MARRIAGE AMONG /KUNG BUSHMEN

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BECAUSE within the area we indicate by shading on the map the /Kung Bushmen intermarry among themselves, by custom and preference, members of the Harvard Peabody Smithsonian Kalahari Expeditions needed a convenient way of referring to that area as a unit and arbitrarily called it the region of Nyae Nyae.

Nyae Nyae is a corruption of the /Kung name //Nua/!ei. The name Nyae Nyae refers strictly to a group of pans in South West Africa (S.W.A.) centred approximately at Gautscha Pan at about 19°48'30" S, 20°34'36" E. We extend the application of the name to an area around the pans of about 10,000 square miles, lying for the most part in S.W.A. but reaching some miles over the border of the Bechuanaland Protectorate (B.P.). There are no strictly conceived boundaries around the area. We can only vaguely define it by saying that it does not include Karakuwise to the west or Chadum to the north. It does not, we think, reach eastward much farther than Kai Kai, or southward much beyond Blaubush Pan (40 or 50 miles south of Gam).

We establish the periphery of the region on the basis of statements made by /Kung informants in the interior. They say that they intermarry among the bands which live within the area we describe and do not customarily marry with other

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1 The sketch-map here provided is based on the National Geographic Map of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, March 1950, and the Times Atlas of the World, Vol. IV. The orientation of Gautscha is taken from the S.W.A. Surveyor-General's map dated at Windhoek 7:17:35.
Bushman language groups, Auen, Naron or /Kô, to the south, or with other /Kung whom the Nyae Nyae /Kung know to be living to the north-east and north-west of them.

The S.W.A. and B.P. governments administer the region as it lies within the territory of each but not as a unit in itself. The /Kung have developed no internal political organization to unite their bands. The unity of the region exists, in so far as we know, only in the minds of its /Kung population and in the fact of their intermarrying and being held together in a net of kinship and affinity.

About 1,000 /Kung live in the region. Roughly three-quarters of them live in 28 bands and are nomadic hunters and gatherers with no agriculture, herds, or beasts of burden. Approximately another fourth work for Chwana and Herero on their cattle posts on the periphery of the region. Most of these still have connexions with the interior bands and intermarry among them. In the interior there are no inhabitants other than /Kung, and no European or Bantu institutions modify the old /Kung way of life.

My study of /Kung marriage regulations is based on data derived during the years 1952–3 specifically from 14 bands with which we had the most contact and on which we gathered considerable genealogical material. These bands varied in size from 8 to 57 persons, averaging 25, with a total of 353. The marriage status of these persons as of 1952–3 is given in Fig. 1.

**Fig. 1. The Marriage status of a sample of 353 persons**

| Married men (9 of them had 2 wives) | 88 |
| Wives of above men | 97 |
| Old widowers | 3 |
| Old bachelors | 1 |
| Old widows | 24 |
| Young widows | 2 |
| Young divorced women | 2 |
| Unmarried boys, adolescent and younger | 78 |
| Unmarried girls, adolescent and younger | 58 |
| **Total** | **353** |

/Kung social organization is of the ‘Eskimo’ type, as defined by Murdock.¹ They is the sub-type, which varies from normal Eskimo in that polygyny occurs and extended families are common instead of independent nuclear families in neolocal residence. Other characteristics are normal Eskimo. Descent is reckoned bilaterally, there are no exogamous unilinear kin groups. There is bilateral extension of the incest taboo. Cousin terms² are the same for cross and parallel cousins and cousins are differentiated terminologically from siblings. One term is applied to both FaBr and MoBr, another to both FaSi and MoSi, and these terms differ from the terms for parents.

As we examine their rules of exogamy we find that the band is not an exogamous unit as such. Actually most members of the band are so interrelated by consanguinity or affinity that the marriage regulations strictly prohibit their intermarrying,

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but there might very likely be some between whom marriage would be permissible, such as, for instance, a man and his WiSi or his widowed BrWi.

The \Kung have no unit within which endogamy is absolutely required. Those of the Nyae Nyae region almost all marry among themselves within the region, not because a formulated social rule definitely prohibits their marrying outside but because they almost never go out. They do not like strange places, strange situations, or strange persons, and have no way of feeding themselves where they cannot depend on receiving food from relatives or friends and, in strange country, either do not know where the wild foods grow or might not be allowed to gather them if they found any. Nevertheless, a few Nyae Nyae /Kung have married other /Kung outside the region, and one /Kung woman we know is married outside her own race, with acceptance and ease of relations all around among her people and his, to a Chwana man at Gam, near the southern border of the region. We think in all probability there must be other mixed marriages along the Bechuanaland border which we do not know about, but we are safe in saying that among the Nyae Nyae /Kung such marriages are rare.

Prolonged intermarriage within the region has woven these people together and much visiting among kin develops acquaintanceships and friendships which unite the whole Nyae Nyae /Kung population. They feel themselves to be an in-group and express this feeling in the words ju /\basi.\footnote{S. Passarge puts the phrase on his map in \textit{Die Buschmänner der Kalahari} (Berlin, 1907, Dietrich Reimer, p. 19), spelling it \textit{Swa\basi}. He places it on the line of 20° S, slightly to the east of 20° E, near what we call the centre of the Nyae Nyae region, in the area designated on his and other maps as the Kaukau Veld. He places the phrase as if it were the name of a Bushman group, like Heikom, Naron, or some other. He places the name \emph{Kung} somewhat to the north-west. That is the name we spell \emph{Kung}, which D. Bleek (\textit{A Bushman Dictionary}, American Oriental Society, 1956, p. 447) records as [K\u, \emph{Ku} or \emph{Kag} (person, Bushman).}

Passarge places the name \emph{Kung} once more at about 23° S. as the name of another Bushman group. In sound the name is the same or very, very like the name of the more northerly group. Miss Bleek refers to this group as being popularly called 'Koon'. L. F. Maingard distinguishes between the two by spelling the name of the southerly group [K\u. The [K\u are to be found in B.P., in and south of Okwa. Whereas the /Kung language has four clicks (symbolized now as dental \(\ddot{d}\), alveolar \(\dot{\ddot{d}}\), alveolar palatal \(\ddot{\ddot{d}}\), lateral \(\ddot{\ddot{d}}\)), the /K\u language is very different and has a fifth click, that of the southern Bushman language groups, the labial \(\ddot{\ddot{d}}\). The phrase \emph{ju /\basi} has nothing to do with the /K\u.

Maingard in \textit{Three Bushman Languages} (\textit{African Studies}, 16/1, 1957, p. 37) uses the phrase as the name of a dialect of /Kung—\dots \emph{dy\u/\basi} (Northern Group, a dialect of /K\u, partly in South West Africa and partly in the Bechuanaland Protectorate).\footnote{Bleek (op. cit., p. 354) does not record the phrase in /Kung (her northern Group II), but gives it in Auen (N I) and says it means 'Bushman'. She spells it \emph{ju /\basi}.}

We think that the phrase \emph{ju /\basi}, which we started spelling in this way because we did not know any better and continue because it is simpler, can be applied to groups of varying size and definition, on a variety of bases, when the in-group quality in comparison with the out-group is to be expressed in some way. When we asked what they call themselves, our /Kung informants often replied \emph{ju /\basi} as though the phrase might be coextensive with Bushman as distinguished from non-Bushman (Europeans, /Ju, whom the /Kung also call 'red people', i.e. \emph{ju gau;} or Bantu, whom the /Kung call \emph{ju dzo}, 'black people' or \emph{lgoma} (or \emph{lkoma}?), 'animals without hooves'). They also use \emph{ju /\basi} when one might expect them to say \emph{\slash{}Kung} as distinguished from other Bushman language groups, or when they distinguish themselves from other /Kung outside their region. They said that the Makaukau (/Auen) Bushmen to the south were \emph{ju dolo} and they know that the Bushmen at Karakwulse, Nuregas, and Chadum speak /Kung but said they were \emph{ju dolo} nevertheless.

I had the impression that it was the out-group quality in the phrase (strange and therefore potentially harmful) which was being expressed when they applied it as above and claimed that the Makaukau were a murderous people who have a medicine so deadly that you die if you but glance at it, and that those Nuregas /Kung put poison into the pipes they give you to smoke. One's friend or relative can also be \emph{ju dolo} if one is disheled with him.
we were unable to find a precise translation of /ōassi but think it connotes the we as distinct from the they and has an overtone of something good and safe. The phrase is an opposite of ju dole. Dole means strange or harmful or bad—evidently synonyms to the /Kung.

Because there were so many kinship ties among the people and because they have a system (the name relationship—to be mentioned later) by which they apply kin terms to persons who are not consanguineous relatives or affines, I wondered for a time if we should find that the people who call themselves ju /ōassi comprised a kin group of the type which Murdock calls a deme.1 A deme is bilateral and endogamous, Murdock says, 'comparable to the sib both in size and in the traditional rather than demonstrable bonds of kinship which unite the members'. Though the Nyae Nyae region has the elements of a deme, I am convinced that it does not constitute, strictly speaking, an organized kin group of this type, of which the people are conscious as a social form. The endogamy of the region is customary and preferred, but not required by a social rule, and it is not from the group of people as a whole who are ju /ōassi that social regulation derives.

Marriage regulations: the incest taboo and its expression in avoidance

Marriages are forbidden in /Kung social organization on one basis only. That basis is incest. In common with nearly all mankind (excepting, of course, the Pharaohs and a few other rare examples), the /Kung incest taboo prohibits marriage or sexual relations between Fa and Da, Mo and So, Br and Si. The incest taboo is extended beyond the nuclear family to certain additional categories of persons, and marriage with them is also rigorously forbidden by /Kung social law.

The /Kung did not express the belief that in-breeding per se produces inferior offspring and must for that reason be avoided. Although they believe that in conception the semen unites with menstrual blood, their language does not use the image of blood as ours does. They do not think of relatives as having the same blood or any physical substance in common, actually or by way of figure of speech to represent inheritable characteristics, in so far as we know, and do not think that common inheritance is somehow what makes it wrong to marry close kin.

The thought that incest has been avoided by mankind because it would be exceedingly disruptive to the internal cohesion of the nuclear family comes to the mind of the analyst of social forms but not to the minds of /Kung informants. And no mention was made of the obvious social advantage of marrying outside the nuclear family and thereby weaving a supporting web of kinship with many other families and bands.

The /Kung feel a deep, internalized, pervading horror of incest which they do not try to explain. Incest with parent, offspring, or sibling is unthinkable. 'Only dogs do that—not men.' 'It would be madness (di).’ ‘It would be dangerous, like going up to a lion.' Many refused to speak with me about such 'bad things'.

the Bushmen were saying of themselves, in effect, 'We are not animals, we are human beings', a connotation we did not discover in the thinking of the /Kung themselves. Ledimo, our chief interpreter, also a Chwana, said the phrase had the connotation of 'perfect persons' and that 'clean' and 'empty' were aspects of the word /ōassi, he thought. Elizabeth Marshall Thomas paraphrased it in the title of her book, The Harmless People (Knopf, New York; Martin Secker & Warburg, London, 1959).

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The /Kung extend the incest taboo to certain categories of persons outside the nuclear family because they hold that the relationships resemble the relationships of the nuclear family and that it would therefore be incestuous to unite them in marriage. A man will say explicitly that he must not marry this or that woman because it would be 'like' marrying his mother, daughter, or sister.

The sexual constraints required between persons to whom the immediate or the extended incest taboo applies find expression in the marriage regulations and, in a secondary way, I believe, in certain avoidances which express constraint, namely:

1. Sexual joking and sexual insults, which are permitted between persons who have the joking relationship and must be avoided by others. (2) A sitting taboo. The same persons who must avoid sexual joking must also avoid sitting close to each other or to each other's family fires—with two exceptions, namely: (a) parents and offspring, who must never make sexual jokes but who do not at any age observe the sitting taboo; and (b) all young children, including siblings. The /Kung believe that the persons who must observe the sitting taboo should not allow their genital organs to touch the same spot. No great distance need separate these persons when they sit. About 18 inches is a minimum but is sufficient. The taboo is applied without sex differentiation: men must not sit near men or women, or women near women or men if they do not have the joking relationship. (3) With the exception of siblings of any age, the same persons who avoid joking avoid using each other's names in direct address. They use a kin term instead or the men may use a respect term for each other—/man, 'old man'. (4) Brothers and sisters do not sit near each other when they reach adolescence and, after marriage, when they have dwelling-places of their own, do not enter each other's scherm (shelters). (5) Parents and SoWi and DaHu, in addition to observing the joking, sitting, and name avoidances, do not enter each other's scherm and do not speak to each other in the first few years of their affinal relationship. They are the only persons in /Kung society who must avoid speaking together. After three children have been born, this avoidance is eased somewhat. In-laws may then speak occasionally; once in two or three days would be considered permissible. This interesting avoidance, so varied in intensity and so widely spread in human societies, appears in /Kung society to afford whatever benefits it has without imposing great hardship at any time. A daughter-in-law may lean her scherm upon her husband's parents' scherm and build her fire only about four or five feet away, and what she wants to say to her parents-in-law she says aloud to her husband or child and her parents-in-law overhear and respond in like manner. A son-in-law also could communicate in this way. I think only a /Kung or an informed observer would know that the in-laws were not speaking directly to each other.

The symbolism or expression of sexual constraint which underlies the joking and sitting avoidances is also observable in the modesty of these people. I believe that their modesty is not obedience to a specific taboo, like the sitting taboo, but is a more general response to being constantly in the presence of persons to whom the incest taboo applies, before whom any expression of sex would be improper. The general demeanour of the /Kung is modest. The dancing, if it gives any expression at all to sexuality or eroticism, conveys it with such restraint and delicacy as to be in extreme contrast to the dancing of the neighbouring Bantu tribes. Both men and women among the /Kung are exceedingly modest about exposing their genital
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organs and, though the women’s breasts are naked (breasts are associated with nursing, not sex), the women would not expose their buttocks, which are definitely associated with sex, as the position for sexual intercourse is for the man to be at the back of the woman. When they urinate or defecate, men, women, and all but young children who are not yet toilet trained go away from the werf and squat behind bushes or in the tall grass out of sight.

The persons who express in the avoidances the sexual constraint required by the incest taboo are none of the less free to engage in other activities of life together. Whether or not they must avoid joking and sitting near each other, whether or not they may marry, they may talk (except with SoWi or DaHu), hunt, share meat, share the water-hole, gather plant foods, cook, eat, make journeys, visit, exchange gifts, and, if they wish, huddle their scherms and fires together. And, although they must not direct sexual jokes or insults to each other, they may laugh as heartily when they overhear the jokes as relatives do who have the joking relationship together.

Because it is interesting to compare the pattern of the joking relationship with the pattern of marriage regulation, I have indicated it when I list the various categories of persons with whom marriage is forbidden or allowed.

Extension of the incest taboo to four categories

Marriage regulations, patterned upon the incest taboo as it applies in the relationships of the nuclear family, and extended to certain other relationships because they are considered to be like those of the nuclear family, forbid ego’s marriage with four categories of persons, as follows: (1) members of the nuclear family and certain other consanguineous relatives; (2) certain affines; (3) step-parents, stepchildren, step-brothers, stepsisters, and the close kin of ego’s father’s wife other than his mother (for example, ego’s mother’s co-wife’s sister, who is ‘like’ his MoSi; (4) certain name relatives.

Category 1: ego’s consanguineous relatives with whom marriage is forbidden

In Fig. 2 are listed the consanguineous relatives whom a /Kung must not marry. The terms applied to them are given in their basic form only, all complicating factors being omitted as they have no bearing on marriage regulations. The term which ego applies to the male in a given category appears first; the term applied to females follows. The joking status is indicated by ‘yes’ if ego has the joking relationship with the given category of relatives, ‘no’ if he has not.

The /Kung use the expression ‘We are one people’ when they refer to certain consanguineous relatives—e.g. any lineal kin and the close collaterals listed in Fig. 2—but they do not consider siblings of grandparents, fourth cousins or still more remote collaterals as being of ‘one people’ with themselves. The /Kung, who are capable of being pushed to logical conclusions by an interrogator, say that they recognize a degree of consanguinity among such collaterals but spoke of them as ‘those people’. ‘Those people would name their children for their own people’, they said, for example. ‘We name our children for our people.’

I made considerable effort to determine whether or not I should include third cousins as within ‘one people’. Many of the informants from whom we gathered genealogical data did not know the names of their third cousins, but, when we estab-
lished the definition, with sticks and diagrams in the sand and the names of some actual people, ≠Toma, the leader of the band we lived with, insisted that third cousins were ‘one’s own people’. We ‘red people’ might marry our own third cousins, he said, but Bushmen would know that they were one people and should not marry.

**FIG. 2. Consanguineous relatives whom ego must not marry**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Joking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great-grandparents</td>
<td>ṭsu</td>
<td>ḳa</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents</td>
<td>ṭgu/na</td>
<td>tūn</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>dai</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings of parents</td>
<td>ṭsu</td>
<td>ḳa</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>ṭgo</td>
<td>ḳai</td>
<td>yes, same sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cousins, 1st, 2nd, 3rd</td>
<td>ṭgu/na</td>
<td>tūn</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offspring</td>
<td>ṭha</td>
<td>≠ ḱai</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nephews, nieces</td>
<td>ṭsu</td>
<td>ḳa</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandchildren</td>
<td>ṭgu/na</td>
<td>tūn</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great-grandchildren</td>
<td>ṭsu</td>
<td>ḳa</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The kin who are likened, by being of the same generation, to his parents, to his offspring, and to his siblings, are those to whom a /Kung feels the marriage regulations are particularly directed. Siblings of parents are ‘like’ parents, cousins are ‘like’ siblings, nephews and nieces are ‘like’ offspring. Marriage with all these is rigorously forbidden.

Ego’s marriage with great-grandparents, grandparents, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren is also forbidden but is not a concern. Age and consanguinity combine to push the very thought virtually out of mind. To the /Kung it seemed utterly ridiculous of me to inquire even about the collaterals in these generations. ‘Those old people are already dead’, said someone. ‘It will be for my grandson to mind the rules when the young children grow up’, said ≠Toma in effect. ‘It is not my wish to marry a baby.’

**Category 2: affines**

The second category of persons to whom the incest taboo is extended is composed of certain affines. Their affinal relationship is considered to be indissoluble once it is established, and ego’s marriage with them is prohibited, even though the person through whom the affinal relationship with ego is brought about be dead or divorced. The thought of incestuous relations with at least some of these affines (especially parents of spouse and spouses of offspring) is as horrifying to a /Kung as if they were members of his nuclear family. We learned of no instances of the taboo being broken among them.

The affines with whom marriage is forbidden, who correspond terminologically with ego’s parents’ generation, ego’s own and that of his offspring, are listed in Fig. 3. Joking is allowed or not as it is with ego’s kin in these generations.

Parents of ego’s SoWi and DaHu are terminologically of ego’s generation and he may joke with them but he must not marry them, for that would make his So and SoWi or Da and DaHu stepbrother and stepsister to each other, which would be most awkward.
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Why marriage is prohibited with HuBrSo and WiSiDa was explained by ≠Toma. Marriages with HuBr or WiSi are highly preferred marriages. This makes ≠Toma 'feel like' his WiSiHu, he said, even though he is not married to her, and as a result, his WiSiDa seems to him like his own daughter.

FIG. 3. Affines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marriage forbidden</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Joking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents of ego’s spouse</td>
<td>≠ten</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouses of FaBr, FaSi, MoBr, MoSi</td>
<td>tsw</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SiHuFa w.s., BrWiMo m.s.</td>
<td>tsw</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Ego’s generation terminologically)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents of SoWi, DaHu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mibi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouses of So and Da</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HuBrSo, WiSiDa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marriage with a BrWiMo or SiHuFa seems improper to the /Kung because a man's marriage with his BrWi is highly preferred, as is a woman’s with a SiHu (should the death of the spouse or divorce make their marriage possible), and the parents of these affines therefore seem ‘like’ parents of the spouse.

In the sibling category among affines ego is prohibited from marrying only WiBrWi or HuSiHu. The reason for this prohibition appears to lie in the consistency of the joking pattern, about which three more points must be made. First, throughout

FIG. 4. Marriage forbidden with WiBrWi, HuSiHu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male ego</th>
<th>Joking</th>
<th>Female ego</th>
<th>Joking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Br and BrWi</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Br and BrWi</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si and SiHu</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Si and SiHu</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WiSi and WiSiHu</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>HuBr and HuBrWi</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WiBr and WiBrWi</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>HuSi and HuSiHu</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the whole system (except among remote name relatives), ego maintains the same joking status with both members of a married couple, for example, with FaBr and FaBrWi, WiSi and WiSiHu, &c. Secondly, in the differentiation of sex between siblings among ego’s affines with respect to the joking relationship, the point of reference is the spouse. Ego has the joking relationship with his own spouse and with the sibling of his spouse who is the same sex as his spouse. He avoids joking with his spouse’s sibling whose sex is opposite to his spouse. Thirdly, among affines in the sibling category the extended incest taboo and the avoidances coincide. Sex permitting, if ego may joke he may marry, and if he avoids joking he is prohibited from marrying. As we list ego’s siblings and affines in Fig. 4 we see that WiBrWi and HuSiHu are the only ones whose sex is opposite to ego’s, making marriage possible, but with whom ego is constrained from joking because he does not joke with his WiBr or HuSi, according the same joking status to both members of a married couple.
Categories 3 and 4: step-parents, &c; name relatives

The third category to which the incest taboo is extended, step-parents, &c., needs no elucidation.

The fourth category, certain name relatives, should be further described. The name relationship, described in the paper on kin terminology, is connected with a system of naming children. The /Kung have no surnames. A /Kung father invariably names his first-born son or daughter for his parent of the same sex; usually the second-born for the parent of the child’s mother; subsequent children for his own sibling or the sibling of the child’s mother or the spouses of those siblings. He never names a child for himself or for the child’s mother. Because this pattern of naming exists, the /Kung feel that if two non-consanguineous persons have the same name, they are likely to have had consanguineous connexions in the forgotten past, and from this concept the /Kung have developed what we called their name relationship. In a system too complex to summarize here they apply kin terms to persons on the basis of their names.

The names have passed from family to family, through intermarriage in the region, and from generation to generation, to such an extent that every /Kung of the region whom we interrogated on the subject had a kin term for every other /Kung, except for one man who had once met four /Kung from afar for whom he had no terms. This had made him uneasy.

The /Kung welcome the sense of belonging to an in-group which the name relationship affords them. They welcome also the fact that they know how to behave with people with respect to the avoidances. They fear (koa) to make a mistake about joking and sitting, they say, and feel secure in righteousness and propriety when they know what behaviour is correct and conform to it. The kin terms sort out the whole /Kung population of the region for them. They avoid joking with name relatives whose names classify them with kin or affines of the generation of parents, or with offspring or with a sibling of opposite sex or with great-grandparents. They may joke with name relatives whose names classify them with grandparents, a sibling of the same sex, or the spouse. (Cf. Figs. 2 and 3.)

The incest taboo is extended to name relatives. If ego is forbidden to marry them because of the way their names classify them, he also does not joke with them. But, as we shall see when we consider approved marriages, the system does not maintain perfect consistency between joking and marriage among name relatives, and it does not follow that if ego must not joke he therefore must not marry. The incest taboo is extended specifically to the following name relatives: (1) anyone who has the name of ego’s parent or offspring; (2) the parent, offspring or sibling of opposite sex of anyone who has the same name as ego, (3) anyone who has the same name as ego’s spouse’s parent or his offspring’s spouse. ≠Toma explained that it would ‘sound as though ’one had married his parent, child, or one of these close affines.

Deviations from the rules

The /Kung conform strictly to their marriage regulations in the first two categories, kindred and affines. None of the persons whose genealogical records we

gathered (about 173) had married lineal kin or collaterals, at least through first cousins. However, informants told about two /Kung men in B.P. who had married their cousins: we could not find out which type of cousins. What was interesting was the attitude of the informants. They said the men should not have done this, but there was no talk of madness or danger or expressions of horror such as we had observed when incest was spoken of at other times. No punishments, social or divine, had been meted out, according to the informants. Some said they thought it was not too bad a thing for a man to do, especially if the woman were a FaSiDa, who is not, they said, so much like your sister as a MoSiDa. I believe that the anomaly of the system's allowing joking with cousins, although it prohibits marriage, mitigates, in all probability, the force of the incest taboo and accounts to some extent for the tolerance towards the breakers of this rule.

How much deviation there is in marrying second and third cousins we do not know. We soon gave up trying to gather data on relatives more remote than first cousins because informants so often did not know the names and we could not rely on the information.

One account came to our ears of a man who had violated the incest taboo with his stepdaughter. He was /Gunda Legs, the MoBr of old Gau of Band 1, and he lived with Band 9. He is dead now. What he did was so outside the good and the normal that it could be accounted for only by madness. He had drunk the milk of a young gemsbok doe, the people told us, and this is what had made him mad. Something came from his forehead and went in and out, a sort of swelling. After that he fell in love with his stepdaughter, ≠Nisa, and married her, and both she and her mother were his wives at the same time. The people 'laughed at him' so much because he had made such a horrifying 'mistake' that he took his stepdaughter and lived apart from his band—the only instance we know of a man and woman living alone. They had a son, ≠Toma, who died young. When /Gunda's madness waned he sometimes came back to his people; he would go again when his madness returned. People said they did not understand why ≠Nisa went with him. They mocked at her, said that she was dole, 'bad', and that it was 'nonsense' to fall in love with one's stepfather. Our informants laughed uneasily when they told about it as they laugh when they tell of vultures eating their meat or of being chased by fierce bees when they try to take a honeycomb. There came to my mind a penetrating remark made by /Kushay, the wife of /Qui in Band 1, which might, I thought, be applied to ≠Nisa. /Kushay had said, 'When a Bushman girl goes against the customs of her people and people talk about her and say she is bad, she is very unhappy. She would hear the people talking and be ashamed and would come to them angry—angry because she is ashamed', or, I thought, go away because she is ashamed.

Deviations occur in the fourth category. Two men we met had married women with the same names as their mothers. A man named /Ti/kay married the daughter of another /Ti/kay, and there were other such instances. /Qui, the husband of the above /Kushay in Band 1, said he proposed to do this himself. The girl's family had flatly refused, but he was going to keep on trying. ≠Toma said he would not do this but he sees some people doing these things. There are not enough women whom a man may properly marry, he said, and he would be in favour of changing the marriage prohibitions among name relatives so that a man need avoid only ugly women.
Approved marriages

No marriages are compulsory in /Kung society. Marriage is allowed with anyone to whom the incest taboo is not extended—with three degrees of approval: preference, permission, and toleration. Once a marriage has taken place, no differentiation in status is made.

The joking relationship is the differentiating factor between the preference and mere permission which the society accords. In preferred marriages the man and woman are name relatives who have had the joking relationship before marriage and have applied to each other the terms /gulna and /tûn. This makes the marriage seem altogether right.

Marriage is permitted between name relatives who apply the terms /tsù and / /gà to each other and avoided joking before marriage, provided the incest taboo is not specifically extended to them; and, in the same way, marriage is permitted between name relatives who apply to each other the terms /gø, brother, and /kwi, sister.

Marriage is tolerated, though rarely experienced, as I mentioned before, with persons to whom the name relationship and the application of kin terms is not extended; i.e. persons of other races, persons of other Bushman language groups, or other /Kung outside the region.

To contract a marriage with someone with whom one must not joke brings in a touch of the anomalous which deprives the /Kung of the perfect symmetry and consistency which so content them and make them feel secure in rightness. This society tolerates the anomaly, for obviously it must not forbid marriage in too many categories, and adjusts the joking status by giving to man and wife the joking relationship as soon as marriage takes place.

Though neither the sororate nor the levirate is compulsory, marriage is highly approved with the wife of a deceased brother or the husband of a sister. A man is expected to take care of his BrWi should she need his care, even though he is not required to marry her. Marriage with a WiSi or HuBr is also highly approved. Ego has had the joking relationship with these affines.

A marriage arrangement which the /Kung consider especially good is called /loa ku. This means that an exchange is made between two bands: a boy and girl from one marry a girl and boy from the other. /Loa ku is not a common practice. Bands as units have no authority in the arrangements of marriages, which is the duty of the parents, as we shall describe presently, and parents do not make the exchange between bands a major factor in their choices. If it happens to come about, however, the people are glad because each band thereby gains a person to replace the person lost and the bonds between the bands are strengthened.

Polygynous marriages

Polygyny is the ideal form of marriage among the /Kung. This is not a society in which prestige and wealth concentrate to give certain categories of men more power or right than others to acquire wives. Headmen and medicine men are held in esteem, but their positions do not in themselves entitle them to have extra wives or give them special dispensations. Wealth tends to be fairly well equalized. Everyone carries his or her own artifacts, the men on carrying-sticks over their shoulders, the women
in the pouches of their karosses along with their babies. This puts a strict limit upon any desire to possess great quantities of property in movables. Furthermore, gift-giving keeps all personal property moving in a current through the region and no one possesses very much more than another. The determining factors in obtaining more than one wife are apt to be the personalities of the individuals and the man’s ability to hunt. ‘Women love meat’, we were told, and like their husbands to be good hunters.

The number of wives a man may have is not regulated by social rules but by his ability to obtain and support them. This limits him usually to one. None of the nine polygynists in the band had more than two. However, we heard of a man named Gao, now dead, who had had four wives all at one time. He had been a fabulous hunter and maker of arrows and was the father of the /Ti/kay who is the husband of two sisters, /Naoka and /Nai, in Band 9.

Only two of the nine pairs of co-wives had traceable consanguineous relationship. The above /Ti/kay’s wives were sisters—the only ones—and, in Band 10, Old Gao’s younger wife, /Ghia, was the BrDa of his older wife, Bau.

/Kwi/ sister, is the term which co-wives apply to each other, unless they have the same name, in which case they term each other /gina/. The /Kung, though they do not institutionalize the sororate, say it is a good idea to marry sisters because they are not so likely to be jealous of each other as other women. /Ti/kay’s wives, who appeared to live in harmony and affection and to support each other, provided an example of the validity of this opinion.

Marriage to the same man gives co-wives the joking relationship, and they do not observe the sitting or the name avoidance, though they may have avoided each other before marriage.

/Kung co-wives share one scherm and one family fire. The scherm, the little shelter of branches and grass which the women build, a half hemisphere in shape, is only 3 to 4 ft. wide on the open side, about 3 ft. deep at the centre, perhaps 4 to 5 ft. high at the peak. In it and in front of it, beside their one fire, the two wives live, share their man, share the food they gather, share the work of fetching water and wood, nurse each other’s babies, and co-operate in whatever degree of harmony their spirits can attain.

Husbands and wives may sleep separately or lie close together, side by side, or feet to feet. The woman holds her infant in her arms. Young children sleep near by bundled together, two or three in one kaross. Girls at about seven or eight go to sleep with a grandmother or a widowed friend or relative. The boys of the band, beginning at the same age, all sleep at a boys’ fire.

/Ti/kay (Band 9), husband of the two attractive sisters, sees to it that his wives lie close to him, especially on cold nights, one on each side. Sleeping thus they were like the three stars of Orion which we call the Belt, but which the /Kung say are three zebras, two females with a male between them.

It is under such conditions that the /Kung usually have sexual intercourse—at night, in their sleeping place. They cover themselves with their karosses and are very discreet. The position is to lie on the side, the man at the back of the woman. Men pull the labia of the women before intercourse. The wives of /Ti/kay told me that they took pleasure in intercourse. I asked them if they had orgasms. We had
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considerable difficulty with the interpretation, but I believe they finally understood what I was trying to say. They did, they said, and added that one sleeps very well afterwards.

Co-wives attain varying degrees of harmony. The expression of jealousy, especially loud wrangling, upsets everybody, as all expression of discord does. Women are trained by group approval to mould their conduct to acceptance. But often painful jealousy does beset them, and the tensions are there, though to some extent hidden.

/Áha, wife of a young /Ti/kay in Band 13 at Gam, and still a young woman herself, had with her fierce jealousy driven /Khoa, the pretty young second wife, wailing into the night, back to her family's scherm. /Ti/kay used to sit for hours upon hours singing soft, sad, sweet laments for /Khoa, but she did not return to live with him.

The behaviour of /Naoka and Di/ai, the wives of the medicine man, Gao, in Band 1, was more typical. Both women were approaching middle age, Di/ai somewhat younger than /Naoka. /Naoka had two married daughters and a teen-age son when Gao married Di/ai. The two women obviously disliked each other, but managed to preserve a decent semblance of harmony by self-control, silence, avoiding each other as much as possible in the small space they live in by their fire, and by separating often—going with different groups of relatives and friends to gather wild plant foods, to fetch water, or to visit.

A few men said that the jealousy of co-wives could be so unbearable that they would not marry a second wife, but one said it made him feel good to have two women fighting over him. Most of the men said they wanted more than one wife. They pitied Laurence Marshall because the laws of his land forbade his having several, which they considered him rich enough to afford. One said he would not live where there were such nonsensical rules.

The first wife is considered to have a somewhat more highly esteemed and dominant position. She is supposed to have the right to tell a second wife what to do, and a young second wife should fetch water and wood for the older wife, but I never saw this done.

No property or other material advantage is given a first wife and no important social advantages accrue. For instance, headmanship is inherited by the headman's eldest son by whichever wife he may be borne, and being the mother of a headman does not place a woman above other mothers of sons.

It appeared to me that first wives were often at a disadvantage. Among the people we knew, the husbands favoured their younger, second wives with two exceptions: /Ti/kay of Band 9 favoured his first wife, the elder sister, and Gao, the headman of Band 2, favoured his first wife. Both were good-tempered, intelligent, able women. They appeared to take care of the young girls who were their co-wives, rather than to be served in any way by them. Other older first wives seemed sometimes to be dejected. One told me her husband always took the young second wife with him and, to her deep humiliation, sometimes left her, the first wife, to stay for a time with one or another family in the band, although she said to him, 'Why do you shame me so?'

None of the /Kung women informants expressed enthusiasm for polygyny. Each wanted a husband to herself. They did not expound the social advantage which
polygyny affords women—that none remain long without the support of a husband. They just said they did not want to be second wives, nor did they want their husbands to take second wives, and protests and quarrels attended a husband’s proposal to do so.

Marriage by capture

Marriage by capture was spoken of fairly frequently by the /Kung in conversation. Elizabeth Marshall Thomas and I questioned a number of informants about it and we are convinced that wives are not actually acquired by this means at present. Perhaps they were in the past. The /Kung are a present-oriented people who make no concerted or consistent effort to retain their history and teach it to their children, and we obtained no significant data on their past customs. Nowadays the idea of capturing wives appears to be enjoyed by the men as a fantasy. The remarks of one /Gaishay illustrate what I mean. He weighs, at a good guess, about ninety pounds and looks like a miniature Mephistopheles. With a gleam he told me that if he wanted to take another wife he would go to her werf, seize her, throw her over his shoulder and run off with her. That is the way Bushmen do, he said, and he wished I could see him do so. I also wished that I could.

Arrangements for marriage

First marriages are arranged by the parents of the bride and groom, and second marriages also if the couple are still young. Adults, when both have been married before, may contract subsequent marriages themselves.

Although there is a slight paternal emphasis in this society which recognizes bilateral descent, and the father names all his children, his authority is not clearly dominant over the mother’s in the choice of a mate for their child. By and large, it appears that the father and mother talk things over and come to agreement. If they do not agree, it appears that the strength of personality of one or the other, the opinions of relatives, and various circumstances have weight in the decision.

Either the parents of the boy or those of the girl may take the initiative and go to the other parents with the proposal. A go-between is not required, though it is possible that a friend will sometimes act as such. The parents visit and talk, and, if they all agree, the arrangement is thereby settled upon. They normally give each other gifts in honour of the occasion.

Property does not enter much into the consideration of the parents in arranging marriages for their children. No property settlement is made, no bride-price paid, no dower given, though at the time of the wedding a few gifts are exchanged.

Food and water must, one imagines, weigh in the parents’ thinking when a marriage is being arranged, and may sometimes be a determining factor. However, there is a considerable amount of equalization in these supplies. Veldkos¹ and water-holes are not owned by individuals but by headmen for their bands, in a way I shall describe in a paper on bands. In the Nyae Nyae region each band has access to a supply, else the people would be dead or somewhere else, and things balance out in

¹ Veldkos (field food) is an Afrikaans word used to refer to any kind of wild plant material which people gather to eat. Edible fruits, seeds, roots, tubers, leaves, all are included.
1. Women return in the evening after the day’s digging and gathering of wild roots and berries.

2. A husband, wife, and their son at their family fire cooking their supper of two wild roots which the wife brought. Her genital apron is a fine one ornamented with beads.
3. Gau (centre) with his two wives in front of their scherm. The younger second wife, Khuan/a, holds her son in her arms. The three boys in front are the sons of Be, the first wife, at Gau’s right.

4. /Ti'kay in the best of moods
5. The two wives of /Ti/kay sit at their family fire, /Naoka the elder sister to the left, /Nai the younger, with her son on her lap, to the right. Between them are Bau, /Naoka’s daughter, already married for two years, and /Goishay, their old mother.

6. /Nai, the young bride, the morning after the wedding, showing the design painted on her face by her mother with powdered red stone and fat.
7. The wedding scherm, the morning after the wedding. To the right are Gunda, the bridegroom, and one of the boys who attended him, playing the //guashi. /Nai is to the left with her two attendants beside her. Tsangao has gone to sit by the girls instead of remaining on the men's side.

8. ≠Toma the leader
various ways. The affine who marries into the band, as long as he lives with the band, has a right to the water, to the hunting, and to the gathering of the wild foods, as members born to the band have.

I think that primarily the values and assets that parents seek in choosing mates for their children have to do with the kind of security which is attained through human responses and relations. Friends may want their children to marry because they know and trust each other. Or a family may want to increase its kinship bonds—and thereby its security—with certain bands for any number of reasons—among them could be food, water, or a desire to have supporting friends in a certain area—and, like the crowned heads of Europe, the /Kung may deliberately seek to establish alliances through marriages.

Merging with such desires and to be balanced with them are the characteristics of the families concerned. The /Kung want their boys and girls to marry into up-standing families, among people who are 'able to feed themselves', who are 'not lazy and not thin'. They do not want 'far-hearted' in-laws who are not generous in food-sharing and gift-giving. /U, ≠Toma’s wife, said she would take particular note of their generosity in giving bead ornaments to their children. She would not want a daughter of hers to marry among people who were stingy in that. Proper observance of the avoidances and other social regulations is an asset in in-laws, for they can then be assumed to have taught their children how to behave properly.

The individual’s characteristics are also a concern. Parents of boys hope the girls to whom their sons are engaged will grow up to be good-looking, because, they say, a man takes pride in a beautiful wife. Xama, the mother of Gao, the headman of Band 2, said she had wanted for her son a light-skinned girl with good teeth who was not too thin and not too tall. But most important of all is a sweet temper, she said. A mother hopes, she said, that the girl will not be lazy or wander about visiting at night at other people’s fires 'like a bitch'. The girl should observe the avoidances and the menstruation and other taboos, and in every way behave as a well brought up girl should. However, since the girls are engaged when they are very young, I suppose the parents of the boys can only watch them grow and hope.

Girls would not want a man ‘as tall as a giraffe’, we were told. They would seek a smaller husband. /U's first husband, from whom she was divorced, is so tall (almost six feet) that people laugh and say, 'Did his mother have a dream with a //gaua (a spirit)?'

The girls themselves, all twitters and giggles, told me what they admire in the boys. They like a good hunter like /Gunda; and they like handsome teeth and a wide smile like young Tsamgao's; and straight, slender legs like //Ao's; and a fluid, swift walk like /Gao's; and they hate a big black belly like Gao's—the middle-aged medicine man in a band distant from Gautscha, to whom the young /Doin was married.

The parents of a girl want the boy to be responsible, kind to their daughter and, above all, a good provider—which means a good hunter. They want him to make his arrows straight, to shoot swiftly and accurately, to be able to run down an eland, and, most of all, they want a son-in-law whose heart says to him, 'Why am I sitting lazily here in the werf? Why do I not get up and go hunting?' and who, in obedience to his heart, and the group’s desire, and the magic which has been rubbed into his scarifications in the Ceremony of the First Killing, gets up and goes.

A a
Boys are always considerably older than girls before their parents betroth them. We never knew the precise age of a /Kung because they reckon time from one season to the next, not in years, and do not keep track of a person’s age by any measurement. Boys appear to be usually around twelve to fourteen or fifteen before they are betrothed. At this age their fathers begin to take them on the long hard hunts for the big animals which supply the people’s meat and begin their serious hunting training.

As to girls, wives are in such demand in this polygynous society that the parents of boys have their eyes upon every girl baby and may say to the parents of an unborn infant, ‘If it is a girl, let us have her for our son.’ It seems to be more usual, however, to betroth the girls when they are about two to five or six. The boys wait patiently for long years for their fiancées to grow up.

We wondered what would happen if, when the time at last came for the marriage, the boy or girl should refuse the parents’ choice. It appears that they seldom do. A boy is usually too eager to get a wife. To refuse the betrothed might mean he would have to wait for years and years again for a girl baby to grow up. The girls are usually too young to protest but it sometimes happens that one does. /Kung parents are exceedingly protective and permissive with their children, and delight in them, especially in their infancy. I have sometimes seen an older child scolded or snapped at by an impatient mother but I never saw a child severely punished. No hard work and few, if any, regular chores are demanded of dependent children. The same protectiveness and permissiveness were apparent in parents’ leniency with respect to their girls’ betrothals. They complied with the girls’ wishes.

The marriage may take place when the parents agree. The age of the young people varies greatly. For the girl, there are no definite age or other requirements. The girl need not, for instance, show physical signs of maturity. When the important Ceremony of First Menstruation is performed, the girl may have been married for years. Bau, who was married to Tsamgao in 1951, did not have her first child for six years. /Nai was married to /Gunda in May 1953. She menstruated for the first time in March 1959. To be married as young as that is not at all unusual, but we have known several girls to be somewhat older.

The parents explain that when the girls marry young they ‘get used to’ their husbands. I am sure there is a great deal in this and I am sure it strongly affects the relations of husbands and wives, but I had insufficient opportunity to observe eight- or nine-year-old brides with teen-age husbands, and insufficient means, through interpreters, to grasp the nature of their relationship. What is the young husband like to a girl child? The friendly, gentle old man, Demi, said to me, ‘They enjoy their youth together.’

The young couples are expected not to have sexual intercourse till the girls are ‘big enough’, informants said, and the boys must not force the girls. If a girl complained to her parents and the parents took her back and sent the young husband away, he might have to wait for years again for another bride to grow up. The /Kung are prevented by their incest taboos and their modesty from speaking freely about sex and I learned nothing about the actual sexual practices of the young couples. /Nai and her young husband, /Gunda, had only one good kaross between them; they slept together bundled in it, feet to feet. Bau and Tsamgao slept quite apart—at different fires—when we observed them in 1952. In 1953 they slept at their own fire, apart, she
inside the scherm, he outside. Apparently no social rules pattern their sleeping. Individual adjustments are made.

The boys must before they marry have proved themselves to be hunters and must have had performed over them the most important ceremony in the life of a /Kung boy—the Ceremony of the First Killing. The killing of birds or small animals does not qualify him for the ceremony; the animal he kills must be one of the great antelopes or a giraffe or buffalo, any one of the large animals killed for meat. When the boy himself has killed one of these, he is ceremonially scarified by his father or by another kinsman if his father is dead. The ceremony is performed twice for each boy. For the first male animal he is scarified on his right side and for the first female on his left side. Charred meat and fat, turned to magic by the ceremony, are rubbed into the several lines of vertical cuts on his face, arms, back, and chest to give him the will to hunt, good sight, and accurate aim; also to enable him to find the animal and to protect him from being seen by the animal. The ceremony is both a solemn celebration and a magic force to increase and strengthen the boy’s power to hunt. It also carries with it the right to marriage and attests the boy’s readiness.

Marriage does not necessarily follow immediately upon this ceremony; years may elapse, but the way is prepared and readiness is proved. And once more the act of hunting is ceremonially linked with marriage. At the time of the wedding, the boy must bring to his bride’s parents an animal that he himself has killed. The animal he brings must not be eaten by the bride.

A boy who never killed any large meat animal would not be given a wife, informants said. This was why the strange old deviant, /Gaishay, had remained a bachelor. For reasons no one understood he could not hunt; he gathered veldkos like a woman. Gossip had it that twice he had tried to drag a woman against her will into his scherm but had not succeeded. Informants remarked, ‘Women like meat.’ They do, but there is far more to it than that.

As John Marshall shows in his film, The Hunters, the primary sources of physical life, sex and food, are involved. In /Kung concept they are linked together, and, as they pertain to men, their duality is lifted to oneness in the being of the man, who is the sexually powerful male and the provider, the hunter. Power as a man and a male and worthiness and dignity are associated with hunting and not with the failure to hunt.

Since they are related, both the sexual and the hunting powers of the young man can be captured at once with a bride. For the first several years of marriage the boy goes to live with his bride’s parents, or her people, should her parents be dead, to hunt for them. The parents of girls speak constantly of wanting their sons-in-law to provide them with food as though it were an obsession. ‘We are old’, they say, or ‘We shall soon be old [whether this is actually true or not]; we need a young man to hunt for us’; ‘our daughter’s husband must get us something to eat’; ‘we need karosses’; ‘we want meat’—these are their refrains.

Another value the /Kung place upon the boy’s hunting during his bride-service appears in their belief that if the husband hunts for his wife and feeds her while she is still a growing child she becomes the more his. Food seems to be a main concern in bride-service, but the people also say that they want to be sure that the boy measures up in every way and will take good care of their daughter, and that the girl will have time to get used to her husband.
One of the most rigid social rules the !Kung have, besides the incest taboo within the nuclear family and its extension, is the giving of bride-service. We heard of no deviation from it. A boy or man of any age, a headman or headman’s son, an important medicine man, all go to live with their brides’ parents or other relatives in first marriages and subsequent marriages, whatever the age of the bride.

The duration of bride-service is indefinite. Informants told us a man must stay with his wife’s people until three children have been born. If he goes when the girl is eight or nine, she may not have her first child for possibly seven or eight or more years. It is safe to say that ten years of bride-service are not unusual. It is long enough for the boy’s youth to have turned to manhood and for him to be looked upon as an able, responsible head of his family. After his bride-service is fulfilled a man may remain with his wife’s band or may return with his wife and children to his own.

The Wedding of !Nai and !Gunda

!Nai was a pretty little girl, we think about eight years old, or so, with a quick responsive smile, when she was married on 22 May 1953, at Gauthsch. The bridegroom, !Gunda, was about sixteen, we judged, and the people said he was the best young hunter among the boys of the territory.

!Nai belonged to Band 1, !Gunda to Band 2. Both of these bands belong to the water-hole at Gauthsch and were encamped there at the time, about 100 feet apart. We lived with Band 1.

!Nai’s mother, Di/ai, had divorced her former husband, Gumtsa, the father of !Nai, and was now the second wife of the medicine man, Gao, in Band 1. !Gunda’s mother, Khuan/a, had divorced !Gunda’s father, Bo. Khuan/a was now the second wife of Gau in Band 2. Both Gumtsa and Bo were living far from Gauthsch.

The two mothers had betrothed their children some time previously. We heard that Di/ai had had her eye on the strong young !Gunda, saying, ‘We must get this boy for !Nai so he will take care of her and we can get enough to eat, also karosses’, and had gone to Khuan/a to propose the betrothal. Khuan/a had said, ‘Yes, this is very good.’ The mothers exchanged gifts. Khuan/a gave to Di/ai a necklace of five strings of ostrich egg shell beads which reached to the umbilicus (shorter strings would have been inappropriate) and Di/ai gave other beads and copper wire ornaments to Khuan/a.

Gumtsa, !Nai’s father, heard about the betrothal. He had hoped to arrange a marriage between !Nai and someone of his choice at Kubi where he lived. One day in November 1952 he came to Gauthsch to complain, he said, that he had not been consulted and to protest against the betrothal and take !Nai to Kubi with him. Tension rose. !Nai cried and looked very frightened. The members of both Bands 1 and 2, though they had no theoretical authority in the matter, all expressed themselves and poured torrents of talk over the affair, mostly supporting Di/ai in her steadfast refusal to yield !Nai, saying that Gumtsa had not fed !Nai, had not so much as sent her a gift, and should not now come and interfere in her betrothal. After four days of this Gumtsa gave up and went home.

Meanwhile the affair, like a spoon stirring in a pot, brought to light another tension. Some of !Nai’s relatives began to express disapproval of her betrothal, not because they wanted her to go with the father but because they were angry with
Khuan/a, the mother of the bridegroom. They claimed that Khuan/a was stingy—and worse. /Nai’s stepfather, Gao, had given a present of beads to one of his relatives. A knife which was gradually making its way to him as a return gift had been diverted by Khuan/a to one of her relatives. Khuan/a, some claimed, was ‘like that!’ /Nai’s MoSi, /U, the wife of ≠Toma, said in a voice that could be heard across the werf that Khuan/a had ‘borrowed’ a coal from her fire one day without asking. At this, Khuan/a had with quiet dignity risen from her fire place and walked off to the water-hole. /U also said, but in a low voice, that Khuan/a, while she was still married to Bo, had been sleeping in the bushes with Gau till the people said to Gau ‘What are you doing with Khuan/a?’ She then left Bo and married Gau, although they were distant relatives, in some way we never could trace, who should not marry. Gau loved Khuan/a so much, /U sniffed, that he spoiled her and let her have power over his belongings. /U had no doubt but that Gau would soon find himself very poor. /U disapproved of /Nai’s marriage to the son of such a woman but said that she would reconsider her position if the knife which had been diverted by Khuan/a were now given to Gao, as had been expected.

It never was, but gifts of ostrich egg shell beads and a blanket were given and Gao declared himself satisfied. /Nai’s mother wanted the marriage so much she was ready to overlook the matter of the knife and they all started again in peace.

Nothing more happened about /Nai’s wedding until the morning of 21 May 1933, when we noticed the two mothers together building the wedding scherm. They had placed it between the two werfs about twenty-five feet from the fire of the bride’s family. The scherm was slightly larger and more nearly round and much more carefully built than the usual skimpy structures.

Next morning /Nai’s mother asked me if I would bring the wood for the bride’s fire. I knew it was because her back ached, not to honour me, but I felt honoured anyway and brought the wood.

All that day /Nai sat at a short distance from her family’s fire, the fire that each family keeps burning in front of the scherm for cooking and for light and warmth at night. The fire-light is more of a house to the Bushmen than the scherm is. /Nai was covered, head and all, with a big gemsbok kaross of her mother’s. She wore her usual beads, but no special regalia brightened the sombre grey-brown of the old kaross.

Just as the sun was setting, without speaking to her mother and stepfather, /Nai walked alone over to another fire, seven or eight yards away, the big kaross still pulled over her head and trailing behind her. She went to this fire because it was the fire beside which she had recently been sleeping with her mother’s widowed cousin, since she had reached the age when girls and boys leave off sleeping beside their parents. Her old great-uncle was there. She sat down opposite him. He paid no particular attention to her and they did not speak.

By then the sun had sunk below the horizon. /Nai uncovered her head but kept the kaross tied around her waist and over one shoulder in the way karosses are customarily worn.

Presently two girls came to /Nai. They had waited till twilight was deepening into darkness because people sleep at night and a wedding is a ‘night-thing’. One was ≠Nisa, /Nai’s stepfather’s daughter by his first wife. The other was Xama from
Band 2. She was /Nai’s second cousin (MoFaBrSoDa) and the first cousin once removed of the groom (MoSiDaDa). The attendants were not selected for their precise relationship to the bride. They were the only young kinswomen present in the two bands. The girls sat down and chatted with /Nai for a moment and then stood up and, giggling and chattering, took /Nai by the arms. /Nai drew back. Then Xama pulled /Nai’s arms over her shoulders, bent and took /Nai on to her back so that her feet did not touch the ground. Xama carried /Nai in this position to the wedding scherm, laid her down inside, to the left of the opening as one entered, in the dark shadow, and covered her over with the kaross. There /Nai remained. We did not see her again that night.

It is the custom for the parents to take brands from their own fires to light the wedding fire of the bride and groom. Presumably this was done, though I did not see it. When the girls arrived the fire was burning and a young man, a cousin of the groom, was tending it. The two girls sat down by the fire on the women’s side.

/Kung men and women must sit on opposite sides of the fire.¹ They believe that if male and female genital organs should touch the same spot on the ground the man’s hunting powers would be vitiated and the woman would get a sickness in her genitourinary tract, not an ordinary, human, communicable disease but a magical one. The woman’s side is to the left as one faces the entrance to the scherm, the men’s to the right. The fire is always in front of the entrance if the scherm is built, but, more often than not, if the weather is good, or the people are travelling and staying only one night, or the wife is lazy, she hangs the family belongings in a bush and does not build a scherm. Then it is the custom to thrust two upright sticks into the ground to represent the entrance, so that the family may orient itself.

In the werf of Band 2, about twenty or thirty yards to the west, a group of boys had come to /Gunda to attend him. They were all the young boys of the werf who were approximately his age, two cousins (MoSiSo) and four of the sons of /Gunda’s stepfather by his first wife. The boys made a show of catching /Gunda and held him by the arms for a moment, laughing and talking. Then they formed a line with /Gunda following at the end, walked to the wedding fire, and sat down on the men’s

¹ This taboo reveals the association which, I believe, the /Kung make between the hunting power of men and the male sexual principle. Both must be protected, and sexual activity must be controlled and constrained lest the life-giving and food-producing force of men be weakened or drained away. During the period of a hunt a man must not have sexual intercourse—that is, while the man is looking for game and, after he has shot his little poisoned arrow into the animal, while he is tracking it for miles and waiting and watching for days till it dies of the poison. A hunt usually demands many days and nights of effort and privation.

Too frequent indulgence in sexual intercourse with one’s wife, even when no hunt is in progress, is believed to diminish a man’s hunting power. Some men believed that once in five nights was best; others thought once in three nights was all right. Men who have the joking relationship constantly play upon the theme of excess, taunting each other: ‘You do not know hunting, you know women’; ‘You cannot leave your wife long enough to hunt.’

The /Kung are less strict about another taboo. A woman is supposed not to touch a man’s hunting gear at any time, because this would lessen his power to hunt. But I have often seen women touch assegais and quivers. Indeed it has sometimes been urgently necessary to do so when the children got hold of them, as, for instance, when the three-year-old ≠Gao, agile as a flea, took after us with his father’s assegai, infuriated with us for some sudden notion of his own. There is a medicine called gow gowma, made from a plant, which may be rubbed on the weapons to purify them if they are touched by women, but I never saw this done and doubted if anyone bothered with it. The effect of a woman’s touching the hunting gear is much stronger if she is menstruating. I assume they are more careful then.
side. /Gunda sat behind the line of boys, in a deep shadow, to show that he was ‘ashamed’ and respected (feared, *kod*) the wedding scherm.

One of the boys began to play, not their ceremonial music or special wedding music, but songs of the /guashi, as they call them, the little wordless melodies these people compose about happenings in their lives, about pleasures or distress, about their moods. They play and sing these melodies for hours upon hours in the afternoons when they are resting or in the evenings by their fires, and they played for hours that night at the wedding fire.

Soon young guests began to arrive, the children of both werfs with whom /Nai played, all of them younger than the boys who attended /Gunda and the girls who carried /Nai. The youngest guest was the ubiquitous three-year-old boy who never missed anything. No adults came.

One boy brought four mangetti nuts with him and roasted, cracked, and ate them himself. That was all that appeared by way of a feast. Di/ai said that they would like to have given the children something to eat but there was nothing in the werf that night. Even though the others had had something to eat, the bride and groom would have had to abstain. They must not talk or eat, to show they are ‘ashamed’. The young guests seemed to enjoy themselves, nevertheless, and were still singing and chatting when I left at midnight.

Soon after sunrise the following morning—/Gunda had already departed—/Nai’s mother went to the wedding scherm and sat down beside the embers of the night’s fire. /Nai stood shivering beside her in her little genital apron and the duiker skin which women wear around their buttocks and up between their legs, but stripped of her kaross. The mother had brought a little fat (eland fat, if they had it, would be used) and a bit of powdered red stone, one of the red earths (/gam /gai gwoie), mixed with fat. She rubbed /Nai all over with the fat, and drew a line on her forehead and a circular design on her cheeks with the red powder mixed with fat. Over in werf 2, Gao, Nai’s stepfather, presented /Gunda with a blanket.

This completed the wedding ceremony.

/Nai was a lively child who loved the dancing and singing games the girls play. She often danced alone, tapping her bare feet on a stone in rapid rhythm or making a game of printing a design in the sand with tiny steps. She liked babies and as often as not had her infant half-brother or some very small cousin tied to her back. That morning she appeared to turn into a housewife as though it were her next blithe step. When the women went to gather veldkos, she put on her own little duiker skin kaross, took her digging-stick and went with them. At the end of the day, when they returned in the slanting sunset light, she had two big roots. She went straight to her own fire, blew on the embers, added wood, and sat down. Three ostrich egg shells full of water and her digging-stick were her household goods. These she arranged beside the scherm. /Gunda came and sat down opposite her. She smiled at him and set the roots in the ashes to cook.

It has been said in talks with informants that the bridegroom must bring an antelope which he himself has killed to the parents of the bride before the wedding, but no animal had been brought; there had not been a scrap of meat in the werf for days. I asked Di/ai about this. ‘Oh, that,’ she said in effect. ‘Yes, he should give me an antelope, but we thought we would have the wedding first and that /Gunda would
then come with us when we leave tomorrow to gather tsi. He will hunt from that place and get us some meat.'

The ritual elements in the wedding ceremony, in so far as we observed, were as follows: (1) carrying the bride so that her feet do not touch the ground; (2) covering her head so that the sun does not shine upon it; (3) waiting till the sun has set before taking her to the wedding scherm; (4) the fact that the scherm is specially built and set apart from the others; (5) anointing with fat; (6) painting a design on the forehead and cheeks with powdered red stone; (7) lighting the wedding fire with brands from the fires of the bride's and groom's parents.

Apart from the third and seventh, all these elements occur also in the Ceremony of the First Menstruation, a more elaborate and prolonged ceremony from which the /Kung wedding ceremony undoubtedly derives. The design on the face is the same; the girl's feet must not touch the ground from the instant her first menstruation begins to the end of the period, when she is washed and anointed with both eland or other fat and the oil of the tsi (Bauhinia esculent A Burch). When the girl is taken to her special scherm or moved out of it to urinate or defecate she is carried on the back of a kinswoman. A kaross over her head shields her from the sun whether she is sitting in the scherm or being carried out.

Our endeavour to bring to light the meaning of the ritual elements yielded little. The meaning or origin of the design on the face, I was convinced, was not withheld but lost to memory, lore or myth. 'It is our custom' was all the people could tell me.

About the ritual of the feet not touching the ground, the custom frequently observed by divine kings and menstruating girls, the /Kung had no more illumination. They think that the carrying is the overcoming of the girl's symbolized modesty about going to the arms of her bridegroom, which she should properly feign even if she is eager to go, and her reluctance to separate from her own family: I think that when the attendants take hold of the bride and groom by the arm and pull them a little they symbolize the overcoming of reluctance and modesty and perhaps there is even a vestige of bride capture in that gesture, but of the feet not touching the ground the meaning is lost. Obviously, however, in this society the bride is equated to the menstruating girl. In the past the girl's wedding and her first menstruation may have been celebrated at one time.

The /Kung say that the sun is death-giving. When the three months of life-giving rains are past, the sun dries up the water pools. It kills the fresh leaves and fruits, dries the roots and berries, and would scorch the people if they did not find shade and dig shallow pits and lie in them covered lightly with sand which they have moistened with their urine for coolness. They pity the morning star, the kuli gaishay, which crosses the sky all day ahead of the sun, has no branches to carry for shade and cannot turn aside to rest under a tree. The sun is a 'death thing' and the bride is shielded from it.

The most important element of behaviour with respect to kinship in the wedding

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1 Robert Story, *Some Plants Used by the Bushmen in Obtaining Food and Water*, Department of Agriculture, Division of Botany, Union of South Africa, Botanical Survey, Memoir No. 30, 1958, p. 25. Dr. Story was a member of the 1955 and 1957 expeditions. We gratefully acknowledge whatever botanical identifications we mention as his.
ceremony is the avoidance of the parents, which is symbolic of the incest taboo. Any (preferably young) kinswoman who is tall enough and strong enough, whether she herself is married or not, and whether or not she has the joking relation with the bride, may carry the bride; and any may attend her. Only the mother absolutely must not do so. Likewise the groom's father must not attend him. Neither pair of parents go to sit by the wedding fire, for they must not sit near their son's wife or daughter's husband, nor speak to them. Guests of mature years might go and sit by the wedding fire only if they have the joking relationship with both the bride and the groom. Very young guests, such as we saw at /Nai's and /Gunda's fire, may go, whether they joke or not with the bride and groom, because the avoidances are not stringently observed with young children.

Termination of marriage and remarriage

Widows and widowers are not avoided in any special way because of their widowhood.

If her husband dies, a young widow usually returns to her own parents or lives with one of her own siblings, but, if her parents are dead, or if it is her preference, she may stay on with her deceased husband's people. It is the duty of her HuBr to hunt for her if she needs his support.

Several possibilities are open to a young widower: rarely he might stay with his deceased wife's parents or siblings; more likely he would return to his own parents or siblings; and, when he marries again, he goes into matrilocal residence with the new bride. In any case, a man is responsible for his wife's parents and young siblings, and, if they depended on him for support, he would take them with him. They would be likely to prefer, however, to live with an adult son, daughter, or sibling of their own if they had any.

Old widowers or widows whose own parents are dead usually live with either a son or daughter, or perhaps with their own sibling—as they wish.

The surviving spouse is free to marry again within the regulations of the extended incest taboo, which applies to all marriages.

Parents would arrange the subsequent marriage of a widowed boy or girl. Adults may make their own arrangements directly. My impression was that persons might be considered fully adult somewhere in their middle or late twenties.

An adult man takes the initiative and asks the woman to marry him. Robert Dyson in the 1951 expedition learned that one way for a man to ask a woman to marry him is to present her with a bow and arrow. If she accepts it she indicates her willingness to consider his suit.

No restriction of time is put upon the remarriage of a widower, but a widow should not remarry until one rainy season has passed. She is then considered 'clean' and may marry again. /Toma said, 'The rain washes (/num) the death away from the widow.' /Num is the gesture of wiping a dish with one finger and then licking the finger. /Ti/kay of Band 9 said that some men wait for a rainy season to pass, but that others would be pleased the husband was dead and, without waiting, say, 'This is my chance.' One interpreter understood that the widow had to take off her kaross and spend a night out, letting the rain fall on her, but /Toma said this was not what
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was meant. That would be very uncomfortable, he said. It would make her shiver and might make her sick. The rainy season's passing is what cleanses the woman. When she is about to go to her new husband she prepares herself by washing in the ordinary way.

Unless a woman is quite old she does not remain long unmarried. One man said, 'Even if a widow is thick and tall, but is a good woman, some man will want her.' Widows may marry as second wives of married men, or they may marry widowers, divorced men, or bachelors. The two young widows and the two divorced women who were unmarried in 1953, had remarried by 1955. Only the very old widows remain unmarried.

There are so few unmarried women that widowers have difficulty in finding wives. The young widowed musician, /Gao, was an example. After his first wife's death he had married the daughter of Gao, the medicine man in Band 1, when she was approximately ten or eleven years old, about the age of his own son, and was patiently waiting for her to grow up. Only one of the old widowers had succeeded in finding a wife by 1957.

The children of a widowed parent are kept by that parent. A widower may leave his children with a woman relative, but they remain his. Orphaned children go to live with relatives. There is a tendency to feel that the boys belong eventually to the father's side of the family, the girls to the mother's. This concept came to our attention several times, but we did not find it to be a rigid social rule. The relative who is expected to take the children if they are young is the MoSi. But the FaSi might be nearer or more able for one reason or another to take them and might do so. FaBr would be the relative most likely to take half-grown boys, but again MoBr might be the one. Failing these, some other relative would take them. When it came to arranging marriages for orphaned children, informants said that the father's elder brother would have the most authority; a stepfather or stepmother has none.

Adoption does not exist in /Kung society.

Divorce may terminate a marriage. The couple may divorce without formality, by mutual consent or by one spouse simply leaving the other. The /Kung word for ending a marriage in this way is /kao joo. I use the word 'divorce' for convenience, although no legal action takes place. No religious dispensation is involved, no permission or action on the part of the headman or group is required. If parents of a very young couple withheld consent this might influence the couple, but the parents' consent is not a requirement. No property entanglements present difficulties, for there is no dowry or bride-price to be resolved. The only property a /Kung owns personally consists of movables, and these are never owned in common by man and wife. Every artifact down to a single bead belongs to an individual, who takes his property with him in case of divorce.

Divorce does not change people's status in the community in any way. They are free to remarry without restrictions.

Divorce is never obligatory and the grounds are not formalized; the desire of the couple concerned is the determining factor. A condition such as sterility, for example, or a wrongdoing such as adultery, might or might not lead to divorce, depending on how the couple felt about it. Mistreatment or failure to provide would certainly be considered justification for divorce, should they ever occur, but justifica-
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...tion is not necessary. 'A wife can get tired of loving her husband', we were told, 'and just tell him to go away.'

We learned about seven divorces only in our sample. The middle-aged Khuan//K, the mother of the bridegroom, /Gunda, had left her first husband to marry her lover. Another middle-aged woman left her husband because he was on the point of marrying a second wife. Jealousy between the two young wives at Gam, lamented in song by the young husband, had been the cause of the third. The whims of young girls caused others. A girl named /Ungka, married to a considerably older man, hated him though he was good to her and gave her oil and ornaments for her hair. She cut off her hair and threw it, ornaments and all, into the fire. She thrust her head into the ashes and made herself filthy. In another instance, the girl took offence the first night of her marriage and left her young husband next day, to his painful chagrin. The lenient and patient parents of these girls arranged other marriages. Di/ai, the mother of the bride /Nai, and now the wife of Gao, the medicine man in Band 1, was divorced from two former husbands in her youth. And /U, her sister, while still very young had been persuaded by ≠Toma to leave her tall young husband from Gam and to marry him.

Our data on frequency of divorce are too scant to be significant. We have merely the impression that there seems to be some tendency for couples to separate while they are young and in whatever adolescent turbulence the /Kung experience, but that, on the other hand, there is considerable stability in marriage once a compatible mate is found. At least, no divorces occurred between 1952 and 1959 in eight of the bands of our sample. We lack data on the others.

Young children of divorced parents remain with the mother. As they grow to adolescence the girls usually stay with their mothers, the boys may go to their fathers or stay with their mothers or spend some time with each.

Although the /Kung do not consider divorce reprehensible, they deplore it. Divorce is untoward, disruptive; it can cause trouble. Anything other than peace and harmony in human relations makes the /Kung uneasy.

Extra-marital sexual relations

Murdock points out that 'Our own culture includes a blanket taboo against fornication, an over-all prohibition of all sexual intercourse outside of the marital relationship.' He goes on to say that our society is highly aberrant in this and that 'from available evidence [however] it seems unlikely that a general prohibition of sex relations outside of marriage occurs in as many as five per cent of the peoples of the earth'.

/Kung society has an over-all prohibition against any sexual relations outside of marriage with one exception. It makes no requirements such as sexual hospitality or jus primae noctis. It makes no provision for sexual access to certain categories of kin or affines outside of marriage, such as BrWi. Premarital unchastity, unchastity of widows, and prostitution are not among their social conventions. But /kamheri, though not required, is either fully permitted or tolerated as not a very bad thing; I never reached certainty as to which of these attitudes the society adopted.

/Kamheri means that two men may agree to exchange wives temporarily, provided

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1 Murdock, op. cit., p. 263.

2 Ibid., p. 264.
the wives consent. This is regarded as a concern of the couples involved rather than a concern of society as a whole. One man said, 'If you want to sleep with someone's wife, you get him to sleep with yours, then neither of you goes after the other with poisoned arrows.'

The word /kamheri was used by //Ao, one of the young hunters, to express his deep feeling of friendship for John Marshall. 'We are such friends that we are /kamheri', he said, but, as John had no wife to exchange, this remark had its funny side which delighted the men.

No actual instance of /kamheri came to our attention and we failed in finding out if it is now practised. One man in Gam lent his first wife to an unmarried friend, one of the gossips told us, because he was in love with his second and did not care any longer for the first, but this was a mere deviation from the rules, not an instance of /kamheri.

We heard of several irregular sexual unions in addition to the above. Rape did not appear in stories or gossip. Fornication must be very rare because there is practically no one to fornicate with. Almost all females are married except very young girls and leathery old grandmothers. Adultery is the usual form for irregular unions to take. Adultery, however, is sharply limited by several deterrents. One deterrent is the incest taboo, of course, which forbids extra-marital sexual relations as rigorously as it does marriage with persons to whom the taboo is extended. The same internalized sanctions induce obedience to this rule as to the marriage regulations. The same gradation of feeling probably exists, and we expect that people comply strictly within the kindred and among close affines and are no doubt less strict with name relatives.

Ease of divorce must exert a modifying influence on adulterous unions. If a married couple really want to change mates, nothing need deter them but the general difficulty of extricating themselves from the web of responsibilities which marriage entails.

In a sense, the impossibility of maintaining secrecy exerts a control over extra-marital relations. There is no privacy in a /Kung werf and the vast veld is not a cover. The very life of these people depends on their being trained from childhood to look sharply at things and to take into their attention what they see, for they must observe the most minute marks on vegetation to distinguish from the matted grasses the almost hair-thin brown vine stems that come up from the edible roots. Hunters memorize visual impressions and are able to follow the tracks of an individual animal in the midst of a large herd in a way that seems to us miraculous. It may be a week after a hunt that they return to recover an arrow that missed, miles from the werf, remembering where it lay in the vast monotonous sameness of grass and bush. They register every person's footprints in their minds, more vividly I am sure than we do faces, and read in the sand who walked where and how long ago.

The /Kung value control of anger, upholding self-control as an ideal, giving it group and individual approval and training for it. Despite this, volatile tempers sometimes flare and burst out of all control. And always at hand are the little poisoned arrows. They are formidable weapons. There is no antidote for the poison; at least our /Kung informants said they know none and told us of tragic deaths from the poison which would have been averted had they had an antidote.

Adultery, so exceedingly provocative of anger and vengeance, could be very
dangerous under these conditions. Anger turns upon the adulterer. We were never told about a woman being killed or even very severely punished, but a husband is considered to be quite within his rights by /Kung rules of conduct if he kills a man who sleeps with his wife. However, the adulterer may fight back. With poisoned arrows both men might be killed. Fighting is so dangerous it is feared by the /Kung with a pervading dread.

Nevertheless, although prudence counsels against it and anxiety attends it, adultery does occur. During the years from 1951 to 1958, five instances in our sample came to our knowledge. When it did occur, the most clearly observable behaviour was the attempt on the part of related persons and other members of the band to help resolve the situation in order to avoid fighting and discord, for fighting, like fire, may spread and consume much before it is quenched.

A husband and a young widower had quarrelled and almost fought over the attentions of the young widower to the wife. The fight had been averted by the husband running away. He came to Gautscha where we were with Band 1. When I saw him handling his weapons, his face contorted with emotion, visions possessed me of the two men, both angry and afraid, shooting each other in nervous self-defence, writhing, bleeding, and dying in agony, and I was as filled with the fear of fighting as any Bushman. But before sundown that day the affair was resolved in the following fashion. A relative of the young widower undertook to use his influence and went and brought the young widower and the wife to Gautscha. The relative had two motives. He wanted peace, as everybody does, and he wanted no disgrace in his family which the affair would bring, for the young widower and the wife were sexually taboo, albeit in the mildest and most extended way. He was an able man and he succeeded. The pair agreed to his behests. When they arrived at Gautscha the wife went directly to her husband and, to our surprise, in a few minutes they left the werf with their child and came over to our camp, where they settled themselves right in our cleared camp space. Presently the young widower came too, with his three children, and settled himself beside the others. Under our wings they had less fear of each other’s flares of temper and tensions relaxed. In a day or so the young widower left. Peace prevailed. The wife was still with her husband in 1958.

The young widower was taken by the B.P. authorities, we heard, for killing a man in another quarrel over a woman.

When John Marshall was with Band 1 in 1957–8, ≠Gao Lame, the unmarried young headman, took to sleeping with /Ghia, the second wife of Old ≠Gao, headman of Band 10. Nobody seemed to expect a great deal of /Ghia, who was thought not to have very good sense, and she was not blamed nearly so much as ≠Gao Lame. His family railed at him quite openly. ‘People get killed doing that’, said /U, his sister (≠Toma’s wife). ≠Gao Lame eventually stopped sleeping with /Ghia. John thought the group’s expressed opinion really did influence him. Furthermore, ≠Gao decided it would be best to go to Old ≠Gao and say he was sorry. Old ≠Gao said ≠Gao Lame was right to come directly to him and that they should not fight. He gave /Ghia a mild thrashing instead. Then /Ti/kay of Band 9, who was /Ghia’s MoBr, roused up the whole affair by claiming that when ≠Gao Lame ‘insulted’ /Ghia he also insulted him—/Ti/kay. /Ti/kay, the husband of the two charming sisters, an intense and vital man, especially gifted in performing the curing ceremonies
as a medicine man, although in a cool moment he could speak eloquently and philosophically about the evils of fighting, was an erratic person, self-centred, frightfully jealous, shrewd to see that no one got more than he, quick to take offence. Gao, the medicine man in Band 1, husband of Gao Lame's older sister, Di/ai, shouted out that /Ti/kay was a trouble-maker not to leave well enough alone. /Ti/kay thereupon foully insulted Gao Medicine, who shouted back that /Ti/kay was not fit to be a headman. /Ti/kay, now in a rage, called out that Gao lied to his own arrows. John said that some of the people flattened down on the ground or got behind things at this point. But two of /Ti/kay's half-sisters, who were present, threw themselves on him, pulled him away, and sat down beside him, holding his arms. He quieted down and Gao Medicine also sat down and was quiet. As the tempers cooled, peace took hold once more and, John says, the affair did not flare up again, at least during the remaining weeks he was there.

In some societies it would be incumbent upon kin such as MoBr or SiHu to feign anger and make a show of fighting to satisfy the conventions of honour. We observed no episodes which raised this question other than the above. John was strongly of the opinion that the emotions were genuine and that /Ti/kay's temper, which we had all experienced two or three times before, had released itself once more, but that once more a fight had been averted because people wanted peace and harmony most of all.

Illegitimacy

There were no illegitimate children in our sample in the years 1952–3 and we discovered no social norms established with respect to illegitimacy. Girls are usually married before they are old enough to have children. But, we asked, what would happen if a girl had a baby before she was married? People said the parents would go to the father of the child and say he must marry their daughter. Did they know anyone who had done this? No.

Suppose that a child were conceived in adultery and it were known with certainty that the father was not the woman's husband, what would happen to that child? we asked. The baby would be kept by its mother, of course. After they had talked things over among themselves, one informant said, and others agreed, that they thought, if the woman's husband fed the child for years while it grew, he would be justified in keeping the child and the biological father should not try to take the child away.

There is such a child now in Band 9. In 1955 or 1956 white farmers came into the Nyae Nyae region and illegally recruited some /Kung families. These families tried to run away from the farms some time later. They told us that they were followed by two white men and a white woman on horseback with guns, led by a 'tame' Bushman tracker. These people forced the /Kung to return to the farm by threats and pointed guns. In the fracas some of the /Kung got away. Husbands and wives were separated. When the S.W.A. authorities learned on which farm these /Kung families were, they acted promptly to restore them to their bands, and fined the farmer, but two years had passed. One girl had had a child by one of the /Kung men. Once they were all restored to Nyae Nyae, the girl went back to her own husband with her baby boy, and was with him in 1958. The people said the baby's bio-
logical father, as well as his mother's husband, should do something nice for him. Perhaps when he receives his first assegai his begetter will give it, for that is a very proud thing—but we do not know what the future holds for these people or where they will be by then.

The dominance of men

Wives are much desired by the young men, who usually wait for years for their infant fiancées to grow up, and by men who want second wives, and by widowers. /Kung women are not only precious as mates, they are the food-gatherers and supply more of the daily food than the men do. Hunting is very arduous in the Kalahari and the hunters succeed in bringing a big meat animal to the werf only about once or twice a month. Meanwhile women have dug roots and gathered berries and the other wild plant foods to feed their families every day. /Kung women in their two roles make a very great contribution.

In /Kung society, however, the magnitude of their contribution does not make women dominant. There are factors which bring the men forward clearly into dominance and leadership.

The primary factor is undoubtedly strength. /Kung men are small and slender, but they are wiry and vigorous. With their strength they carry and protect the very life of their people. When they swing their weapons and implements and their small children on to their shoulders and stride out in front of the women, the image seems to reveal, as vividly as if a great artist had painted it, how the laden following women are borne up by the strength of their men and take heart from them.

Another factor which brings men clearly forward is the character of hunting and its reward. Women bring the daily food, but there is only drudgery in digging and picking in the hot sun and trudging back in the early evening to the werf with heavy roots and berries and babies all sagging in the pouches of their karosses, a small dead tree or two on one shoulder for the night fire, possibly another child astride the other shoulder. Many of the vegetable foods, furthermore, are rather tasteless and harsh and are not very satisfying. There is nothing splendid about returning with vegetables and wood. The return of the hunters is vastly different. The intense craving for meat, the anxiety that goes with the hunt, the deep excitement of the kill, finally the eating and the satisfaction reach to the very core of the people, engaging powerful emotions. Once, when an eland had been killed and the hunters were sighted with the meat on their backs, moving in a dark, lumpy, bobbing line in the golden grass, we heard the sound of voices in the werf rising in volume and pitch like the hum of excited bees. Some people ran toward the hunters, others crowded together at the edge of the werf, some danced up and down, the children squealed and ran about, the boys grappled and tussled together. The motion and sound had the effect of a vibration. Another time a young man who was said to be the best hunter in the region (/Qui Hunter we called him, his people called him Short /Qui), had been charged by a magnificent cock ostrich on a big open pan where there was no refuge. He knelt facing the creature till it was within close range and shot an arrow straight

1 John Marshall has described /Kung hunting in his film, /The Hunters/, Peabody Museum Film Study Center, Harvard University, and in 'Man as Hunter', /Natural History/, the magazine of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, vol. lxvii, No. 6, June, and No. 7, August, 1958.
into its heart. Back in the werf, while the meat was being cut up and distributed by Quí's wife's brothers, he slept exhausted on the mound of black and white plumes and the women, some of the plumes in their hair, danced a dance of praise around him. This is the role of /Kung men and the way it should be.

By comparison with the men, the women are considerably more circumscribed in knowledge, less ready for new experience, more suspicious and apprehensive of strangers. They draw back and seem on the whole somewhat timid. The men protect them in many ways. They would not let the women ride with us in the truck, for instance, unless some of the men were with them.

The women expect the dependent role. They have their say in conversation but do not take part in the serious conclaves of the men, saying often, 'The men know these things. We do not know. The men must decide.' And one woman said, 'A man can do everything—shoot and make fire.' /Kung women are encouraged to be compliant by the fact that, in their love of peace, the /Kung like quiet, modest, gentle women. Overbearing, strident, demanding, or nagging women would disturb not only their own husbands but the whole werf. Disapproval of anyone's behaviour is expressed by the group in talk, and also by songs, such as the song of The Two Baus, which was composed about two loudly quarrelsome co-wives. When the two Baus heard this song strummed on the /guashi or hummed here and there in the shadows of the werf at night, they mended their ways.

Though the /Kung like gentleness and compliance in women, their society does not impose extreme forms of obedience or subservience upon them and women are not ill treated. One man told Laurence Marshall that if he wanted to go somewhere and his wife wanted to go somewhere else he might have to talk, talk, talk, talk, talk to persuade her.

We once saw a woman strike her husband on the head with her digging-stick in a fit of frustration because he had coerced her to go with him when she wanted to remain visiting her parents. He had coerced her swiftly and decisively by snatching her baby from her arms and walking ahead with it. In a flash the wife ran a few steps and hit him, then she went around in a circle, stamping her feet in great, high stamps like an enraged samurai in a Japanese print, then she followed her husband. I personally never saw a /Kung man hit a woman. This is not to say no /Kung ever did, but it is far from common.

The dominance of the /Kung men is more protective and life-giving than crushing to the women. On the whole a good balance seems to be attained and there is a notable freedom from quarrelling between husbands and wives. The instances of strife that we have mentioned are exceptional breaks in the usual peace of their well-adjusted human relations.

Résumé

LE MARIAGE CHEZ LES BOSCHIMANS /KUNG

ENVIRON 1.000 Boschimans /Kung vivent dans la région de Nyae Nyae. De préférence et par coutume, ils se marient entre eux, mais ils n'ont aucune règle rigoureuse d'endogamie. Dans la société /Kung il est interdit, sous peine d'inceste, de se marier ou d'avoir des rapports sexuels avec un membre de sa famille restreinte ou avec toute autre personne à
MARRIAGE AMONG /KUNG BUSHMEN

laquelle s'étend le tabou d'inceste selon la conviction que certains liens ressemblent à ceux de la famille restreinte. L'interdit d'inceste s'étend tout d'abord aux membres du lignage et aux beaux-parents, beaux-fils et belles-filles et aux demi-frères et sœurs. En ce qui concerne les collatéraux, le tabou s'étend aux vrais frères et sœurs des parents, aux cousins germains, et aux cousins, au second et au troisième degré; aux neveux et nièces. Pour ce qui est des affins, il comprend les parents de l'époux d'ego'; les époux de FaBr, FaSi, MoBr et MoSi; les SiHuFa, BrWiMo; les SoWiFa, SoWiMo, DaHuFa, DaHuMo; les SoWi et DaHu; les HuBrSo et WiSiDa; les WiBrWi et HuSiHu. Parmi les parents de nom, il s'étend aux personnes qui ont les mêmes noms que ceux des parents ou des enfants d'ego'; aux parents, aux enfants et aux vrais frères et sœurs de tout individu ayant le même nom qu'ego'; aux personnes qui ont le même nom qu'un des parents de l'époux d'ego' ou l'époux d'un des enfants d'ego'. Les /Kung se conforment avec la plus grande rigueur à ces interdits de mariage. On préfère les mariages avec des personnes qui ne sont pas consanguines et avec lesquelles ego' est en parenté à plaisanterie, y compris certains parents de nom, SiHu et WiSi et, si la mort ou le divorce rende un mariage possible, avec HuBr et BrWi.

Les parents arragent les mariages pour leurs enfants lorsque les garçons sont adolescents et les filles plus jeunes. Ils donnent la préférence à des familles fortes et nombreuses qui ne sont ni paresseuses ni avaries dans le partage de la nourriture et les cadeaux.

Dans un certain sens, la bande possède les sources de nourriture et l'eau, et l'affin qui se marie dans la bande acquiert les mêmes droits qu'une personne née dans celle-ci. Il est rare qu'un individu possède des biens mobiliers, de sorte que les questions de propriété n'entrent guère en ligne de compte dans le mariage. Il n'est payé aucune dot ni prix d'épouse. Le jeune époux donne plusieurs années de service comme chasseur pour payer son épouse. Une fois ce service accompli, les époux décident soit de rester avec la famille de l'épouse soit de s'en aller vivre dans celle de l'époux. Les veuves, veufs et divorcés ont le droit de se remarier. Les rapports sexuels en dehors du mariage sont interdits par la règle sociale, et plusieurs facteurs exercent un effet préventif contre l'impudicité prénuptiale ou l'adultère. Malgré que cette société pratique la polygynie, les épouses sont fortement désirées et recherchées. Mais elles ne dominent pas la société en dépit de leur importance pour la cueillette, et leur rôle d'épouse et de mère. Les hommes sont clairement les chefs et les protecteurs et leur rôle de chasseur alimentant leur famille en viande est reconnu et profondément apprécié.

Our thanks are due to the Peabody Museum for a generous grant towards the cost of publication of this long article.

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