interpretation. For one, many Ju/'hoansi seemed worried—rather than triumphant—about the actions of the Rada members. While most Ju/'hoansi with whom I spoke agreed that relations between the NNDFN and the Ju/'hoan communities had sunk to an unacceptable level, many expressed concern that resource support for transportation, health, education, and other popular development programs would be disrupted as a result of the scandal surrounding the meeting.³¹ As had been characteristic prior to the meeting, the Ju/'hoansi's needs for transportation and cash soon highlighted the issue of their dependence on the development regime. In what was to me a particularly excruciating interaction, for example, the delegates sent by the Rada council to meet with the NNDFN board of trustees, lacking adequate funds, were forced to turn to the former director of the NGO—one of the men they had just fired—for help locating money within the NNFC budget to pay for the costs of their travel to Windhoek from Nyae Nyae. When these funds were not immediately available to cover fuel and lodging expenses, the administrator advanced the Rada delegates the money out of his own project budget—in effect bankrolling their efforts to resist his control over them. Their continued dependence on the NNDFN for access to flows of resources and power, rendered glaringly obvious in transactions like these, quickly led even these Ju/'hoan delegates to soften the strongly critical position that the Rada council as a whole had taken. Without rescinding outright the decision to dismiss the two NNDFN staff members, the delegates made a point of assuring board members, donor agencies, and government ministry representatives that the Ju/'hoansi had been more divided and ambivalent than they had seemed in the Rada meeting, and that, most importantly, the Nyae Nyae communities remained committed to their efforts at “development.” If the Rada meeting had, as I had initially assumed, been about resistance to the neocolonialism of development, this resistance had been at most partial; the Ju/'hoansi were well aware of the advantages, and not merely the costs to their self-determination, that “development” had brought to Nyae Nyae.

Another factor that suggested to me the need for a more complicated interpretation of the Rada meeting came in the form of reactions to the meeting by development workers and anthropologists with extensive experience work-

ing among the Ju/'hoansi. Several of these observers, I was startled to learn, did not seem even to consider the possibility that the meeting had been a rejection of the neocolonial paternalism of the NNDFN. For them, more significant than the meeting's substantive agenda or outcome were the dynamics between the various categories of Ju/'hoansi who had participated in it. Long-time Ju/'hoan anthropologist and advocate Megan Bieseke, for example, has interpreted the meeting in light of ongoing processes of generational conflict, elite formation, and cultural transformation (telephone conversation with the author, 1994). Noting the self-aggrandizing and aggressive actions of several young men who played key roles in the Rada debates, she argues that these younger Ju/'hoansi have lost sight of core traditional values like social harmony, egalitarianism, and sharing, and that their actions directly conflict with what she terms the more “idealistic and community-oriented” views of an older generation (1994, 64). To explain the problems that had precipitated the Rada members' dramatic actions, Bieseke points to various “mistakes” made by the NNDFN, inappropriate policies that have inadvertently fostered such divisions within the Nyae Nyae communities (64–65). While an analysis like Bieseke's leaves intact the possibility of aid being entirely benevolent (provided the NNDFN could rectify its “mistakes,” that is), and hence ultimately fails to engage the politics of the development encounter, her point is well taken that dynamics internal to the Ju/'hoan communities—and not just their relationship to “outside” agents like the NNDFN—were also at play in the Rada confrontation.

Indeed, perhaps the most significant inadequacy of my preliminary interpretation of the meeting was the way in which my understanding of it in terms of resistance to domination by the NNDFN necessitated that I ignore the many other power relations in which the Ju/'hoansi are also embedded. By focusing on the paternalistic oppressiveness of the development regime, I was able to assess the Rada council's actions as resistance (and the meeting itself as revolutionary), but in doing so I came to see the NNDFN as the primary locus of politics—and domination—in the Ju/'hoansi's lives. Such a position reflected my perspective at the time as a staff member within the organization and also mirrored the NGO's own efforts to prescribe the horizons of Ju/'hoan society in other political and economic ways (see above). Although the NNDFN did—and does—play a significant role in people's lives in Nyae Nyae, however, so too do representatives of the Namibian state, missionaries, journalists, researchers, tourists, and many others. As scholars like Wilmsen (1989a, 1989b) and Gordon (1984, 1992) have been at pains to point out, so-called bushmen have been embedded within multiple fields of power for a very long time; the one represented by the current development regime is perhaps best understood as merely the most prominent in recent years.

Importantly, by framing the NNDFN as the main problem in the Ju/'hoansi's lives—and the Rada meeting as a refusal of its dominance—I inad-

vertently elided the degree to which Ju/'hoansi continued to operate within cultural frames of reference—"symbolic fields," in Bourdieu's (1977) terminology—that reflect their long history of interaction with Western people.³³ Although I failed to take notice of it during the actual meeting, the Ju/'hoansi demonstrated their proficiency in the language of Western political action from the outset, in that their first act of rebellion was to call for the revision of the day's agenda. The fact that a formal agenda—a series of hierarchically and chronologically organized "discussion points" written in English (despite extremely low levels of literacy among all Ju/'hoansi and nearly nonexistent English language skills in the community) on a flip chart controlled by a meeting facilitator—would serve as the medium for focusing a rebellion indicates more about the extent to which Western bureaucratic procedural practices have come to structure Ju/'hoan politics than it does the radicalism of the Rada members' actions. Ju/'hoan dissatisfaction with the NNDFN had been quite widespread prior to the Rada debates, yet it was only when the community acted through a council of elected representatives—deploying a formal protocol of speeches, motions, votes and resolutions, and with expatriates documenting their actions in both writing and film³⁴—that their anger drew significant notice from donors, the Namibian state, and the NNDFN itself. Seen in this light, the Rada meeting appears less a rejection of Western domination than an ingenious deployment of the West's own civic conventions for particular political purposes. By framing their resistance to NNDFN paternalism in the bureaucratic format of a "meeting," as well as in their interest in the reaction of donor agencies to their actions and their concern about disrupting flows of resources to Nyae Nyae or undermining the national and international credibility of the Ju/'hoan NNFC, the Rada members demonstrated a sophisticated awareness of the rules of the political game in which they existed.

To offer a more satisfactory explanation of these dynamics than a simple resistance-domination model allows, then, I return to the realm of civil society theory. In his introduction to *Civil Society and the State in Africa*, Harbeson argues that the concept of civil society provides a way of understanding the processes by which "working understandings concerning the basic rules of the political game or structure of the state emerge from within society and the economy at large." As a liberal political scientist, Harbeson conceives these "basic rules" and political "structure" as the result of positive social action: "In substantive terms, civil society typically refers to the points of agreement on what those working rules *should be*" (1994, 3, original emphasis). While I clearly reject the universalism of Harbeson's liberal vision of civil society, I find his notion of "the rules of the political game" suggestive, particularly in light of the Ju/'hoansi's deployment of the conventions of liberal political action in the Rada meeting.

The idea that political "games" are governed by "rules" also appears in another strand of civil society theorizing, this time in the Hegelian-Marxian

tradition, in the work of Antonio Gramsci (1971) and Louis Althusser (1971). For Gramsci and Althusser, civil society is indeed highly normative, but unlike the liberal conception, in their framework the "norms" in question emerge not from within society but rather are imposed on society by the state. In Gramsci's famous formulation (1971, 206–76, esp. 242–47), civil society is the arena in which states exercise ideological hegemony over their subjects, manufacturing the active consent and collaboration of those they rule. Whereas states themselves are agents of explicit domination,³⁴ Gramsci argues that civil society "operates without 'sanctions' or compulsory 'obligations,' but nevertheless exerts a collective pressure and obtains objective results in the form of an evolution of customs, ways of thinking and acting, morality, etc." As a result of state "educative pressure," exerted through the law but also through "non-state" entities like schools, churches, and labor unions,³⁵ "each single individual . . . [comes to incorporate] himself into the collective man," and "necessity and coercion [are turned] into 'freedom'" (242).

Conceiving of civil society as the realm of ideological hegemony goes a long way toward explaining how Western political ideals and practices have so saturated the political aspirations and actions of people in Nyae Nyae. Influenced by years of "educative pressure" from liberal development workers, teachers, missionaries, and the like, as well as from South African and Namibian government bureaucrats, the Ju/'hoansi have come to share—in some fundamental ways, at least—the *habitus* of the Western liberal political field (see Bourdieu 1977).

Yet there is a problem with applying a Gramscian or Althusserian conception of civil society to the Ju/'hoan case: such a model presupposes that the hegemony in question is that of the state—that people are normalized into "subjects" by civil society in order to conform with the ideological and material needs of the dominant state structure. Such a framework is unsuited to a people like the Ju/'hoansi, for the simple reason that people termed bushmen have notoriously tended to fall outside of the complete control of the state. Indeed, "bushmen" have arguably been so classified precisely because of their situation on the geographical and political margins of nations, and because of the consistent difficulty that states have had transforming them into individualized, documented citizens and workers (see Gordon 1992).³⁶ In Nyae Nyae, the Ju/'hoansi are permitted to move freely across the Namibia-Botswana international border that runs through the region, although the crossing is strictly monitored (requiring passports and visas) for expatriates and other (nonbushman) Namibians.

If the dominance of the state over the Ju/'hoansi fails to be hegemonic, then how can we account for the extent to which they have come to appreciate the "rules of the political game" in which they operate? I suggest that the hegemony at issue in this case is not that of the state, but rather of Western liberal ideology itself. The state, in this sense, can be seen as a part and prod-

uct of ideology, not its underlying structure, as is the case in the Gramscian-Althusserian model. Instead of conceiving of civil society as the realm in which states exercise hegemony, I propose that civil society operates as that component of Western liberalism—at once abstract and pragmatic—through which normative political values and practices are themselves exported as universals. In the course of their interactions with the liberal apparatus of global civil society, incarnated in the persons and practices of development workers, anthropologists, browsers on the World Wide Web, and many others, the Ju/'hoansi have come to orient themselves not just to the Namibian state, but to the liberal West more generally.

Conclusion

Because the Ju/'hoansi have been defined by the West as bushmen, their engagement with the orienting (civilizing, disciplining) process enacted by civil society has proceeded along particularly stylized lines. In that liberalism requires the figure of a presocial human subject on which civil society may act, the Ju/'hoansi have been fashioned repeatedly by the West as authentic socio-cultural Others: first as decentralized, kinship-based, hunter-gatherers, and, more recently, as victims of colonialism and underdevelopment. At the same time, though, liberalism bases its moral authority on the promise that its civilized sociality will one day embrace all humanity.³⁷ And so the Ju/'hoansi have been held up as symbols of liberalism's triumph as well. During Namibia's first democratic elections, a special task force from the United Nations was there to ensure and celebrate Ju/'hoan participation in the voting; the international donor community, pleased to be extending the fruits of development even to "bushmen," has showered organizations like the NNDFN with money; and the Namibian regime, eager to demonstrate its commitment to democracy and equality, has proudly espoused "progressive" policies toward the nation's "indigenous" citizens.

For their part, the Ju/'hoansi can at best be described as ambivalent about bearing the weight of all these liberal projections. At times they have successfully capitalized on, and even relished, certain benefits derived from their status as iconic "bushmen"—as in their ability to make money from tourists and their evident pleasure in the resources brought to Nyae Nyae by "development." The fierce nature of their struggles with the NNDFN over the control of vehicles and development revenues, on the other hand, indicates that they are also concerned that their participation in the liberal project of building "civil society" poses a real threat to whatever vestiges of self-determination they still have.³⁸ Within a liberal paradigm, after all, people like them are forever frozen in the unenviable position of the not-quite-yet fully modern, perpetually cast as needing the civilizing action of liberal civil society rather than as subjects capable of forging a civilized society in their own right.

Ambivalence or no, what the events of the 1994 Rada meeting make clear is that the Ju/'hoansi have no alternative but to operate within this liberal framework. As a result of nearly fifty years of interaction with liberal Western anthropologists; of almost twenty years of active engagement with the ideologies and practices of international development discourse; of regular contact with Western tourists, journalists, and others; and of their situation within a newly democratic, postcolonial nation, the Ju/'hoansi have come to structure even their resistance to Western domination in terms of liberal political idioms and practices. As their story illustrates, the central drama of liberalism—civil society's rendering of presocial humanity into moral, universal Man—is much more than just an ethical ideal; it is also a powerful mechanism by which Western political hegemony comes to encompass even places like the Kalahari.

Notes

1. Most notably, Marxian versions—such as Gramsci's conception of civil society as the realm in which states exercise ideological hegemony over their subjects—have been influential (see Bobbio 1988). I discuss the Gramscian conception of civil society toward the end of this chapter.
2. See Bratton 1994; Hall 1995; Harbeson 1994; Seligman 1992; and Young 1994 for genealogies of the concept.
3. For a discussion of this term, see Fisher 1997; Korten 1990; Lee 1995; Lipschutz 1992; Macdonald 1994; Shaw 1994; and Walker 1994.
4. Barnett and Cavanagh offer a typical vision at the close of their recent book on multinational corporations: "More and more people who are bypassed by the new world order are crafting their own strategies for survival and development, and in the process are spinning their own transnational webs to embrace and connect people across the world. On dreams of a global civilization that respects human diversity and values people one by one, a global civil society is beginning to take shape" (1994, 429–30).
5. Images of NGOs as organic, "grassroots" entities, in combination with widely publicized efforts by NGOs to reform the policies of global international entities such as the World Bank and the United Nations—including the increasingly institutionalized UN practice of holding "NGO Forums" simultaneously with official policy conferences—have all contributed to the powerful perception that NGOs represent a check on the power of the formal international political and economic system. Unmentioned in most discussions of NGOs, however, is the central dependence of most "nonprofit" and "nongovernmental" organizations on the sponsorship of state aid agencies and corporate donors. As Robbins points out, the increasing willingness of states to channel aid through NGOs indicates a rapprochement, not greater critical distance, between states and such agents of civil society (1995, 105).
6. Liberal international organizations like the United Nations perpetuate such conceptions of the world as a democratic community of nations, in that all states ostensibly

participate as free and equal members, like Western bourgeois subjects writ large (see Lee 1995).

7. Harbeson, for example, suggests "that civil society may have a better claim to universality than other elements of Western political philosophy, [for] by definition it upholds the proposition that to be legitimate and viable, political and socioeconomic structure must be consonant with the value systems of any given people" (1994, 26). See also Young 1994; Bratton 1994; Tripp 1994; Hall 1995; and Perez-Diaz 1995.

8. But see Sampson's (1996) discussion (in the same volume) of the Danish government's effort to promote the development of "civil society" in the Albanian "transition."

9. I use the term "bushmen" throughout this chapter with intentional irony in order to signify the shared history of those southern African people who have historically been categorized as bushmen by others with the power to label them as such.

10. Alternate spellings include Ju/wasi, Zhun/twasi, and Zhu-/wasi. A rough pronunciation (minus the click) in English would be "Zhoon-twa-see."

11. This "fanciful" image of the presocial subject, of course, has a long history in Western liberal thought, from Rousseau's attempts to imagine man prior to entry into the social contract, to John Rawls's famous vision of a radically ethical "original position" behind a mythic, culture-free "veil of ignorance" (see Lee 1995, 562–66).

12. Under the sponsorship of the Peabody Museum of Harvard University, the Marshall family (Lorna and Laurence Marshall, John, and Elizabeth Marshall Thomas) undertook a series of exploratory and ethnographic expeditions to Nyae Nyae in the early 1950s (see Ruby 1993).

13. This debate has spawned a voluminous literature; Wilmsen and Denbow (1990) and Lee (1992) frame the outlines. Alan Barnard's "The Kalahari Debate: A Bibliographic Essay" (1992) provides a fairly comprehensive overview. For a current instantiation, see the forthcoming special edition of *Visual Anthropology*, "Encounters in the Kalahari," guest edited by Keyan Tomaselli.

14. Gordon's careful documentation of colonial efforts to exterminate bushmen as vermin (1992), and Wilmsen's arguments about the proletarianization of bushmen in the regional political economy of the Kalahari (1989a) stand in stark contrast to the assertion of Cultural Survival that bushmen have "always lived autonomously, subject only to the law and custom of their own society."

15. Macdonald (1994, 269 n. 8) notes the ubiquity of "web" metaphors in global civil society discourse. The World Wide Web, with its potential for "networking" among "virtual" or "cyber" communities, has played a key role in the collective imagination of global civil society.

16. For an Australian example of the role of indigenous peoples in this process of liberal redemption, see Povinelli 1998.

17. In the Namibian case, official independence from the Republic of South Africa only came in 1990; the country was organized under apartheid until well into the 1980s.

18. Marshall has sought to describe and explain recent sociocultural transformations among the Ju/'hoansi, as well as his own role in shaping them, in a number of

different forums (see especially Marshall and Ritchie 1984; Marshall 1993). The conflation of his own personal trajectory with that of the Ju/'hoan people is nowhere more evident than in his curriculum vitae, currently available on the World Wide Web, which includes a three-page history of the Ju/'hoansi since 1950 (Marshall 1996).

19. See Ferguson 1994 on the centrality of agricultural intensification in the Western imagination of development.

20. Gordon (1992) has documented the exploitation of Ju/'hoan people by the South African military in some detail. However, when I conducted interviews in 1994, many Ju/'hoansi spoke with evident nostalgia of the days when the SADF provided high salaries, food rations, and regular social services to the region, suggesting that a simple exploitation model may be inadequate to understanding this period in Ju/'hoan history.

21. See Povinelli 1993 for an analysis of the importance of labor—the recognizable transformation of the natural environment—in the liberal politics of land-rights for hunter-gatherers in Australia.

22. I eventually learned that there were two nonwhites on the senior NNDFN staff in 1994, a Zambian agronomist and a Namibian automechanic workshop manager. A handful of black Namibians were also employed as office assistants, messengers, and housekeepers at the NNDFN office in Windhoek.

23. Tsau, the utopian Kalahari setting for Norman Rush's novel *Mating* (1991), sprang to mind more than once in Baraka!

24. Although seldom documented in official NGO reports, the expatriates associated with the NNDFN have clashed frequently among themselves over the issue of paternalism—most often in the context of debates concerning whether to distribute food relief during times of hardship, how to manage the revenues generated by NNDFN projects, and whether the NGO should attempt to control the flow of tourists and researchers to Nyae Nyae. The resignations of NNDFN staff shortly before my arrival in Namibia had resulted from ideological conflicts such as these.

25. A grant from the Ford Foundation to the NNFC enabled the Ju/'hoan organization to purchase several such vehicles of its own.

26. I know of only one Ju/'hoan person—a prominent leader of the NNFC—who actually owns his own car.

27. See Urry 1995 (144–46) for a provocative discussion of the relationship between rapid forms of mobility and modern forms of subjectivity and sociality, particularly with respect to human perception of the natural environment. For a more culturally specific discussion, see also Povinelli on the "productive" nature of "just traveling through the country" within the cosmological and economic context of Aboriginal Australia 1995 (514).

28. By chance, a specialist in local cooperative development from the Namibian Ministry of Agriculture had been asked—again by one of the dismissed NNDFN staff members—to attend the Rada meeting as an advisor to the Ju/'hoan NNFC. As he was knowledgeable about the criteria by which local organizations are judged to be

legitimate local government structures by the Namibian state, he was able to provide useful information to the Rada members as they debated restructuring their relationship to the NNDFN.

29. At the time, the NNDFN Board was composed entirely of NNDFN staff (including both individuals fired by the Rada!), lawyers, businesspeople, and anthropologists with an interest in the welfare of the Ju/'hoansi. One of the outcomes of the 1994 Rada meeting was the incorporation of several Ju/'hoan representatives into this advisory structure.

30. My assessment of the Rada meeting in terms of Ju/'hoan resistance to domination echoed the work of development critics like Amin (1990), Escobar (1995), Ferguson (1994) and Hancock (1989), who have forcefully argued that the international development industry is best understood as a systematic—if at times unwitting—arena in which fundamental relations of domination between the West and “the rest” are reproduced.

31. News of the meeting (and especially of the dismissal of the foundation's white staff members by Ju/'hoansi) made the front pages of Namibian newspapers (Lister 1994).

32. See Adams 1996 for a suggestive discussion of the dynamic mimesis that constitutes interactions between westerners and fetishized cultural Others (in her case, Sherpas) like “bushmen.”

33. As has been true for an extraordinary number of public events in Nyae Nyae, the entire Rada meeting was recorded on film by John Marshall. The Rada members seemed quite pleased to have a film “record” of the meeting's events, often uttering their speeches directly into Marshall's camera. As Marshall's films have provided important strategic evidence in debates over land rights and other political issues in the past, the Ju/'hoansi can be presumed to have understood the potential importance of documenting their actions against the NNDFN. See Tomaselli n.d. on the overall performativity of Ju/'hoan life, and Wilmsen n.d. on the politics of representation in Marshall films.

34. Althusser (1971) terms the police, military, and other explicit agents of state force the “Repressive State Apparatus.”

35. These compose Althusser's (1971) “Ideological State Apparatuses.”

36. Similarly, Sharon Hutchinson (1996) has recently argued that people who move around—in her case the Nuer—are more likely than members of sedentary societies to avoid complete incorporation by the state.

37. The apparent contradictoriness of the simultaneous insistence on the Ju/'hoansi's ethnic particularity as “bushmen,” and on their universal humanity as national and world citizens, should come as no surprise, for as Comaroff and Comaroff (1997, chap. 8) have recently noted of the colonial context, the assertion of ethnic difference and the promise of its erasure constitute the characteristic “double gesture” of liberal humanism (see also chapter 2).

38. The fact that conflicts in Nyae Nyae have often flared over issues of transportation and money, I believe, is far from coincidental. Control over the mobility and pro-

ductivity of people called bushmen has long been a key issue in the process of their orientation to the West. For albeit different purposes, Sahlins (1972) has famously noted that the !Kung are devoted mobility maximizers, and Gordon (1992) has documented at length the ways that “bushman” peoples historically used their ability to move around in the bush to resist incorporation into the South West African colonial economy. As the extraordinarily violent measures taken to regulate their movement and appropriate their labor during the colonial era attest, these are precisely the issues around which battles over the incorporation of people like the Ju/'hoansi into the Western political field have historically been organized.

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