

Ju hoansi essay sample

[Science](#), [Anthropology](#)



In 1963, Richard B. Lee went to southern Africa to study a tribe called the ! Kung in an area of Botswana known as the Dobe. Six years later, Marjorie Shostak traveled to Africa to live with the ! Kung hoping to discover, in particular, how the lives of ! Kung women differed from her own. In this essay, I will contrast and compare Lee's book, *The Dobe Ju/'hoansi*, 1984, 1993 and Shostak's book, *Nisa The Life and Words of a ! Kung Woman*, 1981, 1983.

The ethnography describes the people's lives when Richard Lee first met them in the 1960s, at that point the Dobe Ju/'hoan were still relatively isolated and were still surviving as hunters and gatherers. The book is important for many reasons. The foraging (another term for hunting/gathering) life described by Lee stands in sharp contrast with the "nasty, brutish, and short" life described by Thomas Hobbes. Lee found that the Ju people were able to survive on a twenty hour work week. Typically, women gathered wild nuts, roots and grubs while the men hunted and occasionally helped with the gathering. Their knowledge of the desert was incredible.

The ! Kung are a foraging tribe who live in the northwest Kalahari Desert. They speak a language that is infused with a series of clicks, represented on paper by exclamation points and slashes. They rely on the nuts of the mongongo, an indigenous tree, as a staple of their diet. Meat provides about 30 percent of their food. They also eat a variety of plants and small animals. Occasionally one of the men will kill a larger animal, such as an antelope. According to Shostak, "! Kung women contribute the majority (from 60-80 percent by weight) of the total food consumed." (Shostak, 12).

The educational web cite explain the Dobe Ju/'hoansi as a tribe of hunter-gathers who live primarily in the desert regions of northwestern Botswana. Their naming pool is very small; there are only 35 male names and 32 female names to choose from. This would not seem so restrictive if the tribe did not also have strict naming rules and patterns. Boys are named in this fashion: son 1 receives paternal grandfather's name, son 2 receives maternal grandfather's name, consecutive sons receive the names of the father's brothers, when there are no more father's brothers, the last sons are named after the mother's brothers.

Girls are named this way: daughter 1 receives maternal grandmother's name, daughter 2 receives paternal grandmother's name, consecutive daughters receive the names of the mother's sisters, when there are no more mother's sisters, the last daughters are named after the father's sisters.

Children are never named after their parents.[1] The naming situation of the Dobe Ju/'hoansi only gets more complicated. It designates who one can and cannot marry. Women cannot marry men bearing their father's or brothers' names. Men cannot marry women bearing their mother's or sisters' names. It is believed that all bearers of a name come from the original person who had that name; it would be like incest to marry someone with the same name of someone in your immediate family.

The Worldly's citemotto is, quite simply: " Know the world, and know yourself". Never let it be said that they don't have a right to be proud of our own distinctive cultures. When the SIERRA SERRANO, managing editor of this magazines discovering the them of tribes he admit that the Ju Hoan are a

hunting and gathering kind of people. Men typically hunt, and women typically gather. However, they are very egalitarian, meaning that men and women share equal status and there are no official leaders or chiefs. Because of the harsh environment, social relationships are crucial to survival.[2] Although they live in small, nomadic bands, they maintain relationships with other groups. One way they do this is through Hxaro exchange.

Hxaro exchange is a form of generalized reciprocity (giving and receiving) where people from the each band will have Hxaro, or exchange, partners in other bands with whom they will give gifts. Now you may think, " how is this any different than bartering?" The difference lies in the reasons for giving. The exchanges are not part of any economy, nor are the materials given essential for survival. The basic theme is " I give you something now, and you in return give me something some other time in the future." Richard B. Lee, Anthropologist, discussed hxaro exchange with a Ju hoan man.

Lee asked, " If you gave me a spear and I in return gave you a 3 strings of beads would that be ok?" The man replied, " Yes." " Two Strings?" " Yes" " One String" " Yes." The Ju Hoan man explained that " One string, five strings, any return would be alright. You see we don't trade with things, we trade with people." Basically, in Hxaro exchange, If I gave my roommate a Mercedes Benz and he gave me a spoon, it would be a fair exchange. The value of the object isn't as important as the relationship built and maintained between the two of us. The Hxaro exchange practice is very important to

survival in the Kalahari Desert, as well as the maintenance of the ecology, which we will understand as we read on.

The other Internet publication devoted to cooking traditions in different countries said that the area inhabited by the Dobe Ju/'hoansi has over 50 resident species of mammal that provides a solid hunting base. The main theme of this cite is food. The main game animals are the kudu, wildbeest, and gemsbok. Birds are also abundant with 100 species of resident birds and 40 of migratory. Ostrich eggs are prized food. Their hunting area is shared with lions, two species of hyena, wild dog and other carnivores. The ! Kung often sleep in the open without fires and do not seem to be afraid of predators.[3]

Villages are readily established and moved easily, habitations being built in a few hours or days. They are occupied for only a few months before they are moved. The huts are built in a ring around a central " plaza" in the shade of trees near water sources. Behind the ring of huts is another ring of ash dumps, then as one moves outwa cooking pits, carefully cleared areas, a " defecation zone' and finally the outer ring which joins the bush.

The villages, consisting of 10-30 people, are semi-permanent; once the water source dries up, the band has to carry their belongings to a new site where a reliable source of water can be located. The huts are small and built of grass with all doors facing the center, circling a large communal area where children play, women cook, and all family life except for sleeping takes place. A fire is burning in front of each hut at all times.

The ! Kung are hunter gatherers, adapting to their semi-arid environment by gathering roots, berries, fruits, and nuts that they gather from the desert, and from the meat provided by the hunters. Both women and men possess a remarkable knowledge of the many edible foods available, and of the medicinal and toxic properties of different species. ! Kung men are responsible for providing the meat, although women might occasionally kill small mammals. Game is not plentiful and the hunters sometimes must travel great distances.

Meat is usually sparse and is shared fairly among the group when a hunter is successful. Every part of the animal is used; hides are tanned for blankets and bones are cracked for the marrow. Typical game sought in the hunt includes wildebeest, gemsbok, and giraffe; they also kill various reptiles and birds, and collect honey when it is available. The men provide household tools and maintain a supply of poison tipped arrows and spears for hunting.

[4]

Plentiful, but life would be difficult if all-raw consumption were attempted. We shall see that the ! Kung's foods are indeed plentiful and nutritious, but that without processing (such as roasting to facilitate mongongo nut cracking, burying wild oranges, roasting some roots), food would be more monotonous, less palatable, and certainly life more difficult in general.

The Mongongo. The mongongo is a highly nutritious fruit and nut that constitutes the main staple in the diet of the ! Kung Bushmen. Indeed, nuts represent over 1/3 of their total calories, and are available almost all year long. Under normal climatic conditions, the mongongo season begins when

the fruit first ripens and falls to the ground in April. After the fruit flesh has been consumed, the nuts are roasted, cracked, and eaten.

By August, and lasting until approximately November, the fruit flesh has dried, and has been partially eaten by insects (the nut kernel is still okay at this point). Despite the insect predation, some (dried) fruits are edible after soaking and cooking; the insect-damaged fruits are roasted to burn off the damaged fruit flesh, and the nuts are cracked. From November to March, the fruit flesh is gone—eaten by insects—and only clean nuts are available.

Baobab. The seedpod of a very large tree. The seedpods are 10-15 cm long, 80-200 gm in weight, and have a dry pulp with 20-30 seeds. The composition of pods (by weight) is: 22% pulp, 31% seeds, 47% waste. The pods are in season in the period May-September. In immature pods, the seeds and pulp are eaten together. With mature pods, the pulp is pounded to remove the seeds; after removing the seeds, the dried pod pulp is pounded to produce a flour. The flour is then used to make pudding or drinks. The fruit has a pleasant flavor but is acidic. The seeds are roasted and consumed.

Vegetable ivory palm (! Hani). The spherical seed (5 cm in diameter) of a palm tree; consists of four layers: (1) An outer skin (inedible); (2) edible fruit pulp (3-5 mm); (3) nutshell (inedible); (4) an extremely hard nut approximately 15 mm in diameter. Early in the season, in June, about 33% of the total weight consists of the fruit pulp. Later in the season (October), the seeds dry out and the fruit pulp proportion falls to 25%. The skin is peeled off and the fruit is pounded to remove it from the nutshell. The fruit pulp may be eaten raw, as-is, or ground into a coarse meal. It is always eaten raw,

unsalted, and never mixed with water. It may be eaten with baobab fruit (flour). The flavor of the fruit pulp is similar to dates.

The ! Kung consume large quantities of the berries, including the pits. The latter are passed intact through the digestive system and expelled in massive wads in the feces. One of the hazards of eating *Grewia* in large quantities is the danger of fecal impaction. According to the ! Kung, people have died from this condition though we never observed such a case in our studies.

As for tribe traditions a lot of different publications describe their dancing and marriage traditions. The trance dance is an exciting social event for the ! Kung during which people renew bonds, visit and laugh together, and sing and dance. ! Kung women's clapping and singing influence the power of the *n/um* the healers are able to activate, and they also protect the healers from hurting themselves when they are in a trance.[5]

The emphasis on modesty enforces the egalitarian nature of Kung society, so that no achievements in hunting or other aspects cause differentiation between people based on class. The lack of social stratification is key for their adaptive strategy because it provides for a cooperative atmosphere where gift-giving and reciprocal altruism can be necessary for survival. The community organization is based on gift-giving, though there is no emphasis on material culture in terms of accumulation of wealth.

Material culture is seen as objects to be shared or given to others in order to form alliances, such as between families before, during, and after a wedding.

Accumulation of wealth is not practical because of the mobile nature of the group. They must be prepared to move when resources are depleted in an area, and moving excessive amounts of goods would be detrimental and impractical. Items of material culture are often provided by men for use by women, such as tanned skins to make carrying sacs, digging sticks, mortars and pestles, sinew, and shoes, and women care for them and maintain them as they are used. [6]

The Ju/'hoansi marriage ceremony involves the mock forcible carrying of a girl from her parent's hut to a specially built marriage hut, and the anointing of bride and groom with special oils and aromatic powders. Unlike our western fairy tales in which the couples live happily ever after, ! Kung marriages start on a stormy note and continue in that vein for weeks or months after. (Lee, 82).

The cite <http://people.stu.ca> describe the marriage traditions as follow:

Traditionally, a girl would be wed in the ! Kung tribe by the age of 12 to 16 years of age, but now a girl is around the ages of 15 and 18 while the traditional age of a boy is 18 to 25, compared to today the age of 22 to 30. The ways in which couples are determined are by the mother and the father (particularly the mother). A mother's idea of a perfect husband for their daughter is one whose name is unrelated to their own. Some qualities which

parents look for are; the man must be an able hunter he must come from a family who like to do hxaro. (! Kung's way of traditional exchange.)

The boy must not enjoy fighting, and finally the way to which the parents of both families show their reinforcement is the exchange of gifts throughout the engagement period. If either side ceases to send gifts then the wedding can be called off. The marriage of the ! Kung begins with the bride pretending to refuse the wedding as she is carried from her parents hut to the marriage hut. The couple is then covered by oils and aromatic powders, by the elder women. " When = Toma comes from the east we will hold the {marriage} ceremony. First we will build a house for them to live in. The parents choose all first marriages; this means that the girl has little or no say in the matter.

If the parents choose a man in which the girl is unsatisfied with, then the girl will show her displeasure by kicking and screaming. This is her way of showing her independence; in fact if the girl screams and kicks long enough then the marriage is called off all together. Some girls have tried to commit suicide rather than marry someone. Almost half of all first marriages will fail in the ! Kung tribe. The ones that do are not always the best. In fact the bride will sometimes not sleep with her husband for weeks, sometimes even months. However in the beginning stages of the rocky marriages, ! Kung couple will normally settle down in a very stable relationship which can last in upwards of twenty or thirty years.

Despite what might be interpreted as a rather sexist ritual, the ! Kung actually have quite a lot of equality between the sexes. The women are

given a fair amount of authority and responsibility and do more food-gathering than the men.

Another intriguing paradox of ! Kung life is the way men act and are treated after they have gone hunting. In a strange ritual known as insulting the meat, when a man hunts and kills an animal, especially a large one, he is expected to act extremely modest and to minimize the importance of his contribution to the tribe. In addition, the other tribe members insult his kill by proclaiming how small and worthless it is. Lee illustrates this by quoting a tribesman named Gaugo:

Say that a man has been hunting. He must not come home and announce like a braggart, " I have killed a big one in the bush!" He must first sit down in silence until I or someone else comes up to his fire and asks, " What did you see today?" He replies quietly, " Ah, I'm no good for hunting. I saw nothing at all maybe just a tiny one." Then I smile to myself because I know he has killed something big.

Worked Cite:

1. Survival of the ! Kung San people in the Kalahari Desert
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5. John C. Caldwell Was there a Neolithic mortality crisis?

6. Wood, James W. 1998. A theory of preindustrial population dynamics: demography, economy, and well-being in Malthusian systems. *Current Anthropology* 39(1): 99-135.
7. http://kyky.essortment.com/kungsanpeople_rftw.htm
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11. [http://www.worldlymag.com/section.asp?Section= 143&Dept=](http://www.worldlymag.com/section.asp?Section=143&Dept=)

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