

SOME NOTES ON !KUNG BUSHMEN KINSHIP NOMENCLATURE AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

→ paternal grandfather

The !Kung Bushmen in Nyae/Nyae use only 87 names; 46 for men and 41 for women (L. Marshall, 1957. The kin terminology system of the !Kung Bushmen. Africa 27:1-25). Because there were over 600 people in Nyae Nyae in 1957 (L. Marshall, 1960. !Kung Bushmen Bands. Africa 30:325-365), many people had the same name. There were dozens of men named Toma, for example. "A man invariably names his first-born son for his father (that is, the child's FaFa), and his first-born daughter for his mother (that is, the child's FaMo). If he has more than one wife, he names the first-born son and daughter of each wife for his father and mother, respectively A man usually but not always names his second-born son after the child's MoFa and the second-born daughter for her MoMo Subsequent children are usually named for the siblings of their father or mother, or for the spouses of those siblings." (Marshall, 1957). From these rules it follows that a person can have the same name as someone else in his own generation or his grandparent's generation. But he can never have the same name as a parent or a child. The !Kung say that it would be "madness" [crazy?] for a man to name a son for himself or a daughter after her mother (Marshall, 1957).

. . . a man always applies the term //ga to a woman who has the same name as his mother. !Kung rules of marriage forbid a man to marry such a woman . . .

When a man marries he always goes to live with his wife's parents . . .

A man must remain in bride service until his wife bears three children. . . . Since girls are married young . . . a man may have to wait five or six years before his wife's first child is born, and several more for the next two. To spend ten years in brideservice is not unusual. When it is over, a man may finally choose where he will live . . . and may contract his own subsequent marriages.

Rain is scarce and spotty To exploit the resources of a region, one must have legitimate access to them. Access to food and water can either be inherited or acquired through marriage. In each region of Nyae Nyae there lives a "core" of lineal descendants who "own" . . . the food and water in their region . . . Ownership is inherited by both men and women, so that all people have the right to exploit the resources of the territory where either of their parents were born. These inherited rights are inalienable: no matter where you decide to live, you always have the right to the resources of your home "territory."

If you are not an "owner" of food and water in a territory, you can still exploit the food and water there if you marry an "owner." Then, you and your close relatives (siblings and parents) acquire the right to collect food and take water in that territory. In turn, a person who marries one of your close relatives gets the same right, as do his or her close relatives. Thus in any given territory there is usually a core of "owners" related by blood, and several chains of affines . . .

People exercise their rights to food and water by visiting. If one region is having a bad year, people make extended visits to their "connections" in other territories. Visiting distributes people more or less evenly with respect to food and water; or, looking at it the other way, distributes food and water more or less evenly to all people . . . We can therefore view bride service as a system of exchange in which each !Kung band gives up men in return for access to food and water. . .

The more meat a man distributes the more closely his family is bound in the web of favors and obligations. And the more favors a man is owed, the greater is his family's security and influence. The !Kung . . . say that distributing meat increases the "weight" of a family (This narrative condensed and modified from the study guide accompanying the film "An Argument about a Marriage").