

!KUNG BUSHMEN OF South West Africa by Laurence and Lorna MARSHALL

THE Bushmen of Africa are one of the racial mysteries. They are not Negro, nor Mongolian, nor of the white race. The late Professor Hooten of Harvard University called Bushmen an enigma, and he with other anthropologists classed them, at least tentatively, as a separate race of mankind.

Though it is not known where Bushmen came from or where their early migrations took them, there is ample evidence that they lived in the southern part of the African continent, from the Rhodesias to the tip, for long before the Bantu-speaking Negro tribes came down from Central Africa and before European voyagers came to the Cape.

Bushmen south of the Orange River are now extinct. A few live at Lake Crissie. The larger remnants of the race exist in the Kalahari Desert in South West Africa, Bechuanaland, and south eastern Angola.

S.W.A. Annual, 1956



It is a woman's work to gather the wild veld foods, the mainstay of their diet. This woman has dug a root which she will cook for her family's supper

Dit is die vrou se werk om die wilde veldkos in te samel, wat hulle stapelvoedsel is. Hierdie vrou het 'n wortel uitgegrawe wat sy vir die gesin se aandete gaan kook

Photo: L. Marshall

Foto: L. Marshall

The various groups are similar in culture. Their languages, however, have grown to be different one from the other as French is different from Spanish. The Bushmen languages all have curious sounds called clicks, made by snapping the tongue in different parts of the mouth as we snap the tongue when we urge a horse to go faster. And they have high and low tones, as the Chinese language has.

Bushmen are a small, non-aggressive people. Those who survived the advent of the other races did so by taking refuge in land that no one else wanted. We know /Gikwe Bushmen in Bechuanaland who live during the dry months with no water whatsoever. They survive on the juices of melons and roots and liquid squeezed from the rumen of the occasional antelope they kill.

These dry lands were not conducive to agriculture and the keeping of herds. The Bushmen in them had no incentive to adopt the cattle culture of the Bantu-

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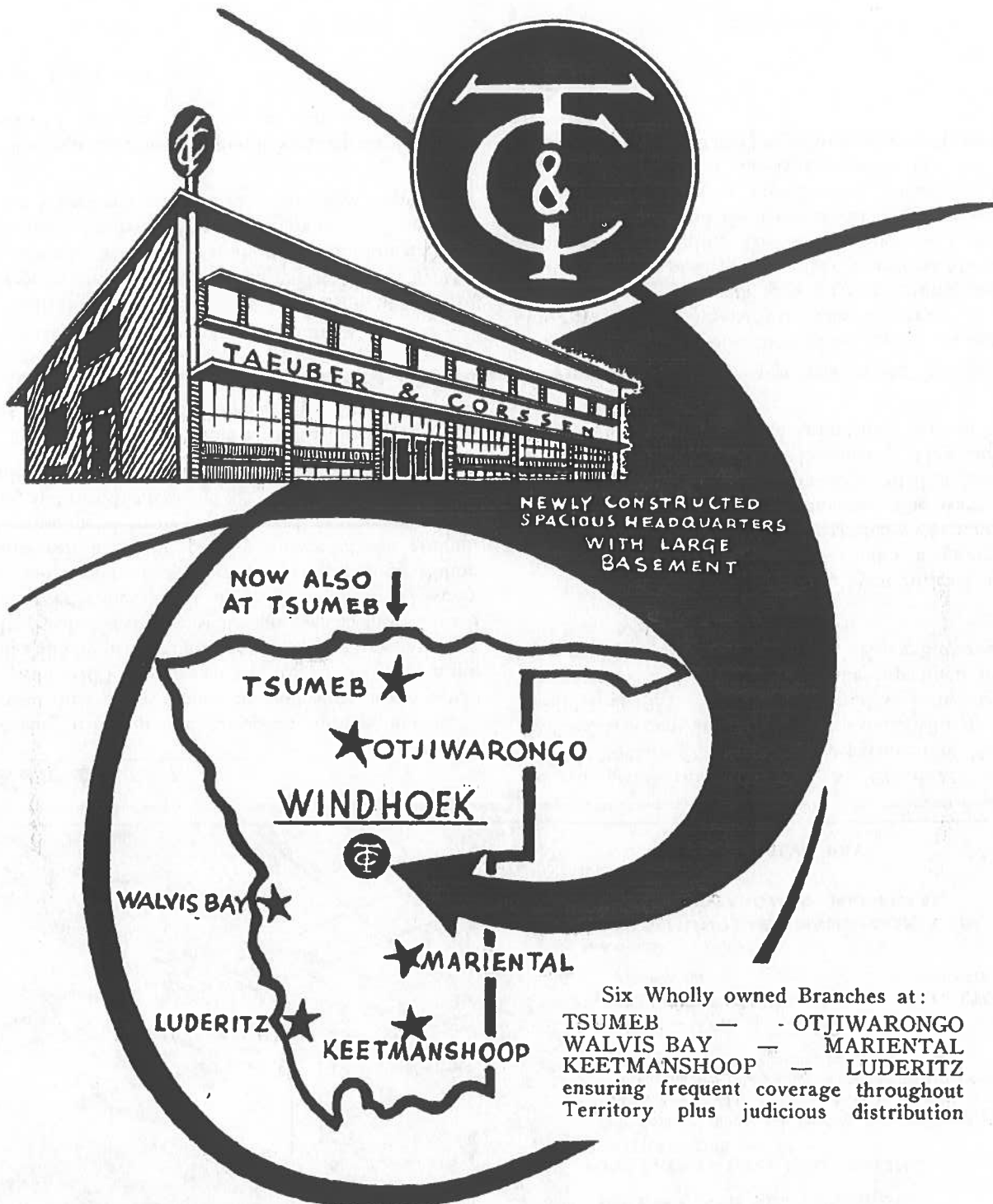
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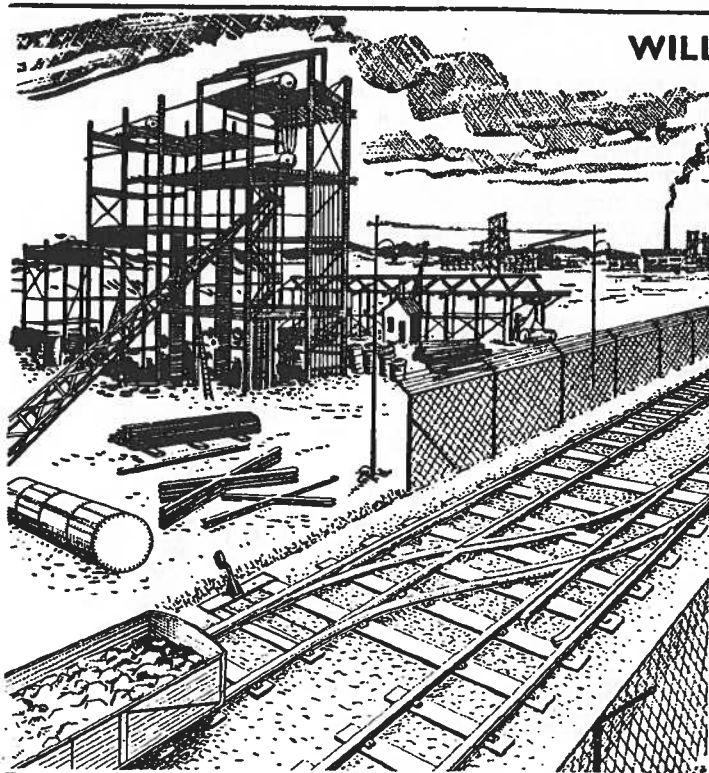
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!Kung Bushmen

speaking tribes or the European farmers but were, instead, best off to remain nomadic, free to go where the wild veld foods ripened and free to follow the hunt. Still skillfully preserving their ancient hunting-gathering culture, they are like stone-age men before animals were ever domesticated or fields planted. However they no longer use stone implements, though Wilton points can be found on the surface of the ground. They use metal arrow points as well as wood and bone ones, and metal knives and axes if they can get them by trading skins with the Bechuanas.

There is world-wide interest in learning more about Bushmen. Modern anthropological studies of them have not been extensive, especially studies made in remote areas where Bushmen are independent and uninfluenced by European or Negro masters.

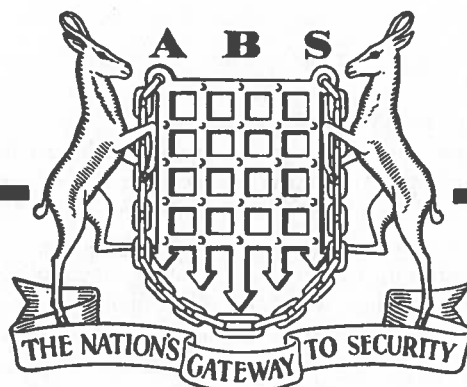
With this in mind the Peabody Museum of Harvard University elected to sponsor an expedition led by Mr. Laurence K. Marshall to study remote Bushmen in the Kalahari. Professor Raymond Dart of the University of the Witwatersrand gave his enthusiastic approval of the plan.

The Administration of South West Africa made the endeavour possible by giving not only permission but

also co-operation and assistance. Mr. Claude McIntyre, Senior Welfare Officer of the Department of Native Affairs, was sent by the Administration with the expedition of 1951. Aided by his extensive knowledge of the country and of native life, the expedition made successful contact with a group of !Kung Bushmen in the Nyae Nyae area of the Kalahari.

The Nyae Nyae area of South West Africa is near the Bechuanaland border. It contains a group of pans surrounded by long desolate stretches where heavy sand and yellow bush predominate. The waterless, desolate country around them constituted a barrier for the !Kung Bushmen who live there. They had so little contact with other cultures that they were an ideal group for our study.

We have been particularly fortunate in the interest shown and the co-operation given by the scientific institutions of South Africa. The University of the Witwatersrand sent with us a physical anthropologist and a professor of linguistics. The Transvaal Museum sent an entomologist. The National Botanic Gardens at Kirstenbosch and the Department of Botany of the Union Government of Pretoria sent botanists. The Smithsonian Institute of Washington, D.C. sent a zoologist with the 1952-53 expedition, and co-sponsored the 1955 expedition.



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!Kung Bushmen . . .

In all we have made four expeditions into the Kalahari in the pursuit of our Bushmen studies, during the course of which we spent a total time of some two and a half years living with remote and unspoiled groups. One year we stayed through the round of the seasons for fourteen consecutive months with the !Kung Bushmen of the Nyae Nyae area.

Because the !Kung Bushmen were the principal subject of our study, we shall give a few of our observations about them.

Our findings were in contrast to some of the ideas about Bushmen which we have heard expressed or have read in the old literature. Some of these ideas are: Bushmen are the lowest form of humanity, filthy, with no morals, and with low intelligence; or, that to go into their country one must take a gun as the only thing a Bushman respects is a rifle; or that when they kill an



TOMA with his family. Their possessions hang in three bags on a bush beside their little grass house, more a symbol of a home than a shelter

Photo: L. Marshall

TOMA met sy familie. Hulle besittings hang in drie sakke aan 'n boom langs hulle grashut, wat eintlik meer die teken is van 'n tuiste as beskutting

L. Marshall

In addition to interviews and personal observations, the various expeditions have made extensive use of photography and sound recording. We explained to the Bushmen that this was to aid our memory in preserving the story of their way of life. We have nearly two hundred thousand feet of 16mm coloured motion pictures, thousands of still pictures, and over a hundred hours of sound recording on high fidelity tape of Bushman language and music.

animal they squat by the kill and gorge till it is devoured or that one must be alert and fear the little poisoned arrow that flies silently out of the dark. *Vermio* is one word that has been used for Bushmen.

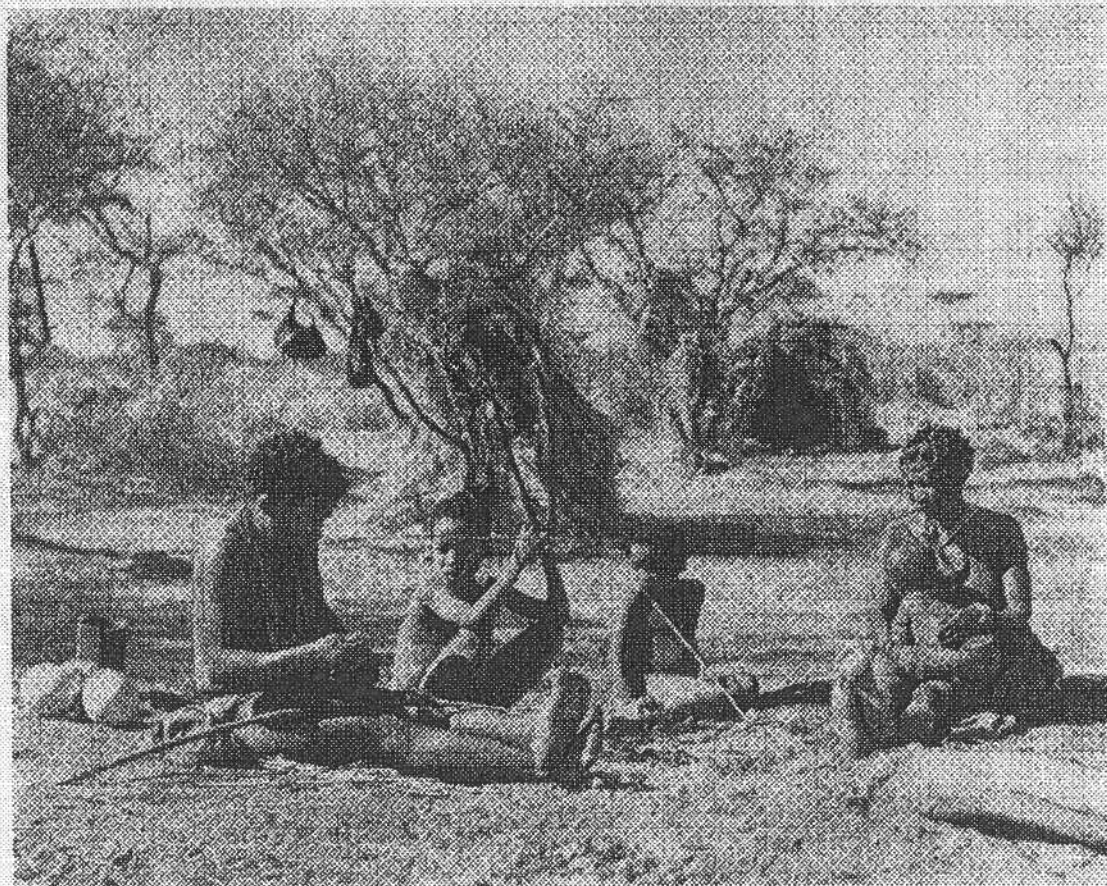
In contrast to the above concepts, we found that !Kung Bushmen to be an alert and active people, who were quick to learn and responsive once they had got over their mistrust of us as strangers. They have shown a power of survival which indicates intelligence.

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'Kung Bushmen . . .

strength and skill. Their adaptation to the meager resources of their physical environment has been successful.

In addition they have developed and maintained moral codes and customs which have given stability and control to their society. They have sufficient intellectual grasp and strength of character to conform to customs which deny the immediate appetites in the interests of social solidarity, which we believe is the prize to be won in Bushman life. They must cohere or perish. We shall mention some of the customs which have helped to make their society the most peaceful and cohesive one we know.

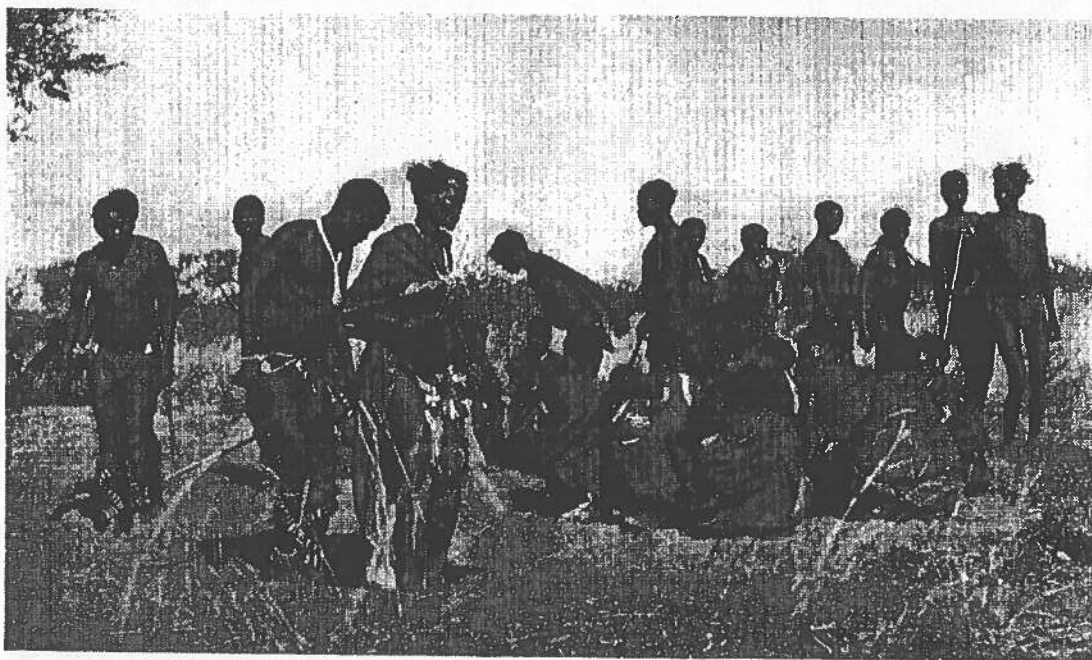
One of the duties of a man is to share meat with his relatives. This is a social law which is never broken by these people. Custom gives the hunter, for himself and his immediate family, the liver and a portion of meat such as the hind-quarter or the back of any buck which he has shot. The remaining large portions of meat he distributes among his relatives; his wife's parents, his own parents, his wife's or his own brothers and sisters having first claim. These persons in turn distribute their portions to their children and "in-laws"

and whoever may be living with them, till all members of the group receive some meat. If there are visitors, they are given cooked meat. This is like being a guest at supper. The meat is then the possession of the individual, who may eat it when he wishes.

If there is a lot of meat, it is cut in strips and hung to dry, a simple type of biltong. It is eaten in normal amounts as long as it lasts.

Many of the world's primitive peoples do not share the kill of the hunt. Some hide it and eat it secretly, causing jealousy and recrimination within their groups. For people who have no walls, whose solace and security is the nearness of others in the circle of fires which hold out the night, the sharing of meat is a wise custom. When !Kung Bushmen were asked what kind of behaviour they considered good or bad, they never failed to mention sharing food as a great virtue.

We were much interested to be told by Tikay that the greatest wrong-doing was to make crooked arrows. The next wrong-doing he mentioned was fighting. He assured us that fighting is very foolish and causes much trouble. If he had a son who fought, he said, he would keep him with him constantly, even on long, hard hunts, till the boy learned sense. No culture hero in their myths or legends is glorified for fighting. There is



Dances are ceremonies for curing the sick. Dance songs are sacred music which Bushmen believe strengthen the power of their medicine men to cure. The six men in the left of the picture are medicine men preparing for the curing ceremony

Photo: L. Marshall

Danse is seremonies om die siekes gesond te maak. Dansliedere is gewyde musiek wat, na die Boesmans glo, die mag van hulle toordokters om te genees, versterk. Die ses manne links op die foto is toordokters wat hulle klaarmaak vir die genesingsseremonie

Foto: L. Marshall

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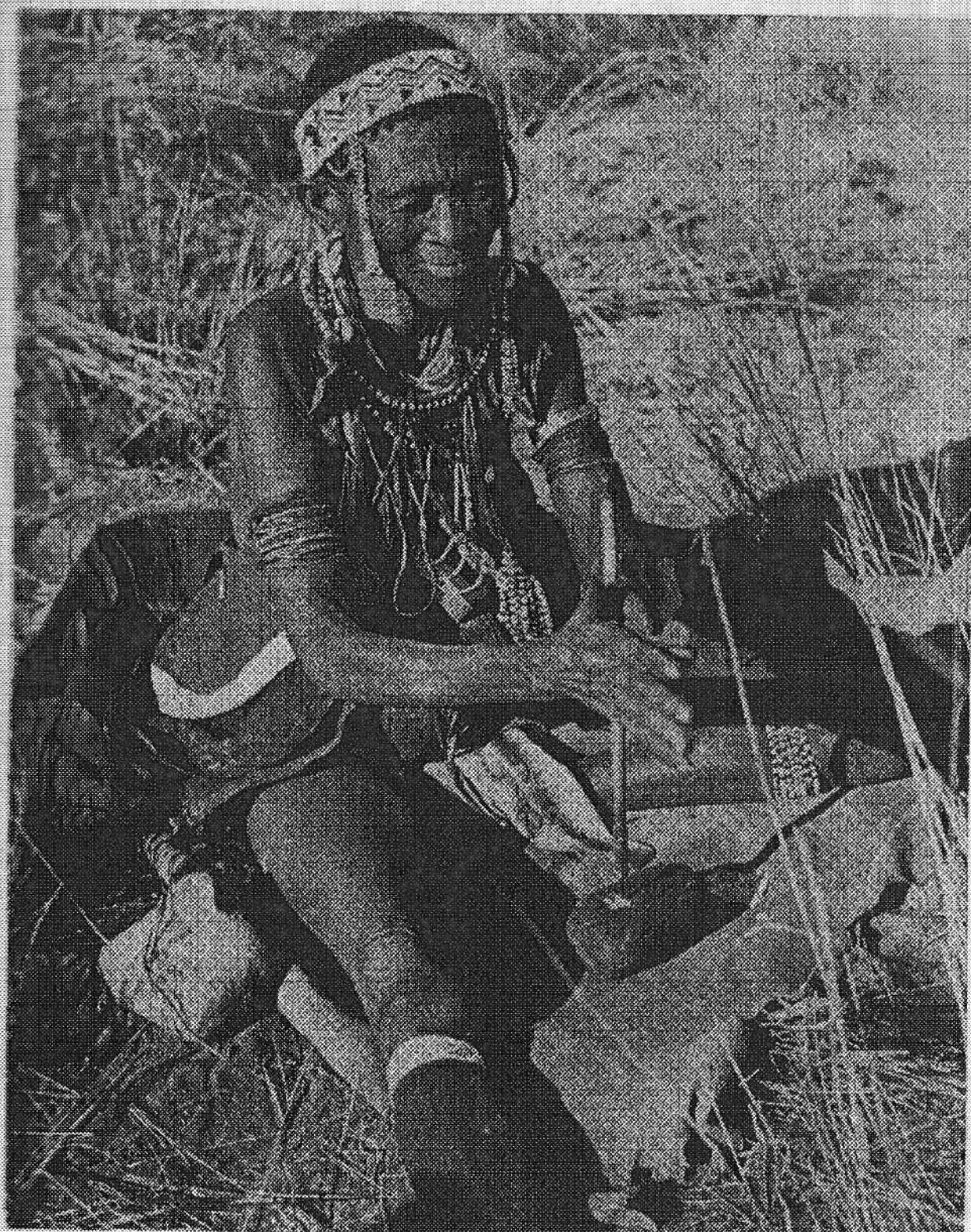
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**An old woman bores a hole in an ostrich egg-shell bead.
Bushmen women love to wear ornaments**

Photo: G. Marshall

**'n Ou vrou boer 'n gaatjie in 'n volstruislerdopkraal.
Boesmanvrou is besonder lief om ornamente te dra.**

Foto: L. Atterhall

address:
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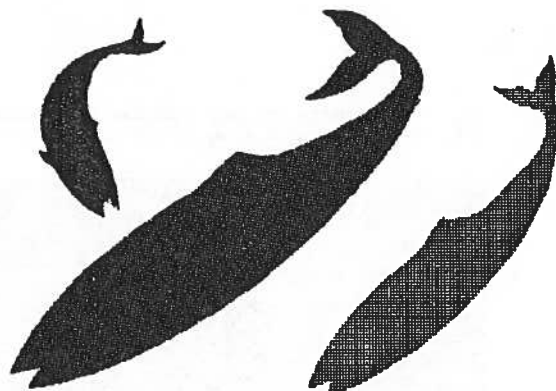
ASSETS

Cash on hand at the South African Reserve Bank, etc.	£5,198,361
Remittances in transit	2,313,525
Investments	8,389,304
Advances	31,591,635
Customers' Liabilities under Guarantees and Letters of Credit:	
Less Cash Deposits	2,226,242
Fixed Assets	2,751,036
	<u>£52,470,103</u>

LIABILITIES

Deposits including provisions for Income Tax, etc.	£44,572,011
Notes in circulation	60,734
Drafts drawn on branches and agencies	1,042,807
Liabilities under Guarantees and Letters of Credit	3,051,257
Provision for proposed dividend	187,500
Capital	2,500,000
General Reserve	1,000,000
Unappropriated Profit	55,794
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*The full Annual Report is obtainable from the General Manager, VOLKSKAS LIMITED, P.O. Box 578, PRETORIA.



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Kung Bushmen . . .

of their fighting with neighbouring groups
the memory of themselves, or, they said, of their
fathers.

These Bushmen do not steal. It did not even occur
to speak of stealing as a wrong-doing because
it does not happen. For over a year we had left
our equipment open and unguarded. Nothing was
lost. If we lost anything it was returned. On the

leave their belongings hanging in trees for months on
end in absolute confidence that nothing will be stolen.
Or they may leave a cache of water buried in the ground
in ostrich egg shells to have for a return journey through
waterless country. The stealing of this water could
mean death to the owner who counted on it. Such a
cache is never stolen. The custom of respecting the
property rights of others helps very much to minimise
strife and dissension, hatred and revenge, and to make
for trust and harmony. It strengthens social solidarity
immeasurably and is a factor in survival.



A little girl tenderly helps a baby drink from an ostrich
egg shell

L. Marshall

'n Klein dogtertjie help 'n baba liefderik om uit 'n vol-
straiselerdop te drink

Foto: L. Marshall

of our departure /Toma found a short piece of our
in the grass. It would have made arrow points
Toma—and arrow points are life itself to Bushmen.
he had kept it we should not have known, but he
travely returned it to us.

When these Bushmen are in their own area where
there are no people of other races, they can go off and

The !Kung Bushmen of Nyae Nyae are strict in
the observances of their marriage customs and sexual
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About one out of ten marriages is polygamous. Their
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course of our study of the genealogy of several hundred
Bushmen we have no record of persons as close as first
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TC-1

1956

W.A. Annual, 1956

!Kung Bushmen . . .

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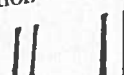
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!Kung Bushmen . . .

Adultery is considered by !Kung Bushmen to be very bad. They allow divorce, but it seems to be fairly infrequent. There have been no divorces among the forty to fifty couples we saw most often from 1950 to 1955. Bushmen are devoted to their children, and man and wife and elder children share in the care of them.

Sexual experience before marriage is not condoned by these Bushmen. Girls are married young, and often when they come to maturity they are already living with their young husbands.

A marriage ceremony was a touching thing to see. The young bride mourned all day with her head covered to symbolise her grief at parting with her parents. When the sun set—for the sun must not shine upon the head of the bride, the sun with its fierce heat being a death-giving thing—the bride was carried on the back of a kinswoman to the little grass hut which both the mothers-



The //guashi, a five-stringed instrument which they tune to the pentatonic scale, is skillfully played by this pretty young musician who is a composer of songs. !Kung Bushmen are a very musical people

Die Ghuasji, 'n vyfsnaar-instrument wat hulle stem op die pentatoniese skaal, word behendig bespeel deur hierdie skone musikant wat 'n komponiste van liedere is. Die Kung Boesmans is 'n buitengewone ras

Photo: L. Marshall

Foto: L. Marshall



Bushman hunters climb baobab trees to look over the land. Pegs are driven into the trunks of the trees to climb by. The name on the tree is W. Matenkloot, author of "A Fugitive in South West Africa," 1917 is the date he carved here at /Gautscha Pan

Boesmanjagters klim in baobab-bome om oor die veld heen te kyk. Spore word in die boomstamme gedryf om aan op te klim. Die naam op die boom is W. Matenkloot, skrywer van „A Fugitive in South West Africa." 1917 is die datum wat hy hier by die Gautscha-pan uitgesny het

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in-law had built together. The groom, attended by his kinsmen, was waiting for her, and she was given to him. They sat at the entrance of their tiny hut together beside their first fire. Young guests joined them and they played upon their little harp—the //guashi—and sang late into the night. The parents of the bride and groom did not sit by the first fire of the young couple. "In-laws" must respect each other so much that they cannot sit close together nor speak to each other.

No alcoholic beverages are made or used by these Bushmen. In this respect they are unique in our experience.

Each band, composed of an extended family, is autonomous, none having any authority over any other. There is no paramount chief. Yet these !Kung Bushmen are not like disconnected fragments, but are like a

!Kung Bushmen

Adultery is considered by !Kung Bushmen to be very bad. They allow divorce, but it seems to be fairly infrequent. There have been no divorces among the forty to fifty couples we saw most often from 1950 to 1955. Bushmen are devoted to their children, and man and wife and elder children share in the care of them.

Sexual experience before marriage is not condoned by these Bushmen. Girls are married young, and often when they come to maturity they are already living with their young husbands.

A marriage ceremony was a touching thing to see. The young bride mourned all day with her head covered to symbolise her grief at parting with her parents. When the sun set—for the sun must not shine upon the head of the bride, the sun with its fierce heat being a death-giving thing—the bride was carried on the back of a kinswoman to the little grass hut which both the mothers-



The // guashi, a five-stringed instrument which they tune to the pentatonic scale, is skillfully played by this pretty young musician who is a composer of songs. !Kung Bushmen are a very musical people.

Die Ghuasji, 'n vyfenaar-instrument wat hulle stem op die pentatoniese skaal, word behendig bespeel deur hierdie skone musikant wat 'n komponiste van liedere is. Die Kung Boesmans is 'n buitegewone ras.

Photo: L. Marshall

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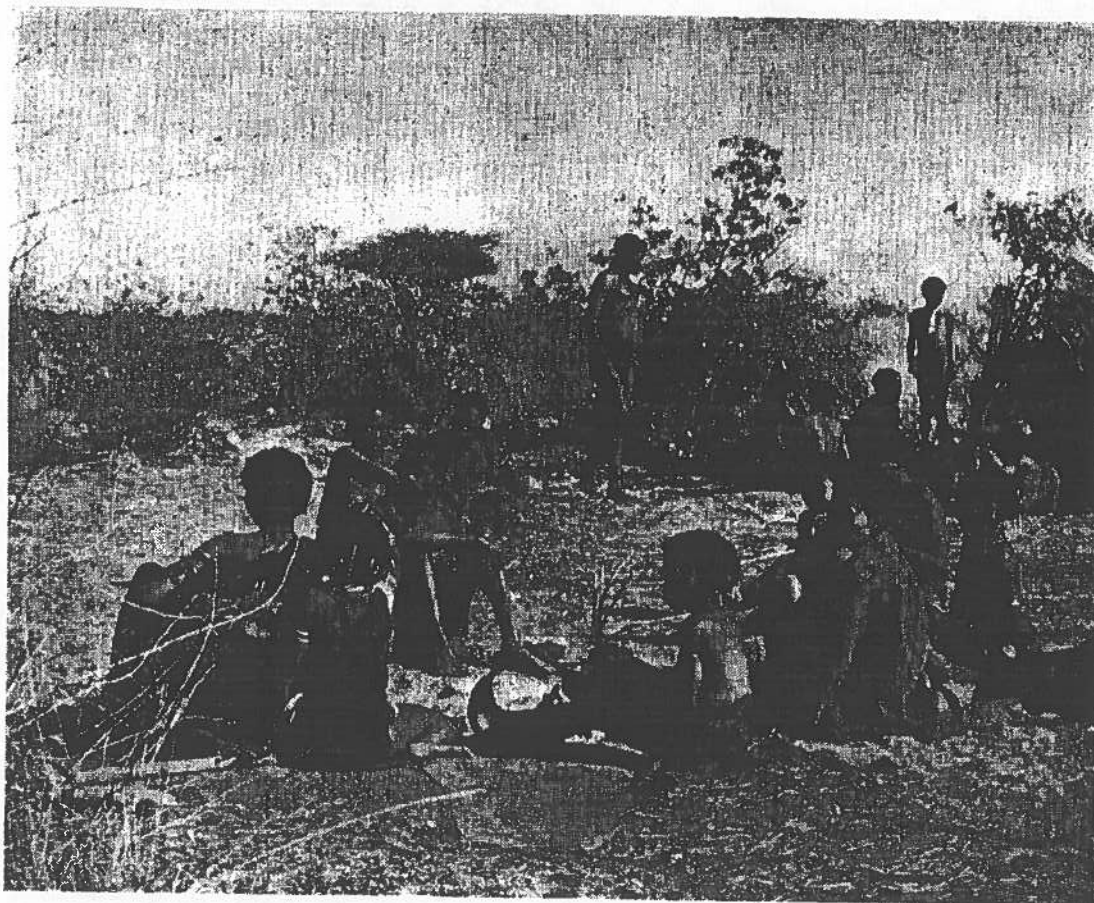
'Kung Bushmen . . .

woven fabric. What weaves them together, in addition to their common language, is an unusual device in their kinship system which we call the name relationship.

In the name relationship a !Kung Bushman applies a kinship term to anyone who has the same name as himself or one of his family. So, though there may be no blood ties, if a man meets another who has the

It is a comfort to them to feel the nearness and sense of belonging that the use of a kinship term gives them.

Kxao went for the first time to Chadum, with a message we sent. There the Bushmen—!Kung though they were—called him *ju dole*. He was distressed, but when he told his name he found he was “brother” to one man, “son” to another. Then, although there was no common blood relationship, he was taken to sit by the fire and given a present of gum from a tree, a very great delicacy to them.



A typical extended family

Photo: L. Marshall

'n Tipliese uitgebreide familie

Foto: L. Marshall

same name as his brother, he uses the kinship term “brother” for him, and so forth, in a pattern too complex to explain here in full.

Bushmen are a timid people. Their experiences have given them a fear of strangers. They use one phrase for both stranger and harmful person—*ju dole*.

W.A. Annual, 1956

Name relationships provide a bridge whereby isolated groups who speak the same language can meet as friends wherever they come together at the fringes of their areas.

In living with the !Kung Bushmen as long as we did we came to admire them and respect them. In-

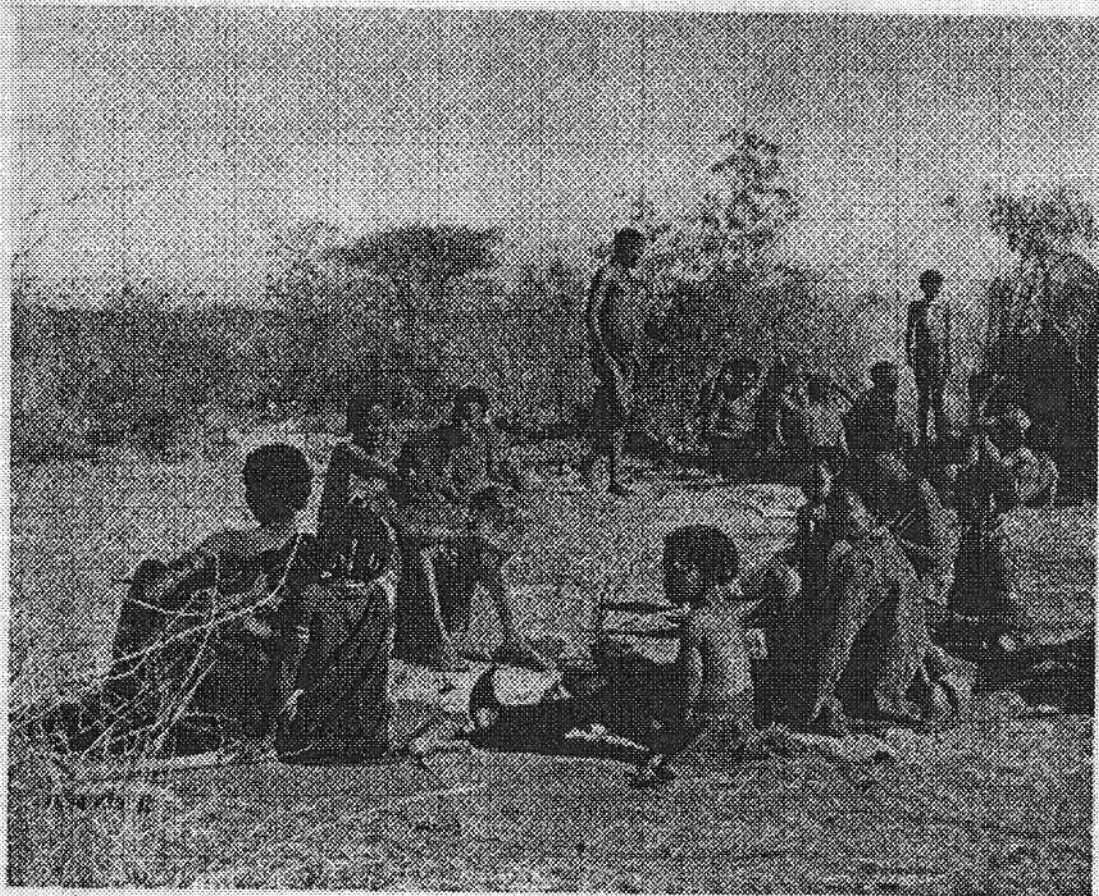
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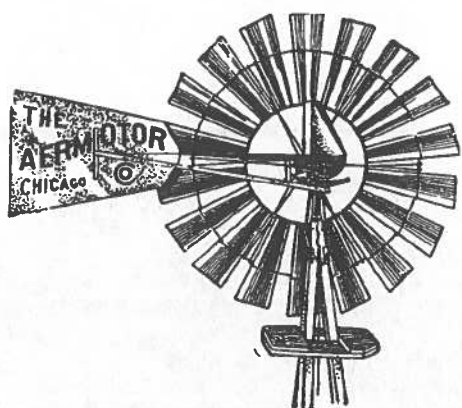
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'n Tipliese uitgebreide familie

Foto: L. Marshall

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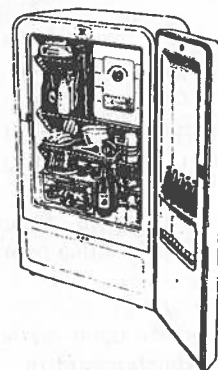
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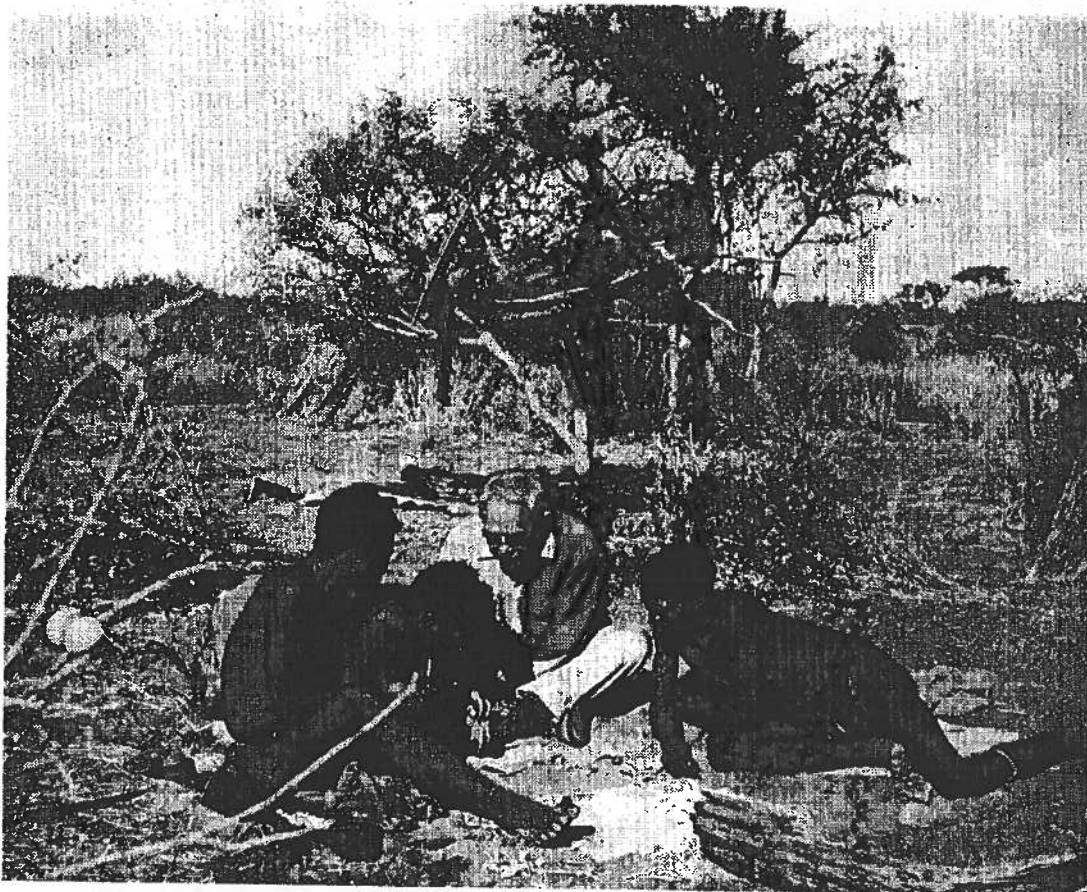
stead of their being subjects of study, they became individuals for whom we developed a warm regard. It is not surprising then that we, together with all who know them intimately, are very concerned with their future. They have been squeezed into the last bit of territory undesired by other more aggressive races. They have made an admirable adaptation to difficult conditions in the past, but what is to be their future in these changing times?

We believe that these people have all the characteristics which will enable them to become useful elements in our culture. But it is obvious that to make the transition from their present state they will require guidance exercised with patience. As in every case where people

of one culture must adapt to another, as they must adapt to ours, they must be taught our pattern of values and the kind of responsibilities that our society expects.

The Administration of South West Africa has been active in studying the situation. Before we came to this country, they had appointed a commission to make recommendations for the preservation of the Bushmen. The Commission, it is understood, has presented its report, which the Administration is at present studying. The report is bound to be of very great interest, and its publication is eagerly awaited.

No one who has had any extended contact with the officials of the South West Africa Administration has failed to be impressed with the depth of their knowledge of the native peoples. Although our work with the Bushmen is limited to that of an academic study, we are deeply interested in them and it is a source of satisfaction to us to feel that the future of the Bushmen is in such experienced hands.



Toma mends Laurence Marshall's shoe

Photo: L. Marshall

Toma maak Laurence Marshall se skoen heel

Foto: L. Marshall

S.W.A. Annual, 1956

Kung Bushmen . . .

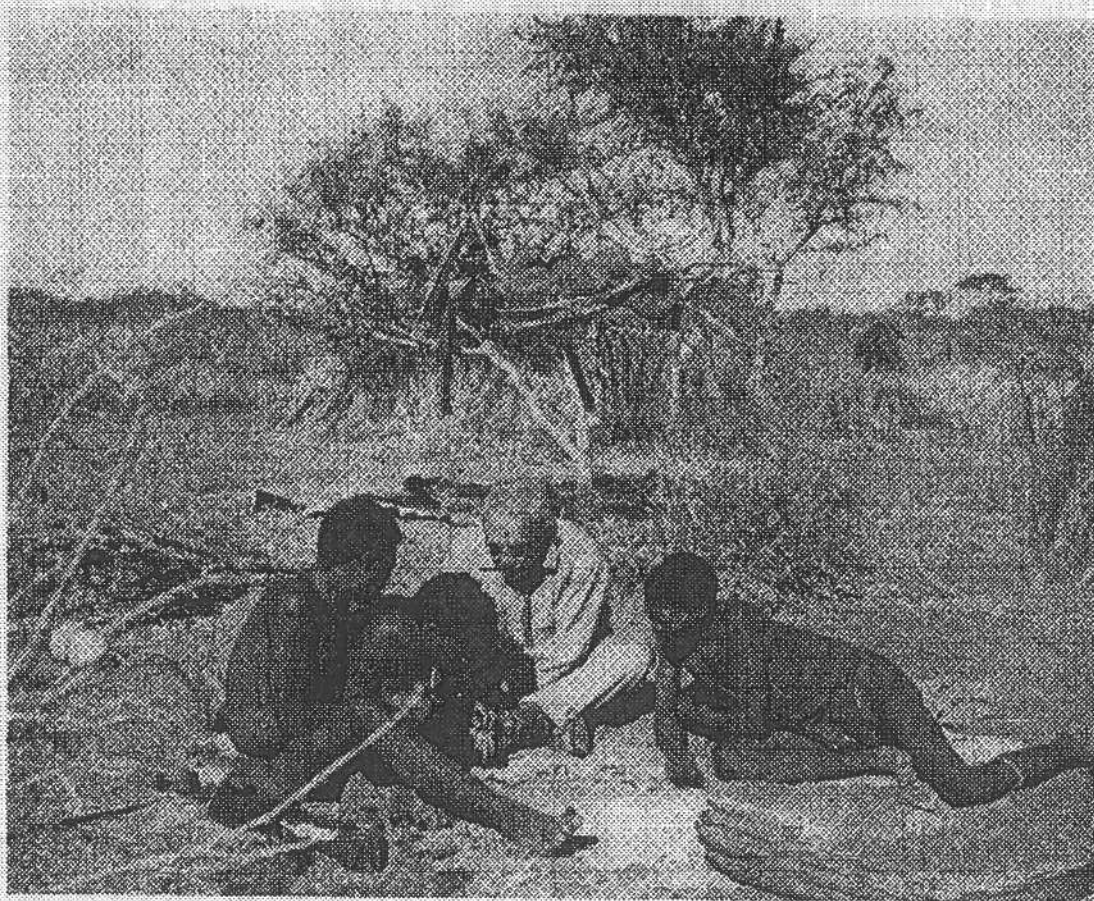
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