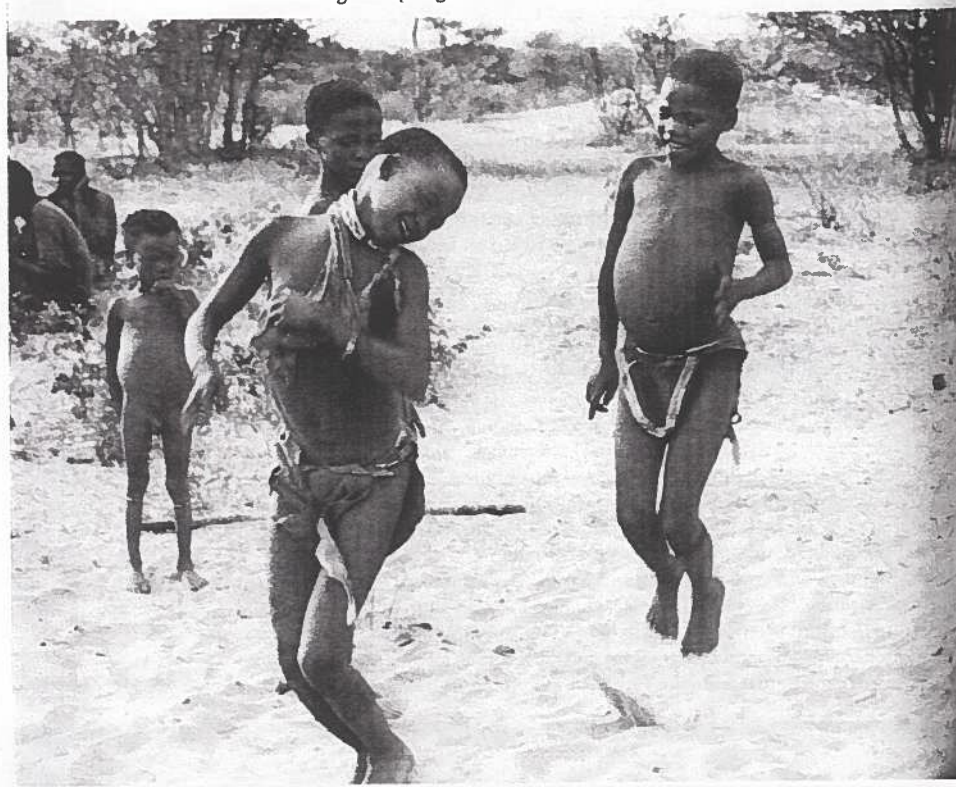


A !Kung Woman's Memories of Childhood

Marjorie Shostak

Girls dancing the springhare dance



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The !Kung have engendered a great deal of interest during the past twenty-five years. Research, such as that set forth in this volume, has been done on their social structure, cultural institutions, subsistence ecology, physique, health, and growth, providing a broad base from which to understand the !Kung way of life. The most striking features of the adult society include hunting and gathering, frequent mobility and fluid band structure, lack of privacy, sharing of food and possessions, ample leisure time, the birth of children every three or four years, and a 50 percent mortality before adulthood; childhood is marked by late weaning, multiple caretaking, multiaged play groups, sex play, lack of responsibility throughout adolescence, and occasional early marriage for girls.

All these aspects have been noted and discussed by Western scholars, but how is this way of life experienced by !Kung women and men? How do they perceive their childhoods, their families and friends, death, birth, hunting and gathering as a way of life? How do they feel about themselves? As essential as these questions are, almost no attention had been given them. I wanted to try and find some answers before the acculturation process that has been gradually changing the traditional !Kung way of life, and that of all other known hunting and gathering societies, had progressed so far as to make a search of this kind impossible. Therefore, while in the field from 1969 to 1971, I undertook an exploration of the inner experience of being a !Kung. What follows is a description of how I used the interview technique to approach this problem and a presentation of edited sections from interviews with one woman. Her memories of early childhood and adolescence have been selected for this chapter.

When I first started to live among the !Kung, I hoped to be able to establish informal relationships with several people in which we would exchange feelings about experiences we shared in common and those that were different. As I became fluent in the language, however, I realized this was not possible. Apart from being a foreigner, I was seen as someone with unlimited wealth, who did not freely share her possessions as they did (for the most part) among themselves. If I wanted something from them, they in turn wanted something back from me. After considering carefully how payment might affect both the type of information I wanted and the delicate economic balance of a seminomadic people, I finally decided that some form of payment would be appropriate. People felt this was fair and became more responsive to my probing. After a period of experimenting with different interview techniques, I settled on one which

I used for all subsequent, long-term interviews: I would ask someone to "enter talks" with me, and for an hour or more at a time over a period of about two weeks, we would sit talking while I taped the conversation. By the end of a full set of interviews, I would have spent, on the average, twenty hours with each person.

Because of the intimacy required by this technique, I could not select my subjects completely objectively. After interviewing one man, I quickly learned that I could not achieve the same degree of intimacy with men. This was probably due to !Kung men's reticence in talking about masculine concerns with women, and to our mutual embarrassment in dealing with intimate matters. The women I chose were ones with whom I felt I could establish a good rapport, and ones who would reflect the widest range in !Kung conditions of life. Therefore, my sample included both fertile and barren women; married and, as yet, unmarried; happy and, as it seemed to me, unhappy; and women of a wide range of ages.

All the women I approached were eager to participate, partly for the payment and partly for the chance to talk about themselves. At the onset, I told each woman that I wanted to spend many days with her about her experiences. I mentioned some of the topics I hoped to discuss: memories of early childhood; feelings about parents, siblings, relatives, and friends; adolescence and experiences with other children; dreams; marriage; the birth of children; sex; relationships with husband and/or lovers; feelings about the death of close family members; and thoughts about the future. I made it clear that anything she told me would not be repeated while I was living there and that the purpose of our talks was so women in my country could learn about !Kung women's lives.

Although the interviews began with my mentioning the kinds of things I wanted to discuss, I encouraged the women to initiate the conversations themselves. I felt that the way one memory led to another was of potential importance, and I tried to interrupt as little as possible. Aside from asking questions of clarification, I asked women to expand on topics which seemed interesting or important, but which might have been spoken about only briefly. When a woman found it difficult to sustain a topic or start a new one, I suggested other directions. With some women, I had to direct each interview, while others, once they understood the procedure, were able to go ahead with little assistance.

I interviewed eight women, and a unique relationship developed with each. This was not only because we spent close to twenty hours talking together, but also because of the marked personality differ-

ences among the women. Generally, as I learned to see the subtleties in the way each woman expressed herself, I was able to understand her better and, presumably, ask better questions. In turn, as each woman came to realize that I kept her confidences, she learned to trust me more. The women often openly expressed their pleasure in talking with me. They were proud they had been chosen to teach me about their customs and experiences. They told me that the things we discussed would never be spoken about with a man, because men had "their talk" and women, theirs. They became silent whenever a man walked by the hut we were in. It would be in a low and excited voice that a woman told me her lover's name, or discussed an early sexual experience, or talked of the time she went from the village, by herself, to give birth to her child.

Talking about experiences and telling stories is one of the main sources of entertainment for the !Kung. They have no written forms in which to express themselves; people sit around for hours talking to one another. It is common when a man describes a hunt or a woman describes something that happened while she was out gathering food, to see the speaker gesture broadly, suddenly raise or lower his voice and imitate sounds of animals, birds, and physical movements. Elements of the stories are repeated over and over again, and there is much use of exaggeration and hyperbole. Stories are usually accompanied by drama and excitement.

As with any skill, some people are more proficient at it than others. Among the eight women I interviewed, one woman was exceptional in her ability to tell a story vibrantly, expressively, and dramatically. I will refer to her as N \neq isa. Her life has been difficult: in her fifty years she has experienced the death of all three of her children, her much loved husband, and both her parents. Her only living relatives are two brothers, one older and one younger. Although she derives pleasure from being a "substitute mother" for her brother's two small daughters, she feels her life is somewhat empty, that few people care if she lives or dies. She envies a woman of her age in another village who not only has seven children living nearby and many grandchildren, but whose father, husband, and older brother are alive as well. N \neq isa feels that God has abandoned her; she does not understand why he has refused to help.

Like most !Kung women, N \neq isa loves and has always wanted to have children. Although she was married five times, her only children came from her third marriage. She had been married twice before she reached menarche. These marriages were unstable and brief (see note 17). After her third husband (the father of her children) died,

she married for the fourth time. During this fourth marriage she did not conceive again, and, because of other difficulties, they separated. By the time she married her present (fifth) husband, all three of her children had died. She became pregnant for the last time in this marriage but miscarried. Though she wanted to have another baby, she was not able to conceive again. At the time of our interviews she was going through menopause, causing her much emotional, and some physical, pain. Now she knew she would never have another child.

In addition, N#isa seemed to be questioning her sexual role. Along with the difficulties brought on by the onset of menopause, her husband, within the previous months, had not shown much interest in having sexual relations with her, or, she believed, with other women. He complained about being tired and old, while she often felt full of sexual energy. She wavered between thinking of herself as an old woman, and as one attractive (and attracted) to men. She still had a few lovers, as she had had for years, but none seemed steadily interested in her, as others had been when she was younger. On occasion, she said she did not feel healthy and that she was too thin to continue the relationships she already had. At other times, she talked positively about the prospects of new men in her life and said she would start "looking again" when our interviews were finished.

N#isa's life has been a full though difficult one, marked throughout by death and sorrow. Yet, despite the pain and despite her present loneliness, she has been able to find humor and value in her experiences. Even had she not been so gifted in her ability to express herself, her interviews would be a valuable document. But the combination of this attitude, her expressive gift, and her confidence, intelligence, and sensitivity make her narrative an exceptionally moving account of the life of a courageous woman.

This is what I wanted. I hoped getting behind objective facts, getting "into" who the people are would provide a deeper insight into !Kung life. But, more important, I hoped it would touch us *humanly*, in terms of the felt experience, in a way a body of strange facts cannot. Such facts often emphasize differences rather than similarities.

N#isa's twenty hours of tape produced 350 single-spaced pages of typewritten transcript, written mostly in English, with some !Kung expressions retained so that the final version would reflect nuances unique to the !Kung language. Achieving a fluid English reading in the final version involved modifying or deleting awkward elements in the first transcription, particularly my interruptions for

clarifications and the excessive repetition of words and phrases. Although repetition is a natural way to emphasize ideas in the !Kung language, it is unnatural in ours. Wherever possible, I have incorporated literal translations of !Kung idioms.

The texts presented here are edited excerpts of close to half of all N#isa's memories of her childhood. (The entire collection of these early memories comprises about one-third of the total narrative.) They do not reflect the order in which they appeared in the interviews; here, they are organized chronologically. In a few cases, a memory presented as a continuous narrative is, in fact, taken from two different accounts of the same incident. Apart from these changes, the excerpts are faithful to N#isa's narrative.

The memories are organized into four sections as follows: (I) weaning and her relationship with her younger brother; (II) relations with other family members; (III) experiences with other children; (IV) marriage. Both N#isa's style of narration and the content of her stories raise a number of important questions about the factual validity of her narrative. It is not necessary to take literally everything she says for reasons which will become clear in the discussion found at the end of each group of memories.

Part I: Weaning and Her Relationship with Her Younger Brother¹

(1) Long ago my mother gave birth to my younger brother Kumsa. I wanted the milk she had in her breasts and when she nursed him, my eyes watched as the milk spilled out. I cried all night, cried and cried, and then dawn broke.

Some mornings I just stayed around and my tears fell and I cried and refused food. That was because I saw him nursing, I saw with my eyes the milk spilling out. I thought it was mine.

Once, when my mother was with him and they were lying down asleep, I took him away from her and put him down on the other side of the hut. Then I lay down beside her. While she slept, I squeezed some milk and started to nurse and nursed and nursed. Maybe she thought it was him. When she woke and saw me, she said, "Where . . . tell me . . . tell me where did you put Kumsa? Where is he?"

I told her he was lying down inside the hut. She grabbed me and shoved me. I landed far away from her; I lay there and cried. She took Kumsa, put him down beside her, and insulted me by cursing my genitals.

"Are you crazy? By your large genitals,² what's the matter

with you? Are you crazy that you took a baby and dropped him somewhere else and then lay down beside me and nursed? I thought it was Kumsa."

I stayed there crying and crying, and then I was quiet. I got up and just sat, and when my father came home, she told him:

"Do you see what kind of mind your daughter has? Hit her! Hit her, don't just look at her. She almost killed Kumsa. This little baby, this little thing here, she took from my side and dropped him somewhere else. I was lying here holding him and was sleeping. She came and took him away, then left him, and lay down where he had been and nursed me. Now, hit her!"

I said, "You're lying! Me . . . daddy, I didn't nurse. I refuse her milk and didn't take him away from her."

He said, "If I hear of this again, I'll hit you. Now, don't ever do that again!"

I said: "Yes, he's my little brother, is he not? My brother, my little brother, and I love him. I won't do that again. He can nurse all by himself. Daddy, even if you're not here, I won't try to steal mother's breasts. That's my brother's milk. But when you go to the bush, I'm going to follow along with you. The two of us will go and kill springhare, and you will trap a guinea fowl and then give it to me."

We slept. When dawn broke my father and my older brother went and I ran behind. I knew that if I stayed in the village, mother would sting³ her milk and wouldn't let me nurse. But when my older brother saw me, he pushed me away and told me to go back to the village, because the sun was too hot, and he said it would kill me.

(2) It was like that even before he was born, when mother tried to wean me. One night, my father took me and left me in the bush.⁴ Mother was pregnant, and I cried because I wanted to nurse. When night sat, my father took me and said,

"I'm taking you and leaving you in the bush so a hyena will kill you. Hyena! There's meat over here! Come and take it!"

"Are you a little baby? If you nurse the milk that belongs to your little sibling, you will die."

He set me down in the bush and began to leave. I started to run and ran past him. Crying, I ran back to mother and lay down beside her. I was afraid of the night. I ran back and lay beside her. When my father came back, he said, "I'm going to hit you! You can see that your mother's stomach is big, yet you still want to nurse. Your sibling's milk will kill you."

I cried and cried and finally was quiet. Then father said,

"Now, stay quiet and lie down. Tomorrow I will kill a guinea fowl and give it to you to eat. Today your mother's breasts are bad for you."

I heard what he said and was quiet. The next morning he killed a guinea fowl, and when he had cooked it, he gave it to me to eat. But when I finished, I still wanted to take mother's nipple. He took a piece of leather and hit me.

"N^{isa}, are you without brains? Why don't you understand? Why do you want your mother's breasts again and again. Leave her breasts be."

I cried and cried. She was pregnant with Kumsa, wasn't she? I cried, and soon I was quiet. I ate many other things because it was the rainy season, but I still asked to nurse. Mother said, "Daughter! these things are things of shit! Shit, and you don't eat it. It kills you. Yes, it is shit, and it smells terrible. If you nurse, you'll go, 'whgaaah, whgaaah' and will throw up."

I said, "No, no. I won't throw up. I'll just nurse and drink the milk."

She refused, "You don't know what you're talking about. I'll explain to you. If you nurse the milk you'll die! Tomorrow your father will kill another springhare, and he will give it to you."

When I heard that, my heart was happy.

(3) One day my older brother #Dau went out, and while he was digging some //xaru bulbs, he saw a duiker and struck and killed it with an arrow. I was playing when he came back. He skinned it and gave me the feet, and I went and roasted them. He took some meat off the leg and gave that to me, too. I roasted it with the other, and then I ate and ate and ate. Mother asked me for some, but I refused.

"Didn't you sting your breasts? Didn't I say I wanted to nurse and you stinged the milk? Are your breasts a good thing? No, your breasts are a bad thing, and I alone will eat this meat. I won't give you any. Just #Dau and I will eat it, and you won't."

(4) My younger brother Kumsa grew up and when he was just walking, my mother was pregnant with my younger sister, the one who died when she was still a little girl. When mother was pregnant this time, I was older and hated Kumsa. I always did bad things to him. We hated one another. When Kumsa said he wanted to go to mother and nurse, I picked him up and dropped him down somewhere in the bush. I hit him and pushed

him down and told him that mother was pregnant and that he shouldn't nurse.

(5) Some people just live, and others live and set animal and bird traps. If it is your father who is carrying the animals back home, you say to yourself, "My father is bringing home meat, and when he comes back I can eat it, and I can also sting it."

Because when you are a child, you play, and you also do bad things to one another. You do bad things to someone, and he does bad things back to you. You tell him, "My father brought back meat and I won't let you have any of it."

You are mean to one another and hit and fight all the time. My younger brother Kumsa and I were like that. We hit one another. Sometimes I bit him and said, "Ooooh . . . what is this thing that has a horrible face and no brains and is mean? Why is he so mean to me when I'm trying to rest?"

He'd say he would hit me. I'd say I would hit him. We stayed together and played like that.

(6) Once when our father brought back meat, we both said, "Daddy . . . daddy . . . !" When I heard my brother say "Daddy . . . daddy . . . !", I said, "Why are you greeting my father? He is my father, isn't he? You can only say, 'Oh, hello father'."

He said, "Daddy . . . daddy! Hello, daddy!"

I said, "Be quiet! I alone will say hello to him. Why are you greeting him? When I say, 'Daddy . . . daddy . . . !', you be quiet. Only I will talk to him. Is he your father? I'm going to hit you!"

We argued and argued and argued. Later mother began cooking the meat father had brought back. She put a few pieces in the coals, and the rest she put in a pot. When the meat in the coals was done, she brushed the ashes off and gave me some. I sat and ate it, but while I was eating, Kumsa grabbed it and ran away. I ran after him, got it back, and bit him. He started to cry and I left him. I came back and cooked the piece again, then finished it.

When the meat in the pot was done, they took the pot out of the fire and gave me a plate of meat that I was supposed to share with Kumsa. I refused:

"I refuse Kumsa, his fingers are dirty. Kumsa has dirty fingers and I won't eat out of this plate with him. I'm going to eat out of this plate myself. Take some of it and give it to your son. Why should Kumsa and I eat together?"

Then we both ate. Kumsa and I were without brains, we were always fighting with one another. I hated him, and Kumsa, he hated me.

Discussion

The memories in Part I raise a number of questions that are difficult to answer. First, can we assume that N \neq isa remembers in such detail, not only the event of being weaned, but verbatim accounts of conversations between her parents, her brother, and herself? It seems unlikely. Late weaning (age three or four) makes it possible that at least some of the feelings could have been remembered. But the exact detail in which N \neq isa describes these events is best regarded as her own stylistic invention. N \neq isa enjoyed the interview situation with the machine that "grabs your voice," and this, as well as her desire to tell her stories dramatically, may account for her seemingly unusual memory. However, other women I spoke with said, quite directly, that people do not remember anything from when they are such little children. It seems fair to assume then, that her earliest memories are a combination of facts, generalized experiences, and fantasy. (Verbatim accounts of conversations characterize her entire narrative. Even from later sections, much of this is probably reconstruction rather than actual memory.)

The second memory in which she said her father took her out to the hyenas because she was bad, raises the question of exaggeration. This is almost certainly the remembered fantasy of a little girl who was deeply frightened by her father's verbal threats. He might have gone as far as to pick her up, perhaps he even took her out of the hut, but it is very doubtful that the event took place as she described it. As indicated in Draper's and Konner's accounts (Chapters 9 and 10) of child-training practices, the !Kung are very lenient and indulgent with their children and rarely are observed using any form of physical punishment. This second memory can best be seen as the product of the fanciful imagination of N \neq isa the little girl who eventually believed her own fantasy, or N \neq isa the woman exaggerating a feeling that she still remembers from her childhood. This kind of exaggeration, especially when it involves parental physical punishment, will be encountered repeatedly throughout the sections that follow.

N \neq isa's parents seem severe in the first weaning memory but they were very concerned that she stop nursing. The !Kung believe that a child should be weaned as soon as the mother realizes she is pregnant again. The milk that remains in her breast is thought to belong to the fetus and not to the child. If the child continues to nurse, they believe that the life or health of either the child or the fetus may be endangered or that the infant will be born wanting to injure his older sibling. Observations of the weaning period confirm the feelings of

misery N#isa expressed. Konner (1972) describes this stage as one in which children usually are depressed and resentful of the birth of the new sibling. N#isa still carries some of these feelings with her. She believes that her relatively slight build and short stature came from having been weaned too early and from not having been given enough to eat.

!Kung children are encouraged to share things from infancy, because exchanging food and possessions is so basic to adult social interactions. Among the first words a child learns is "na" ("give it to me") and "i" ("here, take this"). This type of socialization is hard for children, especially when they are expected to share with someone they resent or dislike. Then, giving or holding back becomes a way of exercising power and expressing anger. Evidently, this is what is occurring with her brother, in memories 3, 5, and 6.

Part II: Relations with Other Family Members⁵

(7) During the time I cried because I wanted to nurse and couldn't, I sometimes took food from our hut when mother was away gathering. My parents hit me when I took things; they left me alone when I didn't. Some days I remained in the village and I didn't take and ruin⁶ their things. Other days, when they were not there, I did. That's when they hit me and said I was without brains.

Once my mother took a digging stick and hit me. She hit me so hard my back hurt. I cried and cried and cried. Then I was sick.⁷ My father said to her: "What did you do? You took your digging stick rather than a soft branch and hit the child? You hit that small child with a stick? You might have broken her back!"

I said, "I won't eat any of your //xaru bulbs. I'm going to go and eat grandma's //xaru."

I went to the village where mother's mother lived and told myself I would eat with her. When I arrived at her hut, grandma roasted //xaru, and I ate and ate and ate. I slept beside her and lived there for a while.

Once, when it was getting dark, I got up and walked back to mother's hut and lay with her and father. Another day, when they were away, I climbed the tree where the little pouch hung and took the //xaru again. I took the big bulbs and put them in a little pouch my father had sewn for me. I sat there and ate them, and when my parents returned they accused me of eating the //xaru. I said I didn't. They said I did. Then I started to cry;

my father hit me and my mother yelled at me: "Don't take things! You don't understand? I tell you and you don't understand. Your ears don't hear me when I talk to you."

I thought: "Uh-uhn, mother's making me feel terrible. I'm going to go stay with grandma again. Mother says I take things and hits me until my skin hurts. I'm going to go to grandma's and sleep beside her. She will prepare //xaru for me to eat."

I went to my grandmother's, but she said: "No, I can't take care of you. If I try, you will be hungry because I am old and just go gathering one day at a time. In the morning I just rest. While we sit together, hunger will kill you. Now, go and be good. Sit nicely beside your mother and father."

I said, "No, they will hit me. Today my skin hurts and I want to stay with you."

I stayed with my grandmother for a while that time. Then, one day, she said she was taking me back to my parents' village. She carried me there and gave me to my mother. Then she said: "Daughter, today I refuse N#isa because I can't take care of her well. She's just a child, and you shouldn't hit her and hit her. If she is someone who likes food—then she *likes* it—and has a good appetite. Some of you are lazy and left her without enough to eat and she didn't grow well. Maybe that's what happened. When I used to take care of her, there was a lot of food, and I fed her well. She grew up with me for a while and when she went back with you, you killed her with hunger. With your own hands you hit her as though she weren't a !Kung. She cried and cried and was just a little thing. Yet, you yelled at her."

When my grandmother said that, I was happy. I held happiness in my heart because grandmother scolded mother. That made me so happy and I laughed and laughed. Then grandmother went back to her village. When she left, I cried. My father scolded me. "When you left us, we missed you. We wanted you to come back. Yes, your mother even came and looked for you. But today you refuse to be with her. Your mother was the one who gave birth to you. Now you'll start to do things with her and go gathering with her."

But I cried and cried and refused to be with her. I said, "Mother, let me just stay with grandmother. I want to follow her to her village."

My father said, "Be quiet, quiet. There is nothing here that will hit you. Now, be quiet."

Then I was quiet, and my father dug //xaru and *chô* bulbs and I ate them. I ate the roots and bulbs and nuts they gathered, and they didn't scold me.

When I was growing up, I sometimes stayed with my mother's

sister for days at a time and then went back to my mother. I stayed with her for a while and then passed on to my grandmother. I would go there for many days. Everybody helped bring me up—my mother's sister, my father, my mother, my grandmother. Look at how I am today, I'm very small. That's because people brought me up badly. I was too difficult for them.

(8) Let me tell you about my mother, my father, and myself. My father sometimes hit me. I remember the day I broke the ostrich eggshell water container. The shell was on the ground, and I picked it up and carried it in my kaross to get water. But it fell and broke! When I came back, my father took a thin branch and told me he was going to beat me. So, pffft! I ran away.

Another day, when I went again to get water, I took another eggshell and BAMM! But I said, "Today I won't run. Even though father may beat me, I won't run."

He did hit me, and I said I didn't care. But I cried and cried, and he hit me, and I cried. Then it was over. Whenever they asked me to take an ostrich eggshell and bring back water, I refused. When I did go to the well, I just took my thumb piano⁸ with me, drank some water, then left and went home. I wouldn't collect water for them. I thought, "If they want me to get water in the ostrich eggshell, I refuse."

I stayed behind with the other people, and only mother went to fill the containers. Because if I went, I might break another eggshell, and they'd hit me.

I told them I wouldn't help them, that I wouldn't touch their ostrich eggshells because I was afraid they'd beat me. Instead, I took a small can, if I had one, and drank water from that. I was afraid.

We continued to live there, but I didn't touch any more ostrich eggshell containers.

(9) One day we were walking, gathering food, and the sun was burning. It was the hot, dry season, and there was no water anywhere. The sun hurt! As we walked along, my older brother saw some honey. He and my father took it from the tree, and we ate it. I was so thirsty I practically drank it! I carried some with me, and we continued to walk. Thirst was killing mother, and I was crying for water. I cried and cried. We rested somewhere in the shade and there was still no water. My father said to my older brother: "≠Dau, your mother and I will remain in the shade of this baobab tree. Take the water containers, go and

fill them with water. There is a big well way over at the Homa⁹ village."

≠Dau got up, took the ostrich eggshell containers, took a clay pot, and went. I was lying down, thirst killing me. As I lay there, I thought, "If I just stay here with mother and father, I will die of thirst. Why don't I go with ≠Dau, go and drink some water?"

As soon as I thought that, I got up and ran. I cried after him and ran and cried and ran and followed his tracks. He still didn't hear me. I kept on running and cried after him. When he finally heard me, he turned around and saw me behind him and said, "N≠isa's here? What am I going to do with her now?"

When I finally caught up with him, he picked me up and carried me on his shoulder. My older brother liked me. The two of us went together and walked and walked and walked until we finally reached the water well. When we got there, we drank. I drank the water and my heart was happy. Then we filled the containers. ≠Dau got them together, picked them up, picked me up, and carried me on his shoulders.

We started walking back and walked and walked, and then he put me down. I ran along with him and soon I started to cry. He told me: "N≠isa, I'm going to hit you. I am carrying these containers and they're very heavy. Now, keep running along, and let's get back to mother and father and give them some water. Thirst will kill them. What are you crying about? Are you without any sense?"

I said, "No! Pick me up. ≠Dau, pick me up and carry me on your shoulders."

He refused, and I cried. I ran along with him and cried and ran and cried. After a while he said he would carry me again. He picked me up and put me on his shoulders and carried me a long way. It was far! Then he set me down again, and I ran until I was tired, and he picked me up and carried me. We finally brought the water back to our parents. Then we drank it and they said, "Yes our children brought water back and did well—we are alive once again."

After we rested, we left, and all of us went to live in Homa village, where the well was. We walked and rested and walked and rested until we got there. I didn't cry along the way and carried my honey with me. When we arrived, we drank plenty of water and settled there for a while. There was a lot of water and we had all that honey and my heart was happy.

(10) The rainy season came. The sun rose and set, and then the rain spilled itself, and it fell and kept falling. It fell tire-

somely, without ceasing, and it seemed to tease people like a naughty child. The water pans were full and my heart was happy, and we lived and ate mongongo nuts. We ate more and more mongongos, and they were delicious. I was like a dog wagging my tail, and I ran around and wagged my tail. Really!! I went like that with my tail, just like a dog.

My heart was so happy because water had come that day. Yes! I was also thankful. We ate caterpillars,¹⁰ ate many of them, and people collected food; people just kept collecting food. And there was meat, because people had killed meat, and it was hung up. My heart was so happy. I ate meat and wagged my tail. I laughed with my little tail and laughed a little donkey's laugh, a little thing that is. I wagged my tail and said, "Today I'm going to eat caterpillars. CA-TER-PIL-LLLEEERRRS!"

I ate them, and people kept roasting them in the coals and cooking them, and I kept eating them and ate and ate and ate them and then went to sleep.

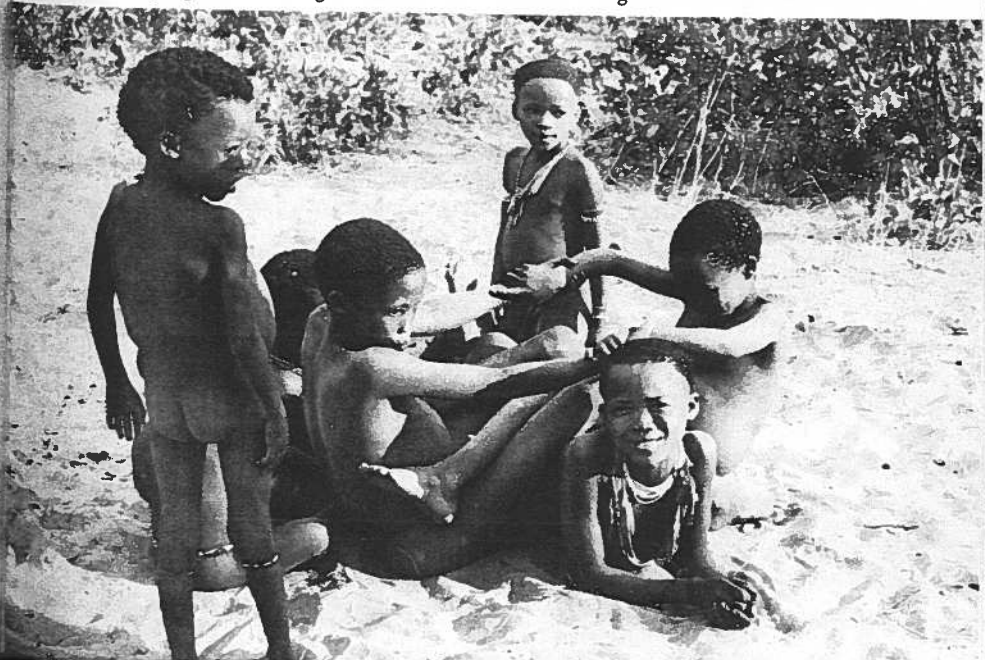
Discussion

Again, in this section, N#isa makes some puzzling statements. The first is about being beaten for having broken the ostrich eggshell water container. It is likely that she was severely scolded for breaking it since emptied eggshells are relatively scarce and are used for carrying and storing water. That she was actually physically beaten, however, is conceivable but doubtful. As in the hyena memory in Part I, memory 2, this is probably an exaggerated account of threats that were internalized and carried out only in the imagination of a little girl.

N#isa makes still another statement that is surprising—that she was punished for taking food. It is difficult to believe that she was either beaten or scolded because parents are concerned that their children have enough to eat and food is given freely. When parents go away for the day, they either leave food for their children or arrange for someone else to feed them. If there is a scarcity of food, it is the children who get preferential treatment. Draper (1972) did observe withholding of food as punishment for wasting or destroying food, but this was short-lived, and there are no observations of beating for taking food. This is why N#isa's account of her parents' reaction to her taking the //xaru when they were away is difficult to understand. One explanation could be that //xaru has some significance we do not yet know about and that parents do not want their children eating large quantities of it. This seems plausible because it is the only food N#isa described being scolded for taking.

Another possible explanation involves N#isa's relationship to her mother. Her memories suggest that this was a time of great tension between them. She portrayed her mother as someone who was always hitting, scolding, and criticizing her. She portrayed herself as someone who kept doing things her mother did not like, especially involving food: she took food which, for some reason, her mother did not want her to have; and, as indicated in other memories, she took food from other people's huts as well. These tensions may have distorted her view of this period and resulted in her remembering only the hostile feelings that existed between them. Whether it was her feelings of being unloved, or some resentment held over from the time of weaning, or simply the general !Kung anxiety about food availability that may have caused her to exaggerate, it is impossible to determine. It is also conceivable that her accounts are accurate; it is possible that her family was unusual in this regard. Also, physical punishment could be so rare that it is almost never observed, and yet be very important in the memories of a child. It is difficult to separate fact from fantasy.

Playing the Antbear game. "It" burrows under the legs



In Part I, memory 3, N#isa refused to give her mother meat. In this last section, she refused to get water after having been scolded. She also left her mother's home for her grandmother's because she did not like the way she was being treated. Leaving was made somewhat easier by the !Kung tradition of multiple caretaking. Children often spend extended period with close relatives, and at least some do this when there are tensions resulting from the birth of a sibling. These actions, though, are indications of N#isa's emerging independence as she learns to assert herself against the authority of her parents. !Kung children are encouraged to respect their own needs and may refuse to do things they feel strongly enough against, even when the requests come from their parents. Unlike western children, !Kung children are not strongly pressured to obey authority (see Draper, Chapter 9). This is reflected in the adult band structure in which there is no real chief.

At the time a child is weaned from the breast (usually when the mother realizes she is pregnant), he is still carried in her kaross while she engages in daily activities. This continues throughout her pregnancy and often even after the next child is born. Children love to be carried; they love the contact with their mothers, and they love not having to walk under the pressure of keeping up. But as a child grows older and gets heavier, and the demands of the younger child become greater, mothers begin to expect the older child to walk beside them.

This being "weaned from the back" (Draper 1972) elicits, in a slightly lessened form, similar kinds of behavior that weaning from the breast did: the child throws temper tantrums, refuses to walk by himself, demands to be carried, and refuses to be left in the village while his mother goes gathering. The adjustment, a difficult one for the child, is made easier by other people carrying him. This is why memory 9, in which N#isa's brother carries her to the water well, is recalled with such tenderness.

Part III: Experiences with Other Children¹¹

(11) When a child sleeps beside his mother, in front, and his father sleeps behind and makes love to her, the child watches. Perhaps this is the way the child learns. Because as his father lies with his mother, the child watches. The child is still senseless, without intelligence, and he just watches.

Then, when he and the other children are playing, if he is a little boy, he takes his younger sister and has sex¹² with her. Because he saw his mother and father do that. So he takes her.

And as he grows, he lives in the bush and continues to play, now with other children, and they have sex with each other and play and play and play. They take food from the village and go back to the bush and continue their games. That's the way they grow up. When the sun is low in the sky they return to the village and sit down. They return when evening is just beginning to set and play in the middle of the village. That's what they do.

(12) I remember my parents when they lay together. Night . . . at night my father lay with my mother. I still wouldn't have fallen asleep; I'd just be lying still. My father slept with her, and I watched. Why wasn't my father concerned about me, that I might be up? I was fairly old by then. Why wasn't he respectful of me? Why wasn't he respectful? Adults should be concerned that a child may be awake. I couldn't sleep, and why were they making love? That's what I thought. I thought that my mother and father didn't care if I were dead asleep or not. If they had, then they could lie together, and no one would hear; then I'd be asleep and wouldn't wake up. That's what I thought.

Then, long ago, I refused to sleep in their hut. I said, "No. Today I won't lie down with mother and father. Today I will sleep alone in another hut."

I refused to stay with them because they weren't respectful of me.

(13) A child that is nursing doesn't know anything because he still has no intelligence. When he is nursing, he has no thoughts. The milk is the only thing he knows. Then he learns to sit. Even when he sits, he still doesn't think about things because his intelligence hasn't yet come to him. Where could he take his thoughts from? The only thought is nursing. But when he grows and is bigger, and he is walking, he has many thoughts. His thoughts now exist, and as he sits, he thinks about the work¹³ of sexual intercourse. He sits and thinks about it, and if he is a little boy, he plays with the other children and teaches it to himself. The little girls also learn it by themselves.

They play and play and have sex with one another, and when they see a little girl by herself, they take her. She cries and cries. That's how boys teach themselves, and that's how girls teach themselves. They play and play and teach themselves. Little boys are the first ones to know its sweetness. That's why they do that when they play. Yes. A young girl, while she is still a child, her thoughts don't know it. A little boy has a penis, and perhaps, while he is still inside his mother's belly, he already knows about having sex. Because boys know how to do things with their genitals. They take little girls and push them down

and have sex with them. Even if you are just playing, they do that.

Sometimes the boys ask if you want to play a game with your genitals, and the girls say no. They say they don't want to play that game, but they'd like to play other games. The boys tell you that having sex is what playing is all about.

I didn't know about it, and they taught it to me. After they taught me and taught me, I didn't cry. Some of the others knew about it long before I did, they had taught themselves and knew it. The little boys used to ask me why I always cried when they played. I said, "You all . . . you all are playing and say we should have sex together. That's why I'm crying. I'm going to tell mother you said we should do that."

Some days I refused and remained in the village and just stayed with mother. Some days I went with them. Sometimes I refused to play, other times I agreed. The little boys entered the play huts where we were playing, and then they lay down with us. My boyfriend came to see me and we lived like that and played. We would lie down and they would have sex with us.

(14) /Ti!kay taught it to me and because of that I liked him. I really liked him! When we played, the other children said I should play with someone else, but I refused. I wanted /Ti!kay only. I said, "Me, I won't take a horrible man."

They teased /Ti!kay. "Hey . . . /Ti!kay . . . you are the only one N=isa likes. She refuses everyone else."

He taught me about men. We played and played, and he grabbed me, and we played and played. Some days we built little huts, and he took me. We played every day. I used to think, "What is this thing that is so good? How come it is so good and I used to refuse it? The other children knew about it and I had no sense. Now I know when you are a child, this is something you do. You teach it to yourself."

(15) We left the area where I played with /Ti!kay and the other children and went to live somewhere else, far away. When we got there, I thought about my friends and said, "I miss the children I used to play with. Mother, say we can go. Mother, father, let's go back east."

When they asked me why, I said, "So I can find the children I used to play with. I've come here and don't see any children."

They told me, "Yes, we'll go. We'll go where you want—we'll go to your cousins Dem and /Tasa. You can play with them."

I said, "No, I refuse! Let's go to the east so I can find the children I used to play with. I don't want to play with my cousins in their village."

I cried and cried, but they wouldn't go as far away as I wanted. They said I was being silly and that we would go to where my cousins lived.

When we got there, I just watched my cousins and their friends. I watched and watched and said to myself that I wouldn't play with them. Then /Tasa came and took me from my hut and asked me to play with her. I refused. Then she asked me to go and play with her in the water, but I refused that too.

At first I refused everything, then later I went with her to where her friends were playing and I joined them. They didn't have sex with one another. Maybe they didn't know it. We went to the water pan and played and then returned. We stayed in the village and rested. Then we went again to the water pan. We just stayed around and played and played and played.

(16) When you are a child you play at nothing things. You build little huts and play. Then you come back to the village and continue to play. If people bother you, you get up and play somewhere else.

Once we left a pool of rain water where we had been playing and went to the little huts we had made. We stayed there and played at being hunters. We went out tracking animals and when we saw one, we struck it with our make-believe arrows. We took some leaves and hung them over a stick and pretended it was meat. Then we carried it back to our village. When we got back, we stayed there and ate the meat and then the meat was gone. We went out again, found another animal and killed it. We threw more leaves over a stick, put other leaves in our karosses,¹⁴ and brought it back. We played at living in the bush like that. We pretended to get water and we ate the meat. That's how we played.

We made believe about everything. We made believe we cooked food, and then we took it out of the fire. We had a trance dance,¹⁵ and we sang and danced and danced and sang, and the boys made believe they were curing us. They went—"Xai-----i! Kow-a-di!"¹⁶

They cured us, and we sang and danced and danced, danced all day. Sometimes the sun set while we were visiting in our friends' village, but even though night sat, we stayed in the center of the village and played. We stayed into the night, dancing and singing and finally left one another and went to sleep. We were up again in the morning and started playing again. Sometimes we played with the children from another village, sometimes we just played by ourselves in the bush. That's what we did, and that's how we lived.

We took food from the village, went to our little village, and shared it with one another, ate it and gave it and took it. We

stayed together and danced and sang and played. Most of the time we played the play of children, that of having sex with one another. We all did that. That was our work. Did we have any sense? No, we didn't have any sense and just did our work.

(17) One day, when I was fairly big, I went with some of my friends and with my younger brother and my younger sister away from the village and into the bush. We walked a long way. As we were walking, I saw the tracks of a baby kudu in the sand. I called to everyone and showed them. "Everybody come here! Here are tracks of a baby kudu. Let's see if we can find it."

We walked along, following the tracks, and walked and walked and walked. As we followed the tracks around, we saw, in the shade of a tree, the little kudu dead asleep. I jumped and tried to grab it. It cried, "Ehnnn . . . Ehnnn . . ."

I cried out as it freed itself and ran away. I hadn't really caught it well. We started following the new tracks. I ran on ahead of everyone, ran so hard and so fast that I was alone. I came on it, jumped on it and then killed it. I grabbed its legs and carried it back. I was breathing very hard. "Whew . . . whew . . . whew . . . whew . . . whew . . .!"

When I came to where the rest of them were, my older cousin said to me: "My cousin, my little cousin killed a kudu! The rest of you here, what are you doing? How come we men didn't kill the kudu? This young girl has so much 'run' in her that she killed the kudu!"

I gave the animal to my cousin, and he carried it. On the way back to the village, we saw another small animal, a steenbok. One of my girlfriends and her older brother ran after it, and then he killed it. That day we brought a lot of meat back with us to the village. We cooked it and had plenty to eat.

Discussion

The !Kung have little privacy, either in the village or within the family. Parents and children sleep together in huts that have no dividers or private sections. This arrangement is inconvenient for parents when they want to engage in sexual activities. Occasionally they go to the bush to make love; most of the time they wait until they think their children are asleep and try to be discreet. But !Kung children are curious and have many opportunities to observe their parents' lovemaking. Several of the other women interviewed expressed feelings similar to the ones N#isa described. One woman remembered telling her mother, the morning after observing her parents' lovemaking, that she refused to help any more because her mother had engaged in sexual activity the night before. Her mother

scolded her and told her not to mention that kind of thing again. N#isa's behavior in memory 12 is typical of older children, who often move out of their parents' huts and build small huts of their own, or share them with other adolescents.

!Kung children are sexually aware at a very early age because of the relative openness and acceptance of adult sexuality. They also have many opportunities to experiment with what they have observed. All the women I interviewed said that their childhood sex play included sexual intercourse. Parents say they do not approve of this among young and adolescent children; they say it is a good thing to do only when you are older. But the parents played this way when they were children and, although they usually deny it, they know their children are playing the same way. As long as it is done away from adults, children are not prevented from participating in experimental sexual play. If they are seen by an adult, they are scolded and told to play "nicely" (that is, nonsexually).

!Kung children have few responsibilities. They spend their time watching and participating in some adult activities and playing in small groups of children of different ages. For the most part, their games do not reflect a separate children's culture. They are usually imitations of adult activities: hunting, gathering, singing adult songs, trancing, playing house, and playing marriage. Many times, as in the case of gathering food or as described in memory 17 (when N#isa killed the kudu), the children actually perform subsistence activity, rather than merely playing at it.

The memory in which N#isa kills the kudu (17) also sheds light on the process through which !Kung boys and girls come to think of themselves as men and women. While it was made clear to the boys that they should have been the ones to kill it, N#isa herself was highly praised for her success and not made to feel ashamed of doing something "unfeminine." Unlike our own society where names like "tomboy" and "sissy" serve to make boys and girls play separately and avoid each other's activities, !Kung boys and girls play together and share most games.

In these memories, and in others not presented here, N#isa portrays many of her childhood experiences as occurring away from the village. Memory 17 describes them following animal tracks far into the bush; memories 13-15 describe the children participating in sexual activities that would be disapproved of were adults present. These memories suggest that children either spend more time away from their parents' supervision than Draper observes (Chapter 9), or that the experiences they have at these times are among their most vividly remembered.

Part IV: Marriage¹⁷

(18) When adults talk to me, I listen. Once they told me that when a young woman grows up, she takes a husband. When they first talked to me about it, I said: "What? What kind of thing am I that I should take a husband? Me, when I grow up, I won't marry. I will just lie by myself. A man, if I married him, what would I think I would be doing it for?"

My father said: "N[≠]isa if you agree, you will marry a man and get food and give some to him, and he will eat it. I, I am old. I am your father and am old; your mother's old, too. You will get married, gather food and give it to your husband to eat. He also will do things for you—give you things you can wear. But if you refuse to take a husband, who will get food and give it to you to eat? Who will give you things that you shall have? Who will give you things that you will be able to wear?"

I said to my father and mother: "No. There's no question in my mind—I refuse a husband. I won't take one. What is it? Why should I take a husband? As I am now, I am still a child and won't marry. Why don't you marry the man you want for me and sit him down beside father? Then you'll have two husbands."

Mother said: "You're talking nonsense. I'm not going to marry him, you'll marry him. A husband, I want to give you. You say I should marry this other man? Why are you playing with me with this talk?"

I said: "Yes, that's what I am saying. Because you can see I am only a child, and yet you say I should get married. When I grow up and you tell me I should marry, then I will agree. But today I won't! I haven't passed through my childhood and I won't take a husband."

We continued to live and lived on and on and returned to just living. Then she talked about it again. "N[≠]isa, I should give you a husband. Which man shall I give you?"

I knew which man she wanted me to marry. I said, "I refuse that man."

She said, "Marry him. Won't you marry him?"

I said, "You marry him. Marry him and set him beside father."

I stopped talking. I felt ashamed and was silent. I said to myself, "What am I doing? Later I will still go back to mother. When I speak like that, am I not shitting on her?"

I thought that. Then we all went to sleep. We continued to live and just kept on living and more time passed.

(19)¹⁸ Long ago my parents and I went to the village where old Kan//a and his son /'Tashay were living. My friend N!huka

and I had gone to the water well to get water and he and his family were there, having just come back from the bush. When /'Tashay saw me, he decided he wanted to marry me. He called N!huka over and said, "N!huka, that young woman, that beautiful young woman . . . what is her name?"

N!huka told him my name was N[≠]isa, and he said, "That young woman . . . I'm going to tell mother and father about her. I'm going to ask them if I can marry her."

N!huka came back. We continued filling the water containers, then left and walked the long way back. When N!huka saw my mother she said, "N[≠]isa and I were getting water and while we were there, some people came to the well and filled their water containers, and a young man saw N[≠]isa and talked about marriage. He said his parents would ask you for N[≠]isa in marriage."

I was silent, just quiet. Because when you are a child and someone wants to marry you, you don't talk. At first my heart didn't agree to it. When they first talked about marriage, I didn't agree.

The next night there was a dance and we were singing and dancing, and he and his parents came from their camp and stayed with us at the dance. We danced and sang and danced and sang, and we didn't stop. N!huka and I sat together. /'Tashay came over to me and took my hand. I said: "What . . . what is it? What kind of person is this? What is he doing? This person . . . this person . . . how come I'm sitting here and he came and took hold of me?"

N!huka said, "That's your husband . . . your husband has taken hold of you, is that not so?"

I said, "Won't he take you? You're older, and he'll marry you."

She said, "What! Isn't he my uncle? I won't marry my uncle. Anyway, he is asking you to marry him."

His parents went to my mother and father. His father said: "We have come here, and now that the dancing is finished, I want to speak to you, to /Gau and Chu!ko, N[≠]isa's father and mother. I will speak with you. Give me your child, the child you gave birth to. Give her to me, and I will give her to my son. Yesterday, while we were at the well, he saw your child. When he returned he told me that in the name of what he felt, that I should today come and ask for her. Then I can give her to him. He said I should come for her."

My mother said: "Yes . . . but I didn't give birth to a woman, I bore a child. She doesn't think about marriage, she just doesn't think about the inside of her marriage hut."

Then my father said: "Yes, I conceived that child as well, and she is a person who doesn't think about marriage. When she marries a man, she leaves him and marries another man and

leaves him and gets up and marries another man and leaves him. She refuses men completely. There were two men whom she already refused. So, when I look at N \neq isa today, I say she is not a woman. There is even another man, Dem, his hut is over there, who is asking to marry her. Dem's first wife is giving her things. When Dem goes gathering and comes back, he gives things to his wife so she can give them to N \neq isa. He asks N \neq isa to sit with them. He wants her to stay and be a second wife. He wants her to take the food from his wife, so they can all eat together. But when his wife undoes the kaross and gives N \neq isa food, she throws it down, ruins it in the sand, and kicks the kaross. It is because of that I say she is not a woman."

My father told that to /'Tashay's father. Then his father said: "Yes, I have listened to what you have said. That, of course, is the way of a child; it is a child's custom to do that. She gets married many times until one day she likes one man. Then they stay together. That is a child's way."

They talked about the marriage and agreed to it. All this time I was in my aunt's hut and couldn't see them, I could just hear their voices. Soon, I got up and went to my father's hut where they were talking. When I got there, /'Tashay was looking at me. I sat down. Then /'Tashay's mother said, "Ohhhh! How beautiful this person is! You are a young woman already. Why do they say that you don't want to get married?"

/'Tashay said, "Yes, she has just come in. I want you to take her and give her to me."

(20)¹⁹ There were a lot of people there, everyone came. All of /'Tashay's friends were there, and when they saw me, they told him he was too old for me. Each one said he wanted to marry me himself. His younger brother and his nephew were sitting around talking that way.

I went into my mother's hut and sat there. I was wearing many beads and my hair was covered with ornaments. I went and sat beside mother. Another one of /'Tashay's friends came over and started talking as the others had, and I felt confused and couldn't understand why this was happening to me.

That night there was another dance and we danced and other people fell asleep and others kept dancing. In the morning they went back to their camp and we, to ours, and then we went to sleep. When the morning was late in the sky, his relatives came back. They stayed around and his parents told my aunt and my mother that they should all start building the marriage hut because they wanted to leave for another village. They began building the hut together, and everyone was talking and talking. There were a lot of people there. Then all the

young men went and brought /'Tashay to the marriage hut. They stayed around the hut together near the fire. I was at mother's hut. They told two of my friends to go get me and bring me to the hut. I said to myself, "Oooooh . . . I'll run away to the bush."

When they came for me they couldn't find me. I wasn't by the fire.

"Where did N \neq isa go? It's dark now, isn't it? Doesn't she know that things may bite and kill her when it is dark like this? Has she left?"

My father said, "Go tell N \neq isa that if she behaves like that, I will hit her, and she won't run away again. What's the matter with her that she ran away into the bush?"

I had already gone. I stayed away a long time. I heard them calling. "N \neq isa—a! N \neq isa—a!"

They were looking for me. I just sat, sat by the base of a tree. I heard my friend, N!huka, call out. "N \neq isa—e . . . N \neq isa—e . . . my friend . . . there are things there which will bite and kill you. Now leave there and come back here."

They looked for me and looked and looked, and then N!huka came and saw me. I ran away from her, and she ran after me and chased me and then caught me. She called out to the others. "People! N \neq isa's here! Everyone come over here, come, take her. N \neq isa's here!"

They came and brought me back. Then they lay me down inside the hut. I cried and cried, and people told me: "A man is not something that kills you; he is someone who marries you, and he becomes like your father or your older brother. He kills animals and gives you things to eat. Even tomorrow; but because you are crying, when he kills an animal, he will eat it himself and won't give you any. Beads, too. He will get some beads, but he won't give them to you. Why are you afraid of your husband and why are you crying?"

I listened and was quiet. Then he and I went and slept inside the hut. He slept by the mouth of the hut, near the fire. He came inside after he thought I was asleep. Then he lay down and slept.

I woke while it was still dark and said to myself, "How am I going to jump over him? How can I get out and go to mother's hut?"

That's what I was thinking in the middle of the night. Then I thought, "This person has married me . . . yes . . ." I lay there. I lay there and thought some more. "Why did people give me this man in marriage? The older people say he is a good person and . . ."

I lay there and didn't move. The rain came and beat down.

It fell and kept on falling and falling and then dawn broke. In the morning, he got up first and went and sat by the fire. I was frightened! I was afraid of him and lay there and didn't get up. I waited for him to go away from the hut and when he went to urinate, I left and went to mother's hut. I went there and sat down inside her hut.

That day all his relatives came to our new hut—his mother, his father, his brothers . . . everyone! They all came. They said, "Go tell N~~≠~~isa that she should come and her in-laws will put the marriage oil on her. Can you see her over there? Why isn't she coming out so we can put the oil on her in her new hut?"

I refused to go there. Then my older brother said, "No, no. N~~≠~~isa, if you continue like this, I'll hit you. Now get out there and go sit down. Go over there and they will put the oil on you."

I still refused and just sat there. My older brother took a switch and came over to me. I got up because I was afraid of the switch. I followed him and walked to where the people were. My aunt put oil on /'Tashay, and his relatives put oil on me. Then they left, and it was just /'Tashay and me.

(21) We lived together and after a while /'Tashay lay with me. Afterward, my insides hurt. I took some leaves and tied them with a string around my stomach,²⁰ but it continued to hurt. The next morning I went gathering and collected some mongongo nuts and put them in my kaross. Meanwhile, I was thinking to myself, "Oooohhh . . . that man made my insides hurt. He made me feel pain today."

The next evening we lay down again. This time I took a leather strap, tied it around a piece of wood and then secured it to my genitals; I wanted to withhold my genitals. The two of us lay down and after a while he was looking for my genitals, and he felt the leather strap there. He said, "What . . . did another woman tell you to do this? Yesterday you lay with me so nicely when I came to you. Why are you today tying a piece of wood to your genitals? What are you holding back?"

I didn't answer. Then he said, "N~~≠~~isa . . . N~~≠~~isa . . ."

I said, "What is it?"

He said, "What are you doing?"

I didn't answer him. I was quiet.

"What are you so afraid of that you tied your genitals with a piece of leather and with a branch?"

I said, "I'm not afraid of anything."

He said: "No, no. Tell me what you are afraid of. Why did you tie a branch to your genitals. In the name of what you did, I am asking you.

"What are you doing when you do something like that? You are lying with me as though you were lying with a Bantu, a stranger. Why did you tie a branch to your genitals?"

I said: "I refuse to lie down because if I do, you will take me. I refuse! I refuse your touching my genitals because when you lay with me yesterday, my insides hurt me. That's why I am refusing you today, and you won't have me."

He said: "You're not telling the truth, now untie the leather strap. Untie the strap from around your genitals. Do you see me as someone who kills other people? Am I going to eat you? Am I going to kill you? I'm not going to kill you. Instead, as I am now, I have married you and want to make love to you. Don't think I would marry you and not sleep with you. Would I have married you just to *live* with you? Have you seen any man who has married a woman and who just lives with her and doesn't have sex with her?"

I said, "No, I still refuse it! I refuse sex. Yesterday my insides hurt, that's why."

He said, "Mm. Today you will just lie there by yourself. But tomorrow I will take you."

I continued to refuse him and we just lay down. Before we went to sleep, he untied the strap and said, "I'm going to destroy it. If this is what use you put it to, I am going to untie it and destroy it in the fire."

Then we went to sleep and slept. He didn't take me, but he untied the strap because he was big and I was afraid of him. We went to sleep and got up the next morning. The men went out that day and then returned. That night /'Tashay and I entered the hut again and lay down together. I just lay there and after a while he touched my leg. I didn't move. I thought to myself, "Oh, what I did last night won't help me at all, because this man will hurt me. Then I'm going to give it to him, and he will have it. Some day it will no longer hurt me."

I said to him: "Today I'm going to lie here, and if you take me by force, you will have me. You will have me because today I'm just going to lie here. You are obviously looking for some 'food,' but I don't know if the 'food' I have is 'food' at all, because even if you have some, you won't be full."

Then I just lay down and he did his 'work.' Afterward he lay down.

(22) We lived together after that, but I ran away again and again. Once I ran away and slept in the bush and they found me in the morning. When my older brother said he was taking me back, I threatened to stick myself with a poison arrow. He got very angry and said: "If you try to stick yourself with an arrow,

then I'll beat you, and you'll understand what you were doing. As you stand here, you are talking very badly about what you are going to do to yourself. You are a person, a woman, and when you are alive, you don't say those things. When you are alive, you should be playing.

"All your friends have gotten married and N!huka, too, she is going to marry your uncle and sit beside him. Don't say you won't come back to the village, because you and N!huka will have your own huts. Will your friend have a hut, and you won't? That's all. As I am #Dau, your older brother, that's what I have to say."

I said: "Yes. This friend of mine has taken a husband, but surely she is older than I am. She is a grown woman. Me, I'm a child and don't think I should be married. Why have you come to ask me these things again?"

He said: "Put the *sha* roots you collected in your kaross and let's go. The person who sits here is your *husband*! He isn't anyone else's husband. He is the man we gave you. You will grow up with him, lay down with him, and give birth to children with him."

(23) When we returned to the village, I didn't go to my hut, but went and stayed at mother's hut. I went inside and rested. /"Tashay went to our hut and stayed there. He called to me. "N#isa . . . N#isa . . ."

I asked him what he wanted and left my mother's hut and went over to him. He gave me some *sha* roots he had dug. I took them, gave some to mother and went back to her hut and stayed there. Late afternoon, when dusk was standing, I went back to our hut and roasted some food. I took the food out of the coals and gave him some and set mine aside to cool. When it was ready, I ate it.

I ran away a few more times. I used to cry when he lay with me and kept saying no. People talked to me about it. Let me tell you what they said.

My mother said, "A man . . . when you marry a man, he doesn't marry your body, he marries your genitals so he can have sex with you."

And my aunt told me, "A man marries you and has sex with you. Why are you holding back? Your genitals are right over there!"

I answered, "I am only a child. This person is an adult. When he enters and takes me, he tears my genitals apart."

We lived and lived, and soon I started to like him. After that I was a grown person and said to myself, "Yes, without doubt, a man sleeps with you. I thought maybe he didn't."

We lived on, and then I loved him and he loved me, and I

kept on loving him. When he wanted me, I didn't refuse and he slept with me. I thought, "Why have I been so concerned about my genitals? They are, after all, not so important. So why was I refusing them?"

I thought that and gave myself to him and gave and gave. I no longer refused. We lay with one another, and my breasts had grown very large. I had become a woman.

Discussion

Although the recent trend has been for !Kung women to marry when they are older, women of N#isa's generation were occasionally married between the ages of thirteen and fifteen (Howell, Chapter 6). Parents are usually responsible for arranging the first marriage and later marriages if the couple is still young (see also L. Marshall 1959), but, as indicated in memory 18, their decision is not final. If the girl is strongly opposed to it, the marriage will not take place. When young girls do get married, it is usually to a man seven to fifteen years older. These first marriages are very unstable, and many break up within a short period of time (Lee 1974).

One of the questions raised by N#isa's account of her marriage is why, if she experienced so much premarital sex play, was she anxious about marrying and having intercourse with her husband? The circumstances of the marriage suggest some possible explanations. Although she agreed to marry /"Tashay, she had hardly spoken to him before they were left together in the hut. The next morning, when the final ceremony was to be performed, she ran away, demonstrating her reluctance to leave her parents and her modesty in not accepting her new husband too easily (see also Marshall 1959). Her husband was probably some years older than she was and expected to sleep with her immediately. From the description of her discomfort after he had slept with her the first time, he must have been larger, genitally, than the boys she had had experience with. He threatened her with force. He also insisted that she sleep with him quite frequently. All these things, combined with the fear of having to eventually leave her parents for him, made her frightened of staying with him and appears to account for her repeated running away. The fact that she kept going back to him suggests her ambivalence rather than her dislike of him.

It could also be that she was generally frightened by any kind of new sexual experience. There is evidence for this in her first descriptions of learning to play sexual games with other children (Part III, 13). She described herself as always saying no, crying and running back to tell her mother, being frightened while most of the other children were participating, and needing a lot of encourage-

ment before she could accept and finally enjoy this sexual play. Perhaps her fear of the unfamiliar is at work in both sets of memories.

By the last memory, N \neq isa is still not a fully matured woman; she is only on the verge of menarche. But this memory presents her first successful efforts at staying with a man and her gradual moving away from her mother. She begins to accept a new person to take the place of her family.

Summary

N \neq isa is an exceptionally articulate person, and much of her narrative is highly idiosyncratic; nevertheless, the events of her childhood, as she described them, resemble those of other !Kung women and touch upon a number of fundamental features of their life.

(1) Weaning from the breast, the birth of a sibling, and weaning from the back enforce on the !Kung child adjustments that are very difficult to make, and they spark off periods of intense unhappiness. N \neq isa's descriptions confirm observations by Draper and Konner of the frustration children experience during these times. Looking back, adults see these events as having had a formative influence on their lives.

(2) Children are expected to share things with others even when they are very young. They discover, as N \neq isa did, that giving and withholding things is a powerful vehicle through which anger, jealousy, and resentment, as well as love, can be expressed. This behavior is of great importance because it becomes the only means of distribution of goods in the adult economy.

(3) The general !Kung concern about, and pleasure in, food is already present in childhood. N \neq isa's memories confirm Lee's observations that they express anxiety about their food supply in spite of the fact that they have enough to eat. (Lee 1968a).

(4) As reflected in N \neq isa's confrontations with her parents, individualism is encouraged and strict obedience of parental authority is considered neither necessary nor desirable. This has the effect of ensuring a very wide range of personalities among the !Kung living in small, isolated groups. N \neq isa's tales of physical punishment are puzzling, since it has not been observed by Draper or Konner. This contradiction should be resolved by further research.

(5) Children play in groups with other children much of the day. Because no formal teaching is done, it is in these groups that children acquire a good deal of the information, habits, and skills they need to survive in their environment and to become proper members of their culture. Unlike our own (middle-class) society, such groups

perform actual subsistence activities and actual sex play, including sexual intercourse. In N \neq isa's accounts children spend much of the time away from adult supervision, although, as Draper points out (Chapter 9), they are seldom far from adult help, if needed.

(6) N \neq isa's memories of her early marriages show some of the stresses involved when young girls marry men much older than themselves. Because young girls are in demand, due to the existence of a small percentage of polygamous marriages, the girl's parents exercise a good deal of control over their son-in-law and can afford to be exacting. Early marriages are unstable (Lee 1972a, 1974; Howell, Chapter 6).

(7) N \neq isa's descriptions of the way girls learn about sex and of her relationship with her husband /'Tashay suggest that relations between the sexes are not egalitarian, and that men, because of their greater strength, have power and can exercise their will in relation to women. This confirms Marshall's (1959) finding that men's status is higher than women's. Still, it must be said that women have considerable voice in group affairs and considerable control over their own lives (that is, in terminating an unsatisfactory marriage). In these respects they may be more egalitarian than most other societies, including our own.

While the factual confirmations and controversies raised by interviews such as these are important, the immediacy of feeling and poetry that is contained in a person's account of his life is at least equally important. Reading, "Look how I am today, I'm very small. That's because people brought me up badly. I was too difficult for them," is more informative than an ethnographer's guess as to the effects of weaning in relation to a person's self-concept; reading, "The rainy season came . . . My heart was so happy and I ate meat, wagged my tail and imitated a dog. I laughed with my little tail and laughed a little donkey's laugh . . .," reveals more profoundly how the !Kung feel about the beginning of the rainy season than a description of their concern about water availability. In an individual's narrative expression of feeling, we can begin to grasp emotionally what it may be like to be a !Kung.

This is important because all too often "primitive" people are dismissed as being so different that it would be difficult to determine or identify with what they feel. This study has carried us beyond this prejudice by presenting the !Kung as *people*: reluctant to leave friends, sometimes loving and sometimes angry with those they love, sad and happy at the changes of the seasons, wanting to live good lives. Underneath all the obvious differences, they are, after all, not so very different from ourselves.

Further Studies to Part III

Draper's other work on hunter-gatherer childhood is found in Draper (1972a, 1973, and 1975). Studies of !Kung infancy and ethology can be found in Blurton Jones and Konner (1973), DeVore and Konner (1974), and in Konner (1971, 1972b, 1973a, 1973b, and 1973c). For a review of Spock's *Baby and Child Care* see Konner 1972a.



6. The Population of the Dobe Area !Kung

1. The research on which this paper was based was carried out both in the field and at the Office of Population Research, Princeton University. I would like to acknowledge the contribution made to this research by Ansley Coale, Director of the Office of Population Research, through critical and constructive readings of drafts of the work reported here, through my demographic training, and through the provision of a stimulating and pleasant work environment. Jane Menken of OPR also contributed substantially to this work.

7. Regional Variation in !Kung Populations

1. This work was supported by NIMH grant MH 13611 to Irven DeVore and Richard Lee and by the research allocations committee of the University of New Mexico.

8. Medical Research among the !Kung

1. When some of these data were presented at the XI International Congress of Nutrition in Mexico on 1972, D.S. McLaren pointed out that during frozen storage the apparent value of vitamin A, by the method we used (Neeld and Pearson, 1963), can go up. Parkinson and Gal (1972) illustrate an example of this phenomenon. Serum vitamin A's were measured within 4 weeks of our return from Botswana (exact dates can no longer be found) and one of the author's sera (taken in the field) was included at the second visit as a control.

9. Social and Economic Constraints on Child Life among the !Kung

1. This characteristic noncompetitiveness was predicted for hunting and gathering societies as a whole by John W.M. Whiting in his comments during the Man the Hunter Conference (Lee and DeVore 1968, p. 339): "Although I know of no data on the subject, I would be very surprised if there were many competitive team sports among the hunters and gatherers—another reason for the emphasis on individual achievement rather than group responsibility."

2. Konner has pointed out that older children are likely to be doing some informal, nondirective child tending of their own—just by being on the premises as are the adults. I agree with this qualification and that the attention shown by an older child to a child of the 2½- to 5-year-old age group is generally voluntary, spontaneous, and quite erratic. Older children are not imbued with a sense of responsibility for young children.

10. Maternal Care, Infant Behavior and Development among the !Kung

1. I am grateful to Irven DeVore, Jerome Kagan, and N.G. Blurton Jones for all forms of support and friendship from the inception of this work to the present, and to Marjorie Shostak for her assistance and companionship through-

out. Financial support has come from the National Science Foundation (G.S.-2603), the National Institutes of Health (5-RO1-MH-13611), the Milton Fund, and the Foundations' Fund for Research in Psychiatry.

2. This technique emerged from a study (Chapter 14) by Blurton Jones and Konner of !Kung knowledge of animal behavior. It consisted of group interview and discussion.

11. A !Kung Woman's Memories of Childhood

1. Memories 1 and 2 probably took place when N#isa was three or four years old; memories 3, 4, 5, and 6 when she was about six or seven.

2. Insults making reference to the genitals are common and are given either in jest or in anger. Even when expressed angrily, they are not very serious.

3. "Stinge": the word "*kxung*," to be stingy, or to withhold, is repeatedly used as a verb throughout the narrative, "Stinge" seemed to me the closest possible English rendering.

4. The bush is a general term referring to all land beyond the village camp boundary.

5. N#isa was probably between the ages of five and seven in memories 7, 8, 9, and 10.

6. "Ruin": the !Kung word *k'xwia* meaning general disruptiveness.

7. The !Kung believe that the expression of intense anger is sometimes followed by sickness in the person to whom the anger was directed.

8. Thumb piano: a musical instrument now very popular among !Kung children. It is questionable whether this is actually the instrument she played because the thumb piano is believed to have been introduced more recently.

9. "Homa": fictitious village name.

10. The caterpillars eaten by the !Kung are about two inches long and have smooth skins. They are considered a great delicacy.

11. N#isa was from six to twelve years old during the episodes in this section.

12. The expression "tchi" literally means sexual intercourse, but in reference to children it only means experimental sexual play without actual intromission.

13. The !Kung word "*///xwasi*" literally means "to work" and is used humorously in this context.

14. The kaross *chikn'a* is a skin worn by women. When it is tied around the waist and neck, a pouch is formed in which children and food are carried.

15. Trance dance: see Katz (Chapter 11).

16. "*Xai, kow-a-di*": cried out during the trance dance by a man in trance and in the act of curing.

17. N#isa was probably about thirteen years old in memory 18 and fifteen years old in memories 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23.

18. N#isa was married five times in all. At the time of the interviews, she was living with her fifth husband. /"Tashay, whom she meets and married in memories 22-26, was her third husband. She was about thirteen years old the first time she married. This marriage lasted only a few days because her husband, who was much older, had an affair with an older woman. Traditionally, when a grown man marries a young girl, an older woman is asked to spend the first few nights with the couple. This gives the girl a sense of protection and helps her adjust to her new situation. In N#isa's case, however, the older woman contributed to the

break-up of the marriage. The woman, one of N^oisa's relatives, had been N^oisa's husband's lover prior to the marriage. During the first few nights, they engaged in sexual relations in the hut. N^oisa told her parents about it, and they dissolved the marriage.

N^oisa's next marriage, begun about a year later, lasted a few months and ended in a dispute about food. Because there is an imposed scarcity of women of marriageable age (due to polygamy), a son-in-law has to prove himself worthy of his wife (L. Marshall 1959; Lee 1974). In N^oisa's father's eyes, her second husband did not fulfill his responsibilities. They quarreled over some meat that the son-in-law had brought with him from his parents' village. Her father asked for a portion, and her husband said he would give it to him in the morning. When her father then pressed him for a share, her husband refused. Her father took this refusal as an insult and said it showed he would not take care of his daughter and her family in the future. Much to N^oisa's delight (she still did not feel ready to be married), her father told him the marriage was finished and that he should leave.

N^oisa married her third husband, /'Tashay, when she was about fifteen. Her breasts had begun to develop, but she had not yet reached menarche. In the marriage negotiations described in memory 19, N^oisa's father blames her for having left her previous husbands and accuses her of being fickle, although he and his wife had actually terminated both previous marriages. When parents discuss marriage plans with their daughter's prospective parents-in-law, it is usual for them to deprecate her. This is in keeping with the general !Kung concern to avoid being thought of as acting "proud."

19. The !Kung have a simple marriage ceremony which takes place over a two-day period. When both sets of parents have agreed to the marriage, the two mothers work together and build a marriage hut for the couple. The !Kung believe that the sun is death-giving because it dries up all the water, and consequently, during this day, the girl keeps a covering over her head so that the sun will not shine on her. Once the sun has set, a firebrand from the fire of each set of parents is brought over to light the fire in front of the marriage hut. Women friends and girlfriends go to where the girl has been waiting, pick her up so that her feet do not touch the ground, and carry her to the marriage hut. They leave her inside, and she lays down with the cover still over her. Male friends escort the boy, and he sits down outside the hut with his friends. Boys and girls sit by the couple's fire and have a good time: they sing, play music, and eat whatever they have. Neither the couple nor their parents joins them in these activities. Late in the night the boy goes into the hut to sleep, but not to make love. The next morning oil and red powder are rubbed over the bodies of the couple by female relatives of both. This marks the end of the formal ceremony (L. Marshall 1959).

20. The !Kung, when they are sick, sometimes tie a piece of rope or leather around the body part that ails them.

12. Education for Transcendence: !Kia-Healing with the Kalahari !Kung

1. Revision of a chapter appearing in Richard Katz, *Preludes to Growth: An Experiential Approach* (Free Press, 1973). Copyright 1973, Transpersonal Insti-

tute, 2637 Marshall Drive, Palo Alto, California 94303. Reprinted by permission with slight editing from Volume 5, Number 2 of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*.

2. In future writings I plan to present research findings on other aspects of this experience of transcendence: the dance structure in which the experience occurs, the phenomenology and psychology of the experience, the healing which results from the experience, characteristics of those who have the experience, and the effects of this experience on individual and cultural maintenance and growth. See Katz (in preparation) for a presentation of many of these findings.

3. The following sections are based on field work I did while living with the !Kung in the Kalahari Desert in northwest Botswana, Africa. My research was supported by NIMH grant #MH 13611.

I am indebted to Richard Lee, who was my colleague, collaborator, and interpreter in the field. His help continues to be invaluable. The !Kung accepted me and gave me a sense of home. Several !Kung made a special effort to teach me some things about !kia. I feel an enduring gratitude toward them; and out of respect, they shall remain anonymous.

I have decided to retain certain !Kung words such as /kia and n/um. These words are central to an understanding of their experiences of transcendence, and they are not easily translated. Certain translations have already been offered in the literature; /kia has been translated as trance, and n/um as medicine. But these English words are vague and possibly inaccurate. I hope that a more complete and accurate understanding of the !Kung words can emerge from considering what the !Kung say about the experiences the words refer to. For the sake of simplicity, I will use /kia and /kia-healing interchangeably, though there are other !kia states not connected with healing.

4. I will not be talking here specifically about !Kung women. But the process of educating for !kia is fundamentally similar for men and women.

5. A pseudonym, as are all other !Kung personal names used in the text.

6. Of those who have n/um, 57 percent were taught to /kia, i.e., received n/um, from their kin (19 percent were taught by their fathers); 25 percent were taught by nonkin; 9 percent received n/um from God; 2 percent were self-taught; and 7 percent did not specify their source of n/um. These percentages are derived from interview data collected by Richard Lee.

7. I am using the term "student" to signify someone who has yet to /kia and who is seeking n/um. I also use the term "potential n/um master." It signifies someone who, at a particular dance in which he participates, will /kia. It is a more inclusive term, including students who for the first time will get n/um during that dance, as well as persons of varying experience in /kia.

8. Richard Lee has collected data which show a significant relationship between a father's having n/um and his son's getting n/um, whether or not the father actually teaches the son. Could there be some inheritability of a predisposition toward /kia?

9. See Katz (in preparation) for a more complete description of the data on these individual predisposing factors.

10. The drug is awaiting botanical identification and analysis. It appears to be a psychoactive substance which has not yet been reported in the literature. I never observed the use of this drug during any of the !kia-healing dances I attended.