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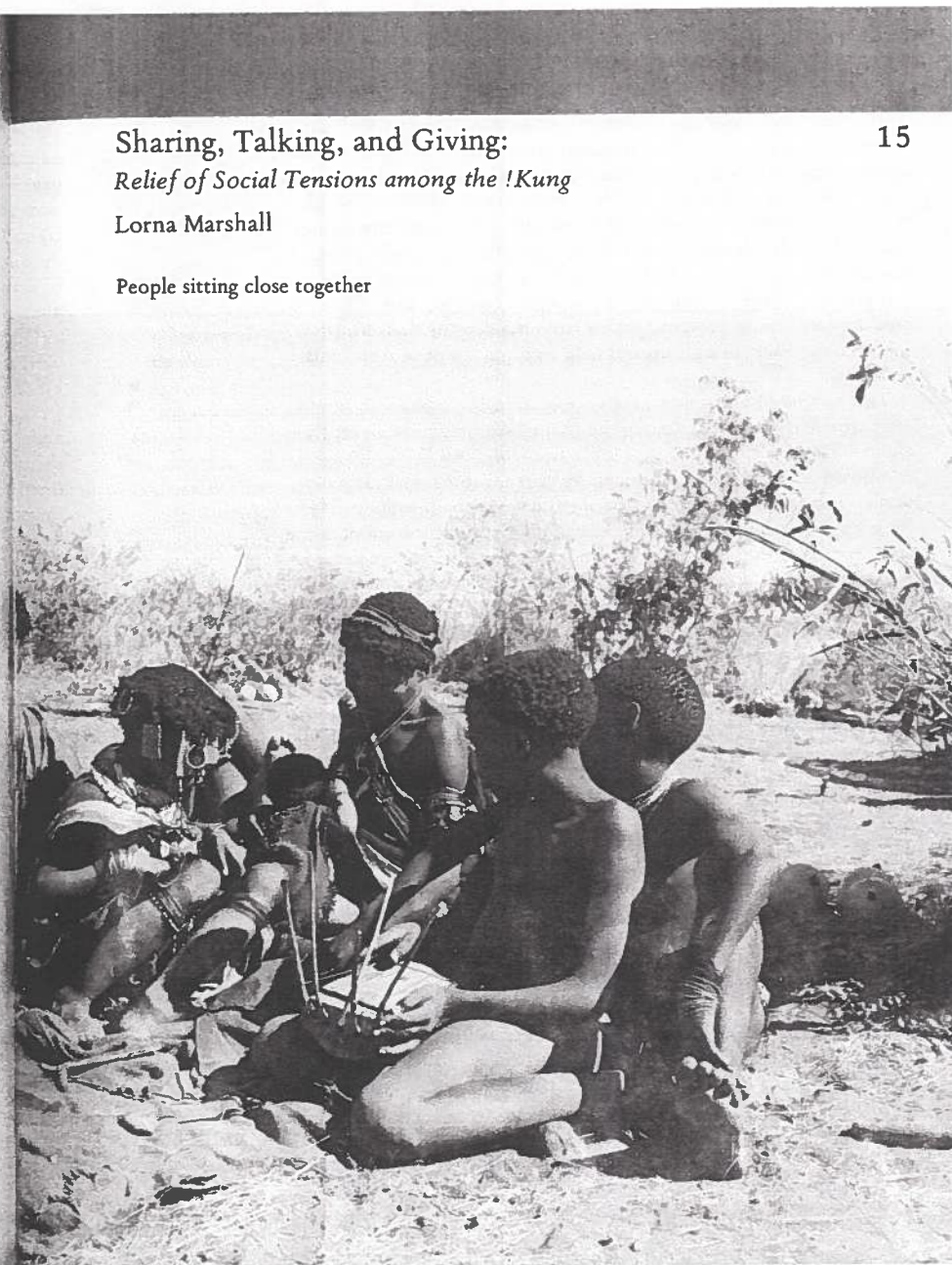
This brings us to the second point: the narrow perspective of some writers on the history of science and the intellectual achievements of urban man. We must concede that the !Kung show no use of mathematics, and on the whole do little experimentation (also true of the majority of western man). But it seems equally clear that the !Kung have, and use in their profession, some of the intellectual requirements of modern science.

Every contributor to this volume could hammer his or her own nails into the coffin of western man's dramatizations of his intellectual rise from the Stone Age. We found our animal behavior seminars chastening at many levels. The sheer volume of knowledge is breathtaking. They laughed to hear that there are people who think that the spotted hyena only scavenges; they know that lions sometimes scavenge from hyena kills; and so on and on. The accuracy of observation, the patience, and the experiences of wildlife they have had and appreciate are enviable. The sheer, elegant logic of deductions from tracks would satiate the most avid crossword fan or reader of detective stories. The objectivity is also enviable to scientists who believe that they can identify it and that the progress of science is totally dependent upon it. Even the poor theorization of our !Kung left one uneasy; their "errors," the errors of "Stone Age savages," are exactly those still made today by many highly educated western scientists (tautological theories of motivation, inadequate application of natural selection theory). We have gained little or nothing in ability or intellectual brilliance since the Stone Age; our gains have all been in the accumulation of records of our intellectual achievements. We climb on each other's backs; we know more and understand more, but our intellects are no better. It is an error to equate the documented history of intellectual achievement with a history of intellect. It is an error to assume that changes in about 7,000 years of urban civilization represent a final stage in a progress which can be extrapolated downwards into our preurban past. Just as primitive life no longer can be characterized as nasty, brutish, and short, no longer can it be characterized as stupid, ignorant, or superstition-dominated.

Sharing, Talking, and Giving:
Relief of Social Tensions among the !Kung
Lorna Marshall

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People sitting close together



This chapter describes customs practiced by the !Kung which help them to avoid situations that are likely to arouse ill will and hostility among individuals within bands and between bands. My observations were made among !Kung in the Nyae Nyae area in Namibia (South West Africa). Two customs which I consider to be especially important and which I describe in detail are meat-sharing and gift-giving. I discuss also the ways in which mannerliness, the custom of talking out grievances, the customs of borrowing and lending and of not stealing function to prevent tension from building up dangerously between members of a group and help to bring about peaceful relationships.

The common human needs for cooperation and companionship are particularly apparent among the !Kung. An individual never lives alone nor does a single nuclear family live alone. All live in bands composed of several families joined by consanguineous or affinal bonds. The arduous hunting-gathering life would be insupportable for a single person or a single nuclear family without the cooperation and companionship of the larger group. Moreover, in this society, the ownership of the resources of plant foods and waterholes and the utilization of them are organized through the band structure, and individuals have rights to the resources through their band affiliation.¹ Thus, the !Kung are dependent for their living on belonging to a band. They must belong; they can live no other way. They are also extremely dependent emotionally on the sense of belonging and on companionship. Separation and loneliness are unendurable to them. I believe their wanting to belong and be near is actually visible in the way families cluster together in an encampment and in the way they sit huddled together, often touching someone, shoulder against shoulder, ankle across ankle. Security and comfort for them lie in their belonging to their group, free from the threat of rejection and hostility.

Their security and comfort must be achieved side-by-side with self-interest and much jealous watchfulness. Altruism, kindness, sympathy, or genuine generosity were not qualities that I observed often in their behavior. However, these qualities were not entirely lacking, especially between parents and offspring, between siblings, and between spouses. One mother carried her sick adult daughter on her back for three days in searing summer heat for us to give her medicine. N/haka carried her lame son, Lame ≠Gau, for years. Gau clucked and fussed over his second wife, Hwan//ka, when she was sick. When !'Ku had a baby, her sister, /Ti!kai, gathered food for her for five days. On the other hand, people do not generally help each

other. They laugh when the lame man, !Xəm, falls down and do not help him up. !'Ku's jealous eyes were like those of a viper when we gave more attention to her husband, ≠Toma, than to her on one occasion because he was much more ill than she. And, in the extreme, there was a report from the 1958 Marshall expedition of an instance of apparently callous indifference in one band on the part of some young relatives to a dying, old, childless woman, an old aunt, when her sister with whom she lived had died.

Occasions when tempers have got out of control are remembered with awe. The deadly poisoned arrows are always at hand. Men have killed each other with them in quarrels—though rarely—and the !Kung fear fighting with a conscious and active fear. They speak about it often. Any expression of discord ("bad words") makes them uneasy. Their desire to avoid both hostility and rejection leads them to conform in high degree to the unspoken social laws. I think that most !Kung cannot bear the sense of rejection that even mild disapproval makes them feel. If they do deviate, they usually yield readily to expressed group opinion and reform their ways. They also conform strictly to certain specific useful customs that are instruments for avoiding discord.

Talking and Talks

I mention talking as an aid to peaceful social relations because it is so very much a part of the daily experience of the !Kung, and because I believe it usefully serves three particular functions. It keeps up good, open communication among the members of the band; through its constantly flowing expression it is a salutary outlet for emotions; and it serves as the principal sanction in social discipline. Songs are also used for social discipline. The !Kung say that a song composed specifically about someone's behavior and sung to express disapproval, perhaps from the deepest shadow of the encampment at night, is a very effective means of bringing people who deviate back into the pattern of approved behavior. Nevertheless, during our observations, songs were not used as much as talking. If people disapprove of an individual's behavior, they may criticize him or her directly, usually putting a question, "Why do you do that?", or they may gossip a bit or make oblique hints. In the more intense instances what I call a talk may ensue.

The !Kung are the most loquacious people I know. Conversation in a !Kung encampment is a constant sound like the sound of a brook, and as low and lapping, except for shrieks of laughter. People

cluster together in little groups during the day, talking, perhaps making artifacts at the same time. At night, families talk late by their fires, or visit at other family fires with their children between their knees or in their arms if the wind is cold.

There always seems to be plenty to talk about. People tell about events with much detail and repetition and discuss the comings and goings of their relatives and friends and make plans. Their greatest preoccupation and the subject they talk about most often, I think, is food. The men's imaginations turn to hunting. They converse musingly, as though enjoying a sort of daydream together, about past hunts, telling over and over where game was found and who killed it. They wonder where the game is at present, and say what fat bucks they hope to kill. They also plan their next hunts with practicality. Women (who, incidentally, do not seem to me to talk as much as men in !Kung society) gave me the impression of talking more about who gave or did not give them food and their anxieties about not having food. They spoke to me about women who were remembered for being especially quick and able gatherers, but they did not have pleasurable satisfaction in remembering their hot, monotonous, arduous days of digging and picking and trudging home with their heavy loads.

Another frequent subject of conversation is gift-giving. Men and women speak of the persons to whom they have given or propose to give gifts. They express satisfaction or dissatisfaction with what they have received. If someone has delayed unexpectedly long in making a return gift, the people discuss this. One man was excused by his friends because his wife, they said, had got things into her hands and made him poor, so that he now had nothing suitable to give. Sometimes, on the other hand, people were blamed for being ungenerous ("far-hearted") or not very capable in managing their lives, and no one defended them for these defects or asked others to have patience with them. The experiences of daily life are a further topic of conversation. While a person speaks, the listeners are in vibrant response, repeating the phrases and interposing a contrapuntal "eh." "Yesterday," "eh," "at Deboragu," "eh," "I saw Old /'Xashe." "You saw Old /'Xashe," "eh, eh." "He said that he had seen the great python under the bank." "EH!" "The python!" "He wants us," "eh, eh, eh," "to help him catch it." The "ehs" overlap and coincide with the phrase, and the people so often all talk at once that one wonders how anyone knows what the speaker has said.

Bursts of laughter accompany the conversations. Sometimes the !Kung laugh mildly with what we would call a sense of humor about

people and events; often they shriek and howl as though laughter were an outlet for tension. They laugh at mishaps that happen to other people, like the lions eating up someone else's meat, and shriek over particularly telling and insulting sexual sallies in the joking relationships. Individual singing of lyrical songs accompanied by the //gwashi (pluriarc), snatches of ritual music, the playing of rhythmical games, or the ritual curing dances occupy the evenings as well, but mostly the evening hours are spent in talk.

As far as we know, only two general subjects are avoided in conversation. Men and women do not discuss sexual matters openly together except as they make jokes in the joking relationship. The !Kung avoid speaking the names of the gods aloud and do not converse about the gods for fear of attracting their attention and perhaps their displeasure.

A talk differs from a conversation or an arranged, purposeful discussion. It flares spontaneously, I believe from stress, when something is going on in which people are seriously concerned and in disagreement. I think that no formalities regulate it. Anyone who has something he wants to say joins in. People take sides and express opinions, accusing and denying, or defending persons involved. I witnessed one such talk only, in 1952. It occurred over a gift-giving episode at the time of N'ai's betrothal and involved persons in Bands 1 and 2 who were settled near together at the time. Hwan//ka, the mother of /'Xontah, N'ai's betrothed, had diverted a gift—a knife—that people thought was making its way to K"xau, the present husband of N'ai's mother. Instead of giving it to him at the time when an exchange of gifts was in order, she gave it to one of her relatives. N'ai's mother's sister, !'Ku, sitting at her own fire, began the talk. She let it be known what she thought of Hwan//ka, in a loud voice, a startling contrast to the usual low flow of talk. /Ti!kai, N'ai's mother, sitting with her shoulder pressed against her sister's, joined in. People went to sit at each other's fires, forming little groups who agreed and supported each other. From where they sat, but not all at once and not in an excited babble, they made their remarks clearly, with quite long pauses between. Some expressed themselves in agreement with !'Ku as she recounted Hwan//ka's faults and deviations, past and present. Hwan//ka's family and friends, who had moved to sit near her, denied the accusations from time to time, but did not talk as much or as loudly as !'Ku. Hwan//ka muttered or was silent. !'Ku said she disapproved of her sister's daughter marrying the son of such a woman but would reconsider her position if Hwan//ka gave the expected gift to K"xau. The talk lasted about twenty minutes.

At that point Hwan//ka got up and walked away, and the talk subsided to !'Ku's mutterings and others' low conversation. In a few days Hwan//ka gave K"xau a present, not the gift in question, but one which satisfied K"xau, and, as they said, "they all started again in peace."

There is a third form of verbal expression which might be called a "shout" rather than a "talk," but as far as I know the !Kung have no special name for it. It is a verbal explosion. Fate receives the heat of the remarks in a "shout."

We were present on two such occasions, one in 1952, the other in 1953. Both occurred in response to the burning of shelters. In both instances little children, whose mothers had taken their eyes off them for a few minutes had picked up burning sticks from the fire, had dropped them on the soft, dry, bedding grass in the shelters and, at the first burst of flame, had sensibly run outside unscathed. On the first occasion, the two children, who were about three years old, were frightened and were soothed and comforted by their mothers and other relatives. They were not scolded. On the second occasion, Hwan//ka, the two-year-old granddaughter of Old ≠Toma and /Təm, had set fire to her grandparents' shelter. She was not apparently frightened at all and was found placidly chewing her grandfather's well-toasted sandal. She was not scolded either.

What was especially interesting was the behavior of the people. On both occasions they rushed to the burning shelters, emitting all at once, in extremely loud, excited voices, volcanic eruptions of words. The men made most of the noise, but the women were also talking excitedly. No one tried to do anything, nor could they, for the grass shelters burned like the fiery furnace. I asked the interpreters to stand close to one person at a time and try to hear what he said. People were telling where they had been when the fire started, why they had not got there sooner. They shouted that mothers should not take their eyes off their children, that the children might have been burned. They lamented the objects which had been destroyed—all in the greatest din I have ever heard humans produce out of themselves. It went on for about eight or ten minutes in bursts, then tapered off for another ten. While Old ≠Toma's shelter was burning, he and his wife, /Təm, the great maker of beads, sat on one side weeping. After the shouting had subsided, a dozen or more people set about looking for Old ≠Toma's knife blade and arrow points and picking up what beads they could find for /Təm in the cooling ashes. The two instances of "shouts" provided examples of the vehemence which vocal expression can have and vividly illustrated the !Kung way of venting emotion in words.

There is still another kind of talk, not conversation, that I consider to be an outlet for tension and anxiety. We happened to hear it only in relation to anxiety about food and do not know if other concerns sometimes find expression in this way. It occurs in varying degrees of intensity. It is a repeating of something over and over and over again. For instance, whether it is actually so or not, someone may be reiterating that he has no food or that no one has given him food. The remarks are made in the presence of other individuals, but the other individuals do not respond in the manner of a discussion or conversation. In an extreme instance we saw a woman visitor go into a sort of trance and say over and over for perhaps half an hour or so in ≠Toma's presence that he had not given her as much meat as was her due. It was not said like an accusation. It was said as though he were not there. I had the eerie feeling that I was present in someone else's dream. ≠Toma did not argue or oppose her. He continued doing whatever he was doing and let her go on.

All these ways of talking, I believe, aid the !Kung in maintaining their peaceful social relations. Getting things out in words keeps everyone in touch with what others are thinking and feeling, releases tensions, and prevents pressures from building up until they burst out in aggressive acts.

Aspects of Good Manners

In !Kung society good manners require that, when !Kung meet other !Kung who are strangers, all the men should lay down their weapons and approach each other unarmed. The first time ≠Toma approached us, he paused about thirty or forty feet away from us, laid down his bow, arrows, and assegai (spear) on the ground, and walked toward us unarmed. After we were accepted and given !Kung names, we were no longer strangers and we never observed the practice again.

Good manners require that visitors be received courteously and asked to sit by the fire. The woman whose fire it is may welcome the visitor by taking a pinch of the sweet smelling *sā* powder, which she carries in a little tortoise shell hung from her neck, and sprinkling it on the visitor's head in a line from the top of the head to the forehead.

Good manners in eating express restraint. A person does not reveal eagerness or take more than a modest share. When a visitor comes to the fire of a family which is preparing food or eating, he should sit at a little distance, not to seem importunate, and wait to be asked to share. On several occasions we gave small gifts of corned beef to be

shared with a group. The person who received the food from us would take only a mouthful. Once an old man who received the meat first only licked his fingers. The lump of food would be passed from one to another. Each would take a modest bite. The last person often got the most. I found it moving to see so much restraint about taking food among people who are all thin and often hungry, for whom food is a source of constant anxiety. We observed no unmannerly behavior and no cheating and no encroachment about food. Although informants said that quarrels had occurred occasionally in the past between members of a band over the time to go to gather certain plant foods, and although we observed expressions of dissatisfaction, no quarrels of any kind arose over food during our observations.

The polite way to receive food, or any gift, is to hold out both hands and have the food or other gift placed in them. To reach out with one hand suggests grabbing to the !Kung. Food may be placed also in front of the person who is to receive it.

Good manners in general should be inoffensive. Any behavior which is likely to stir up trouble is regarded with apprehension and disapproval by the !Kung. In view of this, the joking relationship has its interesting side. Men and women who have the joking relationship insult each other in a facetious way and also point out actual faults or remark on actual episodes which embarrass a person. Everyone joins in the uproarious, derisive laughter. All this is joking and one should not take offense. The !Kung say this teaches young persons to keep their tempers.

In contrast to the joking is their care in other aspects of conduct to avoid giving offense. #Toma said, for instance, that if he were forming a hunting party and a man whom he did not want asked to join him, he would be careful to refuse indirectly by making some excuse and would try not to offend the man.

Gossip which can stir up trouble is discouraged. People do gossip but usually discreetly, in low voices, with near and trusted relatives and friends. It is best to mind one's own business, they say.

People are expected to control their tempers, and they do so to a remarkable degree. If they are angry, aggrieved, or frustrated, they tend to mope rather than to become aggressive, expressing their feelings in low mutters to their close relatives and friends. #Toma told us that he had lost his temper twice when he was a young man and on one occasion had knocked his father down. On the other he had pushed his wife into hot ashes. It had so frightened him to realize that he could lose control of himself and behave in this violent way that, he said, he had not lost his temper since.

Meat-sharing

The !Kung custom of sharing meat helps to keep stress and hostility over food at a low intensity. The practical value of using up the meat when it is fresh is obvious to all, and the !Kung are fully aware of the enormous social value of the sharing custom. The fear of hunger is mitigated: the person with whom one shares will share in turn when he gets meat; people are sustained by a web of mutual obligation. If there is hunger, it is commonly shared. There are no distinct haves and have-nots. One is not alone.

To have a concept of the potential stress and jealousy that meat-sharing mitigates in !Kung society, one has only to imagine one family eating meat and others not, when they are settled only ten or fifteen feet apart in a firelit encampment, and there are no walls for privacy. The desert does not hide secret killing and eating because actions are printed in its sands for all to read. The idea of eating alone and not sharing is shocking to the !Kung. It makes them shriek with an uneasy laughter. Lions could do that, they say, not men.

Small animals, the size of duikers or smaller, and birds belong to the man who shoots or snares them. Tortoises, lizards, grasshoppers, and snakes are picked up incidentally and belong to the person who picks them up. That person may share his find only with his or her immediate family or with others as he or she chooses, in the way plant foods are shared. #Toma says that if he has only a small creature, he and his family eat a meal and give a little to anyone who happens to be nearby at the time.

The custom of meat-sharing applies to the big animals which are deliberately hunted by hunting parties. In the Nyae Nyae area they were eland, kudu, gemsbok, wildebeest, hartebeest, springbok, warthog, and ostrich. Buffalo were found less commonly. The Nyae Nyae hunters sometimes managed to shoot the wary giraffe but only occasionally. All the above-mentioned animals weigh hundreds of pounds; a large bull eland may weigh a ton. It is the meat of these animals that is distributed according to custom and is shared by all present in the encampment.

The composition of the hunting party is not a matter of strict convention or of anxious concern. Whoever the hunters are, the meat is shared and everyone profits. The men are free to organize their hunting parties as they like. No categories of consanguineous kin or affines are prohibited from hunting together, whether or not they have the joking relationship or practice the sitting and speaking avoidances. Men from different bands may hunt together.

A father has authority over his sons and sons-in-law and could ask

them to go hunting or to accompany him and would expect them to obey. Otherwise, participation in a hunting party is voluntary. Any man may instigate a hunt and may ask others to join. No one is formally in command of a party unless he is the father with his sons or sons-in-law, but often an informal kind of leadership develops out of skill and judgment. The men fall in with the plans and suggestions of the best hunter or reach agreement among themselves somehow.

Hunting parties are usually composed of from two to four or five men. One hunter alone would be at a disadvantage in many ways. Ordinarily, the !Kung do not form large parties. Small parties hunting in different directions have much more chance of finding game than one large single party has.

When the kill is made, the hunters have the prerogative of eating the liver on the spot and may eat more of the meat until their hunger is satisfied. If they are far from the band, they may eat the parts that are especially perishable or most awkward to carry, like the head, and they sometimes eat the cherished marrow. They then carry the animal to the band in its parts, bones and all, or, if the animal is very big, they leave most of the bones and cut the meat into strips. The strips dry to biltong quickly and thus are preserved before they decay, and they can be hung on carrying-sticks² and transported more easily than big chunks. The blood is carried in bags made of the stomach or bladder.

The gall bladder and testicles are discarded at the kill. Eventually the picked bones and horns are thrown away. (The !Kung make only a few artifacts of bone and horn; the artifacts last a long time and seldom need replacing.) Sinews are kept for making cord. The hide would be skinned off whole and tanned, if it were suitable for a kaross and someone wanted a new kaross at the time. Otherwise, the hide is dried, pounded up, and eaten. Hides are actually quite tasty. Feet are picked of very tissue; gristle is dried and pounded. Soft parts, such as the fetus, udder, heart, lungs, brains, and blood, are often given to old people with poor teeth. Intestines are enjoyed and desired by all. The meat of the rump, back, chest, and neck is highly appreciated. Nothing is wasted; all is distributed.

The owner of the animal is the owner of the first arrow to be effectively shot into the animal so that it penetrates enough for its poison to work. That person is responsible for the distribution. The owner may or may not be one of the hunters.

Hunters have arrows which they acquire in three different ways. Each man makes arrows for himself, shaping the points (usually now of metal, but still possibly of bone or wood) with some slight dis-

tinction so that he will know them from the arrows of other men. Secondly, arrows are given as gifts. The man, who made the arrow or had himself acquired it as a gift, may give it to someone else, either a man or a woman, consanguineous kin, affine, or friend. Thirdly, people lend arrows to one another. The status of the arrow plays its part in the distribution of the animal killed with it. There is much giving and lending of arrows. The society seems to want to extinguish in every way possible the concept of the meat belonging to the hunter.

A hunter chooses which arrow he will use. The owner of the arrow—who ipso facto owns the animal—may therefore be the hunter himself, who has chosen to use an arrow he made or one that was given him, or he may be a person who lent the arrow to the hunter.

There may be several hunters in the hunting party and several arrows in the animal, but this seems to cause no confusion or conflict. Every arrow is known, of course. The hunters see which first penetrates effectively so that its poison could account for the kill. But I think that often it is arranged beforehand who will own the animal. A man asking another to accompany him might say, "Come and help me get a buck." Or "Old Gau lent me an arrow and asked me to hunt for him. You come too."

I think there is little or no dissension as to who owned the animal because it is not a cause for great stress; each hunter gets a share of the meat anyway. I think also that a man wants sometimes to be the owner of the meat in order to start the distribution off in the direction of his own relatives, but that one is also content sometimes not to have the onus of the main distribution.

If the animal is large, the hunters cut it up at the kill. If the whole animal is to be cut up in the encampment, any of the men may participate in the butchering. They cut the animal in a customary way each time—all know how to do it, all are skilled. If the owner of the animal is a man, he would probably work at butchering himself; and the hunters would probably help, but not necessarily so. Others might do this work. Women do not participate in butchering an animal, and we did not see any assist in carrying the meat around in the distribution even though we saw women carry meat at other times.

The first distribution the owner makes is to the hunters and to the giver of the arrow, if the arrow was not one the owner made himself. The meat, always uncooked in the first distribution, is given on the bone unless the animal is so large that the meat has been cut into strips at the kill.

In a second distribution, the several persons who got meat in the first distribution cut up their shares and distribute them further. This meat also is given uncooked. The amounts depend on the number of persons involved, but should be as much as the giver can manage. In the second distribution, close kinship is the factor that sets the pattern of the giving. Certain obligations are compulsory. A man's first obligation at this point, we were told, is to give to his wife's parents. He must give to them the best he has in as generous portions as he can, while still fulfilling other primary obligations, which are to his own parents, his spouse, and his offspring. He keeps a portion for himself at this time and from it gives to his siblings, to his wife's siblings if they are present, and to other relatives and friends who are there; possibly he gives only in small quantities by then.

Everyone who receives meat gives again, in another wave of sharing, to his or her parents, parents-in-law, spouse, offspring, siblings, and others. The meat may be cooked and the quantities small.

Visitors, even though they are not close relatives, are given meat by the people whom they are visiting. This social rule is strongly felt. Visitors may receive small quantities of cooked meat, which is like being asked to dinner.

Name-relatives often receive generous portions of meat because they have the same name as the giver or because their names associate them with his close kin, but this seems to be more a favor than an absolute rule. ≠Toma said there were far too many men named ≠Toma for him to give them special consideration.

The result of the distribution is that everybody gets some meat.

In the later waves of sharing, when the primary distribution and primary kinship obligations have been fulfilled, the giving of meat from one's own portion has the quality of gift-giving. !Kung society requires at this point only that a person should give with reasonable generosity in proportion to what he has received and not keep more than an equitable amount for himself. Then the person who has received a gift of meat must give a reciprocal gift some time in the future. Band affiliation imposes no pattern on this giving. Except that the hunters are customarily given a forequarter or a hindquarter, no rule prescribes that any particular part of the animal must be given to any particular person or to any category of kin or affine. People give different parts of the meat and different amounts, this time to some, next time to others, more generously or less generously according to their own reasons. We are certain that the motives are

the same as in gift-giving in general: to measure up to what is expected of them, to make friendly gestures, to win favor, to repay past favors and obligations, and to enmesh others in future obligation. I am sure that when feelings of genuine generosity and real friendliness exist, they would also be expressed by giving.

The distribution of an eland which was killed by K"xau Beard of Band 2 will serve as an example of the way meat was shared on one occasion. (On every occasion, the amounts given and the parts given would differ, and the first recipients would vary.) More than a hundred !Kung were present at /Gausha at the time of the hunt. Both /Gausha bands (Bands 1 and 2) were present. Bands 3, 4, and 7, and a sprinkling of people from other bands were visiting.

The hunting party was composed of four men: K"xau Beard, with //Kau, his first wife's brother, and /Twi, his own brother, both of whom lived with him in Band 2. N!aishe, his brother-in-law, who was visiting at the time, joined the party.

The party had hunted for eight days without success in heat so exhausting that they had to lie covered with sand through the middle part of the day.

/Twi was the first to see the eland. It was a huge one. As /Twi had been asked by his brother to come and help on the hunt, he told his brother where the eland was and did not shoot at it himself.

Two boys joined the men to track the eland after it was shot. The party tracked it for three days and then found it dead from the poison. They cut up the meat and brought it to the encampment at /Gausha, which was two days' travel away. The hunt had lasted thirteen days in all.

K"xau Beard was himself the owner of the arrow. The arrow had been given by one person to another five times. /Gau Music of Band 1, who had made it, gave it to his sister, /"Xoishe, who gave it to her husband, ≠Gau of Band 3. He gave it to his brother, K"xau, also of Band 3, who gave it to his wife, Tī'!kai. Tī'!kai gave it to K"xau Beard, her brother, who shot the eland with it and who was responsible for the distribution of the meat.

K"xau Beard first gave meat to the hunters who helped him, as was the custom. To N!aishe he gave a forequarter and to //Kau a forequarter and the head. (The hunters usually received a forequarter or hindquarter or an equivalent amount. The head was an extra gift.) The two boys who helped track got nothing because their fathers would give them some, we were told. To our astonishment, /Twi was given nothing. K"xau Beard explained that his brother would

eat from his pot. (Actually he might eat more in this way as he would not have to share the cooked meat with anyone but his wife and child.)

K"xau Beard's sister, /Ti!kai, who had given him the arrow, received the meat of the back and throat and the intestines.

K"xau Beard kept the meat of the neck for himself. Continuing the distribution he gave the rest of the meat as follows:

To his first wife, //Kushe, he gave both hindquarters, the meat of the chest, the lungs, part of the liver, and one hind foot. To his mother he gave the meat of the belly and one hind foot. To his sister, //Kushe, and to /Tasa, the wife of his brother, /Twi, he gave one front foot each.

The amount given to his first wife was enormous. In addition to giving to her co-wife, also named //Kushe, and to her children and her co-wife's children, she gave a large portion of meat to her parents who lived with them in Band 2. (On other occasions the man had given directly to his wife's parents—not through his wife.) When the meat was cut up, //Kushe gave to her father, Old ≠Toma, four bundles of strips of boneless raw meat (it was somewhat dried by then). There were about ten or twelve strips to a bundle, about 76 cm to 92 cm long. We guessed the weight of this gift to be about 27 to 32 kg. She gave meat also to her two younger brothers, /Gau and /"Xontah. (Her other brother, //Kau, who had been one of the hunters, had got his share from K"xau Beard.) She gave to her co-wife's father, ≠Gau of Band 4, and to old /"Xashe of Band 4, her co-wife's MoFa. She then gave to six other persons, all in Band 1. They were: her cousin, Old Gau (her FaSiSo); his two daughters; two other cousins (FaSiDas), /Ti!kai and !'Ku; and !'Ku's husband, ≠Toma.

The giving of raw meat went on. Old ≠Toma gave to eighteen people: his wife; six affines; three consanguineous kin; two name-relatives (that is, a visitor whose father's name was ≠Toma, and Old /Gasa, whose deceased husband's name was ≠Toma); and six other persons. Telling us the reasons for giving to the last six, whose consanguineous or affinal connections (if any) with Old ≠Toma were so remote we did not bother to trace them, he said of one, "He is an old man whom I like in my heart," and of another, "He was hungry for meat." In the end Old ≠Toma gave some of the meat back to his daughter, //Kushe.

/Ti!kai of Band 3, the giver of the arrow, gave raw meat to six persons: her husband's mother; his brother and his two sisters (all in

Band 2); a visitor who was her HuSiHuBr; and her mother's brother in the visiting Band 7.

Persons who had by this time received substantial amounts of raw meat began giving to others. We recorded sixty-three gifts of raw meat. Doubtless there were more. After the raw meat was given, individuals shared their portions, cooked or raw, with parents, offspring, spouses, and others.

Meat is not habitually cooked and eaten as a family meal among the !Kung. When an individual receives a portion of meat, he owns it outright for himself. He may give and share it further as he wishes, but it never becomes family or group property. The men, women, and children may cook their pieces when and as they wish, often roasting bits in the coals and hot ashes and eating them alone at odd times. Or someone may start a big pot boiling, and several people will bring their pieces to put into it at the same time, each taking his own piece out when it is cooked.

The sense of possessing one's own piece personally is, I believe, very important to the !Kung. It gives one the responsibility of choosing when to eat one's meat and struggling with hunger as best one can when it is finished, without occasion or excuse for blaming others for eating more than their share.

It has often been reported that when San have plenty of meat, they gorge themselves until they can hardly walk. We have seen the Nyae Nyae !Kung eat hearty meals of meat when they have been long without, but nothing more than we considered a normal amount. They hang meat in the bushes to dry and can keep it for some time. It is not uncommon for them to eat quite sparingly and save bits for a coming journey or against a future day of hunger.

The !Kung are quite conscious of the value of meat-sharing and they talk about it, especially about the benefit of the mutual obligation it entails. The idea of sharing is deeply implanted and very successfully imposes its restraints. To keep meat without sharing is one of the things that just is not done.

Gift-giving

The custom of gift-giving, in my opinion, comes second only to meat-sharing in aiding the !Kung to avoid jealousy and ill will and to develop friendly relations. !Kung society puts considerable emphasis on gift-giving. Almost everything a person has may have been given to him and may be passed on to others in time. The !Kung make

their artifacts, on the whole, of durable material and take good care of them. The objects may last for generations, moving in a slow current among the people. The dealings in gift-giving are only between individuals, but they are numerous and provide occasion, perhaps more than any one other activity does, for visits which bring groups of people together.

We gave cowrie shells as parting gifts in 1951 to the women in Band 1, the band which first sponsored us and with which we stayed on each expedition wherever they were. When providing ourselves with gifts for the !Kung on our first expedition, we had had to guess as best we could what would appeal to them. The idea of cowrie shells came from seeing in museums so many West African objects encrusted with the shells. We thought the !Kung might like them as a novelty and bought a supply from a New York shell dealer. They came from the Pacific, and we amused ourselves imagining future archaeologists finding them in !Kung sites in the Kalahari, to their bewilderment. We carefully observed that there were no cowrie shells among the !Kung ornaments before we gave them. We gave to each woman enough for a short necklace, one large brown shell and twenty smaller gray ones. In 1952, there was hardly a cowrie shell to be found in Band 1. They had been given to relatives and friends, and they appeared not as whole necklaces but in ones and twos in people's ornaments to the edges of the area.

The !Kung have not developed special objects to use as gifts. Nor have they invested ordinary objects with special gift significance. What they give each other are the common artifacts and materials of everyday life. However, among those, some are more highly valued than others, as one would expect. I gathered that relative scarcity of material was a factor and that objects were appreciated for their beauty, workmanship, and appropriate size (a wide headband is better than a narrow one). People took an interest in remembering to whom an object had been given in the recent past, but the !Kung, who are present-oriented, do not place special value upon antiquity as such or systematically hold the distant past in mind.

The !Kung decorate their artifacts very little. (They have developed music and dancing but not the plastic or pictorial arts.) However, they delight in ornaments with which to adorn themselves. The most highly valued are the traditional ornaments of ostrich-eggshell beads, especially the wide headbands and the necklaces of five or six strings of beads that reach to the navel—the measurement of a good necklace. The creamy white of the shells is particularly becoming to the yellow-brown skin of the !Kung and is a relief from the monotonous

gray-brown of the karosses that the women wear. The !Kung also like ornaments made with European beads of all colors, though white is preferred. They like all beads, any beads, we were told; K'xau Beard said that the only thing they do not like about beads is scarcity of them.

They value artifacts that take time and care to make: the musical instrument (pluriarc) called //gwashi; a well-shaped wooden bowl; a long string of dance rattles. They also value metal implements and pots; these they obtain by trade.

The !Kung do not trade among themselves. They consider the procedure undignified and avoid it because it is too likely to stir up bad feelings. They trade with the Bantu, however, in the border country settlements of western Botswana. The !Kung offer well-tanned antelope hides and ostrich-eggshell beads. For these they obtain tobacco; beads; knives; axes; malleable metal for making arrowpoints and assegai blades; and occasional files and chisels, fire-strikers, and pots.

The odds are with the Bantu in the trading. Big, aggressive, and determined to have what they want, they easily intimidate the !Kung. Several !Kung informants said that they tried not to trade with Herero if it was possible to avoid it because, although the Tawana were hard bargainers, the Herero were worse. /Twi of Band 1, a mild man, said he had been forced by a Herero, one whom he was afraid to anger, to trade the shirt and pants we had given him as a parting gift in 1952 for a small enamel pan and a little cup. /Ti!kai had more gumption. A Herero at the beginning of a negotiation with him brought out a good-sized pile of tobacco but took from it only a pinch when it was time to pay. /Ti!kai picked up the object he was trading and ran off. #Toma said with amused exaggeration that "a very good Herero, a respectable one, will give a handful of tobacco for five cured steinbok skins. A bad Herero will give a pipeful!" (he showed the size of his fingernail) "for three skins." The Tawana values are a little better. A well-tanned gemsbok hide brings a pile of tobacco about 36 cm in diameter and about 10 cm high. The values vary. Some that were reported to us were three duiker or steinbok skins for a good-sized knife, five strings of ostrich-eggshell beads for an assegai.

The !Kung have become dependent on metal, especially knives, axes, and arrowpoints. They have been able to trade enough for every man to have these implements. They could, however, exist without them and do still use a few bone and wood arrowpoints, as it is poison, not penetrating power, that makes their arrows deadly.

The pots are Ovambo or Okavango pottery (the !Kung make no pottery themselves) or European ironware. The !Kung like to have a pot around to borrow sometimes; not everyone wants to carry one. They cook mostly in hot ashes. More for their novelty, I thought, than for their worth, the !Kung trade also for old oddments of cloth garments (they weave neither cloth nor mats), pieces of blankets, basins, and so forth—things they do not really need but like to have.

Tobacco they need "to make the heart feel better." Oddly enough for these passionate smokers, tobacco is not given as much emphasis in gift-giving as one might expect. They do make gifts of tobacco, but when anyone lights a pipe he passes it around anyway; all present drag smoke into their lungs until they almost faint, and it does not seem to matter much who owned the tobacco.

Eland fat is a very highly valued gift. An eland provides so much fat that people can afford to be a little luxurious. They rub it on themselves and on their implements, and they eat it. \neq Toma said that when he had eland fat to give, he took shrewd note of certain objects he might like to have and gave their owners especially generous gifts of fat.

Real property and the resources of plant foods and waterholes are not owned by individuals and cannot be given away. However, meat, once it is distributed after the hunt, and plant foods, once they are gathered, become private property and may be given. Artifacts are privately owned by the individual man, woman, or child, as outrightly owned if received as a gift as if made by the individual. The !Kung borrow and lend a great deal—in itself this is one of the ways they support each other and aid themselves in maintaining social solidarity—but this does not blur the clarity of ownership. Each object acquires some markings of its own from the maker and from usage. It is easy for the !Kung, with their highly developed powers of observation and visual memory, to keep track of the commonest objects, know the ownership, and remember the history of the gifts.

As far as we know, no rules of avoidance govern the objects given to any category of person. For instance, although women, especially when menstruating, should not touch hunting weapons lest the hunter's powers be weakened, they may own arrows that are given to them.

The gifts vary in quantity. One which /Ti!kai gave to \neq Toma was considered generous. It was a fine ostrich-eggshell headband, three ostrich eggshells, and a well-tanned duiker skin as soft as suede. Another generous gift consisted of a knife, an assegai, and a triple

string of traded white European beads. Often gifts were less. The feelings persons have for each other, the degree of their past indebtedness, what they happen to possess and can give determine the generosity of the gift.

The acquisition, per se, of the objects is seldom, I believe, of primary importance to most individuals in gift-giving—that is, if the objects are their own artifacts. As the !Kung come into more contact with Europeans—and this is already happening—they will feel sharply the lack of our things and will need and want more. It makes them feel inferior to be without clothes when they stand among strangers who are clothed. But in their own life and with their own artifacts, they are comparatively free from both material want and pressures to acquire. Except for food and water (important exceptions!) with which the Nyae Nyae !Kung are in balance, but I believe barely so, they all had what they needed, or they could make what they needed. Every man can and does make the things that men make, and every woman the things that women make. No one was dependent upon acquiring objects by gift-giving.

The !Kung live in a kind of material plenty because they have adapted the tools of their living to materials which lie in abundance around them and are free for anyone to take (wood, reeds, bone for weapons and implements; fibers for cordage; grass for shelters), or to materials which are at least sufficient in quantity to satisfy the needs of the population. The Nyae Nyae !Kung have hides enough for garments and bags; they keep extra hides for when they need them for new garments or when they want them for trade; otherwise they eat them. The !Kung can always use more ostrich eggshells for beads to wear or trade, but enough are found, at least, for every woman to have eight or ten shells for water-containers—all she can carry—and a goodly number of bead ornaments.

In their nomadic hunting-gathering life, traveling from one source of food to another through the seasons, always going back and forth between food and water, they carry their young children and all their belongings. With plenty of most materials at hand to replace artifacts as required, the !Kung have not needed or wanted to encumber themselves with duplicates or surpluses. They do not even want to carry one of everything. They borrow what they do not own. I believe for these reasons they have not developed permanent storage, have not hoarded, and the accumulation of objects has not become associated with admirable status. Instead of keeping things, they use them as gifts to express generosity and friendly intent, and to put people under obligation to make return tokens of friendship.

Even more specifically in my opinion, they mitigate jealousy and envy, to which the !Kung are prone, by passing on to others objects that might be coveted.

Except, as #Toma said, that it would be surprising to see a man give a present to a woman who was not related to him (and vice versa I imagine), anyone may give to anyone. Degree or kind of consanguinity or affinity, having the joking relationship or lacking it, impose no requirements or restrictions. We did hear people say, however, that the *k''xau n/a* of a band may feel that he should lean well to the generous side in his giving, for this position focuses a little extra attention on him, and he wants whatever attention he attracts not to be envious. Someone remarked that this could keep such a man poor.

The times of giving are determined almost entirely by the individual's convenience. The !Kung do not know their birthdays or anniversaries and have no special days of the year which they mark by giving gifts. Gifts are required by convention on only three ritual occasions. The type or quantity of the gift is not patterned, but the gift should be generous. The occasions are (1) betrothals and (2) weddings, when the parents exchange gifts and give to the young couple, and (3) the ritual of a baby's first haircut, when the *!ku n/a*, the person for whom the baby is named, should give him a fine present.

Relatives give to young people with the idea of setting them up in life. *K''xau Beard* gave an assegai and a kaross to his *FaSiSo*, saying it was his duty to see that the boy got some things because among the boy's relatives he was the most able to do so. The boy's father was very old, he explained, and did not have many possessions. People expect to wait a long time for young people to make return gifts.

The two rigid requirements in gift-giving are that one must not refuse a proffered gift and that one must give in return. *Demi* said that even if he might prefer not to be obligated to someone, he would accept and prepare to make his return gift. If a gift were to be refused, he continued, the giver would be terribly angry. He would say, "Something is very wrong here." This could involve whole groups in tensions, bad words, taking sides—even a talk might occur—just what the !Kung do not want. *Demi* said it does not happen: a !Kung never refuses a gift. (I thought of our Christmas giving and how one would feel if one's Christmas gift were refused.) And a !Kung does not fail to give in return. #Toma said that would be

"neglecting friendship." A person would know that others thought him "far-hearted" and "this would worry him."

In reciprocating, one does not give the same object back again but something of comparable value. The interval of time between receiving and reciprocating varies from a few weeks to a few years. Propriety requires that there be no unseemly haste. The giving must not look like trading.

Incidentally, we were not included by the !Kung in their gift-giving patterns. They gave us a few things spontaneously which they thought we would enjoy—python meat for instance—but did not feel obligated to reciprocate for every gift we gave them.

Asking for a first-time gift or asking that a return gift be made after due time has elapsed is within the rules of propriety. People prefer that others give in return without being asked, but #Toma says he does not hesitate to ask if a gift is long overdue. If a person wants a particular object, he may ask for it. Asking is also a means by which people play upon each other's feelings. One can test a friendship in this way. One can give vent to jealousy or satisfy it by acquiring some object. And one can make someone else uncomfortable. I thought that */Ti!kai* (an intelligent man, but very touchy, self-centered and—with us—uncooperative) used to ask for gifts in order to play with anger, arousing it for the sake of feeling it, as children do with fear, playing witches in the dark. His remarks one day indicated a mingling of feelings and purposes. He told us that one may ask for anything. He did, he said. He would go to a person's fire and sit and ask. (I could imagine him with his black, glancing eyes, sitting and asking!) He would ask usually for only one or two things, but if a person had a lot, he might ask for more. He said he was almost never refused. However, if a man had only one pot and */Ti!kai* asked for it, the man might say "I am not refusing but it is the only pot I have. If I get another, you may come for this one. I am very sorry but this is the only pot I have." */Ti!kai* said this would not make him angry unless he were refused too many times. To be refused too many times would make a person very angry. But, said */Ti!kai*, he himself did not tire of people asking him for gifts. Asking, he claimed, "formed a love" between people. It meant "he still loves me, that is why he is asking." At least it formed a communication of some sort between people, I thought.

I have stressed the mitigation of envy and jealousy as the important value of gift-giving. !Kung informants stressed more the value of making a friendly gesture even if it is only a token gesture. It puts

people under the obligation of making a friendly gesture in return. People are quite conscious of this and speak about it. Demi said, "The worst thing is not giving gifts. If people do not like each other, but one gives a gift, and the other must accept; this brings a peace between them. We give to one another always. We give what we have. This is the way we live together."

Absence of Stealing

One day, when I wanted to talk with a group of informants about what the !Kung considered to be a wrongdoing, I began with /Ti!kai. He said promptly, "making crooked arrows and fighting," but could not think of anything else that was a wrongdoing. Informants had previously said that not sharing food would be the worst thing they could think of. Others had mentioned that the breaking of the incest and menstruation prohibitions would be very wrong, and that girls should not sit in immodest postures. No one seemed to think lying was very serious wrongdoing, and no one mentioned stealing. I finally asked directly and K"xau replied meditatively they had not thought to mention stealing because they did not steal.

We had heard of a man who took honey from a tree, honey which had been found and marked and was therefore owned by someone else. He was killed for it by the furious owner. That was the only episode of stealing that we discovered.

The !Kung stole nothing from us. Even when we went away on trips leaving several bands of !Kung settled around our camp site, we left our supplies and equipment unlocked, in the open or in our tents, with confidence that nothing would be stolen. Things that we lost or forgot in the !Kung encampment were returned to us, even two cigarettes in a crumpled package.

Stealing without being discovered is practically impossible in !Kung life because the !Kung know everybody's footprints and every object. Respect for ownership is strong. But, apart from that, /Ti!kai said, "Stealing would cause nothing but trouble. It might cause fighting."

Conclusion

During seventeen and a half months of field work with the Nyae Nyae !Kung (with Bands 1 and 2 and many visitors, usually about sixty to seventy-five persons), I personally saw only four flare-ups of discord and heard about three others which occurred in

neighboring bands during that period. All were resolved before they became serious quarrels. Of the seven, four were flare-ups of sexual jealousy. Another was the talk about Hwan//ka's gift. Two were minor disagreements about going somewhere. On one occasion, K"xau Beard coerced his young second wife into going with him when she wanted to stay visiting her parents. He coerced her swiftly and decisively by snatching her baby from her arms and walking off with him. In a flash the wife ran a few steps and hit him on the head with her digging stick, then she went around in a circle, stamping her feet in great, high stamps like an enraged samurai in a Japanese print, then she followed her husband. On another occasion, /Ti!kai gave his brother a shove for refusing to accompany him. None of the conflicts concerned food.

On a later expedition, in another year, John Marshall witnessed three serious quarrels.³ Anger flared more hotly than in the episodes I saw. One of those quarrels was about food. It was a dispute about the possession of an animal that had been killed. Another was about a marital matter, another about the failure of a curer to come to cure a sick child when he was asked. All three quarrels were resolved by talks. Vehement talking it was, but it stopped short of physical fighting.

I consider that the incidence of quarrels is low among the !Kung, that they manage very well to avoid physical violence when tensions are high and anger flares, and that they also manage well to keep tension from reaching the point of breaking into open hostility. They avoid arousing envy, jealousy, and ill will; and, to a notable extent, they cohere and achieve the comfort and security which they so desire in human relations.

Further Studies to Part IV

Although much of the project's work on behavior and belief remains to be published, several studies have already appeared. Katz deals with the !Kung trance in his recent book, *Preludes to Growth* (1973). Previous work on the trance dance has been published by Lee (1967, 1968b) and by Marshall (1962, 1969). John Marshall made a short informative film on the trance entitled "Num chai" (1971), see also Marshall and Bieseke (1974). Bieseke's studies of !Kung folklore include Bieseke (1972b, 1972d, 1972e, and in press). Previous studies include Lorna Marshall's (1962) and Bleek and Lloyd (1911, 1923).

Long before the current project was organized, Lorna Marshall was publishing a distinguished series of papers on the ethnography of the Nyae Nyae !Kung (1957, 1957b, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1965, and 1969). The Nyae Nyae !Kung are also documented in a series of films by John Marshall including "The Hunters" (1956) and a number of others available from Documentary Educational Resources, 24 Dane Street, Somerville, Massachusetts.

13. Aspects of !Kung Folklore

1. Kauri is a small collection of semipermanent villages near the southeast extremity of !Kung territory. It lies twelve miles west of the Tswana village of Tsau, between toteng and Nokaneng. Tsaukwe and Nharo speakers are frequent visitors there, as are the Dobe !Kung.

14. !Kung Knowledge of Animal Behavior
(or: The Proper Study of Mankind Is Animals)

1. Schaller (1972) describes a not dissimilar occurrence, and Douglas-Hamilton (personal communication) has found fairly significant predation by lions on elephants around Lake Manyara in Tanzania.

2. This discussion took place early in Konner's stay and was interpreted with the assistance of Henry Harpending.

3. Incidentally this bears on one of Lee's (1968a) statements about the source of food at one time of year. In a table in his paper he lists running down fawns, a note suggesting that perhaps only fawns of caching species are taken, where it may be possible to catch them before they begin to run.

15. Sharing, Talking, and Giving: Relief of
Social Tensions among the !Kung

1. This chapter was originally published in *Africa* 31:3 (July 1961), 231-249. It is republished here with the kind permission of the International African Institute.

The second paragraph of the essay is partially rewritten for greater clarity. The sentence marked with this note is especially changed. It formerly read: "Moreover, in this society the ownership of resources of food and water is organized through the headmen of bands and individuals have rights to these resources by being members of a band connected to the headman by some near or remote kin or affinal bond." I feel that the statement needs explanation, especially the word headman. However, since this paragraph is not the place to explain it, I prefer to take the sentence out to make instead the more general statement that the ownership of resources is organized through the band structure, and to give brief explanation of the former sentence in this note. The head of a band is called *k'xau n/a*, "big owner." He does not own the resources personally or exclusively as !Kung own their artifacts. He symbolizes the ownership for the band and gives the ownership continuity.

2. Slabs of meat are cut into strips in the following manner: an incision is made across the slab from the edge, say the right edge, an inch or two down from the top of the slab; the incision is stopped shortly before it reaches the left edge. An inch or two below it another incision is begun, this time at the left edge; it is stopped shortly before it reaches the right edge; and so on. Held at the top, the slab cut in this way unfolds into a zigzag strip, about one to two inches wide.

3. This paragraph, mentioning the three additional quarrels that John Marshall witnessed and filmed, is an addition to the paper.

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