
**THINGS FROM THE BUSH: Power And
Colonialism in The Making of Ju/'hoan Identity in
The Omaheke Region of Namibia**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work.

James Suzman

10 January 1997

ABSTRACT

Studies of those peoples living in southern Africa who have at one time or another been referred to as Bushmen have been dominated by discussions pertaining almost exclusively to their one-time status as hunter-gatherers. In this thesis, the author makes a departure from this line of study and takes as his subject matter those Bushmen who, because they were not seen to be living exemplars of the foraging way of life, were initially of little interest to anthropologists: the "impure" Bushmen who, for several generations, have been immersed in the colonial political economy, eking out a living in the margins of the Omaheke Region in Namibia.

In this thesis, which is the result of eighteen months fieldwork on the white-owned commercial farms and former "native reserves" of the Omaheke, the author examines the processes involved in the construction and articulation of contemporary Ju/'hoan identity. In doing this the author argues that Ju/'hoan identity is constituted, not in terms of cultural institutions left over from their hunting and gathering past, but in terms of their marginalisation and domination by others.

In addressing the issue of identity in a "plural" environment, the author takes an approach which focuses on the production of identity in terms of the relations between Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke and their various neighbours. Consequently, the author examines how other residents of the Omaheke constructed Ju/'hoansi in discourse and how these constructions influenced and transformed the narratives through which Ju/'hoansi constructed themselves. In doing this the author addresses these questions from a variety of angles including, history, politics, religion, kinship and folklore.

In concluding, the author highlights the degree to which Ju/'hoan identity is implicated in their relations with others and suggests that in studying formerly hunting-and-gathering societies experiencing radical change, it is necessary to move beyond the theoretical frameworks and models generated for the study of them as hunter-gatherers.

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A NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

The Ju/'hoan orthography I have adopted in this thesis is based on that devised by Patrick Dickens and adopted by the Nyae-Nyae Farmer's Co-operative (see Dickens n.d.a and n.d.b).

Very basically, Ju/'hoan uses four basic click forms:

- / Dental affricate.
- ≠ An alveolar stop.
- // Lateral affricate.
- ! Palatal click.

In written Ju/'hoan, the following indicate:

- x as in the scottish "loch", or German "ag"
- c as in English "sh-"
- q indicates pharangylisation of following vowels
- h indicates aspiration of following vowels
- n indicates nasalisation of following clicks
- k, g indicates vocalisation of following clicks

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STUDY AREA: OMAHEKE REGION

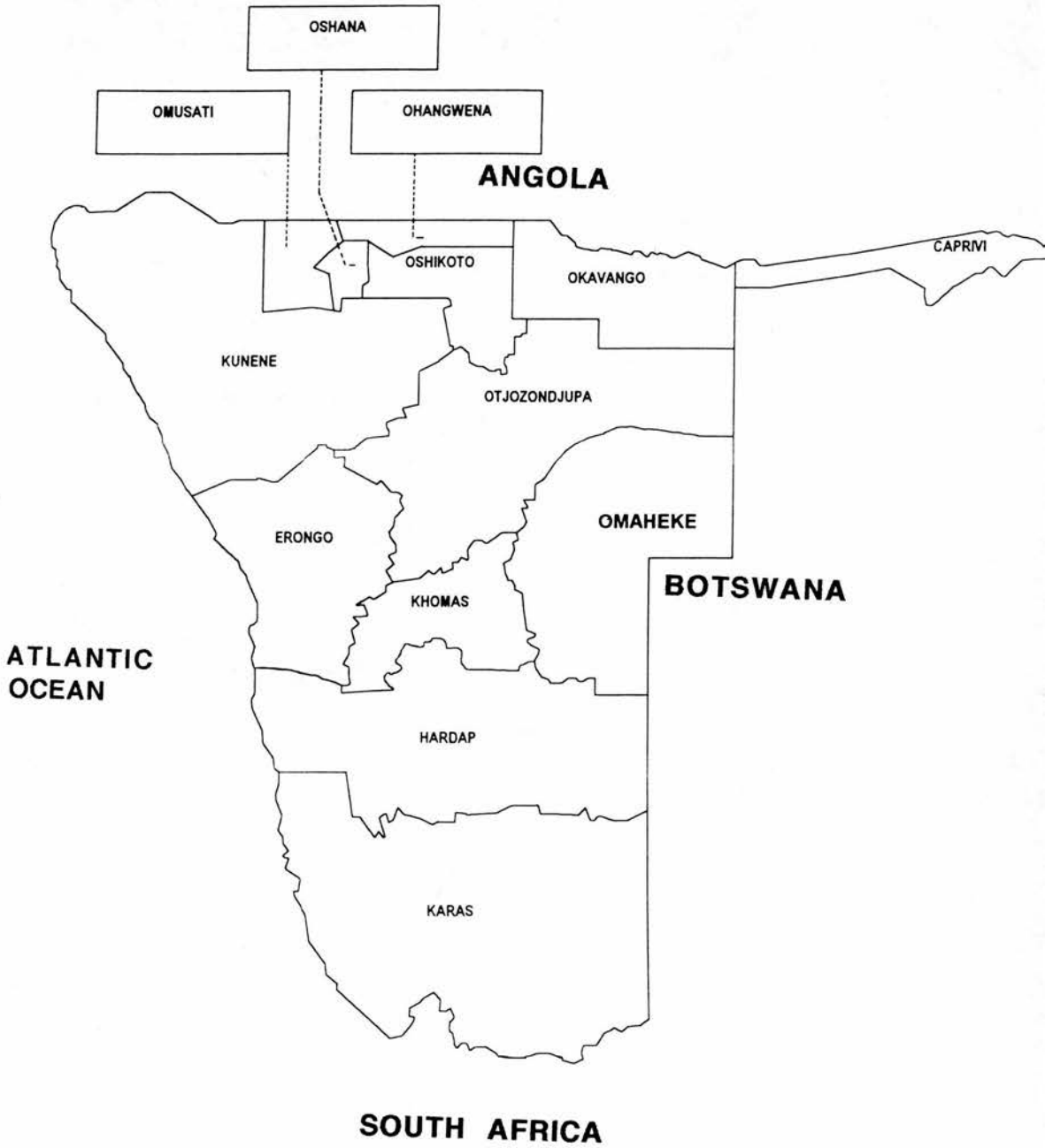


Fig 1. Namibia General

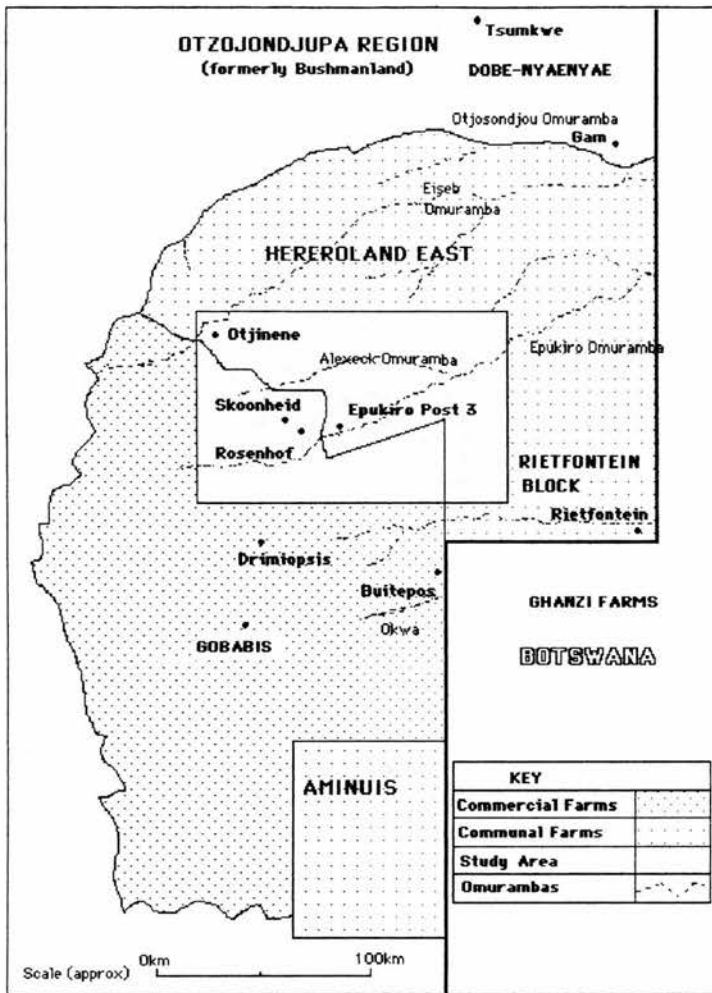


Fig 2. The Omaheke Region

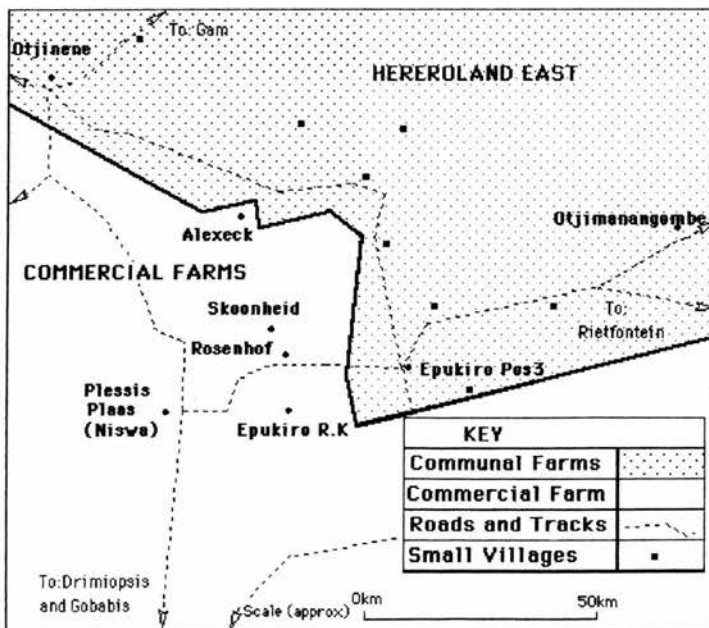


Fig 3. Epukiro

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Friday has no command of words and therefore no defence against being reshaped day by day in conformity with the desire of others. I say he is a cannibal, and he becomes a cannibal: I say he is a laundryman and he becomes a laundryman.

J. M. Coetzee; from the novel *Foe*

The title of this thesis comes from a conversation I had with a Ju/'hoan man one afternoon at Skoonheid Resettlement Camp in the northern reaches of Namibia's Omaheke region. The man with whom I was conversing had a rougher life than most other Ju/'hoansi¹ I knew. Local farmers regarded him as the district's arch villain, and some had threatened to shoot him should they find him on their land. I got on fairly well with him although the knowledge that one drunken afternoon, some years previously, he had pounded his wife's skull to a bloody pulp by the roadside, lurked in the shadows of my mind whenever I spoke with him. I learnt that following the murder of his wife, he had been sent to the local prison from whence he was paroled into the South West African Territorial Forces (SWATF), where, according to rumour, his ruthlessness was put to "good" use by the notorious 32 Battalion against those struggling for an end to apartheid and an independent Namibia. Following demobilisation he had returned to the northern Omaheke and, unable to find work, joined his children, some of whom had settled at the resettlement facility. I had asked him what it was that made a Bushman a Bushman. In response he replied:

I do not know what makes a Bushman a Bushman. But I know that the Bushman are the people who are always "under" and that it is them [Hereros, Boers etc.] that keep us down. It is them who say that we are just *Bushmen* that we are just *things from the bush*.

While his reputation gave him more reason than most to claim that his status was determined by others' (mis)representations of Ju/'hoansi, his reply was not very

¹The term *Ju/'hoansi* (sing. Ju/'hoan)(pronounced Zhootwasi) was the label by which those people in the Omaheke who were traditionally referred to as "Bushmen" referred to themselves. In the existing anthropological literature these people are usually referred to as ≠Au//eisi or ≠Auen (e.g. Schapera 1930:33; Barnard 1992b:39), but for reasons which I discuss later (Chapter 4), now prefer the term Ju/'hoansi. They should not be confused with the foraging Bushmen, who use the same indigenous label with whom the likes of Lorna Marshall (1976), Richard Lee (1993) and Edwin Wilmsen (1989) worked. When I use the term *Bushmen* I am referring collectively to those diverse groups which have over time been placed under the collective labels *Bushmen* or *San* (see Guenther 1986a).

different to many others that I had received to the same question. Many Ju/'hoansi felt that their marginal status on the commercial farms and in the former Herero "reserves" was dependent on how the politically and economically dominant groups in the Omaheke viewed them and acted towards them.

In this thesis, my principal concern is with how Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke were constructed in discourse by themselves and others. I examine how these discourses served as ciphers for social action towards them and thereby shaped their status in the Omaheke political economy. Ultimately, I look at how, given their marginal status and a century of colonial domination by others who regarded them as "things from the bush" they constructed their own identity in this region.

I will start this thesis by first locating my research and approach in terms of the ever growing literature on Bushmen in general and Ju/'hoansi in particular. Thereafter, I address some of the basic themes of this thesis, looking in particular at the role of history and questions of power in current anthropological discourse concerning Bushmen. Finally, I give a brief description of my fieldwork, highlighting some of the issues that do not emerge elsewhere in the text yet are useful in contextualising this study.

Anthropology and the Bushmen

On my eleventh birthday I was taken to see the film *The Gods Must be Crazy* produced and directed by the South African film maker Jamie Uys. In this film, an isolated Bushman community have their lives disrupted by a bush pilot who, when flying over the inhospitable wastes of the Kalahari, happens to lob an empty Coke bottle out of his cockpit window. The appearance of the Coke bottle, because of its utility and beauty in a world of sand and wood, shatters the fragile egalitarian existence of this community by creating tensions and jealousies which had never previously existed. Eventually, the havoc caused by the arrival of this bottle leads the Bushman Band to decide that the "gods must have been crazy" to have sent them such a disruptive thing, and agree to dispatch one of their young men to return it to the Gods by throwing it off the "edge of the world". One of the young men of the band takes responsibility for this hazardous mission which entails leaving the safety of the familiar Kalahari desert and entering the dangerous and difficult "wider world". In a series of tragic-comic scenes he fulfils his quest whilst, in the process, saving a group of school-child hostages from the clutches of "Sam Bocha", a Castro look-alike terrorist leader and his gang of comic terrorists on the run from a failed coup in a neighbouring "Banana" republic. Notwithstanding the politics of the film, which has attracted the criticism of several anthropologists and

other commentators (e.g.. Gordon 1992:1; Tomaselli 1992; Anderson & Benson 1993:161-164), it successfully juxtaposes the apparently idyllic life of the egalitarian, pacifist, "primitively affluent" Bushmen with those of the hectic, difficult lives of the "modern" residents of Johannesburg. The rural idyll portrayed in this film was appealing and, in tandem with another Jamie Uys film, *Beautiful People*, played no mean role in my leanings towards studying anthropology and my choice of location for both my under- and post-graduate fieldwork.

While the film's success in local South African audiences was expected, its international success was somewhat surprising. In dollar terms, *The Gods Must be Crazy* turned out to be one of the most successful films yet to have been made on the continent of Africa. The remarkable international success of this film was not solely due to its clever script or "Ealing in Africa" feel, but because the Bushmen, or more to the point, the *idea* of the Bushmen as portrayed in this film, was a notion which was not unfamiliar to western audiences. Indeed, the Bushmen, along with other exotic "primitives" had long been a part of European and American academic and popular discourse.

The special fascination held for the Bushmen and other "primitives" in the Western academic and popular discourses has been traced to the philosophical and philological fascination with "natural man" as well as the nascent evolutionism present in scientific discourse in eighteenth-century Europe (Schrire 1982:2-6; Desmonds and Moore 1991). We can be sure that within 200 years of the occupation of the Southernmost tip of Africa by the Dutch, Bushmen were imported from the Cape of Good Hope because they were almost guaranteed crowd pullers in the fairgrounds of Europe where they were presented on the stages of various showmen keen to sell images of exotica to whoever was willing to pay. Thus, slotted in amongst a gaudy display of bearded women and other assorted "freaks", the Bushman began to enter tangibly into the general public's imagination. Exhibited variously as exemplars of the "hard primitives" of Rousseau's Second Discourse or as exemplars of the most degraded form of humanity, Bushmen were to find a place in Europe's re-invention of itself during its colonial adventure in Africa (Schrire 1982:5).

For the most part, images of the Bushmen in the West have been characterised by dramatic shifts in sentiment and value ranging from nigh absolute revulsion to nigh absolute adoration. In many respects, these images of the Bushmen had very little to do with those people who now call themselves Bushmen, and a great deal to do with how colonial Europe constructed its own self-image in opposition to others. As such, the category "Bushman" emerged as an open semantic space, providing a metaphor

through which an absolute "otherness", and the contested values projected onto it could be articulated. As Robert Gordon has argued, "if the Bushmen didn't exist, we would surely have invented them" (Gordon 1992:217).

As the dust clouds kicked up by Europe's colonisation of Africa began to settle, Bushmen and other "primitive" colonial subjects, who were hitherto of not much interest to scientists, became the principal *object* of study in the newly emergent discipline of ethnography (Kuper 1988:1-14). Despite the semantic shifts of the notion of a Bushman as, to borrow Dumont's (1986) term, "an idea-value", the category has been imprisoned by various factors defining the Bushmen as a sign. In other words for the Bushmen to maintain their symbolic usage in Euro-American discourses they had to be hunter-gatherers with few visible signs of any sort of institutionalised socio-cultural system. For ethnographers, the purity of the sign *Bushman* in Western discourses necessitated that an equally "pure" Bushman was studied in the field. Their absorption into an explicitly scientific realm did little to alter their status in these discourses since, on a visible level at least, the Bushmen studied in scientific expeditions were those who appeared most self-evidently different from both their black and white neighbours. They were physically distinctive, being generally shorter and lighter on skin colour than their Bantu neighbours, they hunted and foraged, appeared to show little interest in agriculture or pastoralism, did not build houses, appeared not to have permanent settlements and did not display any or much of the explicit ritual life which Europeans thought to constitute the basis of what they regarded as "culture". As such, the Bushmen were to play "nature" to Europe's and America's "culture".

In spite of the fact that by 1950 most of South Africa's indigenous Bushman population had been destroyed or assimilated into other ethno-social polities,² and that many Namibian and Botswanan Bushmen had by this stage, been drawn inescapably into the clutches of colonial political economy through working for both white and black settlers, the Western image of the authentic Bushman persisted. Corresponding roughly with the settler farmers categories of "wild" and "tame" Bushmen (Chapter 2), Europeans classified different Bushmen as "pure" or "impure". Those who appeared to conform to the European stereotype were regarded as "pure" and hence appropriate for study, whereas those who, through contact with white settlers and others, were regarded as impure, were of only marginal interest or concern to academics. The image of the Bushmen in the West was thus often more powerful than any discourse which

²Recently, following the demise of apartheid in South Africa, some groups, have come to re-claim their Khoisan identities in order to further current political ambitions (Chapter 8).

the various Bushmen groups, given the constraints of colonialism, could produce for themselves. Consequently, many people who considered themselves to be Bushmen were not considered sufficiently Bushmanlike by outsiders to attract their interest.

Thus a regionalist³ slant was to develop in European studies of Bushmen, as only those areas which were assumed to be home to apparently isolated groups of "pure" Bushmen living a "traditional" life of hunting and foraging became the areas in which serious studies took place. Of these investigations, perhaps the most renowned were the expeditions of the Marshall family which started in the early 1950s and ended roughly a decade later, resulting ultimately in the publication of Lorna Marshall's *The !Kung of Nyae-Nyae* (1976). Later, following in the Marshalls' footsteps were the Harvard Kalahari Research Project researchers led by Richard Lee who worked not far from where the Marshalls had stayed, on the other side of the then South West Africa/Botswana border. In terms of the discipline of social anthropology, the works of the Harvard group were perhaps the most renowned with the works of Richard Lee (Lee 1968 & 1984; Lee and Devore 1968 & 1976)), being particularly influential in the legitimation and construction of Sahlins' arguments in *Stone Age Economics* (Sahlins 1972:1-39) .

The works of the Harvard Kalahari Research Group⁴ have retrospectively been labelled as "traditionalist" and granted paradigmatic status. In its strongest form traditionalism is an explicitly evolutionist paradigm although very few of those who locate themselves in the traditionalist camp would consider themselves evolutionist any longer (e.g. Lee 1993; Solway and Lee 1993). Traditionalist anthropologists regarded the Bushmen as a typical (or indeed archetypal) hunting-and-gathering society, fluid in social structure, egalitarian in values and leading, what was later to be labelled so evocatively by Sahlins, a life of "primitive affluence". Following in the footsteps of Julian Steward, the traditionalists saw the study of the Bushmen as giving a valuable

³I am referring here not to "regionalist" approaches based on regional comparison as advocated by anthropologists such as Barnard (e.g. 1992), but rather the emergence and subsequent ascendance of certain rubrics of study for some specific "culture" areas. Fardon (1990:24) draws attention to correspondence between regionalism and the establishment of paradigmatic orthodoxies in anthropology pertaining to specific regions, as well as pointing out some of the difficulties in attempting to move beyond these orthodoxies in any constructive way. He has argued that:

Regional factors influence the entry of . . . of the ethnographer to a field that is necessarily pre-imagined, the circumstances under which fieldwork is carried out, the issues which have been preconceived as appropriate and pressing, and in writing up, the canons of adequate reporting and the audience to whom, in part at least, the work will be addressed and whose opinions will be the most telling.

⁴The work of this group, is most clearly laid out in the volume *Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers: Studies of the !Kung San and their Neighbours* (Lee and Devore (eds.) 1976).

insight into all humanity's common hunting-and-gathering past. As a consequence of this Bushmen became the locus of "scientific" attempts to apply ecological models to explain human behaviour and "territoriality" (e.g. Cashdan 1983; Lee 1976:78-95). The apparently ground-breaking studies undertaken by the Harvard Kalahari Research group, and Richard Lee in particular, meant that the Bushmen were propelled once again into the clutches of Western academic and to a lesser extent popular discourse. The net result of this was that a flurry of researchers, both amateur and professional, embarked for the Kalahari hoping to report on and even experience the life of these mythical hunter-gatherers

The writings of the Harvard Group, building on other work done with other hunting and gathering peoples, established something of a paradigmatic orthodoxy in Bushmen and hunter-gatherer studies, the terms of which were laid out at the *Man the Hunter* symposium in 1966 (Lee and Devore 1968). This orthodoxy was to remain more or less unchallenged in any fundamental way until the early nineteen-eighties, when some researchers began to examine and contest the apparently ahistorical foundations on which it was built. This eventually precipitated a heated and bitter debate which appeared on the pages of *Current Anthropology* and kept some university presses busy for some time.⁵ Wilmsen, who remains the most vocal challenger to the traditionalist orthodoxy articulates the revisionist position most clearly in his book *Land Filled with Flies* (1989). In this publication, he chides the traditionalists for having "granted the Bushmen antiquity whilst denying them history", and argues that archaeological, ethnohistorical and political-economy approaches suggest that the Bushmen, far from being isolated stone-age relics, were an ethnic category forged out of the dramatic political and economic processes which shook the southern African sub-continent over the past millennium. Furthermore, he argued that their hunting and gathering subsistence strategy was primarily an adaptation to poverty. The revisionist argument holds that the Bushmen were in essence victims of the dominant political and economic processes that shaped the southern African subcontinent and hence represent a regional underclass rather than a distinct ethno-social entity. Moreover, revisionists argue that the notion of "primitive affluence", which is central to the traditionalist thesis, was based on inadequate and short term research which failed, amongst other things, to grasp the broader geographical and chronological patterns of subsistence which highlighted the difficulties of foraging in the Kalahari (Wilmsen 1989: 304-305).

⁵See Wilmsen (1989); Wilmsen and Denbow (1990); Solway and Lee (1989); Guenther and Lee (1991;1993 & 1995).

Wilmsen's work and the establishment of the revisionist critique has had implications which have reached beyond the bounds of the esoteric world of Bushman anthropology. Hunter-gatherer studies, which had become something of a specialist sub-discipline in its own right during the sixties and seventies, was itself struggling as the textualist turn in anthropology required serious questions to be asked concerning foundational premises of the sub-discipline, especially since those anthropologists concerned with hunting and gathering societies were more prone than others to alienate their silent subjects in both time and space (Schrire 1982:10-11; Pratt 1993:120). Furthermore, the integrity of the sub-discipline was, to some extent, founded on the idea that their subjects were "ahistorical", a notion which was becoming increasingly less popular in a discipline which had become painfully aware of its colonial antecedents and was attempting to purge itself of whatever complicity it had in Europe's grand adventure in the colonies (e.g. Asad 1973; Stocking 1992). Moreover, the notions of primitivism and ahistoricity on which the sub-discipline was built were also becoming particularly shaky following challenges from various quarters (e.g. Fabian 1993:17-18; Kuper 1988:243-244). Added to this, many of the previously silent (or silenced) subjects of this sub-discipline began to find voice themselves, articulating circumstances which were a far cry from their hunting and gathering past. In many respects, by the 1980s, the very notion of studying *contemporary* hunter-gatherers had become an anachronism.

Thus the arrival of Wilmsen's extremely dense, and apparently thorough text, marshalling a huge amount of information all of which seemed to indicate that one of the key exemplars of the hunting and gathering archetype were not what they had appeared to be, sent shock waves through the sub-discipline. Although the revisionist argument, in particular the case as argued by Wilmsen, has some flaws which raise serious questions concerning his reconstruction of the Kalahari political economy (Lee and Guenther 1994), it has served as a wake up call to those anthropologists concerned with hunter gatherers and Bushmen in particular. Of particular importance, it served to blur the conceptual boundaries erected by anthropologists and others between "pure" and "impure" Bushmen.

The conceptual marginalisation of the "impure" Bushmen living and working on farms and former "native reserves" of the then South West Africa by anthropologists, mirrored their political marginalisation on the ground. When, during the 1940's and 1950's, the South West African Administration (SWAA) debated the establishment of a "game reserve" for Bushmen, it was only those groups who were of sufficient "purity" to warrant scientific interest that were considered in these

discussions (Gordon 1992:147-167). Similarly, in more recent years, it has been those Bushmen who were considered to be "authentic", specifically the Ju/'hoansi living in the Nyae-Nyae areas of Namibia, that were to receive the attentions of NGO's and other "interested" parties with the result that development initiatives were focused on a few groups that constituted a significant minority of the total Bushman population in Namibia. Indeed, it has only been in the last year or so that NGO's and foreign funding bodies have begun to pay any attention to those landless Bushmen who, for some time, have been eking out a life on the white farms and former native reserves of Namibia.

My concerns in this thesis lie with the Bushmen who were not sufficiently "pure" to warrant the traditionalist's attention; those living on the largely Afrikaner owned commercial farms as well as in the Herero communal farming areas of the Omaheke⁶ region of Namibia⁷. My main concern in writing and researching this thesis has been to work with those Bushmen who were not attractive to those anthropologists seeking authentic exemplars of "a way of life that was until 10000 years ago, a human universal" (Lee 1979:1). In so doing I avoid discussing the status of Bushmen in the Omaheke in reference to their possible links to the Pleistocene, but rather in terms of their contemporary relations with others and the historical forces out of which these relations have arisen.

Having said this, I am by no means the first anthropologist to have worked with Bushmen who were no longer "pure" exemplars of the foraging way of life.⁸ Apart from Wilmsen, several others have worked with Bushmen whose "purity" was debatable; the most notable of whom were Alan Barnard and Mathias Guenther, both of whom worked just over the border from the Namibian Omaheke in the Ghanzi District of Botswana.⁹ Added to this, the changing circumstances for those Bushmen

⁶The Omaheke, which lies on the Namibia's eastern border with Botswana, is comprised of the former Hereroland Reserves and the former Gobabis District (See *figs. 1 & 2*).

⁷The other significant population of "farm Bushmen" in Namibia can be found in the Otjozondjupa (formerly Grootfontein) Region which lies to the north-west of the Omaheke.

⁸Some anthropologists have also looked at relations between Bushman and others, focusing on matters such as trade and exchange (e.g. Cashdan 1987; Hitchcock 1978).

⁹Barnard's work in the Ghanzi district reflects his principal interest in kinship systems, social structure and, ultimately, how the Bushmen in the Ghanzi district slotted into "regional deep structures". This has meant that his work focuses largely on those aspects of Nharo Bushmen culture which were held in common with Khoisan groups (Barnard 1978; 1981 & 1992b etc.). While many of Mathias Guenther's (1979; 1986b; 1986c etc.) research concerns are coincident with mine, his approach, is somewhat different. Guenther approaches the issue of social change among the Nharo Bushmen of Ghanzi during the 1970s from a perspective which stresses the "adaptability", "survivability" and "flexibility" of Nharo culture and "social structure" on the Ghanzi farms and the "revitalisation" of aspect of their culture in response to the presence of others.

who were once seen to be relatively "pure" has resulted in many others turning their attentions more directly to the problems faced by Bushmen in a political economy dominated by others (e.g. Hitchcock 1987 & 1991; Guenther 1986 etc.). Nevertheless, as will become clear, there are some significant differences between this thesis and much of their work especially with regard to concepts such as "social change" and "acculturation".

Much anthropological discussion on "social change", a term which itself invokes a vision of a static Bushman past, is framed within a dualistic dialectic contrasting a foraging past with a non-foraging present. As such, the current status of some Bushman groups in Namibia and Botswana where their autonomy as hunters and gatherers is threatened or has dissolved are spoken of in terms of the impact of "sedentism" (Kent 1989 & 1995; Osaki 1990), "acculturation" or the adaptability and flexibility of traditional Bushman social structures in the face of new obstacles (Guenther 1986b). In many of these studies, while it is acknowledged that outside influences may be the ultimate catalyst for these changes, they focus on the issues of change from a point of view which centres on continuities in "traditional" social structures and culture. Consequently, such studies often lead the reader to believe that the problems faced by, for example, sedentarised Bushmen in the late twentieth century can be accounted for in terms which relegate the political and state processes which have led to these problems as, from an anthropological point of view, of secondary explanatory importance.

In contrast to these studies, I have chosen to focus on the relations of power between Bushmen and others and how these relate to how Bushman constructed their identity in the Omaheke region of Namibia. Although it may appear that in doing so I am constructing a critique of previous studies, this is certainly not my intention. Rather my intentions are to provide a supplementary discourse to these previous studies, one which highlights certain aspects regarding the contemporary status of Bushmen which have up until recently remained steadfastly in the margins of anthropological discourse.

While, in some respects, I am critical of some of the existing anthropological literature on the Bushman, following Barnard (1992a:86) I believe that on epistemological grounds, "there are more than one correct theoretical positions", and that these positions and approaches all make sense and, to a greater or lesser degree are all equally valid, in terms of their own discursive contexts. The fact that I find these

Consequently, in spite of the fact that his concerns lie in process and change, he does not concentrate on the discursive and material aspects to these processes, but rather the apparent continuity of Bushman cultural forms in spite of, or in response to, the presence of others.

previous works complement rather than contradict my research is evidenced throughout this paper by my use of their materials to confirm or substantiate to my arguments. As Kuper (1993a & 1993b), in his skirmish on the borders of the Kalahari debate with Moore (1993), has argued, while our interpretations of our data are inevitably bound up in our theoretical frameworks, this does not necessarily mean that our data is so tainted as to have no empirical value.

Identity, Representation and History

Few anthropological subjects have had as much ink spilt over them as the Bushman. Well over six hundred articles and books have been written regarding these diverse people such that they constitute a sub disciplinary speciality in themselves (Barnard 1992b). This wealth of material places the study of Bushmen in an almost unique position in the social anthropology insofar as they have been written about from a wide variety of perspectives. Anthropologists writing about Bushmen have had to embrace and accommodate a variety of different paradigmatic approaches ranging from evolutionist (Lee and Devore 1968), to marxist (Wilmsen 1989; Lee 1988) to historiographic (Gordon 1992), to symbolic (Biesele 1993), to regional comparison (Barnard 1992) to post-modern (Shostak 1981), a result of which is that the study of Bushmen now lies at an interdisciplinary cross-roads, incorporating history, literature, ethnography and politics among other things. My approach to this study starts at this cross-roads and so, in spite of the fact that I abandon many of the more traditional rubrics used in studying Bushmen, my endeavours have much in common with the contemporary research interests of many other anthropologists in this field.¹⁰

The slow osmosis of poststructural models into anthropology has had a marked effect on the discipline. The attack on the dominant transcendental signified and the congruent relativisation of western academic discourse has forced some anthropologists to redefine the role of their discipline as an "historically situated mode of understanding of historically situated contexts, each with its own, perhaps radically different kinds of subjects and subjectivities, objects and objectives" (Comaroff 1992:9-10). In other words the anthropological agenda for those concerned with the "new" criticism has shifted to a preoccupation with "the making of collective worlds-the dialectics, in space and time of societies and selves, persons and places, orders and

¹⁰I am thinking here, in particular, of Mathias Guenther's recent work on history and folklore (1989 and 1994) as well as the historiographic work undertaken by Wilmsen (1989) and Robert Gordon (1992). In this regard, I also find myself sympathetic with other anthropologists and critics who have launched a "broadside" to the canonic and disciplinary boundaries which circumscribe western academic life (e.g. Marcus 1993:104).

events" (*ibid.*:12). Thus, where anthropologists were once concerned with the systematic and ordered assembling of ethnographic and social facts *a` la* Durkheim, many are now more concerned with the politics and processes involved in the creation, identification and arbitration of what *fictions* might constitute social fact (Geertz 1973; Rabinow 1986; Parkin 1982).

This marked shift in focus, has placed questions concerning power and power relations firmly on the anthropological agenda. Notions such as "culture" and "social structure" which were the bread and butter of traditional anthropological discourse are now regarded by many as mediated by power relations, and are seen as ever more fluid, processual and unstable. In comparing the work of the philosophers Richard Rorty and Michel Foucault, Rabinow (1986), has argued that "representations *are* social facts", suggesting, firstly, that representations do not reflect reality, but produce it and endow it with meaning and secondly, that power relations determine which representations are dominant and hence *real*. In other words, Rabinow suggests that what constitutes "reality" is a question of politics and more specifically, to use Parkin's terms, "the power to name" (Parkin 1982:xlvi).

The role of politics and power in the construction of social "realities" is a recurring theme in this thesis, in which I examine how others' mythologies concerning Bushmen have shaped their status in the political economy of the Omaheke Region. Because others have dominated the production, circulation and validation of signs in the Omaheke, including the sign "Bushman" in its various guises, I suggest that Ju/'hoan identity must be viewed, in part, as a product of others' discourses concerning them and their actions towards them. In so doing, I argue that in order to gain a useful insight into the making of contemporary Ju/'hoan identity in the Omaheke, it is necessary to examine firstly, how others constructed Ju/'hoan identity, secondly how the Ju/'hoansi constructed their own identity and, thirdly, how the power relations pertaining between Bushmen and others legitimised or delegitimised these constructions.

In general terms, my main aim in writing this thesis is to talk about Ju/'hoan life in the Omaheke by means of the processes and discourses through which Ju/'hoan identity was constructed. In doing so I examine how others' in the Omaheke spoke of the Ju/'hoansi and how, given the distribution of power, others' representations of the Ju/'hoansi have come to dominate how Ju/'hoansi speak of and about themselves. Consequently, while this thesis is mainly about Ju/'hoansi, it is also about the Ju/'hoansi's neighbours and how they informed how Ju/'hoansi constructed themselves. The broad thrust of my argument can be summarised as follows:

1. Because Ju/'hoansi were constituted as sub-human by the various groups which colonised the Omaheke in the early twentieth century, they were only permitted to participate in the emergent colonial political economy as a dependent "underclass".

2. Material dependency on these others in conjunction with their monopoly of coercive force meant that the Ju/'hoan voice in the Omaheke was virtually silenced.

3. Subject to these power relations, Ju/'hoansi came to constitute their own identity in terms of their dependent underclass status, thereby conceding to the hegemony of others and reproducing those dominant stereotypes which were mobilised in order to mark Ju/'hoansi out as a subordinate underclass.

In taking what is an explicitly anti-essentialist view of Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, one of my key concerns is to stress the extent to which Ju/'hoan identity is embedded in political process. In reference to this, I aim to convey how the experience of being a Ju/'hoan in the Omaheke was rendered meaningful in discourse and the practices which these discourses informed. In doing this I examine both how the dominant discourses positioned Ju/'hoansi and others as subjects in different ways as well as how Ju/'hoansi themselves contested or conceded to the legitimacy of these discourses.

In view of this, one of my key concerns in writing this thesis is to contribute to the ever-growing literature on colonialism and the processes of power in colonial Africa. As Rabinow has pointed out, much of the literature on this subject has "been cast almost exclusively in the dialectic of domination, exploitation and resistance" resulting in the fact that "the group in the colonies who have received the least attention in historical and sociological studies are the colonists themselves" (Rabinow 1986:259).¹¹ A consequence of this has been that while the colonised are sanitised, demystified and given voice, the colonisers are often essentialised, mythologised and, for the most part, demonised. In short, the colonisers themselves assume the mantle of the troublesome other against whom we scream and shout. The absurdity of this process was especially clear in the Omaheke, where distinctions between the coloniser

¹¹In recent years, since, as Kuper (1982:243) has put it, "anthropology is no longer about the primitive, and no longer particularly or necessarily about the 'other' ", and following anthropology's growing concern with power relations and colonialism in particular, some anthropologists have come to focus attention on "colonisers" themselves. Stocking (1992) and Asad (1974), for example, have written of anthropology as a colonising discourse and the Comaroffs (1992), among others, have turned their attention to the history of colonising projects. Notably, however, there have been few attempts to write about colonisers on the basis of ethnographic fieldwork.

and the colonised were particularly ambiguous following the radical shake-up of the political and economic hierarchy after the demise of apartheid and the achievement of Namibian independence in 1990. Of all language groups in the Omaheke, this ambiguity was most pronounced amongst Herero, who, by virtue of apartheid, were the "colonised", yet in terms of their relationships with Bushmen and some others were clearly also "colonisers". In order to avoid the trap of creating other *others* I made efforts to engage the "colonisers", Afrikaans and Herero speaking, in dialogue. This text, therefore, makes pretensions at being heteroglossic in that it attempts to capture some of the radically different voices present in the Omaheke and, to a degree, allow them the space to make sense in their own right. I use the word *pretension* here carefully, in that in arbitrating what is said and unsaid in this text remains strictly and irrefutably in my hands. After all, in spite of being deeply involved in the politics of representation, anthropology does not necessarily seek to speak for others, but about, and occasionally, on behalf of them (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:9). Furthermore, by using others' voices in this text, I aim to ground this thesis in the people about whom I write, and thereby not lose sight of them as the products, producers, carriers and imparters of what we refer loosely to as "culture".

In order to examine the identity of a people in a place which has seen dramatic conflict and change over the last century, it was necessary to look not only at the present, but also at how the past created the conditions which rendered the present possible. Consequently, my fieldwork did not only involve talking about the past with my various informants, but also in seeking out voices from the past in the archives and records of colonial rule.

A Question of History

Until recently, many of those anthropologists who have come to specialise in hunting and gathering societies have tended towards stressing the similarities between them, based on continuities in these societies' modes of production, adaptive strategies and social organisation. The stressing of the common ground between foraging societies stems from these researchers' one time common goal to articulate the links these groups might have had with our Pleistocene forbears. A consequence of this has been the fact that large very diverse groups have, with a stroke of a pen, been classified as unitary societies in highly essentialist terms like "hunter-gatherer", "primitive", "stone-age" and so on.

Although, in the case of the Bushmen, ethnographers and anthropologists have long been aware of the diversity among groups that populated the vast southern

African subcontinent, research has long been focused on articulating and reifying the commonalities between them. In spite of the fact that early writers on the Bushmen, such as Stow (1904) and Schapera (1930), were acutely aware of the vastly different fates of different Bushmen groups in southern Africa, their writing tended to blur ideas of time and history, portraying even "extinct" groups in the same ethnographic present as those still living at the time of writing. What this amounted to was an almost complete negation of history in anthropological writing on the Bushmen which sought to capture the lives of these people in their natural, "ahistorical" state (see Wilmsen 1989:7-12; Pratt 1985:120).

Thus, paradoxically, writings on the Bushmen came to stress "the impact of the present on the past while neatly ignoring the effect of past interactions on present populations" (Schrire 1982:11). This process of ignoring history was perhaps more pervasive in Bushman studies than in other areas of anthropology, as researchers, seeking authentic exemplars of our universal past, continually chose to ignore those "impure" Bushmen who appeared to have become part of the grand historical narrative brought to Africa by Europeans. Even by the 1960s, when Richard Lee started his work among the Dobe Ju'/hoansi, ahistoricity remained a defining feature of the "authentic" Bushman, prompting the historically centred anthropologist to believe that his fieldwork was for the first time bringing the Bushmen "into history" (Lee 1979).

The revisionist critique of Bushmen studies, has successfully challenged the ahistorical underpinnings of traditionalist research and placed historical process firmly on the anthropological agenda. In spite of this, however, revisionist (re)constructions of history and Wilmsen's in particular are by no means unproblematic. Apart from factual error in Wilmsen's work,¹² his approach to African history, an approach which is oriented towards Wallerstein's world systems theories, runs the risk of doing a similar violence to that which he is so critical of in traditionalist ethnographic texts.¹³

Wilmsen's argument is fairly straightforward in its basic thesis, which is that the apparent cultural similarities between Bushmen groups based on their foraging

¹² A re-reading of Wilmsen's historical resources has led some anthropologists to believe that his depiction of the Dobe/Nyae-Nyae region of the Kalahari in his seminal work *Land Filled with Flies* "is so distorted and flawed as to be almost totally without value as a work of scholarship", on the grounds that his arguments show evidence of "overstatement, obscurationism, strawmanism, conflation, misrepresentation, mistranslation, unwarranted inference and outright error" (Lee and Guenther 1993:187).

¹³The world systems approach advocated by Wallerstein (1974) suggests that entities such as tribes, social systems etc. cannot be viewed as complete social systems and that the world, since the eighteenth century, should be viewed as a unified system in itself. Although Wilmsen (1989:53) by his own admission, is "mainly concerned with a unitary world system", his rendering of Omaheke history seeks to incorporate Wallerstein's ideas with those of Louis Althusser as well as an "authoritative" re-reading of Marx to explain local transformations in the Kalahari.

mode of production represent a "historically created position in the intersection of processes of ethnogenesis and class formation taking place in Botswana and Namibia" (Denbow and Wilmsen 1990:519). However, in rendering his argument in terms of the emergent capitalist world system Wilmsen falls into the trap of creating a new authentic Bushman, this time however, an authentic Bushman characterised by class relations rather than a culture of foraging.

From an anthropological point of view, world systems theories are problematic in that they rarely do justice to the complexity of relations between groups highlighted in more micro-social analyses. Furthermore, they tend to reduce these relations to a dialectic between cores and peripheries based on material resources. This is a difficult viewpoint to sustain, not least because, as Said points out, "theories of accumulation on a world scale [depend on] a homogenising and incorporating world historical scheme that assimilated non-synchronous developments, histories cultures and peoples to it" (Said quoted in Young 1990:10). Such theories tend to essentialise their subjects on the basis of class with the result, that the indigenous voice is often thoroughly silenced, and the possibility that diverse meanings might be attached to interactions between various polities by these polities is negated. As a result, local models and constructions of these processes, which after all are "real" for the people about whom we write, are engulfed in the normative terms and dominant narratives of a world systems discourse (cf. Dilley 1992:1-2).

In some respects, it appears that Wilmsen, in his enthusiasm to construct a counter-discourse to traditionalist writings, has ended up throwing the baby out with the bath water, through almost completely writing off the works of traditionalist anthropologists as being tainted by "the poverty of a misappropriated theory" (1989:33-64). In writing off these works, he chooses to ignore a great deal of evidence which, tainted or not, suggests that many Bushmen may well have participated in the emergent world economy in terms very different to those which he describes (Solway and Lee 1990). Wilmsen's greatest failure is his failure to recognise what traditionalist ethnographic writings might contribute to a reassessment of Kalahari history. In this respect, Wilmsen also appears to be as guilty of imputing ways of life in the distant past on the basis of the present political and economic relations between Bushmen and others, where political-economic class and ethnicity are coincident.

From my point of view, the question of links between twentieth-century hunter-gatherers and their Palaeolithic counterparts are, given the paucity of pre-twentieth century historiographic and archaeological evidence, beside the point. I find Wilmsen's proto-capitalist reconstruction of Kalahari "pre-history" unprovable one

way or the other as it rests on evidence which is at best highly ambiguous and speculative. Similarly, I find the "traditionalist" contention that foraging Bushmen might represent a tangible link with a "stone-age" past equally unconvincing for the same reasons. In taking this position I find myself in broad agreement with some of the recent publications by so called "traditionalists" (Solway and Lee 1991; Guenther and Lee 1994) as well as with Robert Gordon (1992), whose macro-social history of Bushmen in Namibia is based on a similar premise.

What we can be sure of from the limited evidence is that many of the Ju/'hoan inhabitants of much of the Omaheke were largely politically and economically autonomous in the years immediately prior to the twentieth century, and participated only selectively in the emergent market economy, resisting encroachment on their lands by pastoralists and others (Guenther 1993; Gordon 1992). This, it appears was only possible because Ju/'hoansi retained the ability to exist independently of the emergent economy and, for much of the time, especially in good years, could rely on hunting and foraging to provide for their needs. The research done by Richard Lee, which resulted in Sahlins proclaiming hunter-gatherers to be "the original affluent society", though justly criticised for being partial suggests that for some of the time at least, hunting and gathering offered a fairly comfortable lifestyle choice. Added to this, it is clear from the work of anthropologists such as Biesele (1993) that Ju/'hoan cultural life was very much geared towards the activities of hunting and foraging, and therefore that it was a lifestyle which many Ju/'hoansi chose to retain in spite of the fact that they were in occasional contact with others who had very different lifestyles. Thus, even if, as the revisionists declare, Ju/'hoansi had been in contact and involved in mercantile trade with others, perhaps even for millennia, this does not mean that they relinquished their cultural autonomy to others by on occasion trading or fighting with them.

In line with the Comaroffs (1992), I believe that a crucial part of ethnography is the articulation of the "historically situated contexts" in which we and our subjects find ourselves, and the processes which have led to the creation of these contexts. In respect of this, my concerns in this thesis are to articulate the synchronic relations and structures in which Bushmen in the Omaheke have found themselves in terms of the diachronic processes which have established these conditions and which have which made these synchronic relations possible. Apart from the fact that this thesis is based on long term ethnographic field-work, what distinguishes it from a "social history" is that my concerns lie principally with elucidating the present. My methods of "doing history" do not follow any strict conventions of historical or historiographic analysis, and my interests do not lie in constructing an essential or "true" history, should such a

thing exist, but rather in examining the way that the past and, more to the point, the ways in which people talked about the past, were related to the present. In reference to this, and in order to indicate the temporality of this text, I have, to a large extent, avoided the use of the "ethnographic present". The use of the ethnographic present, which is sustained in anthropology not because of, but in spite of theoretical trends (e.g. Fabian 1983; Comaroff 1992 etc.) serves, as Pratt (1985:120) has put it, to construct the actions of people, not as "a particular historical event[s] but as a pre-given custom[s] or trait[s]". Indeed, the use of this literary convention has emerged from a paradigm of anthropological thought, in which the "other" is constructed in timeless and highly essentialist terms.

A crucial feature of my reconstruction of Omaheke history is that it attempts to capture some of the divergent voices that constituted and which continue to constitute it insofar as I examine historical process in the Omaheke from the perspectives of Hereros, white farmers, the administration and Ju/'hoansi themselves. In doing this, I approach the history of the Omaheke from two angles. First, the political and economic processes whereby the Omaheke and its inhabitants were integrated into the capital economy and second, the discursive aspects to these processes and how these served to legitimate, rationalise and ultimately reproduce the structural relations pertaining between Ju/'hoansi and others in the Omaheke.

To the extent that this thesis attends to issues such as ethnicity and class formation, it has much in common with the neo-marxist approach to Kalahari history advocated by Wilmsen (1989) and the Comaroffs (1992). Nevertheless, there is one crucial difference between my approach and theirs. From the neo-marxian perspective (which Wilmsen reworks) it is argued that the ascription of a separate "ethnic" identity to Bushmen was contingent on their first being an underclass in an integrated political economy (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:52). In contrast to this, I suggest that ethnic consciousness, certainly in the case of the Omaheke Ju/'hoansi and their neighbours, preceded their incorporation into a unified economy and that the discourses by means of which ethnic difference and distance was constructed, in tandem with colonial power structures determined the terms on which Ju/'hoansi eventually came to participate fully in this political-economy. I therefore suggest that others' pre-existing constructions of Ju/'hoansi as fundamentally different played a significant role in legitimating the processes whereby Ju/'hoansi came to participate in the colonial political economy as an "underclass".

Fieldwork in the Omaheke

Like much of southern Africa, contrasts in the Namibian landscape reflected the social, political and economic divisions imposed by apartheid. The richer farming areas where water and fodder were more abundant were generally owned by white farmers, who held private state ratified tenure over vast swathes of land. Adjacent to these, on lands conspicuously dryer and sparser than the white farming areas, were the native reserves, "ethnic homelands" in which Namibia's indigenes were permitted to follow what were understood to be their own "traditional" ways of life and from which cheap labour necessary to provide the manpower needed by the white owned farms, mines and industries could be drawn (Adams and Werner 1990; Suzman 1995a & 1995b). State ratified private tenure of land was not permitted and these areas they were consequently often referred to as "communal" areas.¹⁴

The Omaheke Region, where I chose to work was, like the rest of Namibia, divided along similar lines into commercial and communal farming blocks. The commercial farming block was comprised of hundreds of white owned farms, most of which were used for extensive cattle ranching or game farming for hunters and tourists. To the north of these farms lay the communal farming areas, former "native reserves" for the Herero and Mbanderu. Although a vast area, the bulk of Herero and Mbanderu lived in settlements located around active boreholes in the south of the reserve near the border to the commercial farms which was clearly marked by a massive veterinary cordon fence.

Lacking tenure rights in either, Ju/hoansi were squeezed into margins of these two areas, and most eked out a living as farm or domestic workers for either white or Herero farmers. Those Ju/hoansi who could not, or did not, seek work usually found themselves living on the peripheries of the larger Herero settlements where, in return for doing small menial jobs they were rewarded with some food, cash or a tub of the local home-brew, *tombo*.

Unlike other areas where anthropologists have worked with Ju/hoansi or other Bushman groups, Ju/hoansi constituted a minority population in the Omaheke. Although, they had once dominated much of the Omaheke, the present population of around six and a half thousand comprised around only twelve percent of the total regional population of around 55000 people. While the white, mainly Afrikaans speaking, population "owned" the most significant portion of lands and resources, Herero speakers (Mbanderu and Herero) constituted the single largest language group, with around 22000 people claiming OshiHerero as their first language (1991 National

¹⁴Because communal lands were technically "owned" by state, it was assumed that access to lands in these areas would be allocated through "traditional" means (see Adams and Werner 1991).

Census). The next largest language group were Nama/Damara speakers, most of whom worked on the farms or in the town of Gobabis itself. Of this group, only those who claimed to belong to the Damara "subgroup", the G/obanin, claimed any long established links with the Omaheke. (Suzman 1995b)

Although during my eighteen months stay in the Omaheke I travelled widely, most of my time was spent in the northern part of the region in the borderland between the commercial farming block and the Herero communal lands which extended north and East into the Kalahari. Throughout this area, large and small stock farming was the primary form of land use in spite of the marginal agro-ecological conditions against which farmers continually battled. Surface water was rarely in evidence except immediately after good rains and cattle were consequently concentrated around a series of notoriously unreliable boreholes which are sunk sometimes as deep as 180 feet into the desert and were powered by remarkably efficient pre-war Lister diesel-engines. Apart from the availability of water, further limits were placed on grazing by the widespread presence of *gifblaar* (poison leaf), which is fatal when ingested by domestic stock.

In spite of the presence of underground water, stock farming is dependent on the seasonal rains which fall usually during the hottest part of summer (January and February). Usually 250-350mm of rain are expected annually and this is normally sufficient to regenerate enough plant growth to sustain a limited livestock population until the next rainy season. Rain in this environment is, however, extremely fickle and was highly variable both geographically and chronologically (Suzman 1995b). During the period I lived in the Omaheke, for the first time in anyone's memory, the rain simply didn't come, with most areas receiving less than half the precipitation of what had been the previous driest year since records began in the late 1890s. As a result instead of the usual short but invigorating rainy season, the sun continued to burn hotter than ever melting the dried remains of the previous season's grass cover into the sand.

At the borehole where I had made my home, the smell of death hung almost permanently in the air from February until December as both large and small stock succumbed to the drought and died. In my immediate locale this was further exacerbated by the fact that our borehole collapsed twice due to a dropping water table leaving all the residents of the post without immediate access to water for themselves or their livestock for two six week periods. Indeed, by the time I left, the field surrounding the post was littered with the pyres of dead animals which had to be burnt before they rotted

The post where I lived was the central compound of Rosenhof, a formerly a white-owned farm, which had since been taken over by Government ostensibly to provide emergency grazing during times of drought. My co-residents at the post were made up of a diverse group of people, some Herero speakers, Damara speakers, Ovambo and Kavango speakers, Ju/'hoan speakers and the occasional development worker, most of whom had moved there during the drought in 1993.

On the farm immediately adjacent to Rosenhof was Skoonheid Resettlement Camp, a 7000 hectare farm which Government had acquired and set aside for landless Ju/'hoan and Damara farm workers. Nevertheless, most of the 7000 hectares that made up this farm had been occupied by Herero speakers and their livestock, leaving only the central area for the intended settlers. I initially made my home at Skoonheid, but in order to avoid conflict with the Ministry of Land Resettlement and Rehabilitation Officials who administered the camp I moved to Rosenhof which was under the control of the far more amenable Ministry of Agriculture. Most of the Ju/'hoan residents of Skoonheid had spent much of their lives living and working on white and Herero farms in the Omaheke and had moved to the resettlement facility for a variety of reasons. Some went to try and escape the cycle of dependency in which they were caught, others especially the old, because they were no more use a farm workers and quite simply had nowhere else to go. While there were many Ju/'hoansi and Damara settled at Skoonheid, three families, the Langmans, the Jors's and the Carstens, tended to dominate things.

My closest friends during my fieldwork came from these families and my fellow residents at the main post at Rosenhof. Two men in particular, !A'/ae (a.k.a. Frederik Langman) and /'Engn!au whose names and utterances (along with some others) appear repeatedly through this text, were extremely influential in shaping my understandings of the Omaheke. !A'/ae and /'Engn!au offered very different views of life in the Omaheke and, in some senses, each represented different extremes of the Ju/'hoan cultural spectrum. In juxtaposing the views of these two men, the tensions generated by the colonial process in the Omaheke become fairly self-evident.

!A'/ae took me under his wing right at the beginning of my stay in the Omaheke, undertaking to teach me how to speak Ju/'hoan in return for lessons in English. We spent many hours throughout my time there sitting in the shade whilst he patiently tried to train my tongue to master the phonemics and grammar of Ju/'hoan and I tried to train his tongue to master the phonemics and grammar of English. Almost immediately after I had been taken in by !A'/ae, I was renamed "/Kunta" and slotted into a series of social networks. !A'/ae was by all accounts a remarkable man. With the



Plate 1.1 !A'ae

assistance of a German tourist holidaying at a farm on which he worked, !A'/ae taught himself to read from an Afrikaans Bible at the age of twenty three and subsequently became literate in Afrikaans, Nama Damara and Ju/'hoan. He was a firm believer in the Bible, having been born, and grown up on a mission farm to the south west of Skoonheid. Like most other residents at Skoonheid, he had spent most of his life living and working on white owned farms in the Omaheke and had only recently moved to Skoonheid. He was the only Ju/'hoan I knew who had given up alcohol completely, which he did partially in order to avoid getting into fights (which, by his own admission, he rarely won) when he was drunk, but also in the hope that such temperent behaviour might later allow him access to the riches of heaven (see Chapter 6). Since giving up drinking !A'/ae had managed to acquire a small herd of cattle and goats which made him the wealthiest of the Ju/'hoansi at Skoonheid.

!A'/ae, while being extremely self-deprecating, was something of a patriarch, and clearly appeared to have the dominant voice in his household. His wife of twenty-five odd years, Xoan//a, was much quieter, but I could often detect her voice behind much of what !A'/ae said. Their third born child, who shared my name, /Kunta, had died not long after birth, but their four other children had all survived, the oldest working on a borehole drilling scheme near Gam in the north of the communal areas. All his other children remained with him and Xoan//a at Skoonheid.

Like many Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, !A'/ae had been excited by the pre-independence rhetoric of emancipation and had attended the first major Bushman Conference in Gaborone in Botswana during 1993. Nevertheless, the fact that little improved for the Ju/'hoansi following independence, and that they perceived themselves as remaining as marginal as before left him jaded, bitter and in some ways defeated. His cattle and small stock were frequent targets of stock thieves and this, added with the constant drinking and fighting at Skoonheid, meant that he was often depressed. Nevertheless, he was stoical about these things, and would think and talk about them a great deal. Throughout the time I knew him he repeatedly claimed that life on the resettlement camp was worse than on the white farms and constantly threatened to leave Skoonheid with his family if things didn't improve.

/Engn!au, on the other hand, was a very different man. He had been born during the earliest days of white settlement in the Omaheke, and grew up foraging and hunting for some of the year and working for Hereros at other times. As an adult, he had found work on one of the white farms where he had become a particularly adept member of a borehole drilling crew run by one of the farmers. He had travelled widely around Namibia with this crew for several years until his foot was shattered by falling

rigging equipment. Unable to treat this injury soon after it happened, the wound turned septic and gangrene set in. Eventually, he hobbled to a hospital in Grootfontein where his leg was amputated an inch or two above the knee. /Engn!au and I only came to know each other well during the last six or so months of my fieldwork, but spent a great deal of time together during this brief period.

/Engn!au was one of the last of what were referred to as "old time people" living at Skoonheid as well as the only Ju/'hoan I met who was knowledgeable of *n/um* (traditional medicine). While many considered him something of a relic, his medicinal skills were called upon fairly frequently. Furthermore, he was the best storyteller at Skoonheid and used these skills to comment on Ju/'hoan life in the Omaheke. Like many others at Skoonheid, he suffered chronically from Tuberculosis but, nevertheless, insisted on smoking and consequently coughed, spat and spewed in an almost continuous cycle of sound and phlegm. In spite of this he remained generally very cheerful and liked nothing better than to drink tea and smoke over an afternoon while telling stories or talking about the past. For most of the time I knew /Engn!au, he lived with his daughter Kun//a until in November 1995, after the two of us undertook a mission to find his wife /'Xouin/'xouin who we soon discovered was living at the "Donker-hoek" (Dark corner) *shebeen* (illegal bar) at Drimiopsis resettlement camp about sixty kilometres to the south of Skoonheid. After this /Engn!au and /'Xouin/'xoiun set up their "own fire".

Life at Skoonheid was difficult for many of the Ju/'hoan and other settlers who had been resettled there. The camp administrator, a young Tswana woman, ran the camp along lines very similar to the way white farmers ran their farms. She would use settlers to do her domestic work for which she paid them nothing, insisted on being addressed as "Juffrou" (madam), with-held food rations if people did not work to her satisfaction, and generally abused her position. For the first six-months I stayed there, she and !A/ae were at almost perpetual loggerheads, with !A/ae refusing to participate in the "food for work scheme" which, he insisted, left them materially worse off than they were on the white farms. Furthermore, other ministry officials who occasionally visited the camp, were patronising and condescending to the Ju/'hoan settlers who they pointedly left out of any decision making processes. Conditions at Skoonheid were further complicated by the fact that Hereros had settled with their stock at six of the seven major boreholes on the farm, and subsequently refused to leave. Ju/'hoan and Damara settlers resented the presence of these Hereros on what was ostensibly a space which had been designated exclusively for their use, not least because Herero-owned livestock left the land denuded of grass for those few settlers with their own stock. All

in all, there was a feeling of desperation and resentment which pervaded the air at Skoonheid and which seeped through much of what people said and did.

Since Afrikaans provided the *lingua franca* of the Omaheke, I was able to communicate with all sorts of different people from the outset. All Ju/'hoansi brought up on the farms were fluent in Afrikaans, and often when speaking with one another would use it interchangeably with Ju/'hoan. Most Ju/'hoansi I knew were fluent in at least three or four languages, usually OshiHerero, Afrikaans, Ju/'hoan and Nama-Damara. This multi-lingualism meant that the dialect of Ju/'hoan spoken in the Omaheke borrowed heavily from these other languages. While not dissimilar to Ju/'hoan as spoken further north in the former Bushmanland, there were some notable differences which distinguished them from one another as dialects. Most crucially, apart from the degree of linguistic borrowing from Nama-Damara, Nharo and OshiHerero, was the large and complex array of articles denoting tense and aspect absent in Ju/'hoan as spoken in the Dobe/Nyae-Nyae areas(cf. Van der Westhuizen 1972; Dickens n.d.a and n.d.b). Although under the tutelage of !A/ae, I was able to get a rudimentary grasp of Ju/'hoan as spoken in the Omaheke, because people were so willing to use Afrikaans, my efforts to speak the language fluently were rarely more than faltering and it was only towards the very end of my fieldwork that I began to understand and be understood in spoken Ju/'hoan. The fact that !A/ae was insistent on teaching me *skoon Ju/'hoan* (clean Ju/'hoan) meant, ironically, that I found it easier to communicate in Ju/'hoan with Ju/'hoansi living further north in the Dobe-Nyae-Nyae areas. As a result, many of the quotes made by Ju/'hoansi which appear in this text were originally given in Afrikaans.

Even though my reliance on Afrikaans as a medium with which to engage Ju/'hoansi in conversation was a disadvantage insofar it denied me access to a full appreciation of the some key Ju/'hoan terms, it was, all in all, a bonus, not least because it provided an instant medium for communication. Few of those anthropologists who have worked with Bushmen have been able to communicate with them in a common language from the outset. Furthermore, many have had to rely on the services interpreters, usually from other language groups, in order to make their way and ultimately learn to speak the language in themselves, a problem which resulted in the broad acceptance of some clearly spurious ideas in the Academy. To the English ear, the phonemics of Ju/'hoan and other Bushmen languages are alien and extremely difficult to master. Subtleties in tone, the use of clicks, pharyngalisation and nasalisation, none of which are widely used in European languages all mitigate against attaining a creative knowledge of spoken Ju/'hoan. Added to this, certainly in the case

of Ju/'hoan, it is a highly flexible and creative language, which allows for the frequent and subtle use of metaphor and other forms of verbal play which are difficult to master. In a recently published article written by the Ju/'hoan linguist Patrick Dickens not long before his death, some of the problems and difficulties of this are made apparent (Dickens 1995).

In this article, Dickens suggests that anthropologists concerned with Ju/'hoansi ignore, and have ignored, the work of linguists at their "peril". Although Dickens' article targets Wilmsen in particular, he suggests that the generally naive and "cavalier attitudes" of some anthropologists to linguistics have resulted in them drawing "untenable" linguistic and, correspondingly, cultural conclusions from their analyses (Dickens 1995: 20).

In having a shared language in which we were equally fluent meant that I could avoid many of these linguistic traps experienced by other anthropologists. For a start it meant that when learning or speaking Ju/'hoan we could discuss the meanings and uses of specific terms in detail through a third language. Furthermore, it meant that the people I was conversing with could translate difficult terms themselves. As such, unlike other anthropologists who have had to battle with a language without recourse to any form of meta-dialogue with their subjects, I was able have subtleties spelled out to me. Old /Engn!au, for example, when telling me stories would usually tell me each story two or three times: firstly in Ju/'hoan, secondly in Ju/'hoan and Afrikaans and thirdly in Afrikaans.

Although some linguistic relativists might argue that my reliance on Afrikaans diminished my insight into the Ju/'hoan cultural world, a criticism with which I will hastily agree, the advantages of having a tertiary medium through which I could communicate with Ju/'hoansi far outweighed the disadvantages insofar as it allowed us a degree of communicative clarity which I would otherwise have been denied. Added to this, the fact that Ju/'hoansi used Afrikaans as well as other languages on a day to day basis, raised some interesting questions, especially for those who subscribe to "language as culture" models, regarding bi-, tri- and multi-lingualism, especially if these languages are often used interchangeably.

The fact that my concerns in writing this thesis required that I spend time with a variety of different people in the Omaheke posed some tricky problems. Even though my immediate neighbours at Rosenhof classified themselves as coming from a variety of *nasies* (ethnic groups) I chose to spend a fair amount of time Herero settlements like Epukiro Post 3 and Otjinene as well as in the company of white farmers. Attempting to spend time with people who considered themselves as belonging to the different

communities which made up this polarised society, and constructed demonic mythologies concerning one another, meant that I spent a great deal of time lying to people. Indeed, the only people I established honest relationships with were Ju/'hoansi, to whom I would disclose all my dealings with farmers and Hereros.

In declaring myself to "come from Scotland" I was able to partially avoid being immediately located as a member of any of the dominant political or "ethnic" constituencies in the Omaheke. Although some were suspicious of my fluency in Afrikaans, to all intents and purposes, I was one of the growing number of foreign "outsiders" who was interested in "development". While on one level I was able to escape classification through being a "Scot", being white proved to be a further problem, since Namibia, as South Africa's "fifth province" up until Independence in 1990, experienced some of the worst excesses of institutionalised racism.

The semantics of skin colour permeated almost all aspects of life in the Omaheke. There were white places, there were black places and rarely did the two meet. Several of the white residents of the region took my skin colour as a sign of "racial kinship", and assumed that, in spite of the fact that I lived with blacks and Ju/'hoansi, my "innate whiteness" was grounds for a bond between us. Some even expressed admiration for my ability to live with such "primitive" people without going mad. For most of them it was inconceivable that I did so because I liked it.

For some Ju/'hoansi, my whiteness was also a problem and carried with it quantity of associated baggage. Apart from !A'ae who was remarkable in that, in spite of his mistrust of whites in general, he accepted me easily and openly, it took some time for others to relax completely in my presence. It took a good few months, many lifts, loads of tobacco, litres of tea and a reasonable quantity of *dagga* before people came to be completely at ease with me. In travelling in parts of the Omaheke where I wasn't known by the local Ju/'hoansi, things were always a little more difficult. Exacerbated by the fact that I would show up in my large four-wheel drive (a potent contemporary symbol of power), conversations would almost always start with people addressing me as "Baas" (Boss). After insisting I was not a "Baas", people would usually then suggest that they should refer to me as "Kleinbaas" (Little Boss) since I was, after all, still young. After declining this label people might then suggest that they should address me as "Dominee" ("father"-as in a priest or missionary) since the only whites in their experiences who were not "Baases" or "Kleinbaases" were "Dominees". Usually once we had established that I was "/Kunta", things would improve rapidly. Nevertheless, it was only really at Skoonheid that I was able to make friendships honest and open enough where they would happily take the piss out of me

or vice versa.

I make no pretence of having been able to completely immerse myself in the experience of Ju/'hoan life in the Omaheke. I rarely went hungry, I was mobile, I was rich and, relatively speaking, I had influence and access among Hereros and white farmers which no Ju/'hoan had. Similarly I was never beaten, never suffered the ritual humiliation of constant racial abuse, never had TB or scabies, never had to beg, never was an alcoholic and never had to be totally materially dependent on others. Nevertheless, most Ju/'hoansi I knew were open-minded and took me as I came. Indeed, we shared a mutual interest in allowing our relationships to at least partially transcend the immediate signs of difference.

My dealings with white farmers were the most difficult not least because, as I have already mentioned, as a Jewish, white, apparently "liberal" South African, it was not the *blacks* that were my "demon" other, but the dreaded "Boere". While my own prejudices regarding farmers were to a degree neutralised by my attempts to make sense of them and acknowledge that they, like anyone else, were subject to their own somewhat arbitrary cultural realities, I was never able to sufficiently distance myself from my own prejudices regarding them. This was exacerbated by the fact that some farmers had equal difficulty in confronting their own prejudices, and considered me to be politically dangerous, not least because of my associations with what was, from their point of view, a notorious national NGO, the Legal Assistance Centre, one of whose principal concerns involved looking into the problems experienced by farm workers on white owned farms (see Suzman 1995a). Mutual mistrust with some farmers was further exacerbated after having been threatened on one occasion with being shot if I went anywhere near one particular farmer's land, and on another occasion, after a fairly serious road accident in which the white farmer (whose cliff I happened to have driven off) refused us help because my (injured) passenger happened to be black. As a consequence of this, the amount of time I spent with white farmers was minimal in comparison with other people in the Omaheke and, in the end, the only farmers that I continued to maintain any intentional contact with were those who were more "liberal" than most, and who took an active interest in the problems faced by Ju/'hoansi.

There were, however, several farmers, some of whom were not particularly "liberal" even by their standards who, nonetheless, were extremely helpful and friendly towards me. These farmers insisted on feeding me up on occasion, because I "looked as emaciated as the Bushmen" and expressed a genuine interest in my work as well as the fate of the *Boesmans* (Bushmen). Indeed, some of the most admirable

people I met in the Omaheke were those farmers and (in particular) their wives who were making a conscious effort to engage with past prejudices and view Namibia's recent transition to a multi-racial republic in a positive light.

In many ways, the Herero and Mbanderu were the easiest to get along with as their prejudices concerning whites did not extend as far as Europe or America. Many Hereros considered themselves fairly "worldly" some having exiled in Europe and the USA and several of these having trained as teachers in Edinburgh. Added to this, Hereros had conceded less to apartheid's hegemony than many others in Namibia and were consequently often branded as "arrogant" and "cheeky" by farmers who were irritated by the fact that many Herero were not as supplicant or obedient as some of their other one time colonial subjects. Furthermore, since independence there had been a fairly substantial foreign NGO involvement in Hereroland and many people were familiar with the presence of foreign "strangers". Added to this, my concerns with history and local politics, both of which are the subjects of established traditions among the Herero and Mbanderu, meant that I was rarely without willing company in Herero settlements.

Having said this, as far as I could tell, my status was characteristically ambiguous, not only because I did not conform to most people's prior stereotypes of whiteness, but also because my research involved that I navigate the spaces between the boundaries and narratives which people in the Omaheke erected around themselves and one another.

What was most difficult to come to terms with especially in the first months of my fieldwork was the drinking and its associated violence which took place almost every week. From the earliest days of white settlement in the Omaheke, a *dop* (tot) system had been introduced on many farms, whereby workers were given a tot of brandy or rum on a Sunday. By the time I moved to the Omaheke, drinking had become a firmly established activity among Ju/'hoansi. Many of those Ju/'hoansi living on the fringes of larger Herero settlements were almost permanently drunk, and it was rare for me to find any of them sober at any time. When Oxfam UK wished to hold a "participatory rural appraisal" with Ju/'hoansi at Post 3, it was decided that this had to be done at seven in the morning as too many would be drunk if it was done any later. I knew of several Ju/'hoan women who would prostitute themselves regularly to Hereros (and anyone else willing to pay a small sum) in return for drink, and some who would sell their emergency food (dispensed by the central government under the euphemistic label "drought relief") in order to stock up on *tombo*.

While some have attempted to explain the Ju/'hoan penchant for alcohol by

suggesting a genetic intolerance to the substance, the amount and way people got drunk suggested that there was a great deal more to Ju/'hoan alcohol abuse than this. One Ju/'hoan man at Post 3 echoed words which I grew used to hearing when he explained:

If you do some work for a Herero and you get maybe one rand (15p) then you can maybe get a little porridge. But for that same work you can get some *tombo* and if you are drunk you can sleep and you wont feel hunger until the next day.

For many Ju/'hoansi, for whom day to day life was often an exercise in humiliation, alcohol provided a convenient means of escape. As !A'/ae's son /Kallie explained:

If you are drunk then you don't feel scared. Listen man if you are finished drunk, then you wont take shit from anyone, because you can feel strong.

One consequence of the drinking and fighting was that prison sentences for assault, grievous bodily harm, attempted murder and murder were fairly common for Ju/'hoansi. Fights were usually started over trivial matters such as a pinch of tobacco, or a sip of beer and would follow a fairly regular format. They would start with a bit of pushing and shoving which would then usually lead to a more serious exchange of blows. If tempers did not die down by this stage, the combatants, as if by mutual agreement, would then usually run off to their houses to pick up more serious weaponry (knives, spears or clubs) and return to resume the battle. During this brief hiatus, others would try to intervene and stop the fighting before someone was seriously injured-or, much worse, killed. It was rare for anyone's intervention in these fights to have much consequence, and fights would usually end only after blood was drawn or an opponent was clearly beaten.

Fighting wasn't the only reason that Ju/'hoansi often found themselves standing before the circuit court magistrate. Equally commonly, Ju/'hoansi were pulled up for stock theft, usually after having stolen a goat to eat when drunk and left their footprints all over the place, but occasionally for having taken and attempted to sell larger stock. All in all, by the end of my fieldwork, eight people who I considered friends had been whipped off to prison for sentences ranging from a few months to a several years.

I do not deal with drinking and its associated violence directly in this text, but its pervasiveness seeps through my discussions of other matters and the narratives

which make up much of this thesis.

The Structure of this Thesis

Prior to the Namibia's first "free" elections in 1990, Ju/'hoansi on farms were sought out by party officials who felt that Ju/'hoansi, who they perceived to be both ignorant and stupid, would be easy to convert to their respective causes. Most Ju/'hoansi I knew had attended meetings held variously by the two largest political parties contesting the election, the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) and the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA). The former being the umbrella resistance movement to the apartheid regime that evolved during the struggle for independence, and the latter being a party supported largely by white farmers and many Hereros who were opposed to the formation of a predominantly Ovambo government. Like most other Namibians, Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke were drummed into a fervour of expectancy as Independence drew near. Because they were tangibly the worst off, they felt, perhaps more sharply than others, that the advent of Independence might bring them tangible benefits. They were promised land and livestock by the various political parties vying for their votes who painted their opposition in dark terms. Almost all the adult Ju/'hoansi I knew had voted in that election and felt that for the first time in many years they had some say in shaping their own destiny.

In Namibia's second election, which took place midway through my fieldwork, I knew of only a few Ju/'hoansi who bothered to vote. While most Ju/'hoansi I knew were well aware of the election (they were avid radio listeners), few felt that their voice would be heard. The political parties had let it be known how much they cared for the Bushman vote, by failing to do any serious electioneering at either of the Omaheke's resettlement facilities. Election canvassing at Skoonheid took the form of a single brochure drop from a passing SWAPO supporter's vehicle which deposited several hundred copies of the SWAPO manifesto at the feet of an unsuspecting child who promptly dragged all the brochures to !A'ae who, it was known, was the only Ju/'hoan at Skoonheid who could read. !A'ae dutifully read one of the brochures and declared it rubbish. Several others had seen the brochure drop and came over to pick copies up for themselves. Most took one look at them and turned away disappointed that the paper was too thick and glossy to roll decent cigarettes with. In the end, the only people that got any use from them were a few children, who along with myself, battled to transform their pages into paper aeroplanes. Skoonheid's electoral apathy was captured well by !A'ae when he told me:

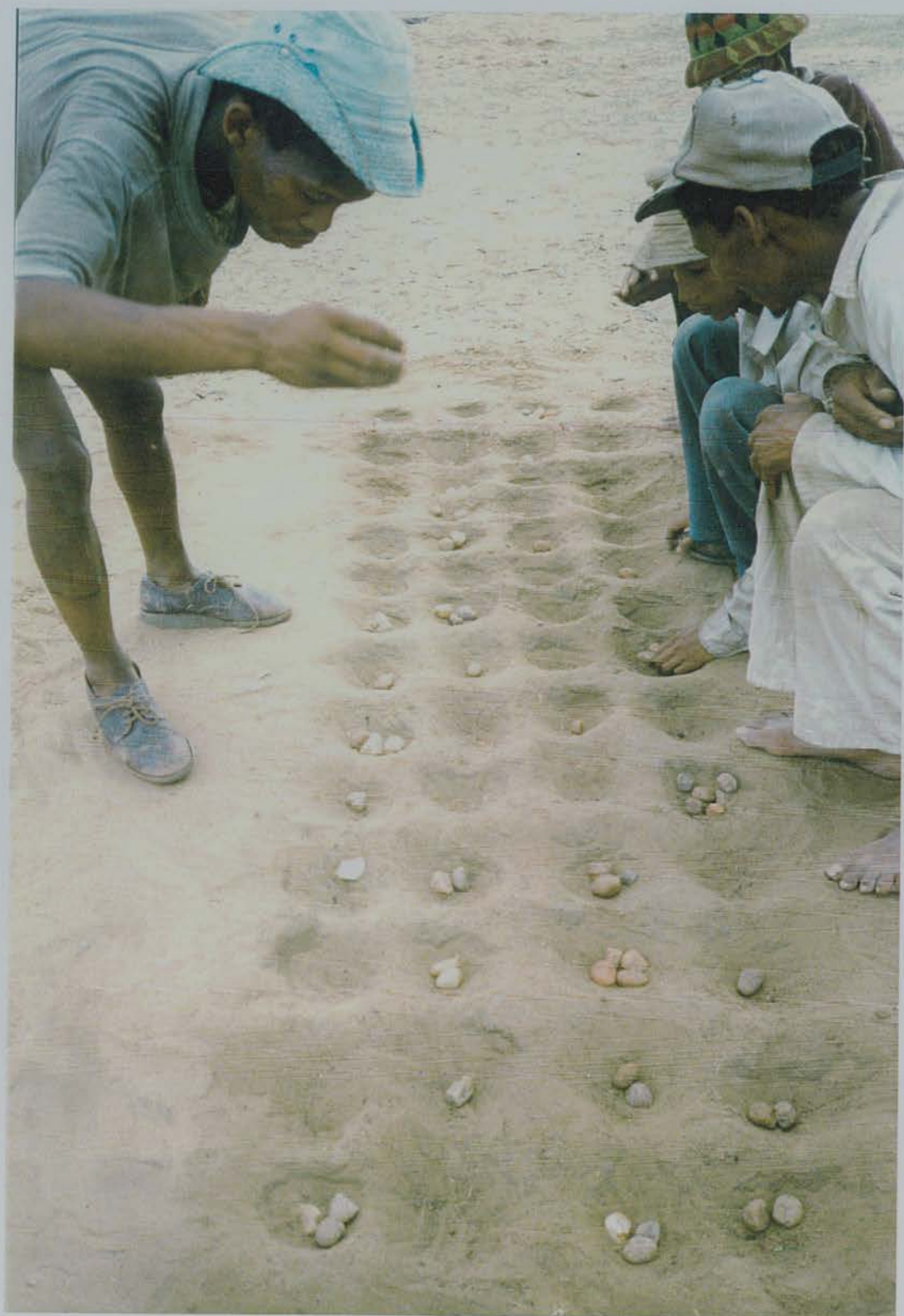


Plate 1.2 Afternoons at Skoonheid, A game of 1-2-3

Last time I voted for the DTA because the Boers had told us lies about what will happen if SWAPO win. But this time I do not know. Things are still not right in this Namibia. For instance look how we must struggle here at Skoonheid, there is still apartheid in this place. The Hereros have one story and us Ju/'hoansi must have another, there is nothing we can do. But if I vote, what difference will it make. These people who will go and sit with the government, give nothing for the Ju/'hoansi. We must just stay here and struggle.

As A'/ae's gloomy diatribe made clear, the advent of Namibian Independence did little to immediately improve life for Ju/'hoansi and they remained virtually as marginal to mainstream political process as they were prior to it. By not voting in the second election, Ju/'hoansi were effectively registering their continuing exclusion from political process in Namibia.

For Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, life following Independence remained difficult. In practical terms few of those structures, and the discourses through which they were sustained, had changed. For most Ju/'hoansi, the fact that others were visibly benefiting from changes brought about following independence served to make them more acutely aware of their marginal status. They remained largely dependent on others who viewed them as social inferiors and denied them the social and physical space to look after their own interests. Those Ju/'hoansi who had managed to acquire small herds of goats or other livestock, had nowhere to graze them, and were the frequent targets of stock thieves who knew they could take Ju/'hoan stock with relative impunity as they were aware that policemen would not take complaints made by Ju/'hoansi seriously. Government officials who dealt with Ju/'hoansi treated them in the same off-hand and patronising way that officials of the old white administration had done, and both Herero and white farmers continued to exploit Ju/'hoan dependency through utilising them as cheap and frequently unpaid labour.

The exclusion of Ju/'hoansi from mainstream political processes, as illustrated by their failure to participate in the most recent elections, evokes one of the central themes of this thesis; the relationship between power, discourse and the creation of social realities. Because those seeking election made it clear that the Ju/'hoan vote- and voice- was of little value to them, Ju/'hoansi paid little heed to the election, did not vote, and thereby excluded themselves from the electoral process. Through doing this, Ju/'hoansi, in effect, ratified the perceptions of those seeking election that pursuing the Ju/'hoan vote was of little value. As such, the conceptual marginalisation of Ju/'hoansi

from the electoral process was effectively *realised* by their actual non-participation in it.

The recent history of Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke clearly demonstrates the reproductive capacity of power in certain circumstances. What has marked Ju/'hoansi out from some other marginalised groups in Namibia has been their failure to contest their subordinate status in any meaningful way. This has been the case, not because Ju/'hoansi lacked the desire to contest their status, but because of the specific circumstances of their subjection. As my brief account of Ju/'hoan electoral apathy shows; the Ju/'hoansi themselves were to some extent implicated in their own domination.

The notion that the dominated may collude in their own domination and the colonised in their own colonisation is not new to academia or anthropology (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1993:24; Foucault 1986) and is critical in understanding the relationship between the two parts of which this thesis is comprised.

In the first part of this thesis, I concentrate on the contextual and historical circumstances which have shaped Ju/'hoan life in the Omaheke. I focus principally on how the narratives concerning the Bushmen, articulated by white farmers and Hereros alike, have contributed in shaping the political economic status of Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke. In doing this, I examine some of the key political and economic events and processes which have informed and transformed Ju/'hoan identity in the region. I also look briefly at how Ju/'hoan perceptions pertaining to issues such as land and labour have been shaped by these processes. By doing this I aim to provide a textual context to the discussion of Ju/'hoan identity in the chapters which follow.

In the second and final part of this thesis, I focus primarily on how Ju/'hoansi constructed themselves and, to a lesser extent, others in the Omaheke. In this part I start off by examining how a century of colonial domination redefined the paradigmatic bases of Ju/'hoan collective identity and resulted in the transformation of institutions such as kinship. Thereafter, I examine the extent to which Ju/'hoan narratives concerning cosmology and history are implicated in their political status with respect to others in the Omaheke. Finally, I discuss how Ju/'hoan folklore on the farms sheds further light on how Ju/'hoansi constructed their place in the regional political economy.

The narratives through which Ju/'hoansi constructed themselves, so heavily implicated in the circumstances of their domination, and which I describe in the second part of this thesis, represent to borrow Bourdieu's words, "the somatisation of social relations of domination", the making of which I describe in the first part of this thesis (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:24). I suggest that by constructing themselves in terms

which stressed their marginalisation, Ju/'hoansi inadvertently contributed to their own domination, reproducing and ratifying the discourses which constructed them as marginal in the first place.

Finally, I will conclude that the political and economic circumstances in which many of the world's one-time hunting-and-gathering populations have found themselves suggest that we must move beyond describing them in terms of the language generated by and for the study of hunter-gatherers *as* hunter-gatherers.

Part One:
Contexts and Histories

CHAPTER 2: BOERS AND "BOESMANS"

If a white man were a passing hunter and friendly, if he shared his bag with the Bushmen, he was welcomed and could travel through the territory in peace; but when the settlers came in, permanently occupying the land at the springs, and doing great execution among the game, then the Bushmen retaliated by shooting the intruders or killing their stock. Whereupon the white man, unaware of any unfriendly behaviour on his part, dubbed the Bushmen an untameable savage and a thief, and did his best to imprison or shoot him.

(Dorothea Bleek *The Mantis*: viii).

Of all events that radically transformed life for Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, the settlement of white, principally, Afrikaans-speaking farmers in this area was perhaps the most significant. For Ju/'hoansi, the arrival of white settlers signified an end to their "selective participation" in the emergent colonial political economy, as these settler farmers, backed by the state, coerced and co-opted Ju/'hoansi into dependency on them. Where Ju/'hoansi once foraged and hunted autonomously, they became generational farm-workers in a political economy in which they were seen to represent a "sub-human" underclass.

Identity and identities are inherently relational; they are articulated in terms of a dialectic between the self and others against which the definition of self is both deferred and differentiated. In some cases, the dialectic between the self and other takes the form of a "egalitarian dialogue", or conversation in which the boundaries between the self and other emerge as the product of negotiation. In colonial encounters, the dialectic between coloniser and colonised is, more often than not, a product of domination and hence more monologic than dialogic.¹ In the Omaheke, the conversation between farmers and Ju/'hoansi was markedly monologic insofar as Ju/'hoansi were effectively denied the opportunity to contribute their own voice to the negotiation of the boundaries between themselves and settler farmers. To this extent, how Ju/'hoan action was interpreted by farmers was ciphered through a lattice of representations and mythologies over which Ju/'hoansi had little control. As a result, Ju/'hoansi came to be captive to farmers' images of them, images in which they were

¹While, as Crapanzano (1992:92) has pointed out, the idea of an "egalitarian dialogue" is problematic, not least because it "mystifies 'real' differences in power", the conversational frame of egalitarianism lends itself to a process of give and take which allows for different voices to engage constructively (or deconstructively) with one another. In contrast to this, conversations which are framed in unquestionably non-egalitarian terms are explicitly mediated by external power relations which enable one interlocutor's voice to dominate the authoritative version of the conversation (see Comaroff 1992:97).

constituted as being essentially different from all others in the Omaheke, and which served to position them as a subordinate category in the emergent field of colonial power relations.

In this chapter, I examine the historical processes whereby Ju/'hoansi emerged as a marginalised underclass on the Omaheke farms, focusing in particular on how white farmers narratives concerning them provided hermeneutic frameworks which mediated social action towards them. In reference to this, I pay particular attention to how farmers' narratives which emphasised the "childlike" nature of Ju/'hoansi came to dominate their dealings with them.

The Arrival of the "Whites"

Although some German farmers had settled around the town of Gobabis² during the first two decades of the twentieth century, it was only after the League of Nations granted a mandate to the Union of South Africa to administer the former German colony of South West Africa (SWA), that white settlement in the Omaheke began in earnest. Seeing a means to bring some of the "remoter" areas of SWA under the control of the newly established South West Africa Administration (SWAA), as well as partially solve the increasing "poor-white" problem in the Union Of South Africa, the Union Government offered substantial material incentives, spiced with generous promises of future assistance, to prospective settler farmers. The target group in this exercise were mainly impoverished Afrikaners who had been unable to restore their fortunes after the Boer War and the difficult years that followed (Butler 1989:58-61). Not long after these people began to settle on farms in an increasingly wider arc around Gobabis, the so called "Angola Boers"³ pressured the Union Government to assist them in resettling from Portuguese colony of Angola (where their relationship with that Administration had become extremely difficult) to farms in SWA.⁴ The Union Government eventually conceded to their demands, footing the half million pound resettlement bill and offering them plots in the "unsettled" lands to the

²The town of Gobabis, which is now the administrative capital of the Omaheke Region, was originally the capital of the Amraal Oorlam (Gai//haun) who settled there with the Rev. Tindall in 1845. The name derives from the Nama *≠Khoandabis*, meaning "place where the elephants come to lick". It was an entrepot on the trade route between Bechuanaland and South West Africa. The town was seceded to the Germans in 1895.

³The Angola Boers were the descendants of the Dorstland Trekkers who had settled in Southern Angola during the 1870's. They managed to convince the Union Government to foot the £500,000 bill to resettle them in South West Africa (Van Rooyen & Reiner 1995:40-43).

⁴ White settlement in the Omaheke was very rapid; between 1913 and 1956 the number of white owned farms increased from 103 to 784. At present there are 829 commercial farms in the Omaheke covering some four million hectares.

north and east of Gobabis.⁵ Consequently, by 1929 white settlement had stretched as far North as the Epukiro Omuramba⁶ (see fig 2.).

Despite the fact that many of the different Ju/'hoan groups who owned the various water points in the areas between Gobabis, Rietfontein and Otjinene, had successfully prevented Herero, Tswana and Nama speakers (among others) from settling at most of these water points, white settlers, if not welcomed, were initially not actively discouraged from settling in these areas.⁷ Indeed, in 1861 Thomas Baines observed that the northern and Eastern Omaheke was an area, "where neither Hottentot [Nama] nor Bechuanan [BaTswana] dare settle" (in van Rooyen and Reiner 1995:9).

Many Ju/'hoansi, based on favourable experiences with white traders during the ostrich feather and ivory boom, saw possibilities of exploiting these new arrivals, who were thought to be generous with highly valued commodities such as tobacco, milk and meat. Indeed, the new white arrivals seemed to be an attractive alternative to Herero and Tswana patronage in difficult dry seasons during which game and bushfoods were often scarce. Most crucially as, Ju/'hoan and farmers' oral histories suggest, relationships between settler farmers and Ju/'hoansi were initially not seen to impinge on Ju/'hoan autonomy.⁸ Thai Dam, a Ju/'hoan man who died during my fieldwork, articulated this most clearly:

. . . no, no, no, my father and his people stayed because of the tobacco. But when the rains came, we would always go and visit and we would hunt. . . Then when we felt like more tobacco, we would go back to the Boere [farmers].

Many of those farmers who settled in the Omaheke during the 1920s brought with them a well established mythology concerning Bushmen, who had long occupied a place in the Afrikaner historical imagination (cf. Van der Post 1958; Marks 1972).

⁵Other Angola Boers were offered plots in the areas surrounding Outjo in the north of Namibia, just south of Etosha pan.

⁶*Omuramba* is the OshiHerero word for the fossilised river beds that crosscut the Western Kalahari. Epukiro is a corruption of the Herero name for *Omuramba ua pukiro*, (Omuramba "where one gets lost").

⁷As far as the settlement of whites was concerned, Bushmen in other areas of Namibia, who had been in more sustained contact with white farmers (as opposed to traders and explorers), had been less welcoming to prospective farmers than those Bushmen in the Omaheke (Gordon 1992:40-41).

⁸Ju/'hoan oral histories, as well as several written accounts suggest that the Ju/'hoansi enjoyed better relations with the German farmers who settled in the central Omaheke before the large influx of Afrikaans speaking farmers. (e.g. Voigt 1943 in Gordon 1992:97).

Based on this mythology, Bushmen were thought to be either "wild" or "tame", the former being those who remained untouched by "civilisation" and continued to live in the bush "like animals", and the latter being those who, through contact with whites, had been put to work on farms and subsequently weaned of their "wildness" (Gordon 1992:137-146).⁹ In spite of the fact that it was known that some farmers who had settled in Grootfontein (to the north west of the Omaheke) some years previously had some serious problems with Bushmen (Gordon 1992:69-83), it was felt by many of the early Omaheke settlers that once "tamed", the local Bushmen could be rendered useful and diligent workers. These ideas were confirmed by the apparent willingness of many Ju/hoansi to help early settlers in the Omaheke find their bearings. Indeed, contemporary settler mythology is replete with stories which testify to the amicability and helpfulness of Ju/hoansi towards the newly settled farmers.

As the settlers grew more accustomed to the difficulties of farming in a desert region, it became apparent that cheap year round labour would be a great help. Consequently, by the early 1920s many of the pre-First World War settlers were attempting to consolidate their labour forces and consequently became more coercive in their efforts to retain their Ju/hoan labourers, whose self-styled autonomy and laissez-faire attitude to work was making life increasingly difficult for them. Furthermore, many of the new settlers from South Africa had brought with them firmly established ideas regarding the way relations between farmers and natives should be conducted. These ideas, oriented around the notion of *baaskap* (domination; see Chapter 3), were strongly authoritarian, paternalist and explicitly coercive. Thus, within a few years of mass white settlement in the Omaheke, many Ju/hoansi found farmers' coercive efforts to retain them as labourers on a year round basis as restrictive of their autonomy and, in some cases, began to actively oppose them.

In their endeavours to resist the increasingly troublesome settlers, several Ju/hoansi adopted the same strategy which had previously been so successful in limiting the settlement of other pastoralists in their territories. This strategy involved the killing and maiming the settler's livestock, thereby removing what appeared to be the basis of the settler economy. In spite of the fact that in contemporary farmers' narratives concerning this period, these early forays into stock theft are accounted for in terms of "wild" Bushmen's apparent inability to distinguish between wild and

⁹Metaphors based around the ideas of wildness and tameness were applied in various forms by colonisers to the colonised in different parts of the world. See, for example, Siegel (1989), in which it is argued that metaphors of "wildness" and "laziness" had a basis in fact, and were relatively "accurate representations of how the Lamba responded to the new relations. . . when [they] . . . were incorporated into the colonial. . . order."(351)

domestic animals, it is clear that this was not the case as Ju/'hoansi generally killed far more cattle than they could possibly eat or carry. This is clearly illustrated in a letter from settler farmers, written in December 1922, petitioning the SWAA to help them deal with their "Bushman problem":

We the undersigned settlers in this district wish to draw attention to the following:-

That during the past few months, stock thieving has been a curse in these parts and has made farming very near an impossible task, on account of the various Bushmen who roam about occupying the various waterholes.

A Mr Lemke who occupies a farm on the outskirts of this district lost over 75 head of his stock in the past few months and has every reason to believe that they have been slaughtered by Bushmen, more than half of his small stock and many more are wandering around with their breasts cut open, which appears to be if the animal is not fat enough they let it go. This cruel act was carried on until they came across an animal which was fat enough to their liking and then killed.

Several of the thieves have been caught, and on questioning them it was found that they slaughtered up to ten head of stock per day.

We have all suffered heavily during the past few months and wish to state that unless something is done to prevent the last few fat stock that is left from being stolen then we shall be forced to surrender our farms and trek to some place of safety.

We are,

Sir,

Yours faithfully [etc.]

(SWAA 411)

As this missive makes clear, Ju/'hoan efforts to drive settlers away were successful enough for some farmers to demand immediate police action. It is revealing to note that Ju/'hoan oral histories are clear on the fact that stock theft was most prevalent on farms where settlers were seen to mistreat Ju/'hoansi and, it seems likely, that these petitioners were targeted for this reason. It also seems likely, however, that these farmers were greatly overstating their case when they claimed that they might be "forced to surrender their farms"; the fact that they had caught and "questioned" some

Bushmen indicates that, to some degree at least, they had the situation well in hand. Nevertheless, in spite of these farmers' worries, an event which preceded the arrival of their pleading missive at the magistrate's office in Gobabis had firmed the SWAA's resolve to deal with the "Bushman problem" in the white farming areas of the Omaheke.

Kaptein Zameko and the Magistrate¹⁰

In the introduction to her book, *The !Kung of Nyae-Nyae* (1976:8) Lorna Marshall talks briefly of the place of Bushmen in the settler farmers' historical imagination. She recalls farmers explaining to her that:

"Tame" Bushmen live as laborers on farms and have done so for two or three generations: "wild" Bushmen live in the bush and wild Bushmen have a bad reputation. . . . Rarely had anyone a personal experience to tell us, but. . . . they told us over and over again certain episodes-of the *murder of a judge by poisoned arrow, for example*-and we were told to take guns for our protection.

(Marshall 1976:8; *my emphasis*)

Marshall suggests that the reason these stereotypes were sustained was because of the "degree to which Bushmen and whites were isolated from one another" (*ibid.*). While, in making this statement, Marshall overlooks the fact that the "tame" Bushmen to which she refers were, in fact, a testament of the extent to which Bushmen and whites were not isolated from one another, her statement does capture the degree to which one event, the "murder of a judge" some thirty odd years before she ventured into NyaeNyae herself, held such a prominent place in settler mythology concerning Bushmen.

The events leading to, what is now referred to as, the "van Rynveld affair" were based around one farm, Alexeck, which lay a good deal further north of any other farms yet to be occupied by whites in the Omaheke, and which was owned by a now notorious settler farmer by the name of Bullick. On this farm, labour was drawn from a local Ju'/hoan group under the headship of a man called Zameko¹¹ who, as the

¹⁰The van Rynveld affair has been described by several other authors most notably Robert Gordon (1992:92-98). Significantly, however, these descriptions are all based on archival evidence and consequently fail to articulate the Ju'/hoan side of the story and, more significantly, how these events are constructed in contemporary Namibia.

¹¹In terms of Dickens' (1994) orthography the name Zameko is now written *Tsemkxau*.

apparent leader of the local Bushmen, was appointed foreman on the farm.

Zameko and his followers enjoyed a relatively easy relationship with the Bullicks, for whom they worked periodically from around 1915 up until 1920 when Mr Bullick "died of exhaustion after having run from a lion"¹² (SWAA 411). After his death, relations between the remaining Bullicks and Zameko deteriorated considerably, with the result that Zameko and his followers decimated the Bullicks' herds as well as apparently threatening the lives of the redoubtable Mrs Bullick and her children. Mrs Bullick, who was widely regarded by other settler farmers as being *n bietjie mal* (a bit mad),¹³ wrote impassioned letters to the magistrate in Gobabis, demanding immediate police assistance in dealing with Zameko and his followers. Since it was feared that Ju/hoansi in other areas nearby might be emboldened by Zameko's rebelliousness, the most senior Government official in Gobabis, the local magistrate, Frederik Van Rynveld, decided to attend to the problem in person. Under strict instructions from the native Commissioner to make "peaceful contact" with Zameko and his followers, Van Rynveld set out immediately with a small patrol to contact Zameko in an attempt to curtail his bad influence on other more "peaceful Bushmen" (Gordon 1992:94).

According to the settler mythology (which was seen to be legitimated at the inquest into van Rynveld's death), a few days ride out of Gobabis, van Rynveld's patrol was surprised by Zameko and his followers, who without provocation, shot at them with poison arrows. Van Rynveld's patrol returned fire, but in the ensuing fight van Rynveld himself was hit in the leg by a poison arrow and later died of his wounds. According to the inquest, even though women and children participated in the attack, only van Rynveld was hit because the Ju/hoansi's usually accurate shooting was poor due to the cold weather (SWAA 411).

Although some settler farmers had treated Ju/hoan farm workers atrociously before this event, the event itself played on white farmers fears and, for some time to come, was mobilised to legitimate settler farmer's excesses when dealing with Ju/hoansi. Most significantly, van Rynveld's "murder" convinced the SWAA that it

¹²According to two Ju/hoan oral histories I heard concerning Zameko and the Bullicks, Mr Bullick had a particular loathing of Hereros and the good relationship between him and Zameko was built on this common ground. According to these same narratives, Zameko helped Mr Bullick murder some Hereros after luring them into an ambush. Several years after the van Rynveld's death, Zameko was apparently murdered by Hereros in Otjinene, after drunkenly bragging about his complicity in this affair. I could find no evidence of either of these events in the written record. Similarly, these events, if they happened, have been erased from the Herero collective memory.

¹³Although the Bullicks have since left Alexeck, they still remain a subject of interest to many of the older farmers (and Ju/hoansi) who remember them. Mrs Bullick is remembered as a particularly fierce woman who was not averse to adorning her hearth place with Bushman skulls, or threatening to shoot bureaucratic authorities who were seen to impinge on her freedom.

should take a harder line on the Bushmen. As van Rynveld's successor to the Gobabis magistrate's office argued, "they [the Bushmen] were not only increasing in numbers, but also in power and savageness". Furthermore, he argued that Government authority should be extended at least as far as Alexeck (SWAA 411). Although what amounted to a punitive expedition was dispatched following van Rynveld's death, settlers' fears had been ignited (*ibid.*) and they responded by being even more ruthless toward Ju/'hoansi living in close proximity to them. As the German historian Voigt pointed out:

After Magistrate Van Rynveld had been murdered by an unknown Bushman an evil time emerged for the entire Bushman population. Everywhere in the Protectorate [i.e. SWA] the British Boer soldiers and police were instructed to prepare to flush out the Bushmen and destroy their hordes.¹⁴

(Voigt 1943, in Gordon 1992:97)

An excerpt from the debriefing of the sergeant who was sent to arrest Zameko and his followers following van Rynveld's "murder" hints at the way in which police dealt with Ju/'hoansi:

When we had proceeded about 300 yards we then entered a thick patch of thorn bush and long grass, and at once came across a large Bushman location, where numerous Bushmen were running about and shouting, all my native constables shouted out in the Bushman language to the effect that we would not harm them, but this had no effect and the patrol was met with a shower of poisoned arrows, fired by men, women and in some cases youth of about 10 to 12 years. Several members of my patrol had narrow escapes. . . . Every effort was made to arrest these Bushmen without force, as our guide had informed me that they were Zameko's band, but this could not be done, and certain of my men were forced to use their firearms, with the result that six Bushmen were killed, actually in self defence. 23 men and 70 women and children were arrested.

¹⁴Voigt was no doubt slightly over-stating the case in order to glorify the "benevolence" of German colonial rule in Namibia in comparison to South African colonial rule, nevertheless, as Gordon (1992:97) points out in reference to this particular passage, it "rings true".

Prior to the van Rynveld affair, was the idea that Ju/'hoansi, although "wild" in their "natural" state, might be "tamed" when placed under the civilising influence of whites and put to work on farms. In terms of these narratives, the death of van Rynveld precipitated a rupture in the continuity of images of Ju/'hoansi held by farmers, destabilising pre-existing notions regarding their "wildness" and "tamelessness". The death of van Rynveld at the hands of apparently "tame" Bushmen was seen to indicate that neither of these states were immutable and, therefore, that Ju/'hoansi could revert dangerously between their wild and tame states, a notion which remains a defining trait of Ju/'hoansi in contemporary farmer's narratives concerning them.

The van Rynveld affair holds an equally important position in the emergent historical narratives articulated by the Ju/'hoansi. In all of my discussions with Ju/'hoansi about the past, the story of Zameko was perhaps the only point of unity in what were otherwise highly fragmented and individual historical narratives (Chapter 6). /Engn!au, who was regarded as the most reliable (hi)story-teller at Skoonheid rendered the story like this:

I saw Tsemkxau [Zameko] once, he was a big man with white hair, white-white hair, he also had hair on his arms and legs just like white men do. He was also a *lambeen* [had a limp] and couldn't run or walk fast. He was foreman at the Bullicks when I saw him; I was at Epukiro with the Hereros and was only this high [gestures the height of a nine or ten year old]. Zameko was head of all the Bushmen in this area, Nharo, ≠Au//eisi, everybody. But he was from Grootfontein himself and when he married with a Nharo he came to Epukiro and stayed with the Bullicks. . . .

At the time before old G/au shot the magistrate, Zameko and his people stole those two oxen which the Bullicks used to draw the wagon and slaughtered them and ate them. That was when the police first came. And then, after this the police in Gobabis telephoned Windhoek and then Windhoek people came on horses and went to the Bullicks and picked up the spoor of those Bushmen. They soon found the Bushmen and caught some of them, but the others started running away and throwing stones at the police. At this time Old G/au was just sitting still, he was old and couldn't run away. The magistrate was on his horse and came to G/au saying [in Afrikaans] "Don't worry, don't worry", and he was holding a bag of tobacco. But G/au was

scared and he had his bow under his kaross and he shot the magistrate [with a poisoned arrow]. The magistrate then climbed off his horse and [gesturing a throat slitting action] cut his [old G/au's] throat. Yes, He cut his fucking throat!!! And then G/au and the magistrate were both dead. . . .

Afterwards, the police shot many of them. I don't know the name of that place, but many were killed there. At the time that old G/au shot the magistrate there was much killing.

This is what my father told me when I was beginning to grow up.

/Engn!au's rendition of the story of Zameko is multifaceted and hints at how Ju/'hoansi constructed their place in the contemporary Omaheke. The fact that Zameko, for example, is said to resemble a "white" man evokes all sorts of question concerning how Ju/'hoansi constructed the relationship between race and power. In this narrative, which is about the last major act of resistance to whites, the man who stands up to them is able to do so because, in some respects, "he is like a white man", and not like a Bushman. Having said this, what is striking about this narrative is the fact that it is not highly mythologised or sensationalised. Indeed, in terms of describing the actual event, it closely resembles the "official version" of what happened. To this extent, it points to the relative lack of importance ascribed by Ju/'hoansi to "history" as medium for speaking about identity (chapter 6).

At the time of my fieldwork, most older Ju/'hoansi I knew considered Zameko to have been the last autonomous Ju/'hoan "Kaptein" (captain or chief) who stood up to the Boers, and his defeat and capture to signify the end of Ju/'hoan political autonomy in the Omaheke. A crucial part of this particular (hi)story lies in /Engn!au's reference to the police coming from Windhoek, a place to which few Ju/'hoansi would have been as it implies the emergence of a Ju/'hoan awareness of the powerful resources settler farmers could summon when challenged. In this respect, the van Rynveld affair is constructed as the crucial moment in their incorporation within the colonial political economy, and the power relations which constituted it. This is further exemplified by the fact that, /Engn!au characterises Ju/'hoansi as "victims"; powerless people who run and throw stones at men with guns, a theme which as we will see later (Chapter 5), provides one of the idioms by means of which Ju/'hoansi articulated their identity with respect to others.

Archival records as well as farmers' and Ju/'hoan oral histories all suggest that, following the van Rynveld affair, Ju/'hoansi in and around Gobabis became conspicuously more reluctant to directly challenge the administration's or farmers'

authority. Consequently, while settler farmers were becoming more aggressive and authoritarian in their dealings with Ju/'hoansi, Ju/'hoansi themselves were becoming more submissive in their dealings with farmers. Although stock theft was to continue unabated, stories of Ju/'hoansi directly defying the new settlers following the van Rynveld affair virtually disappear from the archival record (SWAA 411).

The Consolidation of the Farming Block

Despite the fact that, following Zameko's capture, Ju/'hoansi tended to be better behaved, large stock farming in the Kalahari was still proving a difficult affair for settler farmers such that notwithstanding assistance from the SWAA, it became clear that farmers needed all the help they could possibly muster in order to ensure their success. Although resident G/obanin (Damara) populations and, increasingly more, the Ju/'hoansi, were proving themselves to be good workers, labour was often in short supply, a problem exacerbated by the fact that Ju/'hoan workers still frequently "deserted" their work-places when the rains came.

Game and bushfoods were still plentiful during wet seasons and this allowed Ju/'hoansi to enjoy, for at least part of most years, the lifestyle that Sahlins interpreted as "primitive affluence". During these seasons, many Ju/'hoansi would leave the farms to go and hunt and forage in areas further to the east, in what is now known as the Rietfontein Block, or further North, up the Eiseb Omuramba towards Gam. Many Ju/'hoansi from the farming block engaged in this dual lifestyle through which they could make the most of an increasingly difficult situation. Their ability to "drop out", as Gordon refers to this process, and engage in independent activities for at least part of the year, was the final vestige of Ju/'hoan material independence and political autonomy within the region.

Because South West Africa was granted in mandate to the Union of South Africa, the colony became subject to a swathe of labour legislation which had been enacted in order to feed the manpower requirements of the growing industries in South Africa. As far as Ju/'hoansi were concerned, the most important legislative acts to be passed were the various vagrancy laws and the Masters and Servants Proclamation of 1927 (Gordon 1992:140 & 1994). These laws ultimately empowered farmers to go out and "recapture" any Ju/'hoansi who had "illegally" deserted their workplaces, or capture new ones if necessary. In spite of the fact that Ju/'hoansi were considered to be "unreliable" and potentially dangerous by settler farmers, they paradoxically remained the labourers of choice. This was the case mainly because it was understood that "Bushmen are usually satisfied with wages in kind such as tobacco, beads,

material etc., and there need be no cash disbursements" (SWAA A50/67).

Capturing ones' labour was widely practised throughout the Omaheke, but not all farmers involved themselves directly in the job of manstealing, a practise which continued, albeit in a modified form, even beyond Namibian independence in 1990.¹⁵ Rather it was left to small teams of farmers who specialised in the business and would do a proper job for an appropriate fee. These teams, usually led by a tracker were well armed, moved fast on horseback (later in motor-vehicles), and were usually successful in their endeavours. Farmers living in areas where little indigenous labour could be found were particularly keen on this "stolen" labour and, consequently, many Ju/'hoansi caught in this way were removed far from their homes to be taken to places where their labour was needed most. The success of these expeditions had a huge impact on Ju/'hoansi living in or near the commercial farming block. As !A'/ae told me once:

When we were at Kroonster and when Kan'//a was also small my father would go and hunt in Rietfontein. We went every year. . . . Then one year the Boers caught us and, when we ran, one of them shot our older brother here in the shoulder. . . . After this time my father was too frightened and didn't hunt anymore.

In that time [1940s and 1950s] many Ju,/hoansi were taken away; some even were taken to Windhoek where they became Namas, some were taken to other places.

Far from being condemned by the bureaucratic authorities, manstealing was met with their tacit approval. From the point of view of the SWAA and their regional representatives, manstealing was regarded as a useful means through which the "Bushman problem" might be addressed because it was believed that Ju/'hoansi might be better controlled when under the direct authority of settler farmers. Furthermore, it was also felt that if Ju/'hoan children were brought permanently under the "civilising" influence of whites that they might be weaned of their "natural" intransigence (SWAA 411 20/09/1922).

By the 1960s it was clear that fear had changed things for the Ju/'hoansi such that rather than only leave for the wet seasons, they would desert their work-places

¹⁵The last publicised incident of manstealing was brought to the attention of Namibian lawyers and resulted in a civil claim being upheld against the farmers in question (John Ford pers. comm.)

and trek over the border to Botswana from where it was not possible for farmers to "retrieve" them.¹⁶ Indeed, some of the reasoning behind the establishment the Bushmanland reserve in 1970 stemmed from a desire to stem the flow of labour to Botswana by providing a space within Namibia where Ju/'hoansi could continue to engage in the "natural" way of life (in Marshall and Ritchie 1984:18). Ultimately, these labour recovery expeditions in tandem with Herero and Mbanderu expansion in the communal areas served to remove the last vestiges of Ju/'hoan material and political autonomy, which hinged on their ability to engage in an alternative lifestyle through hunting and gathering. By the time of the implementation of the Odendaal Commission's¹⁷ recommendations in the early 1960s, through which the last spaces within the communal farming areas where Ju/'hoansi could independently forage and hunt were brought under bureaucratic control, it was virtually impossible for Ju/'hoansi to engage in independent foraging activities. Many Ju/'hoansi, like !A'/ae's father, had experienced the heavy-handed consequences of desertion and were reluctant to leave the farms for fear of similar reprisals from their employers. Had Ju/'hoansi wanted to take the risk of leaving the farm without permission, independent hunting and gathering would not have been a viable option anyway since Herero occupation of most water points in the Northern Omaheke had meant that the bulk of game made way for increasing numbers of domestic livestock whose taste for the bush-foods, on which hunting and gathering Ju/'hoansi depended, made independent foraging nigh impossible. Thus while settlers consolidated their operations, Ju/'hoansi found themselves increasingly more dependent on Herero and white farmers as the only viable sources to any sort of livelihood.

The years following the Odendaal Commission were perhaps the most significant in terms of rupturing any continuity with the past that the Ju/'hoansi constructed for themselves. At this stage, most Omaheke Ju/'hoansi were born into service on farms and, from an early age, were put to work by farmers who were loathe

¹⁶McIntyre, secretary to the Commission for the preservation of the Bushmen, and later the first Bushman Affairs Commissioner, reported on the effects of "manstealing", during the 1950s during which period some farmers were coming as far north as Gam in order to capture labour. Marshall (1976:283) similarly notes a labour recovery expedition right in the heart of NyaeNyae. Nevertheless, it is clear that few missions were undertaken so far north or east and that most were confined to the Omaheke and areas near Grootfontein.

¹⁷The Odendaal Commission, named after its chairman, was set up in 1962 to produce a plan for "separate development" in Namibia. It extended existing policies to "further the extension of apartheid throughout the territory; and to make it the basic principle of political, economic and social organisation as in South Africa" (Katjavivi 1988:11). It delimited the physical and political boundaries of the various "ethnic homelands" in Namibia, incorporating all areas of the country that were hitherto not demarcated as commercial or communal lands.

to have anyone "idling" in their workers' compounds. As a result, life for Ju/'hoansi came to be dominated by the demands and skills required of farm life. While tractor repairs, fence-building and herding, became considerably more important as life-skills, gathering, hunting and the other "bush-crafts" necessary to survive as independent foragers became less and less important in order to realistically secure any sort of livelihood in the Omaheke. As such Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, like many other peoples in southern Africa, became "generational farm workers" and came to draw their identity from this status.

By the time of the Odendaal Commission, the relationship between state and white farmer had progressed in such a way that it allowed for individual farms to evolve in many ways into "total institutions"¹⁸, with little or no outside interference in how farmers dealt with their workers. Labour legislation enabled farmers not only to discipline workers for certain offences, but also permitted them to control workers movements on and off the farm (Hayes et al *in press*). On top of this, complicity between farmers and police officials meant that even matters which were technically the responsibility of the state were more often than not dealt with "informally" on the farms; beatings, whippings, incarceration and occasionally even hanging were the order of the day.

The implications of this for the social organisation of Ju/'hoan social groups were enormous. Family and band groupings were often fragmented as farmers prohibited informal visiting between farms, and large social gatherings such as trance dances became impossible in many areas, not least because of the evangelising intentions of many farmers who saw trance dances as, quite literally, the work of Satan (chapter 6). In order to maintain links with Ju/'hoansi on other farms visiting had to be done individually, and on the sly, since it was a highly risky activity. !A/'ae described the difficulties of such visiting very eloquently:

In the days of the pass, when we visited people [on other farms] we had to *skelm kuir* [visit on the sly] and would use the chickens as alarm clocks. Cocks make different crows at different times of night. The first crow which come around midnight is the shortest crow "Koa Koaaaa!". The second crow comes at around two in the morning and is longer then the first "Koa koa Koaaaaaaa". The last crow which is made when the sun comes up is the longest and goes up [in tone] at the end "Koa koa koaaaaaaah!"

¹⁸For Foucault (1977:241), prison was the total institution (or as he put it, "complete" institution) *par excellence*, but various South African analysts have seen fit to apply this idea to farms and other institutions in Southern Africa (e.g. Du Toit 1994).

In the times of the pass¹⁹ visiting was very difficult; if you went to the baas[of the farm you wish to visit] and your pass wasn't in order, the baas would beat you and send you away. Often, even if your pass was in order the Baas would send you away. So if we wanted to visit, we would have to creep through the bush to visit and leave early in the morning before the Baas would wake up. Usually we would sleep until the first cock crow and when this happened we knew it was midnight and time to start walking. If you heard the second crow when you woke up then you knew it was time to run. If you only heard the third crow then it was trouble because you knew that the sun was coming and you would have to hide on the farm for the whole day; this was very bad if you were expected to work at your farm.

An immediate consequence of this restriction on mobility was that "traditional" Ju/'hoan social groupings, and the discourses which ratified them, lost their integrity, thereby forcing Ju/'hoansi to partially redefine the paradigms through which they constituted their identity with respect to one another as well as others (see Chapter 5).

Labouring Stereotypes: Migrant and Generational Workers

The period following Odendaal also saw significant changes in the labour market as migrant Ovambo labourers and others began to play a far more prominent role in the Omaheke farm labour market. Added to this, the fast growing Damara speaking population also began to find work on farms where once only Ju/'hoansi had worked. As a consequence of this, labour hierarchies, articulated by means of an ethnic idiom, began to influence the processes of labour recruitment in the Omaheke and led to the further marginalisation of Ju/'hoansi as farm workers. Nevertheless, many farmers chose to retain Ju/'hoan labourers on their farms because migrant labourers tended to demand "real" (cash) wages as well as better working conditions, whereas it was only necessary to give the Ju/'hoansi a little food and tobacco. Added to this, those Ju/'hoansi who were second or third generation farm workers had become highly skilled labourers in their own right and, what's more, were regarded as having a unique aptitude for certain specialised farm tasks such as mechanics.

The fact that many farmers came to prefer non-Ju/'hoan labourers was also partially a result of the Ju/'hoansi's response to their ever increasing dependency and

¹⁹The "Pass" was the identity book that all "non-whites" working in "white" areas had to carry in Namibia up until 1987, and which, if not appropriately stamped, was liable to put the holder in prison. It was used to regulate the movements of non-Europeans in and around Namibia (Hayes et. al. *in press*).

loss of autonomy. As time progressed, especially in the years following their final disenfranchisement after Odendaal, many farmers found Ju/'hoansi increasingly harder to deal with. Alcohol abuse became rife and, tied to this, many Ju/'hoansi became increasingly more violent in their dealings with one another, with wife-beating and often extremely vicious drunken fights becoming commonplace in workers' compounds, and constituting, from the farmers' point of view, a definite downside to employing Ju/'hoansi. Most crucially Ju/'hoansi were seen to be "irresponsible" and "unreliable", traits, which several farmers suggested to me were symptomatic of their innate "wildness" or animality.

As a result of all this, the dominant trend in employment which, prior to this, usually involved employing members from only one family over several generations, ended on many farms. Furthermore, the growing military struggle in the north of Namibia with the largely Ovambo controlled SWAPO during the 1970's, also set white farmers on edge. Fearing possible "Mau-Mau" style attacks from workers and their families, many farmers grew reluctant to allow their workers' extended families remain on their farms.²⁰ This led to a further break-up of Ju/'hoan family groups and Ju/'hoansi would often have to travel far from the place of their birth and their families in order to find work, or a place to stay.

Thus, although during the early years of white settlement in the Omaheke, Ju/'hoansi provided the bulk of labour required by white farmers, by the time I lived there, many Ju/'hoansi found themselves working and living alongside Damara>Nama speakers, Ovambo, Herero and Kavango speakers.²¹ The politics of farm life for Ju/'hoansi was therefore not simply a matter of negotiating their relationship with farmers, but also *other* farm workers. While all farm workers were subject to the will of their *baas* (literally "boss", see Chapter 3), the relationships that these workers enjoyed with their *baases* were mediated by stereotypes which farmers understood to pertain to the different ethnic groups from which their labour was drawn. The stereotypes identified by Gebhardt in 1973 still have much currency today:

Most farmers. . . preferred Ovambo labourers to other labourers for their steady routine type of work. Before the strike they were regarded as "reliable" and "disciplined". They were preferably employed in the farmer's house or in

²⁰In some respects, the activities of SWAPO were beneficial to the Ju/'hoansi in terms of labour. Since SWAPO was a largely Ovambo political organisation, many farmers became more reluctant at this time to hire Ovambo speakers for fear of political activity on their farms and hence hired the apparently apolitical Ju/'hoansi.

²¹At the time of my fieldwork Ju/'hoansi, constituted around 25 percent of the Omaheke farm labour force (Suzman 1995).

the garden with cattle and sheep. San [Ju/'hoansi] are regarded as "intelligent", "agile" and "technically able". The Damara are "servile", "submissive" and diligent. . . . Hereros are least liked by the farmer for their arrogance.²²

(Gebhardt 1978:168)

The broadest point of division in farmers' taxonomies of the different "ethnic" groups from which their labour was drawn lay in their constructions of the differences between Ju/'hoansi and *swart mense* (black people). It was widely believed that there were tangible "racial" differences between Ju/'hoansi and blacks, evidenced not only by their respective behaviours, but also the apparently self-evident physical differences between them. Although, Ju/'hoansi comprised only a small portion of the farm working population, on those farms where Ju/'hoansi did work, they tended to be in the majority as many farmers were often reluctant to "mix" their work forces on the grounds that this may lead to *etniiese stryery* (ethnic violence).

As much as the stereotypes held to pertain to these different groups were more or less universally agreed upon by farmers, different farmers had different ideas as to the net benefits of employing people from these diverse "ethnic" groups. Some felt that the apparently superior work done by Ovambos and other migrant workers justified the real wages that they demanded, whereas others felt that the comparatively poor work done by Ju/'hoansi was more than amply balanced by the fact that they commanded considerably lower wages (Suzman 1995a).

Even though it only had a marked impact on Ju/'hoansi following Odendaal, migrant labour played a role (albeit marginal) in the Omaheke from the 1930s onwards. Under the SWAA, Ovambo and later Kavango households in northern Namibia had become increasingly more reliant on cash incomes generated through working on the mines, farms and in the urban industries, establishing a labour migration pattern which remains today (Hishongwa 1992:50-82). Work in the cities and mines was generally preferred, but since it was not always available, many were forced to seek work on the white owned farms. For eleven months a year, these workers would stay on the farms, living off the rations issued by their employers and sending a substantial portion of their incomes home. For the remaining one month a

²²Herero and Mbanderu rarely sought work on the farms in the commercial district, preferring to find better paid jobs in Windhoek and other urban centres. Added to this, Hereros were generally less willing to succumb to individual farmer's authority and accept the often appalling conditions offered to farm workers. Consequently, they were unpopular with farmers who would not tolerate "arrogance" or "cheekiness" in their workers. (Chapter 4)

year they would return to their families, villages or cattle posts in the Northern communal areas of South West Africa. Unlike some Damaras and most Ju/'hoansi, who, for the most part, had no homes or independent rights to land in any "communal areas", migrant workers were more concerned with cash wages and fair treatment from the farmer. Seen to be considerably more "reliable" and "disciplined" than the Ju/'hoansi and Damara, many migrant workers articulated their relationship with the farmer in a "professional" manner constituting their labour value in cash terms.

The different status of generational and migrant farm workers was made abundantly clear in 1971 when Ovambo farm workers, along with other migrant workers in the mining and industrial sectors, went on strike in an attempt to seek better working conditions as well as destabilise and protest against the migrant labour system. Apart from making farmers more acutely aware of the level of "political" consciousness amongst northern Namibians, it also made farmers aware of how dependent they had grown on migrant labour. As a result, following the strike, those farmers who retained Ovambo labour started to pay them better, as well as offer them more comfortable living and working conditions. For the most part however, conditions for generational farm workers, who lacked the organisation or awareness of the migrant labourers, remained largely unchanged. If wages were given at all to generational farm workers they were usually considerably lower than those given to migrant labourers (Suzman 1995a).

In contrast to migrant workers, generational workers were marked out by their dependence on farmers for their most basic material needs; a place to stay, water to drink and food to eat. Only certain "ethnic" groups in Namibia were awarded "reserves" (Chapter 4), which in spite of being located in the more marginal agricultural areas of Namibia, gave these people a degree of autonomy within these spaces. Those groups without reserves, in the case of the Omaheke, the Ju/'hoansi and the G/obanin Damara, were forced to live at their workplaces, which for them were to become the central focus of life.

Generational workers' complaints regarding preferential treatment of migrant workers were not completely without foundation. On many farms, migrant workers received better pay, housing and, most significantly, tended to be treated with considerably more respect by the Baas. Since, on the whole, migrant workers tended to be better qualified for certain jobs, especially those which required specialised skills such as literacy or specialised licensing for jobs such as truck driving, they could command a better wage. Apart from better wages, migrant labourers usually received preferential treatment in matters such as housing and facilities. Indeed, on many farms

it was only very recently that Ju/'hoansi were offered any sort of housing at all. Ju/'hoansi, as far as farmers were concerned, were Bushmen and, after all, what need had a "man of the bush" for proper housing?

From the early 1970s, the status of generational farm workers in the Omaheke changed dramatically as the state apparatus which sanctioned and ratified the institutions of farm life began to break down in the wake of Namibian liberation politics. Prior to these changes, Ju/'hoan families would often work on one farm over several generations. Thus, second generation farm workers would often end up working on the farms on which they were born. Since then the influence of migrant labour, population growth as well as the introduction of "economising" strategies on many farms resulted in broad changes to these practices.²³ Although I knew of several farms where it was still the case that Ju/'hoansi who were born there continued to work there, the practice of employing single families over several generations was on the wane; even those farms where families were still employed generationally, farmers only did so if they considered it to be economically beneficial to them. As a result of these changes, many Ju/'hoansi no longer worked on the farms on which they were born and those who did not work on the farm of their birth joined the ever growing number of Ju/'hoan workers who moved between the farms and the communal areas as stable work became scarcer.

Werksoek (the process of looking for work) thus emerged as a central feature Ju/'hoan life in independent Namibia. At the time of my fieldwork, most of those in the process of looking for work, were based at the larger settlements of the former Hereroland East, Epako or the Government farms and the resettlement camps, the latter having been established because of the highly visible groups of unemployed Ju/'hoan "squatting" on the roadsides. The process of looking for work was a difficult and arduous one, and it involved travelling the long distances from farm to farm asking for work, whilst also having to return "home" on occasion in order to get food and the like. One Ju/'hoan man described the process very eloquently:

If you don't get word that there is work for you at a specific farm, then you must just walk from farm to farm and ask. But at every farm, you get the same reply; "No work here, no work here, no work here". And what can you do ?
Fuck all. I had cattle and goats, but they were stolen by the people here in the

²³The tabling and implementation of new labour laws (Labour Act 1992), has already, and is likely to still, drastically alter this situation. The abolition of child labour (which was intrinsic to generational farm employment), demands for regulated wages, unionisation and the stricter codification of employment practices all mitigate against the continuation of the employment of families over successive generations.

Reserve and now I must just stay here and struggle.

Thus, by the time Namibia achieved its independence in 1990, life for Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke had undergone dramatic change. As we will see later, facets of life which were once regarded as central to Ju/'hoan social organisation, such as the articulation of identity through kinship and locale (Chapter 5), were radically transformed by farm life. Most importantly, the loss of the relative autonomy enjoyed by Ju/'hoansi in pre-colonial era resulted in the emergence of a Ju/'hoan world view in which they articulated their identity in reference to their relations with others.

The Essential Boer

That farmers often treated Ju/'hoansi differently to other workers was contingent on the fact that they were understood to be fundamentally different to other "Africans". In order to examine how Ju/'hoansi were constructed as radically different, it is first necessary to briefly examine how farmers constructed their own identity and role in the Omaheke.

The advent of independence and "black rule" in Namibia confounded many of the Afrikaans speaking white farmers in the Omaheke mainly because very little changed for them. In the "war" years prior to independence, farmers' lives were permeated by the fear that their savage other would, as Rian Malan has put it, "leap up and rip out their throats". Fearing a "total onslaught", some farmers set about turning their homes on their farms into veritable fortresses. Steel meshes were erected to secure all windows, stoeps (patios) were sealed off, land was cleared around the houses in order to allow defending farmers to get a clear shot at the imagined attacking hordes, and nine-foot high razor and barbed wire fences were constructed around the perimeters of the farmers' compounds. Farmers and their wives almost all joined reservist units in the South West African Territorial Forces (SWATF), and became well versed in the intricacies of farm defence, from weapon selection to the finer points of counter-insurgency strategy.

Although one of the worst incidents of the "war" in the Omaheke involved a massive bush fire caused by the one of the women's commandos after shooting tracer bullets into the tinder dry grasses of the Kalahari, the reaction of the Afrikaans farmers to the inevitability of change in Namibia was a stimulus for the reification of their identity as Afrikaners. Many Omaheke farmers referred to themselves as *egte boere*, real Boers, referring as much to their lifestyle as to their self-ascribed identity as the personification of Afrikanerdom. That these farmers considered themselves to be the

living embodiments of the authentic *Boer* stemmed in part from the fact that their settlement in the Omaheke earlier this century, captured something of the "spirit of the Voortrekkers", those Afrikaners who had first escaped British rule in the nineteenth century Cape by trekking northwards to form the Afrikaner republics in the Transvaal and Orange Free State. A Cape Times journalist, writing in 1929 of the resettlement of the Angola Boers in Namibia, captured this well when he wrote:

And so history repeats itself. The spirit of the Voortrekkers lives again. The stage is set and the characters, like the creatures of a remembered dream, move through the strange drama to their appointed end. They are not puppets by strings out of their control. They are strongly individualist in a standardised world.

(Cape Times, October 12 1929)

Among the *egte Boere* of the Omaheke, the articulation of links with wider Afrikanerdom remained extremely important to how they construed their identity. Like their neighbours in the Ghanzi district of Botswana (Russell and Russell 1979), the Omaheke farmers saw themselves as very much part of the Afrikaner nation. This relationship was constantly referred to by Omaheke farmers despite the fact that following Namibia's independence from South Africa, Afrikaans farmers in Namibia were now Namibians rather than South Africans. Farmers repeatedly invoked *die Republiek* (i.e. The Republic of South Africa) in every day chat, referring to relatives who lived there, events that occurred there, and the sense of identity which was generated from their associations with it. For these farmers, however, the *Republiek*, was a self consciously imaginary construct, a metaphor for the good old days when the Afrikaners' place in Africa seemed more secure. Although spoken of in the present tense, and visited regularly, the *Republiek* to which they referred was not the South Africa of Nelson Mandela and the ANC, but the *Republiek* of Nationalist Afrikanerdom that governed South Africa from 1948 until the end of white rule in 1994. This act of collective imagination, and there was no doubt that people were very conscious of its "imaginary" nature, was pervasive amongst Omaheke farmers who saw it as a means to symbolically displace themselves from independent "black" Namibia.

This *Republikeinism* permeated many of the more mundane spheres of life in the Omaheke. In the bars of Gobabis Namibian money was often jokingly referred to

as *monopoly money* and South African money as *egte geld*, (real money).²⁴ Perhaps the least convenient form of this (for this anthropologist anyway) was many farmers' refusal to set their watches to Namibian time which, for six months of the year, is one hour different from South African time. This minor act of symbolic resistance caused a great deal of confusion, especially for outsiders having to do business in the Omaheke, where black owned and run services and enterprises (including Government) operated on official Namibian time whereas, white owned and run businesses and enterprises, especially in the farming block, ran according to South African time.

Notwithstanding the fact that this *Republiekanism* provided a series of metaphors through which farmers could construct an identity for themselves, the fact that it was a self-consciously imaginary construct meant that a far greater stress was placed on aspects of Afrikaner identity which were understood to transcend the temporal and spatial boundaries of a national or nationalist discourse. By virtue of this, far greater emphasis was placed on the notion of the *Boer* as an ethnic category that transcended the spatial and temporal confines of a national identity. While, in some respects, the emphasis placed on the idea of the *Boer* referred to what was understood to be a "racial" identity, in other respects, its discursive constitution in post-apartheid southern Africa appealed to a discourse which placed the activity of "settler farming" at its centre.

Metadiscourses of identity articulated by Afrikaners in southern Africa have remained focused around certain key symbols for some time, a key one of which is *die boer*, the farmer. In spite of the fact that many Afrikaners in Southern Africa do not farm, and have not done so for many generations, the idea of the settler farmer, the *boer*, is widely regarded to embody the qualities of the essential Afrikaner; stalwart, stubborn, strong, independent, religious, and, above all, resilient through continually resisting the forces of nature, darkness and Satan. This image of the *boer* has long been central to the ebb and flow of Afrikaner nationalist discourse, and has served as much as program of action with respect to others, as means through which an authentic Afrikaner identity is expressed. This identity was repeatedly invoked by Omaheke farmers in their conversations with me as a white "outsider", often prefixing sentences with the words, "*ons Boere*" (us Boers), and explaining differences in political opinion between myself and them on the grounds that as *Boere* (farmers and *Boers*; see below), their perspective should "obviously" be different to mine and, furthermore, have greater legitimacy than mine.

²⁴In independent Namibia, the Namibian dollar is indexed to the value of the South African Rand. Rands therefore remain legal tender in Namibia.

Unlike other "European" settlers in Africa, who frequently considered and certainly were seen by many Afrikaners to consider their "true homes" to exist in the lands of their European ancestors, Afrikaners considered their "home" to be Africa.²⁵ In contradiction to this, racial purity, specifically, "whiteness" or "*europeneess*" (i.e. non-African-ness) in terms of the apartheid nomenclature, were also seen as defining characteristics of Afrikanerdom. Consequently, discourses by means of which Afrikaners expressed their identity as "Africans" were ordered around what they perceived to be the fundamental paradox inherent in the idea of the "white african". Indeed, the symbolic and discursive worlds of Afrikaner identity continually reiterate this paradox and the tension it generates through attempting to resolve it. The security fences surrounding Omaheke farmers' farmhouses reflected this very eloquently. On one level they served to demarcate and separate their owners spatially, culturally and racially from the Africa that lurks *out there*, yet on another level, they served to defend their place in Africa, through keeping that Africa *out there*, out there.

The term *boer* itself provided a means through which the tension inherent in the idea of the "white african" was partially resolved. The term comes from the Afrikaans word *boer*, which is the noun for farmer and the verb "to farm". As a result, the term is loaded with transformative connotations; *om te boer* (to farm), is to change geographical space, to tame it, to control it and to render it productive. By extension, the *boer* (the farmer), is the agent of this change, the cipher through which the "wild" spaces of the bush are tamed and controlled. According to the logic of this discourse, if the bush itself is wild then, evidently, the people who dwell in the bush must themselves also be wild and, as such, require taming as much as the land so that they too may be rendered useful and productive. The elevation of the noun and verb *boer* to an ethnic label, *Boer*, reflects the centrality of these ideas to Afrikaner identity and its historical construction; the Boer is the transformer, not only of the wild geographical spaces on which he farms, but also the social and political spaces which fall within the geographical space that is the farm. As such, the tension established in the idea of the "white african" is partially released and resolved through the legitimacy gained through viewing themselves as agents of change and bringers of order.

These discourses received their ultimate authority through the "word of God". Religion has continued to play a pivotal role in construction and narration of Afrikaner identity in the Omaheke through giving divine legitimacy to those traits which were

²⁵The Afrikaans word used to describe other white settlers in Africa, particularly English speakers, was *soutpiel*, which, directly translated, means "salt-prick", a condition caused by straddling the continents of Africa and Europe thereby leaving the *piel* (prick) to dangle in the salty waters of the Atlantic.

seen to constitute the essential *boer* and his activities. While the topographical spaces were to be colonised through sweat and hard work, the social spaces were to be colonised by the bible and the whip. Although missionaries have long been present in the Omaheke (Chapter 6), their activities were a marginal part of the mainstream prosletysation process, which was fought out mainly on the farms between the farmer's families and their workers. Afrikaner religious narratives focused attention on the Boer as the ambassador of divine enlightenment, sent to beat the savage land into a respectful submission to God.²⁶ The spreading of religion and civilisation to these spaces was certainly not seen to be a passive or pacifist process; many farmers considered Satan to be real, active and ever-present in the "wild" spaces of the bush and Ju/'hoan religious life was, by extension also seen to be demonic. Consequently, many farmers saw it as part of their obligation to God to divorce the Ju/'hoansi of their "satanic" connections evidenced not only by their connection with the "wild" spaces of the bush, but also their dangerously unrestrained ritual activities such as the trance-dance (Chapter 6).

The Unlucky Child of the Moment

The Bushman lives for the day and the circumstances in which he finds himself and is the unlucky child of the moment.²⁷

(Marais et al 1984:9).

Farms in the Omaheke are large, while most farms averaged around 5000 hectares (20 square miles) some wealthier farmers owned farms in excess of 20 000 hectares (77 square miles). A peculiar consequence of this was that it was often difficult for farmers' children to mix with other farmers' children, especially before the roads were gravelled. Because of this many farmers' children played with the local farm worker's children, be they Ju/'hoan, Damara or otherwise. Often this would lead to the

²⁶Afrikaner nationalist discourse has long focused on the relationship between God and the Afrikaner. During the 1930s and subsequent the rise of Afrikaner nationalism which was eventually to sweep Jan Smuts out of Prime-Ministerial office in favour of the National Party in South Africa, historical events such as the Battle of Blood river were reconstructed as representing a covenant between God and the Afrikaner, in which Africa was to be the Afrikaners' Canaan; a land which was to be ripped from the forces of darkness, by these, God's chosen people (Butler 1988; Giliomee 1988).

²⁷The phrase, "unlucky child of the moment" has an established history of being applied to Bushmen. Father Wust, for example, a missionary in RuKavango wrote in 1938 that, "The Bushman is the unlucky child of the moment. He acts according to his moods-today like this, tomorrow like that" (Gordon 1992:142).

development of firm friendships between farmers' children and Ju/'hoansi, giving substance to the oft used phrase "I know the Bushmen, I grew up with them", through which many farmers rationalised their "authoritative" knowledge of the Ju/'hoansi. However, in spite of the apparent depth of friendships that were made, usually by the stage farmers' children neared puberty, they were actively discouraged from mixing with their Ju/'hoan contemporaries, a task which farmers' children rarely seemed to mind. One Afrikaans woman I spoke to, whose parents farmed near Aminuis south of Gobabis, and who herself had once had Ju/'hoan friends as a child brought the subject up when talking about legislation on the desegregation of schools in Namibia:

The problem is that if our children go to school with black children, not to mention Bushmen children, then it is our children that will suffer because the Bushmen can only go so far at school. With this black government and mixed schools, it will mean that our children will suffer. I lived on the farm *E__* and when I was small, I was always with the Bushmen. I even spoke their language though I have forgotten it now. . . . But when I started to grow up, then we were not the same any longer. You see the Bushmen are like children, and at some time when you grow up you are past them, because you are white.

Throughout the Omaheke, one of the most oft repeated of the traits attributed to Ju/'hoansi by both farmers and Hereros was their apparent "childlikeness". Indeed, the metaphor of the Ju/'hoan as "child" cropped up in almost every conversation I had with farmers and Hereros concerning the Ju/'hoansi. Even amongst those few farmers who considered themselves "modern" and "liberal", as well as expressed a genuine concern for the self-evident difficulties experienced by Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, the apparently innate childlikeness of the Ju/'hoansi remained the paradigmatic basis for discussions on "development".

The discursive referents to the term *Boesman* (*Bush-man*)²⁸ in farmers' discourses is itself particularly revealing in connection with this. Unlike in recent western academic writings, in which the term *Bushman* is being rendered increasingly more sanitised as some academics attempt to "make social banditry acceptable again"

²⁸The term *Boesman* has a long history in Southern Africa (Guenther 1986a; Wilmsen 1989:27-30; Parkington 1984). Guenther (1986a:35) has traced it back to the "vague and varied non-ethnic" designate *Bosmanneken* and argues, somewhat erroneously, that, from a contemporary perspective, the label *Bushman* is "seemingly value free" (1986:38). Apart from the fact that no label can be intrinsically "value free", Guenther's assessment of the label's value (or non-value) stems from the academic usage of the term, rather than its use by farmers, Hereros and others.

(Gordon 1992; Guenther 1986a)), the racist implications in settler farmers' narratives remain. The *Boesman* is equated with the bush and all its tropic referents of wildness, ungodliness and savagery. In the eyes of most Omaheke farmers, the term Bushmen was highly appropriate to the Ju/'hoansi for two reasons. Firstly because it expressed the "natural" relationship that Ju/'hoansi were understood to have with the "wild" spaces of the bushveld, and, secondly, because it evoked the ambiguous position that Ju/'hoansi were thought to occupy somewhere between animals and humans. As one farmer, referring to what he understood to be the *innerlik* (innate) qualities of this relationship, laughingly explained, "you can take the Bushman out the bush, but you can't take the bush out of the Bushman". On the commercial farms of the Omaheke, the idea of the "*bush-man*" was invoked to play nature to the *Boer's* culture and therefore constitute exactly that subject that was the object of the *Boers'* transformative abilities.

Farmer's constructions of Ju/'hoansi were by no means homogenous and were characterised by radically different narratives. These narratives, although part of the same metadiscourse projected against the centred self of the Boer, destabilised the status of the Ju/'hoansi on the Omaheke farms. When on my search to find farms on which Ju/'hoansi still trance-danced, I came across one farmer who articulated one of the extremes of the narratives subsumed within this metadiscourse:

Listen man the Bushmen don't have religion, I know this, I grew up with them. The Bushman is an animal, he is not like us [white people]. . . In the bush, you know, they do what other animals do. When they see the rain in one place they follow it just like the other animals. Ja, when it rains, first its the wildebeest and the springboks which get to these places, then after that other animals, then the lions and after this the Bushmen. I will tell you man they animals. . . Also they do not know love and that is what makes *us* people. . . If a Bushmen wants sex and he sees two Bushman women, they must just give him sex there and then. Because they are animals, it doesn't matter. They don't know love. . .

In contrast to this another farmer explained to me that:

They are not like these blacks [Hereros and Damaras]; if you look after them well they will love you like a father. . . . Look, some people here treat them like animals, and this is not a good thing. These people also say they are good

Christians, but they have no love themselves. . . . I do not know if it is better for the Bushmen to go back to his natural state or not, but we must help them, because it is Christian to do so.

Similarly, yet another farmer, echoing Stow²⁹, claimed that:

In some ways the Bushman is more like the white man than the black man. He has a greater ability than blacks to learn technical things. . . . There was that scientist, what was his name? I can't remember- van Wyk or something- he said that a Bushman's brain-waves are more like a white man's than a black man's. . . . They are very clever with engines and that sort of thing, all you have to do is show them something once and they will be able to do it better than you next time !

As such, the Ju/'hoansi's status in farmers' discourses was a contested and contentious issue. On the one hand, some farmers considered Ju/'hoansi to be too close to animals to deserve human treatment, whereas on the other, other farmers considered Ju/'hoansi to be human enough to be treated in a Christian manner, and possibly even more similar to whites than to blacks. Dominant representations of the Ju/'hoansi thus came to be articulated in terms of metaphor that reflected the instability and ambiguity generated by these conflicting narratives; a metaphor which captured the Bushman's ambiguous status yet simultaneously allowed for different values to be applied to it. In other words, because the "humanity" of Ju/'hoansi was questionable, they came to be regarded as semi-humans, who like children, were not capable of functioning as "adult" social beings in terms of the farmers definition of the category.

The image of the Ju/'hoan as a child was pervasive not only because it served as a means through which the divergent narratives on them could be partially reconciled, but also because it appeared to be ratified very clearly by the Ju/'hoansi themselves, whose actions appeared to be very childlike to many farmers and their

²⁹The idea that Bushmen and whites were more closely akin to one another than to blacks, has been a central trope of both Afrikaans, and western narratives concerning them. Stow, for example, in his classic work *The Native Races of South Africa* opined that;

The Bushmen were peculiar in that they resembled the more advanced races of Europe rather than the backward peoples of Africa. . . . Among the lowest of the world's inhabitants, they exhibited traits of the most advanced. . . . Much lower in scale of humanity than the Bantu around them, they showed greater advances in some arts. . . .

(Stow 1905:26)

families. This was the case, as far as farmers were concerned, for two reasons. Firstly because Ju/'hoansi, like children, were "beginners" in the social world of the farmers whose way of life was alien to the them because their acculturative practices were geared towards a very different set of circumstances, and secondly, because, again like children, the small statured Ju/'hoansi, were thought to be governed by instinct and hence unable to think beyond their immediate circumstances.

Consequently, stereotypically Ju/'hoan traits such as "unreliability" and "irresponsibility" were seen to be, *innerlik* (innate) racial qualities. Similarly, the Ju/'hoan propensity to drink, and their behaviour when drunk, were regarded as indices of their childlikeness rather than an as adaptation or reaction to the harsh manner in which they had been rendered dependent on farmers and others. Through emphasising what they saw to be the innateness of these qualities, farmers negated *their* agency in production of Ju/'hoan behaviour, a factor, which I will argue later, emerged as crucial to how Ju/'hoansi constructed their social world.

By characterising them as children, Ju/'hoansi also became fair game for the farmers paternalist discipline enshrined in the notion of *baaskap* ("Boss-ship" or domination). Many farmers saw it as their obligation to *staan pa* ("stand father" or, less literally, to parent) these children. This was done not so that they might become adults, but in order for them to be "good children", and "good children" were children who listened to, and obeyed adults. Moreover, since children were regarded as incapable of adult reason because their *gedagte* (thoughts) were not sufficiently developed, it was the job of the parent to make decisions for and on behalf of the child as well as ensure that the child does as told. Some farmers, such as the one who spoke of similarities between white and Bushman "brain-waves", rationalised their paternalism on the grounds that Bushmen were more akin to white children than they were to anyone else. In terms of these narratives, it was understood that if a child does wrong, then a child must be punished, not reasoned with, and that punishment must be physical for the child to "understand" it. As a result, beatings, whippings and other forms of corporal punishment emerged as a central feature of farm life for Ju/'hoansi, a factor which ironically, led to Ju/'hoansi characterising farmers as "unreliable", "unpredictable" and dangerous.

That Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke were constructed as being childlike worked on a variety of intersecting levels. Bambi Cueppens (1996) has noted that western discourses concerning child-rearing and agriculture are often articulated in terms of similar metaphors. Children go to *nursery* schools, manners are *cultivated* and so on. In connection with this, Cueppens has argued that western constructions of the

process of growing up are often conceptualised as a process whereby through education, culture is superimposed over the state of nature in which we are born.³⁰ In short, socialisation and acculturation are conceived as processes initiated to control nature, to progress or mature from a state of nature to one of culture and that this process can only occur through the agency of adults. For Afrikaners in the Omaheke and elsewhere, similar metaphors were used in a similar ways. While childhood was conceptualised as a state of nature and wildness, adulthood was conceptualised in terms of culture and tameness. Correspondingly, the process of bringing up a child was conceived of in terms of disciplining or controlling nature, moving towards Godliness, and curbing the "natural" temptations of the flesh. As such, the bringing up of children was conceived in language very similar to that used to describe the process of farming or, as I suggested earlier, the transformation of or taming of wild natural spaces.

By virtue of this, the construction of Ju/'hoansi as childlike fitted into a whole nexus of discourses which were related to the farmers self-identification as *egte boere*. It is suggestive of why some farmers felt Ju/'hoansi to be more akin to whites insofar as Ju/'hoansi were seen to represent "nature", the state of childhood and as such represented an immature or uncultured form of "whiteness". Furthermore, the equation of wildness with childhood suggests how the metaphor of the child was seen to apply so well to Ju/'hoansi and also, it suggests why Ju/'hoansi, who were conceptualised as constituting part of the colonisable landscape, were marked out as an object of the *Boer's* transformative abilities.

Although the equivalence posited between children and Ju/'hoansi went largely unchallenged in farmers' discourses, individual farmers had very different ideas about the implications of this as far as the organisation of farm life was concerned. Those farmers more concerned with the paternalist aspects to *baaskap* tended to constitute their relationship with their Ju/'hoan workers in terms of an obligation to parent them. Although stern with their workers, these farmers were conspicuously more concerned with the spiritual and physical welfare of "their" Ju/'hoansi, and therefore tended to give better rations, better pay and better bonuses. Their wives often worked hard at the spiritual welfare of the Ju/'hoansi, setting up small craft projects to keep workers' dependants usefully entertained, whilst simultaneously giving them instruction in the Bible and hygiene. These farmers tended to be more possessive of their workers,

³⁰ The notion that education served to curb instinct (and hence nature) was central to enlightenment thought. Indeed, it was pivotal in Rousseau's discourse surrounding his conception of the "noble savage". Rousseau, in contrast to prevailing Aristotelian thought, in which it was argued that education allowed man to draw closer to nature, argued that "culture" and education suppressed man's true nature (Cassirer 89:118-121).

having invested more into them both spiritually and physically, and also tended to employ Ju/'hoansi from a single family over several generations.

At another end of the discursive spectrum, were other farmers who regarded Ju/'hoansi primarily, and almost exclusively, in respect of their potential labour value. These farmers tended to be less tolerant of poor performances in the work-place, and had a higher turnover of workers. For these farmers, Ju/'hoansi, who were by no means considered to be incapable when it came to farm work, were hired simply because they were cheap. Indeed, as far as these farmers were concerned, the most tangible benefit of Ju/'hoan labour, was that unlike the migrant Ovambos, the "arrogant" Hereros and to a lesser extent the "servile" Damara, it was not deemed necessary to pay Ju/'hoansi. These farmers tended to rationalise their dealings with Ju/'hoansi by appealing to discourses which focused on the partial humanity of the Ju/'hoansi arguing that the Ju/'hoansi were incapable of understanding or using money responsibly. This inability, farmers argued, was irrefutably evidenced by the Ju/'hoan tendency to "drink" their earnings. As one farmer pointed out:

Not with the others [i.e. Hereros, Damaras etc.]. . . but the Bushmen are like children, but the Bushmen are like children, you give them money on Friday but on Sunday its gone, and he has a *moer of a babelaaas* (a bad hangover). With the Bushmen you must make sure they spend their money properly otherwise they'll just drink it.

The reasons for this another farmer explained were because:

The Bushman doesn't see tomorrow when he thinks. He only sees today. . . . When he was still in the bush, he thought only of the present. If he was hungry he would hunt, if he was thirsty he would look for water. . . . With money it is the same, if he sees something when he has money, he will get it, he will spend it all and not think about tomorrow even though by then he will be hungry.

Few farmers, even those most concerned with the *onwikkeling*, (upliftment or development) of the Ju/'hoansi were not aware of the benefits of exploiting perceived Ju/'hoan incapacities and weaknesses to their own advantage. By paying Ju/'hoansi poorly or not at all, these farmers' actions perpetuated the ever-increasing marginalisation of Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke through allowing them only partial

participation in the cash economy whilst simultaneously ensuring their dependence on it. This also ensured, as will become clear later, the reproduction, and apparent ratification of the mythologies through which non and low payment of Ju/'hoan labourers was rationalised.

* * *

The large scale settlement of white farmers in the Omaheke represents a crucial moment in Ju/'hoan history. Prior to this, the Ju/'hoansi's status in terms of the emergent colonial political economy was based on their selective participation in it, and the relative autonomy that they enjoyed as a result of this. Following the settlement of white farmers in the Omaheke, Ju/'hoan autonomy in the region was steadily eroded as they were coerced, co-opted and cornered into dependence on the settler economy at its lowest tier.

Although, on one level, farmers' discourses concerning to Ju/'hoansi were fragmented and disputed, they found unity in constituting Ju/'hoansi as irretrievably different from others in the Omaheke, a difference which was understood to be evidenced by their being "childlike". Ju/'hoan participation in the settler economy was mediated by these discourses of difference as their growing material dependency, in tandem with coercive might of the white farmers, ensured that their voices were virtually silenced and the dominance of farmers' representations remained largely uncontested.

In this chapter, I have highlighted some of the discursive aspects relating to how the settlement of white farmers in the Omaheke redefined the political and economic landscape from which Ju/'hoansi drew their identity. In the following chapter, I continue on this theme, and examine in more detail some of the aspects of farm life which have been central to this process.

CHAPTER 3: LIFE ON THE FARMS

Having been rendered dependent on farmers and the emergent capital economy, life for most Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke came to be dominated by the exigencies of farm life and the institutions around which it was organised. Of these institutions, *baaskap* (boss-ship) was perhaps the most important, serving as a model of and for farm relations which located authority in the person of the farmer. In this chapter I examine some of the aspects of farm life which have played a crucial role in how Ju/'hoansi have come to construct their social identity and status in the Omaheke. I initially examine the institution of *baaskap* itself and, in particular, the role played by physical violence as a means of social control within this institution. Thereafter, in the light of my discussion of *baaskap*, I look at how, given farmer's domination over the social and physical spaces of the farms, Ju/'hoansi redefined their relationship with place through rewriting their discourses pertaining to land and tenure.

For most Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, the demands of farm life shaped their daily lives. On most farms, Ju/'hoansi were expected to work six days a week, usually from fairly early in the morning until such time as the *baas* had determined that whatever work was needed to be done was done to his satisfaction. Often farmers would give their workers Saturday as a half day, and Sunday as a day off except for essential tasks like milking or, for domestic staff, cooking the Sunday meal. The rigours of this life left little time for so called "traditional" activities such as hunting which was strictly forbidden on most farms anyway. That Ju/'hoansi, for whom the maximisation of free time was once such an important feature of life came to practice such an ordered and disciplined lifestyle was largely due to the authoritarian nature of farm life in the Omaheke where the farmer exercised almost complete control over what took place on his land.

"The Boer is *Baas*", Authority and Power on the Omaheke Farms

I was given permission to live at the old farmhouse on Plaas Rosenhof (Rosenhof Farm), which lay about three kilometres from the central resettlement facility at Skoonheid. The farm, once owned by one of the region's wealthiest white farmers, was now government owned and ostensibly under the stewardship of the Ministry of Agriculture. By the time I took up residence there, almost every available space in the central compound was occupied by an assorted mix of people; Ju/'hoansi, Damaras, Ovambos, OvaHimba, Herero, and the odd NGO representative. In spite of

the fact that this was one of the few "white" farms that were "given to the people" following independence in 1990, the physical structures of the farm stood as a stark reminder of life on the majority of white owned farms in the Omaheke.

Surrounding the central compound was an unfriendly human-proof nine-foot barbed wire fence, with several pad-lockable gates, all of which were set firmly in cement. At the centre of this compound, facing north-east, stood the main farmhouse, an ugly oblong of red brick which still retained the hall-marks of the collective paranoia that afflicted white farmers during the run up to independence. All the windows were sealed by reinforced steel meshes and the *stoep* (patio) had been closed off with a tight lattice of brick work and a series of steel doors making the house virtually impregnable. Immediately next to the house, and adjacent to the kitchen, lay what were formerly the domestic staff quarters, two small, hot cement rooms with an outside tap and blood red corrugated iron roofing. Also safely, within the perimeter fence, were the main farm buildings; the garage and workshop, a large stores building and a small cement unit to which the diesel power generator was securely fixed.

Immediately south of the wire perimeter, but, significantly, still within shouting distance from the main house, lay what were once the farm workers' quarters; again two small cement rooms with an outside tap. These quarters, in turn, were situated close to the main borehole so that if the perpetual chugging of the diesel pump ever stopped, there would always be someone on hand to see to the problem. Also close by, lay the main cattle pens into which livestock was herded at night in order to minimise the ever present risk of cattle rustling.

The lay-out of Rosenhof's central compound was typical of Omaheke farms where the division and allocation of space served as an ever present metaphor for the "order of things". At the centre of farm life, living in the main house was the *baas's* (boss's) household, and all other aspects of farm life were oriented around him. Among the workers, those employed for domestic service were regarded as the most "loyal" and "trustworthy" since they had to be allowed *binne die groothuis* (inside the big house), a space which was strictly off-limits to other farm staff, who were generally not allowed access past the *stoep*. Other farm workers live outside the compound, but never too far away since they must be in shouting (and hearing) distance should the *baas* need them for anything and also, should the *baas* be required to break up a fight, or intervene in any behaviour in the compound which he considered unacceptable.

Some commentators on farms in Southern Africa have argued that they might best be understood as "total institutions" (e.g. du Toit 1994), with little or no outside



Plate 3.1 Keeping Africa out. Security at Rosenhof.

interference, and with the *baas* as the ultimate authority in almost all matters. While drawing attention away from the broader power structures which created the conditions which allowed for farmers to exercise this vast degree of control over what happened on their lands, the idea of the "total institutions" is loosely applicable to white owned farms in the Omaheke, where in spite of efforts by certain NGO's to alert farmers to their legal obligations as employers and farm workers of their rights in terms of the post-independence Labour Act (1992), the centred authority of the *baas* remains the organising principle for life on most Omaheke farms.

Baaskap

Thank you
Baas Kleinbaas,
I'll tell
Baas Ben that,
Baas Kleinbaas says,
If Baas Ben want to see
Baas Kleinbaas,
Baas Ben must come and see
Baas Kleinbaas here,
Baas Kleinbaas.
Good-bye
Baas Kleinbaas

(from the poem *South African Dialogue* by Motshile wa Nthodi)

Motshile wa Nthodi's now well known poem, *South African Dialogue*, captures what for many appeared to be the absurdity of farm life for black South Africans prior to the free elections in 1994. Although Nthodi's poem serves to disturb and ridicule the idea of *baaskap*, its broad appeal, the fact that almost any South African will be able to relate to it, tells us of the centrality of the *baas* and correspondingly *baaskap* in southern African life.¹ In the context of the farm, *baaskap* was mobilised as both a

¹The term, *Baaskap*, was part of a cluster of symbols through which power relations in apartheid southern Africa were represented. The broad currency of *Baaskap* in political language in South Africa was made abundantly clear during the 1966 elections in which the *Republikein* party built its campaign on the slogans: "Baaskap", "swart gevaar" (black danger) and "kaffir op sy plek" (nigger in his place) (Mulder 1967:78). The implication was that "Baaskap" provided the means through which the "nigger was kept in his

prescriptive and descriptive model of farm relations, enshrining a set of rights and obligations between farmers and workers based around the paternalist guidance of the white *baas*.

In spite of efforts to "democratise" farm relations on some farms in Namibia and South Africa, the term *baaskap* still has a wide currency, especially in areas such as the Omaheke where, at the time of my fieldwork, many white farmers were still managing to hold back on any democratising impulses that might have afflicted them. For these farmers and their workers, *baaskap* remained central to their understandings of social relations on the farm.

As a model of and for relations, *baaskap* situated the farmer, the *baas*, as the locus of authority on any particular farm. According to this model, the *baas* was the ultimate arbiter of all matters on the farm, both practical and social. Indeed, within the confined space of the farm, *baaskap* demanded that it was the farmer's voice that was dominant and the workers' voices muted. As such workers were characteristically recipients of and not participants in decision making procedures concerning farm life, even if workers were aware of alternative means to addressing problems. As one Ju/'hoan worker explained:

With your *baas*, you must always be careful. You can never be sure what he'll do. Even if you see something that is wrong, then you must just keep your mouth shut or otherwise, you are on the road [fired].

Baaskap was an explicitly paternalist model of and for farm relations, one which was seen to lend itself particularly well to the "childlike" Ju/'hoansi. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, some farmers spoke of having to *staan pa* ("stand father") for their Ju/'hoan workers, a self ascribed role which required them to "train, to educate, to financially and otherwise assist, to care for and, in the final instance, punish or discipline" them (Hamman and Van den Bergh 1993:3)

Most farmers understood their paternal obligations to their Ju/'hoan workers principally to take two forms. The first was seen to relate to what they saw as their divinely sanctioned right to make decisions for and on behalf of "their" Ju/'hoansi, and the second was seen to relate to their obligation to generally care for and assist them. While on some farms farmers took these considerations seriously, on most, caring for and assisting their Ju/'hoan (or other) workers, entailed providing the minimum

place", hence neutralising the "black danger". The term was also subsequently adopted, inverted and mobilised as a symbol of oppression by resistance movements.

necessary to keep them alive and at work. Rations, consisting usually of a little meat, maize meal porridge, sugar and some tea were usually issued to workers and their families on a monthly basis, and if housing was provided it was usually sparse and rudimentary, consisting of a brick or corrugated iron shelter and a communal tap. In general it was assumed that, because Ju/'hoansi were *Bushmen*, they were happy to sleep outside. Generally speaking, many farmers saw their obligations as extending only so far as to ensure their workers' material dependency on them.

For most farmers, *baaskap* was invoked in order to legitimate their dealings with their workers and many constructed it as a fairly benevolent institution. In doing this, farmers often mobilised *baaskap* as, to borrow Holy and Stuchlik's (1988) term, a "representational model" of farm relations which was used to gloss over some of the less palatable aspects of farm life for their workers. Indeed, in representing *baaskap* to me, doubtless aware of my own sympathies, many farmers stressed the benevolent aspects of it as a model of and for farm relations, and made a great deal out of how much good they did for "their" Ju/'hoan workers; how tolerant and generous they were in their dealings with them, and, in the final instance, how beneficial this was for the frequently "ungrateful" Ju/'hoansi. As one farmer explained:

We do so much for these Bushmen on our farm; but it is difficult because they do not appreciate the efforts we go to help them. Whenever they fight or get sick, we must look after them and take them to the clinic- my wife even runs a small clinic here on the farm, and teaches the Bushmen about cleanliness and hygiene. . . .but they forget that if it was not for us they would have nothing, they would still be in the bush living like animals.

Because *baaskap* was construed by farmers and, to a lesser degree, some Ju/'hoansi as reflecting the "natural order" of relations between farmers and their workers, many farmers considered Ju/'hoan acquiescence to their demands as demonstrating an acknowledgement of their superiority. For most Ju/'hoansi, on the other hand, their acquiescence was taken to be a straightforward matter of pragmatism and an acknowledgement of their relative powerlessness on the white owned farms, epitomised in their nigh total material dependency on farmers. As one Ju/'hoan man explained:

On the farm, you are not on your own [independent of the Baas]. If the owner says, "do this. . . ", and you complain, or you don't do it, then you are in the

road. . . . Before independence, if you complained, or were lazy, you had to be careful because the Boer could just hit you or fuck you up.

Indeed, for most Ju/'hoan, as well as other farm workers, *baaskap* was far from benevolent, and was represented as providing a discursive framework to their subjection on the farms. As the above quote makes clear, as far as most farm workers were concerned, the authority of the *baas* did not necessarily stem from his "natural" superiority, but rather his ability to control his workers through violence and their dependency on him. Having said this, as we will see later (Chapter 6) Ju/'hoan powerlessness on the farms did cause some Ju/'hoansi to reflect that their domination at the hands of others might represent a certain inferiority on their part.

While in more recent years, especially those following Namibia's independence, farmers exercised control over their workers principally by manipulating their dependency on them, prior to independence, farmers exercised their control primarily by means of administering various punishments to their workers should they do anything wrong.

Discipline, Authority and the Ju/'hoan Body

After several months of living in the Omaheke, I had learned that I had to be careful not to be too dramatically physical in my gestures towards Ju/'hoansi I had not met previously. Often if I turned too quickly, or put my hand out too dramatically, people would flinch away or even duck before recovering their composure, apologising and shaking my hand. It later emerged that the problem was to do with the colour of my skin as in Ju/'hoan experience in the Omaheke, if a white man turned on them too dramatically, it usually meant that they were going to be hit.

The nervousness of many Ju/'hoansi when I first met them stood as a constant corporeal reminder of the degree to which fear and, more particularly, fear of physical violence constituted the primary means of affecting Ju/'hoan subjection on the white farms. It was also suggestive of the extent to which external structures of domination, *baaskap* in particular, were internalised in the Ju/'hoan body. Prior to independence, the threat of violence permeated every aspect of farm life in the Omaheke and, from the Ju/'hoan point of view, was a key determining factor in the reproduction of structural relations between Ju/'hoansi and farmers. Fear of farmers violent excesses were understood to have quelled Zamekos' rebellious spirit, convinced !A'/ae's father to stop "deserting" the farm in order to go and hunt during wet seasons, and later ensured Ju/'hoan submission to what was often a brutal regime of farm labour with few if any

tangible rewards.

Although technically illegal, the beating of Ju/'hoan or any other farm workers was a common practice in the Omaheke. Prior to Independence it was informally approved of by regional police and other administrative bodies, who were not averse to occasionally joining in the informal disciplining of "miscreant" Ju/'hoansi and others themselves. Desertion, dereliction of duty, and laziness almost always resulted in a thorough beating or whipping and more serious offences such as stock theft or trespassing, if not dealt with through legal channels, were dealt with very harshly by farmers, and would often result in severe whippings, incarceration and occasionally, according to some Ju/'hoansi, even hangings.²

Of those academics to have written about Bushmen, only Robert Gordon has attempted to examine the role of violence in constituting relations between Ju/'hoansi and others in any depth. In *The Bushman Myth*, (1992), Gordon considers the matter in the context of the emergence of Bushmen as a Namibian "underclass" and focuses on the issue by reference to the emergence of the capital economy. To this extent, he examines the means through which violence against the Ju/'hoansi was mobilised and legitimated at a state level. At the root of the violent treatment of Ju/'hoansi and other Bushmen, he suggests, was the "ambiguous" or "liminal" status afforded to them by others. Ju/'hoansi, Gordon (1992:250) argues, were understood to occupy a precarious position situated between the "animal, supernatural" and the "human, natural" worlds³, thereby defying easy taxonomy. This ambiguity, Gordon continues, was magnified on the frontiers of white settlement where the de-commoditised nature of relations precipitated by Ju/'hoan "selective participation" in the settler economy "made it necessary for livestock breeders to engage in violence in order to ensure operations" (Gordon 1992:210). While Gordon does not spell out exactly what he means when he says to "ensure their operations" it seems likely that he is referring, on

²During my fieldwork, one of Namibia's wealthiest, and most well known white farmers, was accused of kidnapping and attempting to hang one of his farm workers. In subsequent meetings with the Legal Assistance Centre, farm workers made in excess of 15 complaints against the farmer in question, ranging from theft to assault. Significantly however, of all the illegal punishments meted out by farmers since independence, only around ten percent of these resulted in any action taking place at all. In those cases where action was taken, it was usually taken on a lesser charge relating to minor, more easily provable, transgressions of the Labour Act (Suzman 1995a).

³ As much as references to the "supernatural" qualities of Ju/'hoansi were common coin in popular discourse on them, it did not have much currency as a notion on the Omaheke farms. Not one Afrikaans farmer I knew even hinted to me that Ju/'hoansi might have supernatural abilities, indeed, the closest anyone got to this was to remark on their apparently remarkable aptitude for mechanics. Rather, as far as their ambiguity in farmers' narratives was concerned, it was an ambiguity between the "natural/animal/ungodly" world of the bush and the "human/cultural/Godly" world of the farmer.

the one hand, to the safety of their farming operations from Ju/'hoan stock thieves as well as other "troublesome natives", and, on the other, to maintaining a stable and disciplined work force.

Gordon's argument is useful insofar as it identifies the means whereby Ju/'hoansi were constituted as a "site of discipline", but, having said this, it fails to address the extent to which violence emerged as a normative aspect to farmer-Ju/'hoan relations, one which continued unabated up until independence in 1990. Similarly, although Gordon's argument offers an explanation for the violence which characterised the earlier years of white settlement, it does not account for the high incidence of violence against Ju/'hoansi once it was no longer necessary for "livestock breeders to engage in violence in order to ensure operations". It was only during the first thirty to forty years of white settlement that violence was considered a necessity in order to control and subdue Ju/'hoansi since their dependency had not yet been affected. Indeed, during the early years of settlement, violence appeared to be the only means of controlling Ju/'hoansi who still retained the ability to survive independently of the emergent settler economy. Moreover, memories of Zameko still unnerved some settlers who, like Mr Lemke and Mrs Bullick (Chapter 2), considered Ju/'hoansi to pose a genuine threat to their security. This combined with existing mythologies in which Ju/'hoansi were denied the faculty of rationality meant that violence was held to be the most effective manner available with which to deal with them. The fact that Ju/'hoansi appeared to have lost much of their spirit for violent confrontation with settlers following the capture of Zameko and his band suggested to farmers that this was indeed the most effective method for keeping the Ju/'hoansi "tamed".

By the 1940s (and conceivably well before this), the possibility that Ju/'hoansi might pose any real threat to the safety of any farmer or their families had evaporated. Even the older Ju/'hoan men and women could not remember any instances in the previous thirty or so years in which a Ju/'hoan had attempted to strike or even *directly* threatened to strike a farmer. Early brushes with the coercive might of the SWAA, such as those which followed the murder of Van Rynveld, seemingly convinced Ju/'hoansi of the hopelessness of retaliation against forces against which they had no hope of success. As such, the function which Gordon holds to be at the root of violence against Ju/'hoansi became largely redundant once Ju/'hoan dependency on the settler economy had been brought about.⁴

⁴Writing concerning the "terror" on the Putamayo river, Colombia, Taussig (1987:51-60) also suggests, in contrast to Gordon, that violence was not "economically" useful. Indeed, he argues that it was "economically" counter-productive, and flew in the face of the rhetoric of labour shortage.

In a similar vein, during my stay in the Omaheke, I did not know or hear of any occasion in which a Ju/'hoan had even contemplated lifting a retaliatory hand to his *baas*. When asking if it had ever been done, I was laughed at, "You cannot hit a Boer!" I was told. To this Dam Carstens added further:

Even if you are very drunk and fighting with another Bushman in the *lokasie* (location) and the *baas* comes with his sjambok [whip] to stop the fighting and he hits, you will not hit that *baas*. You will only have anger for the man with whom you are fighting.

If anything, Ju/'hoansi were resigned to the fact that the *baas* could beat his workers with impunity. As /!a'e, a young man who had given up on farm work in favour of warthog poaching after some serious run-ins with his *baas*, explained:

Twice Boers have beaten me up so that I have had to go to hospital. But when you get to the hospital the *baas* will say that you have been drunk and fighting with other Bushmen. No-one is going to believe the Bushman.

In spite of the fact that the threat Ju/'hoansi posed to the Omaheke farmers diminished so much as to be insignificant after the first thirty years or so of white settlement (and even then it had been negligible), violence remained a prominent feature of farm life. The emergent settler mythologies concerning Ju/'hoansi, and the violence which characterised the early days of white settlement, established it as a normative aspect to relations between farmers and Ju/'hoansi. Indeed, violence emerged as one of the "languages" through which farmers and Ju/'hoansi engaged with one another in "conversation". Whereas violence was initially used in order to achieve an end (i.e. to ensure the security of farmers and their operations), it was later used to ensure the continuity and legitimacy of that end while also constituting part of that end in itself.

Central to the idea that Ju/'hoansi were "children" was the notion that they lacked the capacity to reason in a (white) adult way. The way to "explain" something to a Ju/'hoan, it was widely believed, was through the domination and control of the body. The Ju/'hoan body itself, as I argued in the previous chapter, was regarded as "wild" space which was required to be disciplined in order to render it useful and ensure its continued subjection. A local white farmer bragged to me that:

I don't worry about what this new black government is saying, but if a

Bushmen who is working for me does something wrong, then I will hit him. It is no good to explain to a Bushman that he mustn't do something wrong, he won't understand, but if you hit him- then he will know.

In the previous chapter, I noted that as far as settler farmers were concerned, while Ju/'hoansi may be tamed, a Ju/'hoan remained, at the core of his being, part of the "wild" space of the bush. Moreover, like the bush, it was reasoned, the Ju/'hoan body had to be constantly disciplined in order for it to remain productive and useful. Like the cleared pastures on the farm, if left untouched and untended, it was felt that Ju/'hoansi would inevitably slide toward their "natural" state" of wildness. As such, violence was understood by farmers as essentially "communicative", instructional and, in the final instance, repressive of the natural, "wild" state.⁵

For some farmers, the disciplining of the Ju/'hoan body was an involved and multifaceted task which demanded high total control. For them the Ju/'hoan body was required to be cleaned and clothed, to be fed and mended, to be restricted in its movements and, most crucially, it was required to be instructed to "work", which, after all, was the signature of "civilised" man. For other farmers, however, the disciplining of the Ju/'hoan body was a far simpler task. For these farmers all that was demanded of Ju/'hoan body was that it worked and, in order for this to be done, all that was required of the farmer was provide with enough sustenance to keep it functioning and restrained in its movements. Nevertheless, in spite of these differences, almost all farmers, certainly up until fairly recently, regarded physical punishment to be the essential to this procedure and, more importantly that this should be sustained over time in order to prevent Ju/'hoansi returning to their "wild" state. Consequently violence and punishment emerged as one of the "languages" through which farmers conversed with Ju/'hoansi, and was sustained by the logic which constructed Ju/'hoansi as perpetual children. At the same time, the act of violence itself communicated far more than the specific reasons for an individual punishment. Indeed, violence provided a supremely corporeal metonym of domination, one which signified to both farmer and worker who was *baas* and who was not, while simultaneously inscribing the entirety of the political and economic hierarchy that made

⁵Hannah Arendt (1986:67) has famously written on violence and "communicative power". Arendt's suggestion that violence "is utterly incapable of creating power", does not fit in well with evidence of the Omaheke. Like Gordon, she argues that violence appears only "when power is in jeopardy", i.e. to achieve an end, and thereby fails to recognise its normative aspect in cultures of domination. It furthermore suggests that discussions concerning violence should take into account the specific historical circumstances in which it occurs.

such an act possible on their respective bodies.

In various colonial encounters, great emphasis has been placed on the processes of de-culturation and re-culturation of the colonised body (cf. Comaroff 1985; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:70) in a way not dissimilar to the processes of "dismembering and re-membering" central to various non-western rites of passage (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:70; Turner 1980; Van Gennep 1960). What perhaps marks the colonial encounter between white settlers and Ju/'hoansi apart from these instances was the fact that farmers did not constitute their activities in terms of de- or re-cultivating Ju/'hoansi, who, as far as they were concerned, were not cultural beings at all, but natural ones. Indeed, the process of bodily reform and the centrality of physical discipline in this instance was constructed, not in terms of creating a "new" being, but rather of preventing the innate "wildness" of the natural, "old" being from re-establishing its grasp. As such, in this case, physical discipline was more to with repressing what was understood to be the essential wildness of the Bushmen rather than creating a newly re-membered body. By virtue of this reasoning, from most farmers' perspectives anyway, the colonisation of the Ju/'hoan body served to maintain Ju/'hoansi in a perpetual liminality between their natural wild state and the unnatural state of culture. Moreover, this perpetual liminality, linked in comfortably with the conception of Ju/'hoansi as essentially childlike insofar as childhood, is by definition, a liminal or transitory period in itself.

With violence playing such a prominent role in relations between farmers and Ju/'hoansi, it was not altogether unusual for farmers to simply vent their frustration on workers, beating them for no apparent reason (from the workers point of view anyway). As far as many Ju/'hoansi were concerned, more often than not, when they found themselves at the wrong end of the *baas's* whip or fists, it was not the result of a breach of farm rules, or the complex racial etiquette that delimited farm life, but for no particular reason at all. Indeed, stories like !'Amace's (below) were more common than some of the more horrific tales that flew up and down the "bush-telegraph"⁶:

One morning, I went to see this *Baas*, to tell him that the calf he sent us to look for [the previous evening] was dead. I told him this and then he pulled me from the tractor and hit me here, in the stomach and, when I fell, he kicked me.

⁶News in the Omaheke travelled fast between farms in spite of the large distances involved. Hitchhikers, job-seekers and farm workers travelling the various roads which snaked through the farming block up to communal areas would spread news rapidly. The effectiveness of this "bush telegraph" was made abundantly clear during the migrant workers strike in 1971, when word to "down tools" spread within a day to the remotest of Omaheke farms.

I don't know why he did this, but what could I do?

Cases such as these were perhaps the clearest expressions of farmer's domination as they appealed to no specific wrongdoing in order to gain legitimacy. In instances such as these, the act of violence appealed to no more than the fact that the farmer had the ability to engage in such an act in order for it to gain legitimacy. The continuation of violence as a feature of farm life for Ju/'hoansi was therefore, not as Gordon has suggested, principally aimed at ensuring the continuity of farmers livestock production, but part of the "culture" of domination that mediated between, and constructed the respective worlds of the Ju/'hoansi and farmers.

While *baaskap* found its signification in violence, its dominance as a model of farm relations, and its placement of the farmer at the locus of authority and power redefined the terms through which Ju/'hoansi constructed their social and political universe. Furthermore, it highlighted some of the ambiguities of colonial life for Ju/'hoansi through subordinating their constructions of colonial relations to the need to maintain the *baas'* favour in order to survive. This problem was clearly reflected in the character of the *witvoet* (white-foot).

*The Witvoet*⁷

During the first few months of my fieldwork, while !A'/ae and most others seemed fairly unfazed by the fact that I was white, several Ju/'hoansi at Skoonheid and Rosenhof were clearly unable to see beyond the colour of my skin and some of the meanings which they inscribed onto it.

For these Ju/'hoansi, it was clear that, notwithstanding the fact that I had been partially re-colonised by them through being named "/Kunta", it took some time for our relationships to transcend the racial politics of *Baaskap*. Characteristically those who had problems in this regard tended to be those Ju/'hoansi who had, comparatively speaking, received better treatment from their *baases* on the farms on which they had worked. Usually, this involved those workers who had been appointed foremen or had been part of the group of most trusted workers, the domestic or garden staff.

In negotiating their relationships with me, these people continually stressed the fact that "they knew the whites" and would therefore be of more "use" to me than other Ju/'hoansi who did not. The meanings attached to this idea of "knowing the whites" generally manifested themselves on two levels. On one level the suggestion was that

⁷The term *witvoet* was one of several terms used to describe such people on many farms in southern Africa. On the fruit farms of the western Cape, for example, the term was used interchangeably with the label *piemper* (Du Toit 1992).

these Ju/'hoansi, through having partial access to the otherwise closed spaces of the farmer's house, garden and compound, had a superior knowledge of "die blanke se maniere" (white man's ways) and, by extension, how to conduct themselves in the presence of one. Tied to this, but on another level, the implication of this was that through "knowledge of the whites", they were able to gain some political advantage over other Ju/'hoansi in the context of the farm.

These people were often difficult to deal with, especially because they would occasionally interpose themselves between me and others with whom I was talking with comments like, "Can't you see he is a white man, you must talk to him properly", or, on other occasions, "You mustn't waste /Kunta's time, he has things to do". Kaice, a Ju/'hoan man who lived at Rosenhof, was particularly bad in this way and, as my guide through the *ozorondonda* (slums of Post 3), would often interrupt discussions I was having with other Ju/'hoansi who I did not as yet know well. It was clear that he felt that his "special relationship" with me was a source of some cache and attempted to draw authority over others from my presence and his connection with me. On one occasion I overheard him say that "/Kunta and me are like brothers, so don't give me shit!". The fact that I had repeatedly paid off Kaice's drinking debt's, fed him, provided him with cash, had helped him on several occasions when he was in trouble with the police, and often left him my guitar was manipulated by him in order to promote to others his association with me. While his habit of interposing himself between me and others was no doubt in part to reciprocate favours I had done for him, it was also because the more dependent on me he became, the more our relationship came to resemble, in some key respects, the relationship between *baas* and *Boesman*. There was no doubt that he felt (even though few others did) that he drew some otherwise absent authority from his connection with me. This was further mitigated by the fact that Kaice took Rosenhof as his *n!ore* (place; see below), and that I, as the only white resident there (when other development workers were away), was adopted as a surrogate *baas*.

Equally difficult was that in treating me in this way, Kaice (and others) would position me within a specific field of meaning and power based on the colour of our respective skins, which I was perpetually attempting to subvert. In these contexts, in which I was made captive to an image and subject to a totalising discourse, the complicity of Ju/'hoansi in their own subjection was made patently clear. As both Foucault (1986:233-239) and Bourdieu (1991:22-23) have argued, power works omni-directionally, and requires for its functioning the complicity of the subject in his or her own subjection. In Kaice, and a few others, I was constantly reminded of the

notion that "the dispositions which incline them [the dominated] to. . . complicity [in their own domination] are also the effect, embodied of domination" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:24).

I approached !A'ae, who had no great liking for Kaice, about this and he explained to me that Kaice was "playing *witvoet* (white-foot)" and that I should not waste so much of my time with him. A *witvoet*, it was explained to me on another occasion was worker who was:

white "on the sly" because he is among the Boers. You cannot see that he is white, but he is. Underneath his shoes, he is a "white foot".

The quality of farm workers' lives depended largely on their remaining in the farmer's favour. As a result, senior farm workers, such as foremen, often received preferential treatment from the *baas* in the form of better pay, better rations and more individual autonomy. Workers would therefore often compete for these tangible benefits, sometimes through "betraying" one of their fellow workers to the *baas* for laziness, drinking or other misdemeanours. A *witvoet* was someone who characteristically would attempt to draw an otherwise absent authority over other workers from their special status with the white *baas*. From what I could gather, most farm workers played *witvoet* on occasion, though some, specifically those who "knew the whites" best, did so more than others. In this respect *baaskap*, and the power relations around which farm life was ordered, insinuated itself into social relations among and between farm workers and provided an idiom for the articulation of grievances between them.

While it was clear that the nature of the colonial encounter between Ju/'hoansi and white farmers demanded that all workers, to a greater or lesser degree, played *witvoet* in order to advance their status with the *baas*, it was equally clear, that to be labelled a *witvoet* was not a good thing. By accusing someone of playing *witvoet*, another worker would attempt to mobilise the consensual support of other workers in a conflict. Indeed, in conflicts between workers on the farm where playing *witvoet* was not the issue, the term was still often mobilised to gain other workers' support.

The character of the *witvoet* pointed to one of the most prevalent tensions of life for Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke. On the one hand, since a Ju/'hoan worker's status depended on retaining the *baas*' favour, Ju/'hoansi had to play *witvoet*, yet on the other, since the farmer was constituted as an oppressive agent responsible for their marginal status on the farms, to be a *witvoet* was understood as a betrayal of one's own identity and a transgression of the boundaries which regulated local political

hierarchies. In broad terms, the expression of conflict through an explicitly racial metaphor points to the extent to which Ju/'hoan social identity was drawn from the hegemony of *baaskap*. As such, the efficacy of such an accusation of playing *witvoet* depended on the existence of, and acquiescence to the structural hierarchy of race espoused in *baaskap* in which "whiteness" and "Ju/'hoan-ness" were placed at opposite ends.

The idea of the *witvoet*, like the "Uncle Tom" of black America, managed to encapsulate one of the key ambiguities of colonial life for the Omaheke's colonised. It expressed the tension that existed between the pragmatic, "operational" models of farm life for Ju/'hoansi in which they necessarily conceded to the farmer's hegemony in order to survive, and a rhetorical, "representational" model of farm life in which Ju/'hoansi constituted farmers as an oppressive "other". This tension further manifested itself in variety of ways and through a variety of narratives, one of the clearest of which lay in the language with which Ju/'hoansi articulated their relationships with place on the commercial farms of the Omaheke.

In spite of the fact that the state ratified authority of farmers and the existence of institutions such as *baaskap*, tended to draw attention to the fact that Ju/'hoansi could only stay on farms through remaining in the good grace of the *baas*, Ju/'hoansi often constructed their relationship with their *baas* as one which existed by virtue of a prior bond with the physical space of the farm itself. Thus, while farmers tended to construct their relationship with their workers as one between people with respect to land, Ju/'hoan workers often constructed the relationship with their *baas* as one which existed by virtue of their prior relationship with place.

"This farm is my *n!ore*, it is my place"

During the final years of South West Africa and the early years of the new Namibia, the "bushman problem" in the Omaheke became embarrassingly "visible". Living on the dusty verges of the C22 which crawled northward up from Gobabis to Otjinene was a growing population of unemployed Ju/'hoan generational farm workers. The new Government, in an attempt to make this problem less visible, set up two resettlement facilities ostensibly to provide the "homelandless" Ju/'hoan and Damara farm workers with a place to go. Skoonheid was the second area to be set aside for the Ministry of Lands Resettlement and Rehabilitation (MLRR) in the Omaheke, and was established in 1993 after the same farmer who had previously owned Rosenhof was apprehended by the new authorities with, to quote one of the local Ministry of Wildlife and Tourism officials, "a little too much rhino horn and

ivory in the back of his truck". In order to pay the resultant fine, this farmer had to sell three of the four farms which made up his empire to the new Government. Government promptly set aside Skoonheid for the MLRR to relieve pressure on the burgeoning population at the Drimiopsis resettlement facility which had insufficient space to allow for anyone to engage in any independent productive activities.

By the time I first stayed at Skoonheid, about a hundred Ju/'hoan settlers, along with a handful of Damaras, had already moved there, and were living in makeshift accommodation under trees, in old farm facility buildings and some pre-fab fibre and iron houses erected haphazardly by the Ministry. All Ju/'hoan and Damara living on Skoonheid, save one family, under the nominal headship of old ≠Oma //Amte, were new arrivals, either having been transferred from Drimiopsis, or having come directly from nearby farms.

Old ≠Oma, otherwise known as "Ou Jan", had lived at Skoonheid all his life, working for the farmer and his family up until the farm was forfeited to Government. At the forfeiture of the farm, the farmer in question had apparently offered old ≠Oma the option of going with him, forty kilometres down the road, to stay at his last remaining farm, and work for him there. ≠Oma declined this offer saying that he would prefer to remain at Skoonheid because it was "*his place*". By the time I arrived at Skoonheid, ≠Oma and his wife were still living in the old cement house that the farmer had built for him some years previously. It was set some way away from the rest of the settlers' houses, whose presence at Skoonheid he spent a great deal of time cursing. Having been the farmer's gardener, ≠Oma had done fairly well at Skoonheid before it was taken over by the MLRR. In fact, by the time of the farmer's departure from Skoonheid ≠Oma had managed to accumulate a small, but by Ju/'hoan standards, significant herd of both large and small stock. When I first met him, his herd was in seemingly perpetual decline as he was selling it off piece by piece in order to keep himself in liquor, which he purchased, ironically, from the shop at Plessis Plaas, his former employers' one remaining farm.

For the first six months I knew him, ≠Oma was almost permanently drunk, and in all our conversations during these first few months he would always steer our chat around to why he resented the arrival of all the others at Skoonheid. "Skoonheid is my place", he would say, "it is my *n!ore*". ≠Oma's resentment of the new settlers centred around the fact that they, as far as he was concerned, paid insufficient deference to the fact that Skoonheid was the place on which he had grown up and grown old. ≠Oma's resentment was further fuelled by the fact that, in the eyes of the government officials who administered Skoonheid, his status there was secondary to

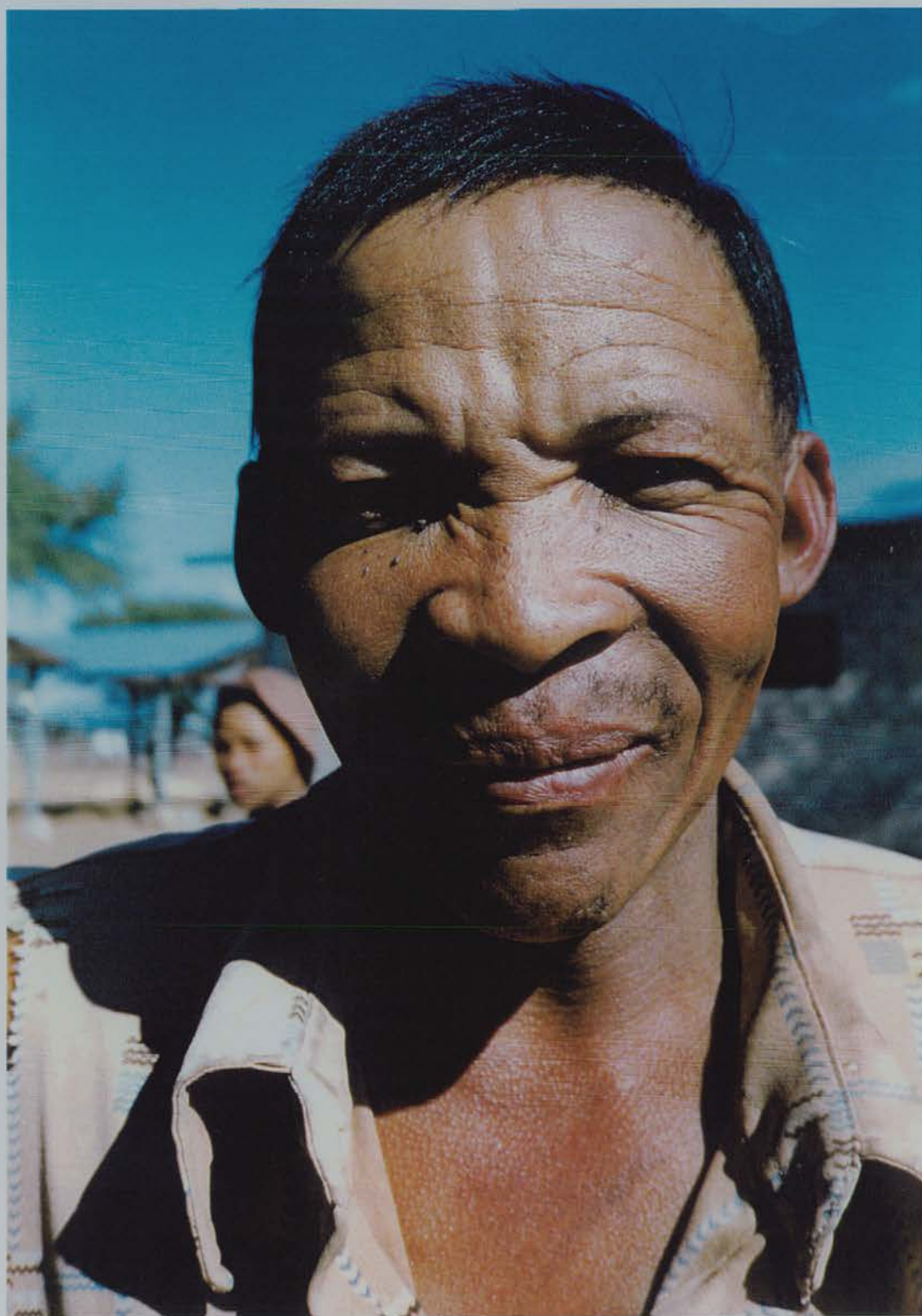


Plate 3.2 Old #Oma

that of those Ju/'hoansi and Damara who had been transferred from the resettlement facility at Drimiopsis. Indeed, the only way in which ≠Oma was able to guarantee his position at Skoonheid was because of his unequalled knowledge of the fiendishly complicated and unreliable systems for piping water from the main borehole.

≠Oma's claims that Skoonheid was "his place" were not qualitatively unique; many other Ju/'hoansi also spoke of individual farms in similar terms, claiming them as "their places" and used the term *n!ore* as the means through which to articulate their relationship these places. Unlike ≠Oma, however, these other settlers no longer lived on (or in some cases were even allowed to visit) the farms they considered to be "theirs".

Prior to the colonisation of the Omaheke, the various Ju/'hoan groups which lived there had divided the vast savannah plains of the area into discrete territories which were referred to as *n!oresi* (*n!ore* sing.). Membership rights to these *n!oresi*, although fluid, were clearly defined, with a strict etiquette relating to ownership of and access to the resources within them (cf. Wilmsen 1989: 180-186; Botelle and Rhode 1995:29-31). /Engn!au, explained how he remembered *n!oresi* worked:

In the old times, Bushmen were all from different *n!oresi*, I was with the Hereros and Tswanas at Epukiro and at Otjinene, I did not stay at my parent's *n!ore*. . . . If you visited some Bushmen, you had to ask. If you didn't have good manners (like these Bushmen now) then they might kill you. When you wanted to drink water, you had to get permission first, if you got permission then you could drink the water. If you didn't ask permission then the people from this *n!ore* will take the people from the other *n!ore* and stab them. . . . Also, if you hunted and had to follow the animal to a different *n!ore*, then you had to always ask first before you killed that animal and you would give some meat to those people. . . . If, in the morning, you follow the animal's spoor into those other people's *n!ore* and they find then they will shoot those people with bows and arrows! Shoot them dead! And when they are dead like animals, they will take those people's things, bows, arrows, assegais, everything.⁸

Many Ju/'hoansi, especially those who grew up while "employment" was still largely generational, spoke of particular farms as their *n!oresi* even if, as in some cases (and

⁸/Engn!au's description of *n!oresi* rights is striking in its resemblance to Kaufmann's as recounted by Schapera(1930:157).

one recent instance I knew of), the *baas* of the farm in question had threatened to shoot them if they did so much as set foot on it. Of all the settlers at Skoonheid, it was only old /Engn!au who claimed to remember the old *n!oresi* (i.e. as they were defined prior to the large scale settlement of whites), but since he was old, and his vision was poor, he was in no state to show me. Usually, when people spoke of their *n!oresi*, they tended to refer to specific farms; each farm constituting in itself a single *n!ore*. In spite of the fact that many Ju/'hoansi were born into servitude on the farms they considered to be their *n!oresi*, they articulated strong and fond ties to the physical space that constituted them. !A'/ae, for example, often spoke of his *n!ore*, Kroonster, a farm about sixty kilometres south-west of Skoonheid, and referred to it as:

. . . . the place which I am always longing for and which I love. *It is the place I know best because I grew up there.* . . . If I could make a living there, that is where I would go.

!A'/ae's description of his *n!ore* was remarkably similar in sentiment to some descriptions given in Tsumkwe by autonomous Ju/'hoansi. Richard Lee quotes a Tsumkwe man who claimed:

Land is something that you don't divide. It's where your mother and father gave birth to you. All those things your parents teach you to find and eat. . . . all those things nourish you when you grow up. . . . *What you know is your n!ore:*

(Lee 1993:166)

The fact that farms were spoken of as a *n!oresi* was significant in that it demonstrated the extent to which the colonial geographical order served as a basis for individual identity with respect to place. It also hinted at the extent to which individual farm communities became a basis for Ju/'hoan social identity with respect to one another in the new political order of the Omaheke. In this sense, discourses of identity were subsumed within the hegemony of the farms and the broader political and economic system which gave the farms their legitimacy.

Paradoxically, as much as *n!oresi* were identified in accordance with the way the Omaheke was chopped up by settler farmers, the fact that these areas were spoken of as *n!oresi* (as opposed to farms), suggested a counter-discursive claim on the land.

This claim appealed to broader, albeit muted, narratives through which the Ju/'hoansi articulated what they considered to be a prior connection to the lands of the Omaheke. This was most clearly expressed through constituting the relationship between the individual Ju/'hoan and the farm on which he lived and worked through the metaphor of land as opposed to the social and political relations with others that took place on it. In other words, what was markedly absent Ju/'hoan narratives tying person to place was the presence of the settler farmer. This was surprising, as in practical terms, a Ju/'hoan's presence on any farm was entirely dependent on remaining in the farmers' good grace.

The erasure of farmers from Ju/'hoan narratives which tied person to place, and the centrality of "land" to these narratives was idiomatic of how Ju/'hoansi spoke of farmers in general the Omaheke. This was also evident in the fact that, even when working on farms, Ju/'hoan workers rarely referred to the farmer by his name, but rather by the label *Boer*, thereby constituting the farmer as a class of being rather than an individual to whom they were tied. By constructing their relationship with the farm through the metaphor of land (as opposed to the farmer), Ju/'hoansi quietly questioned the legitimacy of the farmers' "ownership" and control of the farm, whilst simultaneously making a statement, albeit a quiet one, in which they asserted themselves as legitimate occupiers of the land.

One manner in which Ju/'hoansi asserted their prior relationship with place was connected with knowledge of the physical space of the farm. Ju/'hoansi often stressed their "superior" knowledge of the physical space of the farm, while claiming that the farmer's knowledge of the farm was secondary and ultimately dependent on what his workers told him. As one Ju/'hoan worker pointed out:

The farmer thinks that he sees everything on the farm, but you, who are always on the farm, you see everything. You are his eyes and hands. The farmer knows fuck-all about this farm. It is us that know. This farm is a Ju/'hoan place.

Ju/'hoan claims to superior knowledge were not exclusively spoken of in terms which opposed them to the farmers. More often than not they were mobilised in opposition to the ever growing population of migrant farm workers who they regarded as *ju doresin* (strangers⁹) or *inkomers* (incomers). In this context Ju/'hoansi spoke of their

⁹The term *dore* in Ju/'hoan also implied not only "strange" in the sense of unfamiliar,

knowledge of, and ties to farms as legitimating their position as farm workers. Since opposition to these *inkomers* was framed in the context of farm labour, the farmer and his authority was central to this discourse. Thus, Ju/'hoansi often claimed an additional body of "knowledge" to ratify their status as farm workers; knowledge of how to be a good "worker" as well as knowledge of the individual idiosyncrasies of the *baas*. As one Ju/'hoan farm worker explained:

It is us Ju/'hoansi who are the best workers. Look, we know these places, we were born on the farms, we know this life. . . . Look, these Ovambos and Kavangos are another sort of people. . . they are *inkomers*; this is our place but we must still struggle.

Having said this, not all Ju/'hoansi had specific *n!oresi* to which they felt particularly attached. The insecurity of the war years, during which the employment of several generations on single farms became more and more infrequent, resulted in significant numbers of Ju/'hoansi not considering any single farm to be *theirs*.

As I argued in the previous chapter, the demise of the grand apartheid narrative resulted in a partial fragmentation of the work force, making it the norm for workers to remain on farms for considerably shorter periods of time than was previously usual. As a result, Ju/'hoan life came to be dominated by movement between different farms and/or the communal areas, a factor which resulted in the articulation of a relationship between self and place, not through the metaphor any of particular farms, but of broader regional metaphors, which expressed the social and geographical diversity of their experience. Thus while many older Ju/'hoansi spoke of individual farms as constituting their "homes", many younger Ju/'hoansi, who had lived on many different farms, spoke of *n!oresi* in broader terms. !A'ae's son /Kallie, who grew up after !A'ae had left his *n!ore*, spoke for others when he claimed:

My *n!ore* is the world, this world (*kxa he*), this Kaukouveld, this *Omaheke*.

For these Ju/'hoansi, for whom *n!oresi* also represented familiar or known space, the term captured a wider geographical and social experience within the *Omaheke* than that experienced by those who had spent much of their lives on any one farm. It referred to a slightly different notion of "Ju/'hoanness", one which related far more overtly to the constitution of the Ju/'hoansi as a class in a unified political and economic hierarchy

but also in the sense of something odd, unusual or undesirable.

that transcended the social and spatial boundaries of individual farms (Chapter 5).

However, as much as Ju/'hoan discourses pertaining to land set themselves up in opposition to others, it was rare for Ju/'hoansi to assert these claims in the presence of these others; rather this sort of talk was saved for other Ju/'hoansi, missionaries and the single sympathetic anthropologist. When in the presence of a farmer, Ju/'hoansi would rarely say anything which might explicitly challenge the farmer's authority in any direct way. Indeed, within the tightly controlled space of the farm, any dissenting voices remained largely silent. In other words, as much as Ju/'hoansi challenged the hegemony of settler farmers as the legitimate occupiers of the farms, the fact that this challenge remained largely unsaid outside of workers' compounds meant that as far as many farmers were concerned, Ju/'hoansi made no claims to land at all. Sometimes, workers were even loathe to express such ideas in the relative safety of their compounds. As Alex, a Damara married to a Ju/'hoan living at Skoonheid, explained:

People cannot always talk about the *baas*. . . . Sometimes the *baas* will sneak down to the compound and hide behind a hut. There he will sit and listen to see if the workers speak badly of him. . . . [Also] there are always people on the farm [*witvoets*] who are "yes men" always saying "Ja *baas*, Ja *baas*", they can also tell if you speak badly of the *Baas*.

Farmers often rationalised their dealings with Ju/'hoansi on the basis that they "knew" the Bushmen, and argued that Ju/'hoansi made no claims and, consequently, had no claims to the lands of the Omaheke. Ju/'hoansi, as far as most farmers were concerned, were "traditionally" nomadic and therefore articulated no strong ties to any particular places. Disagreements amongst farmers on the issue of the degree to which Ju/'hoansi were human or animal did not deflect from the general acceptance of the belief that Ju/'hoansi were more "nature" than "culture" and that since culture implied the "ownership" of nature by virtue of one's control of it or work on it, Ju/'hoansi did not own any land. Because "traditional" Ju/'hoan life was seen to have been governed by, and subsumed within nature, Ju/'hoansi were consequently understood to have "followed the rain" neither articulating strong ties nor making any legitimate claims to own any particular spaces or places. The fact that the Ju/'hoansi were understood, unlike the other "races" of Namibia, not to have resisted white farmers' *territorial* ambitions was seen to confirm this. For settler farmers notions of ownership, property and civilisation were all intimately tied to land use. As I have already pointed out (Chapter 2), ideas surrounding the transformation of physical space were crucial to the

self-definition of the *Boer* as the agent of civilisation in a savage land and land-use served in some senses as an index of this “civilisation”. Ju/’hoansi, whose patterns of land use revolved around foraging and hunting, which were essentially non-transformative modes of engaging with the environment, were seen to be controlled by the land rather than controllers of it. In other words, because Ju/’hoansi were understood to constitute part of the wild landscape, it was inconceivable that they could “own” it.

Thus, while conflict between white colonists and the larger pastoralist polities in the Omaheke were explicitly (although certainly not exclusively) about land and the control of it, struggles with Ju/’hoansi and other Bushmen groups in Namibia were not constituted as a struggle for or over land, but rather as a struggle between civilisation and savagery.

Indeed those few major conflicts between Ju/’hoansi and white settlers in the Omaheke were never considered by the colonists to have been struggles for or over land, but rather struggles precipitated by the innate “wildness” of the Ju/’hoansi when forced to confront civilisation. Up until the 1960s, debate at Government level on the issue of land for any of the Namibian Bushmen groups was framed within a paradigm of “nature conservation”. If Bushmen were to be granted land, it was not due to considerations concerning the “rights” of Bushmen to have land, but rather whether or not they, along with other elements of their “habitat” might be preserved from “extinction” in their “natural” environment for the purposes of scientific study. If there were, after all, special reserves for elephants and lions, then why not for the Bushmen (Gordon 1992:161-167)? Significantly though, since the Omaheke Ju/’hoansi were regarded to be too “sullied” to be of any particular scientific value, the issue of land for Ju/’hoansi in the Omaheke was never raised under the South African administration.

The debate on land for Ju/’hoansi ultimately resulted in the creation of Bushmanland in 1970 following the recommendations of the Odendaal Commission. Significantly though, unlike all other so-called native homelands in Namibia, Ju/’hoansi were not entitled to any degree of self-government as they were deemed unable to take on such responsibility. Rather the administration of Bushmanland was to be overseen by a white commissioner to be permanently posted in Tsumkwe. In practical terms though, the creation of Bushmanland offered a homeland only to those few Namibian Bushmen who were still relatively autonomous. For those Ju/’hoansi living south of Gam in Hereroland East and on the white farms, the establishment of Bushmanland was a virtually meaningless gesture.¹⁰

¹⁰It was also widely believed that establishment of Bushmanland might have some effect

As we will see in the following chapters, the political hierarchy implied by *baaskap* provided a powerful idiom through which Ju/'hoansi came to speak of their identity in the Omaheke. In this chapter I have highlighted some aspects to *baaskap* and its implications for how Ju/'hoansi expressed their relationships with place and, in so doing, have touched on the extent to which Ju/'hoan identity was articulated in terms which were drawn from the political economy which subjugated them. While the presence of whites and their ownership of much of the Omaheke meant that life for many Ju/'hoansi came to be dominated by institutions such as *baaskap* and its accompanying violence, the establishment of the Herero native reserve on the northern borders of the commercial farming block provided an alternative for Ju/'hoansi to life on the farms. By Independence in 1990 many Ju/'hoansi had chosen to live in the communal areas where it was possible to escape the bonds of *baaskap* by working for Hereros.

In the next chapter, I examine relations between Hereros and Ju/'hoansi in these areas and suggest that while relations between them were not as explicitly authoritarian as those pertaining between *Boers* and *Boesmans*, life in these areas was in some significant ways more difficult than life on the white farms.

on the labour market in the Omaheke. During the 1940s and 1950s, if Ju/'hoansi got the chance to "escape" from their white *baases*, they would often dash over to the comparative safety of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, forcing farmers to become more heavily dependent on migrant labour. It was felt that through establishing Bushmanland, this flow of potential, as well as active labourers out of the colony might be stemmed (Gordon 1992:166). This logic was without justification, as few of the Omaheke Ju/'hoansi had any interest in moving up to the newly established Bushman reserve or considered it a "homeland". Ironically, by the time the reserve was established, many Omaheke Ju/'hoansi considered their neighbours in the Bushmanland reserve to be too "wild" and dangerous to visit.

CHAPTER 4: "THE BUSHMEN ARE SNAKES": LIFE IN THE RESERVES

The divisions imposed by apartheid and policies of "separate development" meant that the Omaheke, although subsumed within a wider political economy, was divided into two discrete social and spatial entities which were often spoken of in oppositional terms. At both a state and regional level, commercial farming areas and the "native reserves" were constructed by means of a series of opposed metaphors. Whereas white farming areas were said to be "civilised", "commercial", "modern" and "profit oriented" spaces, the reserves were held to be "primitive", "communal", "traditional" and "subsistence oriented" spaces (Adams and Werner 1990; Suzman 1995b:12). Because these oppositions remained central to narratives positing difference between these two areas, they tended to mask the connections between them. The fact that both areas were defined relative to one another depended on their being part of a single, dominant political economy of meaning. Indeed, reserve history has been marked by a process whereby Herero¹ farmers have become increasingly more "commercial" in their outlook (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, because communal areas were constructed as constituting a separate and distinct space meant that, in certain key respects, occupants of the reserve were able to act autonomously of the state and its various apparatus. As a result, relations between Ju/'hoansi and Hereros over the past century, though framed by the advent of white colonial rule, were allowed to take their own course, without much direct intervention from state officials.

In this chapter, I examine some of the processes which resulted in Ju/'hoan marginalisation in the former reserves, and focus in particular on Herero narratives concerning Ju/'hoansi. In doing this I address some of the current debates relating to class and ethnic consciousness, suggesting that, in contrast to some currently held views (e.g. Wilmsen 1989; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992), ethnic consciousness in the Omaheke preceded full Ju/'hoan incorporation in the colonial economy.

* * *

¹In this thesis, I have chosen to gloss over the political distinction between Herero and Mbanderu. While, to be sure, many of my Herero and Mbanderu friends would object to this, I have done this largely because from a cultural and linguistic point of view, they constitute a single entity. Thus, notwithstanding contemporary political views, when I refer to Herero or Hereros, I am referring generally to Herero-speakers i.e. both Herero and Mbanderu. Regarding the politics of difference between these groups see Vedder (1928; 155-156); Sundermeier et. al. (1966:5-6), and for a more contemporary perspective; Suzman (1995b:30).

Around ten kilometres from the large and furious looking fence which demarcates the still largely white-owned commercial farms from the communal farming areas lies Post 3. Otherwise known as Omawewozonyonda or Epukiro, Post 3 is the second largest settlement in the former "native reserve" for the Herero and Mbanderu, "Hereroland East"²(see fig 3).

During the period I lived in the Northern Omaheke, the drought, which was widely accepted to be the worst this century, meant that Post 3 was drier, dustier and hotter than usual. On the dirt tracks and roads which transected the settlement, increasingly emaciated cattle roamed between people's yards, searching for grazing. Towards the Western edge of the town, not far from the stock auction pens, lay the *ozorondanda* ("the place where people drink the rough way"), a sprawling collection of small wood, clay and corrugated iron structures where the local *tombo* (home-brew) industry was located.

On almost any day the most prominent drinkers in the *ozorondanda* were usually the poorer residents of Post 3, the most conspicuous of whom were Ju/'hoansi. In this drought year, during which farmers in both communal and commercial areas were struggling, the *ozorondanda* was doing particularly brisk trade since more Ju/'hoansi were without work than usual. Whilst many Ju/'hoansi would work for their *tombo* by collecting wood or water for the brewers or, in some cases, prostituting themselves in return for enough drink to keep themselves drunk, others would simply beg, hassling other drinkers or the Herero *memes* (mothers or madams) who were the principal brewers. Occasionally, when begging Ju/'hoansi became too much of an irritation, some drinkers or brewers would spike their *tombo* donations various unpalatable additives in order to discourage the beggars.³

During my stay in the Omaheke, there were two housing projects on the go at Post 3. Towards the centre of the sprawling settlement, a "build-together" project, in which people helped one another to build their own houses, was well underway. Funded by UNICEF, and supplied by the nearby cement brick making project, many of the five roomed houses were nearing completion by the time of my departure back to the UK. The owner/builders of these houses were pleased with their efforts, and many families occupied their houses one room at a time, as each was completed,

²Formerly the Epukiro Native Reserve for Hereros, it became known as Hereroland East following the Odendaal Commission in 1965. Although still spoken of as Hereroland East following Independence, these areas are now officially referred to as the "eastern communal areas" and are subsumed under the Omaheke regional government. See fig 2.

³Many Ju/'hoansi believed that the *tombo* they drank was often poisoned. While there was little to substantiate this claim, one Ju/'hoan man I knew in Otjinene claimed that his wife died after having drunk *tombo* with battery acid in it.



Plate 4.1 The Ozorondanda at Epukiro Post 3

happy to make use of the water piped directly to their new abodes from the main borehole.

On the western edge of Post 3, where the road running westwards toward the commercial farms intersects the road to Post 10, there was another housing project. Unlike the well funded and supported "build together" project, the beneficiaries of which were almost exclusively Herero, the owner/builders in this project were exclusively Ju/'hoansi. Also initiated by a UNICEF representative, and funded by Oxfam UK, this housing initiative was very different from the other one in Post 3. With a budget not even substantial enough to purchase the bricks required for one of the "build together" houses, the prerogative of this project was to provide twenty four houses for local Ju/'hoansi. Because of financial constraints, these dwellings were being constructed out of locally available materials; wood, mud and corrugated iron, with most of the small project budget allocated being used to provide lunch for the participants when building.

In the "new" Namibia, in which the post-apartheid rhetoric of racial equality is consumed and regurgitated at an alarming rate, the blatant double standards of Post 3's two housing projects was not regarded by most residents of Post 3 to be much of an issue. This was surprising in a community, which like many others in southern Africa, was highly sensitised to issues of perceived inequality on the basis of "race". Ironically, whereas inequalities between black and white, and, for that matter, black and black (Ju/'hoansi were not considered to be "black"), were regarded to be absolutely unacceptable, perceived inequalities between Ju/'hoansi and others were considered acceptable, reasonable or, more to the point, "natural".

The widespread acceptance of the disparity between the two housing projects by the predominantly Herero population of Post 3 found its logic in discourses which constituted Ju/'hoansi as a category apart, a category defined by its exclusion from dominant political processes. These discourses, which were by no means dissimilar to those articulated by their neighbours on the white farms, emerged out of the historical processes which transformed the Omaheke in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Histories

In independent Namibia, the writing of history has become something of a nation-wide initiative. The massive rupture in the continuity of political discourses brought about by the departure of the dominant "oppressors" radically redefined the political fields on

which self ascribed different "ethnic groups"⁴ dealt with one another. Whereas political life in Namibia was once dominated by relations between these groups and the central South African authorities, political life was now focused on relations *between* people of these different groups which were once universally subordinated by the old regime.

Of those issues which have come to the fore in "the new" Namibia, perhaps the issue of land redistribution and allocation is the most emotive since it tangibly effects the largest cross-section of the Namibian population. Arguments concerning entitlements to land are predominantly legitimated on historical grounds, with various groups (save, amongst a few others, the Omaheke Ju/'hoansi) constructing "official" histories tying people (and ethnic group) to place.

History plays a prominent role in Herero and Mbanderu political discourse and, scattered through the settlements running northward to Gam, I met several men who considered themselves experts in the "histories of the Herero and Mbanderu people". A remarkable feature of most of these Herero and Mbanderu historical narratives I heard was the almost complete erasure of the Ju/'hoansi as part of *their* history. While Ovambos, Namas, Germans and South Africans were all credited with an active role or place in these narratives, Ju/'hoansi, their neighbours since their migration into central Namibia, and previous sole inhabitants and undisputed owners of Hereroland East, remained so marginal to these narratives as to be unnoticeable.⁵ This erasure of Ju/'hoansi from Herero historical narratives is clearly evoked in one of the "official" histories of the Mbanderu, written and compiled by Theo Sundermeier and six Mbanderu elders, in which it is claimed that:

They [The Mbanderu] moved via Windhoek, Witvlei and Gobabis into present Botswana. . . *From Rietfontein east the whole Ghanzi plain was Mbanderu country. There were also Tswana living there, but both nations coexisted in*

⁴Although "unacceptable" as official rhetoric, political discourse in Namibia was saturated by the language of "ethnicity". South Africa's policy of "separate development" was not simply a matter of colour, but of "culture" and "language", as the administration saw it. Thus, homelands were established not only to separate white from "non-white", but also "non-white" from "non-white". A consequence of this forced separation of non-white groups was the reification of "ethnic" identities and the emergence of discourses through which ethnicity was regarded to be the key determinant of social relations (e.g. Vail 1988b:12-16).

⁵In Theo Sundermeier's collaboration with six Mbanderu elders in 1966 to produce a written account of Mbanderu history up until 1914, not a single mention of the Ju/'hoansi is made (Sundermeier et al 1966). Robert Gordon also notes this collective amnesia among Herero speakers (1992:174)

peace.⁶

(Sundemeir et al 1966:6 *my emphasis*)

Although, as we will see, certain events relating to their shared pasts have a place in the Herero historical imagination, they tend to be viewed as incidentals, footnotes appended to far grander historical moments. This process of erasure is especially telling in the context of the land debate as many of the areas to which Hereros lay inalienable claim are areas which were only regarded as Herero following the establishment of the Epukiro Reserve by the SWAA. While, on the one hand, the erasure of Ju/'hoansi from these historical narratives may be partially accounted for in terms of the current political ambitions of Hereros, especially with respect to land, on the other hand, however, this process of erasure must be seen to be part of a broader discursive strategy that has both produced and reproduced structural relations between Ju/'hoansi and Hereros.

When Herero speakers did not use Afrikaans label *Boesman*⁷ to refer to Ju/'hoansi, they were usually referred to by the label *OvaKuruha*. Unlike the term *Boesman*, which was mobilised in contexts in which the intention was often to signal Ju/'hoan social inferiority, the term *OvaKuruha* was not understood to have such blatantly negative connotations. Loosely translated the term means "first people" or, as one Herero man put it to me, "people who have always been here".⁸ The connotations implicit in this label were very similar to those implied in the Western notion of the "primitive", a term which itself was occasionally mobilised by Hereros when talking about Ju/'hoansi. In referring to Ju/'hoansi as *OvaKuruha*, to borrow words Wilmsen has used to criticise other anthropologists, Hereros granted Ju/'hoansi "antiquity whilst simultaneously denying them history".

By utilising this label to refer to Ju/'hoansi, Hereros cast Ju/'hoansi as atemporal beings, governed not by the twists and turns of history, but by timeless qualities thought to be inherent to them. Thus, the label itself, while not regarded as having explicitly negative connotations, contributed to the conceptual alienation of

⁶This migration was said to have taken place during the late eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries (Sundermeir et al 1966:7).

⁷The term *Boesman* was used by Herero in the form *Ovambusmana* (plural) or *Omubusmana* (sing.).

⁸There is some dispute concerning the etymology of the term *OvaKuruha*, and its genealogy as a label by which Herero speakers referred to Ju/'hoansi. I concur with Wilmsen (1989:28-31) who argues that the label preceded use of the label *Boesman*. (see also, Katjavivi 1988:1; Marshall 1976:17 etc.)

Ju/'hoansi, their construction as essentially different beings, as well as legitimating and thereby contributing to Ju/'hoan social marginalisation in the former reserve (see below). Paradoxically, through labelling Ju/'hoansi as *OvaKuruha*, Hereros openly acknowledged their prior occupancy, though, as we will see, not "ownership", of the northern Omaheke. By denying Ju/'hoansi "history" meant that, as far as Hereros were concerned, Ju/'hoansi had no legitimate claim to "own" any parts of the Omaheke. Mbaeva, my most enthusiastic Herero historical informant explained why:

The Bushmen may claim to be owners of this land because they were here first, but this is not their land, it is Mbanderu land. If the Bushmen were the owners of the land, then they would have stayed and fought instead of running away as they did when they saw the Mbanderu coming. The Mbanderu did not notice the Bushmen when we came. The idea that the Bushmen own this land is an idea of the whites to keep the blacks down.

With the issue of land foremost on the post-apartheid political agenda in Namibia, the erasure of Ju/'hoansi from Herero historical narratives was of clear benefit to Hereros and Mbanderus (the latter groups' main claims to land focusing around those areas of the Northern Omaheke once occupied almost exclusively by autonomous Ju/'hoan polities). Through doing so, a long and complex history of conflict and co-operation between Ju/'hoansi and Hereros has been peripheralised and reconstructed in terms which constitute Ju/'hoansi as weak, submissive and marginal to the history of Namibia.

Resistance and Change

During the brief rainy season, which would usually last from December to March each year, the Omaheke gave off the appearance of a cattleman's paradise. The camel-thorn acacia forests, cleaned of the dust that accumulated over the windy dry months would radiate opulence, while the grass beneath them would stretch greenly towards the sky. Water was usually plentiful during these months, with seasonal rivers flowing and the various *pits* (water-holes) and pans brimming with clean, clear water. This opulence, however, was deceptive and belied the many hazards to cattle farming in the Omaheke.

The dry seasons were often ruthless and, prior to the arrival of the white settlers with their windmills and Lister Diesel engines, it was virtually impossible to find enough water to slake the thirst of a herd of cattle during these months. Moreover, as the dry seasons advanced and the edible grasses would dehydrate and lose their

lustre, the lethal ever green leaves of the *gifblaar* (poison-flower)⁹ would often prove too tempting to cattle who would eat them with glee unaware that as soon as they watered again, the toxic agents in the plant would activate, resulting in a painful death for the beast.

During the nineteenth century, Ju/'hoan control over these areas was nigh absolute, and those few others who shared the vast stretches of the Kaukaveld with them tended to be attached to Ju/'hoan groups and, in some cases, if Galton's observations are correct, were subordinated by them (Galton in Gordon 1992:16).¹⁰ Similarly, when the explorer James Chapman, while looking for a route from Lake Ngami, in what is now Botswana, eastwards to the Omatoko Omuramba, attempted to cross over the northern Omaheke Kaukaveld in 1862 he observed that the Bushmen of this part of the Kalahari were more "independent" and "fearless" than any others he had seen (Guenther 1994:1).¹¹

The white farmers who settled in the Omaheke during the first thirty years of the twentieth century were not the first to attempt to settle permanently on Ju/'hoan land.¹² The Herero-Nama wars of the 1860s, and later the Herero-German War of 1904 resulted in large numbers of impoverished Herero (OvaTjimba) attempting to settle in the predominantly Ju/'hoan areas north of Gobabis. However, their efforts to settle in these areas were often met with fierce resistance by some Ju/'hoan bands whose poison arrows were sufficient to discourage any further attempts at permanent settlement for the meantime. Older Ju/'hoansi claimed to remember that there were few others who were permanently settled in the Omaheke prior to the 1920s, a point made succinctly by /'Engn!au who reminisced that:

In the old days, there were very few Herero in the Kaukaveld [Omaheke].

⁹*Dychphetalum cymosum*.

¹⁰Both Ju/'hoan and G/obanin (Damara) oral histories suggest that it was not unusual for others, particularly G/obanin and even impoverished Herero, to attach themselves to Ju/'hoan bands in the Omaheke. Galton refers to Ju/'hoan vassals as "Ghou Damup" (in Gordon 1992:16) a label clearly derived from the Ju/'hoan term for the G/obanin; *G!au Tamah* ("blacks who gather").

¹¹In a recent article, Guenther (1994) has argued a convincing case for Bushman political and economic autonomy and control over the Omaheke and much of the adjacent Ghanzi district during this period. See also Wilmsen (1989:103 -109).

¹²While Ju/'hoan dominance in these areas was largely undisputed, it was not unusual for Mbanderu, Nama and Tswana to spend time hunting and occasionally herding in the northern Omaheke. However, for the most part these groups remained on the peripheries of the northern Omaheke. While the Oorlam-Nama who had set up their capital at Gobabis in 1845 hunted between Gobabis and Rietfontein, well south of the northern Omaheke; the Tswana remained primarily in the east towards Ghanzi and the Mbanderu stayed principally in the West and South. (Guenther 1994:25; Van Rooyen and Reiner 1995: 4-11).

When they came they first went to Post 3 [Epukiro] and Post 8 [Otjimanangombe]. Before this, they lived only in the West.

It was only in 1923, after 178,000 hectares of the largely waterless lands north of the Epukiro Omuramba were set aside as the Epukiro Native Reserve that Ju/'hoan autonomy in the northern Omaheke was seriously challenged. The South African controlled SWAA had, following the end of the First World War, decided to bring its League of Nations mandated colony, South West Africa, into line with its broader policies on race and labour and declared that "native reserves" were to be established in SWA in order that:

married women and children should live in the reserves and have the benefit of milk from the cattle . . . [and] men should go out like the natives of the Transvaal [to work on the white owned farms and industries] and leave their women at home in the reserve until they return home.

(ADM 330 cited in Adams & Werner 1990:8)

In the year of its declaration the Herero speaking population in the Epukiro Reserve was officially noted as 53, a number which grew rapidly to 1503 by 1926 and, by 1934, reached a total in excess of three thousand inhabitants. In response to this rapid growth in population, the SWAA expanded the size of the Reserve proclaiming that areas further to the north and east of the Epukiro Omuramba were now part of the reserve. The drilling of boreholes in these otherwise dry areas which could not sustain large numbers of livestock, resulted in Hereros encroaching further and further into what were once exclusively Ju/'hoan *n!oresi*. The arrival of the Hereros in such numbers brought mixed reactions from the Ju/'hoansi, some of whom regarded their presence as a blessing of sorts. In return for labour, Hereros offered the opportunity for Ju/'hoansi to have greater access to certain highly valued commodities such as tobacco, dagga (marijuana), iron, milk and meat, and consequently, a degree of security during the sometimes very tough dry seasons.¹³ Despite these possible benefits, many Ju/'hoansi resisted the encroachment of Hereros and others onto their lands, establishing a pattern of conflict with Hereros which continued long after active, organised resistance to white settlement further south had ceased. /Engn!au captured

¹³Many Ju/'hoansi developed a taste for these commodities during the nineteenth century, when the ostrich feather and ivory trade (in which Ju/'hoansi played a small but significant part, boomed) (Gordon 1992:33-42; Wilmsen 1989:121).

the tension between conflict and the possible benefits brought by large scale Herero settlement when he remembered that:

At-tat-tat-tat-tat, the Hereros killed many Ju/'hoansi in the time when I was very small and even before I was born, many Ju/'hoansi. My father and mother lived in Epukiro and we would always hear about fighting in the reserve. . . . When I was a little bigger, I went to live in Otjinene and grew up among the Hereros and spoke only the Herero language. . . . They [the Hereros] were much better then they are today; they gave us food and milk, they were like the Tswanas are today. . . . I do not know why they are so bad now.

Being largely independent at a band level, Ju/'hoan resistance to Herero settlers was a haphazard affair and was mostly directed at the Herero settlers economy through stealing, killing and maiming the new settlers' livestock.¹⁴ Conflict was more frequent in the dry seasons, during which the presence of Herero stock and their owners was most acutely felt. Hereros, like the Ju/'hoansi, were fond of game meat and their hunting dramatically affected numbers of wild game while their cattle depleted the stocks of bush foods on which Ju/'hoansi depended.¹⁵ This was further exacerbated by the fact that, during these seasons, both Ju/'hoan and Herero populations tended to congregate within the vicinity of the few available water sources thereby concentrating the competition for resources over these months. Indeed, the newly drilled boreholes at Epukiro Post 3 and Post 1 were a great temptation to local Ju/'hoansi. This increasing competition for resources ostensibly left Ju/'hoansi with two options; either to work for the Hereros during dry seasons, or attempt to maintain exclusive control over resources. !A/'ae, on rendering his extremely concise history of Ju/'hoan conflict and co-operation with Hereros, claimed that land was a key to galvanising Ju/'hoan resistance to Herero encroachment:

In the old times [see Chapter 6], the Ju/'hoansi were stronger than the Hereros; that poison [i.e. poison arrows] made them scared. At first, Ju/'hoansi did not fight back [when Hereros came to settle], but after a while when they saw that

¹⁴While there is ample evidence to suggest that at times Ju/'hoansi organised themselves into larger groups with which to deal with outsiders, localised band level "resistance" was the norm (see Chapter 1 & Guenther 1994).

¹⁵In the Aminuis reserve, south of Gobabis (Hereroland East area 2), a population of some 3000 Herero managed to all but eradicate an estimated population of one million springbok since 1956.

the Hereros wanted to steal their land and waste them, then the Ju/'hoansi fought.

Many Ju/'hoansi, however, chose to adapt to these changing circumstances and ended up working for Hereros during the dry seasons, while continuing to forage and hunt during the wet seasons. In many respects, working for Hereros was considered to be preferable to working for whites as the working relationship was predominantly one of pragmatism, with few Hereros feeling that they had any obligation to beat Ju/'hoansi into a "civilised" submission on a regular basis, or feeling that Ju/'hoansi should be held back from hunting and foraging when the opportunity arose. As the Gobabis magistrate observed in 1927:

My experience is that it is customary for Hereros and Bechuanas [BaTswana] to have Bushmen . . . working for them, and it appears that. . . [they] prefer to work for natives [rather] than whites.

(SWAA 411; 2/15)

In spite of the fact that Ju/'hoansi apparently "preferred" to work for Hereros rather than whites, between 1923 and 1927 a series of letters from Reserve Superintendent Greaterex reported of Ju/'hoansi killing significant numbers of Herero stock in the newly declared reserve. Furthermore, an "unknown" Ju/'hoan, apparently from Rietfontein in the east, had threatened to kill any Herero crossing a line running north to south just a few miles East of "where the Epukiro and Alexeck Omurambas meet" at Otjimanangombe (SWAA 411 26/05/26). Although a patrol was dispatched to seek out the guilty Ju/'hoansi in this "*uninhabited* country north of Steinhausen (my italics)", it did little to satisfy the Hereros who, under the leadership of Headman Hoveka, undertook a mission to Gobabis to demand that they be given permission to carry assegais (spears) in order to defend themselves and their stock from Ju/'hoansi. Herero dissatisfaction with the SWAA's efforts to protect them from Ju/'hoansi was made emphatically by Headman Hoveka who explained to the Gobabis magistrate that:

Bushmen have bows and arrows, but we have none. When they killed one of our people we were only four, and four not so brave as the one who was killed. If we try to catch them they will kill us.

In the year preceding Hovekas' deputation to the Gobabis magistrate and subsequently, ^{the} Native Commissioner, the Herero settlers had a difficult time of things. In excess of 30 Herero stock had been reported stolen or killed, and one man, known to the official record as the "Native Naphtalie", had been killed when pursuing Ju/'hoan "stock thieves" near Otjimanagombe. One of the key points raised by Headman Hoveka was the lack of action taken by the administration in response to what were officially classified as "Bushman depredations" in the Epukiro Reserve. There were no police stationed in the reserve at that time, and the only government representatives permanently stationed there were the reserve superintendent and his postal "runner". The main problem, however, as far as Hoveka was concerned, lay in the fact that when Ju/'hoansi were caught and taken to the reserve superintendent for prosecution, they were always let-off with a reprimand because superintendent felt that Ju/'hoansi were "too uncivilised" to understand the gravity of their crimes. Often, it was those Ju/'hoansi who had conceded to live among and work for Hereros that were responsible for "depredations" against them and their livestock, a point made clearly by Headman Hoveka at his meeting with the Native Commissioner in 1927:

The Bushmen who do wrong first live among us and then do wrong and leave the locality where they have done wrong and go to another part of the reserve and stay with other natives. The wild Bushmen live far out¹⁶ and come for tobacco, get some and leave again. So far we have had no trouble with wild Bushmen.

(SWAA 411 2/15)

In all likelihood the "tame" Ju/'hoansi who were proving such a problem for Headman Hoveka had been "wild" not three or four years previously, prior to the arrival of the Herero at Epukiro. Indeed, part of the administration's reluctance to punish Ju/'hoansi these "depredations" was due to the fact that they perceived that Herero ill-treatment of Ju/'hoan workers justified Ju/'hoan actions.

Although the administration acted swiftly and, in some cases, mercilessly when white farmers felt threatened by Ju/'hoansi, this was clearly not the case in the

¹⁶At this time the size of the reserve was only some ten percent of the total area that the reserve was to extend to in 1965.

native reserves. The administration felt that it could ill afford to use its stretched resources to police "non-white" areas which were inhabited by largely "uncivilised" people amongst whom conflict was understood to be a "natural" part of life. Moreover, on another level, it was widely felt that the "arrogant" Hereros neither needed, nor deserved substantial protection from the state, since they appeared reject many of its key institutions such as "labour". The administrations' mood was captured by Heinrich Vedder, the apologist ethnographer who, in 1928 wrote of the Herero that:

It is very regrettable that the sensible among them were intimidated by the terrorism of those who called themselves leaders, for their influence may have had a good effect. The general urge is to flock together in the reserves, if possible in order to rear an unlimited amount of cattle, as their forefathers had done, to reintroduce ancestor worship and to escape the domination of the white man. The present government has, with prudence, great forbearance and regardless of expense, tried its utmost to bring the irreconcilable to their senses and take into account the wishes of the Herero people.

(Vedder 1966:163)

Consequently, antagonism between Hereros and Ju/'hoansi was largely ignored at an administrative level with the result that active Ju/'hoan resistance to others continued in the reserve areas long after it had ceased in the commercial farming block to the south. The fact that the administration had neither the will nor, apparently, the means to police the area meant that, in November 1933, contrary to the flow of policy for the rest of the colony, the Native Commissioner, Courtney Clark, authorised some Hereros to be armed with assegais.

In spite of Courtney Clark's concessions to allow Hereros to carry weapons, Ju/'hoan "depredations" in the reserve did not let up. The colonial record indicates that during the 1930s and 1940s conflict was, if anything, more intense than during the 1920s. The reserve population had continued to increase at a significant rate, thereby increasing competition for land and resources. On one occasion, at Post 8 in 1937, Ju/'hoansi were said to have stolen vast amounts of tobacco (valued over fourteen pounds), killed two horses and a cow with poisoned arrows, stabbed one horse with a spear and made off with four head of cattle (SWAA 411 5/C/47). Although occasional patrols were sent into reserve during this time in order to investigate these cases of

“stock theft and malicious injury to property”, struggles between Ju/’hoansi and Herero occupants of the Reserve were left to take their own course with very little direct involvement by police or Government.

Labour and Transformation

Despite the cycle of conflict and co-operation that characterised relations between Ju/’hoansi and Hereros, it was not the activities of the police, nor victory in battle that ultimately tamed the “wild Bushmen” of the Epukiro reserves, rather it was the gradual erosion of the possibility of independent subsistence through foraging and hunting. As the reserve population increased, it was extended further northwards and eastwards into the arid plains and dunes of the Omaheke. As the reserve boundaries were extended, boreholes were drilled, some as deep as seventy or eighty metres into the soft sands of the desert, in order to provide enough water to sustain the increasing herds of cattle that provided the foundations to the Herero economy. Thus, while the bushfoods that were the Ju/’hoan staple were rooted out and munched by Herero livestock, the wild game which provided the most highly valued of Ju/’hoan food-stuffs (Bieseke 1993: 91-92), were either hunted out or retreated northwards and eastwards towards Gam and Tsumkwe. Consequently, although it was predominantly during the dry seasons that Ju/’hoansi and Herero were most antagonistic towards one another, it was also during these seasons that Ju/’hoansi came to depend most on employment from the Hereros in order to survive.

There was another important dynamic which drew Ju/’hoansi into Herero households as labourers during dry seasons. One of the main reasons for the establishment of the reserve system had been so that male labour could be drawn to the mines and industries in the “white” areas of Namibia, leaving women and children and unemployed males to maintain the “traditional” cattle-based economies in the reserves. In Hereroland East, as with the other native reserves in Namibia, a consequence of this was the increasing importance of the role of women in the domestic economy (Hishongwa 1992). However, unlike in other areas of Namibia a further consequence of this in the Herero reserves was the emergence of a “underclass” of workers who stepped in to replace the lost labour value of absent men.¹⁷

¹⁷Similar processes took place in several other areas in southern Africa from whence male labour was drawn. As far as other Bushmen were concerned, Edwin Wilmsen and Pnina Motzafi-Haller document similar processes whereby Ju/’hoan labour was used to fill the role of absent males in Tswana households in Botswana. While Wilmsen focuses on the broader political and economic processes which established the conditions which allowed the system to evolve, Motzafi-Haller focuses principally on the reproduction of

Ju/'hoansi, for whom independent subsistence had become increasingly difficult, came to form the bulk of this underclass, plugging up the gaps left by absent male householders in the Herero domestic economy. What was once seasonal came to be permanent as, in the years following the Odendaal Commission in 1965, the last vestiges of Ju/'hoan autonomy in the Omaheke were lost with the incorporation of the vast Rietfontein Block into Hereroland East. Over the preceding years the Herero population of the reserve had continued to increase at a steady rate such that by 1960s it had increased above the 5000 mark. Partly in response to this, and acting on Odendaal's recommendations, the administration expanded the territory of the former reserve to a total area in excess of three million hectares. Although much of the land incorporated into the reserve at this time was largely waterless, those areas which could support stock were immediately settled by Hereros with the backing of the state. Since the few areas in Rietfontein with water were the areas which were occupied by Ju/'hoansi (who, unlike the G/wi of Botswana, were not able to live on tswana melons), Ju/'hoansi living in these areas also came to depend almost exclusively on year round employment offered by Hereros, or work on the commercial farms.

One of the fundamental differences between Hereros and white farmers lay in how they constructed and institutionalised their relationships with those who worked for them. While it was often the case (certainly at the time of my fieldwork) that there were clear material benefits to be had by working for white farmers rather than Hereros, many Ju/'hoansi chose to work for the latter because of the more flexible and less authoritarian working relationship with them.¹⁸ Because Hereros, unlike many white-farmers, did not consider themselves as ambassadors of enlightenment, nor as transformative agents of "inferior" beings the relationship between them and their workers was considerably easier going, with violence playing a very marginal role in its administration and institutionalisation. Although the Ju/'hoan body was required to be "docile" in order that it did what was required of it, it was not constituted as a site of discipline, and violence was not seen to be necessary in order to retain or restrain it. If anything, the working relationship between Hereros and their Ju/'hoan vassals in the reserves was characteristically voluntary insofar as Ju/'hoansi were generally free

the system within the Tswana domestic cycle (Wilmsen and Vossen 1989:19-20; Motzafi-Haller 1986)

¹⁸In the years immediately preceding and following Namibian Independence, cash wages became the norm on most farms. While not all farmers paid cash wages, and some continued to take advantage of the Ju/'hoansi's ignorance of their legal rights, many farmers attempted to bring their operations into line with the legislation laid out in the new Labour Act (1992). However, since no minimum wage was as yet required by the act, Ju/'hoan wages remained paltry.

to leave their employers at an time they chose.¹⁹

Unlike on the white farms, workers would often eat and socialise with their Herero employers. Furthermore, it was common practise for many employees to refer to their employers by name, or by the labels *meme* and *tate* (mother and father), and for employers to representationally model their relationship with long-term workers through metaphors of kinship.²⁰ Herero farmers consciously avoided constructing their relationship with workers in same language as that used on the commercial farms. For any workers to refer to their Herero employer as *baas* was to use the "language of the oppressor" and was forbidden. As one Herero man explained:

They must not call me Baas, because if they do it is the same as saying that we are like these Boers. Sometimes a Bushman will call me Baas and this makes me angry, we have no *Baaskap* here. . . They can call me *meneer* [mister] or by my name that is best. . . yes, and sometimes they can also call me *tate* [father].

Although the self-conscious avoidance of the rhetoric of *Baaskap*, partially challenged the appearance of Herero dominance over the "outsiders" living in the reserves from which their labour was drawn (see below), in real terms, it did little to improve the lot for those people working for them. While on one level, working for Hereros had certain clear benefits in terms of the relative ease of the relationship, in material terms, working in the reserves was not as rewarding as working on the white owned farms. Dabe, a Ju/'hoan, who had since found work on a white owned farm south of Gobabis, described working for a senior Herero in Post 3:

I did all the livestock work for him and the fencing but I never got any money, just food which I ate at their fire. During the day I'd do lots of different jobs and when I was finished, then they'd give me *tombo* (alcohol). Later I'd be drunk and then I would go and sleep, but I had to wake up early-around six in the morning-to make the fire. Then after this his wife would wake up and we would make the coffee before I would start to work again. . . .

¹⁹Even though some Hereros retained labour through devices such as peonage, I knew of no instances where Ju/'hoan labour was forcibly retained in this way. If anything it appears that Ju/'hoansi were appreciated as a disposable mass of available labour which could be retained on a short term basis.

²⁰In cases where young men were employed from an early age as *ovangure*, they were occasionally adopted into their employer's household, usually as a son. It was rare, however, for such a reward to be granted to a Ju/'hoan.

The availability of this cheap year-round labour for Hereros had marked benefits for those living in the Herero Reserves. While residents of many other so called native reserves struggled to maintain their domestic economies, many Herero households could depend, not only on income generated from work in the mining and industrial sectors, but also could rely on whatever additional capital (symbolic and material) may be generated from farming in the communal areas. As a result, by the time of independence, Hereros were to emerge as the wealthiest (in terms of livestock capital) of all of Namibia's communal farmers.²¹

This reliance on outsiders for cheap labour was encouraged by the fact that the supply of labour continued to grow. Population growth in conjunction with changing employment practices after Odendaal meant that increasingly fewer generational farm workers could consider their place on farms as secure. Due to group areas and vagrancy legislation²² farm workers without an "employer" were expected to return immediately to their homeland. Ju/'hoan labourers, who ostensibly had no homeland, had to take refuge in the reserves, usually gravitating to the larger settlements from where farmers could pick up any labour they needed, usually in return for the promise of food. For many of these Ju/'hoansi, the communal areas were considered to be a stop off point between employment on the white-owned commercial farms.

Ethnicity, Class and Labour

The relationship between ethnogenesis and the processes of class formation has emerged as a key issue of debate in Khoisan studies and, more broadly, the anthropology of southern Africa (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 49-67; Vail 1988:3-5). In recent years, the dominant trend in anthropology has been to consider ethnic consciousness as a product of political process and, more specifically, the incorporation and marginalisation of certain groups within unified systems. The notion that class relations precede and determine ethnic relations is central to the revisionist critique of Khoisan studies, in which Edwin Wilmsen argues that Bushmen "represent a historically created position in the intersection of processes of ethnogenesis and class formation taking place in Botswana and Namibia" (Wilmsen and Denbow 1990: 519)

²¹According to the 1992 Economic survey of the "Eastern Communal Areas" Hereros owned on average 44 large stock units (LSU's) per household (Iken et al 1992).

²²Vagrancy legislation was central to SWAA policy as a means to both regulate "black" bodies in white spaces as well as to provide a means of further ensuring a steady flow of labour to white farms where it was needed most (Hayes et al. in press).

In this respect, his thesis is attuned to the Comaroffs, who argue that:

Totemism emerges with the establishment of symmetrical relations between similar social groupings [and] *ethnicity* has its origins in the asymmetric incorporation of structurally dissimilar groupings in a unified political economy (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:54; *my emphasis*).

As much as I am broadly in agreement that there is a correlation between ethnic consciousness and the production of class relations in the Omaheke, the evidence here suggests that Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke were stigmatised and "othered" in distinctly ethnic terms prior to their incorporation as an "underclass" within the nineteenth and twentieth century Namibian political economy. Hence, in this case, ethnic consciousness preceded class formation and, as we shall see, provided a conceptual framework for the establishment of them. My reasons for arguing this are several. Firstly, as I have already made clear, because the pattern of relations between Herero and Ju/'hoansi up until the last sixty odd years of this century, although articulated in "ethnic" terms do not suggest that Ju/'hoansi were widely subordinate to the economic or political hegemony of Herero speakers. Secondly, because Ju/'hoan incorporation into the Herero political economy was itself mediated on ethnic grounds, and, thirdly because, as we will see, the processes of economic segmentation among Herero speakers were not considered to affect the Herero identity of those affected by these processes.

"That Work is for Bushmen and Ovambos"

Following independence, unemployment in the former reserve areas was high enough to be visibly conspicuous. Apart from the Ju/'hoansi who hovered around the *ozorondonda*, there were a number of young Herero who would spend much of their time hanging out around the two main Post 3 shops, and the newly established "Hair and Beauty Salon Night-Club-Shebeen-House" with not much to do. Many young Herero speakers expressed little interest in continuing to work in the "traditional" manner on their father's farms where they had no immediate rights to livestock and, in many cases, no cash incomes, preferring instead unemployment with the prospect of wage labour. Many older Hereros lamented the "state" of their youth, who are considered to be without initiative, lazy and, in many cases, criminal.

Cash and "modern" commodities have emerged as a far more valued symbols to many younger Hereros, who as one man put it to me, "are more interested in



Plate 4.2 Mbaeva, the local historian

televisions and luxury cars than cattle". However, despite the lament of their elders, most young men still valued cattle highly, albeit that it clearly jostled for space amongst luxury cars and television sets in their value hierarchies. Although most young Hereros were aware that they were likely to inherit livestock from their parents or mother's brother and, to a degree, relied on this, most considered working on the family farm to be unrewarding. Added to this, working on the family farm was considered to be not only financially unrewarding in the short term, but was also lowly valued as an activity. As one young Herero man (well out of earshot of his father) put it, "that work [i.e. farm labour] is the Bushmen and the Ovambos". For many young men, working on one's father's farm was seen as a last ditch option and was tacitly regarded by those with outside cash incomes as a sign of failure, while simultaneously, the ability to acquire stock or cash before one inherited, was tacitly esteemed.

The fact that certain types of work were regarded to be the preserve of "Bushmen and Ovambos" indicates the extent to which cheap, specifically non-Herero, labour came to be central to Herero consciousness through playing such a pivotal role in the formation of the contemporary political-economy. At the time of my fieldwork, *ovangure* (workers) in the reserve were all considered to be *ovatua* (despised or inferior outsiders) by the Herero speaking residents. Indeed to be part of the class of *ovangure*, an individual had to be an *ovatua* "outsider", the assumption being that Hereros not of independent means would attach themselves to wealthier kinsmen who would support them and not necessarily ask for labour in return.

The correspondence between the categories *ovatua* and *ovangure* is significant as it suggests that Herero class categories are and were determined, at least to a certain extent, by ethnicity and the politics of inclusion and exclusion through which ethnic identity was articulated.²³

According to Mbaeva the use of *ovatua* as labourers was a central feature of precolonial relations between Herero and others in Namibia. In Mbaeva's own words, the utilisation of *ovatua* for labour was a form of "slavery". He explained to me that:

*Omungure*²⁴ is an old word from when Hereros found Bushmen and Damaras

²³Wilmsen (1989:29) cites several different interpretations of the term *ovatua*. He also reports that, in contrast to Mbaeva and other Herero and Mbanderu in the Omaheke that, that Mbanderu in /Ae/Ae (in Botswana) claimed that Ju/'hoansi were not considered *ovatua*. but were simply referred to as *OvaKuruha*. He also notes that etymologically, the proto-Bantu root *-tua* has been translated as meaning pigmy or Bushman.

²⁴*Omu* - is the singular suffix to the root *-ngure* of the plural term *ovangure*. Similarly the term *omutua* is the singular of *Ovatua*.

and went to catch them and make them work for nothing. . . . If they were ill or would not work, they would be killed and that is why we lost this country to the whites; it was a punishment for killing *omungure*.

Writing in 1928 Vedder (1928:193) similarly noted that:

The Herero have never had slaves in the proper sense of the word. But they regard the wondering Berg-dama and Bushmen as subject to them when they can bring them^m under their sway, and make them their herdsmen. Sometimes they treat them cruelly; it depends greatly on the attitude of the servant who cannot become free again unless he flees, neither can his children be emancipated, nor may he be sold to other members of the tribe.²⁵

Ovangure and Ethnicity

A recurring feature of Herero historical process has been segmentation on the basis of economic class whereby cattleless sectors of Herero society were "othered". Following the Herero-Nama wars, the Herero-German war and the rinderpest epidemic of 1897, significant numbers of Herero had their herds decimated, resulting in upheavals in the Herero social hierarchy. Those who lost their cattle and were thereby impoverished came to be considered *omundu iriri* (unimportant people), whereas those who retained their cattle, or re-established their herds quickly emerged as *omundo omuhona* (masters). Although these transformations meant that at certain times many Herero were no better off than the *ovatus* from whom cheap labour was drawn, impoverished Herero were still considered to be ethnically Herero. This meant that these Herero were not excluded from exchange and inheritance networks or denied the opportunity to re-establish their status. Thus, while poorer Hereros often contributed labour to the households which supported them, they were generally not thought to be *ovangure* because they were not *ovatus*. Writing in 1928, Vedder (1966:163) noted that:

The Hereros strongly differentiate the *omundo omuhona* (masters) and *omundu iriri* (unimportant people). This is the difference that exists between

²⁵It is likely that Vedder was dramatically overstating this case to highlight the "savagery" of the Herero in order to legitimate their colonial subordination. Concerning Vedder's histories, Lau (1995b:3) has argued convincingly that they "should. . . be seen as a piece of work which is essentially apologetic of colonial rule in its oppressive and violent aspects", and furthermore, that "It tries to explain, justify and idealise the colonisation of Namibia by both Germany and South Africa to absurd lengths" (*ibid.*).

the propertied classes and the proletariat all over the world. One who possesses a herd of cattle which he calls his own is called master. One who has not acquired or inherited cattle is of no importance. It is compulsory for such a person to throw in his lot with an owner of property, who is generally a wealthy man to who he is related in some way or another.

Economic class was therefore understood to be something which could be superimposed on ethnicity, but which could not usurp the place of ethnicity. Thus, while ethnicity might, in some cases, determine class, in this context, class certainly did not determine ethnicity.

Within the all encompassing underclass category of *ovangure* an ethnic hierarchy evolved, ratified by various stereotypes, by virtue of which, as on the commercial farms, Ju/'hoansi were considered to constitute the lowest segment of this class. As much as the discursive dominance of these stereotypes was ensured by the economic dominance of Hereros over the various *ovatua* in the Omaheke, these stereotypes were not articulated in exclusively economic terms nor, as I have made clear, did they find their genesis in unequal economic relations as some anthropologists have suggested (Wilmsen 1989:130-148; Wilmsen and Denbow 1990:489-524).

While Hereros principally utilised Ju/'hoansi to satisfy their labour requirements, in more recent years, labour has come to be drawn from other quarters. With the demise of legislation designed to prevent people from different "ethnic" backgrounds mixing, the Hereroland East labour market was radically transformed as lower tier labour came to be drawn from further afield. In recent years, Ovambos, Kavangos and OvaHimba have all come to play an increasingly more significant role in the Herero economy. Moreover, with many Herero farmers seeking to "commercialise" their farming operations, part of which involves employing "reliable" and "responsible" labourers, traits which were not seen to apply to Ju/'hoansi, fewer and fewer of the Ju/'hoan population in the former reserve came to find employment there on a permanent or even semi-permanent basis. Consequently, many came to depend on piece-meal work in order to survive while others found more permanent and lucrative employment (Suzman 1995a). One of the reasons for this lay in the increasingly commercial attitude to labour adopted by some Hereros in the years immediately preceding and following independence.

The Commoditisation of Labour

Writing of the Tshidi, the Comaroffs have argued that work, "was not an abstract quality or a thing to be exchanged. It simply could not exist in the form of a commodity, as alienable "labour value" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992:133). It seems likely that similar ideas were held by Hereros prior to and during the earlier years of German and South African colonisation. Writing in 1928, Vedder alludes to the decommo­ditised nature of labour among Hereros "of the old type":

Labour in the European sense is unknown to the Herero. According to him, the white man makes unnecessary work whereby he only worries himself and others. . . . There is no such thing as *manual labour* among Herero of the old type, that is to say, no Herero who has learnt to do something special will work for remuneration for another.

(Vedder 1983:183)

Because labour relationships outside the reserves were conceptually segregated from those within the reserve Hereros often represented the relationship between themselves and their Ju/'hoan workers as mutually convenient and reciprocally balanced. As Mbaeva argued:

When the Bushmen came to stay with us we gave them food, milk, tobacco, many things and they would work. The same Bushman would also work for us every year because we would know them.

During the years immediately following the declaration of the Epukiro reserve, the use of outside labour by Hereros was regarded as, above all, a relationship between people with respect to work, with the norm being that Ju/'hoan *ovangure* would return to the same families year by year thereby sustaining a relationship on a generational basis.

By the time of my fieldwork, however, labour occupied a curious position in the Herero cultural cosmology. Many Hereros and, to a lesser extent, Ju/'hoansi had been active in the cash economy for some time, selling their labour and other commodities to whites on the commercial farms, mines and industries that sprung up after the First World War. While the advent of independence itself caused the most evident rupture in the structural continuity of discourses which opposed life in reserves to life in white areas, the integrity of these oppositions had already been challenged by the fact the cash economy had insinuated itself into reserve life at a multiplicity of levels. This was most clearly shown by the fact that several wealthier Herero farmers

had been seeking to break down the conceptual boundaries separating the reserves and the white farms by commercialising their operations through the introduction of private land tenure in the reserves during the 1980s. The move towards private tenure was indicative of broader changes in the reserve whereby the cash economy was coming to play an increasingly more important role in reserve life. Even though livestock continued to provide the most important form of symbolic capital, it could no longer be completely divorced from its cash value. Thus, by the time I lived in the Omaheke, many things- cattle included- were inseparable from their market value. Indeed, the weekly auction and permit sales days became established social occasions in the larger settlements in the former native reserve. The wealthier farmers in the former reserve, being those who managed most effectively to mediate between the cash and cattle economies, skilfully playing each off against the other to their benefit in both. As such, cash was to emerge as an important and pervasive measure of value in the reserves.

Because the more commercially oriented Herero farmers saw themselves as competing in the market place with white farmers, they were keen to seek out and retain highly-skilled "quality" labour. Since, towards the end of the 1980s, cash wages given in addition to rations had become the norm on most commercial farms this meant that Hereros had to offer cash in order to attract the more skilled of the work force.

Furthermore, land dispossession, population growth and increased movement of Ju/'hoansi and other *ovatua* between commercial and communal areas meant that there was an ever present pool of people from which cheap labour could be drawn when required. With such an abundance of potential labourers available on a year round basis, labour relationships became considerably more commoditised and congruently, depersonalised, with specific jobs being offered for specific rewards measured in cash terms. Indeed, it was no longer necessary for most Hereros to retain individuals as permanent labourers as there were always Ju/'hoansi around to do whatever needed to be done in return for a small reward. Maria, a young Herero friend of mine, captured this state of affairs well when she explained:

You can just say "Hey, Bushman! Get up and go and get me some water and I will give you porridge," and he goes because what else can he do? He is hungry.

For longer term work such as fencing or cattle herding at distant *ozohambo* (cattle posts), verbal contracts based on cash payments became the norm. Prices were agreed

for work to be done, which although rarely paid in full, became the basis of labour exchange²⁶. Labour was largely thought of in abstract terms as a thing which could be bought or exchanged. In other words, where labour had once been conceived of as something that existed by virtue of interpersonal relations, interpersonal relations between Herero and their *ovangure* came to be viewed as a thing that existed by virtue of the latter's labour.

The Construction of Difference

In 1927, at his meeting with the Native Commissioner to complain of Bushman depredations, Headman Hoveka of the Epukiro Reserve, most likely tiring of the commissioner's paternalistic replies to his queries exclaimed:

Bushmen are snakes and we don't want them! We used to want them but not now. Tame Bushmen are the ones who have murdered our people and killed our stock.

(SWAA 411; 2/15; 30 May 1927))

Hovekas' exclamation that Ju/'hoansi were "snakes", and specifically that it was "tame" Ju/'hoansi that were snakes, was a good deal more involved than the native commissioner took it to be. As with many others around the world, snakes did not enjoy a good reputation among Hereros. The appearance of a snake in anyone's *onganda* (homestead) would usually cause quite a commotion until such time as the snake was caught, destroyed and buried in the bush. All snakes were considered to dangerous and malicious beasts which had links with the murky and dangerous "netherworld" that existed outside the safe, domesticated space of the *onganda*. Their appearance within the *onganda*, or in the proximity of the *okuruuo* (holy fire)²⁷ was understood to be both physically and ritually threatening.

Given the problems that Hoveka and his fellow settlers in the new Epukiro reserve were having with Ju/'hoansi, the metaphor of the "snake" seemed very appropriate. Like snakes, Ju/'hoansi were understood to have access to powerful poisons which they would use to their own ends. Furthermore, also like snakes,

²⁶See Suzman (1995a:29-48) for a fuller account of labour relations in the former reserves.

²⁷The *okuruuo* was the central feature of any *onganda*. It lay between the *ondjumo onene* (main house) and the *otjunda* (calf pens) and provided the ritual focus of *oruzon* (see below) life, serving as the home to the *oruzo* ancestors. According to Sundermeier (57-59) the term *okuruuo* itself comes from the term *eruwo* meaning "great house".

Ju/hoansi were thought to have links with the dangerous netherworldly space of the bush. Snakes were also considered to be essentially treacherous and untrustworthy things who, at the "dawn of time", had betrayed Herero trust after having been welcomed warmly into the *onganda*. Writing, a few years after Hovekas' meeting with the Gobabis magistrate, the Dutch ethnographer Luttig recounted a Herero myth in which the "children of Karunga [The first Hereros]. . . attempted to use the serpent to cure the first people and how this failed because the creature killed the cattle" (Luttig 1933:16). Like the serpent that the "children of Karunga" brought in to assist them, the "tame Bushmen", who had come to assist the early settlers in Epukiro, betrayed them and treacherously killed their livestock.

Although, given the circumstances of Ju/hoansi in the former reserve at the time of my fieldwork, Hereros were more likely to compare them to the semi-feral dogs, fighting, begging and stealing scraps of food, that roamed the larger settlements, many of the connotations implicit in Hovekas' metaphor of the snake still had a certain resonance. Ju/hoansi were considered to be fundamentally untrustworthy and unreliable beings with an inalienable association with "dangerous" spaces the bush. This association was often represented in the spatial layout of the *onganda*. Whereas Ovambo and Kavango *ovangure*, who were thought to have no such connections with the netherworld, were usually given a junior kinsman's house, well inside the *onganda* in which to sleep, Ju/hoan *ovangure* were usually expected to live on the periphery of the *onganda*, in the liminal zone between the safe, domestic space of the household and the wild, magical and dangerous space of the bush.²⁸

As much as Hoveka's use of the word "tame" to describe Ju/hoansi who worked for Hereros was most likely deployed in order to speak in terms which the magistrate would understand, the use of the terms "wild" and "tame" fitted in well with pre-existing discourses articulated by Hereros concerning Ju/hoansi. For Hereros, like their neighbours on the communal farms, Ju/hoansi were considered to have an ambiguous relationship with humankind through having some sort of essential connection with the undomesticated and dangerous space of the bush, a connection implied in the label *OvaKuruha*. Neither "tame" nor "wildness" were considered to be absolute states and Ju/hoansi were understood to be trapped in a constant tension between their "essential" wildness and the tameness imposed on them by circumstances. Thus even though Ju/hoansi, when working for Hereros or whites,

²⁸The fact that, prior to Ju/hoansi losing their autonomy, they had been powerful and dangerous enemies for Hereros, played a central role in the constitution of the Herero image of Ju/hoansi with their poison technology adding to perceptions that Ju/hoansi had supernatural abilities.

were considered to be "tame", their "wildness", as Hoveka implied, always lurked near the surface and was evidenced in their serpent-like treachery. If in the past, the peripheral relationship which Hereros claimed Ju/'hoansi to have with the rest of humankind was taken to be evidenced by their "treachery" and thieving, by Independence, it was seen to be evidenced by their propensity to leave work unfinished as well as their affinity for the bottle.

The fact that in an independent Namibia Ju/'hoansi were not seen to be as "dangerous" as they once were was seen to be evidenced in the decline, and virtual disappearance, of Ju/'hoan rituals such as the medicine dance which was once taken to be the ritual foundation of their magical power. As Mbaeva argued:

These Bushmen used to have powerful magic. But now only few of them know of it. I remember when McIntyre was native Commissioner [during the 1950's] they would often dance, but now they are too used to drinking and the magic is weak.

Mathias Guenther's work in the Ghanzi district of Botswana has shown that medicine dances and other Ju/'hoan ritual activities were seen as a source of power by Hereros and others who would occasionally seek the assistance of Ju/'hoan or other Bushman healers (Guenther 1976). Indeed, since the virtual disappearance of Ju/'hoan trance and medicine dances in the Omaheke, it was widely believed that Ju/'hoansi were no longer capable of exploiting the ritual and magical powers they were once said to possess. One of the reasons why Hereros would often not pay Ju/'hoansi for work done in accordance with initial contracts agreed upon was because it was known that they no longer had the magical (or any other) means with which to retaliate for such actions (Suzman 1995a:39-45). If anything, the converse was true, and in conflicts over pay, it was usually Ju/'hoansi who feared the "magical" power of Hereros and accused them of using sorcery to "keep us Ju/'hoansi under".²⁹

While Ju/'hoan otherness was expressed in a variety of ways which emphasised their exclusion on the basis of their supposedly innate, and apparently immutable, association with the wild and untamed space of the bush, broadly economic metaphors provided perhaps the most important means through which this was expressed. Although Hereros mobilised different kinds of narratives at various times in order to articulate this difference, metaphors which focused on modes of

²⁹While, it is certain that others understood Ju/'hoansi and other Bushmen to have or have had special magical powers, witchcraft, as Guenther (1994) has argued, "is not a Bushman thing".

production and their place within the Herero symbolic repertoire were clearly ascendant. This was the case largely because many of the historical circumstances that had rendered other metaphors for the positioning of alterity sensible had ceased to exist. Where, for example, conflict had once been a central feature of relations between Hereros and Ju/'hoansi, domination and dependency now prevailed and provided the contextual referents by means of which Ju/'hoansi and Hereros spoke about each other.

Narrating Difference

By March 1995, eight months or so into my fieldwork, it was becoming increasingly clear that the summer rains would not come. Both the November and February rains had failed to materialise with the result that the edible grasses, already depleted after the long dry winter, had little chance to recover before the onset of the next dry season.³⁰ Although various NGO's and the Department of Water Affairs had ensured that there was sufficient water for the 90,000 odd head of large stock in the former reserve to drink, the problem was to provide sufficient grazing to sustain such numbers. Government broadcasts on both the Herero and Nama/Damara language services had recommended that farmers in the Omaheke drastically reduce their herds in order to avoid what appeared to be an imminent disaster. Even though some farmers heeded this advice many others, especially, the relatively poorer farmers, chose to ignore it.

In spite of the fact that Government had set up an elaborate drought relief scheme the impact of the drought was felt early on. Many cows, drastically weakened by the ferocious summer heat, died during calving and others still were too malnourished to provide milk for either human or animal consumption. By July cattle had started to perish. Some died having plugged up their bowels after having eaten plastic bags, and others succumbed to various illnesses which they would usually have been able to resist. Only once it was clear that the possibility of rain had disappeared did farmers contemplate selling their stock. Fairly rapidly, the auction pens were flooded and the permit sales office inundated. Because of low stock prices in South Africa (which governed the Namibian market), a flooded local market, and drastic weight loss suffered by the Hereroland herds, many farmers lost out considerably, getting cash returns on their sales well below what they would have received had they sold earlier. The tenacity with which some farmers held onto their herds when it was

³⁰The 1994/5 drought was the worst the Omaheke had suffered before records began some 100 years ago with the total rainfall over this period of only around 60mm; less than half of the next lowest ever recorded, and one fifth of the mean (Suzman 1995b:24)

clearly no longer "economic" to do so was telling of the extent to which cattle continued to have a symbolic value above and beyond that ascribed to them by the cash economy.

Apart from the ritual value of cattle in matters such as bride price, cattle served as the dominant idiom for wealth and power in Herero communities, constituting the key to people's social identity and thereby forming the basis for hierarchical distinctions between and amongst members of different *oruzo* and *eanda*.³¹ Writing in 1933 Luttig observed:

Out of the tree not only the ancestral pair came, but also the sacred cattle. Nothing occupies so important a place as the latter in the life of the Herero. The power of the chief is proportionate to the number of cattle he possesses and religious social *oruzo* grouping is determined according to the characteristics of the cattle. The calves pen is situated at the centre of the village. This is symbolic of the central position occupied by the cattle in the life of the Herero.

(Luttig 1933:27)

While, as I have argued, the cash economy had long played a significant role in the Hereroland East and served as a pervasive and important measure of value, in some respects, it was constructed as belonging to a different economy of signs and meanings as well as different culture of production and exchange. As such, cattle ownership was not seen as a means to *another*, specifically monetary end, but as an end in itself; capital on the hoof, so to speak, was considered by many Hereros a good deal more valuable than money in the bank. Furthermore, since cattle ownership provided a paradigm for the articulation of social hierarchy among Hereros, with herd size serving as a readily available measure of status,³³ most Hereros, some of whom worked and resided for much of the year in urban areas or farms outside of the former

³¹The *oruzo* (derivation) and *eanda* (origins) provided a basis for the construction of relatedness among and between Hereros. One inherited *oruzo* rights patrilineally and *eanda* rights matrilineally. Both groups held inalienable property rights, the former over "sacred" goods and the latter over secular (see Vedder 1928:186).

³²For the Herero, as with Kuper's Southern Bantu, examples pertaining to the cultural importance of cattle are too numerous to mention (Kuper 1982:11; Comaroff & Comaroff 1992:130). Luttig (1993) gives perhaps the most complete discussion of the role of cattle in Herero cultures. Elsewhere I have examined the contemporary Herero cattle industry in more depth (Suzman 1995b:23-28)

³³In spite of the fact that most Herero households owned cattle, cattle and cattle products served as major contributor to income in only 44% of households (Iken et al 1992).

reserve, attempted to maintain some sort of herd. Poorer Herero families in particular worked to maintain as large a herd as possible, in order to further their status. Cattle were rarely slaughtered in the former reserve, except for ritual purposes, and most farmers were concerned with herd maximisation rather than making a living from them. In contrast to this, goats were regarded as eminently transactable, and were routinely and unceremoniously sold, slaughtered and barbecued.

Since ownership of cattle provided a basis to Herero social differentiation amongst themselves, the fact that Ju/'hoansi had few cattle, endowed them with no special ritual value, and were said to express little interest in all but their meat or their milk, was taken as evidence of Ju/'hoan social inferiority. With cattle playing so critical a role in the construction of the Herero social self, by representing Ju/'hoansi as cattleless, Hereros effectively denied Ju/'hoansi full social personhood. The fact that Ju/'hoansi had few cattle was considered to be a consequence of an *innate* lack of affinity with the animals, a point which was taken to indicate that Ju/'hoansi were fundamentally different from Hereros. Ozemburuka, a Herero neighbour of mine at Rosenhof, recounted and explained a story I'd heard elsewhere to illustrate this to me:

Long ago the Bushmen had cattle, but they ate most of them until all they had left was one bull which they sold. This is why the Bushmen don't know what to do with cattle. It means that if the Bushmen do get cattle, they will sell it and get *tombo*, they don't want the milk because they only like *tombo*. Hereros know about cattle from when they are born. Hereros came onto earth the same time as cattle.

This means that when Bushmen get cattle, they will sell it and buy *tombo*. They don't want the milk, they only like the *tombo*.

As much as this story was set in a mythological past, it was told to me as a parable of the present whereby the centrality of cattle in the Herero symbolic system was articulated, whilst simultaneously legitimating Ju/'hoan poverty by virtue of their perceived lack of affinity for cattle. Ju/'hoan poverty and dependency was constructed in this story, not as a result of actions or agency of others, but rather by means of what were considered to be essential, internal Ju/'hoan qualities, one of which was their *dom*³⁴-ness (stupidity). In this story, in which present relations are projected into the

³⁴Many Afrikaans words like *dom* have come to usurp indigenous terms in everyday discourse. With Afrikaans providing the regional (and national *lingua franca*) it tended to be the language through which members of different language groups *conversed* with one another.

past, it is implied that Ju/'hoansi had the opportunity to become pastoralists, but that they were too *dom* to take this opportunity and instead chose to drink *tombo*.³⁵

The notion that Ju/'hoansi were poor because they were *dom* was pivotal in how Hereros constructed them, legitimating Ju/'hoan poverty by virtue of their own shortcomings rather than their domination and marginalisation by others. As one Herero man, Gideon, put it to me :

Its not us that make the Bushmen poor. They are poor because they are stupid. They do not know about money or these things. If they have money they just go down to the *shebeens* and spend it to get drunk like they always do. It is their way. They do not know anything else.

In constructing Ju/'hoan poverty as a consequence of "their way", Gideon naturalised it, thereby absolving Hereros of any complicity in their marginalisation. As such, Ju/'hoansi were portrayed as the authors of their own poverty.

The fact that Ju/'hoansi were considered *dom* when it came to cattle, was but one of a series of areas in which Ju/'hoansi were considered *dom*, all of which contributed to the construction and legitimation of narratives in which Ju/'hoansi were portrayed as childlike. As on the commercial farms, Hereros often spoke of Ju/'hoansi as children, or being childlike. This was captured well by a Herero official in Post 3, who claimed that:

Of all the people in Namibia, it is the Hereros and the whites who are best. Then below them are the Ovambos and below them are the Damaras and Namas. The lowest people in this place are the Bushmen who are not good people. . . Often if they are working for you must look after them. They are not clever like the Ovambos. . . they are stupid, stupid like children

In a manner not dissimilar to their neighbours on the commercial farms, the metaphoric equation of Ju/'hoansi with children was seen to capture those aspects of the "essential" Ju/'hoan that differentiated them from others. Furthermore, the metaphor

³⁵Although there were a few Ju/'hoansi who owned cattle and several others who had some goats they were hard to come by. In covering much of the 88,000km² that was the Omaheke, I met only four Ju/'hoansi who owned any cattle, none of whom owned more than !A'ae whose herd (prior to a run of stock theft during 1995 in which he lost four head of cattle) numbered 17. I did, however, know of many Ju/'hoansi who had owned cattle at some stage in their lives, but had to get rid of them mainly because they had nowhere to graze them.

also provided a prescriptive model for relations between them through which Hereros could legitimate Ju/'hoan subordination to their authority. While the integrity of this metaphor was undoubtedly reinforced (and possibly borrowed from) metaphors used by white farmers to describe Ju/'hoansi, it was understood to make sense in specifically Herero terms.

The integrity of this metaphor hinged, in part, on the notion that Ju/'hoansi were dependent on others, not as a result of external factors, but because of an inherited inability to care for themselves within the colonial and post-colonial political economy. For Hereros, childhood was defined as a state of ignorance or "stupidity"; a child, it was explained to me, was *eyova* (stupid or ignorant) or *dom*. In ways not dissimilar to the Rousseauian notion of adulthood constructed by farmers, for Hereros, the passage to adulthood, once marked by circumcision, tooth marking and changes in dress,³⁶ was regarded as a process of progressing from a state of ignorance to worldliness, a transformation whereby the individual overcomes or conquers his or her *domness* through experience, education, socialisation and ability. Consequently, full social adulthood was seen to be partially dependent on having acquired certain skills and having mastered certain bodies of social and practical knowledge. In the case of the Ju/'hoansi, those bodies of knowledge of which they were considered inept or incapable of mastering were considered to be central to the definition of social adulthood. Although Ju/'hoan *domness* was said to apply to only certain aspects of the Ju/'hoan "character" such as unreliability, it was these aspects which dominated the Herero stereotype of Ju/'hoansi. As the water official noted, "they are stupid like children".

In representing Ju/'hoansi by means of the metaphor of the child, a whole series of signs and meanings were invoked whereby Ju/'hoansi were considered to be weak, ineffectual, dependent, helpless, incapable, irresponsible and *dom*. Consequently, many Hereros couched their utilisation of Ju/'hoan labour in the cool rhetoric of charity; "we give them work to help them" explained one Herero *meme* to me, "if it wasn't for us where would they be?" (cf. Suzman 1995a).³⁷ Indeed, many Hereros constructed their relationship with Ju/'hoansi in benignly paternalist terms through which a gilt veneer was painted over what were often explicitly exploitative

³⁶I did not think to inquire of the continued existence of rituals marking rites of passage. I certainly did not happen to come across any (beyond changes in dress) and marriage. Contrary to "tradition", almost all young Herero males born at hospital were circumcised not long after birth.

³⁷While almost all my Herero informants spoke of *their* relationship with their Ju/'hoan workers as being "charitable", these informants almost uniformly claimed that other Hereros exploited the situation.

relationships.

Reserve life for Ju/'hoansi was therefore often a fairly desperate affair, with the result that many Ju/'hoansi living in this area anaesthetised themselves to the difficulties of life in the vigorous pursuit of *tombo*. The rigours of Ju/'hoan life in the former reserve was well captured by !A'/ae (not !A'/ae from Skoonheid) who told me that:

I don't see anymore chances in this place [Hereroland]. I'm wasting my time and my blood.

With the metaphor of the child at its locus, Herero narratives concerning the Ju/'hoansi, like those articulated by white-farmers, denied them access to a voice in political process thereby relegating them to a position of material and social dependency. Through denying Ju/'hoansi an adult voice, Hereros ensured that Ju/'hoansi were incorporated, and participated, in the political economy as peripheral players, propping up others' interests while having insufficient access to resources to secure their own. Indeed, as on the commercial farms, the one time conceptual marginalisation of Ju/'hoansi was rendered "real" by others' monopoly of power.

* * *

Thus far, within the limits of space, I have attempted to articulate in fairly broad terms some of the political, economic and narrative processes which have transformed the Omaheke. I have argued that the twentieth century history of the Omaheke has seen the gradual dispossession of Ju/'hoan lands and with this, the erosion of Ju/'hoan autonomy once exemplified by their selective participation in the regional political-economy. That Ju/'hoansi have come to constitute what is, to all intents and purposes, a largely dependent and voiceless underclass in this political economy, I have suggested, is largely a result of others converting their constructions of Ju/'hoansi (which, in spite of changing over time, have reproduced a regional hierarchy in which Ju/'hoansi occupied the lowest position) into practice .

But what of the Ju/'hoansi themselves? Thus far, they have remained largely in the margins of this text, the subjects and objects of others' narratives and actions. How have they attempted to make sense of these processes, how do they see themselves in a political economy in which they are dependent on the materials, and subject to the domination and exploitation of others? How do Ju/'hoansi construct their

space in a political economy in which the production and control of dominant signs and practices is out of their hands?

Part 2:
Identities

CHAPTER 5: COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

The monopoly held by others over the various mechanisms of domination and Ju/'hoan dependency on them meant that, in effect, these others had the power to dictate the social realities of the Omaheke. Their constructions the largely powerless Ju/'hoansi served as a cipher for social action towards them and ultimately resulted in Ju/'hoansi constructing a broader collective identity for themselves which was superimposed over the differences which Ju/'hoansi once posited with respect to one another.

While the anthropological literature is replete with examples in which groups of people articulate their identity on the basis of a "common" culture, language and history, Ju/'hoan collective identity in the Omaheke rests on the emergence of political and economic structures based on *others'* assumptions regarding what was understood to be a common Ju/'hoan culture, language, and, in their case, "ahistory" (Chapter 6). In terms of this, many of the signs which constituted Ju/'hoan identity in the Omaheke were clearly and immediately products of others' domination over the production and legitimation of the relevant social categories which made up the Omaheke political and economic hierarchy. This has become more conspicuously the case in recent years during which those signs and practices (such as hunting, foraging, trance dancing and so on) which once formed the basis of Ju/'hoan identity have ceased to be as relevant to them.

In this chapter I examine the emergence of this collective Ju/'hoan identity through looking at three aspects to these processes. In the first section, my concerns are with the processes whereby the label *Ju/'hoansi* came to supersede labels which at one time served to differentiate among those who now refer to themselves first and foremost as Ju/'hoansi. Thereafter, I focus on how Ju/'hoansi spoke of the role of others in the emergence of this identity and finally, I examine how Ju/'hoan kinship discourse, which once served as the paradigmatic basis for Ju/'hoan identity among themselves has been transformed as a result of their subordination to others.

Who are the Omaheke Ju/'hoansi?

In recent years anthropologists have become considerably more sensitised to the problems and politics of labelling (e.g. Parkin 1982). An awareness of some of the political implications of labelling, and the "right" of the native voice to articulate its

own identity has become a key issue in post-colonial anthropology. Those anthropologists concerned with Kalahari foragers have had particular difficulties in this regard, with the result that a great deal of ink has been spilt arguing about how we should refer to these diverse people (Guenther 1986a). Much discussion on this matter has focused around the issue of what label is appropriate to include all groups that have fallen at one time or another under the label "Bushman". One recent development which has highlighted this issue has been the increasing emphasis in anthropological discourse concerning diversity amongst those Kalahari foragers who were once uniformly labelled Bushmen (Kent 1989; Kent (ed.)1994; Barnard 1992b) and, correspondingly, the politics out of which non-differentiating labels such as "Bushman" or "San" emerged (Guenther 1986a). In response to this, many have opted for classifying the diverse Bushman Groups in terms of these groups' own self appellates; thus, for example, Richard Lee's 1984 publication *The Dobe !Kung* has since been republished under the title, *The Dobe Ju'hoansi* (1993), replacing the generic label *!Kung* with the self ascriptive label *Ju'hoansi*.

≠Au//eisi or Ju'hoansi

As Barnard (1992b:16-17) has noted, classifying Bushman groups on the basis of locale and according to people's self ascriptive labels is not without its problems, not least because of the multitude of labels used by some groups to refer to themselves, and equally significantly the multiplicity of labels by which some groups were referred to by others. Nevertheless, most anthropologists concerned with Bushmen have been little troubled by the issue. For the most part, this is no doubt a result of the fact that those people with whom they worked were confidently assured of which label they used to refer to themselves, and also because the politics of labelling (as opposed to classification) was, at the time of much of early Khoisan research, not a central concern of anthropology. A consequence of this has been that labels applied to these various groups in the anthropological literature have, in some instances been spurious and, on occasion, ill-informed.

Because Ju'hoansi in the Omaheke were never regarded as sufficiently "pure" to warrant serious anthropological investigation, the labels used to refer to them in the anthropological literature remain largely speculative, based primarily on the writings of Isaac Schapera and the sources he used in compiling his now classic volume *The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa* (1930). Schapera's classification of the Omaheke Ju'hoansi was based largely on the works of the Hans Kaufmann (1910) and Dorothea Bleek (1928). Kaufmann's writings were the result of his research

undertaken among the Bushmen of the Groot Laagte (Rietfontein Omuramba) in what is now Botswana, and Bleek's emerged from her research, conducted during the early 1920s among Nharo living in Sandfontein (now Buitepos), a place which is now the main border post between Namibia and Botswana. Based on their writings, Schapera speculated that sandwiched between the Naron (Nharo) and the !Kung (Nyae-Nyae Ju/'hoansi):

In the south of this region, between Sandfontein and Gam [i.e. the Northern Omaheke], are found the //Kau//en [≠Au//eisi], called ≠Aukwe by the central Bushmen, ≠Ausan by the Nama, MaKaukau by the neighbouring Bantu, and commonly spoken of as the Auen.

(Schapera 1930:33)

Following Bleek, Schapera classified the ≠Au//eisi as speaking a dialect of the Northern language group which is now generally referred to as !Kung. Because no further research was undertaken in the Omaheke, Schapera's classification of the Omaheke Ju/'hoansi remains the basis of comparative studies between the Omaheke Ju/'hoansi and others (e.g. Barnard 1992b:39-42).

With Schapera's work and advice from other anthropologists who have subsequently worked in Namibia (albeit not in the Omaheke) in mind, I set off for the Omaheke, feeling secure in the knowledge that I would be working mainly with ≠Au//eisi as well as some Nharo. After arriving in there, however, it turned out that my assumptions regarding who I was to be working with were founded on very shaky ground. Narratives articulated by Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke on the matter of indigenous labelling were by no means homogenous, not least because most people regarded labels such as ≠Au//eisi and *Nharo*, which are the very stuff of which "traditional" Bushman anthropology is made, as relatively unimportant, and, in many respects, redundant.

In all my discussions with Ju/'hoansi on the matter of indigenous labels people were generally agreed on only one issue; that they were all Ju/'hoansi, and that the term *Ju/'hoansi* itself transcended, and was more important than labels such as ≠Au//eisi or *Nharo*. /Kunta, a namesake of mine, and self proclaimed "Kaptein" (Captain) of the Post 3 Ju/'hoansi, echoed a widely held sentiment when, between slurps from his jar of *tombo*, he explained to me that:

All *Boesmans* are Ju'/hoansi, but there are some differences between them. My mother and father were Nharos, but they are also Ju'/hoansi like I am a Ju'/hoan. The people who live in Tsumkwe are also Ju'/hoansi even though we do not understand one another properly [linguistically].

Albeit that there was general consensus as to who the Ju'/hoansi were, there was little consensus as regards who the ≠Au//eisi, the supposed object of my studies were. Apart from in Rietfontein, near the Botswana border, where some people readily identified themselves as MaKaukau¹ or ≠Au//eisi, others were less clear as to whom the label applied. To add to my confusion, some Ju'/hoansi argued that they (i.e. the residents of the Omaheke) were not ≠Au//eisi at all, and that the Tsumkwe Ju'/hoansi (or Ju'/hoansi "proper" as I had been led to believe) were in fact ≠Au//eisi.

Part of the confusion relates to the label ≠Au//eisi itself. In both the Nharo and Ju'/hoan languages the word ≠au (≠kao according to Dickens (1993)) means "north". By extension the label ≠Au//eisi was translated by both Nharo and Ju'/hoan speaking informants as "people from the north". By means of explanation, the term ≠Au//eisi was opposed to ≠Amkxausi (Southern people) which was a label by which the !Xo (who lived South of Gobabis and Ghanzi; see Heinz (1966) and Heinz and Lee (1978)) were also referred, and to //Hangakxausi (people of the west)². In this context the label ≠Au//eisi emerges, as a relative term; a geographically oriented adjectival label which is used to refer to *others*. Indeed, these labels gained their integrity through referring to other Bushman groups in opposition to the geographically and politically centred selves of the speakers.

A clue to the confusion in the anthropological writings concerning Bushmen in the Omaheke can be found in Kaufmann's (1910) and Bleek's (1928) discussions of the matter. When they wrote of ≠Au//eisi they almost always referred to them as ≠Au//en, using the Nharo plural suffix "-n" as opposed to the Ju'/hoan plural suffix "-si". This suggests a certain Nharo focus to their work, and hence explains Their unquestioning use of the label ≠Au//en when referring to the Bushmen groups living west of Ghanzi suggests that most of their informants were Nharo or, if they were ≠Au//eisi, were identifying themselves by using the label by which Nharo referred to Bushmen living north of Ghanzi.³ I suspect that had Kaufmann and Bleek had

¹ A Bantu, most likely Tswana, corruption of the label ≠Au//eisi.

² One resident at Snoonheid, Dam Kakao, claimed //Hangakxau roots and explained that the //Hangakxausi were the "Okahandja Ju'/hoansi".

³ Bleek it seems, got the points of the compass confused with ethnic labels. She argued that "the Naron [Nharo] have no words for north and south. . . otherwise they distinguish points of the compass by the names of tribes dwelling in each direction viz. the Auen's

principally Ju'/hoan-speaking rather than Nharo-speaking informants and interpreters, then they might have discovered that people to whom the referred as ≠Au//en would have also used the labels Ju'/hoansi and perhaps ≠Au//eisi to identify themselves.⁴

Having said this, there is little doubt that the word ≠Au//eisi was used by some Ju'/hoansi as a self-ascriptive label. During the short time I spent in Rietfontein (on the far eastern edge of the Omaheke), Ju'/hoan-speakers readily referred to themselves as ≠Au//eisi or MaKaukau as well as Ju'/hoansi, suggesting that in areas where Ju'/hoan-speaking groups and Nharo were in close contact the label became a relevant marker of identity for Ju'/hoan speakers.⁵ The few histories recorded concerning relations between ≠Au//eisi and Nharo suggest that despite fairly fluid boundaries between them, marked by frequent inter-marriage, the forging of strong friendships and identity switching, ≠Au//ei and Nharo groups were frequently at odds with one another. In such situations narratives through which boundaries are articulated and reified and take on a special significance.⁶ In many of the conversations I had concerning the past with Ju'/hoansi, the unevenness of relations between Nharo and ≠Au//eisi was often expressed. !A/ae, whose father was a ≠Au//ei from Rietfontein, explained:

Oh yes, there was much fighting between Ju'/hoansi in the old times, Nharos and ≠Au//eisi were also always fighting.

To this /'Engn!au added:

In the past, Nharos and ≠Au//eisi couldn't understand each other and always fought because of this. There was also fighting with the people of Gam. I don't know who the *grootman* [headman] at Gam was, but they would often fight with the people in Ghanzi.⁷

country, the Auen's wind for the north" (Bleek 1929:39). It is also worth noting that the terms //Aikhoe and //Aikxausi, which have, at times, been used by Ju'/hoan and khoe speakers to refer to Nharo, both mean "people of the East"; the term //ai (//hai in Dickens n.d.b) meaning east.

⁴ Barnard (pers. comm.) has noted that when speaking with him, Ju'/hoan speakers in Ghanzi identified themselves as Au//en .

⁵This was also evident during my undergraduate fieldwork in Ghanzi, where the one Ju'/hoan speaking family resident at /Oaxa (where the Kuru development project is located) were labelled as ≠Au//en or MaKaukau.

⁶Some recent articles written by Guenther suggest that Nharo speakers in Ghanzi were, in fact, subjugated by their ≠Au//ei neighbours (Guenther 1993).

⁷Kaufmann (1910) also noted that a long standing antagonism existed between the people at Gam and Rietfontein (presumably Ghanzi) (see Schapera 1930:157).

This state of affairs is also alluded to in the administrative record. In a report written for the Gobabis magistrate in 1939, the Station Commander for the South African Police at Sandfontein claimed that:

As far as can be ascertained, The Makoko [≠Au//eisi] Bushmen never cross the Border to Bechuanaland [Botswana], where the Naron [Nharo] Bushmen reside. There is a hostile relation between these two tribes. The reasons for such hostility cannot be established.

(SWAA 1334; 2/10/39).

In contrast to this, in the central Omaheke (Epukiro), where it seems there were fewer Nharo, Ju//hoansi, although spoken of by some others as ≠Au//eisi, referred to themselves first and foremost as Ju//hoansi, but were aware of the fact that Nharo speakers often referred to them as ≠Au//eisi. One of my closest, and most confusing companions in the Omaheke, Kaice, referred to the Tsumkwe Ju//hoansi as ≠Au//eisi and explained that:

Those Bushmen in Tsumkwe call us [Omaheke] Ju//hoansi Nharos . . . [and] the Nharos call us ≠Au//eisi.

Indeed, the only people who often referred to Ju//hoan speakers in the central Omaheke as ≠Au//eisi on a regular basis, were those who claimed Nharo descent.

What this confusion reveals, though, is the self-evidently diminishing relevance of regionally based labels in discourses of identity articulated by Ju//hoansi in the Northern Omaheke in favour of more overarching label *Ju//hoansi* or, in certain contexts, *Boesman* or Bushmen. The prioritising of the more encompassing label, *Ju//hoansi*, is indicative of changes in how the Omaheke Ju//hoansi have recreated, and have been recreated as a broader "ethnic" category, one which was contextualised in terms of their relationships with black and white settlers during the twentieth century. Prior to the Ju//hoansi being rendered fully dependent on the colonial economy, it seems likely that more localised group labels were of considerably more significance as political boundaries between groups of foragers were of more general concern. Following the beginnings of white settlement in the Omaheke, and the establishment of the Herero native reserves north of the Epukiro omuramba, Ju//hoansi came to be more concerned with constructing a collective identity which

superseded local boundaries.

"We are all Ju'/hoansi"

The dominance of the term *Ju'/hoansi* as a self ascriptive label amongst the diverse groups that have come to constitute the Omaheke Ju'/hoansi can be seen to have emerged from two interrelated processes. These evolved out of their growing dependency on the emergent colonial political economy and were a consequence of firstly, the increased integration of Ju'/hoansi from previously different backgrounds on the farms and cattle posts of the Omaheke and secondly, the ascendant hegemony of groups who, through dominating the politics of difference, classified all Bushmen in terms of labels which failed to differentiate between diverse groups of Ju'/hoansi.

The processes whereby the Ju'/hoansi were relegated from a position of dominance within the Omaheke to dependence took place over only around forty years. These dramatic changes which were visited upon the Omaheke radically altered the political contexts by means of which Ju'/hoan groups in the Omaheke had posited alterity amongst and between themselves.

In spite of the dominance of localised labels of and for identification, prior to the colonisation of the Omaheke, Ju'/hoansi articulated, albeit in a subdued way, a broad discourse in which Bushmen were opposed to blacks and whites on the basis of their (i.e. the Bushmen's) shared "humanity". This difference is alluded to by Richard Lee who writes:

Well into the 1970s the [Dobe] Ju'/hoansi still retained a vigorous sense of themselves as a people and their special relationship with outsiders. They called themselves *Ju'/hoansi*, "real" or "genuine" people, a term they grudgingly extended to San of other language groups elsewhere in the Kalahari- the Nharo, /Gwi and !Ko- *but not to their Black and White neighbours.*

(Lee 1993:137 (my italics))

Lee's comments are revealing. The Dobe-NyaeNyae Ju'/hoansi about whom he writes were still relatively independent at the time of his research, and certainly were still in possession of much of their land. The fact that the term *Ju'/hoansi* was seen by them, albeit "grudgingly", as incorporative of *other* Bushmen is important in that it suggests Ju'/hoansi and other Bushmen constructed a boundary which differentiated them from

black and white "others". In an ironic twist on others classifying Ju/'hoansi as only partially human, Ju/'hoansi themselves, through constituting their collective identity as "real" or "genuine" people, constructed these others as only partially human (*ibid.*).⁸ The fact that through dispossession and dependency different Ju/'hoan groups were ultimately subsumed into a political economy dominated by these "others" created conditions in which the broader label was more applicable. The diminishing relevance of discourses which differentiated between Ju/'hoansi is clearly illustrated in /Engn!au's rendition of the story of Zameko (chapter 1) in which we are told of how Ju/'hoansi from different groups united against outsiders when their autonomy was threatened. Indeed, Zameko, a //Hangakxau, was married to a Nharo, yet led a primarily ≠Au//ei band.

Prior to the colonisation of the Omaheke by others, the discreet identities of different Ju/'hoan groups was linked to land and rights to land through kinship (see below). Through losing control over their land to others, Ju/'hoansi in effect were dispossessed of a crucial constituent of their identities, a key metaphor on the basis of which they had expressed difference amongst and between themselves. Tied to this, farm labour and dependency meant that people from diverse language groups became more integrated through living and working together. As a result, marriage between Ju/'hoansi from different linguistic and political groups became more frequent, thereby establishing kinship ties where none had previously existed. This "mixing" undermined the logic of prior notions of alterity, and ultimately resulted in Ju/'hoansi re-articulating their identity with respect to one another in terms of the more inclusive label, *Ju/'hoansi*. //Eng (Christina), one of my first and friendliest female friends explained this to me:

No /Kunta, we are all Ju/'hoansi because we are now so mixed up, Nharos, Ju/'hoansi everyone, even Namas. Look, even Xoan//a [!A'/ae's wife], her mother was Nharo and her father ≠Au//ei.

Ju/'hoansi and Others

Having made a case for change coming from within, it is important to point out

⁸Similarly, among khoe speaking Bushmen groups (e.g. G/wi and Nharo), labels based on the shared humanity of Bushmen were also used. Nharo, for example often referred to themselves as *Khoe di khoe*, which means "people of people", or less literally "real people". In recent years, following the establishment of political networks through which Bushmen from all over southern Africa have been discussing and attempting to influence their future, labels such as *N/oakhoe* (red people) have been proposed to express a common Bushman identity.

that the emergent dominance of the term *Ju'/hoansi* as a broad indigenous label was not generated solely as a result of internal dynamics which were sparked into action by the presence of black and white colonists. Much of the efficacy of this label for *Ju'/hoansi* lay in the fact that those others who colonised the Omaheke considered diverse *Ju'/hoan* polities to constitute a unified ethno-social entity. Afrikaans speakers lumped them under the single collective label *Boesmans*, Herero speakers labelled them *OvaKuruha*, Damara-Nama speakers referred to them as *San* and Tswanas labelled them undifferentially as *Masarwa*, and more recently *Basarwa*⁹.

Since these others dominated the production and circulation of signs and meanings in the Omaheke, their social taxonomies came to be the ones which were constituted as "real". In other words, because the relatively voiceless *Ju'/hoansi* were treated as unified racial and ethnic group, they too came to constitute themselves as a unified category. The role played by others' stereotypes of *Ju'/hoansi* in establishing their collective identity was not lost to the *Ju'/hoansi* themselves. The *Ju'/hoan* man, who gave me the title for this thesis, captured this well when he explained that:

It is them [Hereros, Boers etc.] that keep us down. It is them who say that we are just Bushmen and that we are just things from the bush.

Many *Ju'/hoansi* considered themselves (to appropriate one of Gordon's (1992) phrases) as "captives of an image" over which they had little control. As such, many *Ju'/hoansi* ascribed themselves an almost passive role in the processes that resulted in their marginalisation in the Omaheke. The fact that *Ju'/hoansi* considered themselves largely passive in this process was clearly evident in the ways in which they spoke of themselves on the one hand as "victims", and on the other as "weak" and "ignorant".

The Ju'/hoan as Victim

Central to narratives in which *Ju'/hoansi* expressed a collective social identity was the idea that they were "victims" of, and hence subject to, the (often malicious) will of others. The notion that *Ju'/hoansi* were victims was pervasive, and manifested itself in the utterances of almost all *Ju'/hoansi* I knew. Certain key phrases were often mobilised in talking about themselves which pointed to this; "The Hereros [or Boers] just wish to waste us", I was often told, and equally frequently, "It is them that keep

⁹The prefix *ma-* in *Masarwa* which was dropped towards the 1970s was used in Tswana to indicate inferior or undesirable outsiders, in a way very similar to the use of the term *ovatua* by Hereros (Wilmsen 1989:30). The prefix *ba-* is a general plural marker for people, hence *BaTswana* means "Tswana people".

us down". On one occasion, !A/'ae explained to me that:

Look, when you walk of the sand, you don't look first to see if you are going to stand on anything; it does not matter, you go where you want to go. It is like this for us Ju/'hoansi. People will walk over us to get where they want to go. Like this sand, us Ju/'hoansi mean nothing in this country.

As far as most Ju/'hoansi were concerned, one's identity as a Ju/'hoan depended as much on occupying a subordinate position in the regional political and economic hierarchy, as it did from inclusion within name categories or kin networks (see below). Indeed, subjection, landlessness and poverty initiated and maintained by the agency of others, in short, their victimisation, was regarded as a crucial constituent of their identity. The efficacy of this hinged very much on Ju/'hoan constructions of others, Herero and white farmers in particular, as malicious, "jealous" and self-seeking agents of Ju/'hoan exploitation. !A/'ae again expressed a widely held sentiment when he exclaimed that:

These Boers have no heart for the Ju/'hoansi. Like the Botswana Boers they only want Ju/'hoansi to be workers.

And also:

The Hereros are not good people, if you do work for them they will just cheat you and not pay the original price you agreed on. They are very jealous people and do not want to see the Ju/'hoansi with anything. They can be so jealous that they will even *toer* [use magical means] to cheat their own families.

In positing others as *oppressors*, Ju/'hoansi, by extension, constituted themselves to be the *oppressed*, the victims of others' actions.¹⁰ In more recent years, during which Ju/'hoansi have come to appreciate their own labour as a "commodity", this opposition was often spoken of in terms of exploitation. One man, Dabe, having recently been dismissed from a farm where he had worked and lived for several years, captured this well when he said:

¹⁰As I explain later (Chapter 6), in spite of the fact that Ju/'hoan history, as told to me by the likes of /'Engn!au, was placed in a dialectic of domination and resistance, most recent history was seen simply a matter of increasing subjugation, exploitation and dependency.

The Boers lie. They talk of God and the bible, but after they have been to church they will be swearing and beating us. Perhaps the Boers have no love for people who don't have money even though they are rich because the Ju/'hoansi made their money for them. . . . The Boer's stole our work and made their money with it.

Similarly, regarding Hereros, another Ju/'hoan man claimed:

These people in the reserve are bad, they cheat you too much. Look, when they get you, you first agree on payment for the work. Then you go and work, and after that, when you are finished there is a lot of hassle and you don't get the money that you initially agreed on.

That Ju/'hoansi partially constituted their identity in terms of an opposition between oppressor and oppressed, and that this opposition was seen to be manifested in ethnicity was evident in concepts such as the *witvoet*, (chapter 3) by means of which Ju/'hoansi who were seen to attempt to further their status on any farm were thought to be betraying the integrity of these opposed categories. Indeed, a *witvoet* was by definition a Ju/'hoan who was trying not to be a victim.

The fact that Ju/'hoansi constructed themselves as "victims" was tied to the notion that they considered themselves to have been denied access to certain important bodies of knowledge which were understood to have empowered others.

The "dom" Ju/'hoan

If Ju/'hoansi considered themselves "victims" of others' actions, that they were victims was understood to be a result of their being *dom* (ignorant or stupid). In spite of the fact that some Ju/'hoansi, especially following independence, have questioned and challenged their lack of status, wealth and power, the overwhelming impact of Ju/'hoan subjugation in the Omaheke has been the quiet acquiescence of Ju/'hoansi to these conditions. During the time I lived in the Omaheke, almost always when Ju/'hoansi were mistreated, abused, beaten or cheated they would accept it; often uttering the refrain: "I am just a *dom* Bushman; what can I do?"

In the first part of this thesis, I pointed to how *dom-ness* played a central role in both Herero and white farmer's constructions of Ju/'hoansi, and, furthermore, how narratives pointing to their *dom-ness* were mobilised in order to stress the "childlike

nature" of Ju/'hoansi, and thereby deny them the capacity for social adulthood. Subject to these dominant narratives, Ju/'hoansi came to construct themselves as *dom*, albeit not in the same highly essentialist terms as others, but nevertheless viewing it as a critical component of their marginalisation.

When talking with old Kiewet Kakao regarding why Hereros had managed to do better the Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, he explained to me that it was because Hereros "knew" cattle and continued:

In the past cattle and goats lived wild and the Bushmen hunted them. Then at one time the Hereros came and tamed them and took their calves and lambs but the Bushmen did not know how to tame them. At that time the Bushmen used to follow the game around; to hunt and to follow; to hunt and to follow.

Even though Ju/'hoansi now knew how to "tame" cattle, and were more than competent cattlemen, Kakao's narrative suggests that their marginalisation in the Omaheke was partially contingent on their ignorance of a certain body of knowledge (i.e. cattle husbandry) at a certain time. For many Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, the fact that they were denied (or simply unable to gain access to) certain valuable bodies of knowledge was considered instrumental in their continued marginalisation. Kakao's story was not dissimilar in quality to that recounted in the previous chapter told by a Herero woman to explain Ju/'hoan poverty. In fact, Ju/'hoan discourses which accounted for their marginalisation by means of their "ignorance", shared a great deal in common with narratives told by the Ju/'hoansi's dominant neighbours when accounting for the same thing.

For Ju/'hoansi, the term *dom* had several contested meanings. For some, it was taken to mean an "ignorance" of certain bodies of knowledge, whereas for others, it was taken to imply an incapacity or inability to acquire knowledge. !A'/ae, who (like Foucault) considered knowledge and power to be intimately related, argued unequivocally that to be *dom* was a product of political marginalisation whereas others, like Kaice (the *witvoet*), suggested that Ju/'hoansi were, quite simply, incapable of mastering these bodies of knowledge. In recent years, especially following Independence, !A'/ae's interpretation has come to dominate Ju/'hoan understandings of being *dom* for which they used the Ju/'hoan phrases *koara ≠eng* (without thought), and *koara !han* (*without knowledge*). The word *koara* was usually spoken of as meaning an absence of something quantifiable; thus, for example, to say "I have no water", one would say, *mim koara g!u*. In terms of this, specific bodies of

knowledge were conceptualised as resources to which most Ju/'hoansi were denied access in much the same way that they were denied access to other resources such as land or livestock.

Prior to Independence farmers and government officials alike did not see a need for the "childlike" Ju/'hoansi to be educated at school and consequently, while others in Namibia had enforced schooling by law, Ju/'hoansi were in effect denied access to these institutions on the grounds that they were understood to be incapable of mastering the skills taught in them.¹¹ A consequence of this was that most Ju/'hoansi lacked the necessary skills to manipulate the burgeoning post-independence bureaucracy to their own advantage, or negotiate their interests at a state level. Consequently, much of the time that Ju/'hoansi claimed *dom-ness* was in a bureaucratic sense, where skills such as literacy and numeracy, of which the Ju/'hoansi were most acutely aware of their relative ignorance, were required for undertaking some of the most basic of tasks. Thus, for example while many Ju/'hoansi were aware that it is possible to complain about ill-treatment by farmers, few will do so. This was the case because most found visits to Government office unrewarding and humiliating as they had to rely on often condescending and patronising state officials to take them by the hand. As one Ju/'hoan man explained in connection with the almost ritual humiliation of visiting a state facility:

No man. we are scared of the "offices" [Government House] there in Gobabis. If we go there we can't even read the signs where we must go and those black people there they think we are shit and they make us wait. I went there with my father to try to get his pension sorted and we waited for two days and still got nothing. My father was very old and we had to sleep with no food or anything outside the "Spandiens"[A local garage].

For many Ju/'hoansi, their relative *dom-ness* was understood to have denied them access to the benefits which others were clearly accruing from Independence and the demise of apartheid. The Ju/'hoan attitude to the introduction of pay-ledgers on farms to which farm workers were expected to place their thumb-prints when receiving payments from their *baas's* pointed clearly to this. While the intention behind the introduction of these ledgers was to cut down on farmers cheating their workers, it

¹¹Elsewhere (Suzman 1995b: 22-23), I have looked at the problems faced by Ju/'hoansi in schools in the Omaheke. It is worth noting that, in spite of the fact that by 1991 there were as many as 28 schools in the Omaheke, only four percent of Ju/'hoansi had ever had any schooling at all, and that less than one half a percent had ever gone on to high school.

was argued by Ju/'hoansi that, because they were generally illiterate, it made cheating them of their dues even easier. As !A'/ae explained in reference to why he worked so hard at learning to read and write:

The farmer can write in that book that he has given you even a thousand rand, and meanwhile he has given you nothing, but you can't read what it says. You must just stick your thumb print on the book. You've put your mark in the book and it says that you've got your money and the book doesn't lie. Only you know that you have not got the money.

!A'/ae comments clearly expressed the extent to which Ju/'hoan *dom-ness* was seen to be a massive handicap in the New Namibia. Indeed, for these reasons many Ju/'hoansi argued that life following Independence was worse than before; as !A'/ae's son /Kallie argued:

There is still apartheid in this land Namibia. Things are not yet right in this place and the Ju/'hoansi must just struggle.

For most Ju/'hoansi, *dom-ness* was mobilised as a general metaphor through which they articulated their powerlessness and perceived inferiority to others as well as means to legitimate their apparent defeatism. Indeed, Ju/'hoansi would tolerate all sorts of things rather than face the humiliation of attempting to put it right.

Added to this, Ju/'hoansi also claimed ignorance of "magical knowledge". While it was felt that Ju/'hoansi had once had access to certain form of magic it was felt that now they had little whereas Hereros had access to all sorts of powerful and frequently malicious magic (Chapter 4). Indeed, Herero power over Ju/'hoansi was frequently accredited to the skill of their wizards and the spiking of *tombo* with magical poisons and potions which sapped the Ju/'hoansi of their will to live.

While some Ju/'hoansi have taken steps to contest their *dom-ness*, and some efforts have been made to make schooling available to them, a task not without its problems, *dom-ness* remained central to Ju/'hoan representations of themselves (Suzman 1995b:23). Added to this, few Ju/'hoansi acted or spoke in such a way that might subvert others' perceptions of them as *dom*. As such, being *dom* was often mobilised as a symbol of Ju/'hoan collective identity based on perceptions of self fostered by others, and reproduced, as well apparently ratified, by their own actions or lack thereof. It articulated the Ju/'hoan appreciation of themselves as inadequate

(whether by act of God or circumstance), and thereby contributed to the reproduction and ratification of others' images of the Ju/'hoansi.

That the processes brought about by the colonial domination of the Omaheke resulted in Ju/'hoansi articulating a collective identity in opposition to others, and constituted this identity in terms of characteristics such as *dom-ness*, necessarily had a marked impact on how Ju/'hoansi articulated identity with respect to one another. As such it was inevitable that Ju/'hoan kinship discourses, which once served as the dominant paradigm by which Ju/'hoansi negotiated identity with one another would also be transformed.

Boer Names and Ju/'hoan Names

Driving through the vast commercial farming block one is immediately struck by the bewildering array of farm names hanging on signs marking the tracks leading off the main road. Most farms had names like "Sukses" (Success), "Paradies" (paradise) and "Weltevrede" (Well-satisfied) which captured the optimism felt by some early settlers, whereas others, like "Sonderwater", (without water), "Dis-Al" (That's all), and "Brakwater" (Brine-water), hinted at the disappointment that some farmers must have felt when moving to their newly issued farms; others still, like "Somali", "Toronto" and "Poodle" seemed to have been randomly picked. One farmer, whilst sipping down a brandy and Coke at the Gobabis Hotel, explained that many early settler farmers, stumped as to what to name their farms, simply picked names at random by opening dictionaries, Bibles and atlases at random pages, and choosing whatever word caught their eye first. Despite of the apparent flippancy in choosing some of these names, however, there was no doubt that names had to be chosen for their new farms, and most settlers named their farms on arrival at their issued plots, the ritual of naming the land being an essential first step of its transformation.

It was the process of naming itself that was important to the new settlers, as by naming the land they laid claim to it, erasing its precolonial past while simultaneously signifying and enacting its inclusion within the physical, political and conceptual worlds of the colonist. As we have seen, Ju/'hoansi were spoken of by farmers as constituting part of the landscape itself and they, like the land, found themselves being claimed and renamed by farmers.¹² While, on the one hand, farmers' motivation for giving Ju/'hoansi "Christian" names was simply because they could not pronounce many Ju/'hoan names, especially those with clicks such as /I!'ae or /'Engn!au, on the

¹²A similar process of naming workers took place on farms and in industries all over South Africa.

other hand, it was the first step in "taming" Ju/'hoansi. In renaming them, farmers attempted to redefine the social fields from which Ju/'hoansi drew their identities, locating them as subjects within a new political economy of power and meaning. In this context, the act of naming was an enactment of power, an assertion of the father-like superiority of the farmer over the inferior indigenes whereby the latter were absorbed as subordinates in the colonial hierarchy; a social and, as we will see in the following chapter, religious baptism into the hands of God and the farmer.

By the time of my fieldwork almost all Ju/'hoansi had Afrikaans "Christian" names and often, by bureaucratic necessity, surnames in addition to their Ju/'hoan names. The need for surnames emerged only recently, during the 1960s and 1970s, with the advent of pass legislation which required that all labourers working in white districts have surnames to facilitate their administration.¹³ Often Ju/'hoansi would use their *baas's* names as surnames (e.g. Chapman), names describing particular physical characteristics (e.g. Langman; "tall man"), or the Ju/'hoan name of a paternal or maternal kinsman (e.g. Kaice). While Ju/'hoansi continued to use their Ju/'hoan names with one another their, Afrikaans names came to play a considerably greater role in how they constructed their individual and social identities.

Kinship and Identity

One morning towards the end of my first week living at Skoonheid, I was taken aside Xoan//a (!A'/ae's wife) and some of the other women to be informed that the name "James" would simply no longer do. Henceforth, it was explained to me, I would be known as "/Kunta". Even though I was aware that Ju/'hoansi had often "named" anthropologists staying with them in the past and thereby granted them a Ju/'hoan social identity through locating them in kin networks, I did not think that I would be granted a Ju/'hoan identity so soon, if at all (cf. Lee 1993:76-78). The reasons for this, I thought, were that firstly, unlike for Ju/'hoansi living in the more remote Dobe/Nyae-Nyae areas, Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke had long been subordinate to whites and, consequently, that established stereotypes of whites might mitigate against my partial inclusion in Ju/'hoan social networks, and, secondly, because, during the early days of my fieldwork, I found it impossible to pronounce, let alone remember, people's Ju/'hoan names.

In spite of having been (re)named, however, I did not really tag onto the significance attached to the distinction between Ju/'hoan and Boer names, and was

¹³Prior to this "native" surnames for bureaucratic purposes were usually simply "tribal" designations. Thus a Herero speaker would given the label "Herero" as a surname, a Damara speaker, "Klip Kaffir" and a Ju/'hoan, "Boesman".

very slow to learn all but my closest friends Ju/'hoan names. Although, as my first year of fieldwork progressed I found people's Ju/'hoan names easier to learn as I got better and better at speaking the language, partly out of habit and partly out of ignorance, I still referred to some people by their "Christian" names. Eventually, midway through winter in 1995 almost a year into my fieldwork, Kan//a (Isak Langman), !A'/ae's older brother, who I had hitherto persistently called Isak, took me aside and, in an uncharacteristically aggressive manner, reprimanded me for continuing to use his Afrikaans name:

Listen /Kunta, why are you always calling me Isak when you know that my name is Kan//a? Do I not call you /Kunta?. Isak is my name for the Boers and the government it is not my Ju/'hoan name. You must remember, my name is Kan//a!

Kan//a's outburst, apart from ensuring that I redoubled my efforts to learn people's Ju/'hoan names, hinted at the highly dualistic and context bound manner in which Ju/'hoansi constructed their identity. The use of Afrikaans and Ju/'hoan names respectively invoked different social and political contexts. Afrikaans names were usually mobilised in the context of relations with farmers and consequently signified Ju/'hoan subjection to them, whereas Ju/'hoan names were mobilised in order to decontextualise relations from dominant political order. My use of Afrikaans names, it seemed, constantly confused things through continually shifting contexts between the Ju/'hoan and Boer worlds, whilst also apparently framing my relations with those I referred to by their Afrikaans names as one between a dominant white man and submissive Ju/'hoan. Hence Kan//a's, who was after all my *tsu* (uncle), irritation. Kan//a's reprimand, and the context in which it was framed, pointed to the transforming role of kinship in the Omaheke, and its constitution as a metaphor of identity.

By the time I lived in the Omaheke, kinship as a metaphor for the articulation and negotiation of Ju/'hoan identity was, like many other aspects of their lives, in a state of flux. As we shall see, loss of stability in space, the imposition of farmers' models for the nuclear family, and dependency on others all served to transform and redefine the role of kinship as an idiom for social organisation among Ju/'hoansi. Unlike in the Ghanzi district where the degree of unhindered mobility between farms meant that Nharo Bushmen were able to maintain more "traditional" kinship relations as a model of social organisation (e.g. Barnard 1981:219-222; 1992b:145; Guenther

1986), the role of kinship in the Omaheke changed drastically. In this discussion, I am concerned with one aspect of kinship discourse and its role in the articulation of identity in the Omaheke and that is how names, specifically Ju/'hoan names, emerged as a means for expressing a collective Ju/'hoan identity in opposition to others.

As much as questions pertaining to the validity of "kinship" as an "objective" rubric for anthropological discussions of relatedness have been questioned (e.g. Schneider (1984), there is little doubt that, prior to the colonisation of the Omaheke, kinship provided one of the principal metaphors through which foraging Ju/'hoansi articulated their social identity with respect to one another. While there has been some debate on the specificities of Ju/'hoan kinship (Barnard 1992:47-53; Wilmsen 1989:171-180), the particularities of which I do not wish to go into here, there is a general consensus on the primacy of its role in the articulation of what Lorna Marshall referred to as "belonging" (Marshall 1975:287).

There are two aspects of "traditional" Ju/'hoan kinship discourse which are of particular interest in relation to the changes brought about by colonialism; firstly the relationship between kinship and tenure, and secondly the existence of what Barnard refers to as "universal kin categorisation" (Barnard 1981 & 1992b:243-5).

Anthropological discussions concerning Ju/'hoan kinship have, like much of the anthropology of kinship been limited by its theoretical shortcomings. As Schneider (1984) showed in his reinterpretation of his Yap material, established paradigms for the interpretation of discourses through which relatedness is expressed can occasionally mitigate against a better understanding of how people conceptualise their relations with one another. Even though, in the case of Ju/'hoan and Khoisan studies of kinship, researchers have been at pains to locate kinship discourses within local or regional contexts, it has been the case that few have, up until recently, stressed the role of "place" in the cultural constitution of relatedness (Wilmsen 1989:170)

For autonomously foraging Ju/'hoansi, there was a clear correspondence between kinship affiliations and rights to or with respect to land. Even though Ju/'hoan kin groupings were characteristically fluid, each group was associated with, and "owned" specific territories or *n!oresi* (Chapter 3). This association with a specific area of land, was crucial to the articulation and construction of individual and band identities, providing a physical basis to Ju/'hoan social topography. These *n!oresi* were individually named, identified and known to Ju/'hoansi, with entitlement to use the resources or reside in these areas stemming from inclusion within specific kin networks. As remains the case on the Omaheke farms, a Ju/'hoan's primary identification was with the *n!ore* of their birth, an identification often later reinforced

by marriage (Wilmsen 1989:169-171). While an individual Ju/hoan's rights to land were dependent on their social relations, and were flexible in respect of this, land itself was a crucial variable in the ascription of individual and group identities, providing a physical basis to Ju/hoan social geography. The integrity and form of Ju/hoan kin groups depended very much on their associations with specific areas (albeit that these may have changed over time) in which they had rights to permit or deny others access to resources. In other words, relatedness was expressed through both kinship and land, with both the latter and the former mutually constituting one another. Inclusion within a kinship group necessarily implied rights to specific territories, and rights to these territories necessarily implied inclusion within specific kinship groups (see Lee 1993:62-66; Wimsen 1989:168-186).

With land, marriage and birth playing a crucial role in the ascription of discrete identities for autonomous Ju/hoan groups, universal kin categorisation, which played a significant role in maintaining the flexibility of individual and band identity, operated on two different but related levels. Universal kin categorisation, was practised by many Bushman groups and, in effect, allowed for any Ju/hoan to claim relatedness to any other Ju/hoan by virtue of their names.¹⁴ It provided a practical means through which individuals could negotiate relatedness with one another and establish the rights and obligations arising from these relations. Moreover, it simultaneously allowed for individuals to claim relatedness to Ju/hoansi in other bands and thereby maintain the characteristic flexibility of foraging Ju/hoan social organisation. Richard Lee (1993:73) captures the essence of this system well when he explained that:

In reckoning kinship, the possession of a common name. . . leapfrogs over genealogical ties and creates close kinship even with distant relatives. . . anyone with your father's name you call father, anyone with your wife's name you call wife, anyone with your son's name, you call son, and so on. And you will be called in various kin terms by others according to what your name means to them.¹⁵

¹⁴Barnard (1978a; 1992b:265-266) identifies two variants of universal kin among different Bushman groups. He argues that groups such as the !Xo, have an "empirical" universal system in which one only associates with genealogical kin, whereas others such as Nharo or Ju/hoansi have an "ideological" universal kin system, whereby all persons an individual associates with, must be classified as members of a certain kin category.

¹⁵According to Lee (1993:75), the naming system and its secondary organising principle, *wi*, was "the great rattler and destroyer of systems", in that name relationships could frequently superimpose themselves over other principles for determining relatedness thereby making kinship appear both "quirky and unpredictable" (*ibid.*)

On another level, inclusion in universal kin categories served as a means of expressing a broader Ju/'hoan (as opposed to Herero or any other) identity, as only Ju/'hoansi could have a Ju/'hoan name, and therefore functioned as an ethnic marker to signify social and political boundaries at a level far greater than the band.¹⁶ Essential to the social identification as a Ju/'hoan (as opposed to a black or a white), as far as Ju/'hoansi were concerned, was to have a name which included the individual in kin networks. In other words, a Ju/'hoan name was one of several signifiers taken to demarcate inclusion in the Ju/'hoan social world.¹⁷

On Names and Naming

By the time I lived in the Omaheke, the responsibility of giving Afrikaans, or "Christain" names to Ju/'hoansi had long since passed from the farmers to the Ju/'hoansi themselves, many of whom superimposed the giving of "Christian" names over the giving of Ju/'hoan names. As has been noted by several others (e.g. Barnard 1992:48; Lee 1993:71-73), Ju/'hoansi were usually named after senior relatives in a pattern alternating between *ego's* father's and mother's generations. The giving of "Christian" names by Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke tended to follow an identical pattern to the giving of Ju/'hoan names; where people inherited their Ju/'hoan name from a senior relative, they also inherited their Christian names. Thus for example, !A/ae's *!uma* (grandson/ "small name") shared with !A/ae his "Christian" name, Frederik, as well.

While it would appear from this, along with Kan//as insistence on the importance of Ju/'hoan names, that Ju/'hoan names and naming practices constituted the dominant series of kinship metaphors, this was not strictly the case. In practice, Afrikaans names and its implicit emphasis on the patrilineality radically transformed the practical workings of kin groups and networks.

As I have argued, pre-colonial identities articulated by means of kin relations depended, to a certain extent, on the spatial stability of corporate ownership of *n!oresi*. In effect, identity was drawn from a triumvirate of referents relating to birth, marriage

¹⁶Lee (1993:170) talks of the distinction made by foraging Ju/'hoansi between *Ju/'hoansi* (real people) and *!homsa tju/ho* (wild animals of the village), a term used to refer to non-Ju/'hoansi. By virtue of this, the possession of a Ju/'hoan name served as a marker of common personhood.

¹⁷Although names were unquestionably crucial to claiming Ju/'hoan identity, it was but part of a series of a fluid set of signifiers which demarcated someone as a Ju/'hoan. As such, many anthropologists were named early in their fieldwork to signify their *partial* inclusion in Ju/'hoan social networks. In reference to this, Richard Lee (amongst others) is one of my *!un!a'asi* (grandfathers) and Alan Barnard, who shares a name with A/ae is one of my *Mbasin* (fathers).

and spatial location. Thus, the loss of autonomous ownership of land brought about by the colonial enterprise had a marked effect on the manner in which kinship discourses and practices were constructed and enacted. This came to be especially apparent following the decline in generational employment as "normal" practice on many farms after which, family and spatial identity became less and less evenly correspondent with, in some cases, members of even the same nuclear family unable to remain in contact with one another. The net result of this loss in spatial stability was that kin groups and networks beyond the nuclear family (see below) became considerably less important to Ju/'hoansi as they no longer had the practical function of allowing Ju/'hoansi access to resources or property.

Also crucial to the changing role of kinship for Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke were farmers' perceptions concerning what constituted the "real" family. In spite of the fact that farmers considered Ju/'hoansi to be irretrievably different, this did not prohibit some of them from attempting to force their kinship models on their Ju/'hoan farm workers. Indeed, for many farmers, enforcing their "Christian" model of the nuclear family on Ju/'hoansi was considered an essential part of the process of disciplining the Ju/'hoan body and imposing order on the one-time wild space of the farm. For farmers, the "Christian" nuclear family, centred around the "adult" authority of primarily the senior male and secondarily his spouse, was a central to their construction of civilised and Godly behaviour. Consequently, many farmers came to insist increasingly more vehemently on the "Christian" nuclear family as a suitable model for determining which of their workers' dependants could remain with them on the farm. Furthermore, farmers were often reluctant to allow extended families to live on farms not only because it meant more mouths to feed, but also because it would apparently lead to fighting, drunkenness and sexual debauchery¹⁸. Thus, as time progressed, the "Christian" model of the nuclear family advocated by farmers came to be a more and more relevant unit of social organisation for many Ju/'hoansi. Tied to this, many Ju/'hoansi came to partially accept the dominance of farmers' models of gender in which males were responsible for public space and women for domestic. Contemporary Ju/'hoan male views on their spouse's roles reflected this clearly. Not long after his first child was born, /Kallie, !A'/ae's second son, explained to me that:

¹⁸According to research undertaken by the South African Government during the 1980s (Marais et al 1984:38-39) there were several farms in the Omaheke on which more than 30 Ju/'hoansi were "permanently" resident, thereby allowing kin groupings to remain together. Nevertheless, this only accounted only around 30 percent of the Ju/'hoan population. Moreover, in the ten years following, this number has been drastically reduced, with the farm which was home to the largest of these populations (71 people) (and which lay adjacent to Rosenhof) now providing home to around five Ju/'hoansi.

A good wife is one who stays at the house while you work so that when you come home everything is ready; the house is clean, the food has been prepared, dishes washed and the children are OK.

Further to this, the residential limitations imposed by farmers, as well as their control over their worker's mobility meant that, to a certain extent at least, the "traditional" levels of social organisation (Barnard 199b:226-232) to which Ju/'hoan kinship discourses were once so attuned were no longer as relevant as had been in the past. Units of social organisation such as the "band" and, to a greater extent, "band clusters" quite simply lost their practical significance in a political landscape in which it was rarely possible for such groupings to reproduce themselves.

These residential limitations had a greater impact on Ju/'hoan kinship discourse than removing some of the conditions which had previously ensured the reproduction of pre-colonial kinship discourses and the practices in which they found their signification. Life on the farms was a largely male focused affair. Contracts entered into between farmers and Ju/'hoansi tended to be made between males, and the continuity of these relationships depended, to a large extent, on the male Ju/'hoan farm worker remaining in the favour of the male farmer. Farm work itself was also a primarily male activity and though workers' dependants were often given work in the kitchen, laundry, or garden, their status on the farm was almost always entirely dependent on that of the male kinsmen.¹⁹ Thus, to all intents and purposes, rights of residence, access to resources and basic subsistence all depended on male Ju/'hoansi remaining in the good grace of the *baas*. While during good rainfall years, women and other dependants could contribute to subsistence by gathering, this was only seasonal, and regarded by both men and women as a marginal activity of relatively little importance. Few women at Skoonheid, for example, spent any time looking for veld-foods, or were even particularly adept at it, in spite of having plenty of time to do so²⁰.

Locked within a political economy in which the male's role was so central and in which residence groups had, in many instances, been streamlined around the

¹⁹On most farms where workers' female dependants were given work as domestics, they were paid considerably less than male farm workers in spite of having to work similar hours. Consequently, even in these cases, the degree to which families relied on income earned by women was considerably less than they relied on income generated their spouses.

²⁰This was partially the case because during the time I stayed there, the drought meant that there were very few veld-foods available.

farmer's conceptions of the nuclear family, Ju/'hoan kinship discourse was to experience a subtle shift in emphasis towards the patriline.

Moving towards the Patriline

One of the clearest illustrations of the way in which Ju/'hoansi posited a categorical distinction between the contexts evoked by Boer and Ju/'hoan names respectively was in the matter of marriage. Ju/'hoansi spoke of two different kinds of marriage, a Christian "official" marriage (*trou* in Afrikaans) ordained by a priest and the State, and a Ju/'hoan marriage (*!kom*). While farm Ju/'hoansi, considered "Christian" marriage to be "real" and godly, few Ju/'hoansi I knew had been married by either a priest or a missionary. !A'/ae and Xoan//a who, for example, had been together for over twenty-five years, by the time I came to meet them, insisted that they were *ongetroud* (unmarried in Afrikaans) despite of the fact that they were *dshau sa !hoan* (man and wife). As a result of this, while being a partners in Ju/'hoan terms, they considered themselves unmarried in the eyes of the state and God. Thus while their children were named in the usual manner, inheriting both Ju/'hoan and "Christian" names bilaterally from senior relatives on both !A'/ae's and Xoan//a's sides, surnames were inherited differently. A husband's surname was, in accordance with the state and Christian law only taken by a spouse after an "official" state ratified marriage. Thus Xoan//a whose Afrikaans name was Maria Agroeb, did not take on !A'/ae's surname, Langman, after they became *dshau sa !hoan*. Of particular interest here was the fact that !A'/ae's and Xoan//a's children all took !A'/ae's rather than Xoan//a's surname and, in so doing, like several other families living at Skoonheid, demonstrated the emergent centrality of the males' role and the patriline in the dynamic of Ju/'hoan kinship.

Part of the emphasis placed on the patriline stemmed from another aspect of farm life. The generational pattern of farm labour had meant that Ju/'hoan farm workers' sons were often taken into employment on the same farms on which their fathers' worked, while daughters remained as dependants. A consequence of this was that post-marital residence tended almost always to be virilocal, with son's wives coming in from outside and daughters moving away to live with husbands²¹. Even after generational labour ceased to be the norm, virilocal residence continued to emerge as a normative pattern due to the centrality of the male as key provider through farm labour.

²¹Post marital residence among foraging Ju/'hoansi was typically uxorilocal during the first few years of marriage, and subsequently virilocal (Barnard 1992b:52-53; Lee 1993:79-90; Kaufmann 1910:156-158)

Conclusion

In many respects, Ju/'hoan kinship, as modeled by anthropologists, no longer retained nearly such an important role in the ascription of individual Ju/'hoan or group identities as it once had in the Omaheke. The loss of spatial stability as a key constituent of how Ju/'hoansi constructed relatedness to one another meant that kinship was no longer the principal means by which Ju/'hoansi claimed access to resources or property. Furthermore, Ju/'hoan subordination to others, farmer's control over residence and mobility, and the emerging centrality of the male as principal provider all contributed to diminishing the role of kinship in the articulation of Ju/'hoan identity in the Omaheke, through redefining relevant and practical units of social organisation. With such an evident transformation in the role of kinship among Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, what then of Kan//a's exclamation on the continuing importance of Ju/'hoan names to their social identity?

This, it seems, was the case not because kin relations remained as pivotal in the articulation of an individual Ju/'hoan's identity as they once were, but rather because naming, and universal name structures, provided a means whereby Ju/'hoansi could locate themselves within the emergent broader Ju/'hoan social category (as opposed to localised autonomous kin groups). As we have seen, the political and economic processes in which Ju/'hoansi were absorbed resulted in Ju/'hoansi articulating their identity in far broader terms than previously was the case. Whereas Ju/'hoan identity was once largely a matter of constructing and negotiating relations amongst and between Ju/'hoansi, the settlement of whites and Hereros in the Omaheke meant that Ju/'hoansi came to articulate their identity with respect to *others*. Universal kin networks, which excluded these *others*, thus served to symbolise a boundary, as well as locate those included within this bounded space, and exclude those outwith it.

* * *

Thus far I have argued that Ju/'hoan dependency on others in the Omaheke had rendered them virtually silent in the emergent colonial political economy. Subject to the tyranny of others' representations of them these representations came to be increasingly more hegemonic and as a result of this Ju/'hoansi came to identify themselves as a subordinate category which superimposed itself over pre-existing group or band-based identities.

The changes evident in Ju/'hoan kinship discourse, and its role in the

construction of Ju/'hoan social identity clearly reflect these wider transformations. The increasing emphasis placed on patrilineal, the breakdown of pre-colonial political groupings and identities in the form of bands or band clusters, and the continued dominance of ideological universal naming as a means to express Ju/'hoan identity all suggest that Ju/'hoansi identify themselves in far broader terms than previously.

While it was clear that the emphasis placed on the label *Ju/'hoansi* reflected the emergence of a nascent political consciousness in the Omaheke, the symbols around which this consciousness were constructed were not positive. The fact that victimisation along with *dom-ness* were seen as indices of Ju/'hoan-ness reflects this clearly. Indeed, unlike in the Ghanzi district where I did my undergraduate fieldwork, symbols of Ju/'hoan-ness, were not positively re-appropriated in order to assert a collective identity, but rather to point to their status as a marginalised and impoverished people.

The notion that Ju/'hoan identity was often negatively expressed was evidenced in Ju/'hoan narratives through which they spoke of their identity in reference to religious transformation, history and folklore. In the following chapters I address these themes, looking initially at how Ju/'hoansi constructed the relationship between "old times" and "new times".

CHAPTER 6: G//AUA'S PEOPLE: PAST AND PRESENT

In the previous chapter, I argued that the dramatic changes brought about by the colonisation of the Omaheke radically redefined the political and social parameters out of which Ju/'hoansi constructed their collective identity. I suggested that these political and economic processes have resulted in the emergence of a broader Ju/'hoan identity, one forged on the play and perception of ethnicity, and that this transformation manifests itself in changes in discourses relating kinship, land and status. In the following two chapters I wish to address these changes from a different perspective, looking in particular at the ways in which Ju/'hoansi spoke of and about themselves. In this chapter, I start by examining how Ju/'hoansi reconstructed their place in the cosmos and how the conceptualisation of cosmological process points to how Ju/'hoansi related the past to the present.

In many respects, Ju/'hoan religious narratives in the Omaheke were syncretic insofar as they were synthesis of both "traditional" and "Christian" beliefs. Nevertheless, the notion of syncretism, as has been used in anthropology, is often misleading in that it frequently divorces religious transformations from their political contexts. As Pato, writing of independent churches in southern Africa, has argued, "the hypothesis of syncretism as an explanatory tool . . . does not take seriously the contexts in which African conversions take place" (1990:26). Similarly it often takes "religion" as a discrete, objectively contained segment of cultural life, which can ascribed its own agency (see Stewart and Shaw 1994:15-18). In much recent discussion of the "politics of religious synthesis" anthropologists have attempted to move beyond the limitations imposed by excision of religious narratives from their political contexts by placing, "relations of domination. . . at the centre of analysis" (Stirrat 1992: 9).¹

This is particularly relevant in the Omaheke, where Ju/'hoan domination by others was a recurring theme in religious discourse. In respect of this, relations of domination are pivotal in conceptualising the politics of Ju/'hoan religious synthesis, not only because they contextualised this process, but because political and economic domination was itself an important element of it.

* * *

¹See also Shaw and Stewart (1994); Kempf (1994); Pato (1990) and Comaroff (1985 and 1992)

In September 1995 Thai Dam, one of Skoonheid's oldest Ju/'hoan residents, died. He, like many others at Skoonheid, had tuberculosis, and his old work-worn body eventually gave up the ghost. A few days before his death he'd hitched a ride to the newly built hospital in Gobabis where he passed away in the company of the TB ward nurses.

Among foraging Ju/'hoansi, burial usually took place very soon after death. For old Thai Dam this was not to be the case. His family had insisted on a "Christian" burial, an idea which was met with little dispute from any quarter. Consequently, it took two weeks before Thai was buried at Skoonheid, his body remaining in the refrigerated hospital morgue until such time as a *Dominee* (priest) was available to do the service. Eventually Dominee Reiman, a tough and well-meaning Swiss missionary, who was well liked by the Ju/'hoansi (and well disliked by many farmers), made himself available to do the service.

The night before the funeral, Thai's oldest grandson, !Amace, went to pick up the coffin from the morgue in Gobabis, paying one of the Hereros who grazed his cattle illegally on resettlement lands to deliver it to Skoonheid in his four wheel drive. Once the coffin arrived, using some awning and poles !Amace erected a tiny makeshift church into which the government supplied chip-board coffin was placed for the night.

The *dominee* arrived early the following morning, aware that if the body was buried too late in the day, it would begin to smell. At the start of the funeral proceedings the coffin was laid open and we all formed a cue outside the makeshift church to view the body for a last time. We shuffled in one and two at a time, some spending longer than others staring silently at the greying corpse bedecked in a torn grey suit that was several sizes too big. As the queue died down the *dominee* called the closest relatives to the coffin side and bid us all silence so that a prayer could be said. Once this was done the coffin was sealed and lifted clumsily into the *dominee's* pick-up truck to be driven to the grave site, about half a kilometre from the main residential compound at Skoonheid. Some of the older men and women of the settlement squeezed alongside the coffin in the back of the pick-up, so as to avoid the walk. Soon, with Thai's youngest grandson, /Ui, carrying the wooden cross with which to mark the grave site, marching in front, we set off following slowly behind the *dominee's* truck. While walking the mourners, led by !A'ae and Hendrik (one of the Damara settlers at Skoonheid) sang in Afrikaans; "I hope that God will also take me to heaven", and other Afrikaans kindergarten songs.

As we progressed to the grave site, the camel-thorn grew too thick for the



Plate 6.1 Thai Dam's funeral

dominee's pick-up to go all the way and so, about two or three hundred meters from the grave, the old men and women spilled out the back of the *dominee's* pick-up and the coffin was lifted and lugged unceremoniously to the grave.

Before the service was to start the coffin was to be placed in the grave which had been dug the night before, a difficult task since the grave was too small- Thai's grandsons having measured it according to Thai's diminutive body rather than the one-size-fits-all state provided coffin. Spades appeared, and with a bit of frantic digging and shoving, the coffin was eventually forced to rest at the bottom of the grave, at which point the *dominee* climbed a termite mound nearby and bid us silence.

Speaking in Afrikaans, the *dominee* offered prayers commending the life of the deceased and read a short passage from the Bible, all of which were translated very ably into Ju/'hoan by !A'/ae and Nama/Damara by Hendrik. Again Afrikaans songs (which everybody save myself seemed to know) were sung and eventually the *dominee* called the service to an abrupt end, requesting that anyone who wished to say a prayer for the dead to should do so then. Several Damara mourners stood forward each saying a few words extolling the virtues of the deceased, while all the Ju/'hoan mourners save !A'/ae, stood back in silence.

Once it was clear that no more prayers were to be said, Sofia, one of Thai's granddaughters, dropped a bag containing a cup, a plate, a pot and some of Thai's clothes into the grave with the coffin apparently, as I was later told, "so that he wouldn't come back looking for his things". Thereafter, !Amace picked up a spade and shovelled some sand into the grave, muttering quietly to the coffin as he did so. After this, some of the women, led by Sofia, came forward, and clutching handfuls of sand, threw them into the grave, each one in turn saying a few last words to the deceased. Some spoke quietly, yet others were more vociferous in their final words to old Thai. Sometimes, I could hear what was being said; "go away and don't come back, go away to heaven!"; "Good-bye, but you must stay away" and, "You are dead now don't come back to trouble us!". After the women had all thrown sand into the grave, the men took turns to pick up shovels and do the same. When the shovel was passed to me I very self consciously threw some sand into the now rapidly filling grave, and semi-audibly pleaded with Thai not to return.

Soon the grave was almost full, and the cross bearing Thai's name was planted carefully into the mound which now marked where his corpse lay. Finally Sofia stepped forward with some other women, and pouring water from an old drum over the grave so that he would not return if he was thirsty, offered a final plea to the deceased, reminding him that he was now dead, and that he should not come back to

look for his friends or his family should he get lonely.

The apparent contradiction in the funeral service between the Christian symbolism and the clear worry that people had that Thai might return to bother the living surprised me. Afterwards, I was sitting with old /Engn!au, who had unexpectedly decided not to attend his old friends' funeral, and asked him about this. /Engn!au explained that people were scared that Thai might return to haunt them because he, like /Engn!au, was considered an "old-time person", and did not follow the "path of Jesus". Because of this, it was further explained it was unlikely that his spirit or ghost (*g//aua*) would go to heaven, but instead that it would walk the earth along with the "satanic" ranks of the *g//auasi* (spirits of the dead; see below) who often brought sickness and death to the living.

Religion and Colonialism

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, it was primarily Roman Catholic Missionaries who led efforts to claim the Ju/'hoansi for God. The Mission station at Epukiro, which provided, as it still does, a centre for religious education for the locals, was founded in 1903, some time before any other whites had attempted to settle so far north and east in the Omaheke.² In the years that followed, several other Christian orders began to do missionary work among the Ju/'hoan and other populations resident in the Omaheke, with Lutherans, Dutch Reformed, Rhenish and Catholic Missionaries leading the way, each trying to claim them for their respective churches.³ Nevertheless, even though missionaries placed themselves at the forefront of process to claim the Ju/'hoansi for God, it was primarily through the Afrikaner Calvinist teachings of farmers and their families that Ju/'hoansi came to adopt the signs and symbols of Christianity.⁴

For many of the farmers who settled in the Omaheke, the imparting of "Christian" values to the indigenes was regarded as fundamental to the colonial project. In terms of the Calvinist underpinnings of their understandings of Christianity

²At present, the Epukiro Mission farm, which lies forty or so kilometres west of Epukiro Post 3 (*fig 3*), is still a functioning mission station and nunnery. While the church legally owns the 20000 hectare plot on which it is situated, two thirds of it are set aside for the residents of the primarily Tswana village that has grown up around the mission. The mission farm remains the only major Tswana speaking settlement in the northern Omaheke.

³The only linguistic studies of Omaheke Ju/'hoansi were conducted by one of the Roman Catholic Missionaries based in Gobabis (Van der Westhuizen 1972).

⁴Farmers were often suspicious of missionaries like Reiman, and frequently refused them permission to talk with their workers, or visit their farms, fearing that a non-Calvinist Christian doctrine might encourage their workers to rebellion and "cheekiness" (see Gordon 1992:143).

many farmers constructed the world in highly oppositional terms which distinguished between all things as either satanic or Godly. In terms of this taxonomy, the practices of the "wild" Ju/'hoansi of the Omaheke were understood to be clearly satanic, and many felt obliged to attempt to sever Ju/'hoansi from their apparently devilish roots.

The baptismal quality to the processes of giving Afrikaans names to Ju/'hoansi, which I described in the previous chapter, was a first step in claiming these indigenes for God, a step to be followed by lessons in the Bible, instruction in the ways of the Lord and, on some farms, the banishing of "satanic" practices such as the trance dance, which up until then provided the principal ritual focus of Ju/'hoan religious life.⁵ The equation of Ju/'hoan "wildness" with the works of Satan was central to the proselytising ethic of these farmers, some of whom set about teaching the Ju/'hoansi Christian values with unbridled vigour. For the most part however, while not all farmers banned the trance dances and other rituals completely (a few farmers even encouraged them as shows for tourists), the fragmentation of Ju/'hoan kin groupings, the rigours of farm life, the ravages of drink and the repression of Ju/'hoan cultural practice ensured that the dances along with other Ju/'hoan rituals (such as initiation rites) disappeared almost completely towards the end 1970's.

For Ju/'hoansi, religious knowledge came to emerge as another area in which they considered themselves *dom*. As a consequence of this, Ju/'hoansi deferred "authoritative" knowledge of cosmological and ontological matters primarily to white farmers, priests and missionaries, and secondarily to any others who were understood to have better access to this knowledge. The fact that at Thai's funeral it was only the Damara mourners who felt confident enough to offer public prayers by the graveside indicated this most clearly. Consequently while most Ju/'hoansi claimed to have little knowledge of ontological and cosmological issues, none disputed the notion that an authoritative knowledge of such matters was held by whites and some others. As such, while it was agreed which religious signs and practices were dominant, few claimed to have knowledge of why these particular signs were dominant, or what they stood for.

Even though few Ju/'hoansi could speak on the specificities of the Bible beyond that gleaned from farm church services and the erratic efforts of missionaries,

⁵The trance dance, variations of which were practised by most Bushman groups in Namibia and Botswana has been well described by several authors (Katz 1978; Lee 1993; Marshall 1976 etc.). According to Guenther (1975a & 1976) the trance dance emerged as a symbolic locus for the expression of Nharo political identity in the Ghanzi district. Furthermore, he has argued that trance-healers' ritual power was highly respected by others (Hereros and Tswanas), and healers consequently emerged as potential leader figures for Nharos.

many would speak confidently in more general terms on the processes of religious transformation in the Omaheke. Indeed, Ju/'hoan narratives on this process are suggestive of the degree to which their constructions of self were dominated by the colonial process, and, to this extent, how these narratives served as a means through which Ju/'hoansi rationalised and represented their contemporary status as the "inferiors" of the Omaheke.

"G//aua's children"⁶; Satan's People

Foraging Ju/'hoansi, living in the Dobe-NyaeNyae region articulated a belief in two deity figures; a greater and a lesser God, both of whom, along with their wives and children roamed the earth in another time. In simplistic terms, the Greater God, though distant and inaccessible, was considered the principal architect of creation, whereas the lesser god, who was thought to be more accessible, was considered to be morally ambiguous. The high, creator God was referred to, among other things, as *G//auan!a'a*, and the lesser God as *G//auama* (the suffixes *-n!a'a* and *-ma* meaning small and big respectively). While *G//auan!a'a* was generally thought to reside in "heaven" (*n!a'a*), *G//auama* was understood to roam the earth (*kxa*) and, along with the spirits of the dead, cause trouble for and occasionally assist, the living.

For foraging Ju/'hoansi, while *G//auan!a'a* and *G//auama* were understood to be "the ultimate source" of all things (Lee 1993:113), it was widely agreed that the most active and immediate agents of misfortune and sickness were the *g//auasi*, the spirits of the dead. In trance and healing dances it was principally the *g//auasi* (who were often considered immediately responsible for sickness) that were cajoled, begged and even fought in order that they heal the ill. While there was little dispute that *g//auasi* were the prime source of misfortune, discourse concerning them was contested insofar as agreeing on their intentions (*ibid.* 114). While some felt that *g//auasi* were malicious, others were more circumspect concerning the actions of the dead. One elderly healer with whom Richard Lee spoke offered a useful explanation of the actions of *g//auasi* who described the process of death as a "struggle between two loving sets of relatives, one living and the other dead" (*ibid.*). Lee's informant explained:

Longing for the living is what drives the dead to make people sick. . . They miss their people on earth. And they come back to us. They hover near the

⁶One of Dorothea Bleek's (1928:46) informants also referred to Bushmen as "G//aua's children" (see also Schapera 1930:187)

earth and put sickness into people saying "Come, come here to me".

By the 1920s, just prior to the most intense period of white settlement in the Omaheke, Dorothea Bleek described Nharo and ≠Au//ei (Ju/'hoan) religious beliefs as "a wonderful muddle", and noted that the most frequently used term for the senior deity was "!Khuba" (!Xu) and not "G//auan!a'a",⁷ the former being a term her informants suggested derived from Nama. It seems likely that the Ju/'hoan creator deity was widely referred to as !Xu by the time Christian prosletization (by whites) got well under way (Bleek 1927:25-27). This indicates that the first inklings of a Christian divine taxonomy constituted in terms of opposing forces of good and evil entered into Ju/'hoan cosmological discourses some time before the large scale settlement of whites in the area.⁸ By the 1990s, and possibly well before then, it was almost universally agreed among Ju/'hoan speakers (old-time and new-time people alike (see below)) that the cosmos was governed by three different incarnations, !Xu, G//aua and the g//auasi. !Xu it was explained to me was "God", the same God "who was father to Jesus" and, furthermore, that he dealt with people "through the living spirit of his son Jesus Christ". G//aua, I was informed, was "Satan",⁹ and the g//auasi were the spirits of the dead who, through ignorance of "God's true word", remained Satan's minions. In contrast to foraging Ju/'hoansi, Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke considered g//auasi to be the agents of "evil" rather than morally ambiguous spirits of the dead that Lee wrote of.

Many Ju/'hoansi considered the transition to Christianity and, by extension, their colonisation by others partly to be a consequence of the fact that in the "old times", all Ju/'hoansi were "G//aua's (and hence Satan's) people". Following years of subordination to, and dependence on people who equated Ju/'hoan ritual and religious life with Satan, and who told them as such, many Ju/'hoansi came to speak of their foraging past in similar terms. Indeed, several Ju/'hoansi made it clear to me that the process of colonisation was "good" insofar as it was seen to have weaned them of their "satanic" allegiance to G//aua. For some Ju/'hoansi, the Omaheke was

⁷The term !Xu derives from the Nama, !Khuba (Lord). The -ba suffix in !Khuba signifies a masculine singular in Khoe based languages.

⁸There is evidence that Nama who settled and travelled through the Omaheke and Ghanzi regions also attempted to convert Ju/'hoansi to Christianity. Since it seems clear that the use of the term !Xu is of Nama origin, it is reasonable to suggest that even prior to large-scale the settlement of whites, Ju/'hoansi conceptualised of divinity by means of distinctly Christian signs (cf. Lee 1993:113). Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Dorothea Bleek's informants in the 1920s translated the term G//aua unproblematically as "Satan" (Bleek 1927:25).

⁹In conversation with various Ju/'hoansi, the unproblematic association of G//aua with Satan was demonstrated by speakers using the terms interchangeably.

understood to have been a battle ground on which God and Satan fought for Ju/'hoan souls; a battle enacted through the bodies of farmers, missionaries, priests, Ju/'hoansi and others. Dam Kakao, a young Ju/'hoan man living at Skoonheid explained:

!Xu made all things, he even made *G//aua*. But *G//aua* can lie and he will say to people that he made all good things. *G//aua* will say he made goats for people because they are good and will protect their young from jackals. They will scream and will not run away like sheep if jackals come. *G//aua* also said that he made dogs, which are good for hunting warthogs, and that *!Xu* only made shit things. But it was *!Xu* that made all good things. . . *G//aua* is one who lies. We know that *G//aua* lies because it is what the whites taught us. *G//aua* speaks shit! . . .

Before the elections [at Namibian Independence in 1990] both SWAPO and the DTA came to the Ju/'hoansi. The DTA promised good work, good living, good money and said [to us], "SWAPO will make you suffer and SWAPO will kill you". And then SWAPO came, and promised us cars, and farms, and said that the DTA was lying. It was the same with *!Xu* and *G//aua* except that both SWAPO and DTA were lying and it was only *G//aua* who is the liar. *!Xu* does not lie.

So just like SWAPO [who won the election], it was God who won in the end, and this is why it is only the old men who are dying who know of medicine dances, and can speak with *G//aua*.

In the old times, *G//aua* would walk the earth and come to your home and talk to people. This is why he had the Ju/'hoansi. [At this time] *!Xu* was in heaven. It was always *G//aua* who came to the Ju/'hoansi; God did not come until the Boers came with the Bible; now they [the Ju/'hoansi] are no longer with *G//aua*.

In other parts of colonised southern Africa, religious discourse and ritual practise often provided a space in which indigenes contested their political disenfranchisement and powerlessness. It has thus been argued, that because syncretic religious beliefs and their enactment, don't concede wholesale to the hegemony of the colonial ritual symbolism and, in particular, practice, that they provide an avenue of symbolic resistance for the colonised (e.g. Comaroff 1985; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:80-83). In contrast to this, Kakao's narrative points clearly to the extent to which Ju/'hoan religious identity was a product of farmers' hegemony in that far from subverting or

contesting the legitimacy of their colonial domination at the hands of others, it gave it divine sanction.¹⁰ Indeed, in this case, the synthesis of Ju/'hoan and Christian religious symbolism provided a means with which Ju/'hoansi articulated their submission and acquiescence to others' domination.

Kakao's narrative is most striking in that it evaluates the Ju/'hoan past in explicitly negative terms. Present miseries are accredited to a historical connection with Satan (*G//aua*) who, prior to the arrival of the whites in the Omaheke, was considered to have duped the Ju/'hoansi into a misguided allegiance to him. In this narrative, the causes of Ju/'hoan marginalisation are not accredited to the direct agency of farmers or Hereros, but, indirectly to God. While blame for Ju/'hoan misfortunes is placed on their one time misguided allegiance to *G//aua*, it is implicitly turned back on the Ju/'hoansi. Indeed, Kakao is clear in his election analogy that Ju/'hoansi were *dom* enough to be duped by Satan's lies in a way that others were not. Thus, there is an implication in this narrative, in which Ju/'hoansi are portrayed as "ignorant" victims of *G//aua's* guile, that Ju/'hoansi were less capable than others of telling between God's legitimate, and *G//aua's* fraudulent claims to divinity. The "old men who are dying" (one of whom was Thai Dam) to whom Kakao referred were those people who, because they were still rooted in the past, had not conceded to the authority of God over *G//aua*. In the last paragraph of this narrative, Kakao also implies that perhaps Ju/'hoansi were not worthy of *!Xu's* attention until such time as the Boers arrived.

Even though, at least as far as Kakao was concerned, God was already victorious in the battle to wrench Ju/'hoansi from Satan's clutch, many others spoke of it as an ongoing battle. The continuation of this struggle, however, was not because most Ju/'hoansi (save, of course the "old men who are dying") continued to orient ritual and religious life around an allegiance to *G//aua*, but because many Ju/'hoansi continued to succumb to what were understood to be Satan's ever-present temptations. *!A'ae*, the only Ju/'hoan I knew who had given up alcohol completely, did so firstly because he kept getting into fights which he lost whenever he was drunk, but, secondly, because he wished to secure a place for himself in Heaven. *!A'ae*, who through being literate and owning a Bible was considered to be the most authoritative Ju/'hoan voice on religious matters, articulated a widely held belief when he explained that:

¹⁰Writing about circumcision in missionised New Guinea, Kempf (1994:114-116) has also noted that syncretic ritual practice often reiterates rather than opposes colonial domination.

Those who drink, lie, swear and steal will go to *G//aua*. They will then just walk on the earth making people sick and doing harm. If people are not with God, when they die they will be *g//auasi*.

For many Ju/'hoansi, the fact that they succumbed so easily to Satan's temptations was taken as evidence of their "weakness" and inferiority. This was held to be particularly true in connection with alcohol. Kun//a, one of /Engn!au's daughters put it well when she claimed that:

We know the drink is bad, but it is *G//aua* that makes you drink and fight, and it is difficult to say no. If the drink is there, then *G//aua* will call you to it.

As such, the fact that some Ju/'hoansi considered themselves to be or have been *G//aua*'s people was not only because of a re-evaluation of their past in terms of present circumstances, but also because of their continued failure to resist what were perceived to be Satan's ever-present temptations. In terms of this, the notion that Ju/'hoansi were Satan's people also hinted at what was perceived to be a particular Ju/'hoan weakness for the bottle which made them more susceptible to *G//aua*'s temptations than others.

Several farmers used the notion of divine retribution as a means of social control. Consequently, the notion that actions taken while living might tangibly affect one's status when dead came to be central to Ju/'hoan constructions of cosmological process. It was widely believed that the "good" (i.e. those who followed "the path of Jesus") would *care n'a'a* (go to heaven), and those who chose to flaunt them would surely go to *G//aua*'s side, become *g//auasi*, walk the earth and trouble the living. As much as Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke shared a common understanding with Ju/'hoansi in the Dobe-NyaeNyae region of how *g//auasi* were thought to act, the fact that they were seen as more unambiguously "evil" pointed to the extent to which the notion that one's deeds while living effected one's status in the after-life. Omaheke Ju/'hoansi described *g//auasi* as suffering in perpetuity for their sins. Indeed, some speculated that it was because of this perpetual pain that *g//auasi* were thought to experience, that they tormented the living. !A/ae, for example, suggested that:

If you do not go to heaven and [therefore] join the *g//auasi*, you will burn, just as if you put your hand in the fire, you will burn. . . . Perhaps this is why they are jealous of the living.

Thus it was not only those who remained in touch with the pre-Christian Ju/'hoan past, the "old men who are dying" that Dam Kakao spoke of, that would most likely become *g//auasi* following death, but also those who did not heed the word of God and were easily seduced by Satan's many temptations. Thus old Thai Dam was thought more likely than most to join the ranks of the *g//auasi* mainly because he was one of the few old-time people still living on the northern Omaheke farms, but also because he was known to have been fond of drink and engage freely in other "sins". Hence the fact that at his funeral special attention was paid to imploring him not to return to trouble the those he left behind.

Old-Time People and New-Time People

Although the distinction between what were referred to as "old time" or "new-time" people came to my attention quite late in my fieldwork, and specifically in the context of cosmology and ontology, the logic of this distinction resonated through many aspects of Ju/'hoan life. It was intrinsic to the way Ju/'hoansi spoke of time, change and process following white and Herero settlement in the Omaheke, as well as providing an important set of referents for discussions of social identity.

At Skoonheid there were only three or four people who were spoken of as old-time people, one of whom was Thai Dam, and another old /'Engn!au who recounted the tale of Zameko (Chapter 1). Old-time people were those who were thought still to be in touch with what were referred to as the "old ways" of the Ju/'hoansi. They were said to know of the skills required for hunting and foraging, and some were said to retain knowledge of *n/um* (trance and bush medicine), and occasionally were called upon to deal with sicknesses caused by *g//auasi* or witchcraft. Diseases or afflictions which were apparently incurable by the "white" medicines and treatments readily available at the clinics or hospital were understood to be caused by *g//auasi* or witchcraft (usually perpetrated by Hereros), and consequently required the skills of a *n/umkxau* (traditional healer) who knew how to communicate with the *g//auasi* in order to be cured. As such, while no-one wished to learn *n/um* from the old-time people for fear that they would be punished by God, old-time people were still valued specifically because they retained the knowledge to deal with sickness caused by *g//auasi* or witchcraft.

In spite of the fact that old-time people were valued as repositories of some important bodies of cultural and practical knowledge, they were also paradoxically viewed as living embodiments of a weak and submissive past. For younger

Ju/'hoansi, old-time people were considered to be fundamentally ignorant of the essential knowledge necessary for survival in the "new Namibia". One Ju/'hoan man, recently released from prison, explained:

People like your grandfather [/'Engn!au]¹¹ don't know of things like independence. They know only of the old things and living under the Boers. They know fuck-all of money, they get their pensions but do not know what to do with the money they get.¹²

Even though old-time people were considerably more aware of what was going on than many credited them (/'Engn!au, for example, while working on a borehole crew, had travelled more widely through Namibia than most other Ju/'hoansi I knew), their status depended on their being opposed to "new-time people". Most Ju/'hoansi, I was told, were "new-time" people or *Jusa o //eike* (today's people) and knew only of *tci zesin* (new things).

As far as most *jusa o //eike* were concerned, old-time cultural knowledge was considered to be almost wholly redundant. This was clearly illustrated by the label used by self proclaimed new-time people to describe old-time people. While some *jusa o //eike*, remaining deferent to their elders, offered the labels such as *ju !ae!ae* (old person) and *n!ausi* (old men), others suggested that the term *ju ≠'angsi*¹³ (old or worn out people) was the most appropriate. More often than not though, Ju/'hoansi referred to old-time people by using the Afrikaans label *outyd se mense* (literally "old-time people"), a term which in itself pointed to the colonial political field which produced the logic behind such a classification. In using the label *ju ≠'angsi* to refer to old-time people (which, to the best of my knowledge, was not used by foraging Ju/'hoansi), new-time people implied the partial and, in some respects, total redundancy of cultural

¹¹Even though /'Engn!au was not my !un!a'a, given the amount of time I spent with him people had taken to referring to him as my grandfather, using the Afrikaans term for grandfather, "oupa" to describe the relationship.

¹²Strictly speaking this was not true. While old-time people (as with most others) were not numerate, they had a fair idea as to what their pension cash could get them after younger family members had scrounged a fair bit off them for booze and other goodies. Following Independence, the Namibian government set up a state pension scheme which, though fairly paltry, worked well, especially given the "remoteness" of many eligible recipients. For pensioners at Skoonheid their pensions were sent to the police station at Plessis Plaas, about 30 km west of Skoonheid, and the arrival of their money was announced over the Damara language radio service.

¹³The intransitive verb or adjective ≠'ang was usually used in order to suggest that something was no longer of any use e.g. *ka uto!om tsio ≠'ang* (that tyre is worn out). In this context it had a double meaning, suggesting on the one hand the "old-ness" of old-time people, and on the other, the fact that the knowledge they possessed was no longer of any use.

knowledge possessed by them. Thus, in contrast to their once esteemed role as educators among foraging Ju/'hoansi, old-time people, with their knowledge of the *g//auasi* and *n/um*, were denied an active role as producers and imparters of relevant and valid survival knowledge (cf. Biesele 1994:20).

Old-time people thus occupied a somewhat paradoxical position in the contemporary Omaheke. On the one hand they were understood to have access to knowledge which was, in some contexts valuable and useful (i.e. in dealing with magic and sickness) yet, on the other, they were seen to represent a past which was not only satanic, but also redundant. The transformations of the political and economic landscape of the Omaheke following colonisation therefore affected an inversion of pre-existing Ju/'hoan social hierarchies whereby older people came to be regarded as largely ignorant of the life skills deemed necessary for survival in the contemporary Omaheke.

The fact that old-time people were afforded a more marginal role among Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke points to several other broader issues relating to how Ju/'hoansi constructed their past and its relationship to the present as captured in the distinction made between "old times" and "new".

Talking about the Past

Articulating no grand nor unified historical narratives, Ju/'hoansi usually talked about the past in terms of personal experience. Few would tell a (hi)story in which they had not, at least, some indirect connection with the events or people involved. /'Engn!au, for example, who recounted the tale of Zameko, reminded me that he could tell it because, as a child living at Epukiro, he had once seen Zameko. Similarly, more recent events or changes, such as the implementation of pass legislation, or the advent of independence, were also almost always spoken of in terms of the centred self of the speaker. Usually, when I asked to talk about specific events with people, my queries would be deferred to someone who was thought to know of the matter through personal experience. Nevertheless, while having no unifying narratives with which to constitute a dominant history, many Ju/'hoansi would talk easily of the past and its relationship with the present in fairly abstract, even analytical terms; casting judgements and drawing conclusions about the past in reference to the present and the present in reference to the past.

In talking about the past, most Ju/'hoansi posited a broad conceptual distinction between the pre-colonial period, during which Ju/'hoansi were seen to have been relatively autonomous, and the colonial and post-colonial periods during which

Ju/'hoan autonomy was eroded and their dependency on others ensured. The pre-colonial period was referred to using the temporal adjective, *goaq* (long ago), or the Afrikaans term, *outyds* (old-time). Ju/'hoansi usually spoke about this period in conspicuously static and non-processual terms, constructing it as a time of indefinite length in which old-time people hunted and gathered, and life continued on a fairly even keel. In contrast to this, the colonial period was spoken of in conspicuously processual terms in which notions of change and transformation initiated by the presence of others took a prominent role.

Old-time people were said to draw their identity from life during the pre-colonial period during which Ju/'hoansi still engaged in a "traditional" lifestyle oriented around the activities of hunting and foraging. In contrast to this, new-time people were said to draw their identity from the colonial and post-colonial periods, during which the "whites" weaned the Ju/'hoansi of their old and "satanic" ways. While both old and new-time people described old times in fairly similar terms, both placed different values on life during this period. As we have seen, new-time people considered this a period as one during which the Ju/'hoansi were thought to have been "with *G//aua*" and claimed that, for this reason, life was worse for the Ju/'hoansi than it was now. In contrast to this, old-time people, such as /Engn!au, constructed the pre-colonial past as one in which life was considerably better than the present, and in which Ju/'hoansi were still *ju jansin* (good people). As /Engn!au expounded:

They [old-time people] were not like these Bushmen here at Skoonheid. In those days, there was no drink [alcohol] and there was little fighting. People did not steal, they did not lie and they did not try to take others' women. . . . They were good people! If they married once, then they would stay married. When they married, they married with meat; elands, kudas, blue wildebeest, hartebeest, duikers. They would give meat to their wives and their wives would give some to their fathers and mothers and afterwards give even more meat away.

This was how the old people lived, and how the people in Tsumkwe still live.¹⁴

¹⁴Biesele (1993) writes of the metaphorical equation between women and meat made by foraging Ju/'hoansi. The title of her book, *Women Like Meat*, (1993) captures this well with its double meaning, referring on the one hand to the fact that women were equated with meat (and hunting) and, on the other, the fact that women like (to eat) meat and that a husband's principal obligation was to provide his wife with it (92-93).

From /'Engn!au's perspective, hunting was seen as the definitive activity of the period, and he often referred to the people who lived during those times as *Ju !aeqsa o kxaice* (first people who hunted), and painted an Eden like picture of Ju/'hoan life "before the Hereros and whites came":

In the old times there was always much rain and bushfood was plentiful. The game meat was also plentiful; elands, kudus, gemsboks, wildebeests, hartebeest, duiker, steenbok, everything- and the Ju/'hoansi hunted.

While old-time people almost universally praised the life in the past, reconstructing them in almost romantic terms, new-time people were considerably more ambivalent about "old-times". On the one hand, life in the "old times" was seen to be bad because the Ju/'hoansi "were still with *G//aua*", and would suffer during dry seasons yet, on the other, it was seen as a period which, despite being marked by its "ungodliness", was a time in which Ju/'hoansi had few of the problems that existed for them today. Thus while many claimed that life during the old times was bad, it was said to have been only little worse on a practical level, than life in the "new times".¹⁵ Even for !A'/ae, who vehemently criticised Ju/'hoansi living during the old times for their complicity with *G//aua*, this period was still constructed as one of relative innocence:

In the old days, the Ju/'hoansi did not know of such things [stealing, lying etc.] but later we did. . . . We learnt to steal from the Boers and those other people [Hereros etc.]. The Boers stole from us, swore at us and beat us, and we have learnt to do such things as well.

In spite of being considered a period of comparative innocence, most new-time people considered that period as one in which the Ju/'hoansi were even *dom-er* than they were now. Some Ju/'hoansi, to my surprise used the Afrikaans word *primitief* (primitive) to describe "old times" and "old-time people" and, consciously avoided connecting their present with that past, in order to partially subvert the dominance of this imagery in others' constructions of them. Some Ju/'hoansi (though not !A'/ae) recoiled in horror when I suggested they join me in a trip to Tsumkwe (Nyae-Nyae) in the north, where

¹⁵In contrast to this, as I argued in my undergraduate dissertation, Nharo in Ghanzi constructed "old times" in far more positive terms than Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke. Guenther (1976) has also noted that in during the 1970's in Ghanzi, the self- designation *kamakwe* (stupid people) was giving way to terms such as *gabakwe* (new people). At the time of my fieldwork in Ghanzi (1992), many Bushmen referred to themselves as *n/oakwe* (red people) in an effort to shake labels which evoked a poor self-image.

some Ju/'hoansi still hunted and foraged, claiming that the Tsumkwe people were still "wild" and with *G//aua*, and that they feared being shot by poison arrows should they venture there.

For many Ju/'hoansi, the further devaluation of old-time people and "old times" lay in constructing a comparison of their past with the pasts of others. The fact that Ju/'hoansi had come off worst in the regional political economy was ascribed to the weakness and ineffectuality of old-time people in dealing with the colonising whites on the one hand, and Hereros and other blacks on the other. The continuing perception that Ju/'hoansi were *dom* was seen, in part, to be legitimated by the idea that had Ju/'hoansi not been *dom*, and had they had knowledge of guns, diesel-pumps and other useful technologies, then circumstances might well have been very different. /Kallie, !A'/Ae's second son, suggested to me that:

They were *dom* those old-time people. Look the whites were clever, they came with lots of things, guns, cars, diesel and wind pumps all of that sorts of things. . . . And also the Hereros and Namas, some of them had these things also, and they knew goats and cattle, but the Ju/'hoansi- they had nothing. They knew fuck all! They were weak people! People struggle in this place because the Hereros say, "you people are *dom*, you are not people, you cannot make anything!"

In stark contrast to this, old-time people constructed old times as a period in which, despite lacking guns and other such things, Ju/'hoansi were "stronger" and more organised than others. Kiewiet Kakao, Dam Kakao's father, who was distinctly old-time in his outlook, projected a technological superiority to Ju/'hoansi over others prior to the "arrival of the whites":

Ju/'hoansi were the strongest people in the old times. The strongest! They had bows and arrows with that poison worm. Everyone was scared of that poison, Hereros, everyone. They knew that if they fought with Ju/'hoansi then they might die from that poison. No man they were strong! . . . That is why the South Africans went to take them into the army.¹⁶

¹⁶Kakao was referring to the fact that from 1976 onwards, many Ju/'hoansi in the Dobe-Nyae-Nyae region were enlisted into the South African Defence Force to fight in the bush war in the north of Namibia and Angola (see Gordon 1992:1; Marshall and Ritchie 1984). Ian Uys (1994), a South African military historian, gives perhaps the most detailed account of Ju/'hoan involvement in the SADF, albeit that his account is outspokenly apologetic to the military.

While few disagreed that authoritative knowledge of the ultimate origins of man and animals rested with those who knew the Bible, this pre-colonial period of time was also understood to have seen the differentiation of the races. For old-time people in particular, this period of time was understood to have produced the foundations of colonial and post-colonial relations between Hereros and Ju/'hoansi. Indeed, for old-time people, Ju/'hoan ignorance of cattle and goat herding originated from !*Xu*'s division of people at during this period. /'Engn!au, for example, argued that it was during the old-times that:

!Xu gave cattle and goats to the Herero, the Tswanas and the Hottentots [Nama] but he did not give the Ju/'hoansi cattle or goats. I do not know why he did this, but he did, and all that !*Xu* does is true. !*Xu* also taught the people how to make houses- he taught the Ju/'hoansi to make theirs' with grass and the Hereros to make theirs' with cow dung.¹⁷

As much as those like !A'/ae held little faith in such explanations, preferring to account for Ju/'hoan marginalisation exclusively by reference to of the malicious agency of others, and rationalising this as a possible consequence of being "with *G//aua*", many others considered the divine ordination of difference described in the above narrative to be a suitable and reasonable explanation of Ju/'hoan poverty. In this respect, present circumstances were projected into the past and accounted for as being beyond Ju/'hoan control.

While it was clear that, fuelled by a growing resentment, there was an emerging tendency to account for present miseries by reference to the agency of others, how Ju/'hoansi spoke about the past was linked to the present. Dam Kakao's narrative, recounted earlier in the chapter, clearly evokes the degree to which many Ju/'hoansi acceded to the hegemony of others, constructing their "inferior" status as divinely sanctioned, and therefore natural. Similarly, it shows the extent to which questions pertaining to religious synthesis in the Omaheke cannot be understood without reference to the power relations and historical processes which contextualised them.

¹⁷Guenther has noted the existence of similar mythologies articulated by Nharo in Ghanzi. He (1989:67-70) gives detailed transcriptions of Nharo narratives concerning the "differentiation of the races", as well as several "historical legends" dealing with relations between Bantu and Bushmen (152-156). See also Guenther (1976)

"History" and the Ju/'hoansi

The difference posited between old and new times was not simply a temporal distinction based on a perceived rupture in unilinear time, but rather, a qualitative distinction made between "times". Old times was considered static or cyclical, and not measured in terms of specific events or processes, whereas new time was considered essentially processual and was measured on a linear scale marked by events and transformations. As such, old times were spoken of as "ahistorical" in much the same way that some anthropologists classified hunting and foraging societies as ahistorical, whereas new times were spoken of as historical.

The foregoing begs some interesting questions of the recent turn in Khoisan studies (of which this thesis is a very much a part) towards history and historicisation. As argued by Wilmsen (1989), the revisionist critique of Bushman studies was built around the notion that many of those anthropologists to have written about Ju/'hoansi and other Bushmen (e.g. Lee 1984, Tanaka 1980 and Silberbauer 1981) were guilty, first and foremost, of "denying Bushmen history" (Wilmsen 1989:3-4). Surprisingly however, in attempting to "grant Ju/'hoansi history", no revisionist writers have, to the best of my knowledge, looked at the place of "historical" discourse in Ju/'hoan life. Consequently, they have granted Ju/'hoansi *a* history (or histories) without examining the extent to which such notions make or made sense to them on their own terms.

As Wilmsen (*ibid.*) has noted, traditionalist anthropology was founded on the cornerstone that Ju/'hoansi, along with other so called primitive societies, were essentially "ahistorical" insofar as they were seen to represent the simplest model of social organisation, one governed not by the processes of time and transformation but rather by "nature" (Pratt 1985:120). While the evolutionist foundations to such ideas may well be untenable (Wilmsen 1989), and the connections made between contemporary foragers and stone-age life, at best, speculative and, at worst, spurious, we should not be so quick to dismiss the idea that Ju/'hoansi, among others, were "ahistorical" in some significant ways. Rather we should attempt to address what we mean by ideas such as history and ahistory, and question the extent to which these ideas were, and are, meaningful in terms of indigenous discourses.

In order to do this, it is necessary to turn briefly again to the Kalahari Debate, and the revisionist critique of the apparently ahistorical bases to traditionalist scholarship. The broad traditionalist assertion that Ju/'hoansi represented an "ahistorical" society can be seen to have emerged out of two intertwined processes. Firstly the fact that anthropological thought, at the time the main traditionalist works

were conceived, was dominated by approaches which placed emphasis on the synchronic rather than diachronic aspects of culture, as well as subscribed to a broadly evolutionist taxonomy of social organisation, and, secondly, the fact that the experiences of these anthropologists in the field did not appear to contradict their assumptions brought with them from the academy. When, for example, Richard Lee (1979:6) claimed that his fieldwork "can begin to place this "ahistorical" society into history", he was speaking of (at least) three different kinds of history, the first two of which relate to the former process mentioned above and, the third, to the latter. Firstly, his use of the term "history" implies (whether consciously or not) the politically centred, dominant "History" (Young 1990) of the West into which the Ju/'hoansi were supposedly appropriated by his act of fieldwork, secondly it implies a more academic construction of history whereby social structures or political relations are construed in terms of causes, effects, and/or processes, and thirdly, it implies an indigenous Ju/'hoan construction of history. As far as the latter is concerned I am referring to history fairly generally as a genre of speaking or writing, whereby events or processes in the past are reconstructed in the present, often to convey a sense of identity or "history" to its listeners, or to ratify or repudiate present concerns.

When revisionists such as Wilmsen criticise the traditionalists for denying Ju/'hoansi history, they are talking of the first two kinds of history mentioned above (e.g. Wilmsen 1989:2-5)¹⁸. On the one hand Wilmsen, for example, is critical of synchronic orthodoxy in anthropology which informed traditionalist approaches, and on the other, on the basis of his own historical research, he constructs a history which places Ju/'hoansi in the dominant "History" of the west (by locating them in the emergent world system) far earlier than Lee does. In terms of this, while Wilmsen's critique, reflecting the contemporary fashion in anthropology to emphasise the diachronic as the producer of the synchronic, highlights some of the dangers of adopting a purely synchronous approach to ethnography, he does not address whether or not Ju/'hoansi speak, or spoke about the present and the past in terms which might be roughly convergent with the western notion of history. Hence, he neglects the third type of history implied in Lee's statement, the idea of an indigenous Ju/'hoan history. From an anthropological perspective, perhaps Wilmsen's greatest failing is the fact that he renders a history of Ju/'hoansi framed by paradigm which rides roughshod over the Ju/'hoan voice.

¹⁸In a recent article, Lee (1992:41) touches on some of the issues concerning the multiplicity of meanings implicit in the idea of a Bushman history and is critical of histories "which are constituted *only* by membership in a regional trading block". Furthermore, he raises question pertaining to the existence of "cultures which exist independent of academic constructions of them" (*ibid.*).

While none of the so-called traditionalist anthropologists have directly addressed how different Bushman groups construct the past and its relationship to the present either, it would appear from what literature is available, that foraging Ju/'hoansi did not construct history in ways congruent with western understandings of the notion. Certainly, it is clear that foraging Ju/'hoansi did not construct any unified or authoritative history of themselves that was made known to anthropologists. Nor, it appears, did they have any established traditions of reproducing a collective identity through history. As Megan Biesele has demonstrated in her book, *Women Like Meat* (1993), which I discuss in greater depth in the following chapter, Ju/'hoansi had other narrative forms and practices through which they spoke of and about themselves.

My foundering efforts to collect Ju/'hoan oral histories made it clear that Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke had no long established traditions of recording, reconstructing and recounting or transmitting what we would call histories. Moreover, it was also clear that the idea of a Ju/'hoan history told by and for Ju/'hoansi was a fairly recent, and was tied to, and applied to the processes of twentieth century colonialism, and the factors which precipitated the emergence of a collective Ju/'hoan identity. Thus, unlike their Herero neighbours among whom "history" was deemed as an important means of conveying identity (Chapter 3), with special status being afforded to historians, and an established tradition of passing on historical "knowledge" to the young, few Ju/'hoansi I met considered the past of such immediate importance. In fact, several people got quite annoyed with my nagging questions about the past when it was clear, from the their point of view anyway, that it was the present which was important. The apparent "live for the day" attitude of many Ju/'hoansi, which was so central to farmers and others' discourses concerning them may well be a consequence of the fact that though Ju/'hoansi did speak of the past, only recently have they come to *historicise* it.

Added to this, while Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke knew the Afrikaans word for history (*geskiedenis*) no-one could offer any appropriate translation in Ju/'hoan. In all discussions I had on the matter, it was generally agreed that the most appropriate term was probably *n#oahnsi*. Conventionally, however, *n#oahnsi* was used as a general term relating to any factual stories or news; stories about farm life or hunting were considered *n#oahnsi*, as was any newsworthy information (Biesele 1993:17). Furthermore, *n#oahnsi* were not generally considered to be collective property, but were almost always told in relation to the individual, or people, to whom the events of the story referred. That this was considered to be the case, was clearly demonstrated by the fact that people deferred the telling of stories relating to specific events to people

who had been directly involved.

However, in spite of the fact that Ju/'hoansi had no established tradition of articulating identity through history, and had no grand unifying historical narratives, there was little doubt that Ju/'hoansi were moving toward constituting their identity in terms of how they constructed the past. Indeed, while the past and its relationship to the present was a contested space, it was unified insofar as the past was considered to have impacted on the present. Moreover, the emergence of a collective Ju/'hoan identity, based on a shared experiences of others, and mediated by others' unifying constructions of them, suggests that Ju/'hoansi were united in constructing their contemporary status, and hence identity, by reference to their relations with others in the past.

CHAPTER 7: THE JACKAL: FOLKLORE AND IDENTITY

The living utterance, having taken meaning or shape in a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousand of living dialogic threads . . . [and] cannot fail to become an active participant in a social dialogue.

Mikhael Bakhtin (1981:276)

While folklore was a major concern of much early European research on Bushman,¹ it remains fairly marginal to contemporary academic discourse concerning them. In recent years only Megan Biesele (1976 & 1993) and Mathias Guenther (1988 & 1989) have attempted draw attention to the richness of contemporary traditions as well as their special role as a narrative genre among southern African foragers.² In some respects this is curious not only because folklore and storytelling provided one of the principal leisure time activities for foraging Ju/'hoansi, but also because, as Biesele (1993) has demonstrated, they offered a narrative peephole into how Ju/'hoansi constructed their cultural universe.

In the previous two chapters I outlined two broad aspects to Ju/'hoan social identity in the Omaheke. In Chapters 5 and 6, I made a case for the emergence of a collective Ju/'hoan identity in the Omaheke forged around various symbols of Ju/'hoan-ness based around their collective experiences of others, and, in the previous chapter, I examined how this identity was qualified in reference to cosmology, time, process and history. In this chapter, I continue on this theme, but from approach it from a somewhat different perspective. While much writing on Bushman folklore is aimed at providing an insight into the past (e.g. Hewitt 1986), I examine folklore as a contemporary metonym of identity, one which is responsive to the conditions of the present, but embodies and captures something of the shared historical experience which forms the basis of this identity. As Moore and Georges (1995:225) have argued, in circumstances where groups erect various narrative and physical boundaries around one another, "the bases for [these boundaries] and consequences of which are often expressed in folklore".

I am concerned here with one particular aspect of Ju/'hoan folklore in the

¹The most notable of these early studies were conducted by W.H. Bleek (1875); (Bleek and Lloyd 1911), and Dorothea Bleek (1928 & 1929 etc.).

²Recently, others have written fairly extensively regarding Bushman folklore, sourced from the Bleek and Lloyd (1911) and Dorothea Bleek (1928)(e.g. Hewitt 1986), as well as other historical sources, or, in more general terms regarding a Khoisan folkloric tradition as a whole(e.g. Schmidt 1975).

Omaheke, that being what folklore can tell us of how Ju/'hoansi constructed their political identity there, given the forces and constraints to which they were subjected over the past century. In doing this I initially examine the extent to which the folklore tradition (as a distinct genre of addressing the social and political universe) on the Omaheke farms was continuous with that of foraging Ju/'hoansi. Thereafter, I focus on some of the stories themselves, paying particular attention to the principal character in most of these stories, the "trickster-jackal", Willem Poster, with whom Ju/'hoansi strongly identified. I recount verbatim, and partially contextualise four stories relating to the trickster-jackal's exploits, but avoid, where-ever possible, butchering them completely with an analytical knife. As will become clear, the stories recounted in this in this chapter, appeal a great number of "dialogic threads"[sic.] which are richly evocative on their own terms, and engage both directly and indirectly with much of the foregoing in this thesis.

Folklore and Everyday Life.

Kaice had a reputation for being unreliable, a thief and a liar. Many of my Skoonheid companions would speak dismissively of him, pointing to the fact that he had no wife (or lied about having women), no children and, in spite of this, did not stay with his own parents even though they lived fairly nearby. When I came to know him he had recently completed a three-month spell in the prison near Gobabis for horse theft (he had drunkenly taken it for a joy-ride and the horse had been returned lame) and had since had a couple of brushes with the law, most notably after assisting some Hereros load up and bugger off with one of the 69 litre gas canisters which powered the Rosenhof stove and refrigerator. Nevertheless, in spite of this, and the added fact that certain other residents of the Rosenhof compound wished to see Kaice in prison or dead (the old Himba, Uezemake once took a club to Kaice's skull), I came to depend on and trust him as he came to depend on me.

Rosenhof farm, as Kaice often reminded me, was his *n!ore*, of which he was self appointed *grootman* (big man), looking after the borehole engine, and supposedly keeping a beady eye on the house when it was deserted. In return for keeping his belly full, apart from guiding me through the more drunken and depressed areas of the Omaheke where !A'ae was not very helpful, Kaice looked after my (when I had any) and Roger's (an Oxfam official who also occasionally stayed at Rosenhof) goats when either of us was absent from the farm. Even though I rarely had more than one goat at a time, and these would not often last more than a week before they were put to the knife, Kaice took his goat-guarding responsibilities seriously, partially because he

knew he would always get a fair portion of the meat himself, but also because, goats, as with anything else I lent him, acted as a medium of trust, and hence means to disprove his reputation as a liar.

On one occasion when I returned to Rosenhof from Windhoek, Kaice informed me that there had been a great misfortune and that Roger's goat, a dappled brown *boerbok*, had been taken by jackals during the night. Kaice explained that after searching and tracking the missing animal for some time he came across its carcass in the bush surrounded by jackal spoor. He explained that it had been savaged by jackals, who, after eating it from the anus inwards, left no more than some smelly viscera and bones which he subsequently cast into the desert.

Even though most evenings I fell asleep to the shrill calls of jackals and the baying of the Rosenhof dogs in reply to them, during my entire time in that part of the world I had not heard of any occasions in which jackals had successfully taken anyone's goats. Nevertheless, suppressing any suspicions that I might have had, I happily accepted Kaice's explanation without much further thought. Later in the day I was sitting and sharing a cigarette with Kxau (a Skoonheid resident, who not long after this conversation, was to start a fairly lengthy sentence at Gobabis gaol for stock theft) and mentioned to him that Kaice had told me that we had lost a goat to a jackal while I had been away in Windhoek. On hearing this Kxau laughed and, making a none to thinly veiled reference to Kaice, exclaimed, "/Kunta the only jackals stealing your goats at Rosenhof are those with two legs not four!"

While I still don't believe Kxau's suggestion that Kaice nicked the goat in question, his reference to the "two-legged jackal" was not simply a glib piece of verbal play in response to my worries about goat security, it was a loaded metaphor which referred to the central character in many of the stories told by Ju/'hoansi on the Omaheke farms, the "trickster" jackal (*G/hoan#aq*).

In fact, not long after Kaice had warned me to be wary of "two legged jackals", old /'Engn!au, Skoonheid's most prolific story teller told me the following brief tale.

Story 1: The stolen goat

Jackal (who goes by the name Willem Poster) had been drinking [*tombo*] and wanted meat. So he went to the goat-kraal and slaughtered a goat. He cut out its belly and crept away to eat it in the bush. Afterwards he slept.

In the morning when everyone woke up they saw that a goat had been

eaten. Then along came Willem, the jackal, and they asked him, "what happened to this goat?" .

The Jackal said to them, "It was the hyena (the hyena is a dog) who slaughtered this goat, I saw his spoor in the bush and chased him".

But the jackal had eaten that meat. Ai, but the jackal is a scoundrel!.

Story telling and Stories among Foraging Ju/'hoansi

For foraging Ju/'hoansi, folklore and story-telling played a significant role in their cultural lives. Not only was story-telling a popular form of entertainment, but also a means of transmitting, creating and reproducing cultural knowledge. Stories dealt directly and indirectly with a variety of issues in a variety of ways, examining amongst other things, sexual power, life, death, origins and transformations (Bieseles 1993:101-102). For the more recently autonomous Ju/'hoan groups living in the Dobe-Nyaenyae areas, and, it also seems likely, among the Omaheke Ju/'hoansi prior to their loss of autonomy, stories were usually concerned with the exploits of certain key characters, both animal and human, who appeared repeatedly in them.

These stories, referred to as *n#oahnsi o kxiacemasi* (stories of the beginning) or *noahnsi o n//aahnmasi* (stories of long ago) were principally set in a distant mytho-time during which "animals were like people", and "people were like animals" and when the trickster god, G//aua, and his children roamed the earth. Animals, gods and humans all interacted with one another on similar terms in this narrative landscape in which no grand taxonomy distinguished these beings from one another. Significantly, however, the animal characters in these stories while being "persons", retained some of the defining characteristics which were seen to apply to the animals in question.

In her book, *Women Like Meat*, Megan Bieseles (1993) proposes that the Ju/'hoan folkloric tradition was intimately attuned to the exigencies of their one-time foraging and hunting way of life. Folk-stories, she argues, provided a means whereby Ju/'hoansi could "make sense" of their world as well as transmit knowledge that was important for survival within it. Indeed, for hunting and foraging Ju/'hoansi, for whom learning was not a matter of forced education so much as observation, stories and storytelling provided one of the principal means for expressing some of the key issues effecting their lives (Bieseles 1993:56-57; Draper 1976). These stories, as Bieseles has argued, in spite of being set in a distant mytho-time dealt, albeit indirectly, "in [the] actualities [and] prime realities of social experience," but did so dialectically by, "constantly making new sense [of things] by reflecting on social reality as currently understood" (Bieseles 1993:92). This was possible, she suggests, because

within the relatively free narrative space of these stories social norms were often suspended or inverted, allowing for action to take place which would otherwise be unacceptable.

In spite of the fact that Biesele somewhat overestimates the survivability of these stories in contexts where Ju/'hoansi no longer depended principally on hunting and foraging,³ one of the clearest points to emerge from her close readings of several genres of these stories is their embeddedness in the cultural referents of gathering and hunting. Thus, although many of the stories recounted by Biesele "helped" foraging Ju/'hoansi to make sense of their own lives, many of these stories only make sense and made sense in a hunting-and-gathering context, dealing with issues peculiar to that mode of production and its related cultural symbolism.

As we will see, while story-telling itself as a pastime certainly no longer retained the prominence it once had among Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, stories and storytelling continued to provide an alternative paradigm through which Ju/'hoansi spoke of and about their social universe. The stories themselves while retaining many of the narrative and metaphoric devices which characterised the *n#oahnsi o kxiacemasi* told by foraging Ju/'hoansi were, nevertheless, very much oriented to the present circumstances of Ju/'hoan life in the Omaheke.

Story telling in the Omaheke

Among foraging Ju/'hoansi story-telling was largely the preserve of *Ju n!a'asi* (older Ju/'hoansi), providing one of the principal means whereby they could impart their accumulated and valued knowledge (both cultural and "survival") to younger Ju/'hoansi. Indeed, as an old woman Biesele (1993:20) talked to explained, story-telling for foraging Ju/'hoansi was a defining feature of old age:

The old person who does not tell stories just does not exist. Our forefathers related to us the doings of the people long ago and anyone who doesn't know them doesn't have his head on straight. And anyone whose head is on straight, knows them.

³Biesele wrongly suggests that, "*Hunting and gathering remains. . . a major source for the content of the expressive forms of even semi-aculturated Bushmen. Pastoral and agricultural concerns barely penetrated the tales of modern Ju/'hoansi. . . even those who lived on farms. Most of the oral expressiveness of the Ju/'hoansi is still centred on the concerns of a foraging economy and the social attitudes necessary to keep it working*" (1993: 14 *my emphasis*). As this chapter makes clear, Ju/'hoan folklore in the Omaheke has very little to do with hunting and gathering.

By this reasoning, not all old people in the Omaheke "had their heads on straight". In fact it took me some time to realise that storytelling remained a feature of Ju/'hoan life at all. The free time during which stories were once told, and which was once so much a feature of autonomous Ju/'hoan life had diminished rapidly for Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, for whom the regime and discipline of farm life had usurped previously held notions concerning the compartmentalisation of time and activity (Sahlins 1988:14, 33-39; Lee 1968:37). Many Ju/'hoansi I knew wore watches, and even those who were neither numerate nor literate were well adept at using the twenty-four hour clock, and were avid time watchers; measuring time and activity according to their watches' revolving hands or flickering digits. What available "free time" there was, was usually spent talking or gossiping about work, money, people and specific events or news. Otherwise for entertainment, if batteries were available, people would listen to the Damara language service of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation on the radio or, if someone had cash, or had brewed some *tombo*, get drunk.

Often, when I had asked people if they knew "the old stories" many claimed no knowledge of them. Even widely known Ju/'hoan stories collected further north in the Dobe-NyaeNyae regions, but told as far a field as Ghanzi like, "The Moon And The Hare" which explained how death came to the earth, were known by older Ju/'hoansi, but never told.⁴ For most Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke folklore dealing with life, death or cosmological and ontological issues had long since been replaced by the Bible stories which were considered to be the last word on such matters.

The absorption of Ju/'hoansi in Omaheke into a political economy in which they occupied a subordinate position radically transformed the realities of life. On the one hand Ju/'hoan cultural discourse came to be dominated, in part, by the voices of others and on the other, as a result of this, many of the discourses and practices to which "traditional folklore" referred quite simply no longer existed. Trance dance and hunting metaphors which, for example, were frequently essential for understanding and contextualising stories told by foraging Ju/'hoansi made little sense to listeners who had never hunted- except illegally on farms with dogs- or had never attended a trance-dance, and were unfamiliar with its rich symbolism. For Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke such stories were anachronisms; floating signifiers in a semantic universe in which they referred to little else but a devalued past. In short, the political, economic and cultural referents which had once rendered these stories sensible and meaningful, had simply ceased to exist in the late twentieth century Omaheke.

⁴Variations on this story were also told by /Xam Bushmen in the Cape (see Bleek and Lloyd 1911:64-65; Guenther 1989: 71-75).

In spite of this, the practice of story-telling by *Ju n!a'asi* had not disappeared completely, a fact which came to my attention when I came to know old /Engn!au. While story-telling as an activity occupied a somewhat more marginal position in Ju/hoan social life than it once had, good story-telling was still a valued skill. It also became clear, after I spent more and more time with /Engn!au, that story-telling, and, more importantly, the stories told were very much to do with the then present realities of Ju/hoan life. As it turned out, my early enquiries about "old stories" (as opposed to "old-time stories" as a narrative genre) were somewhat misguided as few considered stories such as those told by /Engn!au to be "old". Rather, as I later realised, they referred unfailingly to the present "realities" of Ju/hoan life.

Unlike foraging Ju/hoan folklore, stories told by Ju/hoansi on farms almost all involved the character of the trickster-jackal and his exploits. The "trickster" (though certainly not always in the guise of a jackal) was but one of a series of principal characters in stories told by a great diversity of Bushmen groups in southern Africa, including the /Xam who fell victim to the Bushman genocide in the Cape Province during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁵ The character of the various tricksters in these stories was fairly consistent whether it was the "Eyes On His Feet" of Nharo narratives, the G!ara (G//aua) of foraging Ju/hoan tales and, as will become clear, Willem Poster of /Engn!au's tales. In almost all of these stories, the trickster was a highly ambiguous character whose deeds often resulted in him getting in some sort of trouble, but equally often turned out to his benefit.⁶ Significantly though, while the trickster was but one of many characters who took centre stage in stories told by other Bushmen, the trickster, in the guise of the jackal, was the principal character in almost all stories I heard in the Omaheke.

Although the stories told by Ju/hoansi in the Omaheke found their discursive referents almost exclusively in contemporary farm and reserve life, there were certain clear continuities between the stories told to me and those which made up the folklore of foraging Ju/hoansi. Apart from continuities in central role played by the trickster, his tricks, and the means whereby these stories engaged with "reality", they shared with those told by foraging Ju/hoansi a highly distinctive narrative style and form. As

⁵Stories with a jackal as the principal actor were by no means unique to the Omaheke Ju/hoansi. They were told in many of the "frontier" farming areas of Namibia and Botswana by a variety of Khoisan groups including some Nama. Many of the stories told were very similar reflecting, at once, the degree to which elementary forms of these stories were communicated over wide areas, as well as the uniformity of the colonial experience over these areas.

⁶Both Guenther (1989:114-151) and Biesele (1993:103-115) give accounts which describe the character and role of the trickster in /Xam, Nharo and foraging Ju/hoan folklore respectively. See also Hewitt (1986:59-61) and Bleek (1929:305) etc.

such, they retained their status as a specific oral paradigm through which Ju/'hoansi could indirectly address and articulate issues relating to the social and political realities of life.

In the previous chapter, I noted that stories describing specific historical events, happenings or incidents were referred to simply as *n#oahnsi* ("stories", "histories" or "news"). In contrast to this, stories relating to the exploits of Jackal and other animal-humans were considered to constitute a special class of stories, *n#oahnsi o kxaice*, "old-time stories" and were considered the property and responsibility of "old-time people". Consequently, they were also often spoken of as *n#oahnsi o ju #'angsi masi* (old-time people's stories)⁷ or *n#oahnsi o n#ausi masi* (old men's stories). They, like the *n#oahnsi o n//aahnmasi* told by foraging Ju/'hoansi, were identified by the fact that they operated at a heightened level of metaphoric abstraction and utilised various identifiable narrative devices specific to the genre (see Biesele 1993: 27-31; Guenther 1989 20-29).

Since knowledge of this genre was considered the property of old-time people, its diminishing status was clearly linked to their increasingly more marginal role in Ju/'hoan life (Chapter 6). Nevertheless, most self proclaimed new-time and old-time people had heard, or knew of, these stories and once news was out that /'Engn!au would be telling stories, children and others, would periodically join /'Engn!au and myself in what often turned into marathon performances.

/'Engn!au's Stories

Of all the Skoonheid residents, old /'Engn!au, was understood to be the best story-teller. With a constant flow of tobacco and tea he was able to embark on sustained story-telling sessions which would often last well into the night. He was also, for my sake, an extremely patient story teller, and happy to repeat and translate into Afrikaans portions of stories which I did not follow. Unlike other story-tellers I met subsequent to meeting him, he would often offer a secondary narrative while telling these tales, spelling out the allegorical allusions to ethnicity on which his stories hinged, and occasionally appending the statement, "this is how it is for these people", in reference to portions of his narratives he used.

As a narrative genre, Ju/'hoan folk-story-telling allows for a great deal of individual expressive freedom. While particular stories were identified by means of a series of key characters, events and relationships, the rest was subject to the whims of

⁷The use of the term *#'angsi* (old or worn out) in this context implied (as it did in the label for "old-time people") the diminishing value granted to folklore it as a relevant and contemporary form of narrative engagement with the "real" world.



Plate 7.1 Old time man: l'Engn!au

the story teller who could render the stories in such a way that would make them very much "their own", a fact illustrated, among other things, by the large variation in versions of certain stories (Biesele 1993:66-67; Guenther 1989:20-29). Through allowing for individual creativity, older stories could be made more contemporaneous and oriented towards emphasising areas of specific relevance. As such, there were no authoritative versions of stories, merely authoritative tellers.

/Engn!au's chief skill lay in his ability to use stories as a medium to talk about Ju/'hoan life in the Omaheke, and was widely regarded as the best story-teller at Skoonheid for this reason. While those like !A'/ae tended to be fairly direct when making social commentaries, /Engn!au preferred to use his art to the same end and would occasionally fashion short stories based around his principal characters in order to make a point to me as he did in the story recounted at the beginning of this chapter. While as both Biesele and Guenther have pointed out the narrative content of the stories engaged indirectly with reality, /Engn!au's liked to establish a immediate relation between his stories and "real" events. His choice of stories was almost always geared directly to events which had recently taken place, and his renditions of them, responsive to the immediate conditions of life at Skoonheid. From his point of view, stories provided a means with which he could talk about Ju/'hoan life and Ju/'hoansi indirectly through transposing what were often real events to the alternate reality of his narratives. In rendering these stories, he would rarely cast direct judgement on peoples' actions in the "real" world, but sought instead to highlight or draw attention to them. Indeed, in spite of the fact that his stories were always framed as fictions, he was insistent on their truthfulness and claimed that "they are just stories, but they are also *tcì/'hoansi* (true things)". In terms of this, /Engn!au's understood his stories to hold up a mirror to what he perceived to be the realities of life which, although superficially distorted in the image he produced, remained true to the essence of that which it represented.

In most respects, his stories were similar to those told by others in the Omaheke, except in that he placed a great deal more emphasis on their allegorical content than other story-tellers. In contrast to foraging Ju/'hoansi, for whom their folklore was not said to express any particular message or impart any explicit moral (Biesele 1993), /Engn!au occasionally insisted on using stories to this end. A point which he made clear in his rendition of the following tale, one morning after a particularly grim fight had taken place between two men at Skoonheid over accusations of infidelity.

Story 2: Jackal is arrested by lion.⁸

Willem Poster, the [Ju/'hoan] jackal was now very hungry, and he saw two goats which he did not recognise. "Now I can eat meat", he said and he cut their throats and slaughtered them. First he ate the stomach, kidneys and liver which he cooked on the coals, and then he went to sleep.

Next morning he was still hungry, so he cooked some of the goat's ribs on the fire because he didn't have a pot. So he sat and ate.

Then along came the policeman, I don't know where he came from, but he arrived from this [pointing] direction. So Jackal is sitting under the tree eating when the policeman comes-[aside] the policeman is a lion- when the first people were here, the lion was the policeman.

The lion asked, "Where did you get this goat meat?"

"Its not goat meat", said Jackal, "its duiker meat, I shot it with my bow!"

"You are lying, pick up the meat - lets walk", ordered the lion.

But Jackal did not do this, and so the lion picked him up and put him on his back to take him to the police station. On the way to the policeman's house jackal exclaimed, "Ai! Stop I have got a flea in my eye-give me a twig so that I can get it out", but Jackal is lying and he picks up a sjambok and hits the lion on the bum- and the lion starts to run and run and run.

Then the jackal went to the lion's house and called to the lion's wife, "Lion has said that you must screw me". So the two of them lay together. Later, when the lion was coming home again, Jackal got up climbed out the window and ran and ran.

When lion came to the house he said, "where is my wife? Where is my wife?"

"I'm here", she called.

"What are you doing there?"

"It is you that said jackal can come and screw me, so he came and screwed me", she replied.

"So its him", said the lion. "It is this Willem Poster the jackal. He is a scoundrel! Tomorrow morning when it is light I will go and get him!"

Then, in the morning, he found jackal's spoor and tracked him. When

⁸The version of this story which is recounted here was told during the same session as story 2 (above), and was told as an extension of that same story. Guenther (1989:126-127) has also recorded variations of this story told by Nharo on the Ghanzi farms.

he saw jackal he chased him, caught him and hit-hit-hit-hit-hit him. He took all of jackal's clothes so that Jackal was naked, butt-naked! Then Jackal went to his own wife.

"What do you look like?" She said when she saw him. "Why did you go and screw lion's wife? I am also a woman, I also have a pussy-Not everything has a pussy you know, it is just us women who have pussies! You are jackal so when you want to screw you must screw me. You are a jackal, you cannot screw a lion!"

This is what Jackal's wife said to her husband, Willem Poster.

In the rendering of this tale, /'Engn!au was keen to make two interrelated points. Firstly, it was a commentary on infidelity, a point which he spelled out to me immediately after telling the story:

The old people were good, not like these Skoonheid people. These people just fight, fight, fight. In the old times if you took another man's women then there would be big shit and the other people might kill you. These people like to drink and then fuck too much and if they don't have a woman then they will just chase someone else's.

Secondly, this tale was specifically about the jackal "screwing" the lion's wife, an act which /'Engn!au understood to upset the "natural" order of things. Jackal's wife is angered by him not only because he has demonstrated his infidelity, but also because he has done so with the lions' wife. As /'Engn!au pointed out, "a Jackal cannot screw a lion". As a result, the jackal is punished by both the lion and his own wife for his actions. In saying this, /'Engn!au was making the point that one should only "screw" one's own kind, and warning of the perils involved in taking someone else's woman.⁹ The fact that I was told this story in the light of the previous nights events, in tandem with /'Engn!au's commentary clearly suggested that, in contrast to stories told by foraging Ju/'hoansi, some of his were explicitly allegorical. Having said this, in most of the stories /'Engn!au told me, he was not as forthcoming with a meta-narrative on them, or as keen to spell out an implicit message. Indeed, the effect of his stories on the listener came from the fact that they drew attention to certain issues without

⁹In the Omaheke it was rare for anyone to marry someone from another "ethnic" group. On the few occasions where this did happen, it was always men who married women from groups occupying a lower position in the political hierarchy. Thus, while it was not completely inconceivable that a Herero take a Ju/'hoan wife, it was inconceivable that a Ju/'hoan man could take a Herero wife.

recourse to comment on them directly.

A crucial allegorical element to /'Engn!au's stories lay in his explicit identification of his "animal-human" characters with various ethnicities or occupations. Apart from the lion, who was always identified as a policeman,¹⁰ the animal characters in his stories, were made up of those animals which had managed to adapt to life in the fenced farming block; the jackal, the porcupine, the warthog, the steenbok (a small red antelope) and the *springhaas*. (springhare) In most stories, each animal was explicitly identified as representing an individual ethnicity or a specific social status role or occupation. The jackal was always a Ju/'hoan, the porcupine a Damara, and the steenbok a Nama. In telling these stories /'Engn!au, who spoke Ju/'hoan, Nama/Damara, Afrikaans and OshiHerero, would use all of these languages in his performance, each character often speaking in his own particular tongue. Furthermore, when telling these stories, /'Engn!au would use ethnic labels and the animals they were identified with interchangeably. So, in the same story, the porcupine character was, for example, referred to interchangeably as "Porcupine" or "the Damara", and the jackal was referred to variously as the "jackal", the "Boesman", the "Ju/'hoan", or by the name "Willem Poster"(see below). Unlike Jackal and the other human-animals around whose actions the stories were constructed, domestic animals also made frequent appearances in them, but were ascribed only passive roles. Goats were stolen and eaten, horses and donkeys were ridden, and cattle were milked; they featured only as objects on, or in respect of which, others acted. While both policemen and Hereros were often be duped by Jackal's exploits, farmers were rarely more than indirectly involved. Unlike all the other characters, farmers were never equated with any particular animals and were always referred to namelessly as "the Boer" or the "baas". Through doing this, farmers were conceptually segregated from the other characters in the stories, and constructed as contextual referents which demarcated the social and political fields in which the action took place, a fact well illustrated in /'Engn!au's story about Jackal and Porcupine digging a well.

Story 3: Digging a well.¹¹

¹⁰While lions no longer roamed freely through the Omaheke, they retained a certain notoriety among the Omaheke Ju/'hoansi, and were still usually referred to indirectly as *zhum* since using their real name (*n!hai*) was thought to summon the real thing. Some farmers in the Omaheke, especially those who ran hunting lodges or game farms, kept lions and, much to the distress of their Ju/'hoan farm-workers, fed them meat on a daily basis.

¹¹Mathias Guenther recorded three slightly different versions of this story told by Nharo Bushmen in the Ghanzi District in Botswana during his fieldwork in 1969 (Guenther 1989:130-132).

The Jackal, he that is Willem Poster, saw the porcupine and called to him, "Hey Damara, I have work for us ! I have work! We must dig a well for the Boer." So Porcupine and Jackal went to the Boer's farm and slept there during the night. In the morning Jackal first went to the *smous* [shop] and got a guitar. The porcupine also went to the *smous*, but he got pick and a shovel.

Soon they got to the place where they had to dig the well, Willem Poster, the jackal, he who was foreman sat under a tree and started to play guitar while Porcupine started to dig the well.

At lunch-time, Jackal said, "it is time to eat, the Boer will bring us food, but first you must wash yourself, you are very dirty!"

So porcupine climbed out of the hole and went off to wash. As soon as he had, gone the Jackal jumped into the hole porcupine had dug and covered himself with dirt. Then the Boer came to bring them food.

When the Boer saw them he thought, "What is this? This man Willem Poster is dirty and looks like he has been working hard, but this man, this Damara looks so clean. This man [Jackal] has hands that look like they have been doing work, but this [other] man looks like he has hands that have not been doing work. I wonder why this is?"

So the Boer gave them food. The Jackal, who was foreman, got nice food, and the porcupine got given bad food. In the afternoon when it was time to work again, Jackal again sat under the tree and played his guitar while porcupine started to dig.

That afternoon , the Boer was still curious and he took his gun and crept to where Jackal and Porcupine were working and he saw the Jackal sitting under the tree and the porcupine hard at work, "Now I see, this man that is black [the Damara] is a hard worker and this man who is red [The Ju/'hoan] is lazy. Tonight I will give the black man coffee and this jackal nothing!"

When the sun set, Jackal said, "come let us go and ask the Boer for coffee". So they then walked to the Boer's house and asked him for coffee. But the Boer had seen them working and he gave only the porcupine coffee. Jackal didn't get anything. Afterwards, the jackal was very jealous, and the porcupine took the coffee with him so that he could give some to his mother who lived in a hidden place nearby.

The next morning at work, Jackal said, "I must go and look for my horse, you start work, and I'll be back soon". But Jackal had other plans.

Instead he followed Porcupine's spoor to the place where the porcupine's mother lived. When he got there, he took a stick and beat, beat, beat her to death and stole the coffee. After this he returned to the well where Porcupine was hard at work. When it was time to take a break, the porcupine went to have coffee with his mother, but when he came to their house he saw his mother lying there dead and was scared. So he said, "If the Jackal is so jealous that he will kill my mother, then I must leave before he kills me too!" And the porcupine ran off to another place, for he was very scared.

Later the Boer came to the well and he saw the Bushman and said, "where is that other man, the black man who works so well? What have you done with him? Why did you chase him away? Why did you kill his mother?"

The Jackal said nothing. He just stood there and shat himself because he was so scared he was shaking. The farmer said, "I know that you have killed his mother, this is a bad thing you, red man, must leave! If you don't, I will shoot you!"

I don't know how he knew what the jackal had done, but somehow he knew.

As was /Engn!au's fashion this story was blended into another concerning goings on between the jackal, the lion and his wife (see story 2 above).

This story was one of the clearest in demonstrating the extent to which contemporary Ju/'hoan folktales were intimately related to the political and economic circumstances of contemporary Ju/'hoan life in the Omaheke. In this particular story, the Boer's status as *Baas* is unquestioned, and the actions of Jackal are contrasted with those of the Porcupine. Action is confined within a specific field of political relations, one in which Ju/'hoansi and Damara are farm workers and the Boer is *baas*. The jackal and the porcupine both are constructed in terms of farmer's stereotypes of them, with the Damara as both "servile and submissive", and the Ju/'hoan as "unreliable and irresponsible". Moreover, /Engn!au describes the *baas* as carrying a gun when he goes to spy on his workers, a powerful symbol of violence and authority on the frontier farms (one which links in with his narrative concerning Zameko recounted earlier (Chapter 2)) and which is suggestive of the means of the *baas's* dominance over what takes place on his farm. The fact that the *baas* keeps his workers under surveillance similarly evokes something of the *baas's* panoptic capacity to keep his worker's bound within visual space. To this extent, the story itself, while focusing on the Ju/'hoan Jackal, does not offer a counter discourse to, or attempt to subvert the

hegemony of farmer. Indeed, the jackal's trickery, far from being aimed exclusively at the Boers, who are otherwise spoken of as the aggressive agents of Ju/'hoan marginalisation, is aimed at the porcupine, an individual who is also dependent on the farmer. Added to this, like Ju/'hoansi on the farms, Jackal does not even entertain the possibility of retaliating against the farmer. So, when the farmer uncovers the jackal's initial wrongdoing, it is significantly the Damara porcupine and his mother who bear the brunt of the jackal's anger, and suffer the sternest consequences of his mischief. Thus, in contrast to foraging folklore, far from suspending the normal social rules or relations which circumscribed Ju/'hoan life, these rules and relations were ratified and reinforced in these stories. Even though Jackal plays on the farmer's gullibility and stupidity, at the end of the day, the farmers' authority remains uncontested. The farmer remains the farmer, the policeman remains the policeman and the jackal remains the jackal. In other words, /Engn!au locates Ju/'hoansi at a specific status position within existing power relations which remains largely unchallenged, and therefore represents the partial naturalisation of their subordinate position.

Apart from the fact that these stories were set on the farms, the most self-evident continuity between the narrative and "real" worlds lay in the fact that the jackal character, like the Ju/'hoansi had two names, a *Boer* name and a Ju/'hoan name. Significantly, when telling these stories, /Engn!au would only ever referred to the jackal by his *Boer* name, Willem Poster. In doing this, he constructed the jackal, not just as an individual sharing certain perceived traits with an animal, but as a social and political being whose self-definition was constrained by the politics and power relations which shaped this alternative reality. Thus, paradoxically, while the telling of these stories was associated specifically with old-time people, the lead player was incontestably "new time" in his construction. Consequently, as much as the narrative stage on which these stories were set was said to be an alternative reality, it was an alternative reality which was constructed in parallel to the "realities" of life in the farming block.

In centring the action around the activities of the jackal only one significant inversion of the perceived social realities of farm life is achieved. While not always successful, Jackal's trickery was characteristically ingenious and depended on the implied stupidity of others. In this respect, normal relations pertaining between Ju/'hoansi and others are not only subverted, but turned on their head, as, in these tales, it is the Ju/'hoansi who are clever and the others who are "dom". As /Engn!au insisted in one of our post-story conversations, "Jackal is the cleverest of all animals". In the following story, in which /Engn!au combined two very similar stories he had

told me at other times, this point is made very clearly:

Story 3: The Magic Pot

The Jackal, Willem Poster, was cooking meat in his pot and he saw some people coming. When he saw these people (they were Hereros) he covered the fire with sand and put the pot on top of the sand. When the people came he said, "this pot doesn't need a fire to cook food!" He then jumped up and hit the pot with his *sjambok*¹² "tca-tca-tca", took the lid off, and showed them the meat which was hot.

"I will sell you this pot for 1000 rand" said the Jackal.

"That is a wonderful pot", they said. So one man then bought it and gave Jackal a thousand rand. Then they left. When they had walked for a while they grew hungry and decided to eat. So they put some meat in the pot and hit the pot with the *sjambok* "tca-tca-tca". When they opened the pot they saw that the meat was still raw and not hot. So the man hit the pot again "tca-tca-tca," but still the meat was cold.

After this they went back to find Jackal. When the Jackal saw them coming, he was scared and he took the money they had given him for the pot and shoved it into his donkey's arsehole to hide it.

When they came to him the man who bought the pot said, "Jackal, why did you sell me this pot? It did not cook my meat when I hit it. Take it and give me my money back!"

The jackal replied, "No! you have already finished buying the pot and anyway I have already spent the money". Just then, the donkey started to shit and out came the money from its arsehole. Then, up jumped the jackal and said to them, "Look this donkey shits money. You can buy it for a thousand rand and it will shit more money for you!"

So the man then bought the donkey. And the people went away again. The jackal is a real scoundrel. That is all.

In reference to stories such as this one, Mathias Guenther has suggested that the popularity and prevalence of jackal stories among "farm Bushmen" in Ghanzi is because:

¹²Traditionally a *sjambok* was a whip made of bound heavy leather. In recent years the term has become a generic label for a whip, now often made with tire rubber.

In these stories, one of their kind, a veld-jackal manages easily and without fail to get the upper hand and the last laugh simply by using his natural wit. These stories can be seen as a subtle non-strident form of oral "protest literature".

(Guenther 1989:129)

As much as stories of the trickster-jackal undoubtedly had a certain cathartic quality, as in the story recounted above, I do not feel that to label them "protest literature", as Guenther does, quite fits. Like in Motshile wa Nthodi's poem recounted earlier (Chapter 3), protest literature characteristically engages with that which it describes in such a way that it ridicules or exposes it as absurd or iniquitous. The explicit intention behind such stories is to subvert, in some way or form, the legitimacy of that which they protest against. The stories I heard were not told in order to express the apparent inequities of life pertaining to Ju/'hoansi and others nor, as I have pointed out, were they explicitly aimed at challenging, ridiculing or offering any sort of counter-narrative to those which were dominant in the Omaheke. Furthermore, in these stories, although the jackal is often smarter and more devious than those he deals with, he certainly does not always win. Guenther himself has recorded several stories in which the Jackal comes off second best as a consequence of his own actions. In one version of story 3 (above) that I was told, Jackal is severely beaten by the *baas* before he skulks off, tail between his legs, and in another version of one of the magic pot stories, Jackal pays for his trickery with his life. Correspondingly, those Ju/'hoansi who were least interested in /'Engn!au's stories were usually those who were most strident in decrying the inequities of Ju/'hoan life in the Omaheke.

In contrast to Guenther, I suggest that the popularity of the jackal character stems from the fact that, in a manner consistent with folklore as a genre of speaking indirectly about "reality", Jackal embodies something of a Ju/'hoan *everyman*, a point which emerges when we examine the ambiguous interpretations afforded to him by Ju/'hoansi.

Willem Poster: Hero or Villain ?

In many respects, the trickster-jackal makes an unusual culture hero. His deeds are neither heroic nor altruistic in any conventional sense, and his morality was taken to be, at best, ambiguous, and, at worst, evil. Nevertheless, most Ju/'hoansi strongly

identified with the character of the jackal, a fact made by clear not only by /'Engn!au in his incessant reminders that "jackal is a Bushman" and, more to the point, that the jackal, Willem Poster, is a "farm Bushman", but also by the way his audience empathised with the character.

In these stories, Jackal embodied many of the "ambiguities" of existence for Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke as he, like Ju/'hoansi, is caught in a chaotic no-man's land inbetween systems of meaning and power. Consequently each story simultaneously threw up a series of conflicting meanings, each of which competed for dominance in the rendering and reading of these tales.

Jackal as Hero

One of the most self-evident interpretations of Jackal's actions is as heroic. In his adventures the jackal scorns many of the values propagated and sustained by those in dominance; he steals from them, skives off work, and occasionally manages to con them out of their money. It is his blatant scorn of those on whom he is ultimately dependent that mark out his status as heroic. Jackal manages to survive not because of these others, but in spite of them. For the jackal, while never directly challenging his status or the authority of others, constantly manipulates the limitations imposed on him by them. As such, jackal, while partially acceding to their authority never completely capitulates to it. His resistance is based on trickery, on hiding the fact that, in actuality, he is bucking the system. In terms of this, jackal's heroism stems from his social banditry captured in his refusal to play the game by the rules. Nevertheless, Jackal's heroism is contextualised by his status, and confined within the field of meaning in which his actions take place. Indeed, Jackal's heroism is defined by the fact that he is good at being a jackal and making the most of the limited opportunities available to him.

A further aspect to this stems from the fact that Jackal is clever and correspondingly that others are *dom*. Nevertheless, this cleverness is circumscribed by Jackal's *domness* in other areas. The jackal only resorts to the means he does in order to achieve his own ends because, being a jackal, he is not "clever" at the things which would allow him to make his way by any means other than trickery.

Jackal as Villain

Paradoxically, while Jackal's actions were considered heroic insofar as he manipulated things to his benefit in spite of others, Jackal was usually spoken of as a *skelm*¹³; a

¹³*Skelm* is an Afrikaans term which means "scoundrel" or "rogue".

being whose morality was highly questionable. Even /'Engn!au, whose chief delight lay in recounting Jackal's nefarious deeds, claimed of him that, "he is a *skelm*, he is not a good person!". Indeed, those same attributes which were regarded as marking the trickster-jackal out as a hero, marked him out as a villain; it was because he is a vagabond, a bandit and a trickster that he was regarded a *skelm*. While it may have once been the case, at some point in the Omaheke's history, that Ju/'hoan social banditry was taken as a legitimate (or even admired) activity by Ju/'hoansi, since having been subsumed within a dominant system of meaning in which such banditry was vilified, many Ju/'hoansi now classified jackals' actions as "bad".¹⁴ For /'Engn!au, Jackal provided a vehicle with which to express all that he saw was wrong with Ju/'hoansi in the "new times".

The interpretation of jackal's actions as villainous operated on several different levels, the most immediate of which rested in a fairly literal assessment of the Ju/'hoan-jackal metaphor. Jackals were one of the few predatory species in the Omaheke to have successfully survived the ecological transitions wrought by large scale cattle ranching. In the wild, jackals survived principally through scavenging and hunting for small rodents and any other morsel they could get their teeth into. On the farms, things were not much different. They had to scavenge and "steal" in order to survive, living on their wits, and at the mercy of others. Outside of the narrative space of folklore, jackals were not well liked by Ju/'hoansi and equally importantly, others. They were reputed to steal small stock, scavenge from humans, fight with dogs and were generally regarded as being a nuisance. Farmers often shot them on sight, or tried to bait them with poisoned meat, and dogs were kept to keep them away from the household and small stock pens at night. The jackal then, even as far as Ju/'hoansi were concerned, was a unpleasant beast and a veritable rogue. In spite of this, the applicability of this image as representative of Ju/'hoansi was not questioned by the Ju/'hoan audience, largely because the metaphor was understood to be wholly appropriate.

On another level, the equation of Ju/'hoansi with the trickster-jackal invoked narratives in which Ju/'hoansi associated themselves with G//aua. In *Women Like Meat* Biesele recounts several tales in which G//aua (G!ara) himself is the trickster. In the previous chapter, I argued that many Ju/'hoansi described themselves as "G//aua's people", and, following colonisation equated G//aua with Satan and represented themselves as "Satan's people". This explicit association of Ju/'hoansi with the

¹⁴Guenther (1989:23) similarly has noted that "the inferiority of the Bushmen is a theme that runs through a number of myths and stories".

trickster-jackal and with G//aau adds a further dimension to the negative image of Ju/'hoansi portrayed in these stories as it mobilises connections with discourses through which the past was devalued. Moreover, the trickster-jackal was also seen to possess those characteristics which were seen to identify Ju/'hoansi as Satan's people: Jackal steals, drinks, sleeps with others' women, and is uncompromisingly selfish. Indeed, a crucial constituent of the jackal's character lies in his singular individualism and opportunism epitomised in his willingness to work his mischief on anyone, even other farm workers. While his individualism partially reflected the breakdown of traditional kinship structures and the mechanisms of reciprocity which supported them (Wiessner 1982; Marshall 1976:287-313), it was felt that this was perhaps his single worst attribute, but which, nevertheless, applied well to Ju/'hoansi on the farms. As /'Engn!au argued:

Jackal is a man that is always alone, because he does not give to others. He is just like these Skoonheid people who will just steal, steal, steal. They give fuck-all. . .

An Everyman Jackal

The trickster as a universal folkloric theme has long been a central concern of folklorists, and has generated a great deal of literature attending to it from a variety of perspectives (e.g. Radin 1972; Jung 1972; Georges and Owen Jones 1995:239-243). Through isolating the trickster as a universal character, folklorists have tended to focus discussions on them in order to articulate something of the "human condition". For Jung, for example, tricksters in folklore were understood to correspond to universally held "inner psychic experiences and sprang from them"(Jung 1972). To be sure, as much as similarities between trickster figures in different folkloric traditions raise some interesting questions concerning psychological universals, to focus on them in this way risks divorcing these stories from their specific cultural, political and geographical contexts. Nevertheless, Jung (*ibid.*) captures the attraction of the jackal in Ju/'hoan folklore well when (referring to tricksters in general) he argues that:

[the trickster] became and remained everything to everyman- god, animal, human, hero, buffoon. . . denier, affirmer, destroyer and creator. If we laugh at him, he grins at us. What happens to him happens to us.

For Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, it is precisely because what happens to him the jackal

happens to the Ju/'hoansi that the jackal emerged as the main character in their contemporary folklore.

A clue to understanding the basis of the "everyman" appeal of jackal in Ju/'hoan folklore in the Omaheke can be found in Toelken's (1969) celebrated essay, "The pretty Language of Yellowman", in which he discusses the trickster character in Navaho folklore, the coyote. Toelken's essay, which is the product of research undertaken on a reservation in Utah, focuses on a story about *Ma'i*, the trickster-coyote as rendered to him by an old Navaho, Yellowman. Toelken addresses this story partially by reference to the fact that the Navaho, in a way not dissimilar to Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, were in a "marginal situation".¹⁵ He argues, in terms not inconsistent with Biesele's basic thesis, that the trickster-coyote in Yellowman's story, functioned as "an enabler, whose actions, good or bad, bring certain ideas and actions into the field of possibility, a model who symbolises abstractions in terms of real entities" (quoted in Georges and Owen Jones 1995:298). For Toelken, furthermore, the trickster is a symbol of chaos and disorder, and is evoked in a cautionary manner in order to help conceptualise order or, "in its absence- dramaticise it" (*ibid*).

For /'Engn!au, like Toelken's Yellowman, stories were told in order to dramaticise what he perceived to be the "absence" of order. This is perhaps the most significant rupture in the continuity of the folkloric tradition between foraging and farm Ju/'hoansi. Whereas folklore was once utilised as a narrative space in which order was reaffirmed through allowing disorder to be played out at a level of metaphoric abstraction (Biesele 1993:188-191), folklore was now used to reflect and thereby highlight the current state of disorder in which Ju/'hoansi found themselves. The ambiguous readings of the jackal reflected the pervasive tensions that existed between old times and new, between the past and the present and, more explicitly, the social and political liminality of Ju/'hoansi eking out an existence in the margins of farm and reserve life. In this sense, /'Engn!au's Jackal embodied the entropic and chaotic dimension of contemporary Ju/'hoan life in the Omaheke. Indeed, Jackal was constructed as a Ju/'hoan everyman because he is subject to precisely the same constraints imposed on Ju/'hoansi, and, like them, must find imaginative ways to negotiate his way around, between and through them.

It is my suspicion that many Ju/'hoansi's increasing lack of interest in /'Engn!au's stories was, in part, because they stimulated its listeners to contemplate

¹⁵The similarities between the evidence of the Navaho presented in Toelken's essay, and the evidence of Ju/'hoansi presented here are remarkable. Of further significance, is the fact that Yellowman is not unlike /'Engn!au in terms of age and status. Yellowman's comments concerning his stories, which Toelken recounts verbatim, are strikingly similar to those of /'Engn!au presented in this chapter (cf. Toelken 1969:220-225)

their status in an uncomfortable way. Among people who drank so much partially in order to keep the reality, which /'Engn!au's stories so effectively invoked, at a distance, such stories reminded their listeners in a powerful way of that which they were trying to forget. This uncomfortable evocation of reality not only emerged from the stories themselves, but also the broader context in which the narrative performance took place. Indeed, the performance of story-telling as an "old-time" activity which invoked "new-time" problems reflected in itself the pervasive tension between the past and the present.

Conclusion: New-Time Narratives

While folklore, and /'Engn!au's tales in particular, were unfalteringly contemporary in their contextual referents and representations, the ambiguous interpretations afforded to the actions of the trickster-jackal, as well as the declining value accredited to these tales and the art of telling them was suggestive of the extent to which Ju/'hoan cultural discourses, rather than seeking to reproduce themselves in a manner consistent with the past, were transforming themselves towards the present and future. As much as the diminishing status afforded to folklore as a genre of speaking about themselves by Ju/'hoansi can be accounted for as a consequence of a variety of factors, it represented a desire by some Ju/'hoansi to move beyond existing representations of themselves, representations which they understood to be embodied in old-time people, old-time stories and old-time things.

In discussing the "animal-human" status of many of the characters in Bushman folklore Mathias Guenther has suggested that one reason for this might lie in the fact that they "partially represent 'the transformation experiences' into animals experienced by some trance healers" (Guenther 1988). Schmidt, furthermore, when writing about trickster in Bushman folklore in general points out that one of his main characteristics is his ability to "transform himself into different persons. . . or things" (1976:103). Since, in /'Engn!au's stories, the identities of the various characters are conspicuously non-transformative, some interesting questions emerge regarding the fact that animal-humans remained so central to those stories told by Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke for whom transformative rituals held little meaning other than to symbolise a devalued past. The contemporary value of such a characterisation, I suspect, lay in the fact that it implied a certain rigidity or immutability of identity, a point made by /'Engn!au in response to my asking why it was that Jackal was a "scoundrel". He explained:

I don't know why, but he is a scoundrel, it is just how Jackal is. A jackal is

just a jackal. . . How else can jackal live? .

For some Ju/'hoansi, especially those who, like !A'/ae, were acutely conscious of the apparent inequalities pertaining between Ju/'hoansi and others, folk-stories were considered to be frivolous and unimportant. !A'/ae, for example, could not understand my interest in /'Engn!au's stories but put it down to what he considered my peculiar fascination with "old-time" things. !A'/ae's personal lack of interest in these stories stemmed from the fact that he, like some others, were, by their actions and words, attempting to redefine the image of Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke and to extricate them from the dominant narratives which constituted them as "things from the bush" and thereby shatter the immutability of identity implied in these tales. Furthermore, the fact that, in some respects, the stories celebrated Ju/'hoan "social banditry" (and congruently, their marginalisation), was at odds with the desire of some Ju/'hoansi to negotiate a new space for themselves in Independent Namibia and to transcend the specifics of identity implicit in farm folklore. For !A'/ae, it was precisely through acting as jackal does that Ju/'hoansi remained trapped by negative stereotypes, a point he expressed when he claimed that:

It is those Ju/'hoansi at Post 3 who are always stealing and drinking that make things difficult. It is because of these people that they say we are just Bushmen and cannot do anything.

Furthermore, on another occasion, after I had talked to him about a particularly funny story /'Engn!au had just told me, he replied:

Yes /Kunta, I know those stories. I have heard all of them! I am not interested in them. Some are funny- but that is all. That old man just tells them because he likes to make jokes about people. . . . but it is true that some Ju/'hoansi are scoundrels like Jackal.

A further aspect to this lies in the fact whereas folk-stories tended to contextualise action in a narrative landscape in which the political hierarchy was not questioned, narratives with which Ju/'hoansi articulated their status in terms of collective experience of other offered a far more powerful challenge to the conditions of their domination. Thus, for those like !A'/ae, who consciously disputed the legitimacy of Ju/'hoan marginalisation, the portrayal of Ju/'hoansi via the metaphor of the Jackal did

not accurately represent the political status of Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke. Because the action in folk-stories all took place within the parameters of an established field of power relations, !A/ae felt that other narratives were better suited to challenge the very parameters which marked out the boundaries of this field. Thus, while story-telling provided both an effective and powerful means of representing and referring to the present, it clashed with the emergence of other discourses through which Ju/'hoansi constructed their identity in terms which they understood to better reflect the historical and experiential bases to it. Consequently, some Ju/'hoansi were keen to confer greater authority upon other narratives (i.e. those which drew attention to the malicious agency of others) and which accounted for Ju/'hoan social identity explicitly by reference of their relations to, and historical experiences of others.

Having said this, the key point which I have made in this chapter is simply the degree to which Ju/'hoan social identity, as represented and articulated in farm folklore, as well as people's responses to it, clearly conveyed the degree to which how Ju/'hoan identity was embedded in their relations with others. In the stories themselves, /'Engn!au located Ju/'hoansi as subjects in terms very similar to the way that farmer's did and, as such, they speak eloquently of how settler political economy provided the conceptual and material basis to the Ju/'hoan conceptual universe. Indeed, in farm folklore, an apparently autonomous and distinct Ju/'hoan form of narrative engagement with the "real" world, we see how external forces have transformed "local" worlds as a product of their encounter with one another.

just a jackal. . . How else can jackal live? .

For some Ju/'hoansi, especially those who, like !A'/ae, were acutely conscious of the apparent inequalities pertaining between Ju/'hoansi and others, folk-stories were considered to be frivolous and unimportant. !A'/ae, for example, could not understand my interest in /Engn!au's stories but put it down to what he considered my peculiar fascination with "old-time" things. !A'/ae's personal lack of interest in these stories stemmed from the fact that he, like some others, were, by their actions and words, attempting to redefine the image of Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke and to extricate them from the dominant narratives which constituted them as "things from the bush" and thereby shatter the immutability of identity implied in these tales. Furthermore, the fact that, in some respects, the stories celebrated Ju/'hoan "social banditry" (and congruently, their marginalisation), was at odds with the desire of some Ju/'hoansi to negotiate a new space for themselves in Independent Namibia and to transcend the specifics of identity implicit in farm folklore. For !A'/ae, it was precisely through acting as jackal does that Ju/'hoansi remained trapped by negative stereotypes, a point he expressed when he claimed that:

It is those Ju/'hoansi at Post 3 who are always stealing and drinking that make things difficult. It is because of these people that they say we are just Bushmen and cannot do anything.

Furthermore, on another occasion, after I had talked to him about a particularly funny story /Engn!au had just told me, he replied:

Yes /Kunta, I know those stories. I have heard all of them! I am not interested in them. Some are funny- but that is all. That old man just tells them because he likes to make jokes about people. . . . but it is true that some Ju/'hoansi are scoundrels like Jackal.

A further aspect to this lies in the fact whereas folk-stories tended to contextualise action in a narrative landscape in which the political hierarchy was not questioned, narratives with which Ju/'hoansi articulated their status in terms of collective experience of other offered a far more powerful challenge to the conditions of their domination. Thus, for those like !A'/ae, who consciously disputed the legitimacy of Ju/'hoan marginalisation, the portrayal of Ju/'hoansi via the metaphor of the Jackal did

not accurately represent the political status of Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke. Because the action in folk-stories all took place within the parameters of an established field of power relations, !A/'ae felt that other narratives were better suited to challenge the very parameters which marked out the boundaries of this field. Thus, while story-telling provided both an effective and powerful means of representing and referring to the present, it clashed with the emergence of other discourses through which Ju/'hoansi constructed their identity in terms which they understood to better reflect the historical and experiential bases to it. Consequently, some Ju/'hoansi were keen to confer greater authority upon other narratives (i.e. those which drew attention to the malicious agency of others) and which accounted for Ju/'hoan social identity explicitly by reference of their relations to, and historical experiences of others.

Having said this, the key point which I have made in this chapter is simply the degree to which Ju/'hoan social identity, as represented and articulated in farm folklore, as well as people's responses to it, clearly conveyed the degree to which how Ju/'hoan identity was embedded in their relations with others. In the stories themselves, /'Engn!au located Ju/'hoansi as subjects in terms very similar to the way that farmer's did and, as such, they speak eloquently of how settler political economy provided the conceptual and material basis to the Ju/'hoan conceptual universe. Indeed, in farm folklore, an apparently autonomous and distinct Ju/'hoan form of narrative engagement with the "real" world, we see how external forces have transformed "local" worlds as a product of their encounter with one another.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

Perhaps one of the greatest difficulties that ethnography has had to contend with has been the legacy of ethnographic holism, the perception that the ethnographer is in a position to delineate and demarcate the boundaries which mark one society as different from another. Ethnographers have thus often been ill equipped to deal with the ever-more transitory, fluid and essentially unstable nature of these boundaries, and the shifting power relations which constitute them. As Henrietta Moore (1994:140) has put it, the subject is no longer a uni-dimensional product of a singular set of social referents, but "is composed of, or exists as a set of multiple and contradictory positions and subjectivities", and furthermore, "that what holds these subjectivities together. . . are such things as the subjective experience of identity, the physical fact of being an embodied subject, and the historical continuity of the subject". In this thesis, I have been primarily concerned with some aspects as to how the subjective experience of Ju/'hoan identity in the Omaheke have formed the basis of how Ju/'hoansi delineate their own space in the social universe with respect to others. I have argued that Ju/'hoan identity in the Omaheke is inseparable from their collective experience of being identified by means of a series of discourses which posited an unbridgeable alterity between them and others. That this is the case, I have argued, stems from the fact that the unequal distribution of power in the Omaheke allowed for others' discourses concerning Ju/'hoansi, and the practices which they informed, to reify, ratify, and ultimately *real*-ise the boundaries which they constructed around them. The common experience of a history in which Ju/'hoansi were located in similar ways as subjects within dominant and totalising discourses, I have suggested, has formed the basis of their collective identity.

In the first part of this thesis, I outlined some of the political and economic processes which resulted in Ju/'hoan marginalisation in the Omaheke, and the discourses through which these processes were ciphered. I have shown that, as far as white farmers in the Omaheke were concerned, Ju/'hoansi were understood to occupy that liminal space which separates man from animal; godly from satanic; nature from culture, and were consequently constructed as constituting part of the colonisable landscape. I have shown that Hereros constructed Ju/'hoansi by means of series of similar metaphors whereby Ju/'hoansi were constructed as a liminal category, occupying the space between the wild and the tame, the bush and the household. By virtue of their liminal status, as far as both Hereros and white farmers were

concerned, Ju/'hoansi were taken to constitute an inferior order of mankind, and were treated as such. Ju/'hoan dependency on these others, in tandem with the monopoly of coercive power enjoyed by them, ensured that Ju/'hoansi were in no position to dispute or challenge the legitimacy of these discourses. Far from it, the marginal status of Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke, which was marked by their exclusion from full participation in the regional political economy, served to reproduce and ultimately ratify the discourses which legitimated their marginalisation in the first place.

The identification of Ju/'hoansi with the jackal, the distinction posited between old-time and new-time people, as well as the emergence of other narratives through which Ju/'hoansi constructed their collective identity, and the centrality of their marginal status in these narratives, clearly demonstrate the extent to which their colonial encounter with others in the Omaheke, enacted through institutions such as *baaskap*, inscribed itself indelibly onto the Ju/'hoan body and mind. It is through these narratives that the impact of their historical experience is most clearly articulated, and their failure to contest imposed identities is revealed. It is in these fragmented narratives through which Ju/'hoansi construct their social identity that Ju/'hoan subjection to the hegemony of others is fully realised. Indeed, it is in these narratives, that we see how the conceptual marginalisation of Ju/'hoansi by others was, in effect, rendered "real" in the Omaheke.

Foucault has argued that, "there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse" (1986:229). In this thesis, by attending to the various discourses through which Ju/'hoansi were constructed by both themselves and others, I have attempted to convey how colonial power relations have shaped some of the social "realities" of Ju/'hoan life in the Omaheke, and, by extension, the extent to which Ju/'hoan identity is framed by this reality.

The degree to which this identity is rooted in their colonial relations with others raises some important questions regarding the anthropology of Khoisan people and hunter-gatherers as a whole.

The Lost World of The Kalahari

For the many anthropologists who worked among Bushmen, the notion that they were participating in the "discovery" (or at least the academic appropriation) of a "lost race" who, through geographical isolation, continued to hunt and forage in a

manner similar to that of Pleistocene man, added a touch of adventurous spice to their texts.¹ Prior to embarking on my own fieldwork in the Omaheke, and with similar ambitions in mind, I got in touch with Nyae-Nyae Development foundation,² in order to inquire of the possibilities of my doing some research among Ju/'hoansi living in the Dobe/Nyae-Nyae area and glimpse something of a "vanishing" way of life.³ I was informed that it was likely that yet another anthropologist would not be well received by the local Ju/'hoansi, and that I would be better off following my original plans to work further south in the Omaheke. About a year into my fieldwork, when attending a conference in Gaborone concerning future research on the Bushmen,⁴ similar sentiments were expressed by several of the Bushman delegates to the conference who claimed to be sick of being the objects of inquiry for people who had nothing to offer them. In stark contrast to this, no Ju/'hoansi I had met in the Omaheke had even heard of an anthropologist, let alone had one living with them. This disjuncture in Bushman opinions of anthropologists was telling for it suggested that the preoccupation with seeking out "pure" Bushmen meant that it was not the more geographically remote residents of Nyae-Nyae (or, as the conference delegates made clear, those living in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve) who were "lost" to the anthropological gaze, but those "impure" Bushmen living and working on the white owned farms and native reserves of the Omaheke.

Thus, in a somewhat curious inversion of the popular imagination, this thesis is very much in line with previous works on the Bushman, in that it too is a "lost race" narrative in which the anthropologist "discovers" a people who have hitherto escaped the anthropological and popular gaze. In contrast to these other texts however, the "lost" race with which I have been concerned was not marked out by their geographical isolation from others, but rather their conceptual marginalisation

¹ Many anthropological as well as popular texts concerning Bushmen, evoke three of the themes of early science fiction identified by Barnard (1994); "the lost race motif"; "The early man motif" and less directly, "the noble savage as self motif" (e.g. Lee 1984; Marshall 1976 etc.).

² The Nyae-Nyae development foundation was established by John Marshall and Claire Ritchie in order to co-ordinate development initiatives in the Nyae-Nyae area of former Bushmanland, the site of the Marshalls' one-time "ground breaking" fieldwork among the Ju/'hoansi. (See Marshall, J. 1994; Marshall, J. and Ritchie 1984).

³ This sentiment was made clear on the several visits I made to NyaeNyae (where I went not as an anthropologist, but as an NGO representative) in which I asked Ju/'hoansi what they thought of various anthropologists. People's sentiments in this regard were clear. Those who came once, wrote a book and never returned, were not looked upon nearly as favourably as those, who like Megan Biesele or John Marshall, had actively contributed over several years to helping local Ju/'hoansi deal with changing circumstances.

⁴ National institute of Research: Basarwa Research Conference 24-25 August 1995, University of Botswana.

by others. Nancy Howell, a member of the original Harvard Kalahari Project wrote in 1986 that:

We could have stayed near home and seen people behaving as a rural proletariat, while nowhere but the Kalahari and a few other remote locations allow a glimpse of "hunting and gathering way of life." So we focus upon bush camps, upon hunting, upon old fashioned customs, and although we remind each other once in a while not to be romantic, we consciously neglect and avoid the !Kung who do not conform to our expectations. (Howell 1986:7 in Wilmsen 1989:36)

Howell's critique of the romanticism implicit in much anthropological work concerning Ju/'hoansi and other Bushmen, captures some of the problems which have beset Khoisan anthropology and ultimately engendered the strong emotions which permeate the rhetoric of the Kalahari debate. Most crucially, she points out how, in search of a myth, it is easy to ignore that which doesn't conform to one's prior expectations. Consequently, those Bushmen living and working for white farmers, Hereros and others have remained steadfastly in the margins of most anthropological texts, as interpreters, guides or chance meetings lurking in the shadows of grander narratives concerning a way of life that, until 10,000 years ago, was practised by all mankind (e.g. Marshall 1976; Lee 1979:1 Tanaka 1980:10-11).

In a classic case of not seeing the wood for the trees, anthropologists, by attending almost exclusively to the "pure" Bushman delimited in Western narratives, contributed in the "losing" of the majority of Bushman living in the twentieth century Kalahari.

Howell's critique has served as a starting point for this thesis, in which it is precisely those Ju/'hoansi who did not conform to the foraging stereotype that have constituted the principal subject of this text. In doing this my principal intention has, in common with some other scholars (e.g. Gordon 1992; Wilmsen 1989), been to redress the bias in anthropological discourse away from elevating Bushmen to the status of a hunting and foraging archetype. Thus, while I have incorporated the work of many "traditionalist" anthropologists into this thesis, and do not dispute the value of much of their work given the contexts in which they were written, I have avoided examining the status of Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke in terms of the rubrics which came to be the bread and butter of pre-revisionist ethnography concerning hunter-

gatherers; the "bush camps, hunting and old-fashioned customs" of which Howell writes.

In doing this, there is an explicitly political intent in writing this thesis. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:51) invoking a popular sentiment in the realm of social research have pointed out, "social science cannot be neutral, detached or apolitical", and furthermore, that representations, ours (because of the institutional authority afforded them), as well as our subjects, have the capacity to reconstitute social realities and relations (see also Said 1989). While there is some debate as to extent of the impact of anthropological writings on those we write about, in the case of Bushmen, there is little doubt that our scribblings often have real implications for them. This is particularly true in Namibia where the works of anthropologists, along with other image makers, have had a tangible impact on the lives of many Bushmen.⁵ In recent years anthropologists have had an increasingly more immediately influential role in the shaping of the lives of Namibian Bushmen as their voices are sought out by Government ministries, NGOs and other bodies in order to shape policy, design development programs and apportion funding to them.

It is certainly true that the western fascination with the "purer" exemplars of Bushmankind has diverted attention away from the often desperate circumstances in which other Namibian Bushmen have found themselves. In recent years this has been most markedly apparent in the efforts of those various NGOs involved in facilitating Namibia's transition to a democratic republic. While it has been the case that Ju/'hoansi living in the former Bushmanland, home of those Bushmen who were once thought to be the "pure" exemplars of the foraging way of life, have attracted the attention of funders and has seen the establishment of several hugely expensive development projects, Bushmen in other areas have seen few such developments.⁶ As a result, what amounts to a fairly small percentage of Namibia's Bushman population have attracted a remarkably large proportion of available funding. This imbalance in the apportioning of development capital is no doubt a reflection of the fact that changes in the former Bushmanland, to borrow Ramos' (1993:65) phrase, project more eloquently to the West a symbol of the "pristine good-life endangered by the brutality of capitalist expansion" .

⁵Robert Gordon has discussed at some length the impact of ethnologists and others' images of the Bushmen in shaping colonial policy towards them (1988 & 1992:157-167). See also Lau (1994 and 1989)

⁶The hat-making project which I initiated with a friend in the Ministry of Youth and Sport and a local Peace Corp volunteer was the first Ju/'hoan income-generation project to be established in the Omaheke.

In writing this thesis, I intend that more attention will be drawn to those Bushmen in Namibia living and working in the margins of the black and white owned farms of the Omaheke (and elsewhere). It is especially important at this juncture, where issues pertaining to land redistribution (among other things) remain in legislative limbo, that attention is drawn to those people who look likely to be further marginalised by these processes should they not be granted the opportunity to voice their own concerns. In reference to this, this thesis aims not only to draw attention to the status of Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke in order to force a readjustment of the anthropological gaze, but also to affect a change in those dominant representations to which they remain subject.

Hunter-gatherers; where to now?

In the preface to *Land Filled with Flies*, Wilmsen (1989:xii) somewhat triumphantly proclaims that "the ethnographic era of anthropology, an era marked by the excision of societies from their historical contexts, is behind us" . Even though in making this assertion, Wilmsen does not account for the fact that, like anthropology, ethnography has been subject to changes and meaning brought about by both paradigmatic shifts in the social sciences as well as social and political changes in the world at large, his proclamation does have a certain resonance that is hard to ignore. Thus, while I do not concur with Wilmsen on this matter (except in terms of a fairly narrow view of ethnography, by which I mean the holistic study of societies as bounded and unitary social systems) I feel that it deserves further consideration especially in the context of hunter-gatherer studies.

From my perspective, as much as it may not be true to argue, as Wilmsen does, that the age of ethnography is behind us, it is certainly true to argue that the age of hunter-gatherer ethnography is behind us. Political changes over the past century have ensured that the idea of a contemporary ethnography of hunter-gatherers as hunters and gatherers is an impossibility. There is little doubt that the revisionist intention to place history at the centre of anthropological discourse concerning Bushmen and other one time hunter-gatherers has, in part, been precipitated by fact that there are no longer any people who conform to the hunting-gatherer archetype, and hence that, by definition, the contemporary study of hunter-gatherers must be historical. In other words, the study of hunter-gatherers *as* hunter-gatherers is now reserved exclusively for those concerned with the past. It is not a concern of the

contemporary ethnographer, whose principal research tool of participatory fieldwork prohibits him/her from studying a way of life which no longer exists.⁷

Given the transformations brought about by the impact of global economies and the hegemony of the nation state, we are forced to ask the question, when is a "hunter-gatherer" not a hunter-gatherer, and by extension, at what point do we discard the models and theoretical frameworks which have characterised and, to a large extent, continue to characterise the study of these people? In many respects, the lives of the generational farm-working Ju/'hoansi described in this thesis share more in common with generational farm workers in the Cape (many of whom themselves are the biological descendants of hunter and gatherers who were also labelled Bushmen) than they do with the Bushmen described in the classic traditionalist texts (cf. Du Toit 1992). If we were to speak of these Cape farm workers as "Bushmen", and construct a discourse concerning their social organisation and culture which placed them a continuum with their ancestors' hunting and gathering past, would this not lead to accusations of essentialism or ethnic (re)invention? If this is so, then to what extent is it appropriate to speak of Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke as hunter-gatherers?⁸ Further difficult questions regarding these problems, at least as far as those people labelled Bushmen are concerned, are posed by the appropriation of essentialist imagery of them for both political and commercial reasons.⁹ In the years both immediately preceding and following the demise of apartheid, images of Bushmen have been used to sell things as diverse as train tickets, t-shirts, adventure holidays and bottles of wine. Furthermore, a Khoisan identity, with all its connotations of aboriginality, less the smear of primitivism, in a classic example of the "invention of tradition", has been appropriated by communities attempting to construct and legitimate a new and "authentic" identity for themselves in the "new" South Africa. Should we then look to the anthropology of hunters-and gatherers to explain the behaviour of !Khoisan X?¹⁰

⁷The virtual disappearance of hunting and gathering hunter-gatherers is becoming increasingly more central concern for anthropologists concerned with them. See, for example Burch (1994:442) and Lee (1992:38).

⁸Peterson has raised similar questions pertaining to Australian aboriginals (Peterson 1991).

⁹Wilmsen (pers. comm.) has suggested that the use of essentialist Bushman imagery in the South African mass media during the transition to a multi-racial democracy was mobilised in order to destabilise and therefore mediate between black and white claims to legitimacy in South Africa.

¹⁰!Khoisan X is the Cape "coloured" leader formerly known as Benny Alexander. The South African political scene is now littered with various bodies such as the Khoisan Representative Council of Kimberly established on the basis of a (re)invented Khoisan identity. More insidious has been the emergence of groups such as the *Kleurling Weestandsbeweging vir die Voortuig van Bruinmense* (KWB) which have been compared to the ultra-right Afrikaans organisation, the AWB and which aims to have coloureds

As early as 1928 Isaac Schapera was well aware of this sort of problem in writing about Southern Africa's "native" populations, a point he made forcefully when he argued that:

the Natives are now differentiated to such an extent that it is impossible to generalise about their habits and characteristics as a whole. Some are living very much as they did under the old tribal system, others have changed very materially indeed, and approximate the outlook of Europeans both in mode of life, economic occupations, outlook on life generally and individualism.¹¹

(Schapera 1928:188)

As things stand, in spite of fairly dramatic shifts in the manner in which anthropologists constitute their subject, many of those concerned with hunter-gatherers seem reluctant to allow the contemporary descendants of these communities shake the hunting-and-gathering legacy of their (and our) ancestors. In what is an ironic twist in the ethnography of hunter-gatherers, people who would once have been rejected as insufficiently "pure" exemplars of the foraging way of life are now being written about in terms of the language and models which were applied to the study of foraging foragers. Indeed, while few one time foraging communities continue to lead lives which immediately resemble that lifestyle which once excited anthropologists so much, we continue to conceptually segregate these communities from others we study, writing about them under the ubiquitous "hunter-gatherer" label and constructing their actions in terms of theoretical schema and analytic tropes more appropriate to the concerns generated by and for the study of hunter-gatherers in isolation from others.

Albeit that, in light of revisionist criticisms, the "classic" traditionalist texts concerning Bushmen may not be as highly regarded as they once were, they offer an invaluable perspective on the lives of these people at various points in their and our histories. Perhaps the clearest point that these texts make regarding the contemporary study of one-time hunter-gatherers, however, is the extent to which the analytical

classified as an "ethnic group" on the basis of their Khoisan Identity (WMG March 24 1995; April 19 1996)).

¹¹Gordon (1990:26-31) outlines attempts by South African anthropologists such as Schapera, Gluckman and Hilda Kuper, to view colonial Southern Africa as part of a single social system.

language and theoretical preoccupation's which have marked their study in anthropology hinge on their status of their subjects as *authentic* hunter gatherers.¹²

The impact of revisionist historiography, in tandem with the absence of contemporary hunter-gatherers, has meant that most of those anthropologists who place themselves within the hunter-gatherer sub-discipline have turned their attention away from the immediate dynamics of the hunting and foraging way of life toward questions concerning "social change", "sedentarisation", "encapsulation" and "acculturation" (e.g. Ingold, Riches and Woodburn 1988 & 1991). In these studies, the *etic* constituents of social change are prioritised over other factors. A consequence of this has been that the signs of social change are reified at the expense of the political relations and processes of power that have resulted in these changes.¹³ Indeed, the implicit objectivism which still remains central to many of these studies runs the risk of losing sight of those historical and political processes which inform change, and to "reify the structures it constructs by treating them as autonomous entities endowed with the ability to act in the manner of historical agents" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:8).

While, as Myers (1988) points out, such analyses represent a single strand of a variety of "critical approaches" that have been generated in order to grapple with the problems raised by revisionism, the language and conceptual frameworks generated by and for the study of hunter-gatherers remains central to many of these approaches. Much recent work concerning one time hunter-gatherers has been dominated by two intertwined lines of approach. The first of which is oriented towards questioning whether the social organisation of hunter-gatherers should best be understood as a "a product of encapsulation" or incorporation within "external" political and economic relations (e.g. Woodburn 1991; Bird-David 1991), and the second is oriented towards examining the contemporary status of hunter-gatherers in terms of a dialectic between present circumstances and their hunting-and-gathering past (Bender and Morris 1991:8). In adopting these approaches, anthropologists have

¹² The objective value of the taxonomic distinction made between hunter-gatherers and others has been raised repeatedly since hunting and gathering societies became a subdisciplinary speciality. For the most part however, these questions have been raised within the context of attempting to establish a set of empirical referents with which do delineate the boundaries of the subdiscipline. See, for example, Hamilton (1982), Barnard (1983) and Burch (1994).

¹³ A good example of this is Susan Kent's essay in which she accounts for changes in Bushman political process explicitly in terms of the impact of sedentarisation without making reference to the political and discursive worlds informing this process. (Kent 1989). Similarly, Osaki (1990), elevates "sedentarisation" as a causal phenomenon of social change among G/wi in Botswana without contextualising this process as a product of particular historical relations.

tried to accommodate some of the questions concerning process and history into their constructions of foraging life but do so through inventing models which highlight the adaptability of hunter-gatherer social organisation with a particular focus on their "internal dynamics" (Bender and Morris 1991:12). In the first line of approach, it has been suggested that the social organisation and adaptive strategies of hunter-gatherers should be understood to constitute a sort of cultural *leitmotif* which surfaces occasionally should the adaptive need arise.¹⁴ In the second line of approach, in which concern is more explicitly focused on the contemporary circumstances of hunter-gatherers, the general trend has been to locate recent transformations undergone by hunter-gatherers in terms of the hypotheses generated in the first line of approach and thereby construct recent transformations in terms of cyclical and adaptive models of social organisation and behaviour which focus on the continuity of internal dynamics.

Their stress on internal continuity and their peripheralisation of "external" influence, is one of the key areas in which these approaches distinguish themselves from Kalahari revisionism. Indeed, in contrast to Wilmsen's revisionism in which the local is emphasised at the expense of the global, these approaches pay only cursory attention to the impact of what are increasingly more pervasive "external" factors. Consequently even though questions pertaining to history, process and politics have come to be central to anthropological discourse concerning one-time hunter-gatherers, these questions continue to be phrased in terms of apparently etic constituents of social change, pertaining to matters such as changing patterns of resource utilisation and settlement, the impact of sedentarisation and, most pervasively, the adaptability and flexibility of "traditional" structures in coping with submergence within the state. The focus on internal dynamics and the placing of these in a continuum of long term adaptive strategies has meant that when writing about contemporary hunter-gatherers, anthropologists have been able to hang onto much of the language and conceptual models used in the study of hunting-and-gathering hunter gatherers. An immediate and important problem with such analyses is that in constructing hunter-gatherer responses to changing socio-political circumstances as part of a longer term adaptive strategies, these writers run the risk of giving legitimacy to the essentialist representations of hunter gatherers which are

¹⁴The essays presented at the hunter-gatherer conference at London in 1986 reflect this position most clearly (see Ingold, Riches and Woodburn 1989 and 1992). In the case of anthropologists concerned with Bushmen, Guenther (1985) and Vierich (1982) argue this case most strongly. Guenther (1985:10), for example, suggests that hunting and foraging should best be understood as "the overt or latent leitmotif of Bushman social existence" .



Plate 8.1 When is a hunter-gatherer not a hunter-gatherer? Xooan'//a making hats, making money.

often mobilised legitimate their marginalisation. In short, such approaches serve to impose a historically resistant, atemporal identity on these people. Schrire's criticisms of Guenther's work can be taken to apply to the anthropology of hunter-gatherers in general;

He seems considerably less committed than other authors to the notion of long term isolation of these people, yet he subconsciously produces an image of traditional existence in the face of some rather ambiguous historical data. . . . Instead of analysing the implications of these observations, Guenther labels them *non-traditional* and dismisses them because they seem to reflect the effects of acculturation on an idealised small-scale society.

(Schrire 1982b:11)

Thus, the contemporary study of one-time hunting-and-gathering communities remains captive to a paradigm generated by and for the study of hunter-gatherers in isolation, and addresses various issues in terms not well equipped to deal with the transformations affecting hunting and gathering peoples around the world. It is as if in using these approaches, which hark back to "better" times when foragers still foraged and hunters still hunted, that many anthropologists are attempting to distil something of that original and authentic "purity" which once informed our understandings of these people. Perhaps the reason that anthropologists have been reluctant to discard these analytical tools when examining the complex processes of social change lies in the continuing perception that hunter-gatherers are in some ways our "contemporary ancestors" and therefore that the anthropological study of them is "often more in touch with what it is to be human than are trends in virtually every other branch of [anthropology]"¹⁵ and, furthermore, that these studies form "the backbone of the discipline" (Barnard and Woodburn 1988:4), a contention, it seems, which only seems to be held by those involved in hunter-gatherer studies themselves.

The most significant contribution of revisionist historiography is that it highlights the dangers of examining questions pertaining to transformations in

¹⁵Richard Lee (1992:43) has discarded this view, but in a strange endorsement of revisionism suggests that the human condition is to be found in "poverty, injustice, exploitation, war [and] suffering", and that to seek this condition out, one must go to where "massive inequalities of wealth and power have produced fabulous abundance for some and misery for most". By his reckoning then, though certainly not mine, the "impure" Bushmen of the Omaheke capture the essence of the "human condition" which he mistakenly once thought was to be found among the "pure" Bushmen of Dobe.

settlement patterns, exchange or kinship in isolation from the political processes which prompted these changes in the first place. In doing this, the work of the revisionists, and Wilmsen in particular, radically challenge prevailing understandings of what it is to be a "hunter-gatherer", and destabilise the objectifying and temporalising discourses with which anthropologists and others narrate the spaces between "us" and "them", between hunter-gatherers and others. In respect of this, the writing of revisionists like Wilmsen and Schrire (sic.), remind us that like the "primitive", the "hunter-gatherer" is a product of the western historical imagination, a site on which the West can and has projected its fantasies about itself.

In response to these considerations, some anthropologists, raising methodological and empirical problems, have argued that we should do away with the idea of the "hunter-gatherer" as an analytic category altogether. Ernest Burch (1994:454), for example, invoking the spirit of Kuhn has argued that "there is too much variation in class of hunter-gatherers to make it useful for theoretical purposes" and suggests that we should explore for a more appropriate basis to our social taxonomies. Similarly, Harvey Feit, in the same volume, argues that those characteristics which were thought to mark out the distinctiveness of hunter-gatherers (their conceptual models of resource utilisation, labour and temporality) are not so distinctive after all (Feit 1994:438). Feit consequently concludes that there remains no justification to maintain the taxonomy between hunter-gatherers and others.

While I am broadly sympathetic with their intentions, my grounds for the reappraising the analytic value of the category are somewhat different. The evidence presented in this thesis suggests that, in contrast to much of existing work written concerning the contemporary status of those we still think of as hunter-gatherers, a more profitable understanding of these people might be gleaned from a closer examination of the political and historical contexts which have produced them; in short, the interplay between discourses, practices and identities. While the case which I have presented is undeniably somewhat more extreme than that experienced by hunter-gatherers elsewhere, it serves to highlight the need not only to accommodate questions pertaining to history when considering their contemporary status, but also to examine the discursive aspects of power pertaining to their relations with others, and, more importantly, how these insinuate themselves into hunter-gatherer's world views. In this thesis, I have constructed an alternative set of contextual referents with which to provide a back-drop for the study of other aspects of contemporary Ju/'hoan life in the Omaheke. It would certainly have been possible,

in analysing and interpreting the data presented in this thesis, to have stressed the adaptability of so called traditional Ju/'hoan social organisation and place their discourses and practices on a continuum with those of foraging Ju/'hoansi, but to have done so would have been to sideline the presence of others and more importantly minimise the effects of the interplay of dominant narratives mediated by relations of power.

To this extent, while I do not dispute the value of the language generated for the study of hunter-gatherers *as* hunter-gatherers, I feel that this language and the analytic tropes it generates are inadequate for attempting to produce a fuller understanding of the complex processes of social change undergone by most one-time hunting-and-gathering peoples. Rather I feel that in order to generate a useful understanding of the often painful and difficult transformations which are presently radically redefining the terms through which these communities have come to construct their place in the social universe, we are better off examining the processes which have resulted in these changes and the discourses which have functioned as a hermeneutic framework to these processes. In line with the Comaroffs' program for a historical anthropology based on historical ethnography in which anthropologists are encouraged to examine "the making of collective worlds" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:10), hunter-gatherer studies in the new millennium should rather focus on how hunter-gatherer identities are appropriated, constructed and negotiated and, furthermore, how the imagery of the "hunter-gatherer" with its connotations of aboriginality and authenticity are invoked whether in the market place or the political arena.

In much the same way that Ju/'hoansi in the Omaheke considered themselves to be captives to others' images of them, anthropological discourses concerning the contemporary status of these groups remains captive to a theoretical framework which hinges on the idea that hunters-gatherers should be understood in terms different to others. In this thesis, I have attempted to extricate the study of former hunter-gatherers from this framework, and to suggest the value of other approaches in the analysis of their presently rapidly changing circumstances. I have argued that in order to represent these changes we must attend to the specific historical and political constituents of them, and avoid constructing their present and future in the same language that we used when writing of their pasts. Many Ju/'hoansi and other one time hunter-gatherers are desperately attempting to shake the legacy of their

pasts,¹⁶ and as contemporary ethnographers, it is in part, our responsibility to distinguish between "old times" and "new times", the past and the present, and therefore re-evaluate, for both political and academic reasons, the language we use to talk about these various peoples and the taxonomies that we apply to them. In the case of Ju/'hoansi, this involves us discarding the notion that they remain "things from the bush".

¹⁶This view was not only expressed to me during my stay in the Omaheke, and some years previously in Ghanzi, but also by Bushman delegates at Conferences concerning the future of Bushmen in Namibia and Botswana held in Ghanzi in 1992 and Gaborone in 1994 .

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GLOSSARY OF NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Afrikaans-English:

baas	boss
baasskap	domination (boss-ship)
binne	inside
blanke	white (person)
Boer	Afrikaner
boer	farmer/ to farm
Boesman	Bushman
bok	goat
dominee	priest
geskiedenis	history
grootuis	big-house
inkomer	incomer
jakkals	jackal
mense	people
outyds	old times
plaas	farm
sjambok	whip
skelm	rogue
swart	black
werksoek	looking for work

Ju/'hoan-English:

G//aua	Satan
G//auama	Lesser God
G//auan!a'a	Greater God
g//auasi	spirits of the dead
ju	person
ju doresin	stranger/ incomer
ju/'hoansi	real people
ju≠engsi o kxaice	old time people
koara	absence/ without
n!a'a	big
n!hai	lion

n!ore	place/land
n/um	"traditional medicine"
n≠oahnsi	factual stories
n≠oahnsi o kxaice masi	old stories
n≠oahnsi o n//amasi	folklore
tci	thing
tci zessin	new things
tsu	uncle
uto!om	tyre
Zhum	lion
≠'ang	old/ worn out
≠'eng	thought/knowledge
≠kao	north
!aqe	hunt
!han	thought
!u	name
!uma	grandchild/ little name
!un!a'a	grandfather/ big name
!Xu	God
//eike	today
//ai	east
//hanga	west
g!u	water

HERERO-ENGLISH

-nazandunge	clever
-okuti	wild
eanda	matrilineage
eruwo	great house
eyova	stupid
ngombe	cattle
okuruuo	holy fire
okuti onguza	desert
omungure	worker
omuramba	fossilised river bed
ondjuwo	house

onduwo enene
onganda
oruzo
otjihwa
otjunda
oumba
OvaKuruha
ovatua

great house
homestead
patrlineage
bush
calf kraal
danger
Bushmen
outsider (inferior)