

Economic changes of the ju 'hoansi

Economics



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The Ju'/hoansi started as a food foraging society, a mode of subsistence involving some combination of hunting, fishing, and gathering wild plant foods. During the early days, these people would travel long distances within a restricted territory and make seasonal moves to tap into naturally available food sources. Men and women were both equally important in work as well as necessary for survival. Although the men were usually the hunters and women the gatherers, it was not out of character for both sexes to do both jobs. Women were able to share the food they collected with whomever they wanted.

Men on the other hand had different rules and constraints they had to go by in distribution of meat. The sharing was done in units of 25 people rather than just one family, they didn't have to share with everyone but no one went hungry within the unit. One way of preserving large amounts of meat was to make jerky. When hunting and killing an elephant would bring many pounds of meat, it would be stored by drying it out in long strips and could be packed easily as they moved to the next camp. In the 1970's the Ju'/hoansi were taken from their homeland, which caused a social change in their people.

Jobs were given and paid for with monies. Men were given more jobs than women, which caused a significant change in the economy. Women were given welfare by the government and were isolated at their homes with nothing to do. Their purpose was diminished and they had too much time on their hands. Disease hit the people causing many deaths and tragedy. The South African Government came bringing liquor and many men fought each other, killing off their own people. The change brought to the Ju'/hoansi was

a tragedy, they were not accustomed to this new way of life, nor had they been brought up by this kind of culture to be able to adjust.

Some of the people went back to their homeland, never to be the same as the early days of foraging for food. They tried to shift to agriculture which called for a different understanding than what they were used to. Pre-planning and organization was needed for agriculture. The people had been hunting and gathering, which they did while traveling without planning. It was a different way of life, although some success came for a few, it was not common. Like many others of their kind, they were edged out of their traditional habitats and the foraging cultures have nearly disappeared.