

1 Introduction

The Kalahari desert is a large sandy area of southern Africa. It lies mainly in two countries, Botswana and Namibia.

Bushmen were the first people to live in the Kalahari and have stayed for many thousands of years. There are many different Bushman peoples, who each speak a different language. When Europeans came to southern Africa in the

seventeenth century, they thought all these groups were the same and called them Bushmen. Bushmen are also known as Bushpeople, *San*, or *Basarwa*, but they have no agreed name for themselves. Sometimes Bushmen are called the hunter-gatherers of the Kalahari, because of their traditional hunting and gathering way of life. It is more accurate to think of them as several different groups than as one united body, although a hunting and gathering lifestyle has, until recently, been common to all the groups. They have long lived 'from the bush', by hunting wild animals and gathering wild plants.

The Kalahari is hot and dry, but in most places the sandy soil is covered with grass. Some areas have trees too. Water is scarce, and the people of the Kalahari have to travel great distances to use it, either from wells or from flat areas where it collects in the rainy season. Some very deep wells, called boreholes, have been drilled to supply water for cattle and goats. Although Bushmen traditionally do not keep livestock of their own, many of them look after livestock for other people.

The hunting and gathering way of life in the Kalahari is now threatened in a number of ways. Some people simply want the land of the Bushmen for herding livestock, for mining or to make huge wildlife reserves. Other people feel that the traditional Bushman lifestyle is a bad one and must be changed. Bushman groups like the *!Kung* and the *Nharo* are changing to adapt to different ways of life, but often they have no say in how they are to change. Too many people forget that these were the original dwellers of the Kalahari and have at least as much right to be there as anyone else.



▲ *An old !Kung woman from Namibia. She is holding her identity papers and voter registration card. Bushmen who can't read or write can vote by recognising the colours and symbol of the political party they want to vote for.*



▲ *A mother and child in the Kalahari. Although it is called a desert, many parts of the Kalahari are covered with grass and trees which grow in the dry, sandy soil.*

Bushman languages

There are many different Bushman languages, but all of them have unusual 'clicking' sounds that are rare in other languages of the world. There are five special symbols used to show these 'clicks' in writing. / is the symbol for a sucking sound much like the English expression of annoyance, 'tsk tsk'. ≠ is similar, but with a sharper movement of the tongue. // is a different 'click' sound, much like the one cowboys use to make their horses go. ! is a popping sound a bit like the noise of a cork coming out of a bottle, made by quickly drawing the tongue from the roof of the mouth. Finally, ǀ is a kissing sound. Bushmen mix these 'clicks' with other sounds to make words. For instance, in the !Xo Bushman language, ǀwa ǀwa means 'baby'.

Practise saying the clicks with these words. You'll find out what these words mean in English somewhere in this book.

/ga
≠obe
!gau

/wi /um
!huma
//haidin !wobe

One unusual non-click sound is the x, which is like the ch in the Scottish word loch (lake). For instance, xam in the Nharo Bushman language means lion.



The Kalahari and its people

The Kalahari is vast. It is as big as California in the USA, or nearly the size of France in Europe. Many groups of peoples live there, not just the Bushmen, though the Bushmen are the Kalahari's most famous inhabitants.

BUSHMEN AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS

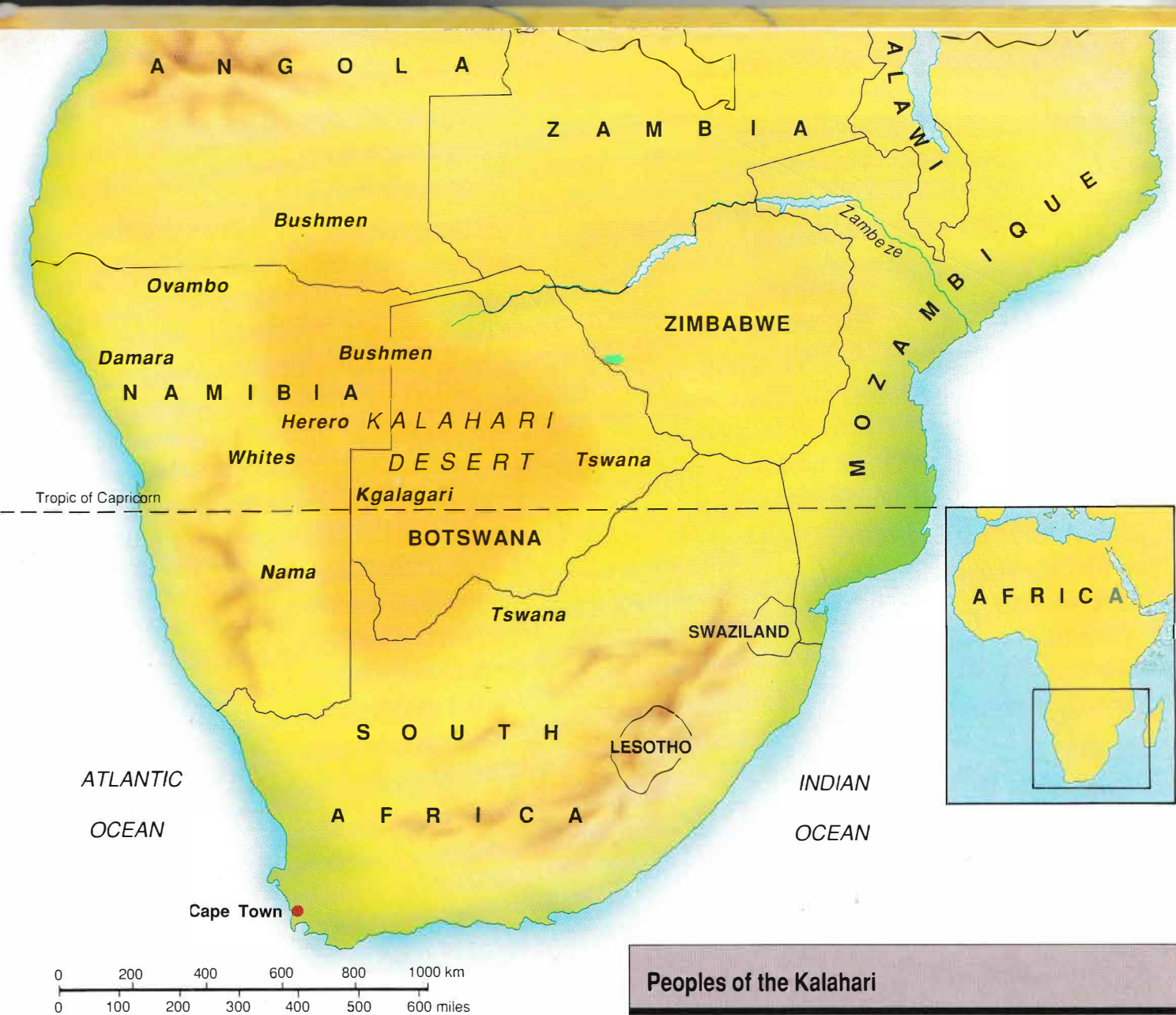
Bushmen are the poorest people in the Kalahari, but they live a lifestyle that should, in some ways, be the envy of people elsewhere. They

know the land well, and they have been able to make a living from it in spite of the scarce resources of their environment. They value things that are less important to members of the other groups. They value their free time. They value friendship and living closely with each other. They choose not to store up wealth, but rather to share their wealth with the rest of the community.

Bushmen include over a dozen different peoples who live far away from each other.



▲ A !Kung man hanging out his best clothes to dry. Although Bushmen keep much of their tradition, many now live in permanent settlements and wear Western-style clothing.



Groups that are hundreds of kilometres apart may not even know about each other. The *!Kung*, the *!Xo*, the *Nharo*, the *G/wi*, the *G/lana*, the *≠Haba*, the *Hail/om*, the *Kwa*, the *Deti* and the *Shua* are just some of many such groups that live in and around the Kalahari desert. Some of these groups are quite large, numbering more than 30,000. Others are small, numbering only a few hundred.

Each Bushman group is best thought of as a people who all speak the same language, rather than as a single community of people who live together. Bushmen generally live in very small bands of only about twenty to fifty people.

Peoples of the Kalahari

Bushmen The 'red people'. They have traditionally lived by hunting and gathering, but some also keep livestock.

Nama and Damara Related to the Bushmen, they also speak a 'click' language. Traditionally, they are cattle and goat herders.

Herero, Tswana, Kgalagari and others These are black peoples who live mainly by herding cattle and goats. Some also have farms and ranches. Others have shops, and some work as civil servants, mechanics and in other occupations.

Ovambo A black people who keep cattle and grow crops.

Whites, mainly Afrikaners Originally from Holland, Germany and Britain, they live mostly by ranching. Some also have shops in the towns.

These bands have traditionally moved from place to place, each within its own area. Today, Bushman bands sometimes have more than fifty members, because they may come together to live around towns and villages. Yet some bands are even smaller than in the past. This can be the result of people scattering into groups of one or two families in search of distant water supplies and better sources of the wild plants and animals they need for food. It can also occur when they take jobs as herders and live with the ranchers who have moved into the Kalahari.

Non-Bushmen who live in the Kalahari include both black and white peoples. Some Bushmen call themselves 'red people' to make it clear that they are different. The blacks are mainly herders, and the whites are mainly ranchers. Both have cattle and other livestock. The herders move

their livestock from place to place and have a traditional African lifestyle. The ranchers run their activities more like a business. They fence their land in, and generally sell their cattle for slaughter more frequently than the traditional herders do.

Most Bushmen can't afford to own herds of animals. Some have goats of their own, but often they spend much of their time looking after other people's animals in exchange for cash, food or other forms of payment. Otherwise, they rely for food on plants they find growing wild in the desert, and on large and small game animals. Only a few Bushmen live in towns and hold regular jobs. *Nharo*, *!Kung* and the others are all caught between wanting to keep their traditional hunting and gathering culture, and wanting the luxuries that are enjoyed by other people.



▲ *A Herero woman in her characteristic dress. The Herero still wear the kind of clothes that missionaries gave them in the nineteenth century. Even some !Kung women have begun to dress in this style.*

The Damara and Nama

Two other groups of herders are the *Damara* and *Nama*, who are related to the Bushmen. They live in Namibia and keep cattle and goats. In the past the *Nama* were called Hottentots, but they don't like to be called that. Hottentot meant 'person who stutters' or 'can't speak properly' and was the name given to them by the Dutch settlers in South Africa, who misunderstood the sounds of their language. *Nama* and *Damara* sometimes call themselves *Khoekhoe*, which means 'the people of people' or 'the best people' and this is the name of their language. The *Khoekhoe* language has 'clicks' like Bushman languages, and is especially similar to the language of the *Hai//om* Bushmen.



▲ A Nama man in South Africa in 1904.

HERDERS

Among the herders are the *Herero*, the *Tswana* and the *Kgalagari*. Each group relies on cattle-herding. They are more wealthy than most of the Bushmen, and many *!Kung*, in particular, work for them as herdsmen.

The *Herero* are the wealthiest. There are over 100,000 *Herero* in Namibia, Botswana and Angola, where they keep their large herds of cattle and live on a diet of meat and yoghurt with few vegetable foods. They are known for their beautiful clothes, and they still dress as they did in the nineteenth century. The women's long, brightly-coloured dresses are worn with lots of petticoats and scarves.

The *Tswana* are a large group, numbering more than two million. Most *Tswana* live south of the Kalahari, in South Africa and south-eastern Botswana (which means land of the *Tswana*). Those in south-eastern Botswana keep

their cattle to the north, deep in the Kalahari, where they employ *Kwa*, *Deti* and others as herdsmen and servants. The *Kgalagari* (the g's are pronounced like h's) are a smaller group. Although they are related to the *Tswana* cattle-herders, some of them live to a great extent by hunting and gathering, just like the Bushmen. The word Kalahari comes from the name of this group, which arrived there over two hundred years ago from the area that is now South Africa.

RANCHERS

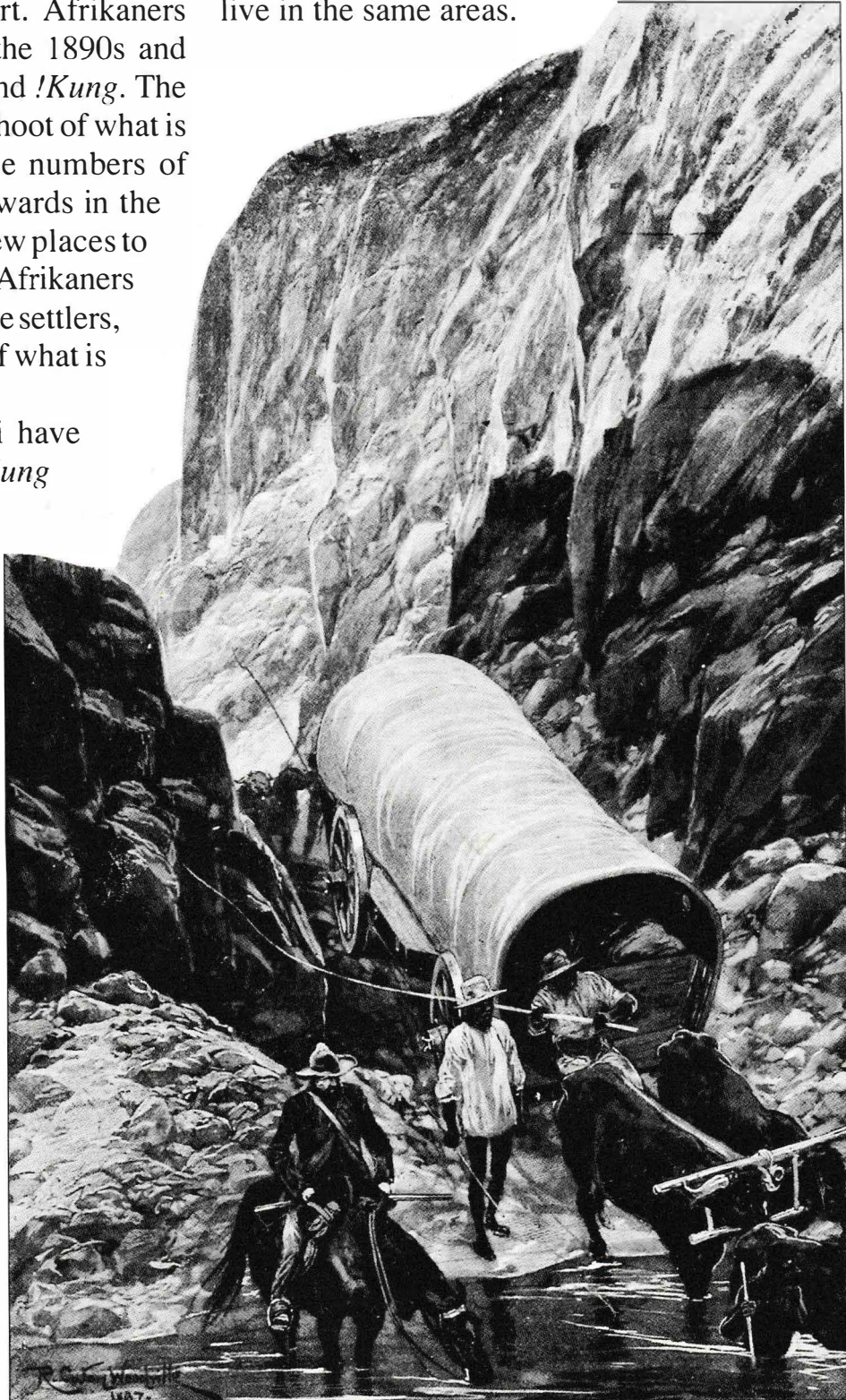
Among the ranchers are people of British, German and Dutch origins. They are descended from colonists who came to Africa generations ago. Many of them are very rich compared to the other people who live in the Kalahari. They own large ranches, even in the middle of the desert. The whites tend to have the best land and the best water holes.

Many of the whites are Afrikaners, white Africans whose forefathers were the Dutch settlers of South Africa. Their language, called Afrikaans, is very similar to Dutch; it also has a number of French words and some that are native to Africa. One of these is *buchu*, which is a herb that grows in the desert. Afrikaners first settled in the Kalahari in the 1890s and learned to live with the *Nharo* and *!Kung*. The Kalahari Afrikaners were an offshoot of what is known as the Great Trek. Huge numbers of Afrikaners had journeyed northwards in the nineteenth century looking for new places to live. The ancestors of the Kalahari Afrikaners travelled further than the rest of the settlers, who stayed in the northern part of what is now South Africa.

Many whites in the Kalahari have learned to speak the *Nharo* and *!Kung* languages, but today's white ranchers are often less friendly to the Bushmen than their ancestors were. They want to raise and sell as many cattle as they can in order to make a profit. This makes life difficult for Bushmen, especially for the *Nharo*. It is their land too, and the more livestock there are, the more difficult it is for the

Nharo to hunt and gather. The livestock can ruin an area where Bushmen get their vegetable foods, and ranchers often kill all the game animals for themselves. Yet since the people and livestock have to use the same water supplies, Bushmen and livestock must live in the same areas.

An Afrikaner on the Great Trek (1836–40) with his black servants. The Afrikaners had a rough journey, crossing mountains as well as dry, almost desert areas of South Africa on their route northwards. Some Trekkers eventually ended their journey and settled in Bushman lands. ►





The Bushman way of life

Because they know their country so well, Bushmen can have an easier time getting food than we might expect. The adults often spend only a few hours a day working at hunting and gathering. Sometimes they do not go out at all, but spend their time telling stories of their past hunts, or in telling myths about their gods – which include the Sky, the Moon and the Rain – about the animal world, and even about why they became hunter-gatherers.

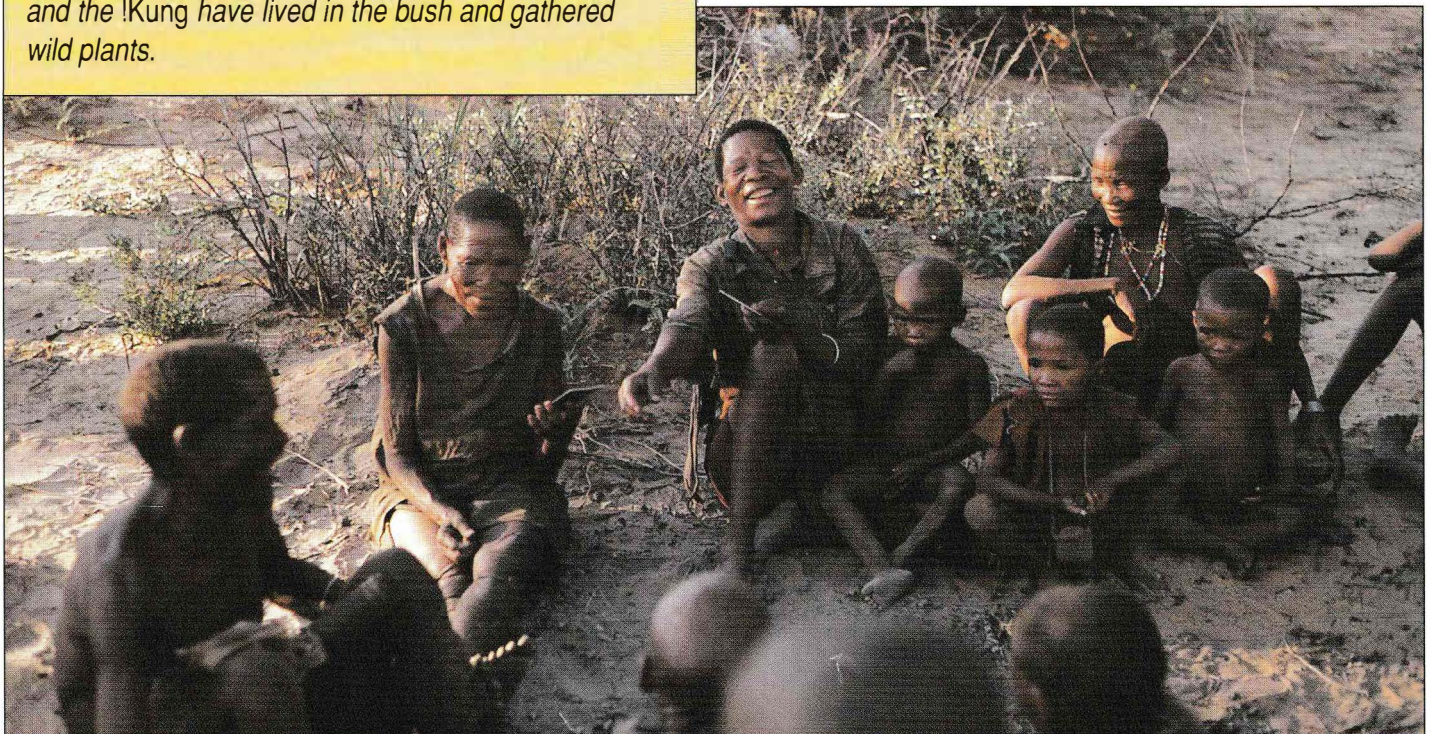
STORY-TELLING

All Bushmen have a knowledge of traditional myths and stories. The */Xam*, a group that has now entirely died out, were the most famous for this. In the late nineteenth century, several */Xam* were arrested for cattle theft and other offences. The police took them to Cape Town, where a German scientist, Wilhelm Bleek, interviewed them over a period of several years. Though very sadly the */Xam* language is now dead, the myths the */Xam* people told are well known through the work of this scientist. The */Xam* prisoners told many stories about */Kaggen*, a god who could take the form of a stick insect.

▼ *Kalahari women and children. Bushmen do not spend all their time getting food. In fact, they spend much of their time sitting and talking, usually around the campfire.*

The story of the tug-of-war

One day God decided to hold a tug-of-war. He made a rope and gave one end to the !Kung and the other end to the Tswana. They pulled and pulled. Eventually, the rope broke. The end the Tswana had was made of leather. The end the !Kung had was made of grass. From then on, the Tswana have had cattle for leather, and the !Kung have lived in the bush and gathered wild plants.



In *!Xam* myths, *!Kaggen* creates other living creatures and gives them their unique characteristics. He also tricks various animals into doing things they do not want to do.

In *!Kung* and *Nharo* stories, the jackal is an especially important character. Like the *!Xam* stick insect he tricks the other animals and always gets his way. Today, *Nharo* sometimes tell stories about the jackal tricking the Afrikaners as well as the other animals. Such stories are designed to show that the *Nharo* are clever, even though they are poor.

The story of the jackal and the hyena

The Afrikaner had two servants, Jackal and Hyena. Jackal didn't want to work for the Afrikaner. He went to sleep while Hyena worked, but the Afrikaner didn't know this. He gave them both some milk from his cows. Then Jackal told Hyena that the milk wasn't very good, and Hyena gave Jackal his share. Jackal drank it: he had tricked both the Afrikaner and Hyena.

In this story, the jackal represents the *Nharo* storyteller. The hyena is an animal hated by the *Nharo*, and here represents any people who are stupid. Like the jackal, the *Nharo* believe they may eventually regain some power in the wider world. This is a theme they like to have in their stories.

GAMES AND TOYS

Bushmen also spend a lot of time playing games, including ball games and others which are similar to board games.

One of these is called *!wi /um*, which means 'one two' in *Nharo*. It is called this because it involves counting. *Nharo* do not have boards, so they lay out their game area in the sand. They make up to sixty-four small holes, set out in four rows; a back row and a front row for each of the two players. They play the game with small stones for counters, starting with two in each of the holes in the back rows and in half of the holes in the front rows. Each player drops stones in each of the holes in turn. If they land on a hole in just the right way, they can collect the other person's stones and continue the round. If they miss, then they give up their turn, and the other person may win their stones. If this sounds





▲ Children playing at skipping. Bushman children in the Kalahari learn to hunt and gather food when quite young, but they also have time for games.

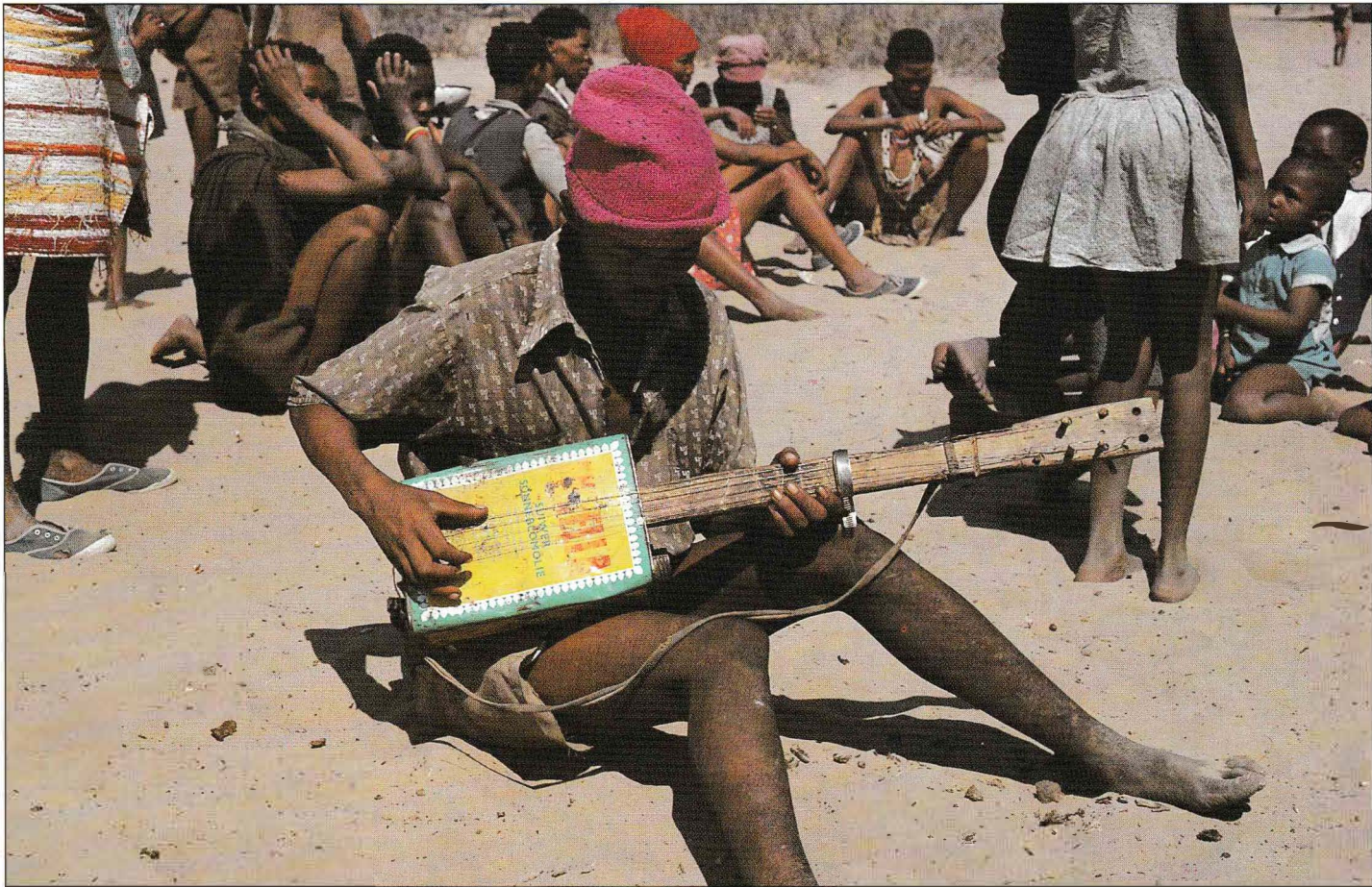
complicated, it is! The *Herero* cattle-herders who live near the *Nharo* play the same game. The difference is that the *Herero* play it for cattle, with each stone representing a cow to be won or lost.

Another popular pastime is making toy trucks. *Nharo*, *Hailom* and *!Kung* children all make these from wire and tin cans, some with steering wheels that really work. The bigger toy cars are half a metre long and made of up to thirty different parts. *Nharo* children can make them from memory, creating the different kinds of truck they have seen in a town or along the road.

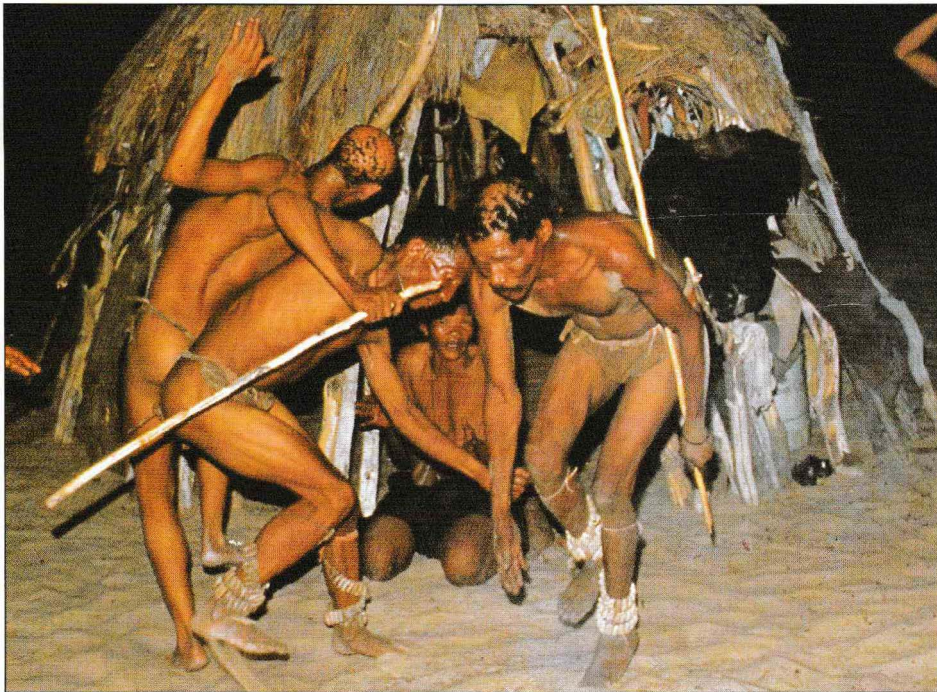
MUSIC AND DANCING

The *!Kung*, the *Nharo* and other people of the Kalahari perform their own music. They sing to accompany their dances, but also play a number of musical instruments. Mouth bows are played with one end of the bow in the mouth, while the string is tapped with the finger or a stick. Thumb pianos are blocks of wood with prongs that can be plucked with the thumbs. Each prong is tuned to a different note, and *!Kung* and *Nharo*, in particular, can play a variety of tunes on them.

Whilst musical instruments are played purely for entertainment, singing and dancing are also



▲ Bushmen play musical instruments, and many are highly skilled musicians. They are also clever craftsmen. This young !Xo man from Botswana is playing a guitar which he has made from a five-litre oil can, a stick, and some wire for the strings.



◀ Men performing at a medicine dance. Medicine dances are important occasions for Bushmen. They often last all night, and people come from all around to be cured and to watch. Even non-Bushmen come, and they are cured too.

Everyone is equal

'We have no chief. Each one of us is a chief over himself', says a *!Kung* man from Botswana.

Bushmen do not have chiefs of their own. Some respect the authority of the chiefs of neighbouring peoples. Others do not recognize any chief or political leader. Leadership is something that emerges when needed, and not something Bushmen like to have pushed upon them. *!Kung* and *Hai//om* respect good hunters and good medicine men in their own communities. They respect women who are skilled in finding food, leading medicine dances and settling arguments. Yet they do not make these people their chiefs. Some of the *!Kung* recognize the local *Tswana* chief, and the *Hai//om* respect the local *Ovambo* chief.

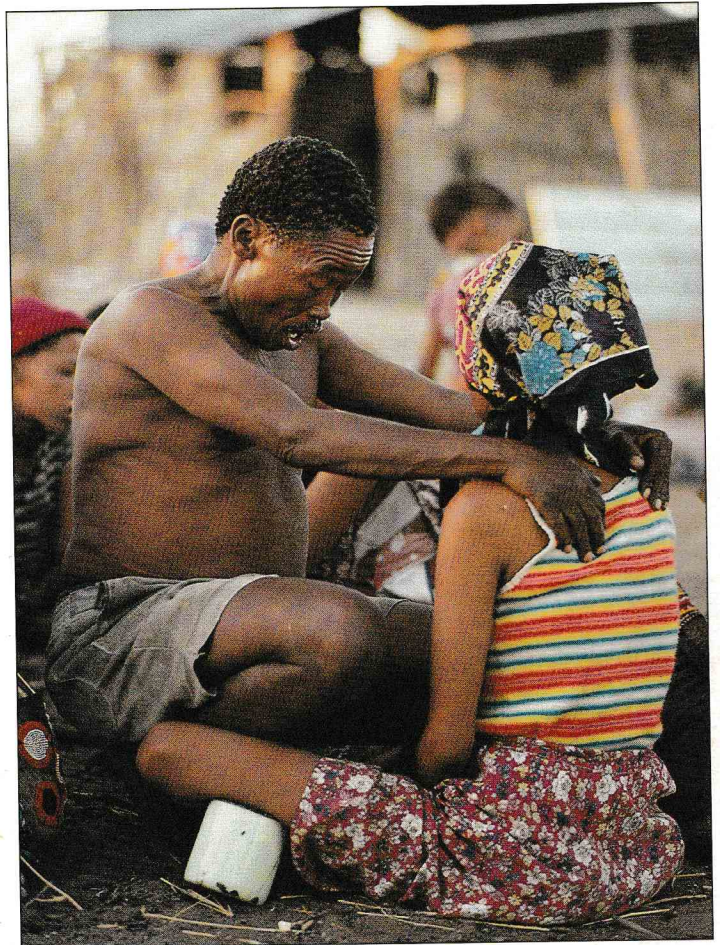
Because chiefs are almost always people from outside the community, the *!Kung* and other groups don't have much influence on the governments of their countries. This is true wherever they live: in Botswana, in Namibia and in Angola.

an important part of religion. People in the Kalahari believe that spirits come to them during their dances. Though the spirits are said to be evil, they are thought to take away illnesses and to help ease tensions among the people as they sing and dance. This is what happens in a medicine dance.

The medicine dance moves in a large circle around a fire, usually in the middle of the camp. The songs of the medicine dance are traditional. Although some *!Kung* have learned to play guitars, they will not use these to accompany the medicine dance. Nor do they use their traditional instruments.

The women and girls do most of the singing during the dance. They sit by the fire and clap in different rhythms as they sing. The men and teenage boys dance around the women, and one or two will go into trance. They say that the 'power' or 'medicine' in them 'boils'. Their hearts beat faster and faster. In their minds they

see things that ordinary people can't see, and believe they can do things other people can only imagine. A *Nharo* medicine man says he can fly across the sky as a *xam ti ≠xe*, 'the lion's eye' (meaning a shooting star). These medicine people – usually men, but sometimes women – can then use their spiritual powers to cure other members of the community. They place their hands on people's shoulders to 'pull' illnesses from them, including the bad feelings that sometimes affect small groups of people living so close together. As Bushmen settle down more and more, the number of medicine dances has been on the increase. It is as if they need to dance to cure the bad feelings that build up even more as they take on modern ways.



▲ A medicine man. While in trance, he places his hands on the woman's shoulders and 'pulls' the illness from her body.

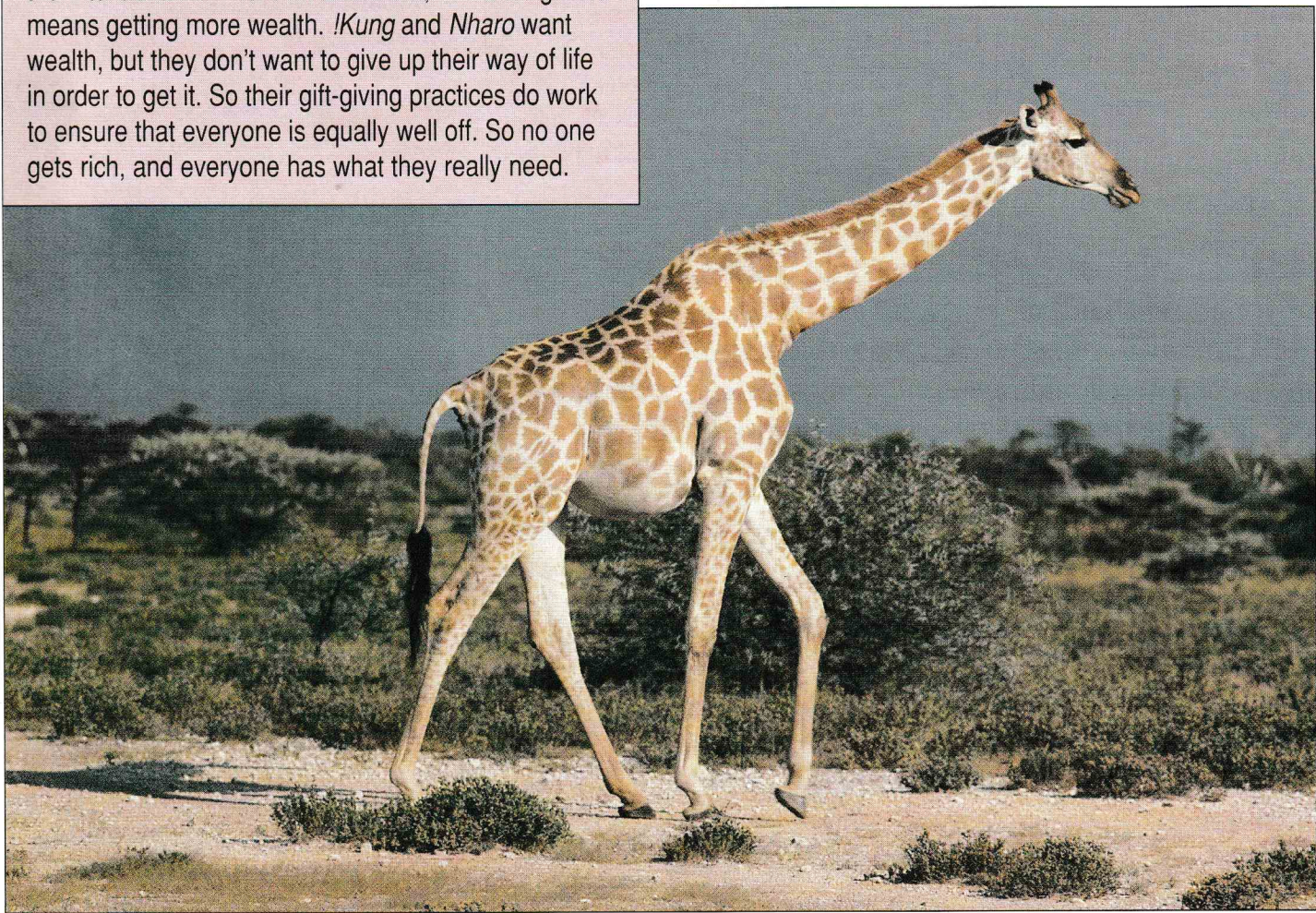
Sharing

Demi, a !Kung from Gautsha has said: *'The worst thing for us is not giving gifts. If two people don't like each other, one gives a gift and the other has to take it. This brings peace between them. We always give to one another. We give what we have. This is the way we live together.'*

Bushman groups are still small. Sometimes only twenty or thirty people will live together near a water hole. They like to share their food, especially meat, within the group. They give gifts to each other, and they regard it as impolite to own more than they need. Some anthropologists think this makes it difficult for them to 'advance'. For non-Bushmen, 'advancing' means getting more wealth. !Kung and Nharo want wealth, but they don't want to give up their way of life in order to get it. So their gift-giving practices do work to ensure that everyone is equally well off. So no one gets rich, and everyone has what they really need.

FAMILY LIFE

Because Bushman bands are so small, family ties are especially important. These ties include those with relatives in the band, and also with relatives in different bands. #Ka#ke and N/isa are a !Kung brother and sister who live in Botswana. !Kung name their children after their grandparents. Therefore, #Ka#ke has the same name as his grandfather, and N/isa shares her name with her grandmother. The !Kung believe that everyone sharing the same name is related. When N/isa meets another girl named N/isa, she calls her 'cousin'. When she grows up, her husband will not be named #Ka#ke. To marry



▲ Some game animals, such as this giraffe, are very large. They are far too big for just a hunter and his family to eat. The meat from a giraffe will be shared between several hunters and their families. Often every member of the band will get some, and some will go to relatives in other bands.



▲ *Women making traditional jewellery. First, they cut thick ostrich eggshells into small pieces. Then they drill holes into them and string them. Finally they rub the strings of beads to make them smooth. These beautiful necklaces take many hours to make and are highly valued, both by Bushmen and by outsiders.*

someone called #Ka#ke would be like marrying her brother. Because the !Kung have relatively few names for people, everyone can trace a relationship to everyone else, even if they have never met.

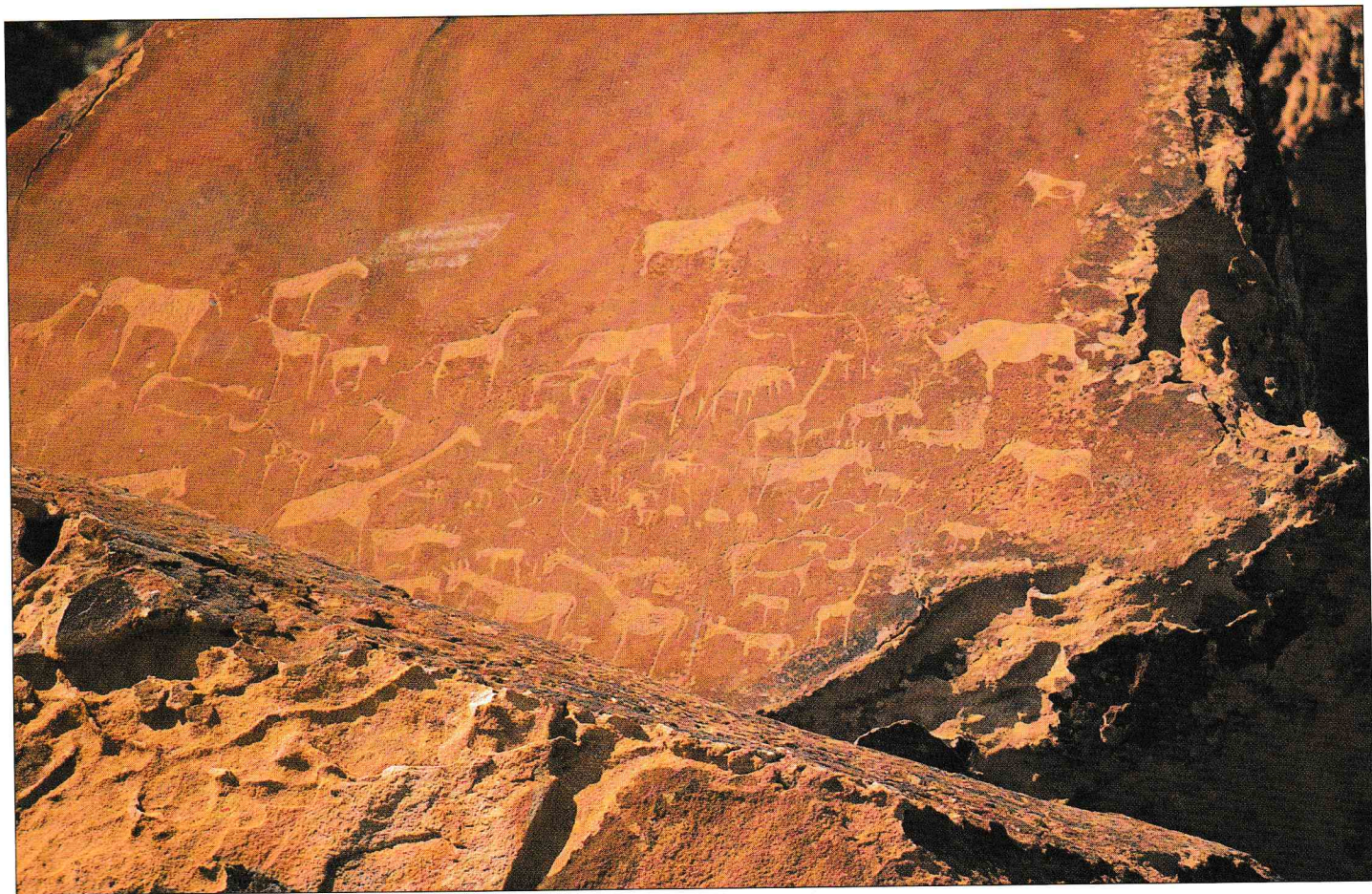
The !Kung share meat with their relatives, since the animals they hunt are often too big for just a few people to eat. They visit their relatives in other bands frequently, even across the international borders. However, this is becoming more difficult nowadays. Their traditional way of life depends on being able to keep in touch. They can't do this if they are forced to move away from their own lands. Most of them have

never learned to read and so they have no way of writing to each other. That is why visiting is so important to them.

Other Bushman groups have different practices from the !Kung. But they all have in common a desire to keep in touch with kin, and to share things within the family and within the community at large.

CULTURE AND WORKS OF ART

In its widest sense, culture is the entire, shared way of life of a people. It is the way of life that distinguishes them from other people – their language, their religion and so on. In its narrower



▲ Rock paintings are found throughout much of southern Africa. Researchers believe that Bushmen painted them long ago to show the animals they hunted or saw when in trance, perhaps during a medicine dance (see page 15). There are only a few rock paintings in the Kalahari proper because there aren't many caves or rock walls there to paint on.

sense, culture is the art, music and literature a people has. Bushman culture is quite different from that of their neighbours, the *Herero*, *Tswana* and *Afrikaners*. The *!Kung*, the *Nharo* and the *G/wi* all have their own languages, their own styles of dress, and their own art. But the best-known art in southern Africa is that of the */Xam*, a Bushman group that once lived in South Africa but died out nearly a hundred years ago.

The */Xam* used to paint on the walls of caves in their country. Their paintings show scenes of men hunting and of medicine makers dancing, curing and turning themselves into the animals of their myths. No one alive today remembers the rock painters, and no one paints any more on

the walls of the caves in that country. The present-day Bushmen of the central Kalahari have never painted, though there are rock paintings in the north near where the *!Kung* live. The *!Kung* themselves do not know who painted them, but it was probably their ancestors or members of another hunting and gathering people who lived long ago in *!Kung* country.

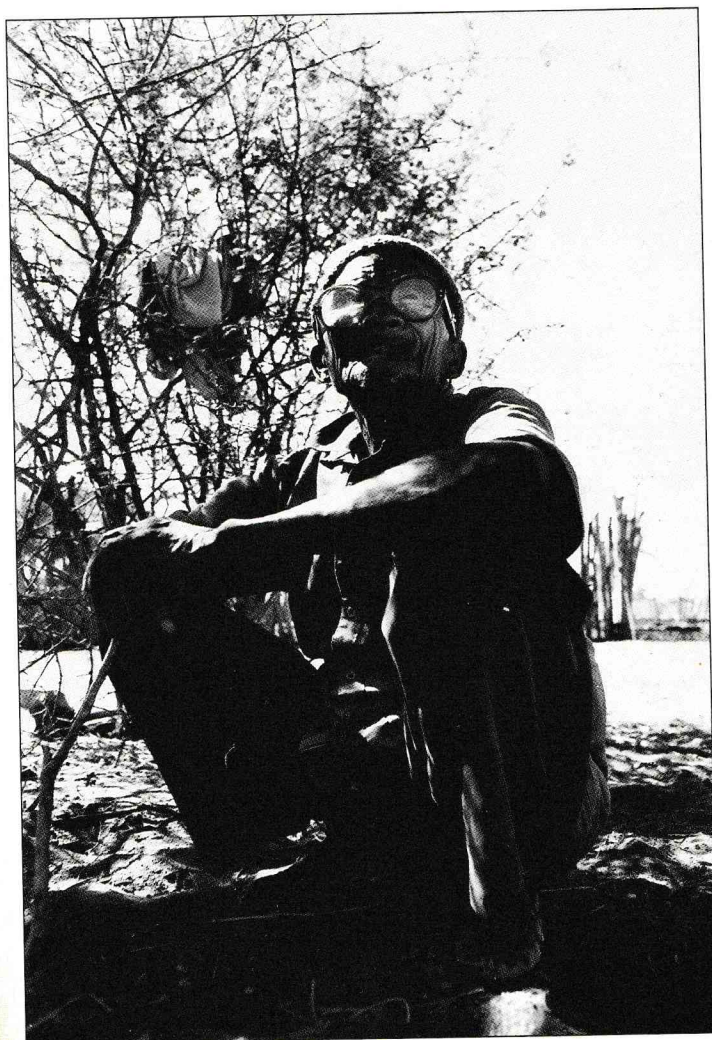
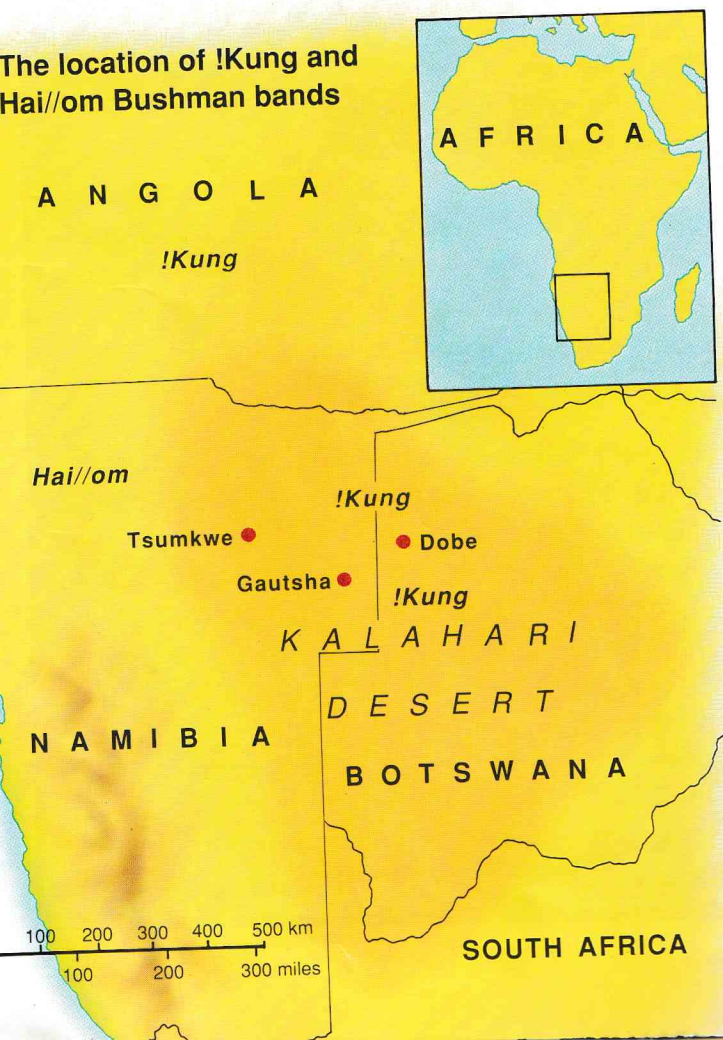
The *!Kung* and *Nharo* decorate their possessions with their own designs. They also make beautiful jewellery, using beads made from ostrich eggshells. Using the skills in arts and crafts handed down to them by their ancestors may be one way for such groups, in the future, to make a living.

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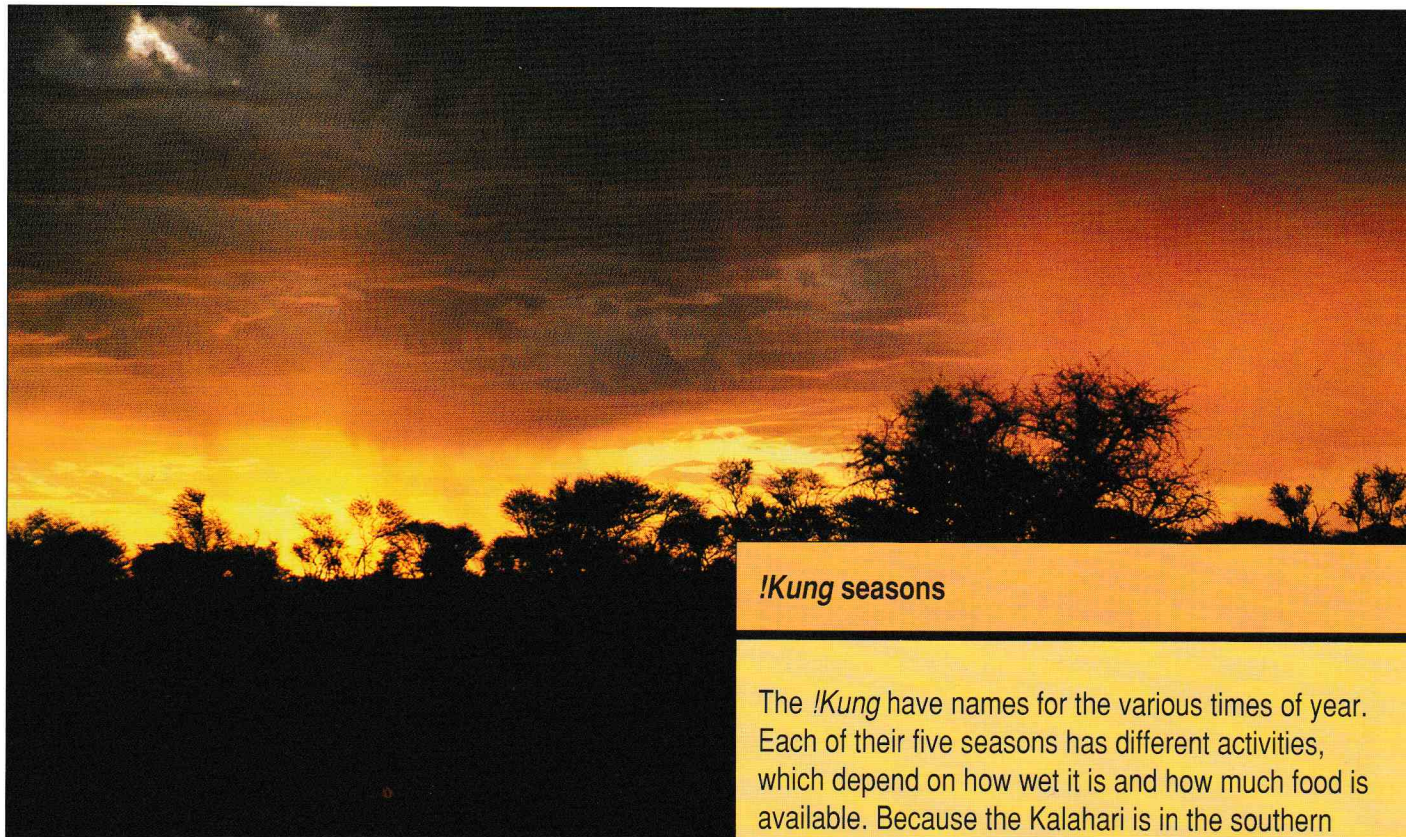
Different Bushman groups

Bushmen have a rich and varied way of life. Each group lives in its own traditional area of the Kalahari. Its members know the resources their area of the Kalahari provides. Strangers may get lost in the desert, and would certainly struggle to find enough food and water to survive. But those who grow up there can learn the skills needed to make a living off the land. Their way of life is threatened because other people want that land. Also, the temptation for Bushmen to settle down, store their food and accumulate more possessions as they see others do is sometimes too great. But their resourcefulness, which has helped them survive in the past, could help them to cope with outside pressures.

The location of !Kung and Hai//om Bushman bands



▲ This !Kung man from Namibia has seen many changes in his lifetime. When he was young, his people lived almost entirely by gathering wild foods and hunting wild animals. Then herders came with their cattle and goats. In the 1970s the South African army moved into his band area. Now the army is gone and Namibia is independent, but there are new threats to his way of life. His grandchildren may no longer have the knowledge and skills that he learned as a boy.



▲ A summer ('bara') storm at sunset. The !Kung have to rely on good rain at this time of year. Otherwise, there may be few vegetable foods for the remainder of the year.

THE !KUNG

The !Kung live in the north. They are the largest Bushman group. No one knows exactly, but there may be as many as 35,000 of them living in Namibia, Botswana and Angola. The band at Gautsha is a good example of a !Kung group. It numbers around a hundred people.

Gautsha is a water-hole near the Namibia/Botswana border, on the Namibian side. In the past, the people of Gautsha could live for much of the year from the nuts of the mongongo trees that grow in great numbers there. These nuts are full of goodness and tasty. People can live off them for long periods of time, especially if they can add other vegetables to their diet.

The people of Gautsha do not traditionally grow vegetables, but there are many foods that

!Kung seasons

The !Kung have names for the various times of year. Each of their five seasons has different activities, which depend on how wet it is and how much food is available. Because the Kalahari is in the southern hemisphere, the seasons are the opposite of those in the northern hemisphere.

!huma The spring rainy season, from October to November. At this time of year, !Kung have traditionally lived among the mongongo trees.

bara The main summer rainy season, from December to March. During this season, !Kung can often find plenty of water in the desert. Except in times of drought, they have a great variety of seasonal vegetables.

≠obe The autumn, April to May. The time of year when the most food is available, both in quantity and variety. The rains of !huma and bara produce a natural harvest which the !Kung can make use of in ≠obe. Some foods, such as mongongos, can be stored for the coming harsh seasons.

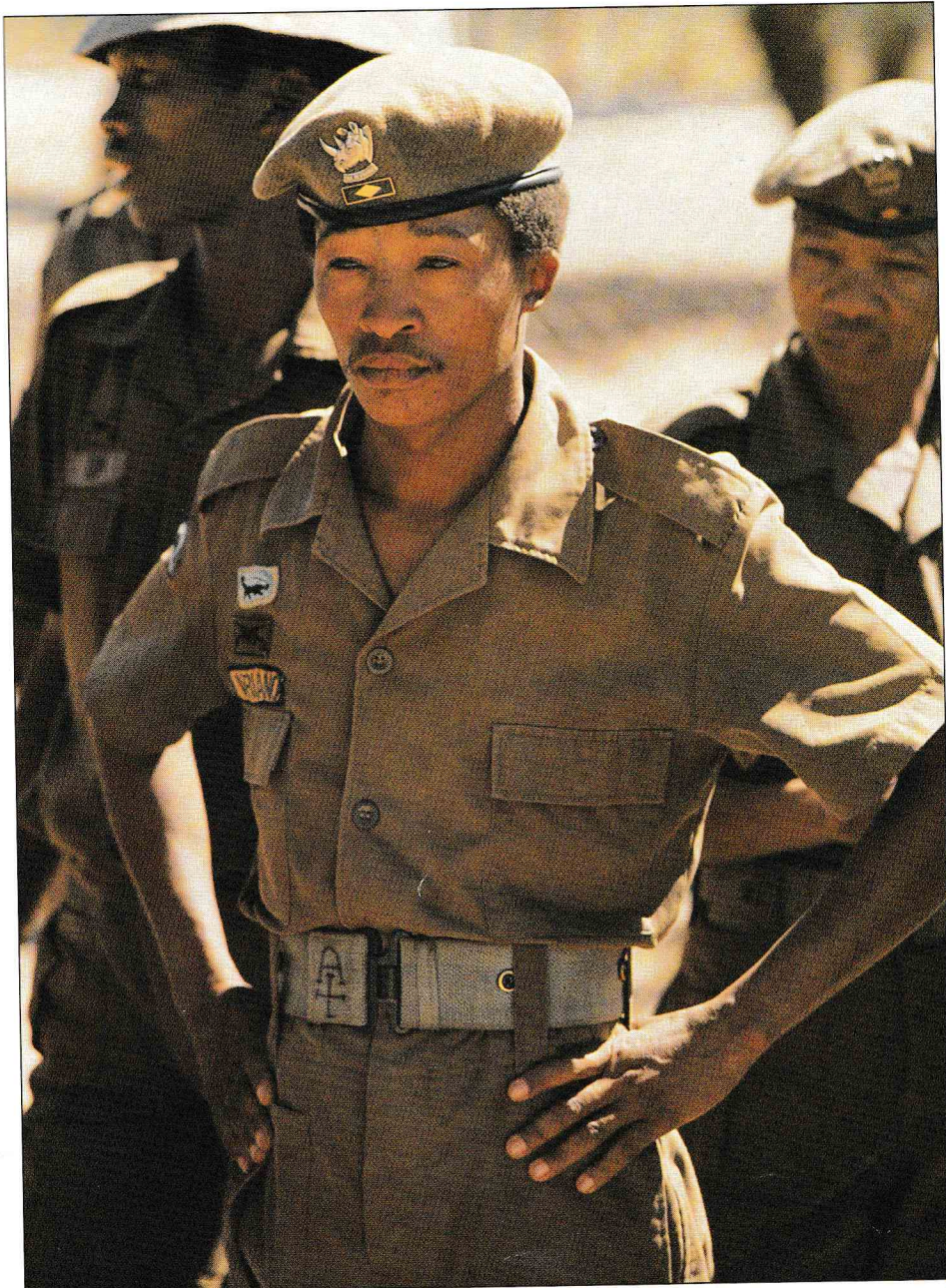
!gum The winter, from the end of May to late August. By this time the rains have ended and most !Kung have moved to their permanent water holes. It is very cold at night, often below freezing, but mild in the daytime.

!ga Early spring, from the end of August to the beginning of October. This is the worst time of year for the !Kung. Few vegetables are available, and water is scarce.

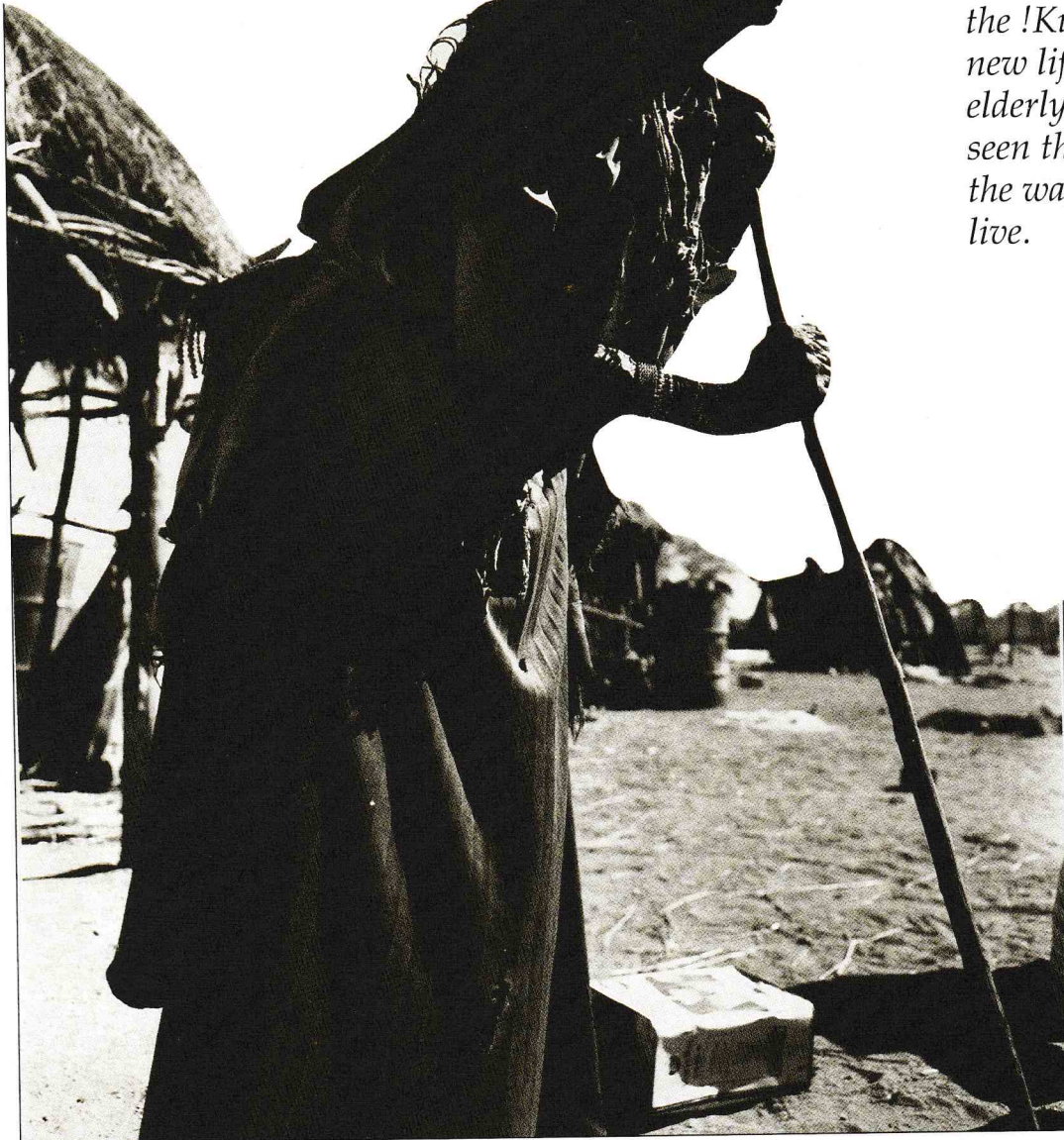
grow naturally in the area. These wild foods are different from the kinds you can buy in a shop, but there are similarities. The *!gau* and the *!goro* are types of onion, and the *//haidin !wobe* is a mushroom. The *//xa* (mongongo) and *gai* are nuts. Among root crops, the */ga* is a bit like a turnip, but much more bitter. Of the fruits the *!xo !xoni* is similar to a plum, and the *tha* is similar to an orange. The *tsi* bush produces berries, which are tasty and plentiful, and also provides the wood for spears, bows, walking sticks and digging sticks. These are only a few

of the hundreds of wild plants the people of Gautsha know about and can find in the vicinity of their water-hole.

In former times, some of the people stayed at Gautsha all year round. Others moved out to smaller water-holes at the start of the rainy season (around October). They would return to Gautsha around June the next year when the water from these dried up. Thus the population of Gautsha was always larger in the cool, dry winter months of June to September. The population of the surrounding area was larger in



◀ *A !Kung South African soldier at Tsumkwe. Between 1966 and 1989, the !Kung were caught in the war between the Namibian independence movement known as SWAPO (see page 22) and the South African army. The South Africans treated the !Kung badly, but many fought on the South African side anyway. They promised money and goods the !Kung could not otherwise afford to buy. Some !Kung say they were forced to join up and fight against their fellow Namibians.*



◀ *The war that was fought in Namibia between 1966 and 1989 is now over, and the !Kung have to change to new lifestyles again. This elderly !Kung woman has not seen the last of the changes to the way the Bushmen have to live.*

the hot summer months, when it rains from time to time.

Then, in the 1970s and 1980s, their way of life was disrupted by a war in Namibia between South Africa and an independence movement called SWAPO (the South West Africa People's Organization). At that time, South Africa ruled Namibia as a colony called South West Africa. South African soldiers set up an army base near Gautsha, at Tsumkwe. The soldiers put pressure on the !Kung of Gautsha to join them to fight their fellow Namibians. By 1982 the !Kung in

this part of Namibia were living mainly from looking after livestock and from cash paid by the South African army. Only 9 per cent of their diet came from animals they hunted, and only 12 per cent came from wild vegetables.

Many people from Gautsha went to Tsumkwe. A generation of children grew up there in the 1970s and 1980s without learning the skills needed to survive in the bush. They are now going to school and learning new skills, such as farming and wildlife management. The !Kung have to decide how they are going to cope with

modern life, whilst at the same time trying to keep what they can of their traditional knowledge. Their traditional understanding depends on its being passed from one generation to another, and their new understanding depends on getting an education in school. In the past every *!Kung* child knew where and when to gather many kinds of wild plants, how to hunt and how to live well with very few possessions. Now they can't do these things as easily as they could, but they can't get enough schooling to get jobs elsewhere in Namibia either. They have a very difficult future.

The fighting ended in 1989, and Namibia became independent in 1990. Now people have

gone back to Gautsha, but they can never go back completely to their old way of life. They want to be able to keep some of their traditions, but still have new clothes, radios, bicycles and other things. The mongongo trees are still there, but people have got used to eating the greater variety of foods they can get in the shop that was built nearby during the war.

What the *!Kung* of Gautsha need is help to learn and use new skills such as game management and livestock rearing. These skills should be suited to the environment and, as far as possible, to aspects of the Bushman culture to help them adapt to the demands of today's Kalahari. Some are now keeping cattle of their



▲ In 1989 SWAPO won a great victory in Namibia's first free election, and in 1990 they formed the first government of the newly independent Republic of Namibia. SWAPO, along with several other Namibian political parties, now campaigns for the Bushman vote.

own, but there are new pressures on their land. Rich *Herero* people, living nearby want *!Kung* land for their own cattle. The *Herero* were deprived of good land themselves by the South Africans. In 1990 when Namibia became independent from South Africa, the new government tried to make land reform a priority, but there is not enough land for everyone. There is no easy solution to Namibia's problems.

THE HAI//OM

The *Hai//om* live in the northern part of Namibia, near the border with Angola. Their population is estimated at around 11,000. It is especially difficult to know exactly how many *Hai//om* there are, because they are widely scattered and live among members of other groups.

Many *Hai//om* live alongside members of the *Ovambo* tribes. The *Ovambo* are an agricultural

Trade and labour

Bushmen are not as isolated as is sometimes thought. Some groups, like the *Hai//om*, trade with their neighbours. The *Hai//om* get knives, cooking utensils, tobacco and drinks from the *Ovambo*. In exchange, the *Hai//om* can offer the skins of the animals they hunt, or they can work for the *Ovambo* in their fields, often for very long hours. Some experts believe that in the past trade was more common across the Kalahari than it is today.

▼ *Winter sunset at the Hai//om settlement of Mangetti West. Smoke from the evening fires rises above the mongongo trees, which are bare at this time of year.*

