**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

# All things being equal: uncertainty, ambivalence and trust in a Namibian conservancy

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Anthropology at the London School of Economics and Political Science for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abstract

This thesis is about how experiences of uncertainty shape the way people share with one another. It is an ethnographic study of a rural conservancy in north-eastern Namibia, the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, and the urban town at its centre, Tsumkwe—between which people "roam in order to live". The people at the centre of this study are the Ju|'hoansi (meaning "true people" or "people of proper custom"), known to anthropology both as hunter-gatherers and as a famously "egalitarian society". In Namibia, they are a "traditional community" with ancestral rights to a communal land region that they now manage largely as a commercial enterprise. In doing so, they aim to perform the complementary work of conserving their ancestral way of life and the diverse fauna and flora they share it with, and enticing tourists, entrepreneurs, and trophy-hunters to provide the cash now necessary to do so. This work only goes so far in making people self-sufficient, however, giving rise to a regular push and pull between their territories and town.

These movements reflect broader shifts towards informality, precariousness, and rising inequality across southern Africa, but they are also extensions of a much longer history of "roaming" that has been the subject of extensive writing within the discipline on hunter-gatherers and their fiercely egalitarian values. This writing sees roaming as a practice circumscribed by the assumption that those who have more than they can immediately use or consume will give in to the demands of roaming others without expecting repayment. In its contemporary guise, however, roaming necessitates encounters not with "true people", like themselves, whom they expect will share without hesitation, but with "other people" who "want to refuse you", "want to ruin you", or who "cannot be trusted". This thesis takes this nexus—between the values ordinarily associated with egalitarianism and the contemporary social context—as a productive space within which to explore the way that people go about sharing in the face of uncertainty and negotiating the ambivalence that emerges in the process.

This thesis is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in the Nyae Nyae conservancy between October 2014 – December 2015. It contributes to current debates within the anthropology of value on redistributive regimes and within the anthropology of ethics on experiences of moral ambivalence, and to broader fields of research on the relationship between state processes and informal economies in southern Africa.

# Table of Contents

# List of Tables

# List of Figures

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## Pronunciation Guide and Orthography

Ju|'hoansi is a language in the Ju dialect cluster which is part of the Kx'a language family. Kx'a languages are mostly found in central and northern Namibia and Botswana but some speakers can be found in Angola and South Africa as well. Ju|'hoansi is a tone language which has one of the largest segment inventories in the world. Vowels and diphthongs in Ju|'hoansi can be nasalized glottalized and pharyngealized as can its click consonants, which can also be aspirated. While Ju|'hoansi shares these phonological features with languages typically lumped together as "Khoisan", it is unintelligible to speakers of dialects from Tuu and Taa language families (see Heine and Honken 2010, Güldemann and Fehn 2014). The table and accompanying guide below aim to provide some assistance to the reader, albeit minimal. It follows the local orthography developed by the linguist Patrick Dickens (1994) in association with the Ju|wa Bushman Development Foundation, which is most similar to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). For ease of reading, however, the four clicks can be replaced with the following consonants in English: 'k' for ! (post-alveolar), 't' for | (dental) and ǂ (palatal), and 'g' for || (lateral).

NB: Ju|'hoansi would therefore be simplified to Ju-twa-see.

### Consonants

Ju|'hoansi contains four, primary click consonants, represented by ! (post-alveolar), | (dental), || (lateral), and ǂ (palatal).

**!** The post-alveolar click is a sharp click, pronounced by curling the tip of the tongue back and touching the top of the mouth a few centimeters behind the teeth. This makes the tongue concave against the top of the mouth. The tongue is pulled down sharply as the jaw lowers to create a loud, popping noise.

**ǂ** The palatal click is pronounced by placing the tongue flat up on the roof of the mouth, touching from the teeth all the way back to the center of the roof of the mouth. The tongue is yanked back in a quick gesture, towards the throat, without lowering the jaw as with the post-alveolar click.

**|** The dental click is a soft click which is pronounced by placing the tip of the tongue behind the front teeth and drawing the tongue slightly back,

which creates a sucking noise at the teeth as in the sound ‘tsk-tsk’ or 'tut-tut' in English.

**||** The lateral click is a sharp click which is pronounced by placing the tongue over the palate and pulling it down as air is drawn in from one or both sides of the tongue. This is a similar sound to that made to urge on a horse.

**Vowels**

Ju|’hoansi has five vowel ‘types’ or ‘qualities’: ‘a’, ‘e’, ‘i’, ‘o’, ‘u’. The five, basic vowel qualities can also be long: 'aa', 'ee', ii', 'oo', 'uu'. Diphthongs ‘ae’, ‘ai’, ‘ao’, ‘au’, ‘oa’, ‘oe’, ‘ua’ and ‘ui’ also occur and can take the vowel quality ‘a’ to form triphthongs (with the exception of ‘oa’ and ‘ua’ since these already end in ‘-a’).

**Tones**

Ju|’hoansi has seven tone patterns (see Miller-Ockhuizen 2003: 146), including “super-low”, “low”, “high”, “super-high”, “super-low low”, “low-high” and “high-low”. They are represented by diacritics on the letters for which the pitch is altered. For example, as ‘àà’, ‘aà’, ‘aá’, ‘áá’, ‘a̋à’, ‘àá’, and ‘áà’, respectively.

**Articulation**

Click consonants and vowel sequences can be accompanied by one or more additional articulations to create distinct phonemes. These include nasalisation, glottalisation, aspiration, and pharyngealisation.

**n** Nasalisation, represented by an ‘n’ either before a click consonant or after a vowel, involves producing a sound with air flowing through the nose (in addition to the noise that comes through the mouth). When placed at the beginning of a word, the letter ‘n’ is pronounced as in English.

**h** Aspiration is represented by an ‘h’ and can be associated with all vowels. Aspiration involves adding a breathy or whispery sound to the articulation of vowel sounds. An aspirated consonant involves an 'h' or breathy 'h' sound after the consonant and before the vowel sound that follows it in a word.

**q** Pharyngealisation is represented by a ‘q’ (otherwise absent as a consonant in the language) and involves constricting the pharynx when articulating

a phoneme to create a hoarse vowel sound. These can also have hard or soft articulation.

**‘** Glottalisation is represented by an apostrophe /‘/ and is a glottal stop which is pronounced by stopping the flow of air briefly after articulating a consonant and before articulating the vowels that follow it.

There are also several other distinct consonants which are not found in English. These include several plosives, fricatives, and affricates that are used in association with clicks or as part of other consonant clusters (see Table 1). These can be voiced or voiceless and involve the complete or partial closure of the glottis when articulating a sound.

**k** There is a voiceless velar plosive ‘k’, which is pronounced as in English.

**kx** There is also a voiceless velar affricate ‘kx’, which exists on its own or is uvularised when it occurs after a click or after a ‘t’ sound.

**g** When used next to a click symbol, 'g' represents a voiced uvular plosive. The voiced uvular plosive is similar to a ‘g’ in English but articulated further back in your throat. The ‘g’ appears at the start of several clicks and produces a more closed and deeper sound, as if you were about to swallow a ‘g’ before making the click.

**x** There is a uvular fricative ‘x’ (IPA [χ]), which is similar to the German *ich*, or the ‘g’ in Afrikaans.

**j** There is a post-alveolar fricative ‘j’ (IPA [ʒ]), which is similar to ‘j’ in the French *je*.

**tc** There is an affricate ‘tc’, which is the same as ‘ch’ in English (IPA [tʃ]), and also appears in consonant clusters with ‘x’.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ! | \| | \|\| | ǂ | |
| g! | g\| | g\|\| | gǂ | |
| n! | n\| | n\|\| | nǂ | |
| !’ | \|’ | \|\|’ | ǂ’ | |
| !x | \|x | \|\|x | ǂx | also tx |
| !k | \|k | \|\|k | ǂk | also tk |
| !h | \|h | \|\|h | ǂh | |

*Table 1 Phonemes in combination with click and other consonants*

## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| CBNRM | Community-Based Natural Resource Management |
| CLM | Christ Love Ministries |
| DTA | Democratic Turnhalle Alliance |
| GRN | Government of the Republic of Namibia |
| JBDF | Ju\|wa Bushman Development Foundation |
| JFU | Ju\|wa Farmers Union |
| JUTA | Ju\|hoan Traditional Authority |
| NAD | Namibian Dollar |
| NNC | Nyae Nyae Conservancy |
| NNDFN | Nyae Nyae Development Foundation Namibia |
| NNFC | Nyae Nyae Farmers' Cooperative |
| SADF | South African Defence Force |
| SWA | South West Africa |
| SWAPO | South West African People's Organisation |

## Introduction:
## All things being equal

"Bring the wheelbarrow!" Gura shouted, turning his head to the two young men who were watching him hold a 20-litre plastic drum under a slowly dripping tap. Sao, the more energised of the two, hastened off in search for it. Oti stood motionless, faintly hiding his tired state behind a pair of pink, lens-less sunglasses. The tap, like most taps in Tsumkwe, suffered from interminably low pressure. This was brought on by lousy infrastructure and by the tendency, mostly among illegal settlers, to cut the water pipes in order to allow their cattle to drink. Gura, Sao, and Oti had been watching the tap drip for nearly an hour and the 20-litre drum was tantalisingly close to being full. Sao arrived back with the wheelbarrow, and Gura started readying the heavy drum for lifting. "We have to lift it together", Gura shouted, "…you take that side and Oti can hold the wheelbarrow". Making matters more cumbersome, the plastic drum had lost its lid. Having played the role of a car in a children's game the day before, it was buried somewhere in the sand. As Sao and Gura lifted the drum into the wheelbarrow, the water sloshed about, spilling over their arms and chests and soaking into the sand. "Careful! Man. It must be full!" It really did need to be full if the three of them were going to get the 5 Namibian Dollars (NAD) that local bar owners paid for a 20-litre drum of water. With the drum positioned somewhat securely in the wheelbarrow, Gura started the more difficult business of dividing up the workload.

"OK. You take that handle. I'll take this one." They paused. "Wait," Sao jibbed, "…what will Oti do?" Oti, still motionless apart from a slight, queasy sway, didn't look like he was going to do much, but he needed to do something. They needed to put in equal amounts of work if they were going to get an equal share of the NAD5 coin they had been promised. Gura grabbed a stick from a nearby wood-pile and a piece of cloth from a nearby heap of rubbish. "Let's tie this between the two handles, then Oti can pull from the front." They got to work. Time was pushing on and they wanted to get at least another one or two drums filled and delivered before sundown. With the stick securely fastened to the fabric, and the fabric fastened to the handles, they got themselves into a triangle and started pushing. Sao pushed slightly left, Gura pushed slightly right, Oti didn't do much, and the wheelbarrow ploughed into the sand and to a halt. Water sploshed out again, the equivalent of ten minutes of life went trickling down the sides of the drum and into the sand. They tried again. Sao pushed right, Gura pushed left, and Oti gave a sudden

tug. The wheelbarrow toppled, along with the water, and the three leapt to contain it. "It's not working!" Gura groaned. "Oti you watch and stop it from falling. Sao and I will push." They tried again, this time getting a little further in the sand before ploughing to a halt again.

Nambe, Gura's nephew, had been watching from the shade of a nearby tree. It was approaching 37° C and he was holding a damp bandana to his forehead. His stomach was grumbling, and his head was throbbing. The cheap, home-distilled spirits they had been drinking, and which the water would be used to make, had ruined him. Beads of sweat were gathering at the edge of his bandana and giving off a sweet odour—aromatic compounds from the Mangetti palm fruits that bar-owners fermented to make the spirit. Gura, Sao, and Oti were clamouring in the background, and Nambe was looking more and more tense. Suddenly, he jolted to his feet. I thought he might hurl, but he barged through the sand, pushed his uncle aside, and grabbed the handles of the wheelbarrow. Lifting his elbows high above his ears, he forced the wheelbarrow forward through the thick sand, and at speed, until he reached the bar. He had steadied the wheelbarrow just enough to keep the drum from toppling, ensuring that his uncle and cousins received their NAD5 to share before he stormed home. He wasn't receiving a share, nor did he want it. He was tired of the sight of them struggling to share a one-person job. Gura, Sao, and Oti then used the NAD5 to buy more alcohol, and picked up another empty plastic drum and headed back to the slowly dripping tap.

Leading up to this comically desperate effort to secure a few extra coins, they, along with most of the town's residents, had been spending their grandparents' pension funds. Gura, alongside the children of other pensioners, had been given NAD100. He had then shared this with the rest of his young relatives, who had then shared with others, and so the funds had travelled through the community. It was a common scene. Once a month, a government employee would arrive and set themselves up outside the local police station. A long queue would form made up mostly of pensioners, people with disabilities, and (from the end of 2015) parents with children under 18 years of age. With the exception of the town's black African residents, recipients were mostly Ju|'hoansi—popularly known as "San" or, more pejoratively, as "Bushmen".[1] They are the dominant

[1] Throughout this thesis, I will introduce terms that have disputed or ambiguous meanings. I will present these in inverted commas to start with, and then italics thereafter.

language group within the region known as the Nyae Nyae conservancy, and primary residents of the communal lands that surround the town.

The Nyae Nyae conservancy is vast and remote, covering over 8,992km$^2$ and with a total population of approximately 3,500. Nestled within a transfrontier conservation area in north-eastern Namibia and at the centre of the Kalahari Desert, it is home to some of southern Africa's most cherished fauna and flora. Scattered throughout the region are also 37 hamlets or "territories"—each home to a distinct lineage of Ju|'hoan speakers who claim indigenous, or rather *ancestral*, status. These lineages go back no more than two or three generations, and when you push further, my interlocutors emphasised, "we are all related really". They are the northernmost group of Ju|'hoan speakers, with more distant relatives stretching south into the Omaheke region and east into central Botswana. They are the only '*San*' group, let alone the only group of Ju|'hoan speakers, to have retained access to a large expanse of land within which they have the right to hunt and gather.[2] Under the auspices and surveillance of the Government of the Republic of Namibia, they work together with numerous non-governmental organisations, government agencies, and private partners to manage the region as a "conservancy": an area set aside for conserving their "ancient way of life" and the diverse fauna and flora they share it with, and enticing tourists, social entrepreneurs, and trophy-hunters to provide the cash influx now necessary to do so.

At the centre of this vast conservancy region is Tsumkwe (see Figure 1). Once an administrative centre for the apartheid regime, it is now a rural town that serves as the only commercial hub for over 300km in almost every direction. While managing the region as a conservancy has brought numerous benefits in terms of environmental sustainability and political self-determination and stands as a remarkable success story despite growing debate, the hopes of economic development through community-based natural resource management remain somewhat under-realised. This has pushed the region's inhabitants towards what they call "roaming in order to live"—to the act of moving back and forth between their rural territories and the town at its centre which is relatively more urban in character. At their rural territories, they can hunt and gather, cultivate small crops, keep small herds of cattle or goats, harvest natural resources for

[2] As noted by Barnard (2007), the term 'San' is considered a more politically correct term for those who speak languages within the Kwadi-Khoe, Kx'a, or Tuu language families than the term 'Bushman'. Within the Nyae Nyae region, people refrain from using the term—opting instead to refer to themselves as the speakers of certain languages—and so this thesis does the same.

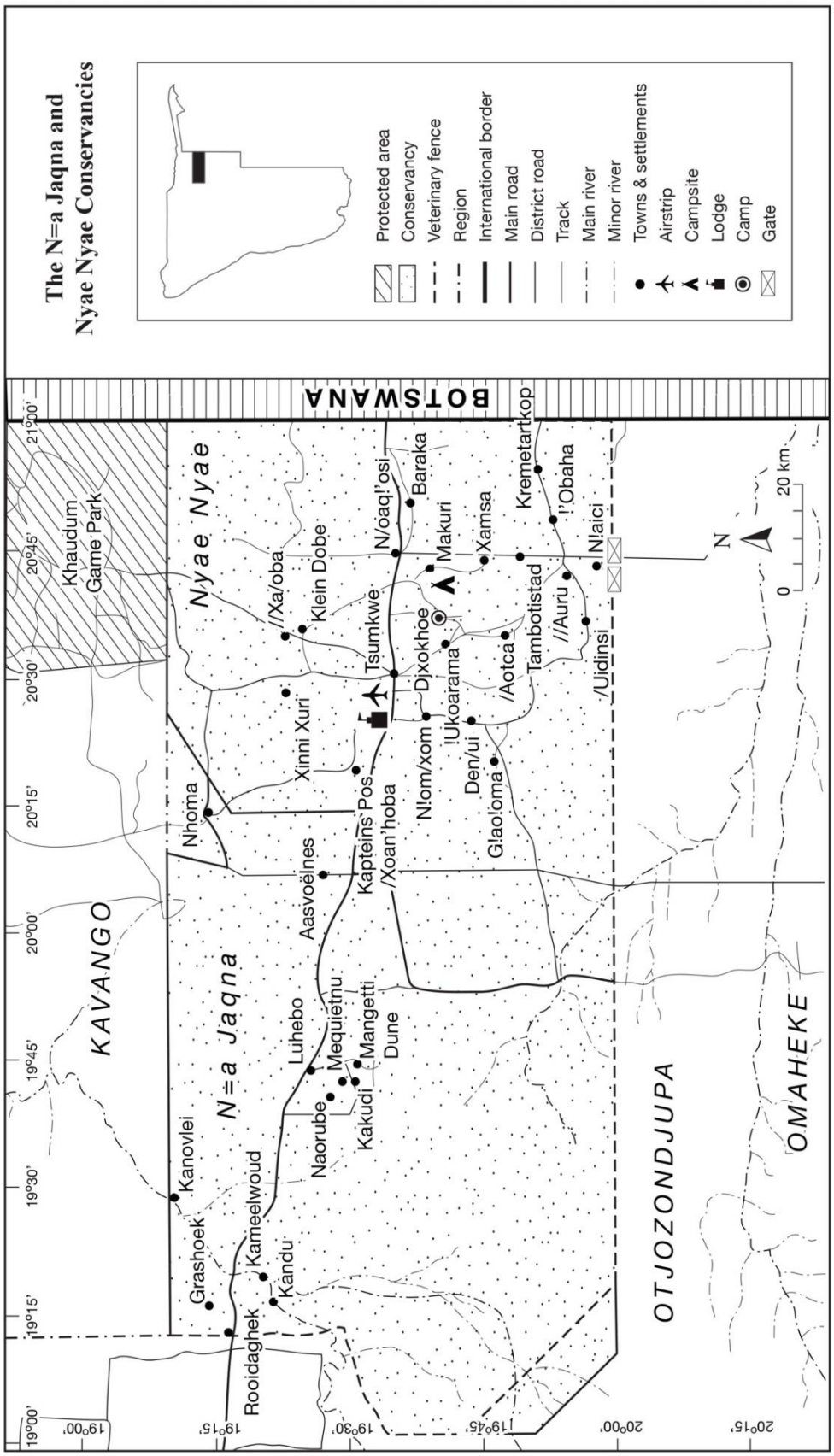


*Figure 1 Boundaries of the N‡a Jaqna (left) and Nyae (right) Conservancies (Source: Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 41)*

sale, and engage in cultural tourism or craft production. In town, they realise their status as citizens of the Republic of Namibia—recipients of destitute rations, state grants, and healthcare, and they pursue their hopes of employment or of being cared for by others. Despite widespread evidence of deprivation, the region is characterised less by absolute destitution than by uncertainty—by undulating flows of abundance and lack that people seek to stabilise through certain patterns of sharing and cooperation.

Dividing up the workload involved in carrying a 20-litre plastic drum of water by creating makeshift handles out of sticks and bits of fabric was not a form these patterns ordinarily took. It was partly this, and the sight of Nambe becoming suddenly enraged, that made the scene so amusing to those of us who were watching. For the anthropologist looking on, there was also humour in the caricature they were making of themselves as "fiercely egalitarian". This is a community that was, and continues to be, turned to as a source of guidance on the types of values and practices that might ultimately bring about equality. Spearheaded by Marshall Sahlins's (1968) essay titled "Notes on the Original Affluent Society" and reinforced by research conducted by the Marshall family, the Harvard Kalahari Research Group, and generations of researchers, these people surface repeatedly in the public imagination as vestiges of our collective past as hunter-gatherers. This, often strongly romanticised, image has not been without criticism. Most notably, it became the focal point for what would later be termed the "great Kalahari debate" (see Kuper 1992, 2003b)—a revisionist critique of alleged primitivism within the study of hunter-gatherers (also see Solway and Lee 1990). The critique recast them as vestiges not of a shared hunter-gatherer past but of long periods of conflict and competition which left them as a struggling underclass with little choice but to forage—with little choice but to be "marginal people who live for the moment" (Day *et al* 1998).

The frequent sight of both men and women, of all ages, roaming in order to live, seems to confirm this thesis. It does so at significant cost, however, shifting our attention away from the present and towards the past thought to have shaped it. Where contemporary studies of *egalitarian societies* have focused on the present, they have done so with the aim of exposing the resilience of certain values and practices in spite of the relentless advance of modern-style social breakdown and hierarchy. These range from Megan Biesele's (1993) concept of a "hunting-gathering imaginative substrate", through Barnard's (2004) exploration of a "foraging mode of thought", to Widlok's (cited in

Frankland 2016: 561) more recent reference to equalising processes rooted in resilient "hunter-gatherer situations". These studies have been ethnographically rich, and hugely effective in uncovering the values and practices of egalitarianism, but they have been less effective in helping to examine how the contemporary context shapes them, and how people themselves may experience and pursue them.

The thesis presented here takes up this challenge. It looks to the present not as a window into the past or as evidence of resilience, but as a source of insight into contemporary phenomena whose relationship remains underexamined: namely, values of egalitarianism and experiences of uncertainty. The ethnographic research upon which this thesis is based repeatedly encounters uncertainty as a factor that shapes both how people feel about egalitarianism and how they go about pursuing it. It is my aim that by looking more closely at experiences of uncertainty, it may be possible to appreciate some of the challenges of taking egalitarianism seriously. Generalising from these findings will, I hope, allow the radical forms of redistribution and patterns of movement that egalitarianism entails to speak more effectively to broader problems of inequality and sustainability.

## Egalitarianism

Before discussing broader problems of inequality and sustainability, and emergent initiatives that aim to tackle these in radical ways, it is worth briefly considering what "values of egalitarianism" and "experiences of uncertainty" are within the research context. As the chapters that follow will examine in more depth, there is more to egalitarianism than sharing. Part of the motivation behind this thesis, in fact, is to challenge prevailing narratives that narrowly define egalitarianism in terms of certain forms of sharing, or at least to complicate the prevailing narrative. Focusing on the way that things, such as food, money, or alcohol, get distributed or exchanged proves to be a productive means to explore how issues of temporality and spatiality feature in people's pursuits of what is "good" or "fair". Since relationships always feature some form of sharing or exchange, paying attention to different forms serves as a locus for exploring a range of other issues—from the process of marrying and caring for family, to the practice of naming children, or the politics of visiting others and conversing with strangers. This focus not only exposes the extent to which different forms of sharing or exchange actually do the work of bringing about equality, or at least the extent to which people think they do, but also those moments when equality is not a central concern in people's lives. As an aid to the reader, the common relationship between status (as kin, friend, or stranger),

space (at home, at another territory, or in town), and forms of distribution (begging, taking, demanding, gifting, and debt) are summarised and organised in Table 2 below. These should not be read as exhaustive or prescriptive, but rather as a snapshot of networks within the region and the factors that shape them. In the process, the range of characters, settings, and themes of this thesis will become clear.

<table>
<tr><th>A Ju|'hoan person who encounters ⇨<br>in ⇩ typically ⇘</th><th>A Ju|'hoan family member</th><th>A fellow Ju|'hoan from another territory</th><th>A non-Ju|'hoan person who is a "stranger"</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">In their own yard or territory</td><td rowspan="2">||'An<br>non-verbalised</td><td rowspan="2">Xaro</td><td>ǂO</td></tr>
<tr><td>Gǂara<br>verbalised</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">At another person's yard or territory</td><td rowspan="2">Xaro</td><td>Gǂara<br>non-verbalised</td><td rowspan="2">N/A</td></tr>
<tr><td>Xaro</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">In public spaces in town</td><td rowspan="2">||'An<br>non-verbalised</td><td rowspan="2">||'An<br>verbalised</td><td>ǂO</td></tr>
<tr><td>Gǂara<br>verbalised</td></tr>
</table>

*Table 2 The common relationship between status, space, and forms of distribution*

There are two primary ways that people go about requesting assistance from one another within the region: they ||*an* (demand) or they *gǂara* (beg). These ways of asking can both be either verbalised or non-verbalised. Where they are verbalised, they entail either demanding by saying "give" (in ways that often appear quite aggressive), or begging by pleading with a would-be patron for help. Where they are non-verbalised, they entail either demanding by simply taking a rightful share, and begging through outward displays of suffering in the vicinity of those who may be able to help. In response or in anticipation, one can either |*'an* (give or pass) or *ǂom* (divide up, share out), and one can either *!xau* (refuse, verbally) or *ǂxun* (refuse, non-verbally). Where these acts of demanding, begging, giving, or sharing out trigger relationships of reciprocity or exchange, they are referred to as relationships of *xaro* (reciprocal gift-giving) or *ǂo* (debt). As Table 2 shows, verbal demands tend to take place in town, among friends; non-verbal demands tend to take place at home, among kin; verbal begging tends to take place in

town, among strangers, as does debt; and nonverbal begging tends to take place, often unintentionally, at the homes or territories of friends, as does reciprocal gift-giving. The factors that affect these are multiple, including sets of obligations, assumptions about shared or contrasting values, and the likelihood of encountering one another.

Among those who share the same territory, and who are therefore either consanguineous or affines, it is customary to take a rightful share, and (in anticipation) to give or share out resources. Where these resources are highly valuable or personal—such as certain items of clothing, beads, or weapons—they are either borrowed (people *|xobe* them) or given as part of *xaro* partnerships between siblings or cousins. Within the public context of town, it is customary to beg from those assumed to have contrasting values (on account of being *ju doresin*, meaning "other people" or "strangers") and to demand from those assumed to share certain values (on account of being *true people*).[3] Where the resources in question are highly valued or personal—such as large sums of money, mobile phones, or items of clothing—they are either taken as debt or given as part of *xaro* partnerships. When visiting a territory that is not one's own, or a yard in town that is not one's own, and the residents are neither consanguineous nor affines, people tend not to demand, take, or beg, and worry that their presence may be regarded shamefully as begging. Where the residents of these yards give or share with those who visit them from other yards or territories, it is customary to take these gifts as *xaro*—sparking ongoing relationships of care between them. Across these spaces, the likelihood of encountering one another again shapes both how likely someone is to ask for help, and how likely it is that a would-be patron feels ambivalent about responding favourably to these requests. It matters, in short, not only who one shares or exchanges resources with, but what these resources are, where acts of sharing or exchange take place, and how likely they are to repeat in the future.

With respect to who one shares or exchanges resources with, the distinction between *other people* and *true people* is based not on intimacy so much as on enduring categories of otherness. Where *other people* are typically either "black" or "white",[4] *true people* are those who speak a click-language as their mother-tongue and share certain characteristics—most notably, their lighter skin colour. These adjectives, "real" or

[3] The term *Ju|'hoansi* is often translated as "real people". Throughout this thesis, I have translated the term as "true people" because the term *|'hoan* has ethical, rather than ontological, connotations.
[4] Ju|'hoan speakers use a number of different terms to refer to black African and white (either Afrikaans or European) people. The most common terms are *jusa joh* (black people) and *|'hunsi* (white people).

"other", are not always used to describe people—who are often referred to by their personal names, as the speakers of certain languages, or other less seemingly pejorative terms—but they feature frequently in people's accounts of why patterns of sharing differ so markedly between them. Elsewhere in southern Africa, "San" often refer to themselves as "red people", here, my interlocutors emphasised frequently, what makes them distinct from their black or white neighbours is that they are "people who help each other". As the chapters that follow examine in more depth, *jusa joh* or *!'homhi* "black people" and *jusa !a'u* or *|'hunsi* "white people" are often described as people who "want to refuse you" and "want to ruin you".[5] Where *black people* and *white people* are said to regard demanding as aggressive and bad-mannered, among Ju|'hoansi it is the "prototypical" form that sharing takes (Widlok 2013: 21)—something good and expected. They are guided by the more general principle that what you produce, or what you manage to gather through employment, piece-work, or patronage, should be shared with those who have less and who share a basic commitment to redistribution. It is this commitment to sharing that forms the essence of what true people are.

Saying that, these broader commitments to sharing are not the only values that people define themselves in relation to. A common trope within the existing literature is that these are societies that practice systems of universal kin categorisation, meaning they define any strangers they encounter as "kin" and they treat them accordingly. The research presented here shows that, to the contrary, people draw quite clear distinctions between those who are kin (who share the same territory and are said to "have each other"), and those who are either friends or strangers. They are expected to prioritise their kin, and to a great extent they are supported in doing so. These expectations create boundaries that shape where people feel they are able to move freely, what they feel they can demand from others, and how they feel they are able to do so. Demanding verbally from those who are assumed to share the same values becomes an activity largely reserved for public spaces in town, nonverbal demanding becomes common in the space of the home, and simply visiting other homes or territories becomes contentious. These values have the effect of limiting sharing to those who tend to share the same space, and of compelling those who do not to make themselves present to one another in the public context of town. Relationships with strangers are altogether different. It is generally

[5] The terms "black people" and "white people" are italicised hereafter to indicate that these are direct translations of terms used by Ju|'hoan speakers.

assumed that strangers are people who feel they are entitled to refuse others. They are not guided by the same general principle that those who have more, should give to those who have less. As a consequence of these assumptions, begging becomes a "good" way to ask for help. Where patrons expect to be repaid, these, in turn, become relationships of debt rather than relationships of ongoing gift-giving.

As much as giving in to others' demands is what people feel they should do, then, it is common knowledge that they should not be forced to do so nor—beyond becoming the subject of gossip or mockery—punished for failing. Common recognition of the obligations that people have towards their kin is not the only driving force behind the partial freedom people feel they have to refuse those who make demands of them. Guiding this partial freedom is the more general principle that, in theory, people should not be forced to act in a manner that is not of their own choosing. People rarely exercise this freedom by verbally refusing others, choosing instead to stay away from spaces within which others may make demands of them. The system is, to a large extent, self-regulating, since people either recognise the shame associated with not caring for others, or recognise that doing so risks their own ability to depend on others in the future. As such, while people are supported in their choices to stay away from convivial spaces of sharing, they are only supported for fairly short periods of time before they become the subjects of gossip or mockery. The event involving the uncompromising wheelbarrow was, therefore, something of a misnomer. Ordinarily, it does not really matter if everyone contributes equally to the workload because, in theory, people have the freedom to choose and their decision should have no immediate bearing on whether they can demand a share. Over time, however, repeated encounters with people who compel others to share but do not, in turn, make themselves present to be demanded from, generates anxieties. The reality that people have neither much knowledge of one another's wealth, nor much certainty of one another's motives, comes to impinge upon their trust in one another.

The scene necessitates roaming—an act that at once serves to stabilise what are undulating flows of abundance and lack by facilitating demand sharing, and to make people's relative wealth and relative commitment to egalitarianism at least partially transparent. The relationship between experiences of uncertainty and values of egalitarianism is evident here. As Gulbrandsen (1991) suggests, contemporary realities of uncertainty appear to support and give rise to egalitarianism, insofar as they compel

people towards intimate forms of mutual dependence. At the same time, values of egalitarianism appear to support and maintain forms of uncertainty, insofar as they hold that people should be at least partially free to choose when these forms of dependence impinge upon them. Bringing these themes together has certain benefits. Most notably, it opens up studies of egalitarianism to comparison—not solely between groups of contemporary hunter-gatherers suffering from decades of "encapsulation, subordination, and encroachment" (ibid: 83), but between people living precariously and faced with enduring uncertainty.

## Uncertainty

It is here that I turn to the themes of uncertainty, precarity, and marginality. These themes are commonplace within the discipline, especially within African studies. They feature prominently in studies of the enduring effects of colonialism and, studies, more broadly, of the "heartless world of neoliberal capitalism" that prioritises "the market" and erodes the "social state" (Ferguson 2015: 3). They have a specific quality here.

Within the anthropology of sub-Saharan Africa, these studies have often taken a positive turn—focusing on the myriad ways that people not only manage to survive but engage in creative work and construct meaningful lives (see Barber 2017, also Tsing 1994). Roaming features as one such way. It takes people to work in extractive or productive industries in distant regions (Jeeves 1985, Crush 1987, James 1999b, among others) or countries (Cohen 2006, Kabwe-Segatti and Landau 2011, Bolt 2017, among others), or draws people together to bring new "informal" (or "popular") economies to life (see Hull and James 2012). The story of Gura, Sao, and Oti provides some clues to the nature of roaming in the Nyae Nyae region. Like many other Ju|'hoan men and women who spend most of their time at their rural territories, they visit town only occasionally—travelling long distances on foot where they tell of encounters with elephants and violent thunderstorms, or hitch-hiking on the back of speeding pick-up trucks. When they do, it is usually to take advantage of the opportunities for patronage or piece-work that arise from time to time. Their rural territories are typically quiet places—surrounded by vast stretches of wilderness and visited only occasionally by mobile traders, churches, or foreign tourists. Some of them boast opportunities for employment in cultural tourism or the sale of hand-beaded or hand-carved crafts, and some are rich in fauna and flora that can be hunted or gathered for own-use, or harvested for sale to national markets, but most bring only a very basic income for people. Even for those with small gardens, herds

of cattle or goats, or family members with permanent employment positions in town who support them, the yields or donations are too few and far between to get through each month. Food aid packages, pensions, child welfare grants, disability grants, and annual conservancy benefits become the mainstay of local livelihoods, and an informal economy built largely on making demands of, and making oneself present to, one another.

Where, elsewhere in southern Africa, similar contexts of marginality and uncertainty have given rise to the proliferation of small enterprises and informal money-lending practices (see Neves and du Toit 2012), in the Nyae Nyae region these informal economic activities are conducted almost entirely by migrant settlers who hail from elsewhere in Namibia. The bar-owners that pay NAD5 for a 20-litre drum of water, or a pile of firewood, and the store-owners who, occasionally, give out food or alcohol on credit, are typically migrant traders. They migrate mostly from the north of the country and many leave home to escape the burden of personal ties and family obligations. They are rarely, if ever, Ju|'hoansi. Where these stark contrasts between the region's indigenous inhabitants and its migrant settlers (and foreign investors) is not a function of values, it appears to be a consequence of historical processes that have seen the latter emerge as a growing entrepreneur class and the former as a captive clientele. They are "captive" in two primary senses. First, they are captive insofar as they lack the personal resources that are necessary to set up small enterprises or migrate in search for better opportunities. Second, they are captive insofar as their access to communal resources depends upon their status as a "traditional community" with ancestral rights to the region and the resources found within it. This status, in turn, also depends upon their commitment to community-based natural resource management strategies even where these serve private-sector business interests over local livelihoods (Bollig 2016: 796, also see Dikgang and Muchapondwa 2016, Francis *et al* 2016).

Describing the latter as "captive" gives the impression that people engage in community-based natural resource management within the region either because they lack alternatives or because they are at the mercy of those with money. The reality is more complex. Shortly after gaining independence from the apartheid regime of South Africa, which governed the Nyae Nyae region as a homeland for the Bushman nation, people living in Namibia's rural regions saw a devolution of power that gave them considerable political autonomy (see Simon 1983). Unlike many of their contemporaries, elsewhere in southern Africa, they did not emerge as a class of largely landless poor who eke out a

marginal existence in informal settlements on the edges of cities. Instead, they were recognised as members of "traditional communities" represented at the government level by "traditional authorities" that were locally appointed (see Kössler 2016). The new government of the Republic of Namibia would allow people to self-identify and to live their lives according to their own customs and traditions. This, in theory, would address decades of divisions that followed the Odendaal Commission of 1964 (see Figure 2), the Natives Land Act of 1913, and the Population Registration Act of 1950 (Parliament of South Africa 1913, 1950, for a more in-depth analysis see Beinart and Delius 2014). Addressing the economic deprivation and environmental degradation that colonial rule and decades of war had brought to these regions, the new government passed a series of legislative changes. These changes made it possible for communities to apply for ancestral rights over certain communal areas (though these would still be the regulated property of the state according to Article 100 and Schedule 5 of the Constitution of Namibia, see Harring 1996). The Nyae Nyae conservancy (see Figure 3) was the first communal area to be granted this status, giving the region's Ju|'hoan residents collective rights to sustainably manage and utilise the resources found within it. At the centre of this region is Tsumkwe, a municipal area within which people from other traditional communities can live, work, and move freely, but over which Ju|'hoan speakers nevertheless feel a great deal of ownership.

These are important historical processes to account for because they have shaped the way that people have come to understand themselves not only as "people who help each other", but as part of a collective project for which they spent many years lobbying and fighting (see Biesele and Hitchcock 2011). The relationships that people have with one another, and which are traced within this thesis, have been shaped by these processes in numerous ways. As membership within a territory has become the primary means through which people are recognised as members of the same traditional community, the obligation to favour these bonds appears to have become stronger. At the same, territories have grown, and sources of employment and patronage have declined, compelling people to roam so they may demand or beg from those who have more. Ongoing gift-giving relationships between members of different territories have diminished, and people have fallen increasingly into debt with store-owners who are said to use violence, both physical and occult, to force repayments. Tourists, researchers, film-makers, and foreign entrepreneurs looking for indigenous crafts have become an

important, albeit fluctuating, source of income for the many people without permanent employment. The cash payments that come from these, however, are either low or few and far between, compelling people to call upon those who have more permanent sources of income, and to make this process easier by drinking. There are numerous health problems, articulated frequently as the outcome of feelings of jealousy or of the breakdown of relationships of care and treated in churches or by shamans. Within each of these contexts, discussions about what makes a "good" person and what counts as "fair" abound. They point not only to the values that people hope to live by, but the contextual factors that shape the way people feel they can, or should, pursue them.

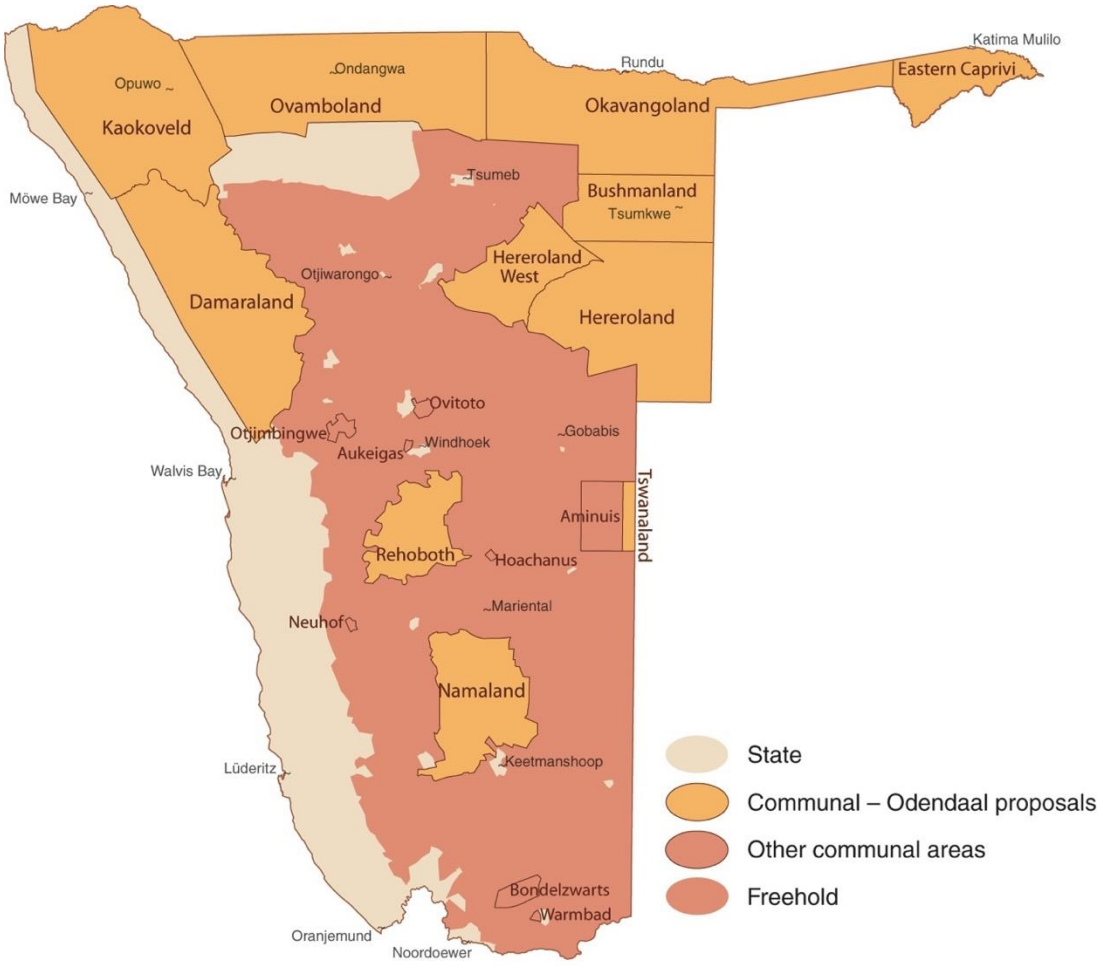


*Figure 2 "Homeland" regions as demarcated following the Odendaal Commission of 1964 (Source: John Mendelsohn et al 2002)*

Within recent years, the region and its people have become implicated in national debates

concerning fairness that extend beyond the bounds of those within the Nyae Nyae region to those excluded from it. It is a debate that centres on the meaning of Namibia's "revolutionary rallying clarion", "One Namibia, One Nation" (see http://www.swapoparty.org/history.html, also see Tapscott 1993, Akuupa and Kornes 2013). It also speaks to concerns that despite three decades of independence, Namibia is said to be one of the most unequal countries in the world and one in which people are increasingly divided along "tribal" lines (see Mushaandja 2015, Mungunda 2017). This debate dominated the country's Second National Land Conference in October 2018 (see

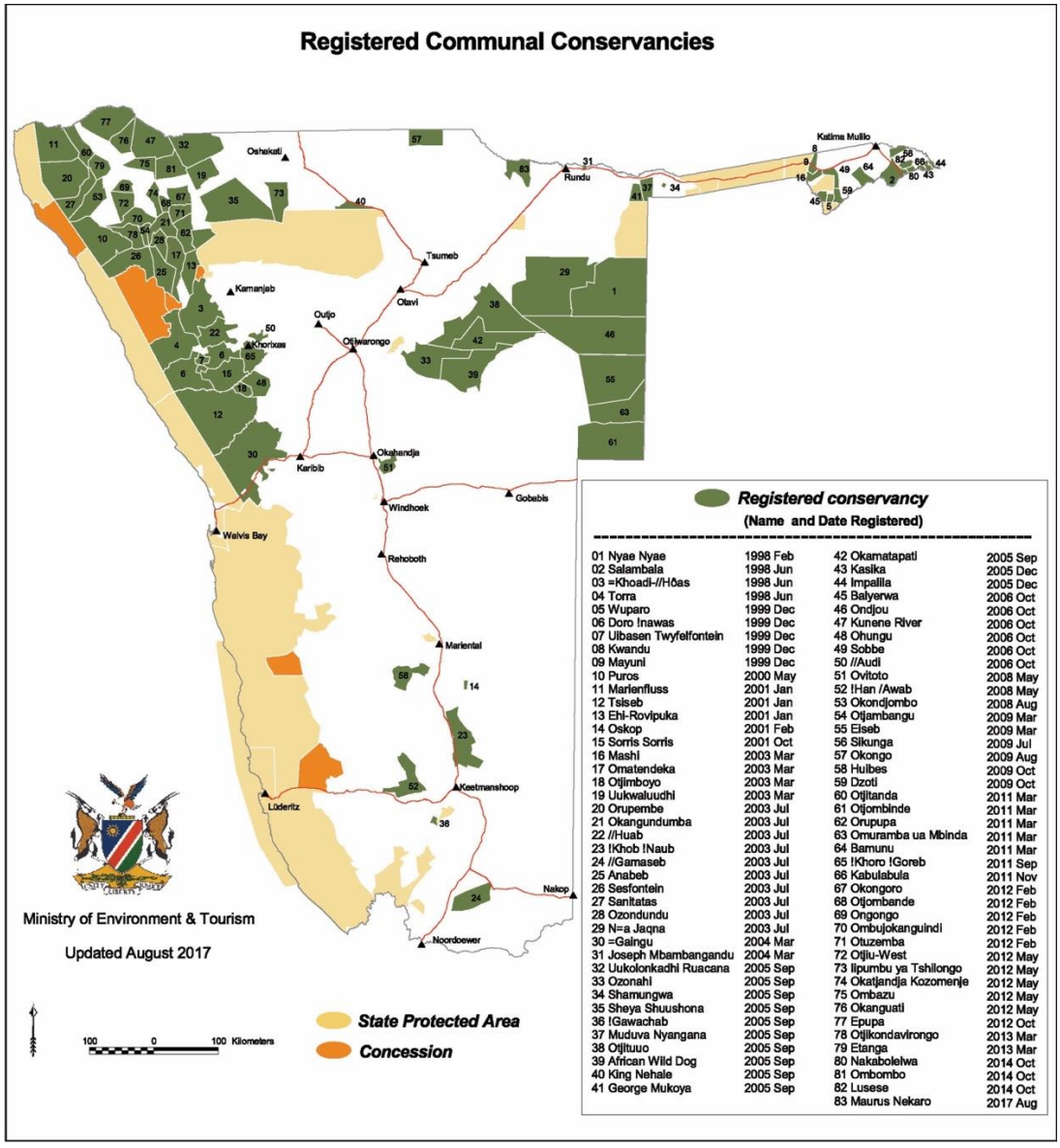


*Figure 3 Registered Communal Conservancies, numbered in order of their establishment (Source: Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations [NACSO])*

The Ministry of Land Reform 2018). While it centres more around the reality that 44% of the total land area of Namibia is owned by 6% of the total population (Mendelsohn et al 2013, Namibia Statistics Agency 2011), it has had knock-on effects for communal areas and the people who live within them. Within the Nyae Nyae conservancy, the debate takes the form of veiled demands from neighbouring pastoralists, though not explicit, to grant them access to the grazing opportunities offered by the region's rangelands. While they differ in important ways, these demands mirror broader calls (as Ferguson 2015: 165, citing The Freedom Charter of South Africa, notes for South Africa) made by impoverished and historically excluded citizens to "share in the country's wealth!". By defining membership within the conservancy on the basis of ancestry, neighbouring groups who are, in turn, effectively denied access charge the conservancy with having an agenda of segregation—one apparently at odds with the country's motto of "One Namibia, One Nation".

## Trust and ambivalence

The debate is worth mentioning not only because it helps frame the relationship between settlers and the Ju|'hoan people, like Gura, Sao, and Oti, who depend upon them, but because it exposes the broader importance of exploring the relationship between values of egalitarianism and experiences of uncertainty. Two competing visions of "equality" surface within this debate which mirror local tensions between the rights people feel they have to demand from those who have more than them, and the freedom they have, to choose when to avoid these demands. On the one hand, "equality" is understood in terms of access to certain, collective resources, and on the other hand, it means having the right to choose—even when it appears to be at odds with redistributive efforts. The tension is not, as it is commonly presented, between having the same rights but not the same opportunities to pursue them (or, as Walker 2015 puts it, between "equality" and "equivalence"). The tension is between redistribution, and the freedom to choose when to take part in these processes. As the opening paragraphs of this introduction argue, these freedoms are typically self-regulating, since people either recognise the shame associated with not caring for others or are alert to the fact that not caring for others threatens their own ability to depend on them in the future. This invites the obvious question of what happens when people either feel no shame in not caring for others, or do not depend on or feel indebted to others.

Among people within the region, discussions surrounding these questions are often sorely racialised. They draw upon a deep history, characterised by "waves of people bearing with them original political ideas, economic innovations, and cultural idiosyncrasies" just as Lan (1985: 13) describes for the Dande valley in Zimbabwe. Over the course of this history—one characterised by racial segregation, on the one hand, and a political economy of cultural distinctiveness, on the other—people have become starkly categorised. It is what the philosopher Ian Hacking (1986: 236, also see Hacking 1999) refers to as the process of "making up people", whereby different "kinds of human beings and human acts come into being hand in hand with our invention of the categories labelling them". Similarly, Comaroff and Comaroff (1987: 196) write of these processes as moments through which people come to define themselves in relation to one another, "each reaching a new awareness of its distinctiveness at the very moment that it was being transformed by the encounter itself". The process is one which has a long history of engagement in the anthropology of sub-Saharan Africa (see Cohen 1969, Vail 1989, Sharp 1996, James 1999a, among others). Of particular interest here, is the way these categories create certain dynamics of mistrust that act as barriers in broader efforts of redistribution or autonomy—excluding groups of people from certain spaces or redistributive circles on the grounds that they are not committed to the same values. At the same time, they act as safeguards if people really aren't thought to be committed to the same values. These are values that not only compel people to share what they have without expecting repayment, but also encourage people to pursue only modes of subsistence that are ecologically sustainable and compatible with those undertaken by others. People should be free to act in a manner of their own choosing, in other words, so long as these actions don't prevent others from doing the same.

Pursuing these values, in other words, depends as much on trust as it does on knowing what people have to share. Doing so, in other words, requires not only having some sense of people's relative wealth, but trusting that the people who take part in these redistributive regimes are concerned with redistribution as much today as they will be tomorrow. As a group of people who are deeply dependent upon one another, and upon those they fear "cannot be trusted", the concerns they have with knowing what people have and whether they can trust them to make themselves present to be demanded from are rooted in more than "unreflective norm following" (Mattingly 2012: 162). They are key to everyday efforts to survive in contexts of marginality and uncertainty, whether

these involve giving in to the demands of others and entrusting them to do the same, or garnering sympathy from those who might act as patrons or, at the very least, reticent creditors. Within broader studies of uncertainty in Africa, there has been a tendency to focus less on "how people think and act in relation to uncertainties wrought by… [contemporary] conditions" (Cooper and Pratten 2015: 13), and more on the conditions themselves. Similarly, within broader studies of egalitarianism, there has been a tendency to focus more on values as they are explicitly articulated, and less on the possible ambivalence that people experience when they pursue them. Addressing these concerns requires a turn to narrative—to expressions of doubt and suspicion, and to moments of contradiction or ambiguity. This focus speaks to recent developments within the anthropology of ethics which have sought to challenge overly collectivist accounts (Lambek 2010, Fassin 2014, Mattingly and Throop 2018: 475), and, building partly upon practice theory (see Ortner 2006), to confront diversity in people's actions and intentions, and experiences of ambivalence and contradiction.

Bringing themes such as doubt or ambiguity to the study of egalitarian societies, or to the study of experiences of informality and uncertainty in southern Africa, adds an affective dimension to our current understanding, but its relevance is not limited to this. Within recent years there has been a surge of scholarship on new, redistributive regimes—much of which draws either directly, or indirectly, on the anthropology of egalitarian societies and which aims, first and foremost, to address experiences of informality, marginality, and precarity—especially in southern Africa. Drawing a direct comparison between emergent proposals for a basic income grant in southern Africa and writing on demand sharing, Ferguson (2015: 165-189) argues for a rethinking of welfare not as gifts from generous patrons, but as the rightful shares of those who have less. There is enormous value in these comparisons, but there is also much at stake if different contexts of uncertainty and experiences of ambivalence are not similarly considered. By drawing attention to these issues, the aim is not only to foreshadow some of the challenges that may lie ahead for new redistributive regimes, but to generate new discussions geared towards their potential solutions.

## Methodology

The research for this study was conducted over 14 months while living in the Nyae conservancy from October 2014 to December 2015. I spent approximately 10 months conducting research in Tsumkwe, the town at the centre of the region, and 4 months

conducting research in different rural territories within the Nyae conservancy—neither consecutively. I first visited the region a month prior, during a pilot trip to Namibia after having spent nearly a year and a half struggling to secure a viable permit in Botswana. Given the time restraints imposed upon me by these delays, and the need to quickly get my research underway, I chose to work in Tsumkwe where the social (and specifically, the religious) landscape appeared to be complex and intriguing. My research in Botswana had hoped to uncover points of convergence and divergence in shamanism and Christianity. I was particularly interested in how Naro shamans who were also Christian pastors navigated the moral and material claims that emerged from these. My primary interests, in short, were sources of contradiction and experiences of ambivalence.

Though I had hoped not to stray too far from my original research proposal, the focus on the nexus between shamanism and Christianity turned out not to be the most productive line of enquiry. Without the opportunity to spend a year developing a new research proposal, and to become acquainted with existing literature on the Nyae region, I took an omnibus approach to my research. Whenever an interesting research theme emerged, I followed this theme in every possible direction. My interest had initially been in the binary of egalitarianism or hierarchy and equality or inequality as they appeared in the regional literature and on the extent to which these concepts were misunderstood or misused within social theory. It became clear over the course of my research, however, that these binaries were not an appropriate focus for my research. Rather, it was uncertainty, and the way people navigate different experiences of it through different obligations to share or to be present to one another, that was in question. So, too, were the experiences of ambivalence that these processes gave rise to. Egalitarianism or hierarchy featured here only insofar as the ways of moving or the relationships that emerged as people navigated these experiences uncertainty could be described as such. Uncertainty and ambivalence later formed the glue that helped bring my research themes together.

During my pilot visit to the region, I requested permission to carry out research from both the manager of the Nyae Conservancy[6] (NNC) and from the Ju|'hoan Traditional Authority (JUTA). They both signed letters of support, which I then used to

[6] The Nyae Nyae Conservancy (the organisation) refers to the organisation responsible for managing the Nyae Nyae conservancy (the geographic region). Throughout this thesis, when referring to the former, "Conservancy" is capitalized, whereas when referring to the latter "conservancy" is in lowercase.

apply for a research permit. While waiting for a year-long research permit, I carried out my research with three-month research permits. These were further supported by the Council of Churches in Namibia, the Legal Assistance Centre, the Nyae Development Foundation Namibia, and The University Centre for Studies in Namibia. Upon receiving my first three-month research permit, I moved to the Nyae conservancy. The Nyae Conservancy put me in touch with a member of the Ju|'hoan Transcription Group, who was fluent in English and agreed to teach me the local language and to let me live at his yard with his family in the north-western edge of Tsumkwe.

*Figure 4 A typical yard in the north-western residential region of Tsumkwe*

I stayed here between October 2014 and December 2014. Most of this time was spent studying the language intensively by recording everyday sentences, listening to these repeatedly, and then practising these upon my return home each day with my tutor's family and people in town or at the territories I visited. Though this period was highly productive in terms of language acquisition, the time spent at my tutor's yard became increasingly counterproductive. My hosts were rarely, if ever, at home, and were reluctant to involve me in their everyday affairs. There were high levels of alcohol consumption and indebtedness in the area, and, partly as a result, the area's inhabitants were considerably worse off than the average resident in Tsumkwe.

At first, this seemed to be a productive opportunity to immerse myself in a rarely discussed (at least not in much depth) facets of the lives of my interlocutors: alcoholism, debt, and violence. My hosts forcefully resisted any attempts for me to accompany them as they roamed through Tsumkwe looking for alcohol and patronage, however, stating that it was "not safe" and "not good" (code, apparently, for being *tàokhomm* "ashamed"). While the issues surrounding alcoholism, debt, and violence were patently obvious, the setup quickly began to negatively affect my research – not only because it was hardly conducive to participant observation but because I became increasingly unsafe. In a bid to participate in the lives of my interlocutors more, I took every opportunity I could to travel with them (something that, given the circumstances, mainly involved transporting them back and forth from their rural territories). The stark contrast between life in Tsumkwe and life in the rural territories in the Nyae conservancy impressed itself upon me during this time. I became increasingly aware that people moved frequently between their territories and town, between drinking heavily and roaming in search for patronage and gathering bush foods and spending time with their families.

Between January 2015 and April 2015, I therefore decided to shift my base from Tsumkwe to the rural territories scattered across the conservancy, whilst retaining a high degree of mobility. It was my hope that shifting my base would give me the opportunity to become more intimate with my interlocutors and therefore gain their trust in ways that would be more conducive to participant observation. This participant observation would not be limited, in turn, to (infrequently) spending time with them at their yards making crafts, sitting around their fires at dawn and dusk, and occasionally going hunting or gathering. By being mobile, it was my aim not only to develop as many potentially productive relationships as possible, but also to emulate what seemed to be an intuitive form of participant observation in itself – roaming. This was informed by my previous fieldwork experience in Botswana, where it was customary for my interlocutors to move between the yards of those whom they could call upon to care for them. The situation was much the same in the Nyae region, making the practice of "roaming" a highly productive form of participant observation.

These approaches were somewhat at odds with one another, however. Roaming, when it was not *with* but *between* groups of interlocutors, militated against the development of intimacy to some degree. These were two different forms of roaming that my interlocutors engaged in but which I was unable to emulate completely. This prompted

me to establish myself more permanently with a single family in the latter half of my research and shift my base back to Tsumkwe. This was made possible by the fact that, during the preceding few months, I established a wider network and was able to establish myself in a space that appeared to be most conducive to my research aims. I remained here, in the yard of a Ju|'hoan family living in the "marginalised" section of Tsumkwe (a division discussed further in Chapter 2), up to the completion of my research in December 2015. During this time, I accompanied my hosts as they moved back and forth between different families living in Tsumkwe and between different rural territories in the Nyae conservancy following work or relatives. The intimacy that prevailed was aided not only by the willingness with which my interlocutors allowed me to accompany them in their daily movements, unlike in my earlier fieldwork, but also the willingness with which they agreed to let me sleep near to them in my canvas tent. Each morning—during my time in the rural territories and in town—we woke up together, ate our meals together, cooked and did chores together, sat and chatted together, and walked into the bush or travelled to town together.

*Figure 5 A Ju|'hoan family gathered around their fire in Tsumkwe at night*

In return for the hospitality of my various hosts, I provided a package of food each day which consisted of 2kg rice or pasta, 3 tins of vegetables, 1 packet of powdered soup, a handful of potatoes, several onions, salt, spice, tea, coffee, 1kg of sugar, oil, and

occasionally meat or milk. The decision to compensate my hosts with food packages was largely motivated by my desire to eat with them. My interlocutors suffered such enormous poverty that without these food packages, we would have gone most days (as they do) without food. When they did receive cash, this often went towards alcohol, and so compensating my hosts with food also prevented bringing about the situation I had sought to escape when making the decision to shift my base away from my initial hosts. Doing so, rather than paying my hosts for having me in cash, meant not only giving them access to cheaper food but also helping them avoid being bombarded with requests from others for cash, especially to purchase alcohol. The prospect of being overwhelmed with requests was a normal part of life for my interlocutors, but it was also something heightened by my own presence. It was not only the case that people requested assistance more frequently from me, as a |*'hun* (white person), but also from my hosts, who were assumed to be benefitting excessively from my presence. As a neighbour put it memorably, "You'll be poor like us again when the white woman leaves!". Managing these tensions, as Unni Wikan (1976) similarly writes about her research in Cairo, Egypt, was not easy.

I generally agreed to assist people—allowing these moments to double up as productive opportunities to become more integrated into the lives of different people, to learn the language, and to see new parts of the conservancy without having to arrive unannounced. I was also aware, however, that doing so was problematic (not only for me or for my interlocutors, but also for the scores of other researchers with varying budgets). From the perspective of several white residents (primarily farmers, teachers, professional hunters, or lodge managers), my willingness to assist people in this regard was foolish – a case of "letting them abuse me". These racialised narratives hark back to a time when the only relationships between whites and "Bushmen" within the region were occupational and being "too nice" or becoming "too soft" was to risk shifting the power dynamics in their favour. As this thesis shows, however, demanding is not an act directed exclusively at wealthy strangers with whom they re-enact a paternalistic past (Ferguson 2013). These are defining features of their lives with one another, and of what it means to live a "good" life and be a "good" person, as are experiences of shame in refusing demands. From the perspective of my interlocutors, then, demanding or sharing were actions not restricted to relationships between insiders and outsiders but were everyday features of relationships among insiders. Nonetheless, being "white", and particularly

being a "white" South African, did change the way people seemed to think about, and behave around, me. As it became clear, people generally assumed that refusal to help or share was based on my unwillingness (a distinctly "white" trait), rather than symptomatic of my lack of resources or my budgetary frugality. When I stated that my reason for not sharing was because I wanted to make sure the resources I had would not run out, people laughed at me. "You are white", they would say, seemingly amazed by my shamelessness but also somewhat tongue-in-cheek, "money never runs out for you."

As the section above shows, these forms of essentialist categorisation are a key part of life for my interlocutors. These are not simply throwbacks to the apartheid regime, but part of broader attempts to come to terms with inequality and difference. The statement that money would never run out for me was obviously false (insofar as I was on a strict research budget set just above the UK national minimum wage), but it was also obviously true (insofar as there were many, albeit mostly temporary, employment opportunities that awaited me upon my return. It nevertheless changed the way I approached the issue of payments. It made little sense, as many people had suggested, to not give too much lest "people think you have more money than you do". They already thought that, and, in a sense, I was better off than they. It made more sense to me to be very honest about what was available, how it needed to be spent, and where I was able to help others, not simply as a research strategy but because it felt like the right thing to do. This was entirely alien to me, coming from a social context within which people rarely talk about what money they have and how they spend it, but it was precisely what my interlocutors were used to and appreciated. In fact, the approach was formed, in part, by watching how my interlocutors went about the difficult work of refusing one another by giving lengthy explanations as to why it was necessary to do so. Even though there was always a degree of scepticism, people generally responded positively to this transparent approach and sought thereafter to find ways to collaborate with me rather than simply request my assistance.

The sense of unease that accompanied me speaks to an enduring legacy within anthropology, or social science more generally, to assume that there are "total social systems" *out there* (see Graeber 2013) that we should aim to represent as fully as possible. As Bernard (2006: 342) notes, anthropological fieldwork—based as it is primarily on participant observation—*should* involve "deception and impression management". The suggestion here is that if we downplay our status as researchers, and we refrain from

allowing our research questions to set the narrative completely, we are less likely to influence the responses our interlocutors give. We are more likely, in other words, to reach the "goal of objectivity" (Turnbull cited in ibid: 371), of more accurately discerning the fundamentally different ideas that our interlocutors might have about the world. Our data, based on the fallacy that an absolute or comprehensive set of ideas are out there and therefore in our grasp, should be "things you see and hear in natural settings" (ibid: 343). The suggestion is that our status as researchers—and, more importantly, our own confusion over the meaning or significance of local concepts and practices—creates an "unnatural setting" that gives rise to confusion and disagreement. Rather than recognising confusion and disagreement as "natural", we sway towards declaring it either anomalous or a consequence of sudden, radical change. This overlooks the possibility that people may normally not really know what's going on, or that people in our field-sites might hold multiple, even contradictory, views on the topics we research.

This was precisely the state of affairs for my own research, where—despite being celebrated for being almost dogmatic in their enforcement of levelling mechanisms (Woodburn 1982)—people expressed ambivalence about whether the cornerstones of egalitarian praxis (namely, demand sharing and derision) were invariably "good". It is only by taking this ambivalence seriously, that "trust" and "uncertainty" emerge as salient features through which people contemplate the value, so to speak, of their own values in different contexts. This is not to say that these data are the next best thing to having access to my interlocutors' "silent soliloquizing" (Bloch 1998: 23) about what they know to be "good". It is based partially on this—with my research questions often starting with "*Ka re jan ka*…" (Is it good if…). It is also based, however, on observing how people behave and paying close attention to their contemplations about the "immediate unpredictability" and "ultimate unknowability" of the worlds within which they see themselves living. Within my own research, speaking with people openly about my research questions allowed these conversations to flourish. The risk of having my interlocutors simply tell me what they thought I wanted to hear was nonetheless a concern, something that I delicately managed with frequent "tell-me-more probes" (see Bernard 2006: 219), open-ended questions, and listening.

Speaking openly about my budget was not simply a way of reminding people of my primary task, in order to solicit different data on what was "good" and within what contexts, it was also about being a "good" person myself. This was informed partially by

the Kafkaesque institutional review board process that I endured in Botswana, where being extremely open about my research questions and objectives was a basic requirement for gaining informed consent. It was also because—as the long-term subjects of anthropological research—my interlocutors felt (rightly so) that they should benefit personally from their participation. To do that, they would need to know when they were participating, something I made every attempt to clarify and specify, but which was, by definition, difficult to do. These are tensions that are usually easy to navigate when carrying out participant observation within one small community, since our interlocutors are then all people with whom we eat and who share in any joy we encounter. When working with multiple small communities, which form part of a larger community who are always aware of one another's circumstances, these tensions become more difficult to deal with as people find themselves to be the subjects of participant observation but are palpably aware of not receiving any direct payment. My interlocutors occasionally reminded me of this by pointing out the injustice of anthropological research. As one of my closest interlocutors poignantly summarised, "The thing about anthropologists is that they come here on aeroplanes and in their cars, with their notebooks and recorders, and they leave only dust as they go". Or worse, in some ways, we go and write about everyone but only one small family (often the same one) ever seems to benefit.

To counter some of these tensions and ill-feelings, I only ever wrote notes in private or when carrying out unstructured interviews. It was not that I wanted to sustain the myth that I wasn't there to record and write about their lives, but because writing notes constantly made people feel uncomfortable and I wanted to forestall the sentiment that that was my *only* concern and that I was simply "shopping" for "culture". Wherever I was in a situation in which people became the subjects of my research without formally consenting or benefitting, I arranged to carry out unstructured interviews to ask questions not about the specific event but about the research themes it spoke to. These were either sharing, humour, kinship, debt, work, or healing. In return for their participation, I would give sugar, tea, tobacco, and milk to the value of approximately NAD100, and always asked if they wanted to stop the discussion after approximately an hour. Over the course of my research, I carried out unstructured interviews of this kind (some multiple times) with a total of 108 individuals (33 women, 75 men). The bias towards men resonates with Lorna Marshall's (1976: 176) experience, women "were [generally] more apprehensive of strangeness and strangers" and "said explicitly that they feared they would not know the

correct answers to my questions". This was true not only with respect to interviews and conversations but also hosting and assisting. It was not simply that women were less literate or less proficient in English, but that they were reluctant to get involved in research. This amounts to a gap within the thesis on issues surrounding gender, one that sits alongside gaps concerning differences in generational experiences.


*Figure 6 A typical interview set-up with some of the goods given as compensation*

Nonetheless, as my proficiency in the language improved and people became accustomed to my presence, my participation in their lives became more intimate and my relationships with women became more equal to those I had with men. Women still generally resisted being interviewed, but their voices emerged from conversations to avoid a bias towards men within the thesis overall.

These interviews and conversations were carried out in a mixture of Afrikaans, English, and Ju|'hoansi. Despite my ability to follow their responses and to ask questions without a translator in the latter half of my research, I still always had a bilingual assistant with me whom I paid NAD50 per interview. I asked for assistance from different people, sometimes relatives of the person being interviewed, depending on the topic of the interview. Their role was typically restricted to rephrasing my questions so that they were clear and made sense to those who participated. These were recorded and transcribed

(with assistance from the Ju|'hoan Transcription Group in Tsumkwe) and form the basis of many of the quotations that appear in this thesis. Others were paraphrased from my notes on conversations and observations. While discourse analysis (as Chapter 5 shows mostly clearly) is an important feature of my research, "what goes without saying" (Bloch 1998) is that this does not mean that my research findings are based upon a "few selected verbal statements". Through participant observation we come to "live in a coordinated way" (ibid: 25) with our interlocutors, to "intuit what life in those places is like 'from the inside'" (Bloch 2017: 37). Through this process, we can question our presuppositions and speculate about the "conditions and possibilities of human life in the world we inhabit" in the way they do (Ingold 2017: 23). Within my own research, this meant critically engaging with the meanings of "egalitarianism", "hierarchy", "equality", and "inequality" within social theory, and speculating (with my interlocutors) on different experiences of uncertainty shape the forms of sharing and patterns of movement ordinarily associated with egalitarianism.

With that said, unstructured or semi-structured interviews also served as sources of insight into areas of social life that I struggled, or was reticent, to gain access to. This is most obvious with respect to the topics of credit/debt, alcohol, and violence (as explored in Chapter 5). Being a woman, and being white, made these difficult topics to research. Not only were creditors reticent, if not outright hostile, towards me when I was walking around visiting shebeens and stores and asking questions about credit practices and the sale of alcohol, but doing so also (as I was repeatedly warned) put me at significant risk of being harmed. This became an enduring tension of my work. On the one hand, I felt compelled to immerse myself fully in the lives of my interlocutors by drinking and roaming with them, and on the other hand, I refrained from doing so faced with the fear of being sexually or physically assaulted. This is not to say that I avoided these areas of social life entirely, but that when it came to the issues of drinking and getting into and out of debt, I relied more heavily on what was reported than on participant observation. While this means that I was not always able to compare how people actually behave with how they say they behave (referring both to themselves and others), I was witness to their own reflections on this discrepancy. The adoption of a first-person perspective (see Mattingly 2012: 170) is, in this sense, as much inevitable as it is well-suited to the overarching focus of the thesis on how people contemplate and navigate the moral

ambivalence that emerges in the process of getting by and maintaining autonomy in the face of uncertainty.

## Outline of the thesis

This thesis begins by considering the region's loaded history from around 1950 to now—meticulously documented by the many anthropologists, film-makers, and development workers who have passed through the region over this period. The primary aim of **chapter 1** is to provide a brief summary of this literature for the unversed reader, but it goes beyond this by considering whether these processes of narrativization have themselves shaped the way people understand one another. Most notably, it considers how the region's history, and its narrativization, has shaped the way Ju|'hoan speakers have come to understand themselves as "people who help each other". Interspersed throughout this account are the voices of my interlocutors, providing their own reflections on these matters and insights into the way this history is lived today. They highlight three key moments. First, there is the time of hunting and gathering. Second, there is the time of the apartheid administration and the Namibian War of Independence. And finally, there is the contemporary moment: one characterised by political empowerment through community-based natural resource management, and by ongoing racialised conflict and a growing informal economy.

**Chapter 2** focuses resolutely on this contemporary moment—on the push and pull that has ensued between the rural territories, where people hunt, gather, and engage in community-based natural resource management, and the urban town at the centre of the region, where people go in the hope that those with more will share what they have. It moves beyond the conventional scholarly approach which asserts that the "prototypical" way to go about soliciting acts of sharing is by demand: either by taking goods directly or saying "give". It shows that these are in fact two distinct forms of sharing. Common to both is the assumption that as Ju|'hoan speakers they will give in to the demands of those with less without expecting repayment. What makes them distinct is the extent to which people trust one another to make themselves present to be demanded from. Following an overview of formal sources of income within the region which come regularly but are rarely enough on their own, the chapter turns to the way people are compelled to roam and to demand from those who "cannot be trusted". It focuses on the way people navigate the ambivalence they experience in the process—most notably, by drinking and becoming "open" to one another.

The impression one is left with is that this is a space not of enduring poverty, but of undulating flows of abundance and lack that people stabilise by roaming and demanding from others. Trust is a pressing concern, not only because "equality is what matters" (Woodburn 1998: 50), but because they depend on people making themselves present to be demanded from in the future when the balance of wealth shifts. **Chapter 3** examines these concerns in more depth, focusing on the way people confront them through mockery—in particular, the mocking phrase "you're a trickster!". Contributing to these suspicions are not only concerns over whether a person can be trusted to share the values inscribed in demand sharing, but over how these values might impinge upon other ways of sharing—notably, those which regard reciprocity or repayment as the norm. These ways of sharing play an important role in mitigating risk, but they come up against broader commitments to autonomy that curb their enforcement. This tension, incidentally, is one that the trickster figure has long been thought to instantiate. Here, it exposes a paradox that, in contexts of uncertainty, taking sharing too seriously in the now, undermines the potential it has for fostering redistribution or supporting autonomy over time. Mockery confronts this paradox by compelling tricksters to "give themselves up".

Having considered relationships between Ju|'hoan speakers in town, who regard one another as "people who help each other" but who cannot be sure of one another's movements or motives, **Chapter 4** turns to relationships between Ju|'hoan speakers at home who regard one another as "kin", and the distinct obligations they have to one another. The chapter examines a tension—this time, not between egalitarianism and experiences of uncertainty but between their broader commitments to being "people who help each other" and to being kin. The presence of this tension goes against prevailing narratives on "egalitarian societies" which state that they follow "universal systems of kin classification"—in other words, that they define any strangers they encounter as kin, and treat them in much the same way. Through an exploration of customs of generalised joking and avoidance, and the way that groups of kin occupy, and defend their rights to, distinct "territories", this chapter presents evidence to the contrary. Drawing upon two fields of research: one on kinship and the social origins of inequality, and one on the legacies of territory mapping within the region, the chapter considers the different socio-economic and historical, political processes from which these distinctions may arise and through which they may be maintained.

Having covered relationships between those who call one another "true people", the chapters that follow turn to relationships between *true people* and those they call *other people*: black Africans, white Europeans, and spirits or gods. **Chapter 5** confronts definitions of "otherness" head on—exploring how these definitions are articulated both explicitly, through what they say about *other people*, and implicitly, through the use of a distinct third-person pronoun that signifies "otherness". Where tracing explicit discourse gives the impression that "otherness" is an essence of certain people, tracing implicit discourse gives the impression that it is a category of actions or processes. The chapter focuses on relationships between Ju|'hoansi and black Africans, in their respective categories, largely as debtors and creditors. Contributing to the work of scholars in economic anthropology interested in the ambiguity of debt—something at once enslaving and liberating—the chapter shows the role that the discourse of "otherness" plays in these processes. One the one hand, it features as an essentialising discourse that precludes any possibility of mutual understanding between creditors and debtors. On the other hand, it features as a processual discourse that guides debtors in their encounters with those they fear may "ruin" them, but who are vital sources of subsistence and joy.

**Chapter 6** picks up on these themes, shifting the focus to relationships between Ju|'hoansi and white Europeans—most notably, social entrepreneurs who work as brokers between Ju|'hoan producers and global markets. The chapter recounts one social enterprise that employed 24 Ju|'hoan women to produce beaded crafts for a high-end international market. Drawing upon anthropological discussions of social enterprise and regional debates over the conservancy model, the chapter situates this encounter within broader efforts to source cheap labour and materials, but also within local dynamics that have seen labour play a minor part in development efforts. The chapter then describes the efforts gone to by Ju|'hoan women to challenge the basis upon which their payments were set, and the way they drew upon the values of demand sharing in proposing a solution. Cutting across concerns with the value of labour or goods, they make the argument that it is better to get paid less by someone who takes a more equal share, than get paid more by someone who seeks to profit disproportionately—an argument that explicitly valorises a kind of transparency. This sparks a discussion about the scalability of demand sharing—one that asks more questions than it answers, but which points to new avenues for research on the role of knowledge in new redistributive regimes.

The preceding chapters deal with the recurring question of how to go about confronting those whose motives or movements are hard to know. **Chapter 7** turns to the question of how to go about confronting those whose motives and movements are not in doubt, but whose capacities are fundamentally different—and, most importantly, lend themselves to violence and oppression. It focuses on relationships between Ju|'hoansi and spirits, including watchful and vengeful ancestors, agents at the hands of vindictive sorcerers, and the malevolent, roaming spirits associated with Christianity. The tension that emerges here is not between acting and the knowledge one needs to do so with confidence, but with the difficulty of acting—in other words, between the right to act in a manner of one's choosing and being prevented from doing so by more powerful others. The chapter focuses on *n|om*, a Ju|'hoan concept that both describes this problem of capacity and offers a means to address it. The concept has a long history of engagement within the regional literature, but its role in navigating sudden losses of vitality has been confined to accounts of shamanism. By tracing how the concept is employed across several domains, the chapter uncovers what is a more general paradox of egalitarianism, and lets the concept speak to broader disciplinary discussions on personhood. In doing so, the chapter rounds off the central theme of the thesis—on experiences of moral ambivalence and the way people go about navigating them.

Taken together, the chapters that compose this thesis tell the story of a community at once empowered and with a strong sense of themselves as people who help each other, and struggling to maintain this status in the face of uncertainty. These dynamics offer new insights into the affective dimensions of egalitarianism, but also into the way different forms of uncertainty may themselves be generative of the values that have long been associated with egalitarianism.

# Chapter 1:
# The Nyae Nyae Conservancy


*Figure 7 Sign at the southern entrance into the Nyae Conservancy*

The Nyae Nyae Conservancy is a communal area in the north-eastern corner of the Otjozondjupa region. The term "Nyae Nyae" is a simplification of the Ju|'hoan term *N||oq'an!'ae*, meaning "place [*!'ae*] of rocks [*n||oq'an*]". The name refers to the stretches of carbonate sedimentary rocks that capture surface water in the rainy season (see Simmonds and Smalley 2000). According to the oral histories of the region's long-standing residents, the Ju|'hoansi, these rocky pans (and the freedom to move between them) are what made the region hospitable when there were no boreholes to provide permanent sources of water. With the transition to independence, knowledge of these sources of water, either pans or pits, served as one of the primary means through which residents were able to claim ancestral rights to the region. This knowledge continues to speak of a "time of hunting and gathering" when they "depended solely on the bush"—knowledge that plays an important role in continued efforts to maintain access to the region by legitimising their claims of indigeneity. At the same time that this knowledge has been liberating and empowering, it has also given rise to a series of stereotypes about them as hunter-gatherers in pristine isolation or, at their most pejorative, as "things from

the bush" (Suzman 1999, also see Sylvain 2001). Over the course of the transition, Ju|'hoansi have at once sought to capitalise on these stereotypes to make a living through cultural tourism and research and to challenge them through indigenous media or to resist them through local advocacy. Such responses have created certain enduring tensions, and these get played out in numerous ways as people move between their rural territories and the relatively urban town of Tsumkwe.

These stereotypes have been the battle not only of the people themselves, but also of researchers who have been heavily divided over the degree to which "hunter-gatherers", such as those living within the Kalahari Desert, have been historically isolated from neighbouring pastoralists and horticulturalists, and subsisted exclusively from hunting and gathering (see Wilmsen 1989, Gulbrandsen 1991, Lee and Guenther 1991, Kuper 1992, Kurtz 1994, Gordon and Sholto-Douglas 2000, Kenrick and Lewis 2004, Guenther 2014, Lee 2014).[7] The central debate, later known as "the Great Kalahari Debate" (Kuper 1992), was sparked by the publication of Wilmsen's (1989) *Land Filled with Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari.* The text argued against the portrait of pristine isolation that had dominated scholarship on the region up to that point. By contrast, Wilmsen argued, the Ju|'hoansi ("Zhu" in the text) were people who had kept livestock and traded extensively. Furthermore, their egalitarianism was a recent function of having been deliberately and systematically marginalised for hundreds of years. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to return to these debates in much depth, it is worth briefly considering the value of different positions that have been taken in response to these issues. Of particular relevance to the focus of this thesis—on egalitarianism, and the different factors that affect the way or extent to which it is pursued—is the shared recognition of "marginality" as an experience common to either history.

Speaking of a series of historical moments, from the time of hunting and gathering, to the time of the apartheid regime and the presence of the military, and the current time of debt, alcohol, and unemployment—each emerges as a time of "great suffering". Their retrospective accounts, in other words, do not appear to match the narratives that dominated early scholarship which argue that long periods of "affluence" preceded experiences of suffering and marginality (also see Kaplan 2000). This

[7] Contemporary developments in genetics, archaeology, and in social theory have come to caste these debates in new light and bring more nuance to the divides they cleaved within the field (see Wengrow and Graeber 2015, Montinaro *et al* 2017, Scerri *et al* 2018, and Schlebusch and Jakobsson 2018).

scholarship began largely in the late 1960s, following the 1966 Man the Hunter conference. Presented here were the earliest, or at least the most substantial, ethnographic studies that spoke of highly isolated bands of foragers who subsisted exclusively from hunting and gathering. The conference sought to unsettle the common assumption, owed largely to the writing of 17th-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes (cited in Gowdy 1998: xviii), that life was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short". To the contrary, hunter-gatherer societies were shown to be "generally well fed, egalitarian, ecologically sustainable, and socially and intellectually complex and to have an abundance of leisure time". The intellectual struggle was highly valuable, in that it challenged dominant discourses—especially those that sought to modernise or develop hunter-gatherers and push them into more, seemingly, productive industries such as agriculture or pastoralism. With the gaze set too narrowly on comparing modes of subsistence, however, these studies overlooked some of the more general features that may have cut across them—such as certain experiences of uncertainty.

Though this narrative was supported by ethnographic case studies of "hunter-gatherers" from across the globe, they were perhaps most heavily influenced by ethnographic case studies of the !Kung (as they were then known) of the Kalahari Desert. Most notable among these were those written by the Marshall family (based on research carried out between 1950 and 1958) and Richard Borshay Lee (whose research was carried out between 1963 and 1965). These ethnographies also formed the basis of Marshall Sahlins' (1968, also see 1972) seminal essay "Notes on the Original Affluent Society" in which this narrative was principally traced out. The argument was not that this was a society free from suffering, but rather that they had "a kind of material plenty" (Ibid: 9), based on limited wants within limited means. These findings were distorted over time in popular discourse to suggest that they were permanently full and happy. Their research states clearly, however, though perhaps not frequently enough, that the "Kalahari hunter-gatherers" were particularly vulnerable to droughts and, even at the best of times, their "sufficient" access to food and water was only ever "barely so" (Ibid: 12). The "plenty" they experienced was a function not of material abundance, then, but of social mechanisms that "systematically eliminate[d] distinctions…of wealth, of power, and of status" (Woodburn 1982: 434) which might undermine the sharing and cooperation that made life possible.

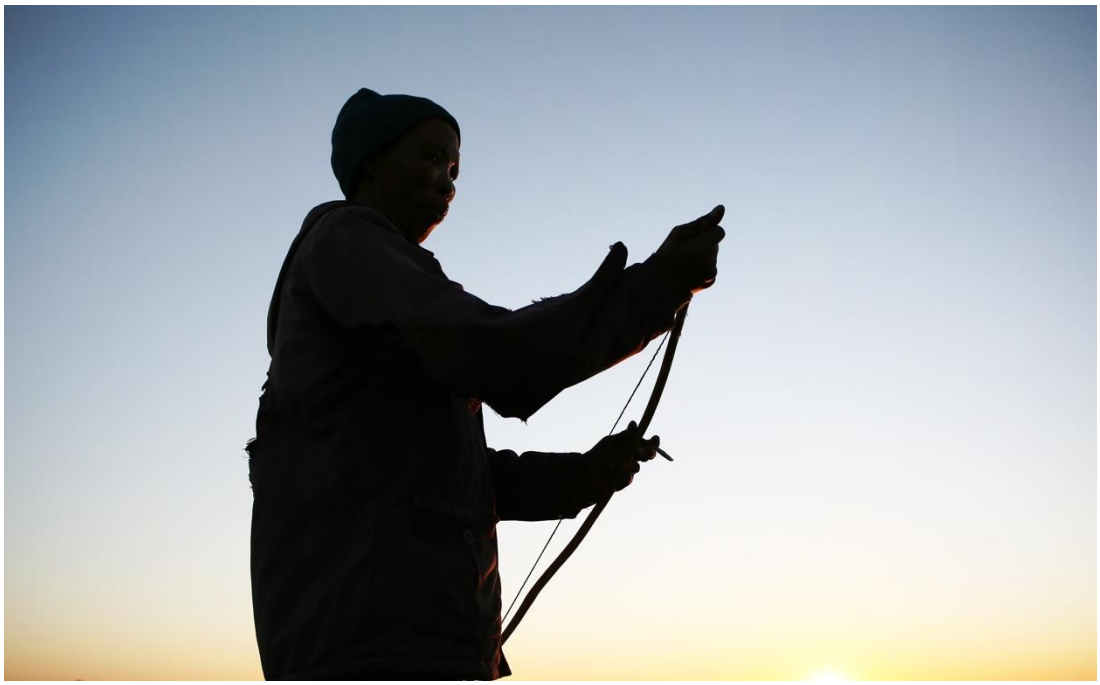

*Figure 8 A Ju|'hoan man adjusts his bow on the way back from a hunt*

A preoccupation with hunting and gathering, however, has generally distracted from a more general discussion of the conditions under which "egalitarianism" might be constructed and disassembled. Such a discussion attends to the fact that "egalitarianism" is not a concern solely of those who hunt and gather. As Day *et al (*1999) show convincingly, there are "marginal people who live for the moment" across diverse contexts (people living within "immediate-return" over "delayed-return" systems, to use Woodburn's [1982] terms), not only those of foraging or recently post-foraging. A preoccupation with a "deep hunting-gathering past", however, tended to persist. These findings—along with the reality that very few contemporary "hunter-gatherers" lived predominantly by hunting and gathering—were seen as evidence of the resilience of "hunter-gatherer living arrangements through many sorts of environmental change" (Biesele 1993: 13). A deep past as hunter-gatherers, in other words, saw certain forms of sociality, namely egalitarianism, valued over others. This disposition towards egalitarianism was variously described as a "hunting-gathering imaginative substrate", a "foraging mode of thought", or by referring to equalising processes rooted in resilient "hunter-gatherer situations". It had a dangerous proximity, as Gulbrandsen (1991: 86) notes, to psychological reductionism—to the performance of sharing, for example, irrespective of contextual factors, or without experiencing a degree of ambivalence when these factors are considered.

The first people to carry out long-term ethnographic research among the Ju|'hoansi, and begin to trace these forms of sociality, were the Marshall family—Lorna Marshall, Laurence Kennedy Marshall, and their children Elizabeth Marshall-Thomas and John Marshall. They first came to the Nyae Nyae region in 1951 in search of "Bushmen in their natural surroundings" (see Barbash 2017: xxii), motivated similarly by our hunter-gatherer past and the possibility of finding people still living by hunting and gathering. At the time of this expedition, small groups of Ju|'hoansi were found scattered across the vast region from what is now Khaudum[8] National Park in the north-east, to what is now known as the Omaheke region in the south, and the Dobe region in the west of what is now Botswana.[9] These groups, later known as "bands", were mobile but claimed rights to particular *n!oresi* (territories) corresponding to particular pans or clusters of resources (see Biesele and Hitchcock 2011, Marshall and Ritchie 1983). Unlike the many other "Bushmen" people they had encountered on the way to the Nyae Nyae region, the Ju|'hoansi of the Nyae Nyae region were said to be not "much acculturated", or at least the acculturation had "not gone so far that a study… would not be valuable" (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 64). Apart from "occasional trading trips, or visits to Bushmen relatives who are working for [Tswana] or [Herero] in western [Botswana]" (Marshall 1957: 2), they were said to rarely come into contact with people who did not speak their language. There was "some trade wire and a few minor items like that," wrote their research assistant Bob Dyson (cited in Barbash 2017: 64), but little else to have exposed them to the "ills of the modern world".

It was for these reasons that the Marshall family settled on the Nyae Nyae region as the appropriate site for their research. The research took place over an eight-year period and was divided up into six separate expeditions. They based themselves at three territories, G|am in the south (in the south), |Aotcha (at the centre of the Nyae Nyae region), and Tco|'ana (in the north-western corner) and worked with twenty-eight distinct "bands" – each laying claim to a particular territory within the wider Nyae Nyae region. Together, the Marshall family took over 32,000 photographs, recorded hundreds of hours of film, and wrote over 14,000 pages of notes on everything from the environment and subsistence practices, to kinship, religion, and language. The narrative

[8] The word "Khaudum" is in fact a simplification of the Ju|'hoan name, *!Hao dom*, meaning "a hole into which many people fall" referring to the large, open pans found there.
[9] These are all regions where Ju|'hoansi who speak mutually intelligible dialects are still found today – though they are now divided by borders and farm boundaries.

to emerge from this research was that these "bands" were neither "desperately hungry nor hurried" – there was "enough food and water", and they appeared to "not have to struggle against anything that I can see" (Lorna Marshall cited in Barbash 2017: 65). These findings were later corroborated by Richard Borshay Lee's ethnographic research among those Ju|'hoansi living east of the Nyae Nyae region in what is now Botswana. He led the multidisciplinary Harvard Kalahari Research Group, along with anthropologist and evolutionary biologist Irven DeVore, which culminated in over twelve long-term studies of the region (see Lee and DeVore 1998: 10-17, also see Biesele 2003). Though they witnessed "an accelerating pace of change", their findings similarly suggested that the Ju|'hoansi were not living a "dismal" existence, but instead had a highly nutritious diet which they worked only a few hours each day to procure. Rather than warring, they were deemed "harmless" (Marshall-Thomas 1959), and rather than suffer from short life expectancies due to disease and danger, they were said to be "comparably" free from these concerns.

Those who grew up during this time take enormous pride in sharing their knowledge of the region's fauna and flora and their skills in utilising these. They speak animatedly about every plant that was gathered, every animal that was hunted, and how they were then processed and distributed. They also speak openly about this time, as noted above, as one of "great suffering". They owe these circumstances of hardship to the reality of living in the Kalahari basin—a lowland desert region that covers most of Botswana, Namibia, and parts of Angola, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe—where seasons are highly varied. "Sometimes we would have heavy rain, and the animals would be fat, and there would be food for long periods of time," one elderly Ju|'hoan man recounted, "… but most of the time we were always hungry, always working hard, looking for food and water". This uncertainty played an important part in motivating many Ju|'hoansi to move from their territories to where the Marshall family were based, and later to the administrative centre set up by the apartheid regime. The Marshall family had arrived during an extended drought, during which it had been particularly difficult to find food and water. "We worked tirelessly…", a former resident recalled to me, "…filming hunting, dancing, gathering, telling stories, teaching them about our language. They wanted to know everything. We would work from early in the morning until late in the evening, but they would give us tea, sugar, maize-meal, and clothes and it was very nice." It was a working relationship that came abruptly to an end when, after eight years of

research in the Nyae Nyae region, John Marshall was banned from re-entering the country until 1978. The "commissioner of Bushmen affairs for South West Africa", Claude McIntyre, had been monitoring their research since their first expedition—upon which he was a member, with the aim to scout out the site for a "Bushman reserve" and to monitor their work. The activities of the Marshall family increasingly came into conflict with these plans, leading to them being declared *personae non gratae* and bringing about a new, but very different, era of working for "whites" in exchange for welfare.

*Figure 9 Arriving into Tsumkwe on the road from Grootfontein in the east*

**"Where the roads all end"**

During the time of the early expeditions—with the exception of those led by Siegfried Passarge (see Wilmsen 1997)—the Nyae Nyae region was an unmapped and unknown territory. There were no roads into the region, and the nearest town was over 100 kilometres away. With the Marshall family no longer present, Claude McIntyre moved permanently to the Nyae Nyae region and sought to bring an end to this remoteness. He established an administrative centre for the apartheid regime. The town was set up at Tsumkwe (a simplification of the Ju|'hoan name, Tjum!kui), a rocky plateau just north-west of Nyae Nyae pan—the largest pan in the region which holds water well into the dry season and is a sanctuary for flamingos and other migratory birds. It became the site

for the permanent and sedentary resettlement of Ju|'hoansi in order to incorporate them into "modern life". This new life, the Ju|'hoansi were informed, would promise employment through the building of roads, training in agriculture, access to medical care and food rations, and a permanent source of water with the drilling of a borehole.

"Everyone moved there," N!ae, a former resident of |Aotcha, informed me, as we spoke of Tsumkwe's beginnings. "We were given maize-meal, sugar, and tobacco; we couldn't get any of those items if we remained in our territories after the Marshall family left." The settlement quickly grew in size, attracting Ju|'hoansi not only from |Aotcha but from across the Nyae Nyae region who sought out some of the benefits that their extended families had received through their work with the Marshall family. "There were so many different people there. Ju|'hoansi from across the region settled in Tsumkwe. There were many strangers." |Am, an elderly woman from southern Nyae Nyae, recounted. These various strangers were called together, and the administration were said to have started by putting able-bodied Ju|'hoan men to work constructing government buildings. Women were then employed as cleaners and cooks both in government education and healthcare projects, and in the private homes of government employees who were stationed in Tsumkwe. After the government buildings were constructed, men were put to work clearing paths for roads that connected the region to Grootfontein and Tsumeb in the west, G|am and the Omaheke region to the south, and what was then the Bechuanaland Protectorate (now Botswana) in the east.

In 1962, the South West Africa (SWA) Administration then started the Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs, often referred to as the "Odendaal Commission". The commission served to consolidate what had been designated as "native reserves" in Namibia into ethnic "homelands", which would be organised along tribal lines as defined in South Africa at the time, under the apartheid regime. Act 54 of 1968, and Act 46 of 1969, South West Africa (followed by Proclamation R208 of 1976, South West Africa), followed, proclaiming "Bushmanland" as a "homeland for the Bushman nation" (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 36). The region was not given self-governing status. Instead, Claude McIntyre was put in charge of co-ordinating several developments including the preparation of agricultural fields and gardens, the introduction of goats and cattle, the initiation of a housing scheme, and the setting up of a police station, government offices, and a store.

By 1969, 12 Ju|'hoan communities had settled in and around Tsumkwe. There were reports of high population density, low rates of employment, and high incidences of violence and alcohol abuse. "Several black families moved into the area at that time, and started selling tobacco, food products, and alcohol," |Kunta, a former resident at |Aotcha, explained. "Many people got jobs with McIntyre, and he paid with food, clothes, and sometimes money. Black Africans prepared alcohol for the days we were paid, and we would then go and drink. The alcohol made you think that people were saying things about you that they didn't say, and it made you want to fight. Everything was mixed up!" By this time, elsewhere in Namibia, the struggle for independence was well underway. Multiple SWAPO leaders were either in exile or imprisoned on Robben Island, South Africa, for having spoken out against South Africa's refusal to grant independence to the vast region that lay mostly beyond their purview. The war had already started waging on the northern border of Namibia and was becoming more than simply a "nuisance" to the apartheid regime.

The regime's attention to the Nyae Nyae region therefore shifted from a concern with managing and developing remote "races" and managing wilderness areas, to setting up army bases within the region and recruiting Ju|'hoan men to track down guerrilla fighters in the remote regions between Nyae Nyae and "Ovamboland" along the border with Angola. From the perspective of colonial officials, these were not entirely antithetical efforts. The widespread recruitment of Ju|'hoansi by the South African Defence Force resulted in an influx of high salaries, and support for dependents in the form of rations, blankets, and other goods (see Kolata 1981). It was estimated that approximately 12,000 "San" (including Ju|'hoansi, !Xun, and Hei||'om speakers from across Namibia and parts of Angola) were ultimately recruited into the military, with three out of every four people in the wider Nyae Nyae region directly or indirectly part of it (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 11). Despite the widespread employment and relative affluence that the militarisation of the region brought, people were said to be largely "idle and debilitated" (Marshall cited in ibid). Militarisation only served to exacerbate the interpersonal fighting, alcohol abuse, and welfare dependency that had come to define the region over that decade.

The war, known as the Namibian War of Independence (or the "South African Border War"), officially started in 1966, when—after over a decade of opposition to the apartheid system of racial segregation, stratification, and resettlement—the United

Nations withdrew the mandate South Africa held to rule over South West Africa, and the South African government failed to concede. From the early 1970s, "San" from across central and northern Namibia, alongside !Xun and Khwe speakers from Angola and the Caprivi region, began being recruited by the South Africa Defence Force (see Lee and Hurlich 1982). A number of army bases were established, first in western "Bushmanland", and then in eastern "Bushmanland" in 1978 with the establishment of "Bushman Battalion 36" at Tsumkwe. !Xun and Khwe speakers were resettled in western Bushmanland, partly in anticipation of their involvement in the war, partly in anticipation of the proclamation that would turn the region into a "homeland" for the "Bushmen nation", !Xun and Khwe refugees were moved to "Bushmanland", where they would later be recognised as a distinct "traditional community" with ancestral rights to the region.

By 1980, there were eight military bases in the region, with a significant proportion of Ju|'hoansi dependent on salaries and rations provided by the military. Some Ju|'hoansi, and a large proportion of !Xun and Khwe speakers, were recruited as trackers. The large army salaries were said to lead to economic stratification between Ju|'hoan families. Ju|'hoan families travelled from as far as Botswana to take advantage of the opportunity, without really knowing "what kind of 'work' they were getting into or what the political consequences of collaborating with an enemy of the possible future government might be" (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 114). Sharing an especially vivid and disturbing account of this time with me was Kxao, a resident from northern Nyae Nyae—close to western Bushmanland where most military activity took place:

> "Some white people arrived and told us that men who were healthy would need to join the army for training. The training base was in Mangetti Dune, approximately 100 kilometres from our homes in the north-western corner of the region. They told us we would be paid and receive food and a place to stay. The training was for six months, and very difficult. We carried 12,5 kg bags on our backs, were injected by nurses in our buttocks with something that made us aggressive, do all sorts of things, and then the training completes with a 70 kilometre walk to the border with *Ovamboland* in the north with only a 1 litre bottle of water and no food. Many people did not make it, their shoes were burning their feet and they turned back and did not become soldiers.
>
> Those who made it became soldiers and started their work, patrolling and looking for black people. We were given guns, and we set bombs. People left the things

> out, and once some children found a bomb and were playing with it and it exploded. We didn't even know whose meat was whose we just put it in a bag and gave it to the person in charge. We were afraid of many things. People would shoot at us from the air. They would shoot at us on the ground. There was nowhere you could hide yourself. Then you would try to think, but you could not think. We would come back home, and we would only be able to stay for a week, but we would be so happy to be back there, enjoying and partying and we would just drink beer and beat each other. Everything became about looking for people to fight."

The account he gave resonates with those of many other Tsumkwe residents, both men and women, who were employed as soldiers or at army barracks when they visited home between periods of service. Physical violence became increasingly normalised at war and at home—these were just "Tsumkwe stories", many of my interlocutors explained. Though it is difficult to trace the impact this period had on people within the region (see Metsola 2006 for a discussion on reintegration), these accounts suggested that not only physical violence, but also certain ways of reckoning and relating to the "waves of people" who had come to populate the region, became normalised. Many of my interlocutors were born after the arrival of the colonial administration and were young adolescents when the SADF established military bases in the region. By that time, many of them were living in Tsumkwe and were dependent on government rations. They had spent little time at their rural territories, hunting and gathering, and said they knew little of it. For them, their lives had been characterised by violence, alcohol, and high infection rates of tuberculosis. "Tsumkwe was a place of death!" exclaimed Kuma, describing what it was like to grow up in the region when most of his relatives were soldiers. Like many others, Kuma had grown up entirely in Tsumkwe and considered himself "a town boy". He had been too young to join the army, and so he had joined others in finding other forms of employment. Young men who were too young or chose not to join the army, or who failed to complete their training, joined others who continued to work constructing roads or new buildings, or for the purposes of mineral prospecting. Women continued to find employment as cleaners or cooks in town or at the army bases, and others found employment as assistants on government programs concerning healthcare or literacy.

Throughout the war period, several reforms were introduced with the aim of changing the way in which the region was governed and used. In the same year as Proclamation R208 of 1976, the Native Areas South West Africa Proclamation R188 was declared which redefined eastern Bushmanland (what would later become the Nyae Nyae Conservancy) as a nature conservation area. The fact that the Ju|'hoansi had, by and large, relocated to Tsumkwe, leaving most of Nyae Nyae unoccupied, made the region more attractive as a potential game reserve within which the existing population would be permitted to remain and work for the reserve. For the apartheid regime, this strategy would serve to retain partial control over regions with potential for tourism, hunting, or conservation, insofar as these would become commercial assets rather than communal assets. Two years later, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 of 1978 proposed a cease-fire and UN-supervised elections. John Marshall returned the same year having produced 20 films of varying length, firmly situating the "lost world of the Kalahari" in popular imagination. Twelve years of the Namibian War of Independence between the South African Defence Force (SADF) and the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), and twenty years of colonial administration had passed, which saw most Ju|'hoansi, including those he had filmed and researched at |Aotcha, resettled in Tsumkwe and dependent on store-bought food and government rations.

As Marshall (2002) noted on touring Tsumkwe for the first time:

> "We saw houses for the white officials, the residence of the commissioner with a little fort on top in case the Bushmen attacked, a new office building with a magistrate's court under the baobab. There was a garage and a generator to provide light for the white community that numbered seven souls. At a segregated distance was a store run with a government loan by a black family."

These sights of dependency were a far cry from the image of self-sufficiency that he and his family had documented prior to the establishment of the colonial administration in the region and had broadcasted to an international audience. Those roaming, isolated "bands" of *true people*—who were said to be mostly isolated and thought to cross paths only occasionally to exploit the same resource, to trade, or to form alliances through marriage—had now become a kind of underclass. They were dependent upon, and at the mercy of, multiple more powerful others in a claustrophobic space "where the roads all end". The direness of this situation compelled John Marshall, alongside colleague Claire Ritchie, to work towards a strategy which could help Ju|'hoansi reclaim their territories

and resist further encroachment and encapsulation. It is worth mentioning this because his efforts, alongside those of other anthropologists who had started working in the region during the Marshall family's absence, had far-reaching effects on the shape that their lives would take and the relationships of dependency and cooperation that this thesis examines.

*Figure 10 Young men preparing a fire to deter elephants during a hunt*

**"Making our own plans"**

Shifting their attention to advocacy work, John Marshall and Claire Ritchie worked out a scheme for a fund which would help Ju|'hoansi "get out of [Tsumkwe], start farming on their *n!oresi* and survive" (cited in Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 68). The Ju|wa Bushman Development Foundation (JBDF) was formed, with the principle goal to "help people help themselves". By the time John Marshall returned, the Ju|'hoansi had experienced a shrinkage of their land base to 8,992km$^2$—with land conceded to Herero settlers in the south, to !Xun speakers in the west, and to the independent Botswana in the east. This meant that the land base was no longer large enough to sustain them through hunting and gathering (Marshall 2002, Biesele and Hitchcock 2011). To counter these changes, they considered starting farming initiatives as part of what would become a mixed-subsistence economy. Lacking political representation and negotiating power, the

organisation also acted as a fund-raising, lobbying, and advocacy body—a "go-between"—for Ju|'hoansi, the media, and higher-level government administrators.

The primary goal was to facilitate a "back to the land" movement which would allow Ju|'hoansi to re-establish occupancy rights in the face of the threat of the proposed game reserve, and to alleviate the poverty and social tensions associated with Ju|'hoan livelihoods in Tsumkwe. While "Tsumkwe was an unpleasant place to be" (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 69), the territories did not have permanent sources of water. Hunting and gathering was also "a difficult life", as many of my interlocutors had recounted, and was not desirable to most Ju|'hoansi who had resettled in Tsumkwe. "John said they would drill boreholes for anyone that moved back to their territories and help us become farmers so that we had food", one resident at ||Auru recounted, justifying his own reasons for making the move back to his territory. Permanent water sources would need to be established, but would not be enough, and so a mixed economy able to sustain Ju|'hoansi would need to be developed. The JBDF proposed drilling boreholes at each territory and equipping them with small herds of cattle and basic agricultural farms, to be supplemented by hunting and gathering. The initiative, however, was opposed by the Department of Nature Conservation (DNC) and SWA Administration, who were concerned about poaching, elephants damaging water facilities, lions killing livestock, and runaway fires.

The number of Ju|'hoan communities who left Tsumkwe and the army bases to establish occupancy at their previous territories nevertheless rose to 30 between 1981 and 1991, before settling at 36 where it stands today. With the aim of withdrawing and leaving the organisation under the full control of Ju|'hoansi upon the eve of independence, the Ju|wa Farmers Union (JFU) was established in 1986 which emphasised consultation, information dissemination, and decision-making about development strategies without favouring members of particular territories. The primary goal was for Ju|'hoansi to develop institutional capacity for handling public policy issues, so that they could establish self-sufficient communities capable of determining their own political, social, and economic future in the new Namibia that lay on the horizon. This move towards representational democracy and a mixed-subsistence economy, however, posed many challenges. At the heart of these challenges, it was argued, was "the concept of nominating and voting, especially in public" and the "disciplines and social relations of agriculture"—at odds with the "no-less-logical habits of mind" (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 61-72) of

local inhabitants. These "habits of mind" (referred to elsewhere as "modes of thought" or an "imaginative substrate") were said to be well-suited to foraging but were a source of conflict in new human-wildlife, citizen-state, and "inter-ethnic" relations. As this thesis examines in more depth, these narratives of conflicting values only tell part of the story—leaving out the possibility that these moments of contradiction are not necessarily contemporary, and that these values are not necessarily vestiges of the past. Wengrow and Graeber (2015) have recently picked up on this, arguing that there is perhaps a seasonality to the commitments people show to egalitarianism depending on the availability of resources or the threat of violence, and that the shift from egalitarianism to hierarchy may not have been as linear as commonly assumed.

For the many development workers and anthropologists who came to work with people within the region, these contradictions were nonetheless palpable. Working through them was of paramount importance, if the Ju|'hoansi were to have any hope of retaining access to the region come independence. With decades of "encapsulation, subordination, and encroachment" (Gulbrandsen 1991: 83) behind them, leading to the slimming of their resource base and to widespread dependency on relationships of dependency beyond the "band" and the "territory". In order to support the Ju|'hoansi in retaining access to the region and developing a mixed-subsistence economy, the JBDF evolved into a non-profit association based in Windhoek with a Namibian board of trustees, and the JFU established a management committee and a representative council. The council included two people from each territory within the Nyae Nyae region, who collectively set development policies and distributed development assistance. The inhabitants of the territories were said to be continually challenged by SWA Administration officials with respect to their residence at the rural territories, and lobbied by the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA, an opposition party to the SWA Administration in the lead up to independence) to turn Ju|'hoansi against SWAPO. As Tsamkxao ǂOma, now the Traditional Authority for the region, stated forcefully in one of John Marshall's later films, they began "making [their] own plans".

A diversity of actors and projects soon crowded the space, making these processes enormously complex. Biesele and Hitchcock's (2011) account gives the sense that Ju|'hoansi, and the development workers who assisted them, were in a state of crisis regarding the best strategy to bring about the most favourable outcome for their communities—pulled in various directions by people with various agendas, and unsure

of what the future would bring. If they were to make a case for retaining the region as their own and restricting access to those they trusted, they would need to present themselves as a cohesive community with a shared vision for the future. This vision would need to take into account not only their own values and customs, but the future vision of whoever was to take office in the new Namibia. The sense at the time was that if the Ju|'hoansi were to have any chance of retaining access to their ancestral territories and of being pardoned for their involvement with the SADF, they would need to pledge allegiance to those most likely to take office. With their security of tenure remaining in the hands of government, these anxieties persist today. "There are still those who are not sure which party to side with!" Khun||a, a Ju|'hoan SWAPO party member, explained to me, "…still unsure which party is best for them and their futures. Only SWAPO is for everyone. They're the only ones with power." To keep in line with those in power was to ensure future security in the region.

As much as they sought to align themselves to the dominant political party, they also sought to keep their options open, developing productive relationships with multiple "others" in order to secure their futures in any eventuality. Responding to trends emerging at the time, specifically to a "cooperative movement" that was taking place in other parts of Namibia that sought to decentralise management of rural areas, the JFU formalised and institutionalised its organisational structure. In addition to decentralising power and recognising traditional authorities, the cooperative movement was about a shift towards community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) as a development strategy for rural regions of Namibia. In many ways, these were informed by "participatory development" or "rapid rural appraisal" methods (Chambers 1981, 1983, also see Kapoor 2002) that were being trialled across the "developing world" at the time. Drawing inspiration from these cooperative methods, the organisation changed its name to the Nyae Nyae Farmers' Cooperative (NNFC), formed district councils for northern, southern, western, and eastern regions (the further western regions predominantly !Xun and Khwe inhabited), and adopted a governing constitution modelled on that of the United States constitution which was brought to them by John Marshall. Membership was defined as "all persons who speak Ju|'hoansi and call themselves Ju|'hoan and who are over the age of 18… and who had lived in the area for 10 years" (cited in Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 80). The JBDF and the NNFC then set up an Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP) which continued to work to

establish territories, as well as engage in water development, support mixed subsistence economic strategies (cattle husbandry, horticulture, and hunting and gathering), provide vocational training, adult literacy and numeracy, and community health education.

"There was a lot of work then. We were being employed to help build and work on projects, and we were all attending training in many different things," explained Kam, now a resident of Baraka where the training had initially taken place. "There were many different white people here then, all helping with different things." One such effort involved travelling to each territory to discuss and prepare for the possible impacts of decolonisation, independence, and the importance of voting and being citizens in what would become the multi-racial Republic of Namibia. UN Resolution 435 on Namibian independence was announced in 1988, and the majority of Ju|'hoansi formally allied themselves to SWAPO. NNFC representatives attended several local and national meetings where they emphasised to SWAPO supporters that "far from being the fierce foes of SWAPO that they had been made out to be by the conservative DTA, the Ju|'hoansi constituted only a small fraction of the SADF's 'Bushman battalion' …in fact fighting for survival in their remaining corner of SWA's Bushmanland." (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 121). At the end of March 1989, SWAPO officials visited Nyae Nyae and a meeting was held at |Aotcha where the NNFC gave a statement calling for a "democratic national system with regional autonomous government in Nyae Nyae based on current and long-term residence" (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 120).

Shortly thereafter, the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) established an office in Tsumkwe and began a series of meetings with the assistance of a Ju|'hoan translator. SWAPO was announced to have won the election, and the months that followed saw several international visitors—including tourists, political figures, and development workers—come to Nyae Nyae. If not simply there to marvel at the post-independence jubilance, these visitors ended up at the JBDF headquarters and sought to make themselves useful. At that time, the headquarters were based at |Aotcha—an area, close to water, where the Marshall family had first set up their research camp in the 1950s. Questions of fairness began to emerge, however, which challenged the privilege that those families who claimed the region as their territory were thought to enjoy at the expense of others. In a bid to even out spatial discrepancies, it was agreed that the foundation would move their headquarters to Baraka, an ex-military barracks located half-way between Tsumkwe and the border with Botswana. This would, in theory, level the

playing field and bring equal access to training, employment, driving experience, and other benefits. As Biesele and Hitchcock (2011: 134, 159-163) examine in more depth, however, the problems of jealousy and suspicion persisted and, in many respects, continue to dog contemporary projects.

These issues of fairness were not unique to the Nyae Nyae region. They were a microcosm of wider issues facing SWAPO in the restructuring of Namibia following independence. The first population census of 1991 estimated that 72% of the country lived in rural areas, and the rest in urban areas – mostly in Windhoek (Namibia Statistics Agency 1993). At that time, 57% of the country was commercial land, 26.5% communal land, and 13.9% conservation areas. Communal land was the least productive land in the country, upon which the rest of Namibia's population lived effectively as "landless squatters" (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 135). Namibia's independence threw up a unique set of challenges regarding how to simultaneously have citizens "share in the country's wealth!" and have their "customs and traditions" respected, against the receding tide of the apartheid regime. These tensions frame the contemporary moment within which the research underpinning this thesis was conducted. They not only cast doubt on the future of those communities living within former homeland regions, but also, more broadly, raise questions about the possibilities that might lie ahead for the country's "genuine social and economic emancipation" (Sam Nujoma, the founding father of Namibia, cited in Melber 2007: 7).

**The hope for conservancies**

For the newly appointed government of the Republic of Namibia, the route to resolving these tensions entailed uniting the disparate regions under the banner of "One Namibia, One Nation", at the same time as recognising that "traditional authorities", and the "traditional communities" they represented, had ancestral rights to certain "communal areas". It is worth detailing precisely how the Traditional Authorities Act No. 25 (The Republic of Namibia 2000) and the Communal Land Reform Act No. 5 (The Republic of Namibia 2002) defines these terms:

> "traditional authority" or "traditional leader" means "a chief, a head of a traditional community, a senior traditional councillor, or a traditional councillor designated and recognized or appointed or elected, as the case may be, in

accordance with the Traditional Authorities Act (No. 25 of 2000), and by whatever traditional title named"

"traditional community" means "an indigenous homogeneous, endogamous social grouping of persons comprising of families deriving from exogamous clans which share a common ancestry, language, cultural heritage, customs and traditions, who recognises a common traditional authority and inhabits a common communal area, and may include the members of that traditional community residing outside the common communal area"

"communal area" means "the geographic area habitually inhabited by a specific traditional community"

Before a "traditional community" or the "communal area" to which they might lay claim could be formally recognised, a traditional authority would need to be appointed. The legal definition of "traditional authority" permits that a traditional authority can be appointed in accordance with whichever custom or tradition is recognised by the traditional community in question. Anticipating these legal revisions, Tsamkxao ǂOma, a resident of |Aotcha and the son of the Marshall family's primary assistant, was democratically elected as the chairperson of the NNFC in February 1991, and later (in March 1998) appointed as the "traditional authority" or "chief". In June to July 1991, the Government of the Republic of Namibia held a conference in Windhoek on 'land reform and the land question', which Tsamkxao attended alongside other Ju|'hoan representatives. Addressing the large audience, Tsamkxao emphasised that the Ju|'hoansi should be recognised by the new Namibian government as the legitimate 'owners' of the Nyae Nyae region. "We had previously not been recognised as traditional authorities during colonial times, and we did not want the same to happen again," Tsamkxao ǂOma recounted. The apartheid regime declared that they had no systems of governance or political leaders, and with that were not given partial self-governance in the way other homelands had. Both the minister of lands, resettlement, and rehabilitation and the president of Namibia, Sam Nujoma, declared that the Ju|'hoansi had rights to their land (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 137). Unlike other click-speaking groups, the Ju|'hoansi of north-east Namibia were thus able to negotiate their access to land and control over its resources, including the right to hunt using traditional weapons. Ironically, this was a situation aided by the apartheid system which set aside communal land for separate ethnic groups (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 65).

A post-independence "free-for-all" atmosphere ensued, however, which repeatedly tested the exclusive (albeit *de facto*) rights that Ju|'hoansi managed to secure. Most notably by Herero herders who sought to establish occupancy rights in the Nyae Nyae region whose ancestors had moved through the Nyae Nyae region into Botswana after fleeing the Nama-Herero genocide. The NNFC successfully challenged with appeal to the Namibian administration, but threats of this kind continue into the present day not only through ongoing incursions from Herero pastoralists in the south but also in the form of debates over the very nature of communal regions. These issues were symptomatic, as contemporary debates attest, to a contradiction at the heart of the project of independence. This saw independence from the colonial administration simultaneously as the uniting of different traditional communities with one another, and their segregation and competition, as each traditional community made attempts to establish exclusive access to particular territories. As noted by Vermeylen *et al* (2012: 121), this was an inevitable contradiction borne of deploying "the tools and logic of the colonial state" in order to overcome its creations.

For the Ju|'hoansi, this segregation was not so much about limiting beneficiaries, but a key strategy to avoiding the threat of over-grazing posed by pastoralists, alongside the risk that the presence of non-Ju|'hoan settlers would exacerbate dependencies which were already well developed in the region. Partially in anticipation of a backlash against what might be perceived as "tribalism", the JBDF changed its name to the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia (NNDFN), rephrased its membership criteria,[10] and focused on development projects that were geared towards ecological sustainability and economic development. One of the options was to turn Nyae Nyae into an eco-tourism and hunting concession. As Biesele and Hitchcock note: "Rather than riding around with a white hunter, tourists could be accompanied by Ju|'hoan trackers, benefiting from their high level of traditional and local environmental knowledge."

[10] The first version of the constitution stated explicitly that members were to be Ju|'hoan or considered so by the traditional authority for the region. This was later changed, since it conflicted with Article 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, protecting citizens with respect to equality and freedom from discrimination on the basis of "sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status." (Republic of Namibia 1990: 8). Eligible members of the conservancy are now defined as a person "over the age of 18 years" who "has lived in the conservancy for more than ten years" or who "marries a member". Applicants must, therefore, be affiliated to a residential territory which suggests that they must have ancestral rights to the territory and its resources by birth, kinship, or marriage. The constitution of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy is still a source of conflict for residents of Tsumkwe without membership. For them, the system is "racist" since it prevents them from accessing and benefitting from communal land on the grounds of their ancestry.

Adopting a commercial approach would not only promise jobs, they hoped, but also assist in securing the region as a conservation area and therefore a place where hunting and gathering might remain possible.

With support from international donors and conservation organisations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), an Economic Planning Committee (EPC) was formed, and groundwork was laid for Nyae Nyae to become a conservancy. The conservancy, as an ancestral territory of the Ju|'hoan "traditional community", would operate on the basis of the '*n!ore* land use system' of the Ju|'hoansi. The system was one in which each "band"—usually up to three generations of consanguineous kin and their affines—claimed ancestral rights to 'permanent features' such as hills, rivers, or roads (Ministry of Environment and Tourism cited in Vermeylen *et al* 2012: 128). Surrounding the territory, each band was to be allocated hunting and gathering grounds of approximately 10km$^2$. People from other territories within the conservancy could also hunt and gather within these, but would respect the *n!orekxao* (territory owner)[11] and either seek permission first, or share whatever they managed to procure.

The *n!ore* land use system was effectively a microcosm of the form of political organisation that the GRN aimed to foster through the demarcation of communal lands. Different kin groups with rights to specific areas of land and resources, represented by democratically elected individuals required to ensure that as a group they work towards a common goal, and that any redistribution happens equally across all groups. The state would act as an aid in this process, bringing expertise and funding where possible, and as an overseer to ensure that each traditional community acted in accordance with state regulations. To facilitate this process, USAID and the Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN) developed the Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE) Project (1992-2002), which provided technical assistance and funding to the Ju|'hoansi of Nyae Nyae to assist them with CBNRM as a means to become self-sufficient. While the project itself would create employment, it would also foster other opportunities with mining and safari companies—bringing together elements of socialism and capitalism that would hopefully

[11] The suffix *-kxao* is often translated as "owner". *N!orekxao* therefore means to be the "owner" of a territory. The suffix can also be translated as "expert" or "renowned for", which more clearly describes that a *n!orekxao* is: someone who knows the region more than others, who is renowned for living within it.

address both the need for redistribution and the need to become competitive in global markets after years of being prevented.

In 1992, the Regional Councils Act No. 22 (The Republic of Namibia 1992) was passed, which made regional councils responsible for planning development. The act took effect in 1998, at which point the Nyae Nyae region was formally delineated and declared a conservancy. The Delimitation Commission then replaced former tribal and ethnic homelands with 13 new regions, of which Otjozondjupa was to include both Nyae Nyae conservancy (home to Ju|'hoansi), and the adjacent N‡a Jaqna Conservancy (home mostly to !Xun and Khwe) as Tsumkwe District East and Tsumkwe District West, respectively. Several problems of leadership and fairness developed within the NNDFN and the NNFC in the years that followed. The several sides of this are captured in John Marshall's fifth part *Death by Myth*, of his five-part series *A Kalahari Family* (2002), and Biesele and Hitchcock's (2011) account of the 25 years of their operation post-independence. The disputes reveal several debates regarding the best way to structure the organisations and how they worked with each other, as well as the best way to ensure that development was equitable among all 36 territories. A major question also concerned whether the Ju|'hoansi would be more likely to succeed with farming and agriculture or by continuing with eco-tourism and large game hunting.

These issues developed into highly contentious debates over which both development workers and Ju|'hoansi became increasingly polarised. A so-called "privileged class" of Ju|'hoansi emerged, who were increasingly derided for acting as representatives for the community at large, and for supposedly benefitting financially from their work. "We never wanted to represent our communities," Kxao ǂOma, a member of the so-called "privileged class" complained (Biesele 2005: 190), "that was a white people's idea in the first place". Fuelled by these conflicts, criticisms began to emerge that Ju|'hoansi were becoming puppets whose primary purpose was to emphasise to western audiences the importance of *tzi 'masi* (bush-foods). These were foods they rarely ate, and which could not sustain them outright, but allowed them to conform to their stereotypes as hunters and gatherers. This, Marshall (2002) argued, was to play into the hands of those who wished to turn Nyae Nyae into a region for rich hunters and tourists. Augmented by the work of anthropologists and writers like Laurens van der Post (1958), this would only eulogised the "pristine" hunter, and would provide minimal benefit to Ju|'hoansi.

As international scholars and development workers debated over what it might entail for Ju|'hoansi to choose their own path and become self-sufficient, the population at Tsumkwe was increasing and problems of poor health, food security, and alcohol abuse proliferated throughout Nyae Nyae. With respect to livestock, Ju|'hoansi struggled to maintain herds due to problems of disease, water sources being destroyed by elephants, predation by lions, poisonous plants affecting grazing, and problems of food security leading to unsustainable off-take. Crop production also suffered due to problems with water, and the same issues of food insecurity led Ju|'hoansi to prepare agricultural seeds as porridge rather than sowing them. Their increasing marginality led to internal struggles between older and younger generations, and between privileged and less-privileged community members. These struggles centred largely on the problem of how to "treat all communities fairly", in the spirit of the egalitarianism thought to have defined relationships between "bands" for centuries before.

The social impacts of commercial tourism and hunting ventures also started to cause concern. It was soon evident that the benefits from these accrued to a small proportion of the Nyae Nyae population, and that these served external interests over local ones. Between 1997 and 2002, the conservancy generated a total income (through resource harvesting, hunting, tourism, research fees, and crafts, predominantly) of NAD3,635,000.00. Of this amount, NAD2,000,000.00 went to individual members in the form of annual pay-outs, and the balance to the NNFC, which had then changed its name to the Nyae Nyae Conservancy (NNC), to cover salaries and other expenses. Despite generating greater profits than most conservancies in Namibia, this would pay for little more than one month's supply of food and some clothes for children. Criticising these outcomes further, Marshall asserted that "the Ju|'hoansi were 'ever more dependent on the trickle down of funds' when the purpose of the NNDFN was to 'help people help themselves'" (cited in Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 221).

Though they foreshadowed relationships of dependency and exploitation that would become an obstinate problem, these criticisms underestimated the benefits that have come from these approaches. At present, NNDFN receive funds from donors and investment partners directly, and work with representatives of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy to devise strategies for livelihood development—including craft production, natural resource harvesting, agriculture, and animal husbandry—or conservation strategies—including rangeland surveys, fire management, wildlife

monitoring, climate change adaptation projects. The organisation also assists government ministries with the maintenance of water points and solar panel systems, and with education projects. While this means that the region has not suffered degradation in the way its neighbours have, and the livelihood projects have continued to provide conservancy members with employment and cash benefits, securing a basic livelihood remains an ongoing struggle for most living within the region. The sense that some territories are benefitting from conservancy projects more than others is a constant point of contention. As a result, one of my interlocutors asserted, those without employment "just wait for the conservancy to do everything for them, because they think 'why should I do it myself when the conservancy is meant to do it for me?' They would rather be destitute than do the work themselves".

These comments seem to fit the narrative of "habits of mind" that doggedly militate against the kind of "self-sufficiency" the conservancy sought to foster in the name of egalitarianism, but they are different in important respects. Whereas, in the former, egalitarianism is enacted through the ability to demand or take freely from those with more than them, in the latter, the members of territories are required to await patronage. As stated in the most recent version of the Constitution of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy (2013), the mandate of the NNC is to "ensure that all members receive similar or equal benefits, and that there is no material discrimination between members", and to attempt to "equalise any disparity and to ensure equity and fairness as between members". The ability to demand or take from one another is thus suspended in favour of a management committee who take on this role on behalf of members. The wealth that is redistributed is limited to the profits the conservancy accrues through the sale of commodities such as trophy animals, plant resources, or rights to carry out research and filming—in other words, to certain "common pool" resources. Any resources, notably money, that people might accrue through employment or work is formally taken out of the equation, only to repeatedly resurface in the discussions people have concerning fairness.

This marks a key shift from the forms of redistribution that characterised life when the Marshall family first carried out their research. It is worth speculating, however, on the extent to which it is not only the way people going about redistributing that have shifted, but the parameters within which this redistribution is pursued. It is no longer primarily redistribution within the "band" that is the object of concern, but redistribution at a much greater scale. The emphasis on redistribution, in other words, may be a product

of a long history of hunting and gathering, but it may also be the product of more recent encounters with themselves as "people who help each other", and with new, national projects aimed at redistribution and self-governance. The parameters which might have ensured redistribution in the past—notably, *trust* that those with whom you share will care for you when are in need, and the conditions of *transparency* that will allow you to make demands from them—are also not inevitable or common features of sociality. These are not necessarily natural features of the past either. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to comment further, given the absence of historical data and having not carried out archival research. Nonetheless, it seems productive to point to new perspectives on these temporal boundaries—and the potential that a focus on experiences of uncertainty may have for cutting across them. Doing so brings to mind new approaches to contemporary problems—focused not on returning to a "childhood of man" but working harder to confront questions of trust and approach problems of uncertainty.

**Being "people who help each other"**

This chapter has focused on some of the historical processes that have shaped the way people have come to categorise themselves as "people who help each other" and as people who self-identify as a distinct "traditional community" with ancestral rights to land and resources. It has also focused on how these historical processes have created new forms of sociality, premised upon new relationships of dependency and cooperation, and new ways of moving through space and thinking about others. It has only hinted at what these forms of categorisation and sociality are, preparing the ground for the chapters that follow which examine these more closely. The next chapter returns to writing on "hunter-gatherers"—in particular, to what has recently been referred to as the "prototypical" form of sharing among so-called "egalitarian societies". As the introduction lays out, this form of sharing is known as ||*an* (to demand), and it is based not on an ethic of generosity but on the ability to demand from those who have more without the necessity of repayment. Responding to this writing, the chapter examines "demand sharing" as it happens within the context of town, between people who say they cannot trust one another. At the same time that they feel they cannot trust one another, they regard one another as people who should, in theory, share the same values. These are values that make demanding from those who have more, and making oneself present to be demanded from, the right thing to do. Certain contexts of uncertainty shape these values and the way they are pursued, setting them apart from other ways of soliciting giving. By attending to them, the chapter

complicates the way that demand sharing has been presented and firmly situates this thesis in the contemporary moment—one characterised by constant fluctuations between survivable poverty and absolute destitution, and thus by a growing informal economy based upon compelling people to open themselves up to one another.

# Chapter 2:
# "Roaming in order to live"

Surrounded by hundreds of kilometres of dense dry woodland and fossilised dunes interspersed with rocky salt pans, the region is in some ways as rural in appearance as it was when the first anthropologists carried out their research. The cold and dry, autumn and winter seasons are marked by little to no rain and temperatures at night that can drop below freezing. Today, as before, these winter months—though no longer characterised by struggles to find water with working boreholes at each territory—bring weight-loss and hunger to many Ju|'hoansi who continue to live at their rural territories, venturing only occasionally to town. The hot spring and summer seasons, by contrast, are characterised by temperatures that can soar above 40°C, averaging 32°C-36°C, and frequent downpours that fill the region's calcite pans with water and bring life to the fruit-bearing shrubs and trees that cover the landscape. During this time, bulbs and tubers that provide water during the winter months, and animals that provide vital sources of fat and protein throughout the year, grow in size and appear everywhere in abundance. Unlike the creeping of winter in the northern hemisphere, the change of seasons tends to happen suddenly—with a snap of cold weather from the south announcing the arrival of winter and killing off the last edible plants, or a violent storm from the east announcing the arrival of summer and bringing an abundance of *veld* foods in a matter of days.

These sudden shifts between seasons continue to have an enormous impact on the livelihoods of people living within the region. Though they depend less on hunting and gathering as they did in the past, these sources of food continue to be the difference, as Lee (2016: 86) writes, between "survivable poverty" and "absolute destitution". Moments of scarcity push people to move, but not in the way they did before. Today, these movements consist not of moving in search for new, unoccupied territories or for territories whose "owners" may agree to grant them the right to hunt or gather, but of "roaming" into and around town in search for people with money, alcohol, or tobacco from whom they demand a share. These practices of "demand sharing" are well-known within the literature, but they have a distinctive character within this context—confined, mostly, to relationships between those who say they "cannot trust one another" and who come together primarily in the public, yet opaque, space of town.

Following a short prologue to set the scene and establish the debate, this chapter examines these more informal patterns of sharing as they emerge in response to the limits of what might be called the "formal" economy within the region, comprising food aid, cash grants, and trading with entrepreneurs. By elucidating these regular forms of income, it becomes clear that this is a context characterised neither by enduring poverty nor enduring "affluence"[12] but by alternating periods of abundance and scarcity, with absolute destitution an ever-present threat. This sets the scene for the second section of the chapter, which introduces the *zula* economy as a new kind of "informal" space which has shaped the practices of "demand sharing" long thought to define so-called "egalitarian societies", and turning them into new kinds of relationships—ones increasingly characterised by problems of "mistrust" and "fear". Building upon this discussion of demand sharing—especially upon the suggestion that "sharing is not a form of exchange"—the final section explores feelings of "mistrust" and "fear" more deeply. It does so by considering their embeddedness within a context that, on the one hand, stands by the principles of demand sharing that free people from the obligation to reciprocate while, on the other hand, morally compels people to make themselves present to one another to be demanded from. The issue of alcohol consumption features prominently here, as a practice that is not only ubiquitous because people feel hopelessly marginalised, but also because it plays an important role in fostering "openness" between people, and in navigating experiences of doubt and moral ambivalence when engaging in redistribution and exercising autonomy in the face of uncertainty.

## "Roaming in order to live"

The yard was empty. The usual chatter of families crouched around their fires preparing sweet, black tea had been replaced by the idle sounds of the vast, outstretching bushveld. Another evening storm was approaching and against the dark, purple band that it cast across the horizon, there was a glow of fluorescent lights and a flicker of orange flames coming from the few yards still occupied. The area's residents and their neighbours had dispersed that afternoon to enjoy the convivial atmosphere of the monthly pension pay-out, leaving the area largely abandoned. A muffled pulse of music emanated from the distant drinking houses between which they moved, sharing sips of alcohol, pinches of

[12] The term "affluence" is typically used to refer to the specific combination of "needs/wants" and "means". It is not affluence as an objective state of affluence, of having more than you need, but having the means to get whatever it is you need or want.

tobacco, and small change. Situated on the periphery of town, the yard provided a quiet break from these frenzied exchanges—lasting up to four days at a time until the relatively large sums of money that came with the pension pay-out were spent.

*Figure 11 A Ju|'hoan family gathers around a fire at dusk*

I was gathering dry bits of wood and grass together to make a fire on the small concrete slab that formed a hearth during the summer months when a voice called out from the pathway leading up to the wooden fence that enclosed the yard. Looking up, I saw Gideon approaching, a renowned hunter from a territory in the south-eastern region of the conservancy. Gideon was something of a legend, one of only a few men who still practised hunting, with calf muscles the size of melons and no visible body fat. At his territory, dressed in a traditional loincloth and armed with his collection of spears and his bow and arrow set, he often entertained and educated tourists with his accounts of hunting and tracking. When he wasn't working with tourists, he worked with trophy hunters who he assisted on elephant hunts, and researchers or photographers to whom he demonstrated the arts of tracking, hunting, and trap-setting.

That afternoon, away from the gaze of tourists, Gideon had packed away his loincloth and traditional weapons and arrived in Tsumkwe dressed in an old army shirt and jacket, and a pair of smart beige cargo trousers he had acquired on a recent trip to France with a team of archaeologists. He loved the trousers because they had so many

pockets. Each pocket was filled with a useful item, he explained to me, most important of which was his Leatherman knife, and his newspaper and tobacco. A new addition to this regular wardrobe was a black snapback hat with a gold miniature car rim on the crown that spun when you flicked it. "Nice hat!" I taunted, as he joined me next to the hearth to break up branches. "I'm a *zula* boy today!" he exclaimed in response, bearing his wide signature grin before we both began laughing at the absurdity of his hat and the suggestion that he was a *zula boy*. While he was certainly dressed like the young, unemployed men who were said to "*zula*" most frequently, he was nothing like a proper *zula boy*.

At their most caricatured, *zula boys* were the brazen-faced beggars, hustlers, and thieves who carried the distinctive tattoos of ex-convicts or soldiers. They were the same men who were thought to have brought the term *zula* to Tsumkwe through their associations with fellow convicts or outcasts (referred to as *tsotsis*, a term brought from South Africa) in the nearest urban centre Grootfontein, approximately 300km to the west. Beyond this, both the origins and the meaning of the term were unknown. It corresponded roughly to the Ju|'hoan term *cu n||hoo*—an adverb meaning "around", and to two Ju|'hoan terms *g‡ara* and ||*an*—verbs meaning to "appeal to" or "demand" from others, respectively. Scanning through an IsiZulu dictionary after returning from the field, I found the term *zula* among its pages: an intransitive verb meaning "wander about, roam; soar". The translation fit perfectly with what my notes were suggesting—that it was a verb, implying at once "roaming around" and the act of appealing to or demanding from others. Rather than aimless roaming or wandering as the isiZulu translation suggests, to *zula* in this context is to go out specifically in search of would-be patrons who might be appealed to or demanded from—in a phrase, for "wealth in people" (Guyer 2009).

Despite the fairly reductive caricature of the *zula* boy—and the masculinity and generational precarity associated with it—*zula* is an activity that most, if not all, Ju|'hoansi engage in. As many Ju|'hoansi say, "it is all you can do these days". And yet, while *zula* does appear distinctly "modern"—a sign of the ever-expanding significance of the "informal" (Hart 2015) or "hustle economy" (Thieme 2017)—the activities it signifies have long been associated with the Ju|'hoansi and "egalitarian societies" more broadly. While these activities do not ordinarily bear the name *zula*, they consist of the same basic emphasis on roaming and, in part, on making demands from those who have more than they can immediately use or consume. Within this context, however, rather than the "prototypical" form of sharing—extending to social relationships as a matter of course—

it is confined, mostly, to relationships between those who say they "cannot trust one another" and who come together primarily in the public, yet opaque, space of town. This suggests an important change to the practice of demand sharing. Or it challenges these prevailing arguments and brings a more nuanced perspective to the way in which demand sharing features in people's efforts to navigate the uncertainties of life, as it fluctuates between moments of scarcity and moments of abundance.

**Formality, uncertainty, and the zula economy**

Following a three-day visit to Tsumkwe in 1980, Robert Gordon and Sholto-Douglas (2000: 3) described the town as "a place where one could literally smell death and decay". My own arrival in Tsumkwe in October 2014 left me with a similar impression. I had unknowingly arrived during the month leading up to the annual "conservancy pay" period. This was a time when the profits accrued by the conservancy in the previous year were shared out equally among its 1,425 members. The streets teemed with people from across the region who—in anticipation of receiving their cash grants—were able to amass debts with local store owners to buy clothes and groceries, or to *!ka n|'ang* (make their hearts happy) with alcohol, tobacco, and the company of friends. Ordinarily pitiless creditors who turn their heads to the unemployed become free-handed patrons, seeking out would-be debtors by car with their boots filled with a variety of goods. Home–distilled alcohol makes up most of the purchases store owners give credit for. It is cheap for store owners to produce, it is sold at low prices, and it has a higher alcohol content than the bottled or home-brewed beer that can be bought in the region.

Marking the time of year is the conspicuous aroma of burnt molasses, clinging to the breath and bodies of its consumers who sit together chatting animatedly outside drinking houses. Store owners, anticipating the rush of customers, hurry to ferment sugar and boil it in the sawn up fuel drums they use for distilling. Non-drinkers pile into any transport they can find to take them away to the tranquillity of their territories. Coupled with the stifling heat of the season, the scene on my arrival, if not evidently characterised by death, was certainly one of decay: along every dusty footpath, people staggered heavy-footed, pulling and shouting at each other, or lay lifeless and passed out on the sand. This was perhaps not the same image of death and decay that Gordon was met with. Though there were several similarities, his visit came at the height of the Namibian War of Independence and the worst of what Beckett (1985, also see Gordon and Sholto-Douglas 2000: 176) called "welfare colonialism". By providing rations of food, healthcare, and

employment, colonial authorities could move Ju|'hoansi into crowded settlements and use their territories for commercial activities such as hunting or tourism. Today, these deliberate efforts to exclude people from the commercial benefits of hunting and tourism have been replaced by cooperative structures that see these benefits shared among them. They are also no longer forced to live in crowded settlements, and are supported in not doing so. Each space still fluctuates, however, between "survivable poverty" and "absolute destitution" (Lee 2016: 86)—giving rise to a regular push and pull between centre and periphery as people try to get by (see Povinelli 1993 for an exploration of similar themes from rural Australia).

Rather than a humdrum of enduring poverty, there are regular peaks where opportunities for work, or an abundance of resources, become available. At the periphery, in their home territories, these peaks tend to occur during the summer months when *veld* foods grow rapidly, or in the winter months where animals become easier to hunt. At the centre, in town, these peaks occur regularly—when state or conservancy benefits are distributed, or when wages are paid out to those with permanent or temporary employment, or irregularly—when tourists, researchers, or film-makers hire them, purchase crafts, or give patronage. As the introduction briefly mentions, these patterns of widespread dependence on cash grants, casual labour, and hawking to passers-by reflect national trends prompted by an unemployment rate of 27-52% of the working age population. Among the Ju|'hoansi, the unemployment is even higher, at approximately 90% of the working age population. Out of the 1,000 or so people of working age population within the region, only about 100 individuals have full-time, permanent employment—typically in government ministries, non-governmental organisations, or the tourism industry. With these positions supporting only a few individuals—typically from the same "privileged" families—the majority of people turn to what might be called the rest of the "formal" economy within the region: food aid packages, pensions, child welfare grants, disability grants, conservancy benefits, resource harvesting, and craft production. It is worth spending a few paragraphs on each of these, the way in which people go about using them and the extent to which they are able to support people within the region. They provide a certain rhythm to life, and it is out of this rhythm that *zula* emerges as "all you can do these days".

The most important source of regular sustenance in the region is the government food aid package, consisting of three 12.5kg bags of fortified maize-meal, occasionally

supplemented by tinned sardines and vegetable oil. The packages arrive quarterly in a large truck. They're offloaded at the Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development in Tsumkwe, from where they are distributed to claimants who form a long queue in the car park of the ministry building. The scene harks back to the colonial era, when white officials doled out rations from the same space, in much the same way (see Figure 12). Ministry employees work through the queue, checking identity documents to names before giving the go ahead to hand over three 12,5kg bags of fortified maize-meal. Eligible candidates include anyone over 18 years of age who is without employment and does not have a spouse in permanent employment. Where in other parts of Namibia these food aid packages are delivered only during times of drought – termed "drought relief aid" (see Dieckmann et al 2014: 466), in Tsumkwe they form part of the "San Feeding Programme", an initiative aimed specifically at the development of 'San' communities.[13] The initiative is part of a broader "focused and dedicated socio-economic programme under the Office of the Prime Minister" to address issues of economic hardship among Namibia's most marginalised communities.

*Figure 12 Queuing to vote in 1989, outside what is now the Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development where people queue, in much the same way, to collect their quarterly food rations © Adrian Arbib http://arbib.org/portfolio/san/*

[13] See http://www.sandevelopment.gov.na Accessed: 12 March 2017.

These food aid packages form the primary, if not the only, source of food for many Ju|'hoan families. They are difficult to obtain, however, both for those living permanently at their territories—who often sit for hours, if not days, at the side of the road on heaped maize-meal bags waiting for transport to take them home—while others carry the maize-meal bags laboriously on their backs to their yards in Tsumkwe. They also rarely last to the next delivery. Each maize-meal bag is intended to cover one month but without other sources of food, the three bags typically last only one to two months. In an effort to make them last longer, most families cook the maize-meal into a liquid porridge, adding a little sugar before letting it cool and pouring it into empty 5-litre water bottles. "Whenever my children are hungry," one Ju|'hoan mother explained, "…I can just pour a little bit into a cup and they can drink it to make the hunger go away." When the maize-meal was not being eaten as a liquid porridge, it was prepared as a stiff porridge and served with whatever *veld* foods, soup, or meat was available. The maize-meal, I was told, was not like the kind you could buy in the shop. It was coarser and less flavoursome. "It's terrible to have nothing else but maize in the house…", she explained, "…you need soup, or meat, or *veld* foods to have with it."

For many Ju|'hoansi, however, even buying a single packet of powdered soup for NAD7 or NAD8[14] each day amounted to more than they could afford. Where cash did become available to purchase store-bought foods and other household goods, it was furnished mostly by cash grants provided by the government at the end of each month. These included pensions (NAD1,000) for people over 60 years, child welfare grants (NAD200 per child for up to six children),[15] and disability grants (NAD200). These cash grants were given out on a monthly basis by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. They station themselves outside the clinic in the centre of town. In a scene that has been documented across southern Africa (see Vally 2016), pensioners queue up with biometric pension cards to confirm their entitlements. They are usually accompanied by creditors, who stand with them to ensure they repay their debts, shortly followed by relatives who "flock to the scene hoping to press for a share" (Widlok 2017: 131-132). These cash grants appeared to be communal property, with pensioners often giving their children responsibility over managing their funds. As Chapter 5 explores in more depth, most pensioners had ongoing arrangements with store owners who let them take goods and

[14] During my research, the exchange rate fluctuated from approximately NAD16 per £1 to NAD24 per £1. The currency is linked with the Rand (ZAR) of South Africa.
[15] These had not been officially rolled out within the region during my research.

pay for them later (referred to as "book up" in the context of remote Australia – see Altman and Ward 2002, https://www.moneysmart.gov.au/life-events-and-you/indigenous/book-up). Store owners were said to charge between 50-70% interest depending on what was purchased. On the day of the pension pay-out, after paying off their debts, pensioners would typically share out whatever cash was left over with their children. While children of pensioners could safely predict a share of their parents' cash grants, they also often received donations from aunts or uncles receiving pensions.

It was this practice, as the opening vignette of this paper attests, that transformed the town from a soporific rural space into one teeming with people and enlivened by the sound of bars playing music. Contributing to a similar effervescent atmosphere were annual cash grants to members of the conservancy. Their delivery by the management committee follows the annual general meeting (AGM) where the total amount to be given as cash grants (a percentage of the profits accrued by the conservancy that year) is agreed upon by those present. At the time of my research, there were 1,337 members. In 2015, NAD1,123,080.00 was shared out, giving each member NAD840. During the 2015 AGM, it was anticipated that the membership would rise to 1,400 (it actually rose to 1,425) and NAD1,120,000.00 was set aside to be shared out to give each member approximately NAD800. Despite being a relatively small amount of money, it is more than most Ju|'hoansi receive at once, and certainly the only time that everyone within the conservancy receives the same amount. This means that there are fewer people pressing for a share, and so they can afford to spend the money on more expensive items such as clothes or blankets. Many take out credit in the month leading up to payment to do this, using the rest of their cash grants to purchase food, alcohol, and tobacco. With the cash usually distributed in November or December, some families also start savings clubs, contributing NAD100 each to purchase meat and rice for Christmas day.

Among poorer households, spending patterns were strongly gendered, with women taking on most of the burden of purchasing school uniforms and supplies for the upcoming school year while their partners, parents, and eldest children spent the money on themselves. Among wealthier households, the burden typically fell on those with permanent employment to cover these costs—giving other family members the freedom to spend their conservancy grants on themselves. With their salaries between NAD3,000-8,000 per month (and higher if employed by government ministries), those with permanent employment said they generally had just enough to meet these demands.

Speaking of a relative with permanent employment as a tour guide at the nearby lodge, one family noted:

> "He pays for everything. When Christmas comes around, he buys everything, and we spend our conservancy pay on ourselves. Maybe if someone thinks of him, they will give him some money, but he doesn't expect it. The pensioners too, they use their money to buy supplies for their territories, and he will still buy them food and transport it to them at their territories. He always helps because he knows we cannot have what he has."

Those with full-time employment supported not only their own households, but their (and their partners') extended kin, meaning that their salaries quickly dissipated. Despite these demands spreading salaries thinly each month, there were obvious divisions of status between those with permanent employment, and those (the majority) without. These signs, like elsewhere in southern Africa (see James 2015), are not tied to spending, *per se*, but the new opportunities for credit that being employed brings. Those with permanent employment have multiple credit accounts—with furniture shops, electronics stores, and clothing chains—and they struggle to keep up with their repayments. Those without permanent employment are generally free from these concerns, but with that comes the more day to day burden of finding food, having clothes or blankets to keep warm, and having shelter to keep dry during the rainy season.

With the few permanent positions taken up—typically by those with driving licenses or secondary education certificates—the rest of the population seek out part-time or temporary employment with non-governmental organisations or with tourists, hunters, or researchers. The work fluctuates seasonally and their pay ranges from NAD50 (the unofficial national minimum wage) to NAD350 per day, depending on the work and the client. Two of the most frequent sources of employment are in cultural tourism and craft production. In terms of cultural tourism, there is a "living museum" (set up and marketed by German donors) which brings a steady stream of tourists en route to Khaudum National Park to a village in northern Nyae Nyae, as well as a few community campsites and a private lodge offering day trips to two Ju|'hoan villages in central Nyae Nyae. There are also professional hunters and researchers who, while not tourists, similarly hire Ju|'hoansi—either in their capacity as hunters and trackers, or in their capacity as bearers of other forms of indigenous traditional knowledge. In terms of craft production, there is a non-profit, community-owned craft initiative which hires

approximately 200 Ju|'hoan women (who make ostrich egg-shell jewellery, designed and sold mostly in Germany) and some men (who make wooden carved objects sold at the local craft shop).[16] Finally, providing another regular source of income is the sale of devil's claw (*Harpagophytum*), a plant whose tubers are used as a herbal remedy for arthritis, at NAD40 per kg.[17]

In sum, despite these varied sources of income, and the regularity with which they can be expected throughout the year, they are never quite enough. Only a few people are able to benefit at any one time, their rates of pay are usually low, and they are quickly inundated by demands from their many family members and in-laws. This reality makes "absolute destitution" an ever-looming threat, one which people narrowly avoid by roaming and demanding from others. The problem is not that people are unskilled, but rather that there is low demand for any form of labour within the region. Where demand does arise, the opportunities they bring are low paid. As Kevin, a self-titled *zula* "expert", put it:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ciniha a se, tca mi oo gea cu n\|\|hoo | *You will see, the way I just hang around* |
| He \|\|'ae sa ǂxaan mi n\|\|haa u ho | *The time drags on as I go around* |
| ko \|\|koama | *looking for small jobs,* |
| Te kahin mi \|\|koa, ko \|\|koama | *And then when I do a small job,* |
| Ka du \|\|'a tcima ka | *And it brings me a small thing,* |
| Kahin mi gu, \|\|'a tcima ka ka \|oa ǂ'aun | *I take it, but it is never enough* |

Resonating with broader writing on the relationship between the "formal" economy and the "informal", "real", or "second" economy (notably Hart 1973, MacGaffey 1991), speaking of the primary "formal" aspects of the local economy captures only part of what sustains people from one day to the next. Within this context, the formal economy brings a regular supply of cash into the region but despite its regularity it does not come to everyone, nor is it ever enough. The formal economy becomes the source, then, of a cash

[16] The prices for each item are worked out roughly by how long they take to make, and the level of skill they require, at a rate of NAD50 to NAD200 per day. These orders come throughout the year, with payments in 2015 totalling NAD273,725.00 (see http://www.nndfn.org/projects/craft-projects/7-craft-projects-g-hunku-crafts).

[17] In 2015, private buyers paid a total of NAD391,175 to a total of 167 harvesters, paying out an average of NAD2,342.37 per harvester for the six-month harvesting period between April and October. Buyers come once or twice during the harvesting season to make payments, typically in July and November, and export mostly to Europe.

reserve that makes it possible for people to just about manage, but only when this cash reserve is distributed through the work of roaming about and demanding from others. This work makes up an "informal economy", but not in the sense that is usually suggested by the term. As much as it might challenge any suggestion that—due to their un- or under-employment—people within the region are "inactive" or "passive", it cannot easily be said to "possess some autonomous capacity for generating growth in the incomes of the urban (and rural) poor" (Hart 1973: 61). As Guyer (2004) puts it, there are often forms of "gain" beyond the economic gains that are so often the focus when studying the relationship between the "formal" and "informal" economy. It is not growth through the production and sale of untaxed goods and services that happens here, so much as redistribution for the purposes of stabilising what are undulating flows of abundance and lack and bringing people's commitments to one another out into the open. This can be described as a process of "informalisation", as Guyer rephrases it, where certain formal assets or economic activities go beyond the purview of the state, but the value they generate is not solely monetary.

These forms of stability are reached not by collective efforts to pool and redistribute common resources, but by compelling people to make themselves present to be demanded from when they have resources to share. As noted at the start of this chapter, these patterns of sharing are well-known within the literature for being based on the principle that those who have more should give in to the demands of those with less. It is a distributional regime that rejects any attempt to centralise processes of redistribution, lest these undermine personal autonomy and develop into forms of hierarchy. Despite appearing similar to prevailing accounts of "demand sharing" within the literature, patterns of sharing that characterise the *zula* economy are in many ways distinct. The following section examines these differences, showing that these are not "prototypical" forms of sharing that people pursue whatever the context and whoever the person, but forms of sharing that take place primarily between those who depend upon one another but do not know each other intimately. Within this context, demand sharing involves more than simply bringing an equality of wealth within moments of abundance, but the concerted effort to be "open"—to make oneself present to others to be demanded from, and to compel others to do the same.

**Demand sharing and the desire to be "open"**

"People call me *tcaq |'u n!a'an*", Kam smirked. "I can pour in everything. I drink so fast!" he said, raising his voice to the small crowd who had gathered to listen in on our conversation. The words *tcaq* (pour) and *|'u* (into) were generally only used when asking someone to pour liquids into cups or buckets. The suggestion that you could pour liquid into a person like you might a cup, and that you could be *n!a'an*—a "big" or "great" version of such an action—set everyone off giggling. "Most people have to swallow first", but not him, Kam was like an empty vessel. You could just pour the liquid into him and it would go straight down to the bottom. The liquid in this case was *g||kaa*, otherwise known as *katjipembe*, a home-distilled alcoholic spirit sold by black African settlers in Tsumkwe. Just as the *zula* economy was associated with beggars, hustlers, and thieves, it was associated with alcohol—especially *g||kaa*, the most readily available spirit within the region. "When I have money, and I am drinking that," Kam went on, "it is like I am the flying stick in the game that children play called *baah*." The game involved cutting off hollow stalks of tall, dry grass (*Grewia flava*) and throwing them so that they glide through the air, aiming to get the stalks to glide for as long as possible. Being "like…a flying stick", he explained, was being able to "go on and on", but to have no control over yourself, to be propelled forward by others.

At the time of our conversation, Kam had recently returned from spending a few days drinking in Tsumkwe. "The people who drink are everywhere! Going to look for someone to *zula*." It was the end of the harvesting season, and he and his family had received a sum of NAD5,808.00 between them. "Wow! I got drunk and drunk from *katjipembe*." Kam exclaimed. He pulled his shirt off over his head and patted his chest. "See how *katjipembe* has made my chest bones show up! It is bad when you are there in town." He and his wife left some of the money at home, paid off some of their debts, and used the rest on alcohol, some tobacco, and one 5kg bag of sugar which he brought out of the house and used to flavour the tea he made for us. On that occasion, they had gone together, but normally he would go alone. "I will say 'I'm going to go get tobacco and sugar and come back immediately', but then *zula* makes you forget that you just came from the village. And then you will go and waste all the money. It is alcohol that stops you." The task of buying supplies for his household, in other words, would be disrupted by the demands placed on him by others, and by the conviviality brought about by

drinking with those who make such demands. "You drink because then you feel easy around each other".

*Figure 13 A distillery for producing katjipembe (or "g||kaa")*

Despite there being a well-entrenched stereotype across southern Africa—that 'Bushmen' "would doubtless be the drunkenest people on earth, had they enough liquor to be so" (Kolbe cited in Gordon 1996: 64)—the relationship between alcohol consumption and sociality remains poorly understood (see Singer 2012). What attention there has been to alcohol consumption among marginalised communities in southern Africa (and more broadly, see Brady 2010, 2012, 2015, d'Abbs and Brady 2004) has been confined to three primary areas: its impact on the infection rates and treatment programs for HIV/AIDS or tuberculosis, its role in cases of domestic violence or child abuse, or in terms of treatment programs and drug policy (see Lesch and Adams 2016, Kalichman *et al* 2012, Chapman and Lupton 1994). Early accounts of alcohol consumption among the "Bushmen" regarded it as part of broader patterns of addiction that were evidence of "their intemperance and lack of economic rationality" (Gordon 1996: 63). These stereotypes are still advanced today, featuring most forcefully in short videos of comedy sketches that people, including Ju|'hoansi, share with one another via Bluetooth on their mobile phones. They typically feature a "Bosman" so drunk that they cannot speak, stand,

or walk, being taunted by a white Afrikaans-speaking person who might offer them a lift home in the back of their truck.

Later accounts, by contrast, have focused on the "political economy of addiction". They have highlighted the use of alcohol as a tool, such as in the *dop* or *tot* system in which wineland labourers are paid partly in alcoholic drink (see Williams 2016), for creating a dependent work force. Less credibly, they have highlighted their "susceptibility to alcoholism" as a "dark side to the San's most ancient and most diverse genetic makeup" (see Sassman 2015). These mark important challenges to the conservative settler historiographies that have persisted in perpetuating enduring stereotypes of interminably "drunk Bushmen", but they overlook the forms of sociality that drinking supports, and the moral ambivalence that comes with it. Within the Nyae Nyae context, this means overlooking the spaces of intimacy and "openness" that are made through drinking, as people navigate the difficulty of roaming around and demanding from those they don't know.

The suggestion that people within the region may feel uneasy about opening themselves up to those they do not know is contentious. It is a challenge to existing analyses of sharing which have been overly formalistic in their attempts to lay out a structural formula for the functioning of so-called egalitarian societies. These have not been incorrect in capturing what are considered "good" ways of sharing. Among the Ju|'hoansi, as in the literature, to ||*'an* "demand" is to ask for assistance in a "good" way. Other ways of asking for assistance, such as *g‡ara* "to beg" or to "makes others feel pity", were generally said to be "not good". Within specific contexts and in response to certain values, however, it is the former that is considered less appropriate, and the latter that is considered more appropriate, and it is these contrasting contexts and values that have generally not been considered. Before considering these—providing a more nuanced perspective on how people go about trying to redistribute and maintain autonomy, and the contextual features that threaten its realisation—it is worth briefly summarising the existing literature.

The first major contribution to this literature was Marshall Sahlins' (1972) *Stone Age Economics*. In this text, Sahlins drew extensively upon ethnographic data gathered on the Ju|'hoansi of north-eastern Namibia and north-western Botswana (notably Marshall-Thomas 1959, Marshall 1961, Lee and DeVore 1969, and Lee 1979). In the final chapter of the text, Sahlins traces out his tripartite model of "primitive exchange" made up of

"generalised", "balanced", and "negative" reciprocity. "Generalised" reciprocity is defined as "transactions that are putatively altruistic, transactions on the line of assistance given and, if possible and necessary, assistance returned". The emphasis is therefore on generosity, with reciprocation only necessary if similarly motivated by generosity. "Balanced reciprocity" refers to transactions that are not based on generosity but the trade of the "same types of goods to the same amounts", "without delay", and "negative reciprocity" refers to any attempts "to get something for nothing with impunity". These modes of economic organisation were then mapped onto concentric circles which separated different modes of social organisation—from the "house", the "lineage", and the "village", to "tribal" and "intertribal". At the centre, the most intimate space of the house, was generalised reciprocity, with balanced reciprocity and then negative reciprocity taking its place as one moved outwards to the periphery (see Sahlins 1972: 199).

Sahlins was uniquely appreciative of issues of temporal and spatial regulation in forms of sharing (see Peebles 2010: 232). In dividing economic organisation into three modes based solely on the exchange of goods, and social organisation into five modes based on degrees of kinship distance, however, he came under criticism (see Cook 1974). The suggestion that modes of economic organisation mapped neatly onto modes of social organisation was deemed too prescriptive, and the division of these into three and five modes, respectively, too simplistic. One of the key criticisms of his division of the economy into three modes was that it stretched the notion of reciprocity, to "cover transactions that are clearly not reciprocal at all, namely 'generalised reciprocity' for sharing and 'negative reciprocity' for stealing" (Widlok 2017: 17). At the forefront of these criticisms was the anthropologist Nicolas Peterson, who argued (1993) that among hunter-gatherers sharing is only very occasionally enacted through "generalised reciprocity". He coined the term "demand sharing", contrasting this form of sharing, which centred on responding positively to the demands of others, to "unsolicited giving" of generalised reciprocity based on an "ethic of generosity". Their form of social organisation is not one that is more "altruistic", then, but one in which people are united by a mutual commitment to the rule that "someone has the right to take what she feels she needs without any direct payment or reciprocation" (Mauss cited in Graeber 2001: 159).

Refining this definition of sharing and its relationship to egalitarianism further, Peterson argues that there is an "apparent indifference implied by demand sharing" with

respect to those to whom people are morally committed. The tripartite model of exchange that Sahlins develops differs in that it makes a "forceful correlation between modes of economic transaction (generalised, balanced, and negative reciprocity) and modes of social organisation (house, lineage, village, tribal, intertribal)" (Widlok 2017: 17). Building upon studies of "universal systems of kin classification" (discussed further in Chapter 4), several authors note critically that this "forceful correlation" does not hold. As Widlok notes further, it does not "stand up to the fact that sharing has been observed to be at times indiscriminate with regard to specific kin relations, since it may include everyone present, even 'distant' visitors or anthropologists who are not treated as close kin in other contexts" (also see Marshall 1957: 23, Peterson 1993: 868-69, Barnard 2016: S148). The emphasis thus shifts from an ethics of generosity to an ethics of demanding from those who have more. Accordingly, it is the act of agreeing to meet demands that precedes definitions of kinship, with "the categorisation of a particular person with a particular kinship term often… [following] the interaction rather than the other way around" (Widlok 2013: 20). Pushing beyond the prescriptivism of Sahlins's writing, and the hierarchy it suggested, the pendulum seems to have swung too far in the other direction—taking demand sharing to be the prototypically egalitarian mode of social organisation without considering its sensitivity to temporality and spatiality.

The process of making demands, both within the context of the *ǂzula* economy and outside of it, takes multiple forms. In both Peterson's (1993) and Widlok's (2004, 2013) definition of "demand sharing", these forms are all modes of communication concerned primarily with the establishment of equality between the people involved. These include both direct demands, such as verbal requests or acts of "taking", and indirect demands, such as expressions of need which may or may not be verbalised. While it is noted that these "conversational strategies provide the background against which providers and takers find sharing to be an acceptable strategy" (Widlok 2013: 20), and that "kinship links", "the occurrence of past sharing", and the "mode of personal presence" are factors that affect these, how they do so is not really the focus. As noted above, Ju|'hoan speakers draw a distinction between two "ways of asking": to *||'an* (demand) and to *gǂara* (beg, plead). As examined in the introduction, each take several forms depending upon who is being asked, what is being asked for, and where the asking occurs. The former corresponds to direct demands, including both taking (what Blurton Jones [cited in Peterson 1993: 861] refers to as "tolerated theft") and demanding. The

latter, in contrast, corresponds to more indirect requests—including either, as one Ju|'hoan put it, "dropping your head into your chest to show you are suffering", or deferentially begging others for help. Between the intimate space of the territory, and the not so intimate space of town, the way people go about asking, and the way they feel about doing so, shifts—there are, in other words, certain contexts and values that shape their enactment.

Within the context of the *zula* economy, it is customary to both demand but only in the sense of making verbal demands of those who are likely to concede, and to beg, but generally only in the sense of verbally begging those who are likely to refuse. Out when roaming through town, my neighbour ||'Ao explained, it is "good" for Ju|'hoansi to demand from one another. When they want to ask a non-Ju|'hoan for help, if that person is someone they do not know well, however, the right thing to do was to show deference and beg for their assistance. "Begging from others", ||'Ao explained, "…is a way of saying that you know already that the person will refuse", whereas demanding from others is a way of saying you know they are people who will never refuse those who have less than them. They are based, in other words, on the values that different "kinds of people" are presumed to have—on what they consider to be "good" ways of asking. There was more to it than this, however, since people were often ambivalent about whether demanding or begging, or conceding to the demands of others, was a "good" thing to do. Within the context of town, people express ambivalence not only about whether others will refuse them, but about whether they will make themselves present to be demanded from at all and whether they will trust those asking them to do the same. These are a consequence of the peaks and troughs that characterise life, compelling people to depend upon those they are not certain they will encounter again.

The commitment to redistribution and autonomy which is necessary in order to navigate their experiences of marginality depends not only upon making and agreeing to demands. Since sharing takes place within a context of shifting encounters, it depends also upon making oneself *tò'm* (near) and *koeqe* or *sara* (open) to be demanded from. Setting aside begging and relationships with those who tend to refuse (discussed further in the coming chapters), the *zula* economy calls for certain forms of intimacy. Elaborating upon the problem of intimacy within the *zula* economy, Kam emphasised that he only ever demanded from people he knew, and that they were the same people he expected to demand from him when he had money. This is not to say that going into town didn't

involve trying to become intimate with others, but that these forms of intimacy were necessary before demanding from them could be considered a "good" thing to do. "You have to sit down with them," Kam explained, "…and go with them wherever they go for a while, then when they go buy something you ask to taste it. You drink together, and it becomes easy, then you can say 'give me NAD10 so I can go and buy something"'. Demanding from others, in other words, was far from "indiscriminate", but instead involved the difficult process of cultivating relationships, of opening up and becoming vulnerable to others (see Ross 2010 for a vivid account of these issues as they play out in an informal settlement in post-apartheid South Africa).

Speaking of this process, Teme—an elderly Ju|'hoan man who cooked *katjipembe* for an Oshiwambo and sold it to fellow Ju|'hoansi—explained that "the way it is, is like, when you are sober you are afraid to say something. You just hold it. When you drink *katjipembe* then you do not feel afraid anymore, you will just feel free." This freedom, which Ju|'hoansi often refer to as *koeqe te tchi* (to be free and drink), encompassed multiple experiences. "Some people will just be drunk from alcohol [*!auhn !xari*], and come and sit with us and talk because they feel joy in their hearts, and then they will just go and sleep", Teme elaborated, "…while others will go mad from alcohol [*di !xari*], and want to fight with others." Among the former, drinking was about freeing oneself momentarily from the concerns of everyday life within the context of marginality and uncertainty—about letting oneself "forget that you just came from the village", as Kam put it, where there is hunger and boredom. Among the latter, drinking was a way of airing grievances—as much about addressing people's failure to *ǂ'ang |'an* (think for, or think of) others, as it was a function of the reticence with which people accuse family of wrongdoing (discussed further in Chapter 4). As Teme explained it, "you already feel bad in your heart with pain… you hold it, and then you drink, and you can go to them and say 'yeah, you did this and that to me'." Most notably, however, drinking was said to allow people to overcome the *koaq* (fear) people experience when demanding from others within the context of the *zula* economy.

As Gideon put it, contemplating the extent to which he really was a "*zula* boy" and poignantly summarising the character of this fear:

> "I'm a *zula* boy when I have no money. If I have nothing, I have to go out there and find friends who might give me something, like some tobacco or money. I

don't like it though. To *zula* is not for me. A friend is a person you really cannot trust."

A "friend", in this case, is the type of person that you encounter when roaming through town. "These people are people who share with you one day or hang around with you when you are drinking as if they are good and they ask you for things," Gideon explained, "…then next thing they are gone, and they are doing bad things". There were many forms that these "bad things" took, but a common form—as the following chapter examines in more depth—was to demand from others and, in doing so, present oneself as someone with whom others might develop ongoing relationships of care, only to hide from those others when in a position to care for them in return. These are people, many of my interlocutors complained, who hang around when they want to demand from others, then when they have money they come into town and then leave quickly. The fear associated with demanding from others, then, was not only that they might refuse you, but that they might *kxuia* (ruin or exploit) you over time.

In the spirit of demand sharing, where people had secure employment and a relatively fixed status as "those who have more than they can immediately use or consume", the threat of being "ruined" or "exploited" were not present. Where people's lives were characterised by undulating flows of abundance and lack, however, developing relationships with those who will present themselves to you to be demanded from in the future, versus those who seek to dodge those who care for them, can be the difference between "survivable poverty" and "absolute destitution". "Everyone does it sometimes", Kam explained to me, "…one time, I was given NAD10 from someone who always gives to me. I went to play jackpot and I won NAD50. I was so happy! I immediately sat down and put the money away safely. I didn't need to give it to anyone else because it was my luck!" Too much of this, though, "…and people start to wonder about you." As my host repeated many times over, "I have been at work for a long time with you … I have to spend today visiting people or they will start to wonder about me."

As Chapter 4 examines in more depth, an important contributing factor to this was the shame people associated with going into people's yards or territories to demand from them. It was up to someone to make themselves present to others to be demanded from, and so working with a white person (which meant, as the stereotype went, having access to money) and not going out roaming and visiting others was to actively resist caring for them. Adding to the fear of being refused and the fear of being "ruined" or

"exploited", then, was the fear of being declared "a person who cannot be trusted", laying the foundation for being shamed into feeling one cannot rightly demand from others. Drinking assuaged these fears, as Kam expressed memorably in his analogy of the flying stick, but it did not remove them. The NAD50 that others saw him win and put in his pocket, or the time he had spent out of sight from others, were sources of anxiety. Were people talking about him? Were they cursing him? Would they think him shameless if he asked them for help again? Perhaps he best stay home for a bit, he said, and go in to town again when he has something to give.

**Friendship, trust, and the problem of presence**

In a recent contribution to the anthropology of southern Africa, Ferguson (2013, 2015) points out the curious relationship between dependency and emancipation. Where liberal thought has often seen these as opposites, he writes, "the political anthropology of southern Africa has long recognised relations of social dependence as the very foundation of polities and persons alike" (Ferguson 2013: 223). Within the contemporary context, emergent forms of dependency—between citizen and state within new social welfare programs, and between patron and client within relationships that hark back to the apartheid era—should not be glossed as evidence *against* "genuine social and economic emancipation". Instead, they are forms of political mobilisation which draw upon a deeper history of thinking about dependency in terms of social inclusion. With this in mind, Ferguson (2015: 165-189) considers the extent to which social welfare programs based on direct cash transfers might be considered forms of emancipation, rather than forms of "ameliorative welfare" which further entrench vulnerability. Developing this argument, Ferguson draws upon the concept of "demand sharing" to argue that cash transfers, rather than indicative of the lack of power that cash transfer recipients have vis-à-vis their "generous" patrons, are indicative of their power to demand a "rightful share" from those who have more than them. When cash transfers are perceived in this way, "there is no expectation of a return, no debt, and no shame… one is simply receiving one's own share of one's own property" (ibid: 178).

Among the Ju|'hoansi of the Nyae Nyae region, this framing similarly describes how people view the act of demanding from others. This is a "good" way of asking—one that not only seeks to bring about redistribution in the moment of the encounter but also seeks, over time, to establish whether people share similar values. It is in terms of the latter that this chapter has sought to problematise the way that "demand sharing" has

been conceptualised to date. Within the contemporary context—one characterised by mass unemployment and what Di Nunzio (2017) has recently called an "enduring politics of limited entitlements"—the act of demanding from others carries certain anxieties, as does the act of giving in to demands that are made. Where people cannot be sure that they will encounter others in the future, and where sociality depends upon people making themselves present to one another to be demanded from, demand sharing can support exploitative relationships as much as it might support and foster redistribution. This exposes some of the limitations of thinking about "demand sharing" without taking stock of the specific contexts within which they are performed.

Within the Nyae Nyae region—where life is characterised by undulating flows of abundance and lack and where people are deeply dependent upon those who "cannot be trusted" for their survival—people are similarly concerned with the possibility of "capture", albeit at a very different scale. The moral ambivalence that demand sharing generates applies not only to the decision to give it to demands, but also the process of demanding from others. Within a context where people depend upon others making themselves present to be demanded from, it is necessary that people trust one another. This trust need not service the same relationships. As Woodburn (1998) writes, sharing is not a form of exchange in the sense of creating a formal obligation to return assistance regardless of someone's personal circumstances. Within the contemporary context, however, it does create an informal obligation to make oneself present to others whenever you are in a position of relative wealth. These may not necessarily be the same people one gained assistance from before, though over time they generally are. The nature of demand sharing, in other words, changes depending on the context—on whether there are opportunities for openness between people. The people who roam through the Nyae Nyae region, like the "steady parade of out-of-work black South Africans" (Ferguson 2015: 142), make important distinctions between the people with whom they foster relationships of dependency. Across these contexts, as Bolt (2013: 243) puts it, "dependencies work differently and mean different things" depending on the "kinds of people" they encounter, and the types of spaces they encounter them in. There is demand sharing that happens at home among kin, and there is demand sharing that happens in town or on the move where interpersonal evaluations of trust are impeded.

As the following chapter explores in more depth, there are numerous ways that people are compelled to make themselves present to one another—in other words, to

"roam". The discourse of mistrust—captured succinctly in Gideon's statement that "a friend is a person you really cannot trust"—appears to do some of this work. In a recent overview of social scientific engagements with "trust", Carey (2017) observes that everywhere "trust" has been depicted as the primary enabler of "whatever it is we value". Without trust, it is repeatedly argued, all social life erodes, and so the more we have of "trust", the better. Unsurprisingly, Carey notes, there is "little room within this absolutist framework for a nuanced discussion of mistrust." What is left is a view of mistrust as inevitably giving rise to "a dog-eat-dog world of so-called amoral familism, in which mistrust locks people and societies into a vicious cycle of backwardness and underdevelopment as squalid and unrelenting as a world without sunlight" (ibid: 2). These conceptions of friendship as affective bonds of love and mutual trust (see Carey 2017: 39-61, esp. pp. 49), inspired by the Enlightenment era, neglect that any context within which interpersonal evaluations of trust come to matter is one which necessarily brings an economy of mistrust to mind (Corsín Jiménez 2011). Friendships are relationships where trust comes to matter precisely because they are circumscribed by contexts which allow for a degree of autonomy that "kinship" tends not to be (also see Carrier 1999, Pitt-Rivers 2016). Friends are people we trust to keep us in mind, but who we cannot enforce to do so at any particular time, and who can easily slip beyond the sphere of surveillance which might allow for interpersonal evaluations of trust to take place. A friend, then, is someone in whom we put our trust and to whom we make ourselves vulnerable, despite the reality that they are beyond our control and beyond our scrutiny.

Within the Nyae Nyae context, it is this that sees friendship "stand in contrast to other ways of relating" (Killick and Desai 2010: 2). Mistrust has become an important issue because people are "not just 'there' to find and take" from at will, but instead have to "present themselves" to be demanded from (Ingold cited in Corsín Jiménez 2011: 187), to make themselves "open" to others. As much as demand sharing might generally be what precedes a kind of equality, it may also lead to inequality and exploitation. It does not, in and of itself, guarantee that people present themselves to one another to be demanded from. Appreciating these dimensions requires pushing beyond overly formalistic portrayals of demand sharing, to consider the contextual factors which shape their enactment. Getting at these requires paying attention not only to what people say about demand sharing as a "good" way of relating to others, but to the various emotive or affective experiences that doing it actually generates. Central to this discussion is

alcohol, and the way that drinking it together opens up spaces within which people feel they *can* demand freely from those who have more than them, but who may not trust them to do so in return.

It is important to not give the impression, however, that where these experiences do entail moral ambivalence they emerge solely in response to shifting conditions of uncertainty and suspicion. As Beatty (2013: 420) puts it, "there are always personal stories and previous emotional encounters that colour the relation, often in contradictory ways, and give it its meaning and peculiar tone" (also see Lutz and White 1986). The next chapter turns to these encounters—to the way people confront those who, they suspect, "cannot be trusted", but who they cannot easily challenge or who they are compelled to keep as friends.

# Chapter 3:

# Mockery, uncertainty, and taking egalitarianism seriously

*Figure 14 Two hunters demonstrating how to make fire to a tourist while mocking one another for the meaning behind their tattoos*

The statement "We, here, are people who help each other", was uttered frequently by the Ju|'hoansi of the Nyae Nyae region. The statement was comparative—a slight on *ju doresin* (other people) who tended to refuse the demands of those who were not close relatives or those they trusted, and who saw the act of demanding from others as deeply shameful. Conversely, to be a "good" person among the Ju|'hoansi is to *sin* ||*an* (just demand), and *sin* |*'an ju* (just give to people). These are, as Widlok (2013: 21) writes, "prototypical" forms of sharing. The values enshrined in these forms of sharing are those which see redistribution as intrinsically good. If everyone is granted the same rights and opportunities to demand from others who have more than them, whoever they may be, redistributive equality should necessarily follow. Within contexts of uncertainty, however—where life is characterised by undulating flows of abundance and lack and where people are deeply dependent on those who "cannot be trusted"—these forms of sharing take on new resonances. A paradox emerges, in fact, where taking demand sharing too seriously in the short term, undermines the potential it has for bringing about such equality in the long term (see Kapferer 2015). At the heart of this paradox is the doubt

people experience over who the "we, here" really are (see Bird-David 2017)—doubt over who, in other words, might demand when others have more than them, but do not make themselves present to be demanded from when others depend upon them to do so.

When framed in this way, the paradox, and the moral ambivalence it generates, appears to arise specifically within contexts where demand sharing is the norm. Within these contexts, rather than give only to those they think deserve it, to loved ones, or to those they trust to be share, a person is stripped of the power to make these distinctions and should give freely to whoever demands from her. The ability to move through space, to "roam", becomes the primary means, then, through which people are able to make use of their rights to demand from others. Refraining from roaming, or—as the next chapter explores—preventing people from moving through space, becomes synonymous with not caring for others. These tensions, however, are not solely a function of demand sharing. They form part of broader experiences of doubt over the values or intentions of others. Among the Ju|'hoansi, this means not only dealing with the difficulty of distinguishing people who value demand sharing from those who do not, but also working out how different forms of sharing might ultimately relate to one another. In particular, how the expectation that those who have more should share with those who have less *without expecting repayment*, will impinge upon other forms of sharing where reciprocity or repayment are the norm. These forms of sharing include those that are *!aoh* (traditional), such as demand sharing or generalised forms of reciprocity, and *ǂe* (new), such as monetary debts, wage labour, or acts of begging.

Within the contemporary context, these time-honoured and novel forms of sharing relate to one another in complex ways. As the previous chapter examines, as people have become increasingly dependent upon those who have to make themselves present to be demanded from, demand sharing, on the one hand, has become increasingly indistinguishable from efforts to take from those who have more without the intention of caring for them in return when they most need it, on the other. Similarly, as money has become an item of reciprocal gift-giving and monetary debts have proliferated, the lines between generalised reciprocity and balanced reciprocity have become blurred. Those who loan money to one another struggle to enforce the timing of repayments and the form these repayments take, and those who engage in gift-giving struggle to shake the feeling that, unless the gifts they give are of equal value, what they reciprocate is never enough. These issues have grown in their intensity as divisions between the "privileged"

and the "marginalised"—between those with a regular source of income and those without—have become more entrenched. This has contributed to the expectation that certain people should demand while others should be demanded from (irrespective of the relative wealth they may possess over time or the extent to which they help others). It has also contributed to the expectation that certain "debts" or "gifts" should not really be repaid or reciprocated since those with more should always give to those who have less without expectating repayment.

Contributing to these experiences of moral ambivalence are not only contradictions and ambiguities between different forms of sharing, but the shame associated with doubting and confronting others. As much as people are committed to principles of sharing which reject either the ability to choose those with whom one shares, or attempts to define what is reciprocated and when, they are also committed to giving the benefit of the doubt. They recognise that they may not be the only party to be in doubt, but that they may be wrong about the people they are doubting. These are not only important signs of respect, but measures which protect people from the harm of ancestors who, as Chapter 7 shows, are relentless in their search for excuses to strike their living relatives with sickness so they may take them away from the acrimony of the living. This makes challenging and confronting others a deeply sensitive process. This chapter traces these processes. In particular, it looks at the way people use mockery in their attempts to navigate or resolve the ambiguity in their encounters with one another. The form this mockery takes draws upon a well-documented tradition of joking with insults, but also the well-known figure of the "trickster"—a deeply ambiguous figure that is at once revered for its ingenuity and chastised for its gluttony.

This discussion paves the way for pushing further beyond the overly formalistic portrayals of egalitarian societies that have emerged from the literature to date. Most notably, for the focus of this chapter, this means engaging critically with the argument that ambiguity is the hallmark of "Bushman society" (Guenther 1999). Rather than deemed a "fundamental aspect of human life", of being "steeped in contradictory thoughts, feelings, and attitudes" (Berliner *et al* 2016: 1), ambiguity is considered a function specifically of "individualism, running as a strong counter-current to the ethos of communalism" (Guenther 1999: 42). It is an argument that has long been associated with the figure of the "trickster" in the anthropological study of folklore, which sees the trickster as an instantiation of a tension between the repressed amoral desires of the

individual and the very moral demands of social life. Recent contributions to the anthropology of ethics and the anthropology of value have gone a long way towards challenging these arguments as they have surfaced elsewhere in the discipline. This chapter joins these discussions, exposing the extent to which these ways of theorising personhood and ethics prevent a more nuanced discussion of the way people both contemplate and go about resolving the experiences of ambiguity, ambivalence, and contradiction that characterise their lives.

**Spaces of privilege, spaces of marginality**

"All this asking is a new thing!" ||'Ao complained, as we sat together at the side of the road near his house, a precariously balanced arrangement of tree branches and road signs covered by sheets of plastic. Like most other young Ju|'hoan men, he did not have a wage-paying job and subsisted largely from food aid packages from the government, and by roaming through Tsumkwe in the hope of securing small cash donations, nips of alcohol, and pinches of tobacco from friends. "All this asking" described his own way of getting by as much as it described the ways of those he was chastising. The proliferation of asking was, as the previous chapter shows, a function of *zula ka ku |xoah* (roaming in order to live), where relationships of dependency extend increasingly beyond the space of kin. While he expressed sympathy and understanding for the behaviour of others like him, he was equally troubled by the changes that he saw unfolding. "This thing of making requests all the time, openly, it is a thing of alcohol and money". It was alcohol, ||'Ao elaborated, that was making a mess of the customs of sharing—with people begging from those they should demand from, and demanding from those they should beg from, people treating gifts as debts and debts as gifts, and people moving more freely in some instances and being restricted in others (as explored in the previous chapter). It was money, furthermore, that was making it easier for people to conceal what they have at any one time, but also leading to the inflation of desire in light of the new forms of exchange made possible by money.

These problems of temporality, spatiality, and intentionality were not solely the concern of those who *zula*—those who call themselves *g||aakhoesi* (marginalised) people—but applied equally to those with regular sources of income—referred to as *||'aihasi* (privileged). Even though the latter rejected the label on the grounds that it did not reflect their own experiences of ever-growing demands from relatives and quickly depleted pockets, these two groups were markedly different. They were not only visibly

distinct on account of the clothes they wore or their nutrition, but they moved through the region, and tried to depend upon one another, in very different ways. As the previous chapter shows, those who are marginalised are heavily dependent upon roaming—on searching for those who have more than they can readily consume or use who they might beg or demand from. Where they tend to demand from those who are similarly marginalised, and then make themselves present to others when they are in the same position, they tend to beg from those who they suspect will refuse them (including, mostly, *other people* including "whites", "blacks", or those who are "far-hearted"). Both marginalised and privileged people practice demand sharing at their homes, among kin. They do this not by verbally demanding from one another as they do when roaming, but by simply taking a share of what is on offer. Where those who are marginalised tend to be visited by extended relatives only occasionally, the privileged are constantly accompanied by extended relatives—who sleep at their yards, eat with them, and depend upon them for transport to their territories.

Saving the discussion of patterns of sharing among kin at home in their territories or in their yards in Tsumkwe for the next chapter, this chapter considers how these issues relate to the practice of reciprocal gift-giving among, and between, the "marginalised" and the "privileged". At once described as being "at the heart of [Ju|'hoan] reciprocity and social networks" (Wiessner 1986: 105), these gift-giving relationships have waned in significance. They nevertheless remain an important topic of conversation, framing the way people discuss their commitments to one another in the context of demand sharing and the way people discuss the difficulty of having to service their debts or pursue repayments. Gift-giving relationships, known locally as *xaro* (or *hxaro*), start with the empathic recognition by the giver that something they possess is needed or desired greatly by another person. Once the first gift is given, a *n!ama* (pathway) is drawn between two people who then give gifts to one another indefinitely. There is no restriction on what should be reciprocated and when, only that *xaro* partners alternate in their roles as givers and receivers. They are typically people who are equals, not necessarily in terms of wealth at any given moment but rather in terms of their capacity to secure access to specific resources in the future. These resources are usually things (such as jewellery, mobile phones, clothes, or money) that are not easily divided up or which lose their value when they are (also see Cashdan 2009). Their value is not solely held in the objects themselves,

but also in the relationships of mutual dependency that they index between people who may call upon each other in times of need.

They are, in a sense, formalised instances of the relationships upon which the *ǂnla* economy depends, and which the discourse of trust seeks to foster, whereby people are compelled to think of others where they may not otherwise. As Wiessner (1977, 1983, 1986, 2002, 2014) has emphasised, these relationships form part of broader risk reduction strategies which involve storing a debt "until the situation of have and have not is reversed, allowing *hxaro* relationships effectively to cover unpredictable losses" (Wiessner 1986: 105). Covering these losses are not necessarily the gifts shared through *xaro* networks so much as goods and services gained through other forms of sharing (forms of sharing that *xaro* networks make possible). As the next chapter examines in more depth, owing to certain patterns of inheritance and land ownership (also see Wiessner 2002: 37) there are certain barriers to movement between regions that are the territories of different kin groups. At the time of Wiessner's research in the 1970s, the average Ju|'hoan had 15-16 *xaro* partners living between 30km and 200km away—providing points of entry into spaces that people otherwise feel ashamed to enter. They create "more binding commitments" (Wiessner 2002: 27) between people who are not otherwise obligated or committed to one another—"those who are beyond the bounds of ordinary kinship reckoning" (Wiessner 1998: 515) and who cannot easily make themselves present to one another.

In recent years, these networks have diminished. The number of *xaro* partners that people report having has decreased from 15 – 16 to no more than 1 – 2, typically brothers or sisters who either live nearby or who visit frequently. Reflecting upon these changes, Wiessner (1986) argues that these changes have occurred as a result of "permanent settlement and resource security" (ibid: 517). This has meant that people either depend upon one another less, or that there are public spaces within which people are able to roam freely and demand from one another. While it is certainly true that growing divisions between the "marginalised" and the "privileged" have exacerbated the former's dependence upon the latter, and the latter's independence from the former, it is not true that people, across the board, no longer depend upon one another, or that people are not still troubled by "the bounds of ordinary kinship reckoning". For the marginalised, relationships of dependency are built less upon being able to move freely into other territories, and more upon people making themselves present to one another (as the

previous chapter shows). For the privileged, relationships of dependency are built less on demand sharing and more upon people loaning large sums of cash to one another to cover debt repayments or greater household and living costs. Where the privileged no longer depend upon the marginalised, and the marginalised cannot hope to reciprocate what the privileged might give them, *xaro* networks become either undesirable or unsustainable.

Speaking of his own *xaro* relationships, my host explained that he had one *xaro* partner, but they were "not friends today… we were best friends at school, and we always used to *xaro* each other for things like clothes. Some time ago, he gave me a big sum of money, NAD6,000, to help me build my house and since then there has been nothing I can do to give him something in return. I am poor, and he has a lot of money." Sato had secured permanent employment, as had his wife, and his family were often referred to as "privileged". While they were still friends, and my host often still demanded assistance from him for small amounts of money or help with transport, there was a sense in which the inequality between them had turned a relationship previously based on *xaro* into one based on a more pressing relationship of *ǂo* (debt or guilt, examined in more depth in Chapter 5). "He does not expect me to, but I need to pay him back", my host complained, "…but there is no money. I feel shame that I am too poor. That's why we just *xaro* small things with our family members". With the rise of permanent employment for Ju|'hoansi with particular skills—typically as drivers, office workers, or tour guides—and the subsequent rise in the distinction between "marginalised" and "privileged", relationships that previously might have offered long-term security for both partners have become distinctly uneven. The commitment to the forms of sharing that have long been associated with egalitarianism appears then to be tied intimately to the recognition that people need one another.

These divisions have been compounded, too, by the growing spatial separation of the "marginalised" from the "privileged". With government housing schemes only benefitting those who are able to pay for water and electricity, Tsumkwe is now divided up into distinct "locations" of the privileged and the marginalised. Where the former typically have one or two-room cement brick houses with pay-as-you-go electricity, the latter either live in huts constructed with wood and mud or, like ||'Ao, in make-shift tents constructed with sheets of plastic and old road signs. In much the same way that people are, and have been, cautious in their movements between territories—tending to

stick to their own or those where they have established *xaro* networks, people are cautious in their movements between other people's yards in town. Speaking in an impassioned way, G|aq'o—an elderly Ju|'hoan man from the far north of Nyae Nyae—gave a felt sense of these divisions:

| | |
|---|---|
| Jao! Mi o g||aakhoe jao | *Ugh! I'm a poor person ugh!* |
| Mi o g||aakhoe eh | *I'm a poor person really* |
| Jao mi o g||aakhoe | *Ugh! I'm a poor person* |
| … ||Xarasi mi |oa ho | *… I have never seen ||Xarasi* |
| ||Xarasikxaosi ha he o ||'aihasi | *People who are from ||Xarasi, those there are privileged people…* |
| …te e!a sa he o g||aakhoesi | *…and we here are poor people* |
| Mi g|a'asi |u ho | *My eyes cannot / will never see* |

Experiences of shame, in other words, extend well beyond the difficulty of maintaining relationships with those who cannot easily be reciprocated, to the difficulty of establishing these relationships to begin with. The *zula* economy attends partially to these experiences of shame. It gives people the opportunity to demand from those who have more than them without the concern that they should reciprocate. The feelings of shame nevertheless remain—augmented, as G|aq'o's words attest, by the sense that they are not welcome among the privileged.

These experiences appear to be at odds with the values of egalitarianism, as outlined above, but they in fact point to the role that suspicion plays in mediating relationships between those who do not readily share each other's company. As Wiessner (2002: 29) notes—resonating with the findings of the previous chapter—*xaro* is "a relationship that opens people to exploitation, something which is constantly monitored by gossip, or when gossip fails, by efforts to become a 'have not' by either concealing goods or limiting production". Counter-intuitively, then, the shame that marginalised Ju|'hoansi appear to experience when soliciting those they regard as privileged is a function of knowing that they cannot reciprocate those who support them. They feel this way, as my host made clear, even while they are aware that the privileged do not expect repayment and it is "good" to demand from those who have more than you. There are two notions of "equality" at play here, one concerned with short-term reciprocity and the

other with long-term redistribution. The interplay between these ways of reckoning fairness will be returned to in the latter part of this chapter. As much as people value the principles of demand sharing, they also take seriously the proposition that for these to function there should be ongoing relationships of care between people. They do this—what Ju|'hoansi call showing that they *sea kxoe* (see each other), or as G|aq'o puts it, to *ho* (find) each other—even with those whose own, persistent, display of wealth suggests their own failure to do so.

This exposes a basic anxiety that people in the region have about being cast as "tricksters" or free-riders. It also suggests that people are willing to tolerate a certain degree of inequality—not because they are defeatist or overly charitable but because they are reticent to challenge or confront others. This applies not only to relationships between the "marginalised" and the "privileged". As the previous chapter shows, the same concerns characterise relationships of dependency between the marginalised, and similarly, they characterise relationships of dependency between the so-called privileged. These take on a slightly different tone, however, since their dependence upon one another takes the form not of demand sharing but of lending one another large sums of money—typically to cover their ever-expanding debts. Those who are privileged regularly assist those who ask them for help in this way. When repayments aren't made by their debtors, however, they cannot bring themselves to make such requests without going against the basic tenets of caring relationships—to show commitment to one another, but never enforce the timing of reciprocity and the form this reciprocity takes. Within the contemporary context, however—where people's wealth is easily hidden through the medium of cash, and where stereotypes and reputations have increasingly come to stand in the place of evidence—people approach these forms of care with caution and appear to be deeply suspicious of one another. As one of my Ju|'hoan interlocutors put it, people these days just want to *xaro ka ǂ'han ce*, meaning give something and then immediately want something back (translated literally as "to give and immediately bring your arm back up").

My own understanding of these experiences of doubt and suspicion is only just forming, and more research is certainly needed into the more affective dimensions of people's encounters with those who "cannot be trusted". It is nevertheless possible to examine the various ways people go about navigating these encounters, and in what remains of this chapter I will focus on one of the ways people do this: through the use of

mockery, in particular, the act of calling someone a |*xurikxao* (trickster).[18] In doing so, it is possible to appreciate some of the challenges that certain experiences of uncertainty pose for people's efforts to do what is "good". Through this, this chapter provides one layer of evidence in the larger task, as Beatty (2013: 420) defines it, of "fitting together… actions, responses, expressions, and language in a temporal sequence that respects particularities—in a word, narrative—and explains what the passionate actor herself cannot see or say", or chooses not to.

*Figure 15 Tsumkwe General Dealer Store, at the centre of town, on a quiet day*

The problems of uncertainty that the ethnographic examples given in this chapter bring briefly forward, are those which have thrived in two ways within the contemporary context. Firstly, dependence on the cash economy has increasingly brought about the concealment of relative wealth—not only between the "marginalized" and the "privileged", but even within the ranks of these two categories of people. Second, as people have increasingly come to depend upon those whose company they do not necessarily share, the scrutiny that normally accompanies egalitarian living become harder to perform. Encounters between people have thus become increasingly framed by the

[18] The word is composed of the verb |*xuri* meaning to "be cunning, sly, or tricky" and the suffix *-kxao* meaning to be renowned for the action or an "owner, expert" of it.

discourse of trust and problems of uncertainty, forcing people to rely on stereotypes and reputation in ways that make doubt a permanent feature of everyday life. Building upon the previous chapter, I will show in this one that these problems of trust apply not only to demand sharing, but also to other ways of sharing.

**"You're a trickster!"**

It was midday in Tsumkwe and the midday rush of residents with permanent employment had descended on the general dealer store at the centre of town. I was loitering awkwardly in the shop, alongside a number of regulars who hung around the area looking for donations of money or food. There were people buying cold drinks and the local baker was piling fresh loaves of bread onto the counter. A man entered through the large wooden doors that were held open by bins and leaned on by children sucking on drink-o-pop sachets. Dressed in a smart shirt, beige shorts, and fake Adidas sliders, he walked confidently into the shop swinging his car keys in his hand. A voice from another man shouted from the counter as he walked in. *Jaooo!! A o |xurikxao!!* (Yoooo! You're a trickster!), the man shouted in a tone that was both suspicious and angry. Standing in the queue to pay at the shop counter, with two cold bottles of Fanta and a warm loaf of bread, he was similarly on a break from the hours he spent waiting for tourists at the nearby lodge where he worked. The accused looked up and with a grin surfacing on his face he exclaimed *Ayee!! Mi |oa o |xurikxao* (No way. I'm not a trickster!). They battled it out for about a minute with statements like "You deceive me!", "No!", "You're playing tricks!", "No! Leave me with this!", before both erupting into laughter, performing several polite greetings, and parting ways.

Recounting the exchange here brings to mind the astute observation made by Carty and Musharbash (2008: 211) that "writing *about* laughter and humour is rarely funny" and that "translating the joke *and* preserving its funniness is a precious skill possessed by few". This is especially relevant when considering the case at hand, where it is not immediately evident that it is principally laughter that people hope to bring about through these sorts of verbal tussles. They were so commonplace throughout my fieldwork that they often seemed to fall fairly flat, and to not carry much meaning. In some ways, they resembled the familiar custom of "insulting the meat" (Lee 1984: 48), a form of mockery that involves using sarcasm to downplay a hunter's skill in killing large animals. Rather than give a hunter praise upon arriving home with a large animal, it was customary to mock him for killing something so "thin" or "small". Despite the name,

this was a common way of downplaying any number of skills or attributes. Verbal tussles like the one described above, however, are less obviously a means through which to deride others for their relative wealth, power, or prestige. They are also less obviously ironic, teetering precariously on the border between humour and insult. This is partly because they were not obviously ironic, and as such they teetered precariously on the border between humour and insult. Making these sarcastic remarks was not for everyone, and even for those who did make them—those called ||*orekxaosi* (jokers) or in joking relationships with one another—were careful not to do so too frequently, or too indiscriminately.

Their performance was a hedging of bets. There was typically no mention of a debt or obligation that had been dodged, and so it was often difficult to ascertain why this kind of sarcastic mockery was used at any particular moment. My interlocutors, however, invariably revealed some genuine act of trickery which had motivated the mockery. At times, particular individuals had shown themselves to have such a proclivity for deceitful acts that the mockery was directed towards them regardless of whether they had performed a particularly deceitful act at that time. They deserved this mockery because they were probably "doing bad things". Those directing these forms of mockery towards others had typically given them some sort of assistance in the past, from giving in to demands, agreeing to loan money, or giving gifts to would-be *xaro* partners (otherwise known as *n!amakxaosi* "owners of paths"). The mockery seemed rarely to have any obvious reparative effect, such as leading to redistribution or the repayment of debts. It did, however, contribute to the formation of narratives concerned with how trustworthy a person was. These are narratives that have risen in prominence today. The contemporary context is not only one in which it is hard to keep track of people, it is one in which keeping track of people is key to getting by. With the stakes as high as they are, the threshold for free-riding is low. Knowing where people are, what wealth they have access to, and how frequently they act selfishly are key to the way this redistributive regime is regulated.

There were two primary scenarios that sparked these forms of mockery. The first scenario concerns relationships between the "marginalised" and the "privileged"—people whose status as givers and receivers, or (rather) demanders and responders, is relatively fixed. Since the privileged generally have permanent employment, there is an expectation that they are always in a position to respond favourably to the demands of

the former. The marginalised are not always worse off, however, and so their demands are often met with significant speculation. The second scenario concerns relationships between the "privileged"—those who are largely equal in terms of their access to a regular income, and who are similarly in large amounts of debt. On account of their relatively equal access to employment and resources, in other words, there is an expectation that they can request larger sums of cash that would otherwise be reserved for *xaro* partnerships. While these are unequivocally debts, formed through requests rather than gifts, the logic of *xaro* nevertheless makes it difficult to request when and how repayments are made. Since it is relatively easy to conceal cash, it is also difficult to adopt the logic of demand sharing and demand when repayments are made.

These scenarios both point to the role that knowledge (about people's relative positions of wealth and their track records of deceiving others) plays in distinguishing "good" and "bad" ways of sharing. They point to a paradox, even, that pursuing "good" ways of sharing within opaque contexts threaten the very pursuits for egalitarianism upon which they are based. Examining the way people navigate these challenges points to a further paradox that deception and trickery can themselves be key means through which people are able to overcome the exploitation that problems of uncertainty make possible. To limit trickery is therefore to seek to control one of the primary means through which people (both the "marginalised" and the "privileged") engage in efforts of redistributive justice—especially within a context where the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and prestige is becoming increasingly entrenched. There are those, in other words, who use deception and trickery for good, and those who use it for selfish gain—though it is often difficult to distinguish between these.

The comparison brings to mind the common trope of the trickster as either a "culture hero" or "selfish buffoon" (see Carroll 1984). The "culture hero" or "clever hero" is a trickster that uses deception and wit to overcome its subordination to more powerful others by bringing about redistribution or freeing itself from bondage. One example of a "culture hero" within Ju|'hoan folklore is Willem Poster, a jackal who appears in a well-known trickster tale recounted among Ju|'hoansi of the Omaheke region (see Suzman 2017: 241-242) and across Namibia. It tells the story of a jackal, Willem Poster, who manages to trick two Herero pastoralists to pay NAD1,000 for a pot that cooks meat without the need for fire. Willem Poster emerges as a hero, inverting the common experience of Ju|'hoansi in the region who are duped into working without pay

for Herero farmers. The "selfish buffoon", on the other hand, is a trickster who uses deception and wit to exploit others (both those more "privileged" and more "marginalised"). This trickster, unlike its heroic counterpart, is a "perverse" person whose "horrifying project is to build a world in which its desires matter only to itself" (Gow 1989: 580). One example of a "selfish buffoon" within Ju|'hoan folklore is, once again, a jackal. Alongside a hyena, the jackal works for a cruel Afrikaner *baas* (master) as a farm labourer. Feigning the role of the overseer, trickster manages to dupe hyena into doing the hard labour while he collects their payments of meat and fat and hides away to eat them. Having gorged himself on meat and fat, jackal falls into a deep sleep only to awake to his *baas* branding him with an iron rod and his ways exposed to hyena. Where the acts of the "selfish buffoon" typically backfire, the "culture hero" comes out victorious leaving more powerful others foolishly duped. Both employ deception as a means to exploit others, but these are considered fair since they are against a more powerful or resourceful other, or unfair when against a less powerful or resourceful other. One type of deception is done in the name of redistribution, and the other for profit and exploitation.

Early accounts of the trickster in folklore tended to conflate these, focusing on the trickster as an archetype and instantiation of the necessary conflict between the repressed amoral desires of the individual and the very moral demands of social life (Radin 1956, Lévi-Strauss 1963, Freud 1975, cited in Carroll 1981). Steeped in the structuralist tradition, these accounts drew attention to a series of binary oppositions—between life and death, the sacred and the profane, hero and fool—as evidence for an irreconcilable binary between individual and society. These appeared frequently in the myths of people across the globe because they taught people about the dangers of desire within the context of social life (see Clastres 1987 [1974]: 150). Following broader critiques of structuralism (notably Diamond 1974), these studies fell increasingly out of favour. Replacing them were the contributions of several theorists (notably Pelton 1989, Hynes and Doty 1997, Babcock-Abrahams 1975, Guenther 1999) who focused on the indeterminacy of the trickster—a protean indeterminate social being that is neither good nor bad, neither deserving nor undeserving. Framed in terms of Victor Turner's notion of liminality (1969), the trickster in these accounts draws attention to ambiguity and contradiction. Repeatedly, the analysis falls back on to the view that the trickster is an instantiation a paradox which is thought to pervade the human condition: that the pursuit

personal, physical pleasure of any sort (though predominantly sexual intercourse or the consumption of food [cited in Carroll 1981: 301, 305]), necessarily leads to the destruction of the sociality that makes these pursuits possible.

These writings go a long way towards bringing out the moral message carried by the "selfish buffoon", but they do little to make sense of the "culture hero". As such, they only partly account for the way "tricksters" are discussed and understood within the Nyae Nyae region today. With the exception of writers such as Henry Louis Gates and James Scott (see Shipley 2015), who explore the relationship between the trickster figure and patterns of resistance (also see Bakhtin 1993 [1941], Weaver and Mora 2016), the trickster as a "hero" has been largely overlooked. Within the annals of Ju|'hoan folklore, trickster tales involving jackals, hyenas, and oppressive masters frequently feature both selfish buffoons and culture heroes. Though these are rarely told today, the trickster nevertheless remains a frequent topic of discussion and is a figure that is repeatedly deployed in people's efforts to navigate the difficulties of not knowing whether they can trust others. By looking closely at the way this figure is discussed and deployed, it becomes clear that there are both "selfish buffoons" and "culture heroes". They share the name |*xurikxao*, but they are discussed in distinct ways. Where "selfish buffoons" are the subject of mockery and hushed speculation, "culture heroes" are a source of joy and laughter as people recount ingenious ways of overcoming exploitation. With respect to the selfish buffoon, the proposition that it is an instantiation of a tension between "individualism" and "communalism", between the desires of the individual and the very moral demands of social life, holds true.

These are figures who demand from others or refuse to make repayments and only have themselves in mind. With respect to the "culture hero", the opposite is the case. The same actions that are declared individualistic when performed by the selfish buffoon, are actions aimed at redistributive justice when performed by the culture hero. Telling a selfish buffoon from a culture hero is not always easy. Within the tales of Willem Poster or the Afrikaner *baas* and his hapless farmhands, the buffoon and the hero are easy to discern, but in day to day encounters between people in the general dealer store or out on the street, these positions are less clearly drawn. People rarely voiced their suspicions in moments of helping one another, but as time passed, they frequently brought one another's motives into question. Speaking rhetorically, they would say: *Ha ǂ'angsi re naun khuian?* (What are his/her thoughts like?), *Ha re taahn mi?* (Is she/he deceiving me (so that

I lose)?), *Ha khoeca kare du |xuri* (She/he maybe wants to play tricks). This uncertainty generates experiences of moral ambivalence for those who suspect others of being tricksters, as much as it does for those who are tricksters themselves. Among those who knowingly deceive or trick others, there is often the feeling that the people they deceive are tricksters themselves. Among those who suspect others of being tricksters, there is often the concern that in turning to deception in their efforts for retribution, they may become tricksters themselves.

*Figure 16 A black-backed jackal, the quintessential trickster, sniffing the morning air*

Within these contexts of mutual mistrust, mockery becomes one way that people voice their suspicions, declare themselves honest, and persuade people to stop whatever deceptive acts they may be doing. Talk about tricksters, in other words, can be a way of declaring someone's status as a "buffoon" or "hero", or it can be a way of working it out. The process comes with its own challenges. Calling someone out as a trickster, when you are not sure they are deceiving others, is risky. Getting it wrong can sour relationships between people who feel they should trust one another. The following section traces these processes, and the ambivalence they generate, through an examination of several cases of "tricksters" and the way people went about approaching them. In closing, it returns to the discussion of mockery that opens this section, and to the way people turn

to mockery as a powerful mechanism not only for voicing suspicion, but also for working through the impasses that mutual suspicion can bring.

## Taking egalitarianism seriously

Addressing the tendency to pit "individualism" against "communalism", and developing an alternative theory of communism, Marcel Mauss (cited in Graeber 2001: 159) writes that it is possible to have a social system in which the "individual" and the "community" do not exist in perpetual tension. He calls this "individualistic communism" and defines it as the mutual commitment to the principle that "someone has the right to take what she feels she needs without any direct payment or reciprocation". The emphasis placed on "need" is vague, but the principle is nevertheless similar to the practice of demand sharing, and to some extent the forms of gift-giving, discussed thus far. Where demand sharing entails supporting those who, in the immediate encounter, have less, gift-giving entails supporting those who, in the future, may need someone to "think for" them. One promises redistribution between those who occupy or come into the same space, and the other promises redistribution between those who live apart from one another, or of the type of things that cannot easily be divided up.

As summarised in the introduction, these two forms of sharing can be broken down further depending on who one shares or exchanges resources with, what is being shared or exchanged, where acts of sharing or exchange take place, and how likely they are to repeat in the future. Demand sharing can involve taking or it can involve demanding. These can self-regulate, or they can become exploitative. Giving can foster ongoing relationships of care, or it can become a draining relationship of debt. Depending on the access people have to knowledge about one another, or the degree to which they need each other, acts that appear geared towards redistribution can come to support or perpetuate accumulation. Since the "privileged" generally always have more than the "marginalised", these issues are rarely a focal point in their relationships with one another. Accordingly, when it comes to light that people have tricked those who have more than them or who are thought to exploit them, the response is not necessarily one of anger or resentment. In fact, it is often one of praise and humorous admiration—just as the discourse of the "culture hero" suggests. Two cases of heroic trickery that illustrate this are given below.

### *Hero 1: A goat disguised*

Teme knows a trickster, a |*xurikxao*, an "owner of cunning deeds". Teme prunes aloe plants in the garden of a man from Windhoek who runs the general dealer store. During a lunch break, Teme sat with Oneh, my host, and me in a quiet corner of the mostly unutilised craft centre that stands on the corner of the crossroads at the centre of Tsumkwe. He tells us animatedly, interrupted by continuous laughter from Oneh, about the trickster he knows who once invited Teme to accompany him deep into the bush for a toilet break. So deep into the bush, he wondered, a strange place to venture for a toilet break when so many shrubs they had passed would have sufficed for coverage. They arrive at the fresh carcass of a goat. The goat is the property of a black African herder from northern Namibia who relocated to Tsumkwe and set up a drinking house selling home-distilled alcohol after the end of the Namibian War of Independence. It is the same herder to whom Teme occasionally sells water and firewood for a nominal price, or for whom he works for a nominal wage. The goat needed to be skinned, cut up into portions, carried into the location where most of the goat and cattle herders resided, and sold before its owner could notice the goat was missing. The latter would also ideally occur once the money was spent and the evidence was therefore minimal. The goat, once skinned, was not a goat, but a duiker (a goat-sized antelope), the trickster explained to Teme. It was a duiker that the trickster had hit with a poison arrow, tracked it deep into the bush, and carried it to Tsumkwe in pieces for sale.

*Hero 2: A stolen donation*

The Government of the Republic of Namibia supports the community of Tsumkwe by providing free healthcare, administered at the local health clinic. Additionally, a non-governmental organisation, independent of the NNC, supports the operation of a mobile health clinic which provides care to Ju|'hoansi living in rural territories across the Nyae Nyae region. The funds go towards transport, the salaries of mobile health workers, and food which gets dispensed to patients. At an Annual General Meeting for the NNC I attended during my research, the organisation was required to report on its operation and the state of its finances. The project manager, a man who moved from Windhoek to Tsumkwe to take up the post, reported humorously on the proceedings from the year. He explained that he had borrowed NAD10,000 from the project, but he called his boss in Windhoek shortly after and told her that he would pay it straight back as soon as he was paid, which he told the crowd was exactly what he did. People began laughing and mumbling to each other; *Ja, |xurikxao hin to'a* (Yes, this very one is a trickster). As he

continued, revealing that the project had struggled throughout the year due to a lack of funds, the crowd became more vocal but seemed unsurprised by the news. As a climax to his speech, he then revealed that the board of health-workers, a group of ten Ju|'hoan men and women whose mandate it was to oversee the operation of the project, had borrowed and used up the funds, reserved for buying food for patients and paying for fuel, amongst themselves. At this point, the heckling directed at the project manager erupted into uncontrollable laughter amongst the crowd including among those who had *'m toan mari* (eaten up the money) and who had not made efforts to repay their debts. The meeting then moved on to address the next issue. "Why is everyone laughing? Isn't this serious?" I turned and asked a friend. "Yes, it's serious, but these people who run it are always misusing the funds that are meant for Ju|'hoansi."

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While these stories were amusing when told, they rarely inspired public forms of mockery in which these tricksters might be ridiculed. These were tricksters who were certain not to steal from the powerful and wealthy others with whom they are on good terms, or from those who are their equals. These tricksters, although generally acknowledged to have done something wrong (or simply illegal), seemed to be appreciated for their actions. Fitting the role of the "culture hero", they appear to act on behalf of the "marginal man", who fails to "fit into the present-day social order of… state government" (Guenther 1999: 124). The Ju|'hoan person who is perpetually a "marginal person", surely cannot be expected to repay debts to someone who has more than them, or who otherwise exploits them. Stripped of the capacity to demand from those who are better-off, either due to the extent to which they conceal their wealth or the consistency with which they refuse, these acts of trickery become laudable pursuits for what is fair. Within the first case of trickery, the trickster's actions are forms of defiance against the herders who, as Chapter 5 shows, Ju|'hoansi hold responsible for patterns of environmental degradation within the region. Within the second case of trickery, their actions are forms of defiance against the many brokers who, as Chapter 5 shows, Ju|'hoansi hold responsible for their ongoing experiences of marginality and poverty. Within both cases, trickery serves to challenge relationships that are putatively unequal and where making demands and compelling people to "think for" others is not possible.

Trickery, however, does not always have such positive valences. For the similarly marginalised and the similarly privileged—who depend on making reciprocal counter-

gestures of either demanding or giving—the possibility of trickery is of ongoing concern. The trickster as a "selfish buffoon" appears repeatedly as the subject of mockery, allowing people to voice their suspicions. Tricksters are individuals who are not always intentionally selfish, but who, on the basis of their own suspicion, behave in ways that exploit others. Voicing suspicion thus serves not only to shame those who are knowingly exploitative, but also those whose own suspicions lead them astray. Two examples of foolish acts of trickery are given here to illustrate.

*Buffoon 1: The unreliable ATM*

Kuma is a known trickster. He enjoys permanent employment as a driver for the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, and lives in the sequestered location of ||*Xarasi*. The story of two men joking in the general dealer store that I recounted earlier, was an exchange between Kuma and Gaga. Gaga is a Ju|'hoan man who similarly held permanent employment as a tour guide and driver. Some days before their encounter in the general dealer store, Kuma had requested from Gaga that he borrow some cash since the ATM at the store had run out of money and he was unable to make a withdrawal. Kuma knew that Gaga had managed to withdraw cash that morning and promised that he would return the following morning to withdraw the cash and repay him. The following morning came and went, and Kuma did not withdraw the cash to repay Gaga. Whenever they crossed paths, Kuma would apologise for having forgotten to withdraw the cash and promise to repay him next time. He only ever seemed to see him in the afternoon, however, when the ATM had invariably run out of cash and it was too late in the day to make a withdrawal. "I can't force him to repay me. I just have to leave it. It is like he is pushing me to just give him the money" Gaga complained. "All I can do is say 'Yeah! You're a trickster!' and keep waiting. It is up to him to decide that what he has done is not good."

*Buffoon 2: The zula expert*

Java was also a well-known trickster, but unlike Kuma he was not permanently employed. Instead, he got by as a skilled transcriber and translator, working intermittently with governmental and non-governmental officials, tourists, and researchers on different projects and at different rates. These jobs were rarely enough though. He was forced to "roam" in order to live. Among the many *zula* experts in the region, he was famed for his ingenious strategies for securing an income—from re-selling electrical donations for

higher prices, to getting tourists or researchers like me to provide transport to areas where he could collect firewood that could then be resold to local shop owners. If it weren't for his reputation as something of a spendthrift, he would have been revered for his ability to secure a steady income despite his odds as a marginalised person. "He can spend NAD800 [sixteen times the minimum daily wage] in a day on the fruit machine", a friend of his remarked in astonishment. "He is wasting his money every day like that." By his own admission, he was an addict, but he also felt he was an "expert" or "owner" of the fruit machine—someone who could make it "spill" money, and this compelled him to keep going. Like *white people*, it never ran out of money, you just had to know how to make it "spill" out. "He's not marginalised," one of his neighbours exclaimed, "…he's a trickster! He goes around making demands from people and then he just gambles what he gets, leaving his children to feed themselves."

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Within both cases, what are otherwise "good" ways of behaving towards others—demanding (or even taking) from those who have more than they can readily consume, giving people the freedom to choose when and how they reciprocate—are also ways to take advantage of those others. At the heart of both of these freedoms is the shared recognition—explored in more depth in Chapter 7—that people should not be forced to act in a manner that is not of their own choosing. It is a value that makes ethical action less about retribution than it is about getting people to contemplate the morality of their own actions. As Strathern (1988: 138) notes of Papua New Guinea, "ties between persons are not constructed through the control of assets and of persons as though they were assets". One person cannot take their own perspectives as truth and use these as a means to force people to act in a manner that is not of their own choosing. As much as they were known "tricksters", then, Kuma and Java were rarely chastised beyond being the subjects of mockery. This mockery, however, has deeply destabilising effects. It forces those who perform it to expose their suspicions, and those who are its objects either to reconsider their own suspicions or to give themselves up as tricksters.

Examining patterns of mockery among the Yukaghir of eastern Siberia, Rane Willerslev (2012, 2013) similarly shows the role that these forms of humour play in navigating "a paradox… built into the moral economy of sharing which makes it fatal to take the moral ideology of unconditional giving too seriously" (Willerslev 2013: 53). Among the hunters with whom he carried out his research, hunting means eventually

being struck with sickness or death. The spirit-masters of the animals that hunters have killed must bring vitality back to the forests within which the Yukaghir hunt, if the forests are to have animals that can be hunted in the future. As Chapter 7 examines in more depth, the act of hunting presents a paradox insofar as it entails the transfer of vitality that can only be rebalanced through further acts of violence—acts that are ordinarily untenable. Among the Yukaghir, hunters respond to this paradox by transforming their relationship with spirit-masters into a "play of dirty tricks" (something which bears a resemblance to Lewis-Williams' [1996, 2003] discussions of shamans transforming themselves into their own predators).

In this way, rather than be seen to have hunted the animal or to have demanded a share of its energy, they get the animal to "give itself up", as a gift, so that they are not required by spirit-masters to reciprocate in any particular form or at any particular moment. They are tricksters who, like "selfish buffoons", use deception to evade their own responsibilities to make themselves present to others when the balance of wealth shifts. They go further, mocking the customs that typically hold these measures in place. While mockery among the Ju|'hoansi serves the opposite purpose and serves to remind people of these customs, it has the same basic quality of allowing people to challenge those whom they suspect are tricksters, while giving them the benefit of the doubt. It gives them the freedom either to give themselves up or to challenge those who mock them in return. Mockery generates what Steinmüller (2011: 25) calls a "'community of complicity': those who understand what is meant based on their shared experiential horizon in an intimate local space and a shared knowledge". In this case, it is a shared knowledge of the problems that surface when taking egalitarianism too seriously in the face of uncertainty.

## Negotiating uncertainty

In a recent response to the 2016 HAU debate "Anthropology and the study of contradictions", Jovanović (2016) proposes that rather than speak of "contradictions", anthropologists should turn their attention to "ambivalence". The turn is to mark a move away from the recent focus on "moral breakdown" (Zigon cited in Berliner *et al* 2016: 5) in the anthropology of ethics to a focus on the way we navigate and tolerate our mutually opposing dispositions. Where a focus on contradiction supports a close examination of "the social, political, and economic conditions on which people are reliant, and which more than often 'work against' them" (Jovanović 2016: 4), a focus on ambivalence brings

us closer to the way people actually approach contradiction in their everyday lives. As Graeber (2013: 226) argues, humans are capable of taking a number of values seriously, but the "stakes of political life tend to lie precisely in negotiating how these values and arenas will ultimately relate to one another".

This chapter has focused on the ambivalence that Ju|'hoansi of the Nyae Nyae region feel towards the dictum that "Ju|'hoansi are people who help each other", bound up as it is in the principles of demand sharing, on the one hand, and of generalized reciprocity, on the other. Drawing upon the literature on tricksters, it has highlighted this ambivalence not simply, as commonly understood, as a tension between "individualism" and "communalism", the desire for accumulation and the desire for redistribution. It also speaks of a paradox that is brought on by the difficulty of knowing the relative wealth, or the intentions, of others. This is, in part, a function of freedom of movement and the reticence which holds people back from acting on their suspicions, and, in that sense, this ambivalence is at the heart of so-called "individualistic communism". As Mauss among others have argued, if individualism is understood as the equal capacity of those with less to demand from those with more, and communalism as the mutual commitment to this means of ensuring redistribution, then it is not necessary that these forms of personhood contradict one another. This ambivalence works to ensure redistribution only, however, if people are regularly forced into one another's company, and if their wealth is readily on show. With this in mind, ambivalence is a consequence less of selfishness meeting communalism than of the reality that, in the absence of transparency, to take egalitarianism "too seriously" is to risk exploitation.

To say "you're a trickster!"—a form of mockery that is both ironic and cynical—amounts to what Peterson (1993) calls "substantiating behaviour". It is at once a means through which to acknowledge certain values (a person's right to demand, or to choose when and how they reciprocate) *and* a means through which persons "establish the state of a relationship in social systems where relationships have to be constantly produced and maintained", where persons cannot be certain whether the commitment to redistribution is mutual. This, as Jovanović (2016: 2) puts it, is "a context of interdependence where actors feel 'locked in' by personal or institutional commitments and constraints." To demand repayment or to refuse to share would amount to a rejection of the principles of egalitarianism that they value. Uncertainty, as De Vienne (2012: 184) writes, is "built as constitutive of the joking frame", since people are all too aware of the

damaging social consequences both of not voicing their suspicions and of voicing their suspicions too assuredly. Mockery strikes a balance between these conflicting threats and works to foster an environment in which the trickster might "give itself up". It is a warning to the trickster that to be a "selfish buffoon" is inevitably to bring about one's own demise—if not by taking on the reputation of a trickster, then by exhausting the support networks upon which they depend.

There is another side to these experiences of ambivalence, however. This angle is not captured by the focus above on how people come to terms with doubt and suspicion in their acts of redistribution. This is the side to experiences of ambivalence, explored in less depth here but equally salient, that see people not so concerned with redistribution than with the desire to limit what sharing they do and when they do it. If we take seriously the claim that "it is often particularly the egalitarian societies which are torn by terrible inner tensions, or at least, extreme forms of symbolic violence" (Graeber 2004: 25), then ambivalence may also be a product of a contradiction between these values and the desire to get away from it all (and to sympathise, to a degree, with those who desire the same). A tension, to bring the early binary back, between "communalism"—the compulsion to give in to the demands of others, and "individualism"—the freedom to choose whether to do this or not. Mockery, from this perspective, goes two ways. It forms part of broader efforts to compel people to be honest about their wealth and to confront the uncertainty that curtails redistribution, or it provides a more cynical commentary on the freedoms that uncertainty brings and the reality that redistribution is not always the most salient value in people's lives. The next chapter turns to this ambivalence through an examination of kinship. It does so by comparing people's broader commitments to sharing to the more specific, and often more pressing, obligations they feel towards their territories and the people they share them with.

# Chapter 4:
# "Between you and your mother"

"There's this saying we have, you need to ask someone about it…" my host, Oneh, exclaimed, tapping on the cover of my notebook with unusual urgency. "The woman we were talking to just shouted it at that man. *Itsa a taqe ||'ami*. You must get someone else to translate it. I can't explain it." It was as if, after over a year during which I'd been conducting research with his assistance into everything Ju|'hoan, he had finally witnessed something that was genuinely interesting to him. Alas, he could not explain it. Ask about *itsa a taqe ||'ami*, I wrote in my notebook. It was not a phrase that I had heard before. There were many phrases like these, whose content did not quite match the topic of conversation and so completely slipped my ears only to present themselves to me in the painstaking work of transcribing audio recordings. The phrase's meaning, "between you and your mother", pointed to findings from my research I was struggling to square with prevailing claims about kinship within the region—most notably, the claim that the Ju|'hoansi are a society that follows "universal systems of kin classification". In other words, they define any strangers whom they encounter as kin. While this goes a long way towards describing how Ju|'hoansi define others as good, and the role that certain ways of sharing play in this process—a question developed further in the following chapter—it does little to capture the distinctions that Ju|'hoansi nevertheless draw between different forms of relatedness.

Questions of relatedness have long been of concern to anthropologists. Mirroring the discourse of universal kin classification, there has been a trend within the anthropological study of kinship to deny that kinship should form a field of study in its own right. Proponents of this view suggest that the relationships which emerge through consanguinity or affinity—that is to say, those very relations which were earlier thought to constitute the distinctive domain of kinship—do not differ significantly from other kinds of relationships. This line of argument has taken at least two forms. In one, "kinship" is simply declared "not to exist" (Leach 1961, Needham 1971, Schneider 1972). Since it "shares certain ontological characteristics" with other domains of social life, such as friendship, nationalism, or religion, "…it therefore has no specific properties of its own" (Sahlins 2011: 7). In the other, *all* relationships are said to be relations of "kinship", as under systems of universal kin classification (Barnard 1978, 1992, 2016, Widlok 2017). To be kin in such a system, it is suggested, does not require a special, biological or marital

relationship—any two individuals who interact will spontaneously recognise each other as "kin".

The consequence of this within the study of so-called egalitarian societies is a tendency to overlook the extent to which people do, in fact, draw distinctions between forms of "relatedness", at the same time that they "draw analogies between different domains in their worlds" (Strathern cited in Sahlins 2011: 8). Where confirmation bias is at play, there is good reason to commit to the view that "virtually all hunter-gatherer societies today" (Barnard 2016: S148) practise universal systems of kin categorisation. "Kinship" typically entails a series of claims which are not only descriptions of what people are made up of, but claims about how they can or should behave as a result of this make-up. Rather than being characterised by hierarchical property regimes that differentiate peoples' access to resources on the basis of identity, egalitarian societies are ones in which all people, no matter who they are or how intimately they know someone, should be able to demand an equal share. As Widlok (2013: 20) writes, these are societies within which "the categorisation of a particular person with a particular kinship term often…follows the interaction rather than the other way around".

The "interaction", in this case, is the act of demanding from those who have more than you and having them give in to the demands that are made. As the previous two chapters show, however, not only is this one form of sharing among many, but the way people go about sharing appears to vary greatly depending on who is involved, what is being shared, and where these encounters take place over time. Pushing further beyond this focus on demand sharing and universal kinship, this chapter examines the claim that only some people *kxaea khoe*, meaning "have…" or "own… each other". This is a form of relatedness that is distinct from other ways of relating—such as sharing the status *ju |'hoan* (true person) or sharing someone's name (either directly or indirectly)—and further sets of expectations than these. Framing a comparison between these ways of relating is a discussion of "joking" and "avoidance" partners among the Ju|'hoansi: people who, on the basis of specific relationships of consanguinity or affinity, or of sharing names with those who are consanguineous or affines, are expected to behave in particular ways.

Productive parallels have been drawn between the values inscribed in relationships of "joking" and "avoidance", and those of "egalitarianism" and "hierarchy", respectively. Drawing upon these debates, this chapter examines the extent to which relations of "joking" or "avoidance" can be generalised to describe relations between

those who "have each other" and those who do not (hereafter referred to as "kin" and "non-kin", respectively). While patterns of "joking" and "avoidance" have received considerable attention in the regional literature (see Barnard 1992), and anthropology more broadly (notably Radcliffe-Brown 1940, 1949, also see Stasch 2002, Mauss 2013), these accounts have often been concerned with their general structural implications. They have been less concerned with the particular historical, political, and economic contexts within which they are embedded. Of particular interest to me here is whether the distinctions that are drawn between kin and non-kin are embedded in contemporary legislation endowing or restricting land rights and political representation, or whether they point to more enduring desires for exclusivity.

*Figure 17 Gathered around a fire making tea on a cold, winter morning*

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first is a discussion of what it means to "have each other", a phrase used to describe consanguineous kin that contrasts with other, more processual, forms of relatedness. The second discusses generalised patterns of "joking" and "avoidance" within the region—ways of joking or avoiding that, in other words, only certain groups of people do with one another. The distinction between joking and avoidance is well-known within anthropology, especially within the study of kinship, and, in this context, it tells us something more about the scope of egalitarianism. Where generalised joking does the work of confronting suspected tricksters, generalised avoidance does the work of avoiding confrontation in the interests of keeping people together. Where the former pertain to more processual forms of

relatedness, the latter are a key component of relationships between kin. The final section turns to the historical, political, and economic contexts within which these forms of relatedness are embedded and considers whether these can account for the distinction Ju|'hoansi draw between kin and non-kin. The chapter concludes by considering the extent to which people live by multiple forms of relatedness, and the different pressures or preferences that may account for this.

It is worth making a brief disclaimer that while this chapter draws heavily upon discussions surrounding the origins of equality and hierarchy, it is not principally concerned with them. The focus here is not on origins so much as the concepts of personhood (and by extension, kinship) that are ordinarly associated with these forms of social organisation. The discussion does not aim to offer evidence in support of or in opposition to positions taken within these debates, but rather to draw upon these as inspiration when considering the different pressures that may shape competing concepts of personhood and kinship. Two quite different sets of pressures or constraints emerge in the discussion below: first, the pressure to roam and to give in to the demands of those who "cannot be trusted", and second, the pressure to claim roots in a bounded ancestral space. These pressures compete with one another, pulling people away from their kin and towards broader publics, on the one hand, and ever closer to their kin, on the other hand. It is this tension that motivates this chapter, and which is aided conceptually by a turn to discussions of inequality and hierarchy.

## "All Ju|'hoansi are related"

"All Ju|'hoansi are related", was a phrase I heard voiced frequently by my Ju|'hoan interlocutors. A Ju|'hoan person was anyone who spoke Ju|'hoansi, but really, "if you put all the peoples together…", my host, explained, "anyone who speaks with clicks is a Ju|'hoan. There are Nama, Damara, ǂKao||'ae, !Xun, Naro, Khwe; they are all Ju|'hoansi because they speak with clicks." Speaking with clicks was the clearest marker that you were a person who shared a common ancestry and a common history, one characterised not only by "hunting and gathering" but by shared contemporary experiences of encapsulation, encroachment, and subordination to both "white" and "black" others. In this sense, "Ju|'hoansi" is an ethnonym in the standard Weberian sense (1947, 1968): "a social construct" borne of the need, in this case, to present themselves as a traditional community (synonymous with an "ethnic group") vis-à-vis others as a precursor to certain rights. When translated directly the term means *ju* (person) who is

|*'hoan* (real or true), with –*si* as the plural suffix). Alternatively, the term can be defined as "people who are correct and proper in speech and manners" (Marshall 2002). Supporting this latter definition was the tendency for my interlocutors to (both mockingly and approvingly) exclaim "*Jaoh! A o Ju*|*'hoan* |*'hoan!!*" (Woah! You are truly Ju|'hoan!), whenever I correctly pronounced clicks and tones, or whenever I followed particular customs such as reciprocating a *xaro* partner or responding favourably to demands.

In a recent article, Nurit Bird-David (2017) asserts that the tendency both to analyse and to locally regard terms such as "true people!" as ethnonymic identifications is a symptom of what she calls "scale-blind anthropology". To use terms such as "true people" to refer to "First Nations", she argues (ibid: 211), is "a strategic move that has unintended consequences of universalizing the nation, projecting it as primordial, and precluding the possible existence of alternatives." Unlike these designations, which emphasise "being like others (dispersed as they may be)", Bird-David notes that "indigenous peoples' designations of themselves" are about "being with others (diverse as they may be)". The central point is that when hunter-gatherers refer to themselves as "true people", or "we, relatives" for Bird-David's interlocutors, they are not referring to an "imagined community", but to whomever (human or non-human) makes up their "tiny" group size at the time. The group, in other words, does not include people who are not personally known, but neither are they excluded from becoming part of the nation.[19]

The suggestion is that "kinship" in these contexts is fundamentally "relational" – privy to processes of "thickening" and "thinning" (Carsten 2013: 247). These are systems not unlike universal systems of kin categorisation, within which "any strangers who might have cause to engage in marital alliance, or possibly even the trade of material goods, would be fitted into kin relations" (Barnard 2016: S148). They are systems within which nomadism and mobility result in the dissipation and reconstitution of kin relations. Speaking specifically of her ethnographic research within a community of South Asian foragers, Bird-David (2017: 217) asserts that "relatives constitute and reconstitute themselves as such by constantly visiting one another and living together…even a birth

[19] These groups vary in size, with an average of 25-50 people sharing a single residential space (Lee and DeVore cited in Bird-David 2017: 210), and whole populations rarely exceeding 300 to 500 individuals – numbers that resonate with Dunbar's (cited in Wengrow and Graeber 2015) argument that humans are limited in their capacity to maintain more than 150 personal, cooperative relationships.

brother who has gone away and no longer keeps in touch with his relatives may be discounted".

Her paper is worth mentioning in such depth because it is the most recent instantiation of a trend in anthropology (largely following Strathern 1992, Carsten 2000, 2004) towards viewing kinship as fundamentally flexible and negotiable—in opposition to kinship as normative and fixed. As Miller (2007: 537) notes, however, "there is nonetheless a danger, as is so often the case with attractive new idea, of swinging the pendulum too far in the opposite direction until the other end of the kinship spectrum, that concerned with formalisation, normativity and fixity in turn disappears below our gaze". This cautionary note is particularly relevant for the study of "egalitarianism", since it has the effect of writing out those aspects of "kinship" that are more 'formal', 'normative', 'fixed' and therefore, by contrast, essentially hierarchical (a relationship examined in more depth in the section that follows).

The task is thus not to discern whether "kinship" in any given setting is negotiable or not, but rather to examine how (as Widlok notes in his comment to Bird-David's piece) "people shift readily between different registers, [and] between different groups of different sizes". "This is why", Widlok continues, "terms such as 'Ju|'hoan', depending on circumstances, can mean both 'we many who know one another and recognize one another as real humans (who by definition are always particular and singular)' and also 'members of one group that is different from others'" (cited in Bird-David 2017: 223). There remains an overwhelming emphasis among anthropologists, however, not on how people shift between registers and the extent to which different registers regulate social relationships, but on "universal kinship"—a form of relatedness that is the outcome of agreeing to demands when they are made, but which dissipates if those demands are refused.

The preceding chapters provide support for such a position, but they also tell of competing logics and points of tension. They show how people, as much as they are united in their depiction of certain forms of sharing as "good", are torn by the extent to which these forms of sharing expose them to those who "cannot be trusted". Being good means making oneself vulnerable to others. As the next chapter elaborates upon in more depth, the willingness with which people make themselves vulnerable to one another is a distinguishing quality that sets *true people* apart from *other people*. In doing so, people learn to "stand-leaned-together"—as the Urarina living in the Peruvian Amazon (Walker

2012b) put it. They make themselves vulnerable to one another but, in the process, they secure their futures within the context of undulating flows of abundance and lack.

As the previous chapter shows, there are numerous ways through which people try to come to terms with the trustworthiness of others. While the lurid discourse of "trueness" and "otherness" plays an important part in this process, there are also more subtle ways that people try to appreciate each other's commitments. One way, and the focus of the next chapter, is through the subtle use of different third-person pronouns that shift depending on how people behave. These suggest that personhood is processual, allowing those who are "other" to become more "true" depending on how they behave. As much as this appears to be true, the distinctions between "true" and "other" people are also fixed in ways that acts of sharing do little to shift. Similar to distinctions between "marginalised" and "privileged" people, categories that describe differences among Ju|'hoan speakers, the categories of "true" and "other" mark sharp and enduring distinctions between Ju|'hoan speakers and other types of people—typically black or white. This is worth mentioning because the same applies to the distinction that is drawn between those who are kin and between those who are, more broadly speaking, *true people*. As much as there are the processes through which people come to be recognised as *true people*, this does little to change the overall composition of kin groups and, most importantly, the specific forms of behaviour expected of them.

It was through my own experience of becoming a "relative" to my host family that this became clear to me. They were the second Ju|'hoan family to have been my hosts and had been friends of mine from my first few days in the region. Like many Ju|'hoansi today, they lived mostly in Tsumkwe only to return to their rural territories occasionally to gather bush foods or to relax over the Christmas period. Suka made crafts to sell to tourists and was part of a local sewing group, and Oneh was a freelance guide to tourists, film-makers, and researchers. They had six children together between the ages of <1 and 21 years old, who all lived with them at their plot—a small 100m$^2$ piece of land situated on the edge of a row of single-room 6m$^2$ brick houses that had been built in the region as part of a government housing initiative. Two of these houses, located approximately 50 metres from them, were occupied by Suka's sisters, Lula and Tiko. Their own house was similarly a single-room structure, made from large hollow blocks and cement, with a corrugated zinc roof. The path in the sand connecting their yards was always worn with footprints leading back and forth. Even the incessant winds that marked

the shift from winter to spring, and transformed choppy contours into flattened clearings, did little to mask the years of use that left these paths free from the small tufts of grass and faintly buried litter that lined their verges (see the Appendix for an anonymised kinship diagram that visualises how kin groups, within territories, maintain their distance—a microcosm of the broader patterns of generalised avoidance discussed in this chapter).

These paths, if not simply leading out to the centre of town, are clear markers that people are kin, clues to the way that networks are "cut" (Strathern 1996). They are traces of the lack of shame people felt when entering one another's yards where they might help themselves to food or join in conversation. The few yards without these paths were invariably those of people who had few relatives living in Tsumkwe. When I spoke to them, they complained of not knowing anyone, of having no one to help them, and of spending most of their time when they were not working either at home with spouse and children or out "roaming in order to live". All those living in Tsumkwe shared the experience of being regularly visited by family members from their territories, looking for a place to sleep on the days they came into town to pick up cash grants or roam through town. Many of these relatives were people from whom they often spent months apart, only to see them for a day or a few weeks at a time, and yet there was little shame associated with coming into each other's spaces of residence. Those without family living in Tsumkwe, who had made the difficult journey into Tsumkwe either by foot or on the back of passing trucks, begged frequently for me to take them back to their villages. Without someone to provide them with a lift home, they were either forced to walk back, or to sleep out in the open at the side of the road ready to catch the first lift out the next morning. Similarly, for those who lived near one another who were not related a fairly consistent degree of social distance was maintained.

Standing as a poignant example of this was the relationship between my hosts and their closest neighbours: Kaqece, one of Oneh's closest friends, and his family. Kaqece and Oneh had grown up together, attended the same primary and secondary schools, and since then had lived near to one another for decades. "We really trust each other… really understand each other" Oneh exclaimed. And yet, despite their closeness, they only occasionally visited one another. Most notably, they avoided the yard during meal times, visiting either mid-morning or late at night when tea was being prepared. By contrast, Suka's sisters came repeatedly in and out of the yard, especially as food was

being served. Where their presence was a matter of entitlement, the presence of friends was a point of constant tension. "Why doesn't he visit you like Suka's sisters?" I asked my host Oneh. "He is always welcome here," he explained, "…if he comes, I will give him food, or whatever I have… but he won't because that is how Ju|'hoansi are. He is scared we will think he just wants to *g‡ara* [beg from] us." As Chapter 2 shows, however, to let the time between visit grow too great was to allow sympathy to turn to gossip. Where it is previously assumed that those who do not visit frequently are showing respect for those who are kin, it is then assumed that they are simply refusing or looking down upon them. As Suka lamented one afternoon, during a period in which Kaqece and his family had not visited, "…they always used to visit us, and now it is like they are looking down upon us, upon our children."

Upon returning to my hosts during the writing up phase, the dynamic had shifted in a way that clarified the difficult balance that kin and non-kin tried to maintain. During my absence, Kaqece's daughter and Oneh's son had married and had a daughter together. "Ever since then", Oneh complained, "he comes here and takes what he wants like we 'have each other'." As much as they were now *juasi* (family), there was still a degree of "fear" and "respect" they were expected to maintain. Curiously, this did not apply to public spaces in town where they regularly met, "roamed" together, shared tobacco, drank together, and chatted with others at the store or clinic. There was a certain sanctity to the space of the yard, or the territory—to the spaces of kin. One couldn't "roam" freely through people's yards without feeling a significant sense of *koaq* (fear) or *taokhomm* (shame), and those who did were often described as behaving "without thought", as if they were drunk. As chapter 2 shows, being drunk was, in part, a way of dealing with the shame that they experienced when turning to people, who weren't family, for help.

Much of this tension appears to hinge upon the appropriateness of sharing food. The yard is a space where kin share the little food that they have with another. They do this not through acts of demand (as they do for meat or gathered *veld* foods) but through more hierarchical practices of "sharing out" (Widlok 2017: 20), and only to those who make up the stable household. The scene is invariably the same: rows of tin bowls and plates gather around an open fire, where maize-meal that has been beaten into a stiff porridge bubbles laboriously and packet soup slowly thickens. Once all of the bowls and plates of those who should receive a share have been gathered together, whoever cooked

gets to work sharing the food out evenly. Anyone who enters the yard during this time who is not being served food, sits quietly while other people eat until, invariably, someone passes the food along, often via a child, to that person to eat. It appears egalitarian in its emphasis on sharing food evenly and ensuring everyone present gets a share, but those who enter the yard at this time show deference and express shame doing so.

Providing one poignant example of this was Suka's brother-in-law, Tuma, who described visiting the village of another family when he was working on a garden project. "I arrived at Makuri, to check up on the sweet potato garden we had set up there for them. I saw they had cow's milk. It was leaning up against the house in bottles. I was afraid to *g‡ara* because if they refused, I would feel shame, and I was afraid they would say no. I left that place and thought about that milk for a long time." Curious as to why he was concerned they would say no, I asked if that was normal for someone to refuse a person who comes from another village and asks for food. My host interjected saying "No! They would never refuse, they would give him." Why was he worried then? "Because it's not right for him to ask them. They have to offer it themselves." The shame people feel to enter the yards of non-kin, then, is perhaps owed to the way it compels those they visit to share. And for Tuma, thinking about that milk "for a long time" was not his way of expressing how badly he wanted it but the shame he experienced—first, for having entered an intimate space where there was food on display and second, for having not been offered any. It did not matter that he had entered as an employee of the conservancy, the expectation that they should share with him and that he should not enter uninvited nevertheless remained.

As much as this shame was a common experience, one that people managed to mediate in a number of ways (see Hollan 2012), it was also shaped and complicated by other factors. These included the particular character of the person (as a "joker" or a "respectful" person), to their status either as affines or as kin (in a sense) by virtue of their names. These factors affect their status as "joking" or "avoidance" partners and shape the particular way people interact with those they "have" and those they do not. In order to appreciate this, it is necessary to turn to relationships of "joking" and "avoidance", and their relationships to egalitarianism and hierarchy respectively. While there are certainly some people who are more prone to joking than others, and some people more prone to show respect than others, these relationships of either "joking" or "avoidance" are based largely on a person's particular position within a wider kinship structure. These structures

are based not only upon consanguinity but upon the name that a person inherits at birth—a process which means that each person occupies a position in more than one family tree. Within the discourse of universal systems of kin classification, it is this process of acquiring a name that is the most important means through which people are incorporated as kin (also see Draper 2016). As Barnard (2016: S150) writes, "even anthropologists are given such names in order to fit them into the system" and are expected to joke and avoid accordingly. Though they appear similar, and have comparable social consequences, these forms of joking and avoidance are not with the same as the forms of joking and avoidance examined above. The basis for their performance is not the same, and with that so are their social consequences.

**"Between you and your mother"**

Early contributions to the anthropology of kinship (notably Mauss 1954 [1925], Radcliffe-Brown 1940, 1949, Lévi-Strauss 1967) saw customs surrounding "joking" and "avoidance" as crucial to the maintenance of social order, of certain "consistent systems" (Radcliffe-Brown 1940: 210). Their appearance was not regarded as evidence that non-Western societies were more "heavily structured" (Parkin 1993: 252) than Western societies, but rather that in such societies these structures were more "openly recognised and positively marked". The basis for their differentiation may not be "kin types"—as they are among societies with standardised forms of "joking" and "avoidance"—but their social consequences are comparable. A relationship composed of joking, rather than one generally composed of humour, is one in which people are expected to behave in a way that "would express and arouse hostility" if performed in any other social context (Radcliffe-Brown 1940: 196). Joking partners are permitted to disrespect one another and expect, therefore, to be playfully attacked on a regular basis. A relationship composed of avoidance, by contrast, is one in which people are expected to show extreme respect and formality. Behaviour within these ranges from complete avoidance, to defending and supporting them under any circumstance.

In what is perhaps the most recent reference to "joking" and "avoidance", Graeber (2007: 14) examines the extent to which these encompass two contrasting forms of sociality. Where joking relationships are "ultimately egalitarian", avoidance relationships are ultimately hierarchical. The former consists of repeated challenges to those who claim, or appear to claim, rights to private property or rights to power or prestige. The latter consists of efforts to respect and support certain claims to property

and, accordingly, to never mock, criticise, or chastise. Where joking relationships are reciprocal, Graeber (ibid: 43) writes, avoidance relationships consist of asymmetrical relationships between inferiors and superiors. They consist of gestures which appear egalitarian in their emphasis on taking people seriously and being mutually respectful of their individuality, but they are "ultimately hierarchical". The burden ultimately falls upon the "inferior party" who should accept the terms of engagement from whomever is superior.

There is no reason to assume that relationships of avoidance are necessarily composed of inferiors and superiors. This forms a key part of Graeber's argument, but it is by no means essential to it. Among the Ju|'hoansi, relationships of avoidance are as reciprocal as joking relationships. They appear egalitarian in their emphasis on taking people seriously and being mutually respectful of their individuality, but they are ultimately hierarchical because they support the conditions under which hierarchy is able to develop or be maintained. The hierarchy that is able to develop here, in theory, is not between inferiors and superiors within the group, but between different groups who avoid each other. Within the Nyae Nyae region, these groups are kin groups. They are kin and who therefore claim access to distinct, ancestral territories. No one is ever only a joking partner or an avoidance partner, however, and so these standardised relationships are not that effective in bringing about, or maintaining, a hierarchical social order. At the same time that people feel obligated to their kin, they also feel obligated to the broader social imaginary (as seen in chapter 2). The types of "social order" that are maintained by patterns of generalised joking and avoidance is therefore be neither egalitarianism nor hierarchy, exclusively, but something of both.

Before examining this further, it is worth spending some time describing Ju|'hoan practices of joking and avoidance, and the kinship systems within which they are situated. At the moment of birth, a Ju|'hoan person is given a name. Typically, this name will be one that is shared with a grandparent, aunt, or uncle who is then called their "big name" and who, in turns, calls them their "little name". The process is one that Lorna Marshall (1957) refers to as "homonymous method" because it entails not only becoming a namesake but gaining new relatives by virtue of their name. If a child is named after a grandparent, then anyone who shares the name of her parents' aunts or uncles become their "sisters" or "brothers", and if named after an aunt or uncle her cousins become her "nieces", "nephews", or "children", and so on. Their position within these family trees,

however, does not supplant their position among their consanguineous kin. They remain the child of their parents, the brother or sister to their siblings, and the grandchild of their grandparents, and niece or nephew of their aunts and uncles (people who are kin). These relationships remain alongside the relationships they gain through the name they inherit—relationships that extend beyond the kin of their immediate namesake to include anyone who shares their name, or the name of their consanguineous or homonymous kin.

To clarify briefly with an example, if your name is |Ui and you are named after your grandfather, anyone who is named |Ui is your grandfather. If your consanguineous sister is Seg||ae, anyone who is named Seg||ae is your sister. If your homonymous sister (your grandfather's sister) is Xoan||an, anyone named Xoan||an is your sister. The same applies if you are named after your uncle (FB) (see Figure 19). Your aunt (FZ) becomes your wife (only in name, and only in joking), your other aunts and uncles on both sides become your siblings and in-laws, your grandparents on both sides become your parents, and (if not your children) your cousins on both sides become your nieces and nephews, as do your siblings. The same applies for women named after their grandmothers (MM) or aunts (MZ). This is true in theory, but in practice people become relatives in this way only to those who are not "primary kin" (see Shapiro 2005: 50, also Dousset 2007)—in other words, people who do not "have each other". They are also, with the exception of same-sex siblings, one's avoidance partners, and so where the kin term they inherit signals a *joking* relationship, using it is disrespectful (see Figure 18 and Figure 19, also see Guenther 1986: 194-199). Where the kin term they inherit signals, by contrast, an *avoidance* relationship, they are compelled to use it. Your parents are never referred to as your children or your siblings, your siblings never referred to as your nieces and nephews or your grandchildren, and your aunts and uncles (with the exception of those you are named after because this should always be a joking relationship) are never referred to as your children, siblings, or in-laws. Within these instances, primary kin (with the exception of parents) can take on diminutive respect names such as *!o!o* (brother) and *!ui!ui* (sister), because you become their senior, but they will never take on new kin terms. Those who share names with those who occupy a position within a person's primary kinship structure, may be referred to as parents, siblings, or otherwise, but those who actually occupy these positions are never referred to with new kin terms.

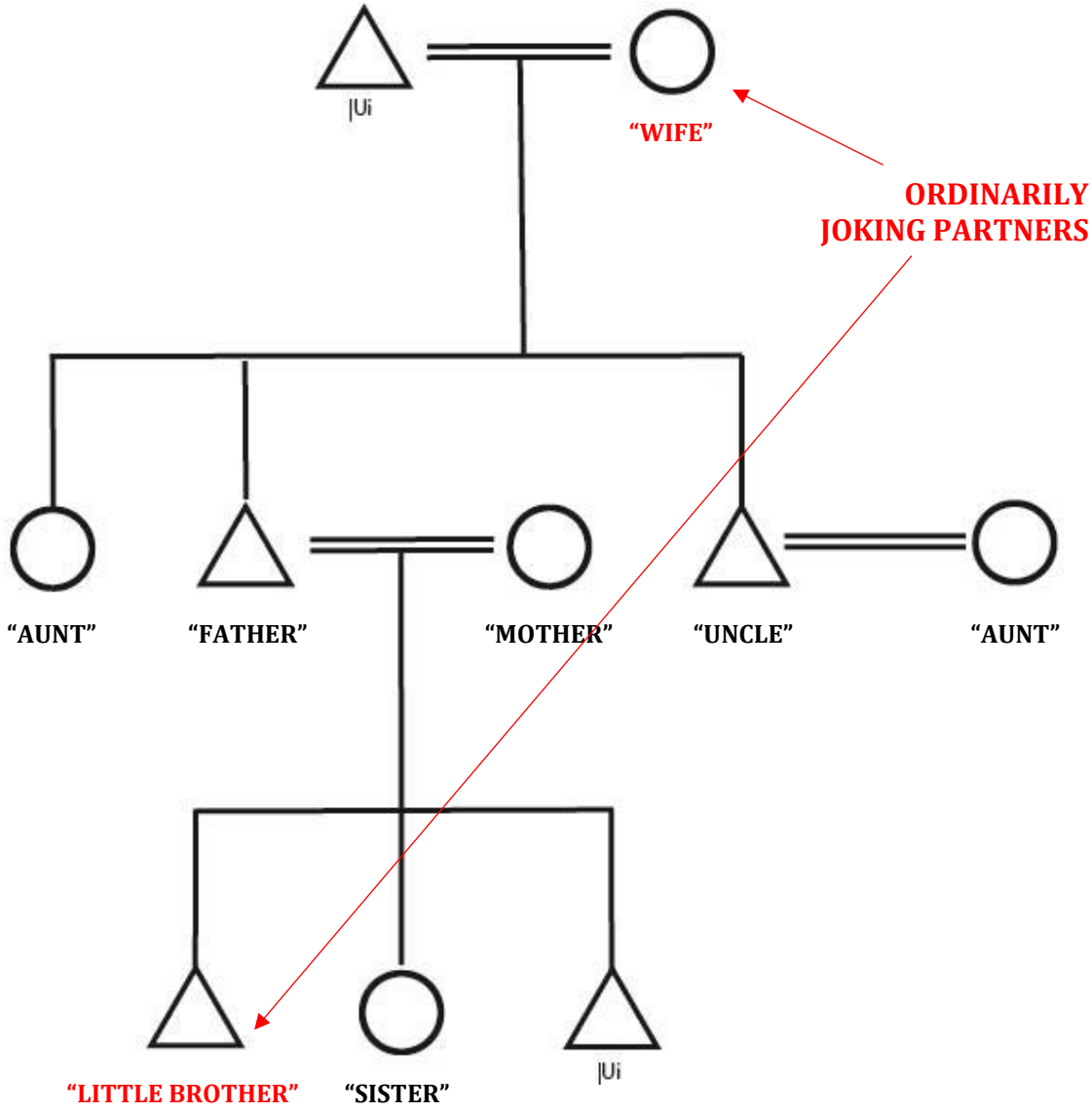


*Figure 18 Kin terms that are used if a person is named after their grandfather (FF)*

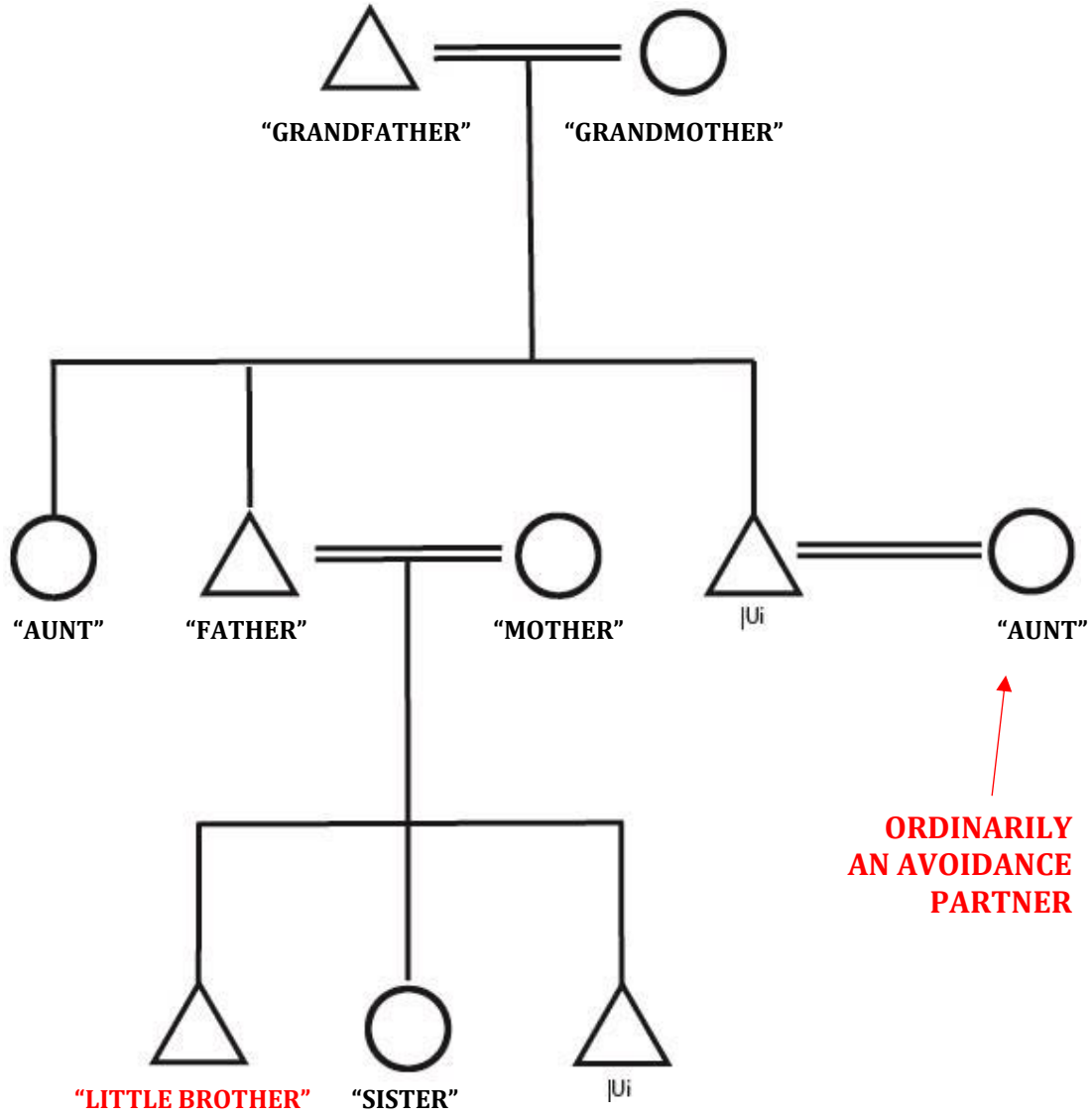


*Figure 19 Kin terms that are used if a person is named after their uncle (FB)*

Challenging the constructionist discourse of "universal kin classification", Shapiro (2005) writes that there is "no stronger argument" against it than the exceptions given to those who "own" or "have each other" (also see Kuper 1985, 2003a, 2005, Kronenfeld 2012). As much as people do appear to "forage for relatives" (Barnard cited in Guenther 1999: 29)—feeling "reassured" and a "sense of belonging" when bestowing a kin term upon those who become relatives by name (Marshall 1957: 23)—they maintain a fairly stable distinction between these "remote" (or "non-") kin and kin. These primary kin are "focal points" for the extension of kin terms, but they cannot themselves lose their position among kin, no matter how they behave, how far they go away, or how little they keep in touch. Similarly, those who become relatives through the process of naming

do not take up positions among kin—no matter how much they share and how much time they spend among them. Many researchers and film-makers have been given names which fit them into the kin constellations of their respective interlocutors. As Lorna Marshall (1976: 214) and Elizabeth Marshall-Thomas (2006: 223) write, however, despite "our Ju/wa names and the implied relationships" and sharing "tirelessly", "we were not an integral part of the social fabric and no one felt the urge to include as, as indeed, we did not belong".

Certain obligations exist between kin that do not extend to those who are simply relatives by virtue of sharing names or sharing kin with such names. Similarly, as much as the kin terms that people adopt dictate that they become "joking" partners to some people and "avoidance" partners to others, the obligations between kin always take precedence over the obligations between those who do not but who, nevertheless, are relatives. There is a certain degree of avoidance, in other words, which people are expected to perform within the presence of those who are kin that they are not expected to perform when they encounter people outside of these contexts. There are also certain obligations that those who are kin themselves are expected to meet, irrespective of their status as "joking" or "avoidance" partners. And it is these expectations that are captured in the phrase "between you and your mother". "When you say, 'between you and your mother!'", one Ju|'hoan explained, "…it's like saying 'only your mother would let you get away with this kind of behaviour'. It will make you feel very bad." It is not confined to the relationship shared between a mother and child. Any relative that you "have" who is an avoidance partner can be named in the phrase—it is a recognition of the generalised relationships of avoidance between those who have each other.

As is customary for Ju|'hoan relationships of avoidance, it is not that people are "enjoined never to speak to or even gaze upon the other" (Graeber 2007: 16), but that they are enjoined to *ǂ'ang |'an* (think for) one another. It is not complete avoidance, but avoidance of a different kind. As Marshall (1976: 250) notes, avoidance partners "give food to each other and receive it from each other as freely as do people who have a joking relationship, but apparently asking for food directly implies too much intimacy". Similarly, as suggested above, those who are avoidance partners are not to comment upon one another's behaviour. Where a person behaves in a way that suggests they are "tricksters", for example, an avoidance partner cannot challenge them with mockery. By contrast, those who are joking partners may request food from one another, following

the customary pattern of demand sharing that takes place between those who are "friends" within the context of town. Seated with kin, those in a joking relationship may start to taunt or play fight with one another as if either one had defied their obligations as kin. Similarly, they may make vulgar jokes to one another that defy the taboo of incest which prohibits sexual behaviour between anyone who is more closely related than cousins. At the heart of these practices of joking and avoidance, in sum, is guidance on marriage, on the one hand, and guidance on what to share, with whom, and when, on the other.

The previous two chapters provide evidence of more generalised joking relationships—with respect to both the practice of demand sharing and the practice of mocking those who either fail to reciprocate or who cannot be trusted to do so. These are practices that are "directed against the very principle of hierarchy itself" (Graeber 2007: 29), since they enforce the redistribution of resources that would otherwise be held as property and they support people's capacity to choose whether to share or to reciprocate rather than being forced to do so as if they were the property of others. Among kin, these joking relationships deal typically with the behaviour of kin towards those who are *non-kin*, and not as frequently with the behaviour of their kin. Those who are kin are remarkably tolerant of one another. As the phrase "between you and your mother" suggests, these are relationships within which forgiveness is the default position. This was especially evident in the way that acts of trickery among kin were discussed in hushed tones and never in the presence of those who were suspected. Throughout my research, my hosts struggled to cope with the increasing pressure from kin who sought to share whatever resources came from me living with them. "They don't believe it", my hosts explained, "…they see a white woman here and they assume we must be getting very rich and not telling them." It was expected that plates of food would be served for them, that they would not need to ask if they wanted to have tea, and that they would not need to contribute to these resources or offer any assistance in preparing them. My hosts would frequently voice their frustration to one another but rarely, if ever, confront their kin.

Their tolerance was partly a function of the perception, examined in more depth in Chapter 6, that whites chronically withhold their wealth from others, and so it is fair to assume that there is always more to give than there appears. It is also a function more generally of the value placed on relationships between kin, and what would be at stake

were people to simply "vote with their feet", as Lee (1979) observed the Dobe !Kung doing, and allow the composition of the category of kin to dissolve. The primacy of these relationships is widely recognised and appreciated, so much so that caring for one's kin appears to be one of the only justifiable reasons for refusing to share more broadly (within the context of demand sharing). It is in this sense that they affect relationships between non-kin as much as those between kin. The "shame" that Tuma experienced is a case in point. The degree of avoidance that was expected of him not only prevented him from demanding freely from people who were not his kin, but from mocking or chastising them thereafter for failing to share. On the one hand, these patterns of avoidance appear to be responses to a contemporary situation within which people's movements are severely restricted, and within which the environment is no longer an unwavering generous "parent" (Bird-David 1990). Such circumstances seem to compel people to stick together and "think for" one another. On the other hand, these patterns of avoidance appear to be part of a longer tradition of demarcating the territories of kin in order to limit the scope of demand sharing and, in turn, to keep kin together.

The previous two chapters both speak of the threat associated with taking demand sharing too seriously within the context of uncertainty. The factors above, however, suggest a different type of threat, one less concerned with redistribution and more with hierarchy. Though the former appears to be something of a last resort where the latter appears to be rooted in a desire to get away from it all, both form part of efforts to establish regimes of private property that localise redistribution to those who can be trusted to "think for" and be present to one another. This does not preclude redistribution beyond those who are kin—indeed, as the previous two chapters show, people take seriously the obligation to make themselves present to those who have less than them, and to start and maintain *xaro* paths between territories which allow them to "think for" one another. It does limit redistribution largely to those who are kin, however, by creating an environment within which it is not only encouraged to first and foremost "think for" one's kin, but it is somewhat expected by those who are not kin. While this does not stop people from gossiping or wondering about the nepotism or selfishness of others, it does support a degree of generalised avoidance between territories. To begin to appreciate what motivates and sustains this, it is necessary to turn to the historical, political, and economic contexts within which these

forms of relatedness are, or may be, embedded—the focus of the final section of this chapter.

## On territories

Writing about kinship among the Ju|'hoansi of the Nyae Nyae region in the 1950s, Lorna Marshall (1976: 184) writes that the region was divided up into numerous territories known as *n!oresi*, each inhabited by "a core of people who are established as belonging to that territory… the [*ǂxae ǂxaosi*] ('owners')".[20] Taken together, these territories make up the *ǂxa|'ho* (literally "earth surface")—a term which is now synonymous with "conservancy" or extended to mean "country". Within each territory is a *tju|'ho* (literally "house surface")—a space of residence for different "bands" (made up of two to three nuclear families who live close to one another) or "groups" (made up of two to three bands who live within the same *n!ore* but typically not as close to one another). Surrounding these spaces of residence are resources, from pans or wells that hold water to patches of edible plants or trees that bear fruit and any animals that may pass through, that the territory owners claim their own. They only "hold" these territories, however, giving up their claims to the region and its resources when they move to occupy new regions that are not already occupied by other bands or groups. At the time of writing, the Ju|'hoansi were therefore nomadic—but contrary to the later interpretations of colonial officials, this did not mean they did not have concepts of "territory" or "private property".

As John Marshall and Claire Ritchie emphasised to colonial officials leading up to the transition to independence, it was not that the Ju|'hoansi had no concept of "territory" but rather that the concept of "territory" as having "well defined boundaries" was ill-suited to describe the property regimes that governed people's patterns of land use. By contrast, Marshall and Ritchie (1989: 11) argued, *n!oresi* "do not have distinct boundaries where one *n!ore* stops and another begins". Instead, the size and shape of *n!oresi* are defined by their resources – it is "…a named place with resources, usually at a place where there is a rainwater pan, or an area with water roots or melons, near which people build their [homes]." As the whereabouts of the resources that define these *n!oresi* shift from season to season, so do their boundaries, and as a band moves from one *n!ore* to another (following particular resources), so does their "hold" of a territory become

[20] The term *ǂxae* means "to own", referring specifically to goods. The terms combined means to be an "owner", or rather "renowned for" "owning" certain goods.

relatively "strong" or "weak". At any given moment, a band "'own[s]' exclusively the resources… of their territory…visitors and travellers from other bands must be invited or ask permission to partake of the resources." (Marshall 1976: 185-7). People not only felt ashamed to enter another band or group's territory and make use of the resources within it, my interlocutors recounted, but risked death doing so—giving numerous cases where people were murdered for taking resources without permission. As those who occupy these regions move on and as new bands or groups establish themselves within the territory, so do the feelings of shame or fear associated with visiting and using resources within the region shift to new regions and new bands or groups.

While this appears to support the discourse of universal kinship insofar as a person's ability to claim membership within a territory is defined in relation to their presence within it, a person does not similarly lose their claim to others as kin when they move. Where people do move, either temporarily (in search for food) or permanently (on account of matrilocality, for example) the sentiment remains that they should "think for" their kin, setting aside a share of whatever resources are gathered and visiting their kin living at new territories to share with them. A particularly poignant example comes from my hosts, who, shortly after I left the field, moved to the territory of one of their relatives who had married a woman from the territory. It was near to where their daughter was attending primary school, and a place where they had family. On one day during winter, Oneh and his family ran out of food. Lacking any transport, they had to walk the 23km from the territory into Tsumkwe through deep sand to *zula* for whatever they could find. They remained there for three days looking for food, before returning to the territory exhausted and empty-handed save for a small bag of sugar to share with the family. Upon their return, they found that a tourist had come through the region and slaughtered a goat on behalf of the residents who then shared the meat out amongst themselves. Finding it difficult to confront one another, they vowed never to return to speak to one another again.

"It is always like this with families…" Oneh explained, reflecting upon what had happened. It had been over a year since the event, and they still refused to speak to or visit one another. "He knew that my family was starving, that we were walking through the sand to get to Tsumkwe, and then roaming around there with nothing for days. He could just have called me to tell me there was meat at the village, so that I could get a lift and come home to eat. Instead, he remained quiet. He did not think about us as family

should and so we went hungry." Speaking to his brother, he discovered a reciprocal presumption on the brother's part: that Oneh and his family were likely doing just the same in Tsumkwe. They were likely eating what they found rather than bringing it back to the territory to share with others. Just as people are morally ambivalent about their obligations to share with those who have less than them, or to refrain from demanding when and how their *xaro* partners reciprocate, they are morally ambivalent about their obligations to prioritise the needs of their kin—especially in the face of uncertainty and growing mistrust.

In choosing not to uphold his own obligations to "think for" Oneh and his family, Oneh's brother (as he saw it) was seeking retribution, in advance, for what he thought his brother was up to. Oneh was going to come home empty handed and the excuse, his brother assumed, would be that Oneh couldn't stave off the many demands that came from people in town. Stating honestly that you were heading back to the territory, and needed to give food to family, was a common excuse that people in town gave for being unable to meet demands. Showing enormous deference to those who made demands, people often said ||*Ae na,* ||*Ae na* (meaning "hold any bad feelings you may have towards me"), "…my family are looking for me, but I will help you next time". For Oneh's brother, the reality that it was never easy to refuse demands did not matter, only the obligations that people had towards their kin. Kin are expected to put each other first.

How might we make sense of these obligations to share between those who "have each other", and to refrain from confronting one another for wrongdoing? I have found it productive (though in no way conclusive) to consider the different pressures that may compel people to limit redistribution and cooperation to those who are kin, and who come from the same territory. As noted above, on the one hand, these appear to be about preventing limited resources from spreading too thinly within contexts of uncertainty and scarcity. On the other hand, these are about being embedded within forms of political representation that depend upon having a distinct ancestry, and upon keeping people who share a distinct ancestry living and cooperating with one another. When viewed from the former perspective, it seems that egalitarianism places certain unreachable expectations upon people—especially within the context of scarce resources. When viewed from the latter perspective, it seems that egalitarianism comes into conflict with certain, contemporary ways of defining rights to land and resources. On both counts, nepotism provides some, albeit incomplete, assurance.

As the introduction and first chapter of this thesis examine in more depth, the "territories" and forms of membership as they are today are the outcome of lengthy processes of strategizing and lobbying. These processes aimed to secure exclusive rights to residence within the region, and to manage and utilize the resources found therein. In order to succeed in these efforts, it was necessary to depict what was essentially a flexible land use system as fixed. Rights to a territory that were based only on the period in which they lived and subsisted within it, came to be based upon ancestral rights to 'permanent features' such as hills, rivers, or roads and thereafter upon descent or, less certainly, upon marriage. Consequently, to allow your relationships with family or in-laws to dissolve is to give up access to a territory and the benefits it brings.

There are numerous examples of this within the Nyae Nyae region. These examples take two primary forms. First, they are of people who were excluded from the early processes of cadastral mapping since they could not claim ancestral rights to permanent features within the Nyae Nyae boundary. Second, they are of people who claim formal membership to a territory but have since become estranged from their kin and are therefore unable to make use of the benefits their membership brings beyond picking up their annual cash grants. Similarly, as noted above, for those who have not been able to secure plots within the Tsumkwe municipal region, not having kin to turn to means having no one to depend upon when forced into town to roam in order to live. For those suffering from tuberculosis, not having kin to turn to makes it difficult to regularly attend the clinic to gain access to food and medicine.

My hosts were a case in point on multiple fronts. They both grew up in N||oqma, a territory that falls just outside of the Nyae Nyae perimeter but has been in the process of being incorporated for over a decade. Since the territory falls outside of the Nyae Nyae perimeter, they are excluded as beneficiaries of community projects and annual profits. To circumvent this, they managed to claim membership to the territory of Suka's brother who had married in to the family of the territory owners. After a series of arguments, fuelled largely by the territory owners' feelings that my hosts were hiding their income from working with tourists and researchers, they became estranged—so much so that they were asked to pay to stay there when requesting that we came to visit during my research.

As a result, they spend most of their time at their plot in Tsumkwe, drifting cautiously from one territory to another wherever they similarly have brothers or sisters

who have married in to new territories. They are never fully welcome—only ever temporary guests. The tensions grew to such an extent that in 2017, they put in an application to the Ju|'hoan Traditional Authority for a new territory (along with upwards of ten other families in similar situations, see Begbie-Clench and Hitchcock 2018). These applications have largely been rejected or delayed on the grounds that establishing residential areas within regions that are currently set aside for tourism and trophy hunting would disturb commercial activities. They have also been rejected or delayed due to the fear that concession would set a precedent that would quickly become unmanageable and lead to environmental degradation with larger areas being cleared for residential use. The situation is partially an outcome of the way that "territories" were transformed into fixed, mapped regions, and partially an outcome of the way that the conservancy has become increasingly focused on tourism and trophy-hunting as a means to generate profit—a topic examined in more depth in the opening chapters and in Chapter 6. It is nevertheless worth considering the impact of territory mapping in its own right, as a process that has transformed or augmented certain obligations between those who are descended from those early claimants.

The 37 registered territories today—while a relatively accurate snapshot of the number of distinct kin groups at the time—have naturally fragmented. They are spaces that are home not only to kin, but also those whose relationships to one another are increasingly "remote" or distant. Within this context, the pressure to "think for" each other takes on new imperatives. Where it may have prevented groups from fragmenting in the past and sustained the forms of care and possibilities for scrutiny that (as Chapter 2 and 3 show) have come into question today, it now prevents people from losing access to land and the many benefits this access ensures. These anxieties are not only felt with respect to the 37 registered territories where they have settled around particular water sources, but also to territories that lie beyond these and that hold particular resources. "If we spend too much time away from our other territories," many of my Ju|'hoan interlocutors noted anxiously, "…we could lose them. They will go to the Hereros who come in the night with their cattle, or the government will take them away because they think they are not being used."

The fear in this case is not, as it may have been in the past, that groups may dissolve to the extent that their claim to a particular territory comes into question, but that they may lose the ability to claim a territory outright. These are fears rooted in a

history characterised by frequent incursions into and expropriations of land by others on the basis of it being "empty" or "vacant". Responding to these narratives, people within the region (as elsewhere in southern Africa, see Marks 1980) came to deploy "the tools and logic of the colonial state" (Vermeylen *et al* 2012: 121). They did this in ways that, though successful in allowing them to maintain access to land, radically altered the way people were then able to move across that land and relate to one another. Where they may previously have moved across and lived sustainably within a much larger region (see Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 98), they are now confined to particular territories with largely fixed boundaries. Where in the past, their "geographical history was denied because their mobility was seen as 'rootlessness'", now, their "relational history…is denied because they are forced to claim roots in a bounded space" (Vermeylen *et al* 2012: 131). When viewed from this perspective, my own findings that (contrary to the prevailing discourse of universal kinship) people draw an important distinction between groups of people who "have each other", appear intimately related to the region's more recent history of drawing up static territory maps with largely fixed membership lists.

It seems fair to say that whatever "fluid and relational movement in an open landscape" there was prior to independence has been constrained by efforts to buck the trend of community-based natural resource management (examined further in Chapter 6). These efforts do appear to have increasingly transformed the Nyae Nyae region from "a living space that grows, expands, and travels" into a more "bounded and hierarchical space" (Vermeylen *et al* 2012: 131). Writing about processes of mapping among other indigenous groups, and the "group rights" that they give rise to, other scholars have made similar observations. They have noted that "open-ended processes of association and disassociation" (Widlok 2001: 1) between individuals often give way to "contradictions and tensions between an essentializing ideology of 'community' and local aspirations and differences" (Sullivan 2002: 179). The tension is one that Alden and Anseeuw (2009) argue extends further, representing a crisis confronting southern Africa with respect to land use and reform. The crisis is said to hinge upon a tension between "liberalism", on the one hand, and "constitutionalism" on the other (also see Wilson 2000). Where the former plays into the narrative of fluid and relational movement, the latter plays into the formation of bounded and hierarchical spaces. The discourse of "universal kin classification" matches that of "One Namibia, One Nation", the discourse

of "having each other" matches that of distinctive traditional communities that can be further broken down into unchanging ancestral units.

There appears to be a strong "elective affinity" (Weber [1905] 1930) between the process through which the territory has become a bounded and static entity and patterns of avoidance between kin have become increasingly generalised. There are also other ways of analysing these findings, however, that are more attentive to the importance these forms of relatedness have long had for people in the region. As early ethnographic research attests (notably, Marshall 1957, 1976, 1999), both the category of the territory and the distinction between kin are long-standing. One hypothesis for this endurance, is that these patterns of avoidance are in fact well-suited to an environment within which, in order to ensure that people are able to secure a basic subsistence and lead "good" lives, neither wholly open-ended processes of association and disassociation nor closed and bounded forms of relatedness are effective in isolation. Testing this would require more research, including a comparison between the vast archives on the Ju|'hoansi of the Nyae Nyae region held at the Peabody Museum at Harvard University and contemporary records. The ethnographic findings presented here nevertheless suggest that there *are* perhaps other forces at work (some more seemingly timeless than others) that compel people to limit the scope of demand sharing and prioritise their kin.

Among these is the pressure to roam and to demand that experiences of marginality bring. As this thesis considers throughout, these pressures are as much a consequence of contemporary political and economic measures which have granted people not much more than "limited entitlements" as they are pressures that have long been features of the environment and people's way of life. When viewed from this perspective and as noted above, it appears that neither demand sharing nor "thinking for" one's kin are enough on their own as means of getting by. Where the former allows for forms of redistribution between people from disparate territories which stabilise what are undulating flows of abundance and lack, the latter allows for there to be a stable group of people who care for one another in an otherwise unpredictable environment. Though these relationships are still characterised by uncertainty and, as the example of my host's brother suggests, kin regularly doubt their commitment to one another, they support commitments that nevertheless bring some certainty. The widespread acceptance of the patterns of avoidance they are associated with also make it possible for people to manage other suspicions—notably, of those who are beyond their scrutiny and whose demands

would otherwise be boundless. These forms of relatedness are thus intimately related to one another, in ways that a stark distinction between forms of relatedness that are either fluid or fixed fails to capture. By focusing on emotion, most importantly here on experiences of shame and narratives of obligation, it is possible to appreciate the extent to which relatedness here may be necessarily composite, and account for the many possible motivations for shifting between these registers.

*Figure 20 A young boy, the nephew of the yard's owner, sets up his mosquito net to sleep under for the night*

**The limits of fluidity**

Building upon the writings of Lewis Henry Morgan (1877) in *Ancient Society*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (articulated mostly in Engels [1884] 1902) developed the concept of "primitive communism"—a form of social organisation characterised by the absence of hierarchical class structures and common property ownership. Hunter-gatherers were considered the bastions of this form of social organisation, and contemporary examples of the position from which all societies had started in their trajectories from "savagery", to "barbarism", to "civilization". These latter stages were, according to Engels, characterised by private property and inequality—the result of the changing nature of the family. Where families had previously been universalist, in the sense that the "family" was synonymous with the social whole, they became "nuclear". With that came private

property, and with private property came inequality as people declared whom should inherit what and share in what wealth. The outdated social evolutionism of this argument notwithstanding, the association between universalist kinship and egalitarianism, on the one hand, and the nuclear family and inequality, on the other hand, resonates with the division that has framed this chapter.

It should not be assumed, however, that, as Engels predicted, the nuclear family spells the formation of permanent and intractable systems of inequality. The patterns of avoidance that characterise relationships between kin appear to have a similar effect. They shame outsiders into keeping their distance, and insiders into keeping close and uncritical. People are also not entirely bound by it. Spending too much time at home, as chapter 2 shows, and failing to make oneself present to others, is as morally questionable as spending too much time out roaming and not "thinking for" your kin. They are both catalysts for experiences of shame. These experiences, on the one hand, compel people to redistribute whatever wealth accumulates among families and, on the other, compel people to maintain broader relationships of care upon which people depend within marginal contexts. Experiences of marginality are not new. They are an enduring feature of the landscape, and in their endurance, they help to make sense of just how long-standing the obligations between kin really are. Saying that, the marginality people experience today is not entirely comparable to the marginality they experienced in the past. Exploring these differences generates new insights. As chapter 2 shows, experiences of marginality today compel people to widen their circles of kin and to demand or beg from those who cannot be trusted. As the next chapter shows, these perceptions of trustworthiness generate anxieties about just how wide these circles should become, and what they should be made up of.

These anxieties relate largely to land. For the Ju|'hoansi of the Nyae Nyae region, the lobbying efforts that allowed them to secure access to their territories and declare the region a conservancy were only ever half successful—giving them *de facto* but not *de jure* rights to land (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 16, also see Suzman 2001, Harring and Odendaal 2006). Since neighbouring regions to the Nyae Nyae conservancy are heavily over-grazed and large parts of the rest of the country privately owned, this uncertain tenure status poses a threat. The threat is not only that people may lose access to a territory but that the people who occupy these territories will not be those who are compelled either to "think for" them or to make themselves present to be demanded

from—most notably, encroaching pastoralists who they class as *other people*. The irony here, as the introduction shows, is that these are people whose narrative is otherwise one of "fluid and relational movement in an open landscape". It is a narrative that argues for "One Namibia, One Nation", and against the language of territory that characterises the Nyae Nyae region. Taking the discourse of the territory as a relational entity seriously, however, has potentially grave consequences. They cannot guarantee that those who occupy vacant or unused regions will "think for" them (either by sharing and by subsisting sustainably). Without these assurances, the discourse of universal kinship becomes distinctly threatening. The following chapter traces these threats. It does so not by exploring the extent to which people are classified as kin, but the extent to which they are classified as "people". It focuses on the Ju|'hoan concept of the "person", and examines the ethical projects that this concept implies. In doing so, it considers the curious and troubling convergence within this context of certain, often racialised, logics of exclusion and the pursuit of egalitarianism.

# Chapter 5:
# Debts, demands, and "other" people

Exploring philosophical engagements with shame, the philosopher Lisa Guenther (2011) writes that shame is "notoriously ambivalent"—it is both the "site of relationality and ethical responsibility, and as the site of its exploitation through oppression". Shame "does simply make one aware of one's existence, but "commands me to answer for the violence that my existence might have done to others; with or without malicious intent" (ibid: 29). The feeling of shame "…does not merely produce a reflection of myself as I must appear from the outside, as an object for-the-Other, but rather provokes me to respond", and to consider "the conditions of possibility for my own freedom" (Guenther 2011: 32). The previous chapters show how shame operates, on the one hand, between those who depend upon one another but are not, strictly speaking, obligated to make themselves present to one another, and, on the other hand, between those who struggle with the competing obligations to "think for" their kin and to share with those who have less. Across these chapters, shame is similarly a recognition of one's debts or obligations to others, and discourses of trust and tolerance emerge as important features through which people negotiate the moral ambivalence they experience as they tend to these obligations.

Within each of these settings, however, people proceed with the assumption that those they interact with are *true people* like themselves—in other words, that they share certain values about what is "ultimately" good. This chapter, and those that follow, is similarly concerned with how people navigate their competing obligations and negotiate experiences of moral ambivalence but in this case not with those they assume are *true people* like themselves but rather those they assume are *other people*. As much as these assumptions are borne initially of observable differences in what people consider to be "good" ways of sharing, they are increasingly the outcome of processes of "making up people" borne, in part, of these observations. Propped up by essentialised, most often racialised, categories, these *other people* are those who (it is assumed) do not, and cannot, experience shame for relating to others in ways that are "not good".

This chapter focuses in particular on relationships between Ju|'hoansi and black African settlers who predominantly occupy the positions of creditors and unwelcome settlers. As much as they regularly behave in ways that are considered "good", earning them the status of moral personhood, their status as *other people*—as those whose default

position is to be "not good"—remains largely fixed. Discourses that regard them as fixed in their ways on the basis of race, then, also compete with more processual discourses that see their behaviour as open to change—its fixed character the outcome, simply, of entrenched forms of misunderstanding. Resonating with the findings of the previous chapter, this chapter examines contradictions between idioms of relatedness which are formed in response to processes of demanding and giving, and those which are not responsive to such processes. It does this through an exploration of the shifting use of third-person pronouns which define people as "like" one another, as individuals, while maintaining certain distinctions between one another, as groups. These distinctions pivot on the morality of certain exchange practices, a theme which has been the subject of extensive research within the anthropology of money (notably Parry and Bloch 1989) and of credit and debt (see Peebles 2010). Similarly, within this context, the medium of money, and the process of circulating it as credit and debt, carries ambiguous qualities—at once burdensome and beneficial, imprisoning and liberating, stifling and stimulating sociality. Understanding how essentialised or racialised categories shape and are shaped by these processes, and the challenges they pose for the pursuit of egalitarianism, is a key aim and contribution of this chapter to the ever-expanding literature on credit and debt.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first describes the political and economic context for relationships of dependency between *true people* and *other people*. The second examines patterns of credit and debt, and considers the extent to which these form the basis of the distinction between "true" and "other". The final section then turns to the shifting use of pronouns, and the extent to which these are indicative of the state of mutual understanding between people or commentaries on the types of actions that might reshape people as "true" or "other". The chapter then concludes by bringing the discussion back to the problem of uncertainty.

## The place of chopped palm trees

Tsama stopped and looked over the sandy field we were walking through, his tracks behind him merging into those of the herd of cattle we were following. "They're going to ruin this place," he said. Tsama employed the third person pronoun *hi*, which at that time I knew was used when referring to animals, and assumed he was referring to the cattle. Lifting a small tin of loose-leaf tobacco from his shirt pocket, and pausing to roll

a cigarette, he continued, "...they graze their cattle here, and soon there won't be any more devil's claw to harvest. Our throats are cut. Our children's throats are cut."

I had accompanied Tsama that day who had been tasked with taking photographs of the ear tags of cattle that were grazing outside of the permitted boundaries of Tsumkwe. The photographs, taken with a camera that recorded GPS coordinates donated by a previous researcher, would be used in an effort to prosecute the owners. We were not far from a tree painted with a wide yellow stripe that marks the boundary between the town and the conservancy, and a few kilometres away from two territories inhabited by Ju|'hoansi. The field the cattle were grazing in had previously been used by the residents of these territories to harvest devil's claw—a medicinal plant used by Ju|'hoansi to reduce pain and swelling and now sold in large quantities to herbal remedy companies abroad. The residents had moved on to other regions to allow the plant population a chance to recover, both from harvesting and from the trampling of cattle. "They" who were slated to "ruin this place" were not cattle however but their owners—Oshiwambo or OvaHerero speakers who lived not far from where we were standing. "Why do you call them *hi*? I thought it was only used when referring to animals? I asked Tsama, "Why

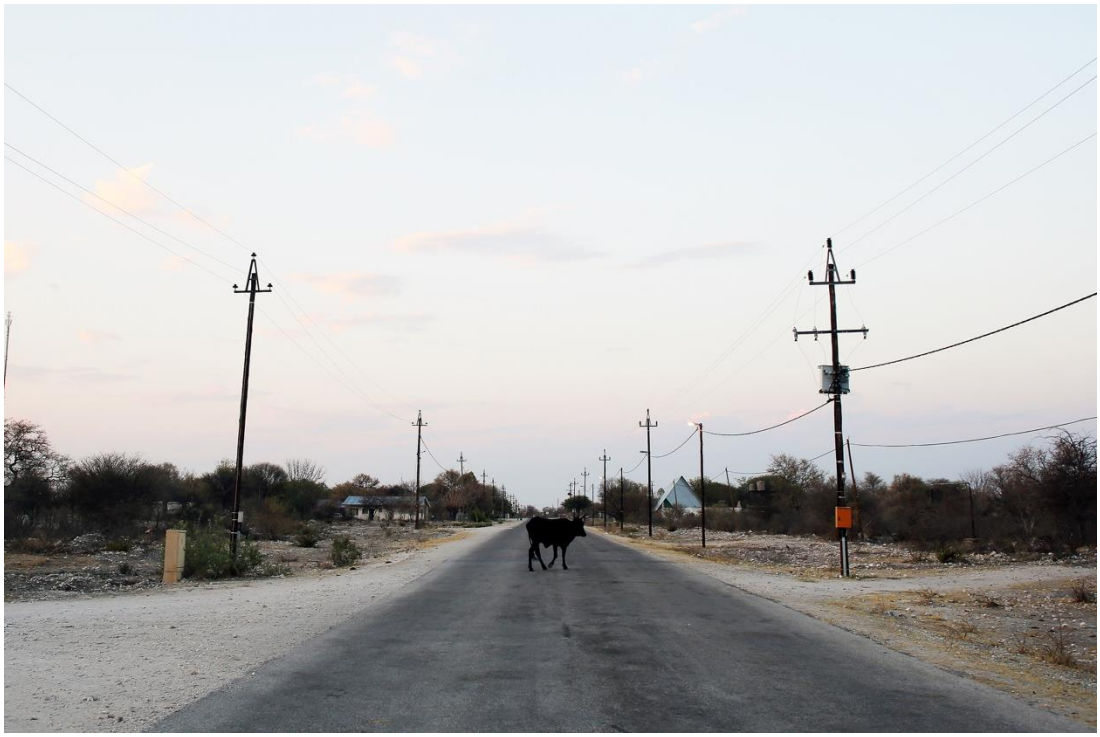

*Figure 21 A cow returns from grazing in the conservancy to Tsumkwe at dusk*

not *si!a*? [the pronoun used to refer to groups of people]". "We use *hì* when we talk about black people." He responded. "We use it because they are *ju doresin* ["other people" or "strangers"]. They destroy and kill everything. *E!a |u tsa'akhoe.* [We cannot understand each other]".

His response was not entirely unexpected. Over the course of my research, the tensions between *true people* and *other people* (especially, though not exclusively, *jusa joh* [people who are black]) became increasingly palpable (see Draper 1990 for an alternative account from across the border). They were *other people* not only because they were strangers—people who were not yet known—but because their *oosi* (customs or manners) were distinct. Similarly, they couldn't "understand each other" not only because they spoke mutually unintelligible languages, but because they couldn't rationalise their behaviour in each other's terms. The term *ju dore* captured and described these differences—a term meaning "person other" (*-sin* indicating the plural) which was used either in plainly descriptive terms or as an insult against those who "don't do good things". The phrase "we understand each other" was used frequently to describe relationships based on care, especially those between people who are not otherwise expected to help each other. It was a phrase that suggested that since certain people were not obligated to care for others, they must be compelled by empathy to do so. The use of different third-person pronouns was one subtle way, among others, that my interlocutors described another person as having empathy and, in turn, the potential for mutual understanding with themselves.

With the exception of the works of the linguist Patrick Dickens (1994, 2005)—who briefly describes the Ju|'hoan classificatory system on the basis of pronouns—the phenomenon has been largely overlooked. The classificatory system is written as follows:

| | **Class 1** | **Class 2** | **Class 3** | **Class 4** | **Class 5** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Singular** | *Ha* | *Ha* | *Ha* | *Hì* | *Ká* |
| **Dual** | *Sá* | *Hì tsán* | *Ha tsán* | *Hì tsán* | *Ká tsán* |
| **Plural** | *Sì!a, sì* | *Hì* | *Ha* | *Hì* | *Ká* |

*Table 3 Third person pronouns by noun class (Source: Dickens 2005: 31-34)*

"Class 1" corresponds largely to kin and 'true people', "class 2" to animals, 'other people', and spirits, "class 3" to plants, "class 4" to things determined by length or time (though largely without semantic coherence), and "class 5" to objects. While these divisions are illuminating—revealing what are, roughly speaking, local taxonomic "kingdoms"—they also conceal the broader classificatory work that pronouns do. At the risk of endorsing univocal approaches to language, this is perhaps already evident in the repetition of certain pronouns across different "classes". Read in this way, there are four primary categories: the category signified by the pronoun *ka* which refers to "things" that are generally not agentive, the category signified by the pronoun *hì* which refers either to *!ha* (meaning "meat" or "animals") and to "other" beings (including both the living and the dead), the category signified by the singular pronoun *ha* which refers to individual persons, and the category signified by the plural pronoun *sì!a* or *sì* which refers almost exclusively to *true people*. In sum, these third-person pronouns distinguish *ha* (the person), *ka* (the object), *hì* (the "other"), and *si!a* ("true" beings) from one another. Rather than simply distinguishing *juasi* (people), *!hamhi* (animals), *!aihnsi* (plants), and *tcisi* (objects), then, they appear to serve broader classificatory purposes: distinguishing agentive from non-agentive, predictable from unpredictable, and ethical from unethical.

When grouped together, these classes appear highly contentious—making certain types of beings appear intrinsically "other", unpredictable, unethical. This is especially problematic given the region's history of highly racialised conflict, and the escalating tensions between Ju|'hoansi and black African settlers today on account of a series of illegal invasions into the region. Reminiscent of the previous chapter's focus, the focus on classificatory systems asks not only what makes these beings *like* each other, but what extent they can *become like* each other. For many settlers, it is the architecture of the communal conservancy (which appears to exclude membership access on the basis of race) that prevents the latter and sustains the distinction between "true" and "other". It harks back to the colonial and apartheid eras they fought to bring an end to. "The people here are racist!" A local black African shop owner exclaimed. "It's meant to be the new Namibia, where we don't discriminate, but here we are and only one tribe has access to this land. It's racist." From the perspective of the Ju|'hoansi, these are measures not designed to keep out black African settlers in particular but to keep out those whose subsistence practices are incompatible with their own. Though Tsama refers generally to *other people*, his statements refer specifically to Herero pastoralists from G|am. The same

pastoralists who, in 2009 and again in 2010, cut the veterinary cordon fence into the Nyae Nyae conservancy and moved into Tsumkwe to take advantage of the grazing that the region offers (see Hays 2009, Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 169-176, 223-225, Begbie-Clench 2015).

For the Ju|'hoansi, these incursions are a continuation of the steady encroachment on their "way of life" that began after the Herero and Nama genocide between 1904 and 1908 by the German Empire. This saw Herero pastoralists passing through the region as they fled from the west into Botswana (then Bechuanaland) to the east (see Olusoga and Erichsen 2010), and steadily seeking new grazing lands in the years that followed. Prior to the Namibian War of Independence and the post-independence period, encounters between pastoralists and Ju|'hoansi are said to have few and far between. While this has been the topic of intense debate, as mentioned before, the Ju|'hoansi of the Nyae Nyae region today emphasise that their encounters with settlers in the past were limited to occasional trading when they passed through the region every few months. During her period of research in the Nyae Nyae region, Marshall (1957: 2) notes that Ju|'hoansi made only occasional trading trips or visits to families working for pastoralists. These were said to consist of hard bargaining, for which the Bantu were said to invariably get the upper-hand due to being "big, aggressive, and determined to have what they want" (Marshall 1961: 242). Problematically, these narratives have contributed to a "pervasively dichotomous view" of socio-ecological relations between hunter-gatherers and pastoralist or agriculturalist communities (Kohler 2005). A view that has served to reduce hunter-gatherers and their neighbours into "two dimensions based on contrasting subsistence strategies and polar relations of power", Stephanie Rupp (2003: 37) notes, and one that creates a "flattened perspective of the social landscape".

The sentiment, related or not, is nevertheless one that is expressed by the Ju|'hoansi today, who use adjectives such as *g|aoh* (strong), *!ka ǂxan* (stingy), or *||'ang ju n|ai* (stubborn) when describing their encounters with black African settlerstoday. These encounters are less typically between them as hunter-gatherers and pastoralists, and more readily as citizens and civil servants, vendors and customers, or debtors and creditors, respectively. Despite living near to one another, they are rarely neighbours—living in separate regions, or "locations", in Tsumkwe. Where the Ju|'hoansi are scattered across 37 territories within the Nyae Nyae conservancy and across 9 locations in Tsumkwe, most settlers live in an area of Tsumkwe called *||Ohm ||Aba*, meaning "to chop palm trees"

(or "the place of chopped palm trees", effectively). There is an enclave of Kavango settlers, who speak mostly Kwangali and live in the north-western corner of Tsumkwe, and another enclave of Herero settlers. The Herero settlers are part of the initial group who cut through the veterinary cordon fence and settled in Tsumkwe in 2009 and 2010. They live mostly north of the road that leads to Botswana on the eastern edge of Tsumkwe or on the southern border towards Nyae Nyae pan. There are several names that Ju|'hoansi use to distinguish the different groups, including *Gobasi* (Oshiwambo or Kavango speakers), *Tamahsi* (Herero speakers), *G!a'utamasi* (Damara speakers), and *ǂAbesi* (Setswana speakers).

Elaborating on the meaning of "||*Ohm* ||*Aba*", another Ju|'hoan interlocuter gave the following explanation:

> "We call it that because the people who live there like to chop all the trees down. Black people are always flattening everything. There used to be palm trees (*Hyphaene ventricosa*, otherwise known as "Makalani") all over that location but when they started to move in they chopped them all down and now it is bare. That's why we call it ||*Ohm* ||*Aba*."

While the absence of trees and shrubs is particularly noticeable in this region of Tsumkwe—where large tracts of land have been cleared to make way for fields for maize or *kraals* for cattle and goats—the desolateness extends across the whole of Tsumkwe, spilling over into the conservancy increasingly each year as firewood becomes harder to find. It is the sheer rate of change that Ju|'hoansi comment upon. It is an observation backed up by historical satellite imagery which shows that the region changes markedly over a period of five years between 2003 and 2008. The town is in a mostly barren area that abuts onto thickets of Russet bushwillows and Leadwood trees that extend out into the conservancy for hundreds of kilometres. The scene is reminiscent of Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's (2005: 29) depiction of an abandoned logging road in the Meratus Mountains of South Kalimantan, Indonesia. "An abandoned logging road has got to be one of the most desolate places on earth… Yet, ironically, the forest as a site of truth and beauty seems much clearer from the logging road than anywhere else," she states provocatively. While Tsumkwe is far from abandoned, its desolate landscape contrasts starkly with the bushveld that surrounds it—a constant reminder, Ju|'hoansi remark, of the threat posed from within to the rich biodiversity that the conservancy supports.

It is not the threat posed to the wider region's biodiversity, however, that dominates Ju|'hoan concerns about *other people*. They are said to be *!'hombi*, a pejorative term meaning "predators" which was commonly used when referring to *black people*. The term signalled a more general tendency, my Ju|'hoan interlocutors told me, to "consume" and "destroy" things. It was a reference not only to the poaching and environmental degradation that Ju|'hoansi say they witness "wherever black people settle", but the tendency more broadly to want to *kxuia* (ruin) Ju|'hoansi through debt and violence. This contributes to a narrative, directed especially to outsiders who may intervene, that the Ju|'hoansi "want the invaders and their cattle out" (Sassman 2015). And yet, while they are sincere in these calls, they are also heavily dependent upon settlers and therefore deeply ambivalent about their presence. Rather than entirely negative and threatening, their relationships with settlers have many positive valences. As entrepreneurs they import food and textiles, brew and distil alcohol, and set up bars that have jukeboxes, jackpot machines, and public spaces where Ju|'hoansi can come together—often escaping the boredom or stress of life at home. In their willingness to give out credit, they are also a vital source of livelihood in the periods leading up to pension pay-outs, or during times of relative scarcity. Settlers also provide one of the only sources of revenue, through enterprise license fees, for the Ju|'hoan Traditional Authority (JUTA)—who use the money to resolve disputes, mediate divorces, and process inheritance claims.

As Ferguson (2013) notes and as examined in Chapter 2, there is a certain willingness with which Ju|'hoansi become dependent upon settlers. These forms of dependency are not always spoken of as purely contractual. Rather, Ju|'hoansi often speak of settlers as "friends" and as being those with whom they have relationships of understanding and trust. These relationships are nevertheless circumscribed by a general trend that Ju|'hoansi find troubling. The increasing concern is that their relationships with settlers are not based upon cohabitation or mutuality but on forms of dependency that may eventually give way to intractable processes of encroachment, encapsulation, and subordination. Census data (Namibia Statistics Agency 1993, 2003, 2011; Suzman 2001) do not go into sufficient detail to get a sense for how the demography of Tsumkwe has changed since Namibian independence. In the neighbouring conservancy, N‡a Jaqna, it is estimated that 50% of the population are Kavango, Oshiwambo, or Herero settlers (Hitchcock 2012: 94). In Nyae Nyae, the percentage is considered to be lower than this but there are no official or reliable figures to provide confirmation. With a steadily

growing population confined to Tsumkwe, a small and fixed area of "state land", these tensions are only set to worsen.

At the completion of my research in 2015, there were 33 registered shebeens (taverns) operating within Tsumkwe. This number has increased to 38 in 2017, and numerous others still operate informally. Many of these shebeens also operate as small *spaza* shops selling groceries such as maize-meal, sugar, tea, coffee, oil, and tobacco.[21] In addition to these small *spaza* shops, there were 5 larger grocery stores in Tsumkwe at the time of my research (increasing to 8 in 2017)—none of which were run either by the conservancy or members of the Nyae Nyae conservancy. This steady proliferation of *spaza* shops and shebeens in remote spaces, typically of enduring poverty can be analysed in light of a more general trend towards informality across southern Africa (Neves and du Toit 2012). The rise of the informal economy—of which small enterprises and informal moneylending make up a considerable part (see Siyongwana 2004)—is said to be strongly patterned and shaped by several colonial and apartheid legacies. While these are multiple, and vary considerably from one region to the next, the key legacies for the Namibian case include the reality of townships and homelands that are located far from economic opportunity, processes of de-agrarianisation, and a retraction of labour-intensive industries leaving many Ju|'hoansi dependent upon enterprise or grants. Though many settlers move on account of employment in government ministry offices in Tsumkwe, others (usually their relatives) often follow in pursuit of better opportunities, either for business or grazing.

Many of those who settle in Tsumkwe come from rural regions, such as Ovamboland in the north or Hereroland in the south, which are either densely populated or heavily over-grazed. There are a few people in Tsumkwe who are from the capital, Windhoek, or other major towns such as Otjiwarongo, but they tend to be posted as public servants to Tsumkwe for brief periods of a few months or years before returning. Those who settle permanently tend to come from regions where most people, like Ju|'hoansi, depend almost entirely on state grants, drought-relief packages, subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry, and small enterprise activities. There are few options for formal employment in unskilled sectors, and a lack of training, education, or access

[21] *Spaza* shops, otherwise known as "tuck shops" or "*cuca* shops", are small retail businesses which operate from a residential stand or home (see Ligthelm 2005). "Shebeens" are much the same, but always include the sale of alcohol – typically home-brewed or home-distilled varieties.

to the necessary capital to make them competitive in skilled sectors. Speaking with Maria, the owner of a *spaza* shop and shebeen in ||*Ohm* ||*Aba*, she stated that "Tsumkwe is a paradise. If you go to Owamboland, where I am from, you will see that every person has a shop. They all play music, give credit, brew alcohol. There are too many people and they are all trying to survive in the same way. It is very difficult to make a living there." Maria had moved to Tsumkwe permanently after her husband, who was trained as a chef in Windhoek, secured employment at the local lodge. Their shebeen, painted aqua blue and aptly called "Tsumkwe Paradise", sells bottled beers, canned soft-drinks, home-brewed beer, and packets of crisps and sweets.[22] They come to Tsumkwe not only because the market is less competitive, but because (as Neves and du Toit 2012: 139 have similarly shown) distant regions offers entrepreneurs in Namibia freedom from the obligations that come when you are known by others and people can "come with stories"—in other words, people they cannot easily refuse.

Putting it more bluntly was one of my Ju|'hoan interlocutors who exclaimed that "there are tourists who come to see us and pay us for crafts or activities, but black people only come here to get us into debt. These days, they don't give us work, they just get us into debt because they can make good money from it." At times of hardship, in those moments when Ju|'hoansi await the next pension pay-out or salary and have few, if any, other options for feeding their families, store owners are vital sources of credit for those with employment. For those without casual employment, shop owners are also said to be amenable to offering credit if the purchase is for home-brewed or –distilled alcohol. Store owners give these forms of credit out at higher interest rates of 70-100% on a "book up" basis. Rather than give cash, they let clients take goods and pay them later. Whatever they take is written down in a book, and they can keep taking until the tally comes to approximately 50% of what they're expected to earn. Even when their clients don't have employment, they are expected to repay within one month through any means they can. At times, store-owners offer casual labour and piece work in the form of collecting firewood, gathering veld foods, collecting and transporting water, clearing agricultural fields, or assisting with brewing and distilling alcohol and selling meat. The wages are said

[22] It also houses two jackpot machines that attract a steady stream of young and old, male and female players whom they often help out with small change to put into the machine. A portion of this amount returns to store owners as a payment paid to hosts by the owners of the jackpot machines who come to collect the profits in each machine at various points throughout the year. They are two Namibians, of Portuguese heritage, who live in Rundu and run a large general dealer store. They stated that the machines make them a large profit percentage.

to be low, however, and the conditions are said to be poor. They are at once a means to survive and a source of "predatory" exploitation, and their relationships are therefore highly ambivalent. Similar to the animals and spirits who share their "class", they are therefore at once sources of fear ("others", referred to with the pronoun *hi*) and sources of care or subsistence ("persons", referred to with the pronoun *ha*).

The following section examines this ambivalence in more depth. It focuses on discussions of credit and debt and the particular shape these practices have within the Nyae Nyae region. These are at once in line with existing research on the topic in anthropology and distinct in their emphasis on racialised categories.

**"This life is all about debt. You can live no other way."**

"This life is all about debt," G|aq'o explained, "…you can live no other way." G|aq'o grew up south of Nyae Nyae, in the Omaheke region. He had moved to the Nyae Nyae region shortly before independence, upon hearing that Ju|'hoansi were being given their own territories to reside in. Many of his relatives had previously lived in the G|am region, and then moved north into Nyae Nyae at the time his family had moved south into the Omaheke region to work on white-owned commercial farms. "White people used to beat us! So we ran away to Talismanus and started working for Hereros. They refused to pay us, but gave us milk and sometimes gave us maize." Moving to Nyae Nyae, he explained, offered him an opportunity to *n!un |'an mi |'ae* (stand for myself) by having his "own place". With the help of the cattle fund that had been set up by John Marshall and Claire Ritchie prior to independence, he would set up his own farm like those held by the Herero speakers he had worked for since he was a child. When he arrived in Nyae Nyae, he was floored by how much food there was in the bush. In the south, he explained, the bushfoods had been trampled on by cattle or removed to make way for agricultural fields. After getting access to a territory and developing his farm, however, living within the region became more challenging than he anticipated. Among other things, he struggled with predation from lions, not having enough financial capital to develop the farm's infrastructure, and with other interpersonal problems regarding how the farm was managed. "Even with all the bushfoods available, living only from hunting and gathering was difficult, and also dangerous with the threat of coming across elephants." As development funding waned, and projects which saw Ju|'hoansi in employment or training diminished, he began spending more and more of his time in Tsumkwe.

This was the backdrop G|aq'o gave for his declaration that the only way to survive, today, was through debt. "It's not simple though," he declared, "… you have to have understanding with store owners. Many people get into situations where they take credit, but they cannot afford to pay it back later. They request to pay half, and the person will get angry. That is why you must always take out debt with someone who understands you and your circumstances." Such relationships of understanding were rare. Most Ju|'hoansi complained that they had little choice over what they paid and when they made repayments. This was not only a consequence of being at the mercy of angry creditors, but because a general condition for receiving credit in Tsumkwe is to hand over all of their personal identity documents, bank cards, pension cards, or any other documents they might use to gain access to grants and payments. The practice is illegal (Republic of Namibia 2004),[23] and local police claimed to be cracking down on it, but it is nevertheless widespread (as documented elsewhere in southern Africa—see Vally 2016). "If you don't have those things," G|aq'o continued, "…they will go see where you live, get your phone number if you have one, and then come to remind you throughout the month that you need to repay the money. And when you cannot pay, they will start to remove property from your house." Rather than simply a threat, these visits (though often unsuccessful) occurred frequently throughout my research.

Existing accounts of the rising dependence on debt in southern Africa have shown it largely to be a burden of those aspiring to middle class status (see James 2015). It is similarly the case here. Those most in debt are those with employment, who amount to what might, tenuously, be called the "middle class". Those with formal, permanent employment can bring a previous pay cheque to apply for credit up to the amount that they are paid each month. These agreements, since they are informal, have no bearing on their ability to get credit elsewhere and many do just that—buying furniture, electronics, or clothing with store cards or on hire purchase. Those without employment, however, are not exempt from these burdens. Without agencies carrying out checks as a necessary requirement for credit, and on account of the ease with which creditors can pursue their debtors for repayment, those who are employed informally as casual labourers are similarly, albeit less heavily, indebted. Even those without employment can apply for credit whenever they are due to receive state cash grants such as pensions, or in the weeks

[23] See http://www.lac.org.na/laws/2004/3266.pdf Government Notice No. 189 "Notice in terms of Section 15A of the Usury Act, 1968 (Act No. 73 of 1968)".

leading up to the annual distribution of conservancy benefits. On the day of payment, a debtor then requests for their creditor to give them back their documents. As witnessed across rural Namibia (Dobler 2016, Widlok 2017), creditors then accompany their debtors to enforce repayments.

The violence in these encounters comes not only in the automatised timing of repayments, but also in the interest that is added to a debt at the point of repayment. The practice of adding interest is referred to locally as to *n‡ai g|aoh* (strengthen) the debt—in effect, to "increase" it. Where the interest is typically set at 50% for those with steady employment, the interest rate for those who are without steady employment (who typically only "book up" for alcohol) is set at 70 to 100%. These interest rates, Ju|'hoansi frequently assert, are rarely disclosed at the time a credit agreement is made, and Ju|'hoansi are not able to read these ledgers and therefore keep track of what they spend and how much is taken off at the time of repayment. This is especially the case for pensioners, who make up the bulk of the permanent debtors in Tsumkwe. "It is also the case for alcoholics!" G|aq'o continued, "…who will get into debt easily at the drinking houses and then keep coming back and not keep track. It's for this reason that some shebeens give credit for alcohol to people without employment." It is only under exceptional circumstances, when there is a relationship of considerable trust, that those without any formal employment who are not due to receive grants can be given credit. This happens either if they agree to work off their debts through peonage, or if they only take credit for home-brewed or home-distilled alcohol and agree to a specified time when they return to pay it off. "They make money that way! When payday comes, or they find out that person has money, the store or bar owners will chase them down for it." The people who do not pay are said either to be reported to the police, beaten, have whatever property they might have at their homes taken away, or become sick and drop dead from sorcery (a threat explored in more depth in Chapter 7).

Giving a lengthy explanation of the risks of physical violence, G|aq'o said:

> "When you are reported to the police, it is like you still have to try to pay the debt but being beaten is like writing the debt off because it is illegal. If you don't report them for beating you, then the debt is written off and you go to a different person. Sometimes though, they will beat you and then immediately run to report that you have not made the repayment. At that point, the police will not believe that they have assaulted you..."

> "…They [police and creditors] then speak to each other in their own language. We call this *ǂ'u ǂo ǂ'u* [colour to colour]. They won't believe you because they are on the same side as each other. They all speak to each other, you see, so there's no way you can just go to another person and take out credit and pay them while the other one is still waiting."

If a creditor and a debtor *tsa'akhoe* (understand or hear each other), however, then they are said to write off debts that have not been paid for a long time. They are also said to refrain from pursuing their debtors through violence or sorcery. "Without relationships of mutual understanding", Di||xao, a young Ju|'hoan woman explained, "…it is only by repaying your debts that you can protect yourself."

The issues raised here surface frequently throughout the literature on credit and debt in anthropology. Among the Ju|'hoansi, to have debt is to have *ǂo*. It is a word that, as in many other languages (Graeber 2011: 121), also means to have "guilt". Speaking of the term's meaning prior to its widespread association with credit agreements with shops and shebeens, ǂOma explained:

> "…*ǂo* was like when you borrowed something from someone, like an ostrich egg used to carry water, something that was yours and I needed to give it back, if I broke that thing, then I would *ǂxae ǂo* 'have debt or guilt'."

Comparable with the Maori concept of the *hau* (spirit) of the gift, famously described by Mauss (1954 [1925]), the objects of exchange which compel people to make repayments are those which embody personal and inalienable qualities. They are similar to the objects that circulate along *xaro* paths, except that they are requested (and therefore only ever borrowed) rather than given. The goods themselves, rather than the relationships they index, are what have value. Similarly, where experiences of *ǂo* follow the breaking of promises or obligations to others, it is the specific promise or obligation, in that moment, that has value. Since value lies in specific things or specific actions, the situation cannot be remedied through similar things or actions. It calls for those who are "guilty" to do more—to *show* that they feel guilty. By doing this, they admit that they cannot repay or reciprocate what they have taken, and they cannot undo what has been done.

It is necessary to take a step back to appreciate why, in light of this, people have come to associate debt uniformly with experiences of "guilt". Why, in other words, the

asymmetries that develop when people feel they cannot repay, redress, or reciprocate are so enduring when it comes to relationships between creditors and debtors, irrespective of repayments. Exploring this association goes a long way towards uncovering the bases upon which distinctions between *true people* and *other people* are built. Elaborating upon his definition of *ǂo*, ǂOma gave some sense of this. "When people say *ǂo* today, they're not really talking about those types of relationships anymore", he continued. "…most of the time, they're talking about the debts they owe to black people. From the moment you borrow from a black person, it's like they want to kill you." It was the resentment that creditors express towards those who borrow from them, in other words, that makes guilt an enduring feature of relationships between creditors and debtors. The guilt comes from the moment you borrow, not simply from the moment you cannot return or repay what you have borrowed. Being in a position to repay, or having a track record of making repayments, is not enough to make borrowing a guilt-free act.

The resentment that creditors express towards their debtors is a key factor in what makes becoming indebted synonymous with being overcome with guilt. The temptation is to return to Mauss' ethnography of the *hau* of the Maori gift, where a direct comparison is made between gifts and debts as objects that create obligations between people to reciprocate. When viewed from this perspective, "guilt" is what a debtor experiences when faced with the spirit of what has been given, that vows to return to the person who gave it. As noted by several authors in response to Mauss' comparison (see Parry 1986, Graeber 2001: 151-228), however, these experiences of debt or guilt can be distinguished by the extent to which, and the way in which, relationships might endure in spite of these experiences. By borrowing or accepting a gift from a fellow Ju|'hoan person, one is not instantly overcome with guilt despite recognising that they are obligated to reciprocate or to return what has been borrowed. As much as acts of borrowing or giving create asymmetries, these only come to matter when they cannot be rebalanced. What matters is not specific asymmetries that cannot be rebalanced, but the effect these have on what are ordinarily ongoing relationships of care. These are relationships of care, in other words, in which asymmetries may alternate, and guilt is what people experience when these patterns get disrupted.

As Graeber (2001) similarly points out in his re-reading of Mauss' writing, the *hau* of the Maori gift is not simply the spirit of the original giver. It is the "accumulated history" of both, or many givers, that makes it impossible to cancel out a relationship by

way of repayment. When it comes to relationships between creditors and debtors, however, guilt *can* be overcome by making repayments. What matters in these relationships are not ongoing relationships of care, but certain goods or services and the value they can be exchanged for. As such, by making these exchanges happen debtors can free themselves of ǂo. A clear difference in relationships between creditors and debtors, and relationships between *true people*, then, is that "everything is exchangeable for everything else" (Parry and Bloch 1989: 15). It is possible to overcome experiences of guilt by repaying or reciprocating, and so people do not depend on the passing of time for guilt to subside. The ǂo that people experience, in other words, is hardly comparable. They are different experiences of guilt, owing to the differences there are in relationships that *true people* have with one another, and those they have with *other people*.

What makes creditors *other people*, then, is not only the resentment they feel towards those who borrow, but the way they concern themselves with the asymmetries of exchanges and not asymmetries in the relationships that make them. Bringing this point home, for my interlocutors, is that these exchanges concern food, tobacco, or alcohol—goods that do not normally carry personal significance and that people share freely without expecting repayment. Demanding repayment for food, tobacco, or alcohol, despite the asymmetries of wealth between creditors and debtors, is not the only difference that my interlocuters found striking. Creditors were known to also inflate the prices of goods, set high interest rates, and pursue debtors through violence if they failed to make their repayments. Ongoing relationships do matter, in other words, they are just a very different form to those that *true people* claim to have with one another. Even though relationships can technically be cancelled by way of repayment, the dependencies that structure them tend to bind debtors to their creditors. From the perspective of many of my interlocutors (explored in more depth later), these dependencies are deliberately sustained through the practice of inflating prices, charging interest, and pursuing debtors through violence. As Killick (2011) similarly argues, the point about these sorts of debts is that they are meant to be binding even if debtors manage to make their repayments.

### Ambiguity in encounters with strangers

"They will give you three to four weeks [to repay your debts] before they want to kill you", Ghau, a Ju|'hoan pensioner, explained as he stood at the gates of the clinic from which pensions were being doled out and creditors moved through the crowds collecting

payments. "First, they will report you to the police, then they will beat you, then they will kill you with sorcery." Ghau knew "them" personally and had been taking credit with the creditors he was pointing to for years, but he still employed the plural pronoun *hi*. He was describing their "otherness", as Tsama had done, and so it made sense to emphasise this through the use of a pronoun normally reserved for beings who were "strangers" proper. Their otherness was not only a function of the unique capacities for sorcery they were presumed. Their otherness was a function of their desire to "ruin" people—either because they are jealous or resentful, or simply because they want to better themselves. These desires started not only at the moment that a debtor failed to make repayments, Ghau insisted, but from the moment they set up shop. "Why else would they move to a region so far from their homes to set up shop?", Ghau asked. "Why else would they travel into the bush to our territories, trying to sell us food and alcohol. What money can we use to pay for it?" "They want us to take credit", my host interjected, "…because they know they can make money out of us by charging interest."

Over the course of my research, "excited creditors" (Strathern cited in Peebles 2010: 227) pushing goods onto would-be debtors was a common sight, especially in the weeks leading up to grant or wage pay-outs. Store-owners would load up their trucks with goods, and travel out to the rural territories where they would offer them to people who had not yet been paid. People coupled these observations with observations about the physical appearance of creditors. They commented frequently on how creditors appeared to be getting fat, or on how they were able to build new houses, erect fences, or buy cows. For my interlocutors, these were signs that from the perspective of black African settlers, the "lines of superiority and inferiority [were] clearly drawn" (Graeber 2011: 110). They are simply people who feel they *should* have more, my interlocutors would explain—people who see the practice of inflating prices, gathering interest, and pursuing debtors through violence as ethical projects geared towards keeping dependencies in place.

Most of the time, though, store-owners appeared to be responding, unwillingly and partially, to the demands of would-be debtors as sympathetic patrons. There were very few shops that did not have hand-written signs that read "NO CREDIT", "CREDIT BREAKS FRIENDSHIPS". Speaking to creditors revealed a different picture. They were people who claimed that their businesses depended on not being "destroyed" or "ruined" by their debtors. As Rosa, an Oshiwambo woman who owned a small bar at the centre of town, put it, "…it doesn't matter if I give everything I have to them, they will always

think there is more, it will always be my fault that they are poor." From the perspective of creditors, inflating prices, charging interest, and pursuing their creditors were necessary to succeed in a context where people frequently failed to make their repayments, at times deliberately.


*Figure 22 From the inside of a popular store, showing a sign on the wall asking customers not to request credit*

On both the side of creditors and of debtors, in other words, there were enduring discourses of exploitation. Given the difficulty of gaining access to credit ledgers, tracing exchanges across value registers (Guyer 2004), or calculating the costs and risks of "booking up" for creditors, it is not easy to verify the extent to which these discourses reflect real processes of exploitation on either side. There were clearly racialised discourses at play, tied up in the region's history and the violent processes that have shaped the way people within the region have come to understand each other as certain "kinds of people" (see Kössler 2007, Taylor 2008, 2009). There was also ambiguity in these relationships. As much as my interlocutors' explicit statements about creditors were rarely ambiguous, there were moments when they expressed doubt over the kinds of people that their creditors were, or may become. As Pelkmans (2013: 5, original emphasis) notes, anthropologists have tended to evade doubt by focusing on "*articulated* thought and *performed* action". Within the Nyae Nyae context, this focus gives the impression that people are unwavering in their conviction that "black people" are "other". By paying

attention to doubt, and to the way people attempt to navigate experiences of doubt, it becomes clear that people are not entirely convinced that "otherness" is a fixed state of being.

Doubt appears, in fact, as a central feature of the work not only of the anthropologist who seeks to understand these relationships and suspicions, but of the debtors who attempt to navigate them. On the one hand, creditors were people whose very presence was an indication that they were out to exploit. On the other hand, creditors were sources of care in an otherwise marginal landscape. They were people taking advantage of a captive clientele, but they were also people who brought the alcohol, music, and tobacco that allowed people to *can* "relax" and *!ka n|'ang* "feel happy". Soliciting reflections upon the way that people navigated their relationships with creditors revealed, too, that creditors were often thought to express sympathy. Not only could debtors "cool the hearts" of their creditors, but creditors varied in their approaches to inflating prices, charging interest, and enforcing repayments. It was possible, in other words, for *other people* and *true people* to "understand each other"—despite Tsama's declaration to the contrary. At the same time, the threat of being *ruined* was palpable—making these discourses of otherness as means through which people warned themselves of the dangers involved in developing relationships with *other people*. They safeguard against too eagerly demanding from those who demand forcefully when and how you repay.

Despite the mutuality suggested by these comments, the failure of understanding was generally assumed to be to a creditors' benefit. Though some of my interlocutors noted that enforcing repayments was what creditors needed to do to keep their businesses going, and were critical of debtors who failed to see this, most saw it more simply as an exploitative practice entailing a failure to appreciate the difficulties faced by debtors to make repayments. As such, discussions regularly centred on the importance of making creditors see and appreciate the difficulties that debtors faced in making their repayments. There were two forms this discussion took. The first was concerned with how to make otherwise disagreeable lenders write off debts or relax the nature of repayments, and the second was concerned with sorting out those creditors with whom relationships of understanding might be possible from those creditors with whom they were not. One is concerned with the process through which relationships of care may come about, the

other concerned with fixed characters and events. These are two competing, though not mutually exclusive, visions of *other people*.

The following section focuses on one of the ways that these competing visions of *other people* are discussed (and, by extension, the types of relationships that are deemed possible with them): through the shifting use of third-person pronouns. Where the use of the third-person pronoun *ha* seems to speak of moments of empathy, the third-person pronoun *hi* seems to speak of its absence. Constraints on time and funding, alongside problems of access, make this an unfortunately one-sided discussion, and one that requires further investigation. More research is needed to have a better sense for how common it is within the region to use what are pronouns for determining number as markers for sociality. Complementary data on the way that creditors navigate their relationships with debtors would also be enormously valuable—not least because they would give some sense of the interplay between the sentiments of creditors and debtors. The absence of insights of this kind are an unfortunate reality, as Rupp (2003: 37) emphasises, for most research contexts which include people from multiple communities.

## The metapragmatics of pronoun use

As laid out briefly in the opening section of this chapter, pronouns take four primary forms and appear to refer to four primary categories of being: *ha* (the person), *ka* (the object), *hì* (the "other"), and *si!a* ("true" beings). Where the category indicating "true" beings is always made up of multiple "persons", the category of the "other" and the category of the "object" is not. Those who are "other" people are regularly referred to in the singular as *hì*, though the grammatically correct pattern would be to always refer to singular people as *ha*. Similarly, though the grammatically correct pattern would be to always refer to singular objects as *ka* (as in the plural), single objects can, too, be referred to with the pronoun *ha* normally reserved for people. Where the latter pattern is similarly found in English—such as when we refer to cars, boats, or machines as "she" or "he"—the former is not. It is similar to the way *thou* and *ye* were used in Old and Middle English, and how *tu* and *vous* are used in French, but is less clearly associated with "metaphors of power" (see Brown and Gilman 1960: 254). The pattern here suggests not a relationship between superior and inferior so much as an encounter with something unknown or unfathomable—something which appears not to share the same ethics as *true people* and therefore cannot be thought of as a group of "persons" who can, individually, be referred to with the pronoun *ha*. This is not to say that those who are thought of as *other people*,

whether as individuals or groups, are always referred to with the pronoun *hì*, but rather that the pronoun *ha* indexes particular behaviours that those who are referred to as *hì* generally don't perform.

It is this tension between the capacity of *other people* to be *ha* (persons), and their tendencies not to be, that is captured by the shifting use of *ha* and *hì* in everyday encounters between *true people* and *other people*. Discussing their use with my interlocutors invariably revealed that using the pronoun *hì* to refer to a person ("true" or "other"), or the pronoun *ha* to refer to an object, was to make a grammatical error. *Ka |oa jan* (It's not right), my interlocutors would repeat, and yet time and again these "errors" cropped up—serving, perhaps, as a "metapragmatics" (Silverstein 1976) through which the standard categorisation of persons and objects was brought into question. By looking at the shifting use of pronouns, it became possible to appreciate what these ethics were composed of. While there are certainly limits to the conclusions that can be drawn here, the frequency with which people shifted their use of certain pronouns in response to certain forms of behaviour substantiated the sort of ethics that being a "person" appeared to entail. These concepts of the person, the other, and the object, "organise the moral possibilities of intersubjectivity" (Parish 2014: 31).

Most common among these shifts was the shift from *hì* to *ha*, *ha* to *hì*, and *ka* to *ha*. The shift from *hì* to *ha* occurred when an "other" (ordinarily referred to with the pronoun *hì*, irrespective of number), be they human or non-human, appeared to show care or empathy. This was especially common when discussing credit and debt partnerships, when people would use the pronoun *hì* to describe people who had refused them or enforced repayments and use the pronoun *ha* when describing people who had given them credit or relaxed repayments. The shift from *ha* to *hì*, by contrast, occurred when referring to a Ju|'hoan person (ordinarily referred to with the pronoun *ha* whether or not they were known to one another) who was "not good" or who did things that meant killing or hurting others. Curiously, this generally only occurred when referring to types of Ju|'hoan people who were not good—such as tricksters, thieves, or fools—rather than specific individuals. The behaviour of these "others" was invariably similar, described in terms of "not listening", "refusing", or "ruining" people. Finally, the shift from *ka* to *ha* or *ka* to *hì* occurred when referring to an object (ordinarily referred to with the pronoun *ka*, irrespective of number) of which you either become a *kxao* (owner) or which comes to own you. Such an object, in other words, either becomes responsive to

your desires or has your interests in mind, or makes you dependent upon or addicted to it. This was common, for example, when referring to the way a jackpot machine behaves when it gives out money, or the way a car drives well on an otherwise bumpy or dangerous road. Ju|'hoan speakers do not always follow these patterns, but when they do they appear to emphasise certain moments of attunement, or the lack thereof (see Throop 2010). I give a few examples of discourse below, using the closest equivalent pronouns in English to highlight these shifts:

A Ju|'hoan interlocuter describes developing "mutual understanding" with a creditor:

> "If you make a mistake and start to drink, you start to buy more drink and from then on a black person says you are a good person. **He/she** [*ha*] then makes nice things for you and you keep returning. After that **she/he** [*ha*] will say you are **her/his** [*ha*] family… then when you don't pay **their** [*hi*] debts… if **they** [*hi*] don't bewitch you **they** [*hi*] beat you."

A Ju|'hoan interlocuter describes Ju|'hoansi who are "tricksters":

> **They** [*hi*] are people you cannot trust.

A Ju|'hoan interlocuter describes Ju|'hoansi who are "hunters":

> "Men are **those** [*hi*] who are hunters."

A Ju|'hoan interlocuter describes hitting jackpot on a slot machine:

> "One time when I really had no money, I went and entered [the bar] where **it** [*ka*] stood. **It** [*ka*] was something you just put your money into. And then I was there, and it was as if I, myself, was **her/his** [*ha*] owner. That time I played **her/him** [*ha*], and **s/he** [*ha*] gave out N$1,000."

Ju|'hoan interlocutors describe the effects of alcohol on Ju|'hoansi:

> "When **he** arrived in the night time, black people had already collected things like sugar, tobacco, and made *kashipembe*, and done many things. **They** [*hi*] had already started and were dying [mad] from drinking."
>
> "Oshiwambo speakers have slowly ruined those people who have moved to Tsumkwe to drink. Alcohol is to blame because the people love **it** [*hi*]."


*Figure 23 A popular jackpot machine in a local shebeen*

These shifts in the way pronouns are used serve as a subtle means through which to talk about morality. If not discursive and deliberately playful uses of language, they seem intuitive. They are based on long-term processes of defining "good" behaviour as giving in to demands and being lenient about the timing or nature of reciprocity (tied up, as it is, in broader principles of egalitarianism). This moral dichotomy is one that has long been a topic of discussion in the study of credit and debt. There is a certain possessive individualism assumed by contemporary credit and debt practices that is "endlessly effective in helping us forget that social life has been mainly about the mutual construction of human beings" (Graeber 2007: 77). To *ǂxun* (refuse) another, a term that applies as much to refusing specific demands as it does to the general business of refusing to nurture or care for others, is for a person (like a trickster) "to build a world in which its desires matter only to itself" (Gow 1989: 580). The tendency for creditors, or patrons more generally, to overlook these social contexts and focus instead on the value of the goods exchanged corresponds with numerous accounts of how exploitation comes to be expressed in local idioms (see Taussig 1980). In such cases, goods become "medium[s] of objectification for projects of value" (Miller cited in Walker 2012a: 52). These do not actually replace intersubjective relationships, but rather appear that way through the course of negotiating repayments. They similarly give rise to the impression that to indebt

oneself is to give up one's freedom out of desperation. This latter claim fits uneasily with visions of debt as empowering—as a form of vulnerability that is key to the initial formation of social relationships (see Gregory 2012, Walker 2012a, Penfield 2017).

The use of pronouns appears to be one such way, among others, that this necessary dependency is brought back into view. It suggests, furthermore, that personhood is processually defined in relation to processes of giving, or giving in, to others. This is an argument which gives support to the discourse of universal kinship examined in the previous chapter. In line with Widlok's (2013: 20) reflections, it appears that the categorisation of beings as "persons", "follows the interaction rather than the other way around". Rather than categories or "classes" of beings (as Dickens [2005] suggests), then, there are different forms that personhood takes—each corresponding to certain ways of interacting (*ha* the individual who empathises with others, *hi* the other who fails to do so, and *si!a* a group of beings who empathise with one another). The temptation is to concur with the numerous voices who have argued that in "egalitarian societies", being a "good" person (and, in fact, personhood more generally) means having certain motives or intentions. As Astuti (1995) writes for the Vezo of Madagascar, who distinguish "kinds of people" on the basis of activity rather than common origins, "persons" are types of beings that perform certain activities. They are types of beings who, in this case and in the interests of redistribution, make demands of those with more and give in to the demands of those with less. Such a conclusion, however, overlooks the emphasis that people place on people's *oosi* (ways or tendencies). As Astuti (2001) later argues, people are not so singularist that the evidence of processual thinking should preclude the possibility that people think of both themselves, and others, as having fixed identities on the basis of origins. Among Ju|'hoan speakers, there is evidence of similar fixity, particularly when it comes to racial origins. Even where *true people* have been effectively adopted into the homes of *other people*, and where *other people* have shown themselves, time and again, to be "good", their "ways" are spoken of as if they have some "authentic thinghood" (Taylor cited in Banton 2007: 33, examined further in Chapter 7).

These distinctions are, in part, the outcome of long-term dynamics of dependence and discrimination within the region (also see Woodburn 1997). They are "ethnic" ideal types, as Weber (1947, 1968) defines them: social constructs borne of the desire to monopolise power and status. They are tied up in the violent legacies of apartheid, but

they are also bolstered by the post-independence context in Namibia where "ancestry" (or "chieftancy", see Friedman 2013) is key to the claims to land and resources people feel they are able to make. Taking on a life of their own, they provide a vocabulary with which to articulate contemporary experiences of inequality and negotiate the fraught terrain of credit and debt that accompany these. In sum, discourses that appear to regard people as fixed in their ways on the basis of race regularly compete with processual discourses that see behaviour that is "not good" as, more simply, outcomes of entrenched forms of misunderstanding—a function of certain contexts of uncertainty and the experiences of suspicion or doubt that emerge from them. This brings to mind broader analyses of patronage and clientelism which similarly run aground when overly privileging individualistic frameworks and failing to consider the relative vulnerability of creditors and the relative power of debtors (Alavi 1973 and Silverman 1974 cited in James 2011: 320). Across these contexts, acts of entrustment and feelings of suspicion go hand-in-hand. Where the former facilitates relationships, the latter attempts to safeguard against these becoming overly exploitative. The shifting use of pronouns serves as a commentary on the status of these relationships at any given moment, as much as they are themselves moral discourses about what good relationships should look like.

## Guarding against uncertainty

This chapter has confronted the problem of how to take seriously both the violence of distinctions between "true" and "other" people, and the possibility that the latter might, in fact, want to "refuse" or "ruin" the former. The discussion here gives only a brief indication of these competing discourses and the ambivalence that they bring to relationships between creditors and debtors, or between *true people* and *other people* more broadly. By focusing on the shifting use of pronouns, the aim has not only been to point out these distinctions, but to start to come to terms with the types of actions, or processes, that shape and define them. Pushing against the temptation to analyse these modes of discourse as evidence for the way that personhood is processually defined, I have focused on the extent to which these discourses stand in competition with perceptions of trustworthiness that see *true people* and *other people* as fixed in their "ways". These distinctions are, at least partially, borne of the violent historical processes that have shaped the region both prior to independence and in the post-independence context. They are forms of essentialism that constrain egalitarianism, but, paradoxically, they also

appear to be safeguards in Ju|'hoan efforts to share with one another in the face of uncertainty.

Borrowers, with these competing discourses in mind, enter a store with caution. They show deference, drop their heads, and then *g‡ara* (beg). They pay their debts for as long as they can, keep their creditors informed of their situation. In so doing, not only do they maintain sources of credit, but they also improve their chances of moulding the creditor into something more like a "true person". Other borrowers, setting these discourses aside, enter a store without caution. They walk up to the bar and they ||*an* (demand) a drink in much the same way they would when making demands of *true people*. The store owner asks for money. The would-be debtor shouts |*ore ka* (write it). If they are eligible, the debt is written down. If they dodge their repayments, they minimise their chances of securing credit in the future and their sources of vitality grow smaller.

The following chapter picks up on this tension between demanding what is (rightly or not) presumed to be a fair share, and begging and showing deference. The latter appears both as a means to gain access to credit within a context of marginality and as a response to the possibility that the lines of vulnerability are not so clearly drawn. It looks at relationships between mostly "white" entrepreneurs and those who work with them, and traces the competing arguments for and against a minimum wage. From the perspective of workers, these are plainly exploitative, whereas from the perspective of entrepreneurs, these are necessary within partnerships where the burden of risk is unevenly shared. The discussion speaks to recent efforts (notably Ferguson 2015) to draw upon the practice of demand sharing to reshape global economic practice, and considers the limits (as examined briefly in Chapter 2) that risk and uncertainty pose upon these.

# Chapter 6:
# Brokers and limited entitlements

The epithet *ju doresin* (other people) is one that extends well beyond "people who are black", to "people who are white" and to "people who have died" (ancestors who torment their living relatives from a place that is "other"). They are "strangers" who have the capacity to be "moral persons", to be referred to using the pronoun *ha*, but whose "ways" are such that they tend not to. They are people who "own" particular types of actions (in the sense of *–kxaosi*), or, rather, whose actions "own" them. They are a frequent source of debate among Ju|'hoan speakers as deeply ambiguous figures—at once people who revere and celebrate Ju|'hoan people and who regard them as people who deserve only a minimum wage. "A white person is someone who has a lot of money," N!ani explained, "…they always arrive here in expensive cars, with new boots, white clothes, and swollen bodies, but they don't want to give you anything. They hold on to their money. If you work for them, they pay you very little. If they buy your crafts, you won't get much." A white person, however, is also someone who "loves Bushmen", he tells me, "…they want to buy our crafts, photograph and film us, learn about our traditions, and write about us." Viewed through the eyes of *white people*, a "double-consciousness" (Du Bois 1903) emerges—a two-ness composed, on the one hand, of reverence and, on the other, contempt. This contempt, as Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) note, is inherent to the "ethnicity industry"—an industry which is "banking its future" upon marketing that which, "insofar as it inheres in human essence", should defy commodification. From the perspective of Ju|'hoansi, the problem is not that *white people* resist commodifying cultural products, but more simply that they resist sharing the value that commodification brings.

The dynamics described here have a complex history. They have been formed by encounters with "whites" (some of whom appear in the opening chapters of this thesis) who have had diverse objectives and approaches, but who appear to have shared a tendency to take more than they give—to *xaro ka ǂ'han ce* (give and bring your arm back up). This chapter traces what appears as the most recent instantiation of this tendency—the model of social enterprise. It is one that is both at the heart of the way the conservancy operates in post-independence Namibia, and a model that has gained popularity in the face of the setbacks that have come while pursuing a mixed subsistence economy. In much the same way that recent social theorists (notably Ferguson 2015) have posed "demand sharing" (or possible forms of it) as a means to emancipation, Ju|'hoan speakers

discuss it as a means to bring equality to relationships that are so apparently exploitative. They are relationships within which, despite being long-term, respective positions of privilege and marginality never seem to shift. The "commons" of these collaborations never seem to be evenly shared. Starting with an overview of the history that has shaped these relationships and ways of reckoning the "commons", this chapter looks at the way people (both employers and employees) talk about minimum wages and cash transfers. It focuses, in particular, on the discussions of twenty-four women briefly employed as craft producers in what was intended as a social enterprise, before concluding by drawing upon broader contributions to debates concerning brokerage and marginality in southern Africa.

## Navigating "the commons"

There are very few *white people* who live permanently in the Nyae Nyae region. With the exception of a formerly homeless family from Walvis Bay, a mechanic employed by the Ministry of Works and Transport, and the manager of a nearby tourism lodge, most of the *white people* Ju|'hoansi encounter are in transit. They are, at most, temporary visitors: tourists, film-makers, researchers, development workers, professional hunters, preachers, or entrepreneurs. They typically stay for no more than a few days before returning home to the capital or overseas or moving on to Khaudum National Park or Botswana. Given the frequency with which they visit, however, they are ever present—bringing the promise of employment, training, and diverse forms of patronage. These promises have been couched in the language of self-help. Starting with the apartheid administration that promised to give Ju|'hoansi "a chance to become civilized" and "self-supporting" (Suzman 2017: 85), the self-help discourse continued through the credo of the first non-governmental organisation that was set up to "help them [the Ju|'hoansi] help themselves". The narrative is as much borne of certain ideologies of emancipation which see dependencies as retrograde (see Ferguson 2013), as it is of necessity in the face of enduring scarcity and forms of austerity within the region.

As the introduction to this thesis explores in more depth, in securing "conservancy" status the hope was to "provide for an economically based system of sustainable management and utilisation of game in communal areas" (The Republic of Namibia 1996), and later on, the management and utilisation of forest products (The Republic of Namibia 2001). Over the course of its development, people within the region gained a degree of political autonomy and this allowed them to make decisions on how

resources came to be managed and utilised. The emphasis, then, turned to conserving those resources which might be managed and utilised and with that came increasingly austere conservation measures and the search for funds which might make this possible. With the steady retraction of donor-funded forms of employment and training, the "economically based system" became more about the conservancy itself and maintaining access to it than the generation of incomes for the 1,500 or so members who sought to survive within it. The outcome, in part, has been the sentiment that the only option is for people to give up part of this autonomy to brokers who bring, albeit usually meagre, forms of employment or the promise of connection to international markets (explored in more depth by Ferguson 1990).

In a recent article exploring the legacy of these "new commons" (also see Boudreaux and Nelson 2011, Bollig and Lesorogol 2016) elsewhere in Namibia, Bollig (2016: 771) argues that this situation is the inevitable outcome of the post-independence bid "to foster social-ecological sustainability and economic development", simultaneously. These measures saw political autonomy defined in accordance with claims to particular resources—including pastures, water, forests, and game—and the conservation of these resources dependent on generating funds by offering them up to be hunted, harvested, or rented. Through this process of partial commodification, it was hoped, the region would be able to generate the income necessary to conserve its region's pastures, water, forests, and game, and to secure the employment opportunities necessary for the survival of those living within it. Where the process has been largely successful in generating an income for the purposes of conservation, there has not been widespread employment generation as anticipated (also see Silva and Mosimane 2012). Within the Nyae Nyae conservancy, approximately NAD3,000,000 (£170,000) is generated annually, with approximately 85% of this generated from trophy hunting, and the rest generated through harvesting natural resources, charging film and research fees, and accruing bank interest. At approximately 40%, the percentage that goes to members (1,425 members in 2015, and growing by approximately 100 each year) as dividends is much higher than in other conservancies in the country. And yet these translate into annual payments of between NAD800 and NAD1,000—about 30% of a monthly minimum wage. The remaining funds go towards salaries for those employed by NNC and NNDFN, transport, equipment (e.g. to maintain boreholes and solar panels), and running the conservancy's various natural resource management projects.

This has become a sticking point for members. It has led to heated debates over whether to scrap the cash dividends entirely and invest the money in social enterprise projects, or to bring in a new management team who may be more successful in challenging dependencies and generating opportunities. "They should already be helping us," one of my interlocutors exclaimed, "…it's only because they are not doing their jobs properly that they now want to use the benefit money". The subtext of these debates is that widespread unemployment within a rural conservancy is not inevitable, but the outcome of efforts that have prioritised conservation and neglected the work of generating jobs. The blame falls repeatedly on the management team who are tasked with mediating between foreign investors and community members, but the reality is decidedly more complex. As Ferguson (1990: 87) argues, the "development" discourse has long "translated all the ills and ailments… into simple, technical problems", obscuring the way that these choices (e.g., between conservation or small-scale farming) depoliticise the broader landscape within which "development" happens (also see Robins 2001).

Extending beyond debates between members, the topic forms the basis for bitter divisions between former non-governmental workers and researchers who, in the years leading to independence, debated the best course of action for the future of the region and its people. The most recent, public addition to this debate is the film "Bitter Roots: the ends of a Kalahari Myth" (Strong 2010, also see Hitchcock and Biesele 2014). The opening scene shows Claire Ritchie standing in the doorway to the now abandoned Nyae Nyae Development Office, looking over strewn papers and broken windows that stand as metaphors for the wrong turns taken by development workers who took over from her. These are development workers who, the argument goes, pushed for the commodification of resources for the purposes of hunting and tourism. In doing so, they transformed the Nyae Nyae region into little more than a route for largely low-paying, entrepreneurs seeking to do good (also see Sylvain 2005), or "cowboy capitalists" taking advantage of a captive clientele (Neves and James 2017).

The problem with this view, however, (as Hitchcock and Biesele 2014 examine in more depth), is that it overlooks the numerous benefits to the "new commons" model that has been pursued in post-independence Namibia. As Bollig (2016: 796) asserts, these "new commons" have created new dependencies and new challenges, but also new potentials, including for continued self-representation, the ability to pursue customary subsistence practices free from competition, and, most notably in this case, ecological

sustainability. While it is not clear that alternative strategies, such as pursuing farming or animal husbandry within the region, would fail to achieve similar benefits, the fact that the model has been largely successful has made Ju|'hoansi within the region reticent to entertain alternative strategies. Contributing to these sentiments is the constant threat posed by pastoralists from the North, South, and West who wish to exploit grazing opportunities within the conservancy. Albeit far from fool-proof, as shown in the previous chapter, the commons model is regarded as the best possible solution to these threats. Despite these benefits, CBNRM strategies—situated within broader free market economic approaches—are "positioned as …state-, NGO- and donor-facilitated process[es] of outsourcing access to significant public natural/wildlife resources and potential income streams to private-sector (frequently foreign) business interests" (Bollig 2016: 796). The consequences have been a reduction in the bargaining power of members to secure fair payments.

The problem is thus two-fold. On the one hand, the goal of having market-based solutions bring an end to the environmental challenges of poaching, degradation, and climate change, and the social challenges of poverty and self-representation, has been thwarted by the reality that community-based natural resource management has not been labour-intensive. On the other hand, being at the mercy of private-sector business interests has meant that the few employment opportunities there are for people living within the region have, generally, been poorly paid and rarely, if ever, overseen to ensure fair payments or safe working conditions. Through the work of a team of Ju|'hoan rangers employed by the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia, several efforts have ensured that the region remains "a conservationist's dream" (Jones cited in Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 98). The team ensures that boreholes are maintained to give animal populations sources of water throughout the year, conducts rangeland surveys and game counts to ensure healthy fauna and flora, and engages in anti-poaching and illegal grazing patrols to ensure that these sustainable numbers are maintained. As much as it is a "dream", however, it is also a "garden of eden in peril" (Sassman 2015), with the social challenges of poverty still very much present. At the root of this problem, many of my interlocutors argued, is not that there is no work, or that the conservancy cannot generate work, but rather that people feel they are unable to demand fairer payments without risking losing the work entirely. "You see how the conservancy

increased the fees they charge filmmakers", my host pointed out to me, "…and now the filmmakers don't come here anymore. They go to N||oqma, where the charges aren't as high."

*Figure 24 An open area near Nyae pans, a popular tourist attraction*

Such is the basis of the bitter divide that rages in the two aforementioned films, *A Kalahari Family* and *Bitter Roots: The Ends of a Kalahari Myth*. Were the people right to choose to pursue commercial activities over small-scale farming and herding for personal use? Where the latter requires capital investment and ongoing maintenance, the latter generates capital which can then be reinvested to conserve the health of fauna and flora that sustains the industry, and to assist each community with subsistence projects (which currently include small-scale farming and herding). The problem is that after distributing small cash benefits and paying to run the conservancy (maintaining vehicles, buying equipment, paying salaries, etc.), few funds remain that can be invested in development projects within the territories. The consequences are, as Bollig (2016) explores in more depth, that rural communities submit themselves to both the whims and competition of the market and the whims of the state, which is itself at the mercy of market forces. The extent of this became particularly clear following the international media attention that the killing of Cecil the lion brought to southern Africa's trophy hunting industry (for an overview see Nelson *et al* 2016). The event gave rise to intense debate among Ju|'hoansi,

ministry officials, and professional hunters. Were a ban to be placed on the importation of game trophies into the United States, Europe, or elsewhere, the consequences for both conservation and for rural communities were predicted to be catastrophic. There would no longer be funds available to maintain the solar powered boreholes that supply animals and people with water and would lead inevitably to an exodus of people from their territories into Tsumkwe (where water supply is strained but maintained with government funding, see Diemand 2010).

The new relationships of dependency that emerge from this—between "markets", brokers, and subjects of enterprise—are not unique to the case at hand of the "new commons" of post-independence Namibia. Rather, they appear indicative of broader shifts towards market capitalism as a means to eradicate poverty that have been taking place across the global South. Critically engaging with the emergence of these forms of poverty alleviation, several authors have argued that these approaches are embedded in certain neoliberal discourses. These are discourses which regard poverty in one of two ways. Either, poverty is a problem simply of "dead capital" (assets which are not easily sold or rented, de Soto cited in Roy 2012a: 140). Alternatively, poverty is a problem of the "poor" themselves not having wherewithal to become "self-realising", "calculating", capitalist entrepreneurs and market participants (see Dolan 2012, 2013, Schwittay 2011a, Thieme 2015). The trend is said to have started with the work of economists and corporate strategists such as Hernando de Soto, C. K. Prahalad, and Muhammad Yunus. All three scholars put forward the general theory that at the "bottom of the pyramid" are 3.5 billion or so people who, according to purchasing power parity, earn less than a few USD per day, but who are rich in assets and in terms of their potential as entrepreneurs. Preventing "the poor" from realising this potential, it is argued, are legal arrangements that prevent assets from being converted to capital, and financial mechanisms that prevent them from converting these forms of capital into profits through markets (see Mitchell 2008: 250).

Giving the poor access to finance, either directly through forms of financial inclusion or indirectly by giving the poor goods or services to sell and using brokers to bridge the divide between the poor and markets, takes the place normally occupied by development. Many of these initiatives, in fact, operate in direct response to the perceived practical and ideological failures of development projects – both governmental and non-governmental. On the one hand, at an ideological level, development is seen as a "neo-

imperialist project" (Roy 2012b: 105), one which is designed and delivered from the top down. On the other hand, at a practical level, development projects are deemed necessarily to fail since they do not challenge the broader contexts that keep the poor from markets, and, historically, have themselves been forcibly cancelled by neoliberal reforms (see Elyachar 2012: 119). Through the rise of free market ideologies, the very idea that development is the business of the state comes into question. The "poor", themselves, it is argued – following shifts towards ethnographic studies and participatory rural appraisal techniques (Dolan and Roll 2013: 129) – should be empowered to develop themselves through partnerships with non-governmental agencies and capitalist entrepreneurs (see Elyachar 2012). In turn, brokers benefit from new profit-making opportunities which have development and social responsibility at their core.

These initiatives take numerous forms. Microfinance or "financial inclusion" are some of the most numerous and involve giving the poor small loans to start up small enterprises (see Schwittay 2011b), and, in the process, converting "shadow" or "informal" economies into "liquid capital". Other initiatives involve not the transfer of cash but giving the poor employment in capitalist enterprises. These consist either of giving them branded manufactured goods to sell in "retail black spots" (see Dolan 2012), or setting up enterprises with them with the aim of having them produce particular branded goods or services for sale to local or international markets through the aid of brokers. The overarching emphasis is on implementing forms of "inclusive capitalism", that arm the world's poorest with the expertise or the minimum capital to develop their own enterprise. The key to eradicating poverty, here, is "entrepreneurship on a massive scale", and the role of development practitioners and brokers, then, is to bridge the gaps between "those who are in need and those who can pay" (Schwittay 2011b: S72).

Taking a highly critical approach to the emergence of these forms of "social" enterprise, Dolan (2012: 3-4) argues that development is outsourced to the entrepreneur at the "bottom of the pyramid" through these processes. Worse though, these processes then facilitate multinational corporations in their efforts to "draw 'untapped' markets more tightly into the realm of consumer capitalism… [doing] little to address the systematic causes of poverty and marginalisation". Taking a less critical approach, Redfield (2012) argues that, while deeply problematic, these are nevertheless "minimalist forms of care" that are circumscribed by a "concern for distant others" (as "invested with grandiose hopes" as they may be). The approach is one which resonates with more recent

discussions of brokerage which outline some of the difficulties that brokers themselves face in negotiating broader markets.

Within the Nyae Nyae region, both emphases are given voice. With respect to the relationship between rural communities and government agencies,the conservancy project—with its emphasis on the commodification of fauna and flora and the marketing of these commodities for profit—is seen to be a means through which governments absolve themselves of the mandate for development in rural communities. At the same time, the conservancy project—rather than representing a malicious attempt to manage assets at a distance and absolve itself of the responsibility to provide support—is a clear rejection of the top-down development approaches, or "welfare colonialism", of the apartheid regime that fostered economic dependency and denied self-governance. Second, there is the relationship between rural communities and private investors. The patterns of poor payments within social enterprise projects are a consequence of the low bargaining power of members in the face of their dependency on foreign investors as a function of neoliberal policies (examined in more depth by Ferguson 2006, also see Harvey 2007, Wacquant 2012). At the same time, they are a function of the specific risks of doing social enterprise work within rural communities, where the costs of operation are much higher, and the more general risks of selling goods or services within highly competitive and volatile markets.

As Roy (2012b: 108) notes, then, to "simply name this 'neoliberalism'" is to "gloss over the sheer depth and complexity of this moment" (also see Eriksen *et al* 2015). Most notably, it obscures and overlooks the extent to which the brokers who facilitate social enterprise projects within this context tend to foreground moral, rather than strictly market, values (Redfield 2012: 158, also see Piliavsky 2014, James 2018). The tension between these values are evident in the opening observations made by N!ani, who sees "white people" as simultaneously caring and exploitative. They are continuously starting new projects that are intended to assist people, but then the overall share they appear to give appears to be relatively low. Without any means to access the books of a given enterprise project, these impressions are rarely based on shared information regarding how much value has been generated and shared out. Instead, they are based on what appear to be the deliberate silence of brokers over questions of payment at the same time that, as N!ani emphasises, they display relatively elaborate signs of wealth. These issues play out differently within different industries—craft production, cultural tourism, trophy

hunting, resource harvesting, and film and research—but they similarly centre on problems of uncertainty.

The next section turns to one example of a social enterprise initiative that was started within the Nyae Nyae region during my research. It traces the way those employed on the project as craft producers discussed questions of transparency and fairness.

**Becoming "like one another"**

It was December, and the stifling heat of early summer had just started to give way to cooling afternoon thunderstorms. We were gathered around a tree in my hosts' yard, our eyes fixed on the patch of ground where I normally pitched my tent. The smooth, tightly packed sand was now a loose, unearthed mound. "She cursed you! She cursed you!", a woman yelled as she walked towards us. We had just returned from a night out camping, and my tent was packed up in the back of the car, ready to be set up again in its regular place. A violent storm had passed through Tsumkwe the night before, drenching us before it got there. When it reached Tsumkwe, the winds were so strong that it had torn a long zinc sheet from the roof of a nearby abandoned house and projected it into the sand where my tent usually stood. "It would have killed you! Chopped your head off! She really cursed you!", my host yelped as she inspected the sand and the zinc sheet that had since dislodged itself and now lay in a clump of shrubs some metres away.

"She" was Du, a Ju/'hoan woman who had come to the yard the day before to complain angrily about payments for crafts she had made. She was one of twenty-four women who had collaborated on a social enterprise project to produce a range of crafts as prototypes for a high-end retail market. Many of the women had previously worked on a craft project locally but stressed that there were not enough orders and they rarely made enough money. They wanted to be paid more for the work that they did, and to get work more regularly, and so asked: if I couldn't buy the goods myself, couldn't I get my "rich friends" to buy them? I tried to explain, rather unpersuasively, that I didn't have any friends who would be willing to buy crafts, not to any meaningful extent at least. "You're lying", they retorted. Though they grinned and jostled with me as if they were teasing, this, as ever, only faintly concealed that they were in fact deeply sceptical. I was yet another white person, an image of wealth and privilege, telling them there was a shortage of money.

Adding to the perceived shamelessness of my statement, and to my own sense of guilt, was the fact that most of my time was spent requesting their assistance on my research for meagre returns. As many of my interlocutors jibed, "You will go write about us, get a job that pays you well, and we will be left here as we are". Despite my own reticence to get involved in any kind of social enterprise work, recognising my hypocrisy pushed me to relay their requests to a colleague who knew people in the industry. At the very least, I thought, I might be able to help them negotiate fairer returns for their goods or services. Shortly thereafter, I was approached by a British woman, a social entrepreneur, who had ordered crafts from Naro speakers in Botswana and sold them at high-end retail markets back in the United Kingdom. She was well-connected, with some of her previous work appearing in magazines such as Forbes Life, Harper's Bazaar, i-D, Marie Claire, and Vanity Fair, and was therefore well-placed to bring them the long-term, the fairly-paid employment for which they were hoping.

After several conversations over the phone with the social entrepreneur, I agreed to volunteer to assist her in setting up and managing the project for the few months that I was still in Namibia carrying out my research. I would fit the slot of the mediator or broker, a person whose expertise, supposedly, lay in bridging the social gaps between entrepreneur and the subjects of enterprise and relaying their hopes to one another, and whose task would be to "find a win-win situation for the poor, the wealthy, and the planet alike" (Elyachar 2012: 122). From the get-go, there were questions that seemed impossible to answer, the most pressing of which was "How much should the women be paid?" When asked directly, the twenty-four women invariably said, "You decide". This was not another way of saying they did not really mind if they were exploited. It was another way of saying, as one of the women explained to me later on, "How can I know what you should pay me, if I don't know how much you will sell it for?". From the perspective of the well-connected social entrepreneur who co-opted me, however, lack of knowledge about exact costs (including not only payments for the goods themselves, but shipping, materials, and the project's running costs) were an important factor.

In retrospect, this was not a particularly reasonable argument, since it is not hard to imagine that estimates could be drawn from similar items for sale in the same markets, and through locally-sourced quotations. The social entrepreneur was still trying to source capital investment through crowdfunding, however, and so, at the time, agreeing at least on a minimum wage seemed the best way forward. We pushed forward with a request for

double the minimum wage that the women had received on the previous project, with a view to setting up a cooperative that shared the profits once the prototypes were released and they started receiving orders. This latter arrangement would be a solution to the problems they had with minimum wages. They seemed to feel that this form of payment was based on a kind of "politics of limited entitlements" (Di Nunzio 2017) in which some people come to be seen as intrinsically less valuable. For the time being, these minimum wages would suffice, but only until the social entrepreneur could establish the project costs and test the market waters.

Namibia does not have a national minimum wage, but it does enforce minimum wages for certain prominent industries such as farm work, mining, or domestic labour. There is no specific minimum wage for craft production, or similar artisanal work, but these industries, especially within rural communities, often fall back on the NAD50 (£2.95) per day for unskilled labour. Settling for NAD100 per day would give the twenty-four women a salary of NAD3,000 (£176.50) per month – a basic salary for unskilled labour in Tsumkwe, and in Namibia more broadly. Of course, craft production is skilled labour, and so NAD3,000 seems far from reasonable. With the promise of a steady stream of future orders and a cooperative which would ensure that a fair share of the profits came back to them, however, the women were happy to cooperate. From the perspective of the well-connected social entrepreneur and the designer she collaborated with, the minimum wage threw up a stalemate, one reminiscent of Fordism and its autocratic regimes of time management (see Linhart 1981). If the women were to be paid a minimum wage, how would the social entrepreneurs ensure that the women actually worked those days? Furthermore, if the women took too long to produce the items, would the entire project collapse in the knowledge that they would never meet the demand necessary for the project to be viable?

*Figure 25 A Ju|'hoan woman working on her crafts in the shade of the brightly painted craft centre*

The solution would be a highly technical one. The first step was to come up with a series of designs that fitted together into a "collection". This was important, it was said, since the pieces needed to tell a unified story that consumers would buy into. The social entrepreneur brought in a high-end designer from the United States, who formed motifs based on both "modern" and "tradition" in the everyday lives of Ju|'hoansi (from traditional huts and animals to popular sweet wrappers and sneakers), with the aim of giving the project "a deeper meaning / purpose" for consumers. The designs that were finalised consisted of several woven glass bead and ostrich-eggshell bead panels attached to the faces of small leather bags. The designs were then given to the twenty-four women, and they divided them up amongst one another so that each woman was making a single item. The decision to divide up the designs so that each woman worked on a single design was motivated partially by the need for easy monitoring, and partially by the women's request to be paid separately. They had been selected from different territories by the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, in the interests of fairness, and so were concerned about being paid collectively and being unable to work out what they had each contributed. Since they would only be paid once the items were complete, with the value of each item worked out as they went along, the women were supported for the duration of the project with food, and paid, wherever possible, for different aspects of the work.

Many of the items were too complex to be given to a single woman to complete within one month, and so, to assist them, the designs were divided up into primary tasks and these were then assigned in such a way to ensure roughly equal payments. To avoid confusion and double payments, if the women chose to further divide up these primary tasks, or take on parts of other primary tasks, they would need to request to be paid by the person who had taken on the primary task. With no real sense for how long the designs would take to produce, however, the system was imperfect. There was no way to guarantee that each woman would be paid roughly the same, because we could only roughly estimate how long each primary task would take to complete, and therefore how much the women should be paid. At the very least, their payments would amount to a minimum wage for the work they had put in, and the task of monitoring would shift from being based on keeping costs down to keeping them fair. Furthermore, in an attempt to stave off any obsessive scrutiny over the relative effort of the women, it was agreed that the women would be left to work at their own speed. This made the project vulnerable, however, to those who might wilfully work slowly in order to be paid more.

While this kind of slowing down behaviour is seen here, by social entrepreneurs, as a way of exploiting their well-meaning intentions, several important accounts have pointed to these, instead, as one of the many ways that workers resist their own perceived exploitation (notably Comaroff 1985, Scott 1985, Ong 1987, also see Bear *et al.* 2015, Ferguson 2015, Ortner 2016). Discussing the issue with the Nyae Nyae Conservancy and Nyae Nyae Development Foundation, they expressed the desire to establish some sort of mid-way point between these two extremes. The women should not be forced to work at speeds they could not sustain, nor should the project risk failing due to the actions of a few individuals they thought might be unreasonable or unreliable. It was decided that the best way around the issue was to take the time it took the fastest and slowest women to produce the same item and use it to calculate the mean average. These final values were then compared to the weight of the item, so that a basic value for labour could be calculated based on the final weight of the item. The obvious problem with this calculation was that it allowed no room for error, neither on the part of women nor on that of the social entrepreneurs. This was made clear fairly early on in the project, when it turned out that the designs put together by the high-end designer were too complex for most of the women. The women were forced to abandon the designs and start new ones with simpler geometric shapes.

*Figure 26 Drilling holes into ostrich eggshells, one of four stages involved in creating ostrich eggshell beads*

From the perspective of the social entrepreneurs, now including the designer, this was a setback for which the women should bear the burden. It would take extensive negotiation before I could ensure that the women would be paid for the work they had already done – despite their inability to generate value from it. These are standard features of what is now referred to as the "gig economy" – an economy based on temporary or "zero-hours" employment, usually to complete particular tasks, rather than permanent employment which involves occupying a particular position for scheduled hours each week. For many Ju|'hoan women, these zero-hours contracts offered desirable flexibility – letting them carry out household chores or spend time at their territories for extended periods of time without jeopardising their access to employment. It also often gave them the option of working exceptionally hard, or of recruiting family members to assist them, in order to secure a higher income. The downside, as noted for "gig economy" workers more generally (see Graham and Wood 2016, Graham *et al.* 2017, Heller 2017, van Doorn 2017), is that workers have low levels of security – both in terms of access to future employment, and in terms of access to a minimum wage.

This was brought into sharp relief when the designer, upon receiving the final costing for each of her designs, contemplated whether there was any point in continuing

the work with the Ju|'hoan women. She already worked with a group of bead-weavers in Cape Town, South Africa, whom, she noted, were cheaper, faster, and more adept at producing her complex designs, and able to produce and deliver orders without the need for outside support. The project went forward to the point that the women had completed and been paid for their orders, at which point the project was ended. The orders were taken to the United States and the United Kingdom, to be sold on the designer's online store and given to those who backed the crowdfunding campaign that financed the project. This was done despite the fact that the items were not to be resold, but rather to be used to gather more orders from high-end retail markets. In fact, the previous justification for not paying above minimum wage was based precisely on the grounds that consumers would only pay so much for an item and high-end retail markets would take a 200 – 250% profit of that value, leaving only so much to spread out on the ground.

To some extent the project just described is an anomaly, since no other social enterprise stated so explicitly that high-end retail markets demand a set profit margin of 200-250%. Many of the foreign investors or development workers who have assisted in the setting up of social enterprises within the region have not been engaged in marketing. They have, instead, confined themselves simply to the work of creating a marketable product whether or not the market can actually be accessed, and whether or not the products could ever actually be sold at fair prices once the cost of materials or shipping were factored in. Where they have been engaged in marketing, they have often attempted to negotiate fairer prices for those who participate, seeking not to tap specifically into high-end, or even low-end, retail markets but rather into those few markets where neither extortionate profit margins nor cheap goods and services are the norm. Furthermore, many have done this work pro bono, often in the hope that this will further increase the value that can be generated for each participant. G!hunku, the craft project owned and run by the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, is a case in point. With technical and logistical support from the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia, the project brings craft orders from European craft retailers to Ju|'hoan craft producers. The project then uses funds generated through other commercial activities within the conservancy to pay the salaries of two managers (one based locally and one in Windhoek) and to pay for other costs, such as shipping in ostrich egg-shells, in order to keep the project afloat.

From the perspective of many Ju|'hoan engaged in craft production (or other "social" enterprises dealing in community-based tourism or services for researchers and film-makers), however, these projects are much the same. They are all in the business of accumulation—of paying minimum wages or "limited entitlements" to benefit *white people* somewhere else—whether or not they are mediated by supposedly benevolent managers and pro bono assistants. Sight, as evidenced in N!ani's reflections at the opening of this chapter, plays a major role in forming these perspectives. The relative privilege of foreign entrepreneurs is not seen to be unrelated to the amount they pay Ju|'hoansi for the goods and services they provide. The accumulation that makes it possible for *white people* to have "expensive cars… new boots, white clothes, and swollen bodies" is itself, at least in part, made possible by paying Ju|'hoansi as little as possible. "White people", as N!ani argued, are people who "hold on to their money".

Enter Du; one of the twenty-four Ju|'hoan women who had worked on the craft project that I had helped initiate, and within which I proved to be a mostly useless negotiator. In addition to working on her own design, three candlesticks covered with strings of ostrich egg-shell beads, she had decided to assist her neighbour with producing ostrich-eggshell beads for another design. After completing the design, her neighbour was paid but gave her only a nominal sum for her assistance and kept the rest (in some sense, rightfully so, because they were all only paid just double a minimum wage for the goods they produced). With no other options available to be paid for the work she had done, she came to me to request payment. "They only gave me money for designs, and everyone has been paid already", I explained, resentful of the situation of impotency I found myself in. "You ruin me!! You ruin me!!" she responded, before leaving the yard in anger. "Just leave her." Tiko, one of the women working on the project who lived in the yard opposite, called out to me. "She knows she made a mistake, but she just wants you to solve the problem and give her money." "It's because you're white…" she continued, "She will work for a black person for nothing, without food each day, but because you're white she will curse you and ask for more money."

Her statement was not hyperbolic. Du and most of the other women on the project were concurrently working for a black African entrepreneur who also ran a shebeen and store in town. They sat together making ostrich egg-shell beads for NAD30 per cup and were not paid in cash but were rather given the opportunity to buy goods

from her store to the value of NAD30 for every cup[24] they produced, but at highly inflated prices. The goods were not only more expensive than other stores in town, but goods such as sugar, loose-leaf tea, or tobacco were divided into small, clear plastic bags to reduce the quantity they purchased. Unsurprisingly, none of the women were happy about the situation and complained bitterly about both the cost of goods in store and the low payments they received. When I asked why they accepted her terms, they were unanimous: *E!a re du hatce?* (What else can we do?). It was not that her terms were fair, it was that they were better than nothing. As the previous chapter examines in more depth, it also pays to develop strong working relationships with black African residents who might then give out credit to those without employment and be calm when they are unable to make their repayments.

As Tiko's comments suggested, however, the NAD30, to Du at least, was to some extent fairer than the NAD300 she received for the same work. The reason for this is that *white people* are deemed to be able to extract more money from the work that the Ju|'hoan women put in than *black Africans* are. Without any data on where black African entrepreneurs sell ostrich egg-shell crafts, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which this is true, nor would it necessarily make a difference to the sentiments shared by Ju|'hoansi. Reflecting upon Tiko's comments, my host explained why Du may have felt more uneasy about the payments made by the white entrepreneurs than those she received from black entrepreneurs: "A black person is a poor person like us. They are living here in these mud houses, they drive old cars. A white person is someone who is very rich. They can fly in and out of this place. They make a lot of money where they come from." The Ju|'hoan women do not know what total value can be extracted from the projects they involve themselves in, and so they base their assumptions on the little evidence they have at hand. When a payment is *jan* (good), it is one that makes people *khuian khoe* (like one another), and when it *kxuia ju* (ruins people), it is one that keeps some *dinn!ang* (behind, underneath).

**Brokers and their limited entitlements**

The argument appears, in its most abridged form, to be an extension of the basic premise of demand sharing: that people should give in to demands that are made from those with less without expecting repayment or reciprocation. What they give should be a share of

[24] This works out as approximately NAD5 (£0.30) per day.

what they have. In this case, becoming "like one another" is not about "copying", as Ferguson (2006: 17, also see 155-175) similarly points out, but an "aspiration to membership and inclusion in the world". The aspirations of Ju|'hoan women, specifically, are less about aspiring to a certain status or image than they are about levelling. It is one that resonates with arguments circulating in South Africa and Namibia today for new, radical forms of welfare which give a basic income to *all* citizens—challenging the premise "that only waged workers have a right to a share of the social product" (Gibson in Ferguson 2015: viii). Within these newly proposed welfare systems, people receive payments simply for being citizens. Similarly, for the women employed on the project, they envision their contributions as grounds for receiving a "rightful share"—one not based on their perceived value as contributors, but on the total value that the project generates and distributes as dividends. Writing about these new welfare systems in more depth, Ferguson (2015: xi) argues that their basic premise—of "simply 'giving' money directly to poor people"—has been met with opposition from those who see it undermining the incentives to work that are understood as a key imperative of capitalism.

Within the Nyae Nyae context, the cash transfers being proposed are somewhat different. They are propositions not strictly to states but rather to brokers. As such, opposition to them has been circumscribed by fears not that they will disincentivise work but that, more simply, costs of business would grow to be too high and their ability to compete on the market would suffer. These are, perhaps, some of the "darker realities" of brokerage (James 2011: 320), determining not only the possibilities for new forms of state welfare but the types of payments that brokers can offer and the way these can be used thereafter. A number of factors converge here to challenge the possibilities for sharing dividends equally among those who participate in social enterprise projects. Most notable among these is the reality that brokers operating within the region are not, typically, the only people (beyond those formally employed) who stand to benefit. Complex hierarchies of retailers, shareholders, governments, and other agents collaborate and receive shares—their respective amounts shaped by numerous factors from the competition of the market, the purchasing power parity of a currency, the spectre of the withdrawing shareholder, and the broader problems of risk.

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine these factors in more depth, it is worth reflecting upon the contradictions they pose for those attempting to negotiate the experiences of "hypermarginality" (Bessire 2014) that arise from them.

Social enterprise projects similar to the one described above have proliferated within the Nyae Nyae region in recent years. From the perspective of those Ju|'hoansi who participate in them, as much as they appear to be motivated to "ameliorate…inequities through redistributive practices", they also emerge from and promote efforts to "create conditions where the market will have primacy" (James 2011: 335-6). Recognising these conditions casts the work of brokers in a different light, exposing the "narrow band of flexibility" (ibid) they work within and the obstacles they face in meeting calls for redistribution. At the same time, taking seriously the claims that are made locally for a rightful share points to problems of complacency or hypocrisy among those who pledge themselves to overcoming inequality.

*Figure 27 Ju|'hoan women move indoors to work on ostrich eggshell beads away from the rain*

When viewed as such, these claims appear to be less about asking for more cash than they are about calling upon those with bargaining power to redefine the processes through which people come to be valued in particular ways. The case presented here, albeit briefly, highlights a tension between two ways of calculating the value of labour: conceptions of a minimum wage and conceptions of the value of goods. Where the former is closely aligned with the particularities of the southern African struggle (see, e.g., Nattrass and Seekings 2016), the latter has been more commonly debated in the context of south Asia (see de Neve 2005, Breman 2007). Within the case presented here, Ju|'hoan

women are to be paid per item but the total amount they are paid should not drop below national minimum wages. Depending on the item, these minimum wages either make an item too expensive to market, or they become guides that serve to justify broader patterns of exploitation. The arguments that the Ju|'hoan women make for forms of redistribution that are not solely based on the resources within a given project, but on the inequality between those who collaborate pushes radically past both positions. These claims are similar to those that have recently been made in support of new cash transfer programs which argue against conditional payments, in that they argue for wages that have no bearing on the perceived value of those who contribute. They are also more radical than this, based on a questioning of the broader structures of inequality that may, or may not, drive down the value of the goods they produce.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine the plausibility of the arguments that the Ju|'hoan women made for redistribution (see Chang 2014, Hickel 2017 for a discussion of the sources and solutions to global inequality). It is also beyond the scope of this chapter to consider the relevance of this discussion for debates surrounding setting national minimum wages or improving fair trade in the market for artisanal crafts (see Cant 2018). What stands out is the emphasis that Ju|'hoan women place, effectively, on transparency as a solution to the problem, as Seekings and Nattrass (2015: 22) put it, that "the poor are politically weak, while the politically powerful non-poor hold on to visions of development and growth that are only minimally inclusive". The statements of my interlocutors allude to the importance of openness and honesty in developing more inclusive visions of "development and growth". They point, enthusiastically and perhaps curiously, to what Strathern (2000) has called the "tyranny of transparency": techniques for assessing, auditing, and evaluating. As Ferguson (2015: 29) points out, where these techniques have more effective forms of redistribution in mind, they "might contribute to… sorts of political and social systems" that are quite different to the "neoliberal" ones they are normally associated with. As this thesis has repeatedly shown, there is an enduring tension here between the desire for transparency and the important difficulty of enforcement. As witnessed in chapter 3, people should be persuaded to "give themselves up". The statements my interlocuters make appear to be efforts to do just that but they are largely ineffective.

While problems of risk and political weakness among social entrepreneurs may be at play, there is nevertheless scope (as the thinking around new redistributive regimes

attests) for seeing where these ideas might lead. While blindly, and perhaps naively, calling for transparency or honesty may prove ineffective, research into the role that ignorance or uncertainty plays in these broader processes may offer new insights. As Davies and McGoey (2012: 64) show, the absence of knowledge serves as "a productive force in itself, something that is actively nurtured and exploited, both by neo-liberal theorists such as Hayek and by expert actors who have been implicated in the financial crisis". Exposing these "rationalities of ignorance", as the Ju|'hoan women sought to do, offers new possibilities for confronting the often personal choices that maintain inequality and curtail redistribution.

# Chapter 7:
# Demanding the capacities of others

The preceding chapters deal with the recurring question of how to confront those whose motives and movements are either hard to know, or appear at odds with one's own. Despite these suspected differences, people are presumed to be fundamentally similar—uniformly capable of recognising the needs or desires of others, and of giving in to the demands that others make of them. Such an assumption gives rise to similar forms of sociality that are set on making people aware of their own moral accountability, reminding them that they are under the watchful eye of others. Underpinning these efforts is a commitment to the general principle that people should not be forced to act in ways that are not of their own choosing. They should be free to make their own minds up about the "good" way to proceed at any given moment, rather than blindly following custom or being forced to act in particular ways. As each chapter shows, this is an important caveat to the forms of assistance that ordinarily define egalitarianism. Here, egalitarian values are enabled to continue in the face of uncertainty. Social life remains vulnerable to the deception and trickery of those who do not share a commitment to sharing, and people confront this vulnerability through the discourse of trustworthiness and through patterns of movement.

The tension between these factors—between the freedom to act in a manner of one's own choosing, and the compulsion to act in certain ways that support sharing between people—has long been a feature of writing on egalitarianism in southern Africa. As explored further in Chapter 3, it is a tension between what has been called "individualism", on the one hand, and "communalism", on the other. The focus is resolutely on action, and not so much on a tension between "similarity" and "difference", as has sometimes been assumed (see Haynes and Hickel 2016). So long as people share what they produce, in other words, it does not matter so much that they are not equal in their productive potential. There is one important exception, however, and that is with respect to differences in people's capacities to force one another to act in certain ways or to withdraw their vitality—especially when these ways are unseen. The concern becomes how to go about confronting those who cause one to lose the ability to exercise control or to address the situation they find themselves in—something that discourses of trustworthiness and patterns of movement can do little to address. Knowing how such a situation came to be is an important part of this but it is secondary to the more general

problem of how to confront those who are thought to impinge upon others in violent ways.

Among Ju|'hoan speakers, there is a vocabulary to describe this and means to address it, but it has often been overlooked.Addressing this lacuna, the following chapter brings together three ways that Ju|'hoan speakers understand and address moments when they lose control or find themselves without vitality. It focuses on the recurring concept of *n|om*. This concept has long been a focus of ethnographic writing from the region. As much as it has been the subject of extensive research, the extent to which it sheds light on certain contradictions of egalitarianism, and allows people to navigate the experience of ambivalence that arise from them, have been overlooked.

**"Something you cannot see"**

In 1982, Richard Katz published "Boiling Energy", a vivid and colourful account of shamanism among the, by then, revered "!Kung" of the Kalahari Desert. The text, which became a seminal piece in the anthropological study of shamanism, spoke extensively of *num* (*n|om*), an "energy" or "medicine" upon which shamans drew to heal the sick. This "energy" is associated exclusively with the healing, or "trance", dance, an event in which whole communities gather together to help shamans travel to, and negotiate with, the ancestors presumed to be responsible for sickness. With the sick person among them, women gather around a central fire that is stoked with large pieces of wood to get it as hot as possible. As beads of sweat drip down their faces, the women start to clap and sing a polyrhythmic melody. Shamans, who are typically (though not always) male, stand between the women and the central fire and start to shuffle and stamp to the polyrhythmic beat. As the shamans get hot and start to sweat, and the polyrhythm builds in complexity, *n|om* starts to "boil" in their stomachs and travel up their spines to the nape of the neck.

At this point, the shamans start to *kia* (make sudden shrieking sounds and to convulse rapidly). These are precursors to the final stage of the ritual process, when shamans collapse and are said to *!ai* (die). This death entails entering an "altered state of consciousness which is the key to healing" (Katz 1982: 8). During these moments of death, shamans travel "on a thread" to the ancestors who are tormenting their living relatives with sickness (see Low 2004: 150-5). When they reach the realm of the ancestors, they argue with them to reveal why they are tormenting their living relatives, and to

demand that they let them be, so they may recover. With the help of those at the dance, shamans will travel back to the realm of the living, where they begin to *ǂhoe* (pull out sickness), to share the reasoning that ancestors give for their actions, and to repair the imbalance between living relatives that invariably motivates them.

Throughout this process, Katz argues, *n|om* is a substance that cannot be contained or concealed by shamans but is something to which they relate "synergistically". In other words, it is not really a substance at all, but something immaterial that "flows freely among participants at the dance" (ibid: 200). On the one hand, this analysis stands in stark contrast to the statements of shamans, who claim to "have" or "hold" *n|om*, and other participants and community members, who claim to "be without *n|om*". On the other hand, it appears to corroborate their reflections on the type of "thing" that *n|om* is. It is *tci n|uia a |u se* (something you cannot see). As |Kunta Bo, a prominent healer from the region, puts it, "*n|om* is an invisible thing that works with invisible things". It is something that allows shamans to see and pull out "sickness things" that form blockages in the body and make people sick. And it is something that allows shamans to see and speak to ancestors who are located in a realm that is impenetrable most of the time, for most people, to find out why they put these "sickness things" into the bodies of their living relatives. It is not, strictly speaking, the "animacy of the lifeworld" that is reinfused into people and things to bring balance, "spirit into substance… agency into materiality" (Ingold 2006: 10) – though the consequences of working with it may be so (see Katz *et al* 1997).

At the root of this confusion is a tendency across writing on the !Kung, and other so-called "egalitarian societies", to adjust the analysis of their thoughts and practices to fit particular visions of what egalitarianism should look like. The "tradition of sharing" that prevents any one person from accumulating wealth, power, or prestige (Woodburn 1982) is regarded to be so paramount that any suggestion of ownership and control is untenable. Its presence can only be a consequence of social change, where shamans "become professionals" and "may try to overcontrol or overmanipulate" *n|om* (Katz 1982: 203). At this point, Katz asserts, "one is no longer dealing with [*n|om*] but with some 'containable' image of [*n|om*]", one that is no longer "beyond the limits of any one person" (Ibid: 197). As Low (2004, 2011) similarly points out, the extent to which *n|om* is in fact "containable" has been downplayed by researchers, committed to particular visions of egalitarianism as anti- "property". Taking stock of the way this misrepresents

how so-called egalitarian societies themselves talk about *n|om*, Low (2004) advocates for reinterpreting *n|om* as "potency"--the "ability of one thing to affect another in a particular manner" (Ibid 2007: S87), "the ability to make things happen" (Ibid 2011: 297). This shift takes *n|om* out of the realm of *things* that are necessarily accumulated and cannot be shared, and into the realm of *abilities* which have no material qualities and whose only use is the rebalancing of vitality. This certainly fits the descriptions of *n|om* that accompany accounts of the healing dance, and provides a more general definition, but it does not go far enough to capture the way that the term is used more generally today. By attending to these different uses, I am going to demonstrate how this definition might be broadened so that the different ways that people talk about *n|om* today might be reconciled, and new understandings might be gained of the political processes that *n|om* indexes.

Among the Ju|'hoansi (previously known as the !Kung) of north-eastern Namibia today, *n|om* is a term used well beyond the dancing circles of shamans. There is *n|om* that kills, used by black store owners to punish their debtors, and there is *n|om* that heals, used by shamans to converse with ancestors who attempt to strike their loved ones with death, by doctors and nurses to treat their patients, or by pastors who converse with God to chase away demonic spirits that enter the body and cause sickness. Going even further, Ju|'hoansi say that "all things have a *n|om*" – a particular "ability" or "capacity for action" which might be drawn upon in times of need by those who know how to harness it. Despite this general way of conceiving of *n|om*—as the "properties" or attributes of beings and things—it is in fact only when harnessing *n|om* that it comes into common parlance. Though "all things have a *n|om*", not everyone is said to "own" *n|om*, to "master" it. To be an "owner" or "master" of *n|om* is to be a *n|omkxao*. This is a title reserved for those who are able to draw upon the capacities of others through ritual means but not that they have an inherent ability to affect the world in a particular manner. This chapter develops these insights through an examination of three instantiations of *n|om* among Ju|'hoan speakers—the *n|om* of shamanic healing, the *n|om* of sorcery, and the *n|om* of Christian intercession. It then concludes by considering what impact these insights have on the way egalitarianism is understood and experienced, and what they pose for studies of personhood more generally.

*Figure 28 Ju|'hoan men, women, and children perform a healing dance for tourists*

**Shamans, and the curse of loved ones**

"It starts with cursing or when someone refuses another person", Kommtsa lamented, "and from then people feel pain in their hearts. That is when the ancestors come in to take their loved ones away with sickness." That's why, he tells me, when arguing people might say "Go to the East!". It is an insult that is like saying "go and die", "go to where there are ancestors", go to where the "hot wind" comes from that brings sickness. The spectre of the east's fury loomed over us, receding further into the distance as we looked over at its horizon. We were sitting together in his yard on two tiny school chairs that sank deeper into the sand as we spoke. With the exception of the panting of dogs and the hum of flies gathering around specks of dried maize-meal in the pots that surrounded us, the region was silent. The silence was interrupted only by the occasional gust of hot wind, swirling around us and through the thickets of blackthorn acacia that stretch ceaselessly in every direction.

Getting to Kommtsa's yard, one of several that made up his family territory, requires passing through a series of low, rolling sand dunes, transected by a wide sand track that leads north to Namibia's treasured Khaudum National Park. The route brings tourism, an exceptional situation that Kommtsa family have seized as an opportunity to

bring employment and patronage to an otherwise impoverished populace. The territory as an ancestral home is now dwarfed by its guise as the "Little Hunter's Living Museum of the Ju|'hoansi San". It is now run largely as a social enterprise set up by a non-profit German-Namibian organisation that showcases "the old hunter-gatherer culture" to tourists "as authentically as possible" (see Tomaselli 1999, Tomaselli and Homiak 1999, Koot 2013, 2016, and van der Burg 2013).

Despite these opportunities, the scantiness with which tourists actually pass through the region and pay for their encounters with the "little hunters" brings turmoil (also see Stasch 2014, 2015). "Everyone wants to get the same from the tourism," Kommtsa explains, "but there's just not enough to go around. We are always jealous and fighting these days." At the time of our discussion, allegations were passing through the community that his son had recently taken tourists out to hunt for porcupines and chosen not to share a large cash tip he had received. The allegations were just rumours, Kommtsa informed me, but even the thought that his son had not divided up the cash between each household, as he should have, was enough to foster resentment. "It's dangerous!" he continued, "if they keep feeling pain in their hearts, he could fall sick. The terrible winds from the east will come to him and he could die." The ancestors appear uniquely placed, in this sense, to confront those who do engage in redistribution. More broadly, it appears uniquely placed to confront problems of opacity in everyday life that emerge when one is, at once, compelled to give in to the demands of those with less and to make demands of those with more and, at the same time, to support the freedom of movement that lets people choose when they do so. Wherever there is a person hiding resources from others, refusing their calls for help, or neglecting to show them signs of love or care, there are feelings of anger and shame. It's in those moments that people are cursed—that you hear someone shout "go to the east!" or "go and die!"—and their ancestors start thinking of ways to help them.

These are the thoughts that bring the "terrible winds" that cause sickness. "They are an ancestor's thing," Kommtsa tells me, "they only bring sickness." On the one hand, ancestors *are* the wind, the type that twists and goes through people, and in another, the wind is something ancestors "work with". Either way, though they are invisible, ancestors are known by the "traces, symptoms, and effects they socially and materially engender" (Blanes and Santo 2013: 3). It is with the hot winds that come from the east during the lean, winter months that people start to fall sick, and with that comes the difficulty of

disassociating the terrible "winds" from the east and the "spirits" of ancestors (both referred to as *maq |kain |kainsi*). The "winds" and "spirits" that bring sickness share the capacity to be everywhere and see everyone at once, and to enter the bodies of people they pass over. By being everywhere and seeing everything at once, ancestors are always watching over their loved ones, and by intervening in their interpersonal conflicts, they hope to remove them from the acrimonious situations they find themselves in. Different from the sorcery they call a "black people's thing", whereby people are able to control and manipulate others to their bidding, the sickness brought by cursing is something that "just happens…as an unintended side-effect" (Guenther 1992: 87). It is not those who curse their relatives who control and manipulate the wind, or who are able to possess those they curse by working with the wind. These interventions by ancestors are not forms of punishment or retribution that bring cosmic balance to a disrupted landscape (see Willerslev 2007). They are forms of care that are aimed at taking loved ones away from conflict.

There is an obvious ambiguity here. On the one hand, ancestors bring sickness and death and are therefore fundamentally "not good". On the other hand, ancestors watch over and care for their living relatives at every turn. Figures of this type emerge frequently within the literature on so-called egalitarian societies. They are classic "tricksters", ambiguous figures who capture a paradox at the heart of egalitarianism borne of a tension between "individualism running as a strong counter-current to the ethos of communalism" (Guenther 1999: 42). Where "individualism", here, is the freedom to act according to one's own desires, communalism is the pull always to share the benefits that those actions bring with others. Despite the seeming benevolence of the interventions that ancestors make, however, there was no doubt among Ju|'hoansi that they were primarily "not good". Their actions were not motivated by concerns for cosmic balance, but rather jealousy and loneliness. As with the Vezo of Madagascar, "…they miss the food, the drinks, the tobacco, the sex, the dancing that they enjoyed in life" (Astuti 2017: 110). "An ancestor is a person who only wants to kill people", Kommsta explained, "they don't care that their relatives don't want to go to where they are", to the place where people go when they die.

The tension here is not between individualism and communalism, but a tussle of incompatible desires. It is where the freedom to act according to one's own desires, means denying another the freedom to do the same. Generally speaking, these tussles do not

surface between living relatives. This is because they see themselves as equally lacking in the ability to perform the types of occult acts that might cause a loss of vitality in others. Despite the reality that the actions of ancestors follow interpersonal conflicts between relatives who fail to care for one another, people are thought to fall prey to the ancestors as "other people". The assumption among those who are afflicted is that there must be reasons for why their living relatives neglect or refuse them. There must be some past wrongdoing that motivates them, a concern with fairness that pushes them to do the unthinkable. Of course, some people are *!ka ǂxan* (far hearted), but people are generally given the benefit of the doubt. The primary difference, then, between ancestors and those who neglect or refuse their relatives is that where the former are *capable* and *intend* to make their relatives sick, for the latter sickness is an *unintended* side-effect. While there is an important relationship between the work of ancestors and that of cursing and neglectful relatives, the latter are never spoken of as "making" their relatives sick, nor is it said that they make ancestors cause others to be sick. People cannot control the capacities of others against their own will, and this is what *n|om* appears to stand in for.

This is not to say that those who curse or neglect their relatives are not responsible for the misfortunes that come oto them,[25] but that the actual work of making people incapacitated is an "ancestor thing". Giving a particularly poignant example of this was N|hakxa. We met at the clinic in the town. She had travelled from the rural territory where she lived and moved in to her uncle's yard in town so that she could start up a course of treatment for tuberculosis. She had been coughing for some time, but it was only when she started to experience stabbing pains in her chest and coughing up blood that she realized it was tuberculosis. At her territory, she spent most of her days with her aunt making ostrich eggshell crafts to sell to a local craft shop. They had been collaborating on pieces together, and because her aunt was elderly, N|hakxa had done the work each month of travelling to town to sell them. On one occasion, N|hakxa returned from town with the money she had managed to get for the pieces. Due to some small errors in the design, she had been unable to sell them to the local craft shop and so

[25] Productive parallels can be drawn between the work of ancestors, in this case, and the work of the "evil eye" in Europe and West Asia (Hocart 1938, Lykiardopoulos 1981). The evil eye, like ancestors, always casts a malevolent glare on human inter-personal relationships. In the case of the evil eye, however, when a person feels envious of another that person is struck with sickness or dealt misfortune by the evil eye. With the work of ancestors, though not always, being struck with sickness serves to bring living relatives together to reflect upon the tensions that exist between them – people are persuaded to "think for" or "give thought to" one another. Either way, the malevolent glare encourages people to reflect upon the ethical, in whatever form it may take.

had hawked them to passing traders and tourists. The money she had secured was far less than what her aunt had expected, and she began to doubt her niece. A bitter argument broke out between them, and so they moved apart from one another and stopped collaborating. Shortly thereafter, N|hakxa explained, a whirlwind moved through her village at !Aoǂa, sweeping up sand and leaves and blowing directly into her house where she was resting. It was that terrible wind that had brought tuberculosis and made her sick, and it had come because after their argument her aunt had cursed her.

She had found out about the curse through a shaman, whom she had visited in the early days of her infection in the hope he might heal her. Since there were no shamans at her territory, she had travelled to another territory nearby to receive treatment from a renowned shaman. With the help of his relatives, and those who accompanied N|hakxa, the shaman performed a trance dance, forming a bridge between the realms of the living and the dead (see Low 2004: 150-155). As his shivering intensified, his body was said to open up to "receive *n|om*", envisaged as many tiny "needles" or "arrows", before "dying" and travelling to the place of ancestors. It was at this moment that it was revealed to N|hakxa that her aunt had cursed her, and that it was the terrible wind that had struck her with sickness. The various stages of this process are captured in the three main titles given to healers – *nǂu'unkxao, n|omkxao*, and *ǂhoekxao* (each suggesting that the shaman becomes an "owner" or "master" of the action that precedes). These three stages can be likened to the "three-fold structure" outlined by van Gennep ([1906] 1961) and elaborated upon by Turner (1967). The first stage involves heating up the healer's body and heightening their senses to bring about a kind of "death", where they are then able to *nǂu'un* (act like) ancestors. The second stage is receiving the *n|om* of ancestors, which is their "capacity" to see everything, so that healers can see and speak with ancestors. The third stage involves returning to the realm of the living, so they can *ǂhoe* (pull out) sickness from those who have been afflicted—either by massaging areas of the body that have been affected, blowing or sucking on parts of the body where "sickness things" have been lodged, or by sharing the reasons ancestors give for their actions.

The middle stage is the most significant, a "liminal" period in which the shaman is suspended between their own ontological status and that of ancestors. With this liminality comes "danger" and "pain", as shamans do what is otherwise unthinkable for the average living person. They draw violently upon the *n|om*, the "capacities", of

ancestors, so they too may "see everything" and "be everywhere". The action of drawing upon the *n|om* of others is to *n|om* – to draw upon the capacities of others. It is only by drawing upon these capacities that shamans are able to converse with ancestors, to come to terms with their reasoning and to chase them away from their living relatives. The dance thus serves to overcome a basic problem at the heart of egalitarianism that the values that celebrate "individualism" only preserve equality if, as Strathern (1988: 138) puts it, "ties between persons are not constructed through the control of assets and of persons as though they were assets". In other words, if individualism is defined as the freedom to demand from one another equally, equality should prevail. Communalism, then, recognises not only that people are indebted to each other for their independence, but also that the most productive way to maintain these freedoms is by compelling people to share the goods that come from their enactment – "value lies in things being instruments of service relations between persons". The difficulty that shamans face during the liminal stage of the healing process is thus proportional to the extent to which drawing upon the capacities of others is antithetical to concepts of autonomy. And yet, when faced with violent others, these violent forms of appropriation are the only way to ensure that these equal freedoms are rebalanced.

**Sorcerers, and the service of debts**

"*!'Hombi* give you three to four weeks after not making a repayment before they want to kill you", Kxao said, as we sat together in his yard. Situated on the edge of the wide gravel road that leads to Tsumkwe, his territory was one of only a few territories that can be accessed without four-wheel drive or good clearance. As a result, it regularly received visitors—most notably, people seeking treatment from renowned healers such as Kxao. Many of these visitors are from Tsumkwe, while others travel from as far as Cape Town to receive treatment. The treatment, Kxao tells me, is invariably for sorcery.[26] "There are many ways that a black person can kill you. They are strong, and they can beat you, they can ruin you with the way they treat you, but most gravely they can *n|om !'hun* you! That's what they do to each other, and that is why they come to me for help."

[26] Ju|'hoan speakers use the English translation "witchcraft" but, following Evans-Pritchard's (1937) analysis of witchcraft and sorcery among the Azande of colonial Sudan, they mean "sorcery". Where "sorcery" is when a person consciously manipulates occult forces for the purposes of killing or striking other with sickness, "witchcraft" emerges from the unconscious or subconscious of those experiencing pain or envy (also see Niehaus 2012).

The term *n|om !'hun* means "to kill with *n|om*". It is synonymous with *n||oq'i*, a term that Ju|hoan speakers translate as "witchcraft" and which they associate exclusively with *other people*. As observed elsewhere (see Marwick 1967, Geschiere 1997, Ashforth 2005), "witchcraft" in this case articulates tensions within intimate relationships, specifically those which take place within contexts of entrenched hierarchy and uncertainty (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1993). Elsewhere, these accusations are seen to emerge primarily within relationships between kin—where the short-term, "acquisitive" domain of the individual is confronted with the "cycle of long-term exchanges concerned with the reproduction of the social and cosmic order" (Parry and Bloch 1989: 2). Here, they emerge primarily in relationships between non-kin. Resonating with the vast literature on spirit possession (notably Lewis 1971), their vulnerability to attack is coterminous with their perceived status as inferiors and the extent of their everyday dependency on more powerful others. As such, they emerge most frequently in their relationships with black African settlers—relationships that, as Chapter 5 examines in more depth, are simultaneously intimate and indicative of broader hierarchies and uncertainties.

What appears distinctive in this case is the emphasis that Ju|hoan speakers place on sorcery being "not a Ju|'hoan thing" (also see Guenther 1992). "A Ju|'hoan healer's *n|om* is for healing, whereas a black person's *n|om* is for killing", G|aice, another resident at Duin Pos, added as he joined our discussion from his nearby yard. These forms of violence are most commonly associated with the failure to make debt repayments, and they are forms of violence that Ju|'hoan speakers say they are unable to perform, no matter how much time they spend living and working with *black people* within or outside of the conservancy. On one occasion, giving a clear indication of this sentiment, four brothers who were heavily indebted to Herero traders in the south were asleep in their tent when it was struck by lightning. The lightning surged through the metal poles and into the ground, creating such heat that all four men suffered terrible burns from inside the tent. Three of the men died, and one survived but was heavily scarred. "It's because they owed the man who runs the shop at the fence a lot of money. He is the one who did it!" residents at Dou Pos informed me at the time. "How do you know it's not their own families?" I asked, to which one resident responded "It's only a black people's thing! Ju|'hoansi cannot do that. They cannot learn." Only *black people* were said to have the

capacity to consciously and purposefully manipulate occult forces for the purposes of striking people with sickness or death.

As the previous section shows, where experiences of sickness occur and where they follow cases of neglect or abuse among kin, they are not the vindictive work of fellow living relatives but rather of ancestors who are concerned about the welfare of their living relatives. These experiences of sickness are therefore "unintended side-effect[s]" (Guenther 1992: 88) of acrimonious arguments or the failure to care for others, but they are not the consequence of personal efforts by living relatives to see those who have wronged others brought to justice. Contrasting sharply with these incapacities were the numerous ways that *black people* (and, though less frequently, *white people*, because there not so many of them) were said to perform sorcery against their debtors or those who have wronged them more generally. Similar to the way that healing with *n|om* requires mediation through heat that escapes upwards to where there are ancestors, performing sorcery with *n|om* requires mediation through bodies or objects—from dreams to spoken words, lightning strikes to snakes. When *black people* become *!ka khui* (hot in their hearts), my Ju|'hoan interlocutors explained, they perform sorcery against those who wrong them. "A person can die at the hands of someone who is hot in their heart," Kha||'an elaborated, "… it can happen when you are just doing your own thing, any small thing, and you can just die unexpectedly. A car accident, a snake bite, a thorn, anything."

These forms of mediation are predicated upon interpersonal ties, from credit agreements to informal labour contracts. When these relationships break down—on account of the failure to make repayments, of jealousy from competitors, or labourers absconding their commitments—*black people* are said to turn to sorcery. In these moments, it is not necessarily a particular object—such as a gift as a personified abstraction (Mauss 1954 [1925]: 55)—that holds people together, but the history that accumulates as memories or as traces of the things that get consumed over their course. Through these processes of association and consumption, people become "enmeshed with one another" (ibid: 43) in ways that defaulting on their debts or absconding from labour arrangements does little to sever. They become (at least partially) inalienable from one another.

These perceptions of inalienability are similarly expressed in the way Ju|'hoan speakers manage their relationships with dangerous or important beings or objects through the use of "praise" or "respect" names. These are second names that Ju|'hoan

speakers use when they fear disrespecting the being or object in question, especially within contexts where they may be in earshot. The names are most commonly used when referring either to dangerous predators that they fear may hunt or harm them (such as lions or black mambas) or to antelope they are hunting, but can also refer to certain forms of weather, species of tree or edible tubers, or (most notably) people or gods presumed to have occult powers. *!'Hombi*, the term introduced in Chapter 5 that means "predators", is one such "praise" or "respect" name, used to refer to *black people* when discussing their behaviour in a way that they, themselves, may find disrespectful. Using these names prevents those they refer to from hearing them, and thereafter becoming "hot in their hearts". When these praise or respect names are not used, and black African settlers are spoken of using their real names, they are said to hear what is being said about them and to strike back with sorcery. Giving a poignant and tragic account of one such experience was Kxao, a resident of Tsumkwe who often complained of being burdened by his debts and addictions:

> "They can just say your name out loud back at you and you or a relative will drop dead. I saw it happen before! It was Christmas day, and we had no food. We went to one *!'homa* who we sometimes bought alcohol from and we asked him for food. He got really angry and shouted at us to leave him alone because it was Christmas. We went home, and we were talking about him, and suddenly my newly-born baby just died. Her heart just stopped. It was the *!'homa* who was angry with us for talking badly about him for refusing us."

Most commonly, however, *black people* are said to strike people with sickness or death through the use of mirrors. With a mirror and needles, my Ju|'hoan interlocutors explained, they are able to shoot arrows into their victims from afar, "even from Windhoek!" These "arrows", similar to those that allow shamans to receive *n|om*, are spoken of as if they are vectors for certain actions or movements that enter certain beings or objects and animate them in particular ways. "The face of the person they wish to kill or strike with sickness appears in the mirror," G|aice stated, explaining the process in more depth, and with a needle they prick at the parts of the body of their victim they wish to harm and these shoot onto the victim." Like the "threads" that shamans travel upon to reach the realm of ancestors, the mirror acts as a mediatory aid that sorcerers use to travel (in a sense) to their victims (see Delius 1996, Niehaus 2012 for complementary accounts from South Africa). As Caroline Humphrey (2007: 35) similarly observes among

Mongolian shamans, the mirror is thought of as having two quite different sides, "one reflecting images and the other a dull blank or imagined as a teeming other world". This "teeming other world" is not one made up of beings or objects, but rather certain forms of potentiality: the toxicity of snake bites, the force of a car crash, or the heat of a lightning bolt.

If not using mirrors, sorcerers are said to put *n|om* into containers—similar to those used by Ju|'hoan shamans to store herbal ointments used for massaging during healing dances. This *n|om* can then be shot directly into people and be animated to make people sick, or it can be put into things that they consume. Once consumed, they become lodged in the bodies of those who consume them and can be animated at will. These "dirty things", |Xoan informed me, are put into the alcohol that they sell to Ju|'hoansi. "It is the stuff you can see floating at the bottom of the cup," she continued, "and it is what makes us sick with tuberculosis". It is the most commonly treated disease at the health clinic in Tsumkwe, occurring in multiple-drug resistant forms within the region. For most Ju|'hoansi, these high rates of infection, and the strain's resistance to treatment, are symptomatic of the hold that local black residents now have over them. Where nurses at the clinic similarly attribute high infection rates to the lowered immune systems that are a consequence of alcoholism, most Ju|'hoansi see it as a consequence of the "dirty things" that are mixed into alcohol, that become lodged in the lungs of those who drink it, and that their creditors can then animate from afar. "It doesn't matter," G|aice explained, "…that other people drink the same alcohol. It will only affect the person that the black person wants to harm, at the exact moment that they want to harm them."

These "things", though most commonly seen as attributes of sickness, can also serve as gateways between sorcerers and those they wish to have control over. While sorcerers are said to have the capacity to enter bodies irrespective of the presence of "dirty things", these things make the experience more vivid and painful. Speaking of his experiences to this effect, one of my Ju|'hoan interlocutors explained how these dirty things allowed for his creditors to repeatedly remind him of his debts and to strike him with sickness as he lay dreaming. . "One time, I closed my eyes, and quickly fell into a dream, where I saw the Kavango woman I owe money to standing in my yard. She was shouting at me to repay my debts, but I couldn't pay her. Then she was shouting at my wife to make me pay her. When I woke the next morning, I was so sick it was like I was going to die. All I could see were snakes going across my eyes." The snakes, he later

elaborated, were suggestive of his creditor "working with *n|om*", and allowing her to enter his dreams was "something black" he had ingested over the many years drinking from her house. The "things", in other words, create a certain inalienability between creditors and debtors which break down only when the "things" are located and removed by shamans or pastors.

Writing about similar experiences of inalienability between creditors and debtors among the Urarina of upper Chambira river in Peruvian Amazon, Walker (2012a: 141) draws a parallel to Marx's claim that "money and commodities, once abstracted from their social relations of production, inevitably come to take on a life of their own and exert a power over people." He gives an example of a *mestizo* trader whose boat—laden with palm hearts extracted from the forest by Urarina debt peons in exchange for western industrial goods—runs aground, splits apart, and sinks. Reflecting upon the event, his interlocuter Lorenzo assures him that "It was all his merchandise that caused his boat to sink… Too much exploiting the Urarina. So his merchandise had their revenge". Similar to the way "dirty things" are animated by sorcerers, the merchandise are said to have "owners" or "masters" who animate them at their will. Among the Urarina, these "owners" or "masters" are understood to be the producers of the things that become animate, whereas among the Ju|'hoansi this is only true with respect to "dirty things" and not to the many other beings or objects that appear to serve vindictive efforts. Among Ju|'hoan speakers, the mechanism behind these animations is *n|om*. While they may appear to take on a life of their own, in the sense suggested by Marx's notion of commodity fetishism, they are in fact directed by certain people—and not those who might ordinarily be thought of as their "owners" or "masters". They point to a certain capacity, in other words, to draw upon or employ the capacities of others to serve personal motives.

**Pastors, and the temptation to sin**

"*G||aoan* is everywhere in the dark places!" Maria exclaimed, hitting the palm of her right hand onto a clenched left fist to emphasise the density of their presence. We were seated together on a plastic church pew, having just attended a Friday evening service at the Pentecostal church, Christ Love Ministries (CLM), in which Maria was a deacon. "They move between the drinking houses, especially on Friday and Saturday evenings into the early hours of Sunday morning." Maria was referring to times of the week in town when alcohol consumption peaked, drinking houses played loud music, and Ju|'hoansi were

considered by the clergy to be most violent, promiscuous, or given to alcoholism. Their behaviour was the will of *g||aoansi*, whom in this case are better translated as "malevolent spirits" than "ancestors" and are associated closely with the Christian concept of the Devil. It was during these times, too, that the church was most active, responding to the threat of malevolent spirits by holding intercessory prayer services on behalf and in the company of community members on Friday and Saturday evenings. The church is one of the most popular in town, with several hundred regular congregants and others from across the Nyae Nyae region who attend at different times throughout the year.

This popularity is largely owed to their emphasis on divine intervention and providing protection from malevolent spirits. The parent church started in Windhoek in August 1993 as an evangelical mission of Christ Love Ministries International (CLMI), based in the state of Rhode Island, USA, with a mandate to "to reach the poor, the sick and the needy in our communities with the gospel of Jesus Christ and with holistic health care approach" (Christ Love Ministries International 2016). There are now approximately thirty branches of CLM International churches across Namibia. The church services in Tsumkwe typically feature supplication and testimonies by congregants followed by intercessory prayers, usually featuring speaking in tongues, and divine healing, usually featuring baptisms in the Holy Spirit with the use of consecrated olive oil and the laying of hands by a pastor onto the head of a congregant. Through prayer, congregation and clergy members are able to call upon God to supplant the presence of malevolent spirits who they regard as the originators of sin. Where ancestors have personal reasons for striking their living relatives with sickness, malevolent spirits are not said to have personal reasons for wanting to possess and manipulate people, they simply do so because they want misfortune to come to others.

The emphasis on prayer through dancing and music was essential to the experience of *maq gauq* (clean wind)—the terms they used to translate from the English "Holy Spirit" or "*heilige gees*" in Afrikaans—which expelled malevolent spirits from the bodies of congregants and from the spaces they shared with others. "As you sing, clap, and move your body, you start to feel God enter you, and your body becomes filled with the Holy Spirit," a Hai||'om-speaking congregation member explained to me following a service. "The church is like a clinic, a place of *n|om*", she continued, "everyone comes here to receive the Holy Spirit." The presence of the Holy Spirit not only brings healing to those suffering from sickness but protects them from further attacks. Before the

church was established within Tsumkwe in 2002, most congregation members attended the Dutch Reformed Church. "I attended that church for many years," the leading pastor of CLM exclaimed, "but there was always something missing. I could feel that something was not there. We were drinking during that time… drinking, doing bad things, and attending church all at once. The Holy Spirit was not there!" For her, God had been little more than a distant observer, providing a guide to how to live a good life but with no physical presence in her life to protect her or heal her from sickness and the temptation for sin. It was only by bringing God into the church through new forms of prayer, she claimed, that she and others had managed to leave those "terrible things".

Making the Holy Spirit present happens in two primary ways. The first involves the personal commitment of congregants to the word of God, and the second involves the mediation of a pastor. Where the former keeps congregants safe from malevolent spirits, the second guides congregants so they may receive God and chase malevolent spirits from their bodies. The two spirits, *maq gauq* (clean wind) and *maq |kain |kain* (terrible wind), cannot share one presence. The former always supplants the latter. Over the course of my research, numerous church members gave testimonies at the Sunday services, detailing how they had been healed by the Holy Spirit or how it protected them from malevolent spirits in their everyday lives. Empowered by the warm receptiveness of the room, and, perhaps, by the language of possession, they spoke openly about the "bad thoughts" and "bad ways" that had led them to sin. The testimonies they gave suggested that they saw themselves in a near permanent state of possession, with all their "wills" and "desires" the work of others. All "bad" behaviour was the work of malevolent spirits, all "good" behaviour the work of God. This was not to say that they had no agency to determine their circumstances. The onus fell on congregants to remain vigilant to the pull of malevolent spirits. Their task was to commit themselves to church and to scripture—to *ǂom* (believe, trust, respect)—so that God could be a permanent presence in their lives.

"Before the church…", one woman noted, "…my entire body was aching and in pain, and nothing worked to heal me." She had visited the clinic multiple times but tested negative for all common ailments in the region – diabetes, high blood pressure, and tuberculosis. She had consulted shamans who performed trance dances, spoke to her ancestors, and massaged her with medicinal herbs, but their efforts only made the pain go away temporarily, resurfacing after every argument and misunderstanding thereafter. It was only once she started attending services at CLM—with the presence of the Holy

Spirit giving her the power to commit, and her commitment to the Holy Spirit giving it an ever-greater presence—that she was able to recover and protect herself from further attacks. While intercessory prayers had helped initially to expel malevolent spirits from her body, the real power of the church was in the newfound capacity she had to commit herself to God. "If you just get prayed for, you will get better, but you will get sick again," she explained to the congregation, "you have to commit yourself to the church." It was through this commitment, through trusting in God without doubt (Robbins 2007: 14), that congregants received the capacity to avoid being affected by gossip, cursing, and temptation. It is by being a *ǂom ju* (a "believer" or "person who trusts") that you receive the capacity of God to supplant the presence of malevolent spirits who make you behave in ways that harm your body and keep you sick.

To the dismay of many of the church's permanent clergy and congregation, however, most of those who attended the church were not regular members. They came only when they were overcome with sickness caused by the work of sorcerers, or when they claimed to have repeated attacks from malevolent spirits who compelled them to sin. Without the protection that commitment brings, the bodies of congregants repeatedly fall prey to malevolent spirits who take seat in them and make them sick. These are not ancestors responding to the neglect or abuse of their living relatives, they are simply marauding spirits – a distinctly "Tsumkwe" problem requiring a distinctly "Tsumkwe" solution.

Late one Friday evening, as the jukebox of a nearby shebeen competed with the distorted radio of a nearby car, the sound of live gospel songs began emanating from a church in their midst. Giving up on my hopes of sleep, and curious to see what suffering they were attending to, I walked over to join the service. Four Ju|'hoan women, sisters from a yard on the other side of town, stood shoulder-to-shoulder in front of the small congregation. Each woman told her own story of how she had become sick as the result of an attack. They had previously come to the church and been healed but had since suffered several further attacks of sickness. The leading pastor told the congregation to join her in prayer, at which point there was a sudden cacophony of voices as each person prayed independently and in unison. The four women kneeled with their eyes closed and their palms facing forward, as the pastor anointed their heads with olive oil. As the leading pastor's prayer, mostly in tongues, became more energetic, the women began crying with various levels of intensity and collapsing on the ground. They were then helped to their

feet and given a chair to sit on, so they might regain their strength. The Holy Spirit was described as having entered their bodies and chased the malevolent spirits away who were causing them suffering.

The pastors, deacons, and committed congregants of CLM vehemently rejected that the church had "*n|om*", stating that it was exclusively "traditional" and involved soliciting "terrible things" for help that only kept God out of your life. Many of the congregants who alternated in their choice of healing practices, however, stated emphatically that its widespread popularity was owed precisely to it "having" *n|om*. Sitting with |Kuni, one of the sisters who had stood before the church that evening, she explained how she saw *n|om* working in the church. When the pastors at Christ Love Ministries are performing their services, they first pray to God, and then they apply olive oil to the foreheads of the sick people and pray to Jesus Christ to give power to the sick person so that they may be healed. At the same service, she continued, other congregation members will start to pray for that person and then point their fingers at you. If you are still full of sin, you will fall down, but if you are free of sin, you will remain standing and strong. These prayers are similar to what a shaman does when entering trance. Like shamans, pastors depend upon the commitment of the congregation to make God present in the church. As the congregation sing, clap, and dance together, the pastor speaks in tongues to bring God into the church. This is a process that is often described as involving *n|om*. Without *n|om*, pastors lack the capacity to make God present among the congregation—a presence that is evidenced by the traces, symptoms, and effects that it socially and materially engenders—the collapsing of bodies that suggest that malevolent spirits have been expelled. These malevolent spirits are not the same as those confronted by shamans who must be communicated with, but are spirits who cannot be reasoned with, and therefore require different capacities to overcome.

The *n|om* that is "owned" or "mastered" by pastors in the Pentecostal church is not confined to the work of bringing the capacity of God to supplant malevolent spirits into the church to heal the sick. It also includes keeping the presence of God in the church so that people are protected from further attacks. These ideas stand in stark contrast to the case of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), which is spoken of as a place without *n|om*. It is worth pointing out that for the clergy of both the Pentecostal church and the DRC, being a place without *n|om* can only be a good thing. The presence of *n|om*, for the former, is evidence of the presence of malevolent spirits, and for the latter it is

symptomatic of straying from "the path of God". For those who view *n|om* positively, however, the Dutch Reformed Church, and the clergy who mediate between God and the congregation, are seen to lack the capacity for ritual mediation that makes God present to expel malevolent spirits that manifest themselves in sickness. As G|aice, a leading pastor in the DRC, put it, "…you can pray to God, ask for him to help you leave alcohol or fighting like I did before becoming a pastor, and maybe it will seem like God has not answered you. Only God decides when to help you. The only thing you can do is stay on the path of God because those things are signs that God is punishing you." Expressing frustration at the perceived incapacity of the DRC to help him overcome suffering, one Ju|'hoan man exclaimed that "That Church is a place you go to die! To prepare yourself for heaven". Where the DRC preaches that sickness is a sign of punishment for the "sins" of alcoholism, fighting, smoking, or neglecting their children, for many of those who suffer from sickness it is a sign of the unique capacities of others who populate the cosmos and would rather have them suffering or dead.

The emphasis that the DRC places on the self as an agent of change thereby relegates it in the eyes of many as a space for "privileged" Ju|'hoansi who have family members with permanent employment, and who are not forced to engage in social and economic practices that expose Ju|'hoansi to the *n|om* that kills. The emphasis on individualism "constitutes a transcendent ideal that is far removed from what human beings can in reality expect to morally accomplish" (Westermarck cited in Robbins 2012: 5). When the cosmos becomes populated with violent others—from uncompromising sorcerers to marauding spirits—demanding the capacity of others to supplant the cause of sickness appears to be the only hope they have for restoring their autonomy.

**Demanding the capacities of others**

The numerous contexts within which *n|om* appears today, were not present at the time that Katz (1982) wrote his account of shamanism among the !Kung of the Dobe region in western Botswana. The dangers that faced them then were confined mostly to the realms of canine predators who sought to steal their meat, and ancestors who took any excuse to share their company. Attending to these dangers, and the fear or sickness they left in their wake, were shamans, "owners of *n|om*" who travelled on threads to the realm of ancestors or transformed into lions (see Katz *et al* 1997: 24-5, Marshall 1999: 238). Among the Ju|'hoansi of the Nyae Nyae region today, there are new dangers and, with that, new ways of healing and forms of protection. Where *n|om* was within the purview

only of shamans before, an "energy" or "medicine" that they draw upon to converse with ancestors and heal the sick, it is now something that gives creditors the power to perform sorcery against their defaulting debtors, and charismatic pastors the power to supplant the presence of malevolent spirits through God.


*Figure 29 Tsumkwe Clinic*

Contemporary uses of the term suggest that previous attempts to define it as a thing, even one that bursts "beyond the limits of any one person", fall short. This chapter builds upon Low (2007), who redefines *n|om* as "the ability of one thing to affect another in a particular manner", as well as the murmurings of past ethnographers who recognised its broader meaning as a "special skill or anything out of the ordinary" (Lee cited in Guenther 1999: 191). By doing so, it adds that since it is primarily a component of ritual processes, it may also be understood as the *act* of drawing upon the ability of one thing to affect another in a particular manner. Defining it as such not only brings clarity to the concept, but also brings new opportunities for exposing some of the contradictions of egalitarianism, and the way people go about resolving the moral ambivalence that these contradictions give rise to. These contradictions have an affinity with those that have long been the subject of discourses surrounding vigilantism (see Sen and Pratten 2007). They point to the difficulties of enforcement within contexts where such responsibilities are shifted away from regular people.

What is the relationship, then, between *n|om* as the "properties" or attributes of beings and things, and *n|om* as something that only some beings and things can "own" or "master"? What type of "property" or attribute is it that sees the shaman, the sorcerer, the doctor, and the pastor as comparable? They are all the agents of transformative processes, but what kinds of transformative processes are these and what bearing does the social, political, or economic context have on why *n|om* comes to define them? The suffix *-kxao* is revealing here, since it is only used in connection with verbs to indicate that someone or something is an "owner" of "master" of the *action* that precedes it. Even though all beings or objects are understood to have certain "properties", and in that sense to be "owners" or "masters" of certain actions, they cannot be "owners" or "masters" of *things* in the sense suggested by the suffix. As a noun *n|om* is a capacity that one takes from others, it is not used to refer generally to "properties" as the precursors to certain capacities. As a verb *n|om* is the act of taking those capacities from others through ritual means. Bringing *n|om* into view, then, are moments when personhood become "partible" (Strathern 1988)—not when it "flows freely" but when it is ritually, and often violently, appropriated.

This emphasis on capacities is conspicuously absent in writing on egalitarianism. With the exception of paying attention to the use of mockery to prevent highly skilled individuals from getting ahead of themselves, our understanding of egalitarianism is largely limited to showing how people share goods not by giving but by demanding (Peterson 1993, Woodburn 1998, Widlok 2013). The right to demand from those who have more does not apply to capacities or, in less abstract terms, to "services". The reason for this is that a core tenet of egalitarianism is that one should never be forcibly denied the capacity to act in the manner of one's choosing, whether by being forced to act according to another's choosing or having one's capacities to act withdrawn in some way. *Ju hin to'a o kxunkxao* (that person is someone who wants to refuse others), my interlocuters would say, *mi |u du tci n|ui, mi ku sin hore ha* (I can't do anything, I will just hate them). Therefore, while it is customary to demand for help from others, these demands should always include the option to refuse—they should prompt people to "give themselves up". To remove the option to refuse is, in short, to deny someone their "individual autonomy" (Gardner 1991).

In recent follow-up to his concept of "the original affluent society", Marshall Sahlins (2017) addresses this absence. He brings attention to the myopia not only in his

own writing on "egalitarian societies", but the writing of those who followed him. Together, they earnestly sought to show that, contrary to popular opinion at the time, the life of hunter-gatherers was not "nasty, brutish and short" (Hobbes cited in Gowdy 1998: xviii) but one characterized by a "kind of material plenty" (Sahlins 1972: 9). But in doing so, Sahlins (2017: 93) argues, they overlooked the extent to which these same societies were "coercively ruled by a host of cosmic authorities, themselves of human character and metahuman powers", and their principle concern was the distribution of vitality—the stuff of autonomy. These "cosmic authorities", he elaborates, are "people like us", and yet they are omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. They have a "monopoly of force" that means they are able to strike others not only with sickness or misfortune, but with the ultimate penalty of death. They are concerned with the equal distribution of vitality not just between humans, but between humans and the many other beings they share their lives with—acting as mediators concerned not only with ensuring that people share what they gather or produce, but with the vitality it takes to do so. "Everything follows," as Sahlins (ibid: 99) puts it, "…from the animist predicament that people survive by killing others like themselves".

This follow-up pushes the discussion towards vitality or "potency", the ability to make things happen, but it presents a landscape within which *n|om* and *n|omkxaosi* have no obvious place. It draws attention to the paradox of egalitarianism, in that it supports people in taking vitality or potency from others, but it draws attention away from their efforts and means of resistance. The fact that Ju|'hoan speakers, more broadly, do not have the means to resist violence speaks to the primary values that define egalitarianism: to demand from those who have more and give in to the demands of those with less, and to act in a manner of one's own choosing so long as it does not prevent others from doing the same.[27] This is not to say that these are values that people live by at all times. As much as a dogged emphasis on giving in to demands when they are made would quickly make people vulnerable to conditions of opacity or to those who cannot be trusted, a dogged emphasis on never forcing people to act would quickly make people vulnerable to those "others"—ancestors, sorcerers, spirits—who do not have the same compunction. The exceptions that are given to the *n|omkxao* expose a paradox at the heart of egalitarianism concerning how to live with violent others. Collectively, the work

[27] It is worth emphasising that these values are not articulated by Ju|'hoan speakers in such explicit terms or in such a distilled down form. Their presentation in this form comes from my own analysis.

of shamans, sorcerers, doctors, and pastors is to confront those who are deemed to do harm to them or to those they represent. These forms of harm vary, and with that, so do people's reflections on whether the work they do is good. What brings them together, nonetheless, is that they are able to draw upon, manipulate, or control the capacities of others in their attempts to seek justice or achieve autonomy.

This sheds new light on some of the contradictions of egalitarianism, and the way people go about navigating the experiences of doubt and moral ambivalence that these contradictions give rise to. It also brings new perspectives on ongoing debates within the anthropology of religion concerning the parallel distinctions between "individualism" and "dividualism" and "hierarchy" or "egalitarianism" (Daswani 2011, Klaits 2011, Werbner 2011, Smith 2012, Bialecki and Daswani 2015). The trend, largely following Dumont (1980, 1986) and buttressed by the "New Melanesian Ethnography" (Gell 1998, Strathern 1988, 1999, Wagner 1991), has been to regard "individualism" as indicative of hierarchy and entrenched inequality, and "dividualism" as indicative of egalitarianism and holism. As the introduction of the thesis examines in more depth, these are crude generalisations. The associations nevertheless creep subtly into analysis, in ways that inhibit our understanding both of these forms of personhood and the ethical projects they are associated with. Mosko's (2010) stringent critique of those (notably Robbins 2004, 2012) who draw upon this framework makes this point (though in a way that is impervious to the nuance in these arguments). By adopting the Dumontian framework of "paramount values", we blind ourselves not only to heterogeneity among the people we study, but also within our own understandings of these concepts.

As the debate between Andre Béteille and Louis Dumont shows most clearly (Béteille 1986, Dumont and Béteille 1987), "individualism", "equality", "dividualism", and "hierarchy" can mean many things, leading to a great deal of confusion over what we actually mean when we talk about them. As evidenced by preceding attempts to define *n|om*, part of this confusion is borne out of the enduring tendency to focus on types of *things*, rather than focus on the *actions* that people feel *can* arise from them and the contexts within which they *should*. By shifting the focus from substances and their origins, to types of actions and the substances (or "capacities") that make these possible, the field opens up for a more nuanced examination of the politics of personhood.The concept of *n|om* has long suffered from a tendency to view it only in terms of its status as a thing. Similar to the debate concerning the distinction between "individualism" as being inherently

indivisible, and "dividualism" as being "partible" and relational, the debate has centred around whether *n|om* is "containable" or "non-containable". This encourages us to conceptualise its properties, but not the capacities for action that these properties make possible. Through a focus on capacities over properties, on action over substance, opportunities emerge for the reconceptualization of *n|om* not as a particular type of thing, but as a general concept to describe "the ability of one thing to affect another in a particular manner".

By comparing contemporary instantiations of *n|om*—among shamans, sorcerers, and pastors—it is possible to push further and appreciate that *n|om* signifies, at once, the capacities of people or things, and the act of drawing upon those capacities in the interests of certain ethical projects. These ethical projects are not always those concerned with egalitarianism and where they are these visions of "equality" are not always the same. For the Ju|'hoansi, the act of drawing upon the capacities of others is described as "dangerous" and "painful"—difficulties that seem proportional to the extent to which drawing upon the capacities of others is not, ordinarily, a Ju|'hoan thing. This is not to say that these acts are enactments of egalitarianism. In fact, the premise of this chapter is to argue against prevailing tendencies to try to make *n|om* fit within broader pursuits for egalitarianism. As much as *n|om* appears to be shaped by egalitarianism, it also confronts its limits.

# Conclusion

The story that emerges here is one that pushes disciplinary debates concerning egalitarianism—so often confined to the study of hunting and gathering—in new directions, and that contributes to current efforts to trace the relationship between state processes and informal economic activities. These come together to make a more general contribution to discussions within the anthropology of ethics and morality on the relationship between the "norms of society" and moments of reflection (Mattingly and Throop 2018: 479). Over the course of this thesis, we have seen that these moments of reflection are often characterised by ambivalence. The source of this ambivalence is, on the one hand, certain experiences of uncertainty that make it hard to know who to trust and how to go about sharing with and demanding from others. On the other hand, the source of this ambivalence is the sheer difficulty of getting by, and the pressure this puts on people to not take egalitarianism too seriously. It is the very fact that the inequities of life are *not* balanced out by omniscient and omnipotent "cosmic authorities", as Sahlins (2017) describes them, that people find themselves battling with uncertainty in this way, and with the shifting perceptions of trustworthiness it brings. The Ju|'hoan people who animate this thesis are not sure about the distribution of wealth or vitality, they are not sure who to trust, and they are not confident that the universe will see to their needs or right whatever wrongs may come to them.

This thesis has outlined and analysed a domain of uncertainty: one with origins in values that valorize autonomy but one that is intensified in the contemporary political and economic context. It has taken as a productive space for enquiry the contested zone between two sets of demands One is the demands people make of others, motivated by the expectation that these will be met, but that those others will not feel forced to present themselves to be demanded from. The other is the demands people face as a result of the need to survive in a context characterised by undulating flows of abundance and lack. The enquiry has been twofold, first: to explore the ways that people actually go about pursuing egalitarianism in the face of uncertainty, and second: to uncover how they negotiate the ambivalence that emerges in the process. This set of concerns was, to some degree, formulated post-hoc. The initial line of enquiry concerned how people navigate their commitments to competing values, but I discovered that, in the face of uncertainty and precarity, following one set of values throws up just as many paradoxes and requires just as much ingenious navigation. It is an encounter with the reality that egalitarianism—

composed of a redistributive regime, on the one hand, and the right to free movement, on the other—is uniquely sensitive to the degree to which people explicitly need one another to survive, and are capable of concealing themselves from one another.

Two complementary questions emerge: (a) how people pursue egalitarianism in the face of uncertainty, and (b) how they negotiate the ambivalence that emerges in the process. To answer these, I accompanied Ju|'hoansi as they moved between their territories and town. In the process, I tracked their encounters with fellow *true people*—both kin and non-kin, marginalised and privileged—and *other people*—black African settlers, white (usually foreign) visitors, and malevolent ancestors, spirits, and agents of sorcery. Each chapter approaches sets of uncertainties, contexts of precarity, and moments of ambivalence, and seeks to understand how these relate to one another. The Introductory chapter sets the scene for this by chronicling political and economic changes that have happened within the region over the past 68 years. It draws upon multiple voices to consider not only how people have come to "roam in order to live", but also to regard themselves as "people who help each other" and others as people who "want to refuse you" and "want to ruin you". It challenges prevailing narratives surrounding egalitarianism, which have depicted these values primarily as vestiges of a hunting and gathering past, by situating them within experiences of marginality, precarity, and uncertainty that cut across epochs.

In the chapters that follow, the focus shifts away from accounting for how these values or circumstances may have come about and towards how they shape one another. In chapter 2, we find that demand sharing *is* the prototypical form that sharing takes, but how it is enacted by people depends on how likely it is that they will encounter one another, or how likely it is that they will *make* themselves present to one another, in the future. We find that people are, in fact, deeply dependent upon those they feel "cannot be trusted" to make themselves present to one another, and that drawing them to drink is not simply addiction and destitution but the capacity it gives them to navigate their feelings and fears of mistrust. In chapter 3, we observe how people go about confronting the suspicions they have about others. We see here that these suspicions are not only about whether people will make themselves present to one another to be demanded from. They are also about whether people will conceal their wealth, and whether people will dodge whatever debts they are to repay, or gifts they are to reciprocate. What generates ambivalence in these encounters is that there are few means to distinguish between those

who "dodge", and those who exercise their right to not be forced to repay or reciprocate (only to give in to the demands of those with less). The emphasis on giving in to demands and being free from the obligation to repay or reciprocate is important, in theory, but not always warranted in practice.

In chapter 4, we observe a similar dynamic. While people, in theory, are committed to making themselves present to others to be demanded from, in practice, they are compelled to do so with their kin more than with others. We find that this is not only because access to territory depends upon a close-knit and enduring kin group, but because kin bring a certain amount of stability and solace to a context marked by undulating flows of abundance and lack, and, at times, what feel like unending demands and suspicions from others. These findings challenge popular representations of kinship within so-called egalitarian societies—offering a more nuanced account that shows how both legal-political and affective dimensions shape the way egalitarianism is pursued. In chapter 5, the focus is similarly on people who refuse or avoid the demands that people make of them to share without expecting repayment or reciprocation. The people in question, however, are not those ordinarily regarded as "people who help each other", but rather those who ordinarily "want to refuse you" and "want to ruin you"—in this case, black entrepreneurs engaged in informal moneylending. We find that these patterns of sharing have become the basis for enduring distinctions between *true people* and *other people*. These distinctions, on the one hand, thwart relationships of mutual understanding between creditors and debtors and, on the other hand, serve as moral discourses that guide people in their efforts to make them share without expecting repayment or reciprocation.

In chapter 6, we are confronted with the limits of these moral discourses. Where people are dependent upon one another, as they are in the encounters described in preceding chapters, they are responsive to these discourses—aware of the consequences of not taking them seriously. Where people are not dependent upon one another, or at least disproportionately so as in the case of white entrepreneurs and those they employ, these moral discourses rarely hold sway. Entrepreneurs adduce their own vulnerability, political weakness, or even experiences of exploitation within the wider networks they operate from, and in the face of low levels of transparency, these narratives remain hard to challenge. In chapter 7, we are confronted with the limits not of moral discourses that valorise redistribution but of the right, as witnessed most clearly in chapter 3, to

autonomy—to the freedom to act in manner of one's choosing. We find that there is an important caveat to this right: one should be free to act in a manner of one's choosing so long as it does not prevent others from doing the same. It is a caveat that limits violence, but it is also a caveat that makes violence difficult to deal with—especially where this violence is committed by ancestors, spirits, or agents of sorcery. We find ourselves back at the problem posed by Sahlins (2017), but in this case the "metapersons endowed with life-and-death powers over the human population" (ibid: 92) are those who "want to ruin you" but have little concern for what is good or fair. We find that Ju|'hoan speakers not only have a unique way of describing this paradox, but a means to address it—one that takes multiple forms and has important implications for current debates within the anthropology of religion and personhood.

Taken together, these chapters support the central thesis that experiences of uncertainty both shape the way people pursue the values ordinarily associated with egalitarianism, and are, in part, generative of them. Different perceptions of trustworthiness emerge in numerous forms throughout the text, from the general trust that *true people* value redistribution and autonomy and *other people* do not, to the specific trust in persons to make themselves present when the balance of wealth shifts or to commit to reciprocating or repaying where they agree to it, or in those who "have each other". Different experiences of uncertainty similarly emerge, from the uncertainty people experience as they turn to those whose future movements and motives are unknown, to the uncertainty people experience as they try to get by, to keep up their obligations to kin, and to maintain their status as members within a region characterised by multiple fluctuations. The central tension that emerges is between being free to choose when and how you present yourself to others, keeping up one's obligations to family, and supporting broader processes of redistribution.

What has appeared in the regional and broader literature on "egalitarian societies" as a relatively coherent system of values appears here as loosely related forms of sharing and patterns of movement that emerge from different experiences of uncertainty. Rather than rooted in more existential concerns with equality of wealth and status, these appear rooted in mutual vulnerabilities. Over time, and in response to the "waves" of history within the region that have shaped the way people understand one another, people have come to regard themselves broadly as "people who help each other", in opposition to those who do not and who are wealthy. The way they pursue these values, move within

the landscape, and think about those they encounter within it, nevertheless, continues to be shaped by the experiences of informality, marginality, and precarity they are currently faced with.

Where this thesis pushes disciplinary debates concerning egalitarianism in new directions, then, is not in the typical vein of saying these people have historically not been as isolated as previously depicted, nor in the vein of saying they are not as committed to egalitarianism as has commonly been suggested. The thesis certainly challenges the suggestion, as Frankland (2016: 562) puts it, that egalitarian societies inhabit "a particular and singular mode of… being", but only insofar as it seeks to situate the recurring moral claims that emerge in these accounts in common contemporary experiences, rather than strictly in the "long duration" and "resilience" of certain "socio-aesthetic standards" (Lewis 2015). The ethnographic writing on egalitarianism within these accounts has been enormously rich, and it has shed light on the values through which redistribution and autonomy (the two pillars, so to speak, of "egalitarianism") may be realised and maintained—all things being equal, that is. It is this latter aspect that I have been drawn to: what are the conditions of possibility for egalitarianism to be realised and maintained, for the values ordinarily associated with egalitarianism to have such effects? What are the conditions, for example, for sharing to *not* be a form of exchange (as Woodburn [1998] argues)—in other words, to *not* depend on trust and transparency? This approach has been productive in allowing me to ask a different set of questions about how these values get experienced. It has been productive in allowing me to look back and consider the broader conditions from which they seem to emerge, as well as those within which they no longer seem to matter.

The portrait that emerges is one that resonates with broader accounts of people "situated between global settings of financialised capital on the one hand and impoverished local arenas where cash-based economic transfers predominate on the other" (Hull and James 2012: 1). It is also a more uniquely Namibian, and distinctly Ju|'hoan, story. We see a group of people who, like many others in southern Africa, are still grappling with the legacies of the apartheid system. They are readily confronted with the way it defined people and segregated them into "homelands", and the way it transformed them from an important labour force in the process of urbanisation and in the war, into a group of people who, in terms of their labour, "simply no longer [have] any use" (Li cited in Ferguson 2015: 11). As witnessed across southern Africa, access to

formal sector employment has long been a key source of subsistence, as—more recently—have the cash grants that have started to replace them. Access to both has been crucial for both recipients and the broader networks within which they operate. An informal economy has developed around the need to make these sources of income trickle down through the community and stabilise what are undulating flows of abundance and lack. What makes this story especially Namibian, is the broader context within which this informal economy is situated. This is less a 'classic' story of people migrating between rural peripheries and urban centres than one of people moving between rural and urban spaces within one communal land region to which they, in theory, have exclusive rights to manage and benefit from. They are an empowered, indigenous group who make choices over how land and resources are managed and used and have a clear sense of themselves as "people who help each other". But they are also a captive clientele, at the mercy of outsiders who provide the cash influx upon which this communal conservancy depends.

As much as this thesis contributes to studies of the relationship between state processes and informal economic activities, it goes beyond the well-worn approach of tracing the way state-regulated or "formal" economic arrangements interpenetrate with non-regulated, "informal" economic ones (see Hull and James 2012). It does so by tracing the sorts of moral claims that people make and deliberate over, as they move through the landscape and navigate the diverse relationships of dependency that sustain them. We find that people experience a certain degree of ambivalence, and are at times confronted by contradiction, as they go about trying to survive and to take part in their own "community's reflection on codified and consciously articulated ideals and values" (Robbins cited in Mattingly and Throop 2018: 479). The discussion is one that speaks to current efforts within the anthropology of ethics and morality, to strike a balance between what people learn from others, and what Keane (2016: 30-31) calls the "ethical affordances" that come from evaluating "themselves, other persons, and their circumstances" in the process of pursuing a good life. It is closely aligned to what Jackson (2012, 2017) refers to as "existential anthropology", except that the central tension is not between "a sense of ourselves as singular and a sense of ourselves as social" (Jackson 2012: 6). Within the case presented here, the tension is twofold. It tracks its way between two sets of polarities: first, what certain ways of sharing or movement should afford, in theory, and what they do afford, in practice, and second, diverse hopes and commitments

and the way they relate to one another. In terms of the latter, one enduring example is the tension between autonomy and redistribution—what Butler (cited in Mattingly and Throop 2018: 484) refers to as "the paradox of subjectivation—the paradox that arises when the act of submitting oneself to norms itself potentiates possibilities for agency"—but it is not the only example. There are other tensions, too—not between values that, under the right conditions, complement one another, but between value projects that are more profoundly in competition with one another.

What does this story, concerning how uncertainty shapes sharing, mean for the people this thesis is about, and for broader efforts to address global inequality? It points to two primary challenges: 1) how to improve the willingness with which people make themselves open and vulnerable to one another, and 2) how to foster moral accountability. In recent years, the push for new redistributive regimes, such as a Basic Income Grant or a Universal Basic Income, has been at the forefront of challenging the way that people, and the things they produce, are valued. As Ferguson (2015) shows, these represent efforts to uncouple the right to resources from the labour that one contributes to their production or extraction, or from the idea of being "deserving". These efforts are synonymous with the logic of demand sharing that this thesis examines in depth. As I have shown, however, and as Ferguson (2015: 29) predicts, these efforts are limited by the access people have to knowledge about the distribution of resources and by unequal possibilities for their use. With respect to the latter, there has been a long-standing commitment by scholars of political economy to understand why the political and economic opportunities available to people vary so widely. With respect to the former, there has been a recent emphasis on whistleblowing and new technologies—most notably, the development of blockchain and distributed ledgers (see Maurer and DuPont 2015, Swartz 2017, Nelms *et al* 2017) which have aimed to make the distribution and flow of resources transparent.

This thesis raises new research questions on how we might bring these initiatives together—on how, in short, those who have more than they can consume or readily use may give themselves up to others. Within the case presented here, the emphasis is not on forcing people to redistribute, but fostering spaces of moral accountability geared towards compelling people to do so. The scalability of these processes, and the new forms of governance that these processes may call for (see Lehdonvirta and Robleh 2016, Dedeo 2017), are themes for future research. For the Ju|'hoansi of the Nyae conservancy, these

processes may offer new opportunities for redistribution, but they are also sources of ambivalence. If these succeed, the ambivalence of the future may not be that which comes from pursuing egalitarianism in the face of uncertainty, but from pursuing their rights as a distinct traditional community in the face of a new politics of distribution.

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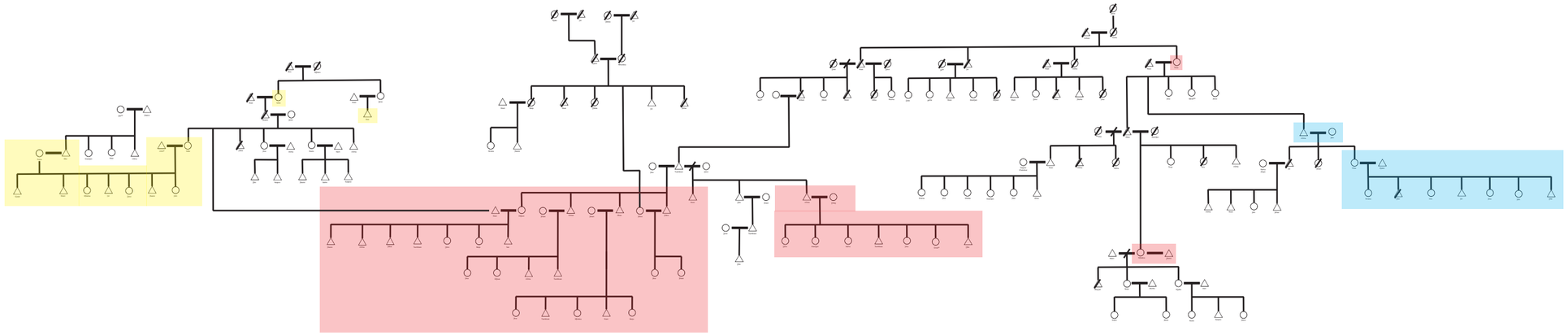
## Appendix



Sub-village 1

Sub-village 2

Sub-village 3