

Chapter 15

Culture, Discrimination and Development

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The Jul'hoansi Living Museum at the village of Grashoek in N̄a Jaqna Conservancy, Otjozondjupa Region



San crafts on display in Windhoek



A Hai||om woman with #aun gathered at Oshivelo, Oshikoto



Demonstrating an age-old San activity

Nowadays San culture is mostly used as a commodity.

15.1 Introduction

“The protection of their distinct culture and language is a central element of indigenous peoples’ survival. For these groups, language and culture are often interdependent and indivisible. Likewise, common beliefs and religion are often a significant attribute of culture, which can only be fully expressed and explained in the indigenous language of that community. To deny one of these aspects to a community will inevitably threaten the identity of that community. Moreover, as indigenous groups usually represent small minorities in their national populations, the denial of a right to language, culture or belief can also be manifested in the failure to actively protect and promote those rights. No other attributes of minority groups are as vulnerable to the ‘tyranny of the majority’ as culture and language. Apart from language, some important aspects of culture are its creative and scientific attributes. Respect for indigenous cultures will often depend on respect for their physical worlds, including the land on which they live and the natural resources on which their livelihood may depend.”

– International Labour Organization (ILO) and African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) 2009: 69

Respect for San cultures – and a concomitant commitment to protecting the values and mores enshrined in these cultures – remains woefully inadequate and neglected in contemporary Namibian society. The cultural characteristics of San groups are unfamiliar to most Namibians. Most might know that the San were once hunters and gatherers, but few know much more.¹ Only some might know that there are several distinct groups of people subsumed under the term ‘San’, and that these groups speak different languages. There is also a widespread notion that San are still ‘roaming’ around the whole country; few know that specific San groups live in particular parts of the country, or which San groups live in which part.

San are often perceived as lacking culture, because, on the one hand, outsiders are ignorant of their cultures, and on the other hand – from an evolutionist perspective – outsiders widely regard the San traditional way of life as belonging to the Stone Age, and thus consider the San to be on a lower rung of the evolutionary ladder than other ethnic groups in Namibia.

There are also those who perceive the San as ‘noble savages’ and/or skilled environmentalists who are fully in tune with the arid environment which they inhabit and traverse. This romantic notion of a culture that is fully adapted to the particularly unforgiving environments of southern Africa is informed by, inter alia, the literature of Laurens van der Post, who “described the Bushmen [of the Kalahari] as the original natives of southern Africa, outcast and persecuted by all other races and nationalities ... [and who] represented the ‘lost soul’ of all mankind, a type of noble savage myth.”²

Both of these diametrically opposed perceptions of the San – i.e. that they represent an uncivilised Stone Age culture in need of development, or that they are environmentalists to be admired for their intimacy with nature – disregard, by and large, the historical developments that have affected the different San groups in different ways.

Although elements of the romantic vision of San culture have permeated outsider perceptions, the alternative notion – that the San traditional way of life is a ‘primitive’ way of life – is clearly the one that is more familiar to Namibians generally, including the government. This view is exemplified in the following response of the Namibian Government to recommendations of the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR), as recorded in *Namibia: 3rd Periodic Report, 2002-2009*:

¹ Many Namibians live in close proximity to San communities or have direct interaction with San individuals (e.g. farmworkers). However, most of the emerging relationships are not very close, and are not imbued with a mutual understanding of the other person’s cultural background. Language differences might play a role in this regard.

² Extract from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurens_van_der_Post.

“The Government has relocated and continues to relocate and settle the San and Ovatus people to permanent locations, usually with the intention of *civilizing* [chapter authors’ emphasis] them and to provide schooling, running water and modern amenities. Unfortunately, and because the San People are hunter and gatherers [sic] and lived nomadic lives for thousands of years, this life-style of coercing them to live in settlement areas has not been very successful.” (ACHPR 2010: 7)

The provision of infrastructure, livelihood assets and services for San and Ovatus communities might be laudable, but the terminology used in this response is revealing: “civilizing” is a word with clear evolutionist connotations; it suggests that human societies proceed through various stages of development of increasing sophistication over time, and in this particular context, this word implies that the contemporary San of Namibia have not evolved as far as the other ethnic groups, which in turn implies that they are looked upon as somehow inferior.

Box 15.1: The idea of civilisation

The idea of ‘civilisation’ stems from the social theory of unilinear evolutionism (or classical social evolution) that was prominent in the 19th century. Societies and cultures, in this line of thought, progressed in time from primitive stages towards civilisation. This theory later met with a great deal of criticism; it was argued that the postulated progression, typically ending with a stage of civilization identical to that of modern Europe, was ethnocentric, i.e. Eurocentric. Furthermore, as critics have since pointed out, there was little empirical evidence for the theory: so-called primitive contemporary societies have as much history, and are just as evolved, as so-called civilized societies. Moreover, unilinear evolutionism did not take the socio-economic and environmental differences between societies or communities into account, and ignored power relations and dependencies between different societies/communities. In academic circles nowadays, the theory of unilinear evolutionism is generally considered to be obsolete, but it is still a prominent theory in popular thinking all over the world, with the result that the San (and other former hunters and gatherers) are often still regarded as having remained in the first stage of human development.

Some of the stereotypes that the San in contemporary Namibia still have to confront seem to be informed by persisting pre-Independence paradigms, and so, for as long as the necessary change of attitude from paternalistic goodwill to respect remains in its early stages, most development efforts will work only to nullify San traditions and assimilate the San into the mainstream, while ignoring the rich culture that San communities have to offer to an independent, culturally diverse and relatively affluent Namibia. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, James Anaya, in his report on his visit to Namibia in September 2012, stressed the need to ensure that indigenous peoples are not discriminated against, and that cultural diversity is strengthened:

“The Government should strengthen and adopt affirmative measures to protect the rights of non-dominant indigenous groups to retain and develop the various attributes of their distinctive cultural identities. Laws and Government programmes should be reviewed and reformed as needed to ensure that they do not discriminate against particular indigenous groups, and that they accommodate to and strengthen cultural diversity and adhere to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.” (Anaya 2013: 19)

This San Study has made evident that San cultures have to be taken into account when planning and implementing development projects and activities, and that a prevailing ignorance of San cultures has contributed to the failure of many efforts aimed at San development. In the next section of this chapter, we will outline the cultural features that San participants in our research discussions identified as differences between San and other ethnic groups in Namibia, as well as the San

cultural characteristics that came to light in our field research. Thereafter, through an examination of anthropological literature, we take an analytical look at cultural characteristics of specific San groups, in order to provide a more profound and comprehensive understanding of certain aspects of the social systems of San communities and their interconnectedness. Finally, we discuss the implications of San cultural characteristics for development approaches.

Box 15.2: 'Developing' the San in Namibia

Examples from different regions in Namibia show that officials and practitioners involved in San development fall prey at times to unreconstructed ways of thinking about the San, just as much as members of the general public do. Under the auspices of the Office of the Prime Minister's (OPM's) San Development Programme, government activities since 2008 have focused on moving various San communities to resettlement projects (e.g. the projects in Kunene Region south of Etosha and in Oshikoto Region east of Etosha). More recent examples are the intended relocations of San from Epukiro Post 3 and Otjinene in Omaheke Region.

Regional officials involved in these relocations in **Omaheke Region** cited the following as reasons for these relocations: (a) the San were unemployed in their current communities; (b) they lived in informal settlements; and (c) their only daily activity was visiting the local bars or shebeens. The clear implications were that the San had lost their culture and heritage, and there was nothing to recommend their current living conditions, hence many officials believed that relocating them to a new resettlement project would render them better off. There, in a new environment, the San would have opportunities to make a living as subsistence farmers, since livestock and other assets, as well as healthcare and education services, would be provided. Thus it was expected that the San communities concerned should willingly move to the new projects en masse, and the idea was that they would be able to stay in the communities in which they currently lived only if they had a compelling reason to remain there, such as work.

Similarly, in **Ohangwena Region**, officials involved with San resettlement projects were often of the opinion that the San could not continue to live according to their own traditions as there was not enough land to support such lifestyles. Although this assertion may be true, the vision for the resettled San is one of integration into the cultures of the other local ethnic communities – notwithstanding the challenges faced in this regard by the Lutheran Church before Independence, and the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement (MLR) and NGOs after Independence. For most officials involved with San development, it remains imperative that once resettled, the San should learn to be subsistence farmers, just like most other people in this region.

As if to reinforce this supposition, reference was often made to the fact that the Owambo people had undergone various adjustments to their lifestyle during the last century. For example, whereas previous generations lived as subsistence farmers and did not necessarily attend school, nowadays Owambo children attend school, and some further their education, thus not only do they now make a living from subsistence farming, but also they run businesses or are employed in the private or public sector. Similarly, although Owambo people were not originally Christian, most Owambo are christened nowadays. Consequently it is believed that the San should follow a similar development trajectory, but even more so, because economic and environmental conditions are forcing them to abandon their previous way of life.

In this regard, some officials viewed the San resettlement projects around **Okongo** as learning centres where San could acquire crop cultivation skills, guided by the livelihood support programmes of the government or NGOs. Some officials felt that the San should not live in informal settlements in Okongo, where they would be at risk of living in squalor around the local shebeens, but should rather live in the resettlement projects and make a living from subsistence farming.^a It was also considered

important to construct 'proper accommodation' for the San, so that they need not continue living in the traditional half-open dwellings to which they were accustomed. It was envisaged that later, should they so wish, certain San could make the progression into communal-area farming activities, where they could obtain a field and a homestead, like any other Namibian farmer does.

These examples convey similarities in the perceptions of how San livelihoods and San culture should develop in each applicable region, key to which is the thinking that the San should be given a place of their own in which to live, so as to provide them with:

- an opportunity to develop alternative livelihoods as a means to support themselves, as they can no longer practise their traditional lifestyles;
- a place for themselves, away from the squalor, poverty and social evils associated with urban and rural informal settlements;
- opportunities to receive an education and become accustomed to different – more sedentary and mainstream – lifestyles/livelihoods; and
- 'proper accommodation', which would symbolise that the San no longer lived in poverty.

^a To this end, officials – with the assistance of the police – undertake efforts at recurrent intervals to collect San from the informal settlements and shebeens in places such as Okongo and take them back to their resettlement projects.

15.2 San perceptions of cultural differences and social exclusion

During our field research we asked San participants in the focus group discussions (FGDs) to identify the cultural characteristics of their respective communities, and at times we probed them to elaborate on differences between themselves as San and members of other ethnic groups. The participants did not explicitly describe a holistic system of social mores and traditions, but only mentioned certain aspects of their own culture.³ Their answers were informed partly by exposure to outsiders' perspectives of the San, and partly by tangible/physical differences rather than distinctions based on, for example, values and knowledge systems. Although references to these less tangible aspects of culture arose tangentially in discussions on other topics (e.g. livelihoods, poverty and education), the participants did not mention them directly when asked about culture and identity.

Common to all research sites – with one exception⁴ – was the fact that the FGD participants did not identify themselves as 'San'; instead, they invariably associated their cultures and traditions with **their language**, meaning that the individuals/communities who participated in the research identified themselves as Ju|'hoansi, Hai||om, !Xun, Naro, Khwe or !Xoon, not simply as 'San'. The following words of Chief Frederik Langman of the ǀAu||eisi Traditional Authority in Omaheke Region sheds light on the significance of language in the eyes of the San: "If you can't talk in your language, if you only speak other languages, you cannot know your tradition ...".

³ The San are no exception in this regard. Our own culture is generally so embedded in our lives and in our way of doing things that we are unaware of its defining characteristics, and only in comparing these characteristics with those of a different culture do we become aware of the contrasts between them, and their distinctiveness.

⁴ The exception was Omatako in Nǀa Jaqna Conservancy. This might be attributed to the fact that different San groups are living together at this site, and they were routinely exposed to NGOs (e.g. the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA)), which usually refer to 'San' rather than to specific ethnic or language groups.

Secondly, the San at most sites stressed their **poverty**, and indicated that they felt **marginalised** and that members of neighbouring ethnic groups **discriminated** against them. FGD participants cited many examples of discriminatory practices, some of which are as follows:

- Stereotyping the San – for example holding the view that they are lazy and/or are drunkards (cited in e.g. Kunene, Ohangwena and Omaheke).
- Exploitation – for example paying San low wages for any job, or not paying them in accordance with verbal agreements, or merely paying them in kind, including with *otombo* (home-brewed beer) (cited in e.g. Kunene, Ohangwena and Omaheke).
- Land being given to or taken by others (cited in Oshikoto, Otjozondjupa, Kavango, Ohangwena, Omaheke and Bwabwata National Park (BNP)).
- Discrimination with regard to employment in any sector (cited in all regions).
- Improper treatment by civil servants and service providers, including paying scant attention to San, treating them rudely or simply turning them away.
- Use of derogatory terms in referring to San (cited in e.g. Omusati and Ohangwena).

In some areas (e.g. some sites in Omusati, Ohangwena, Omaheke and Kavango) the San had clearly become a **separate underclass**. In Ohangwena and Omusati, for example, members of other ethnic groups clearly identified the San as a distinct group, and referred to the San as *Kwangara* (a word connoting ‘fecklessness’). Therefore the San were not fully integrated into Owambo society in these two regions, and this was despite the fact that, in Omusati for example, the San had long stopped speaking their own language and now spoke only Oshiwambo dialects, and had also adopted other aspects of the Owambo culture, such as clothing and housing. The underclass status was also clearly observable with farmworkers in Otjozondjupa and Omaheke, who pointed out that other people had more livestock and assets than them, and were more capable of operating a farm or business successfully. Otherwise, they found it difficult to define how their culture differed to those of other ethnic groups; they only said that the San were poorer than their neighbouring groups, and that these groups discriminated against the San. This identity as an underclass rather than a separate ethnic group within the wider socio-economic system had to do with the fact that the applicable San communities were living scattered among other ethnic groups who formed the majority. Furthermore, due to lacking access to their ancestral land, the San often found themselves limited in their ability to practise their **traditional livelihoods** (e.g. hunting and gathering) and to pass on their expertise to the next generation, so these aspects of their culture were being diluted and even lost. Nevertheless, even in the areas where the San have become an underclass, some less tangible cultural characteristics (e.g. egalitarianism) still play a role in their day-to-day life. These are dealt with in more detail later in this chapter.

In areas where San form the majority and have more access to land (e.g. the BNP and the two conservancies in Otjozondjupa), they exhibit more cultural consciousness, and practise some traditions (e.g. gathering) more extensively, and even pass traditions on to their children.

Table 15.1 summarises the characteristics of San culture that were mentioned in FGDs in the regions covered. In all regions except Omusati, language was perceived as a cultural marker; in Omusati the participants stated that they were no longer proficient in a San language. At all sites, participants stressed that their former subsistence strategies of hunting and gathering were culturally different to the subsistence strategies of other ethnic groups.⁵ Other features of San culture were mentioned only at some sites, e.g. traditional clothing, traditional dancing, initiation rituals, healing practices

⁵ The degree to which these strategies were still practised varied considerably across sites, as described in the regional chapters.

and cooking.⁶ The fact that these were not mentioned at *all* sites should not be taken as an indication that they were not relevant at the other sites, as they were just cited as examples to illustrate cultural differences, rather than being components of a fully comprehensive list.

Table 15.1: San cultural characteristics mentioned in the research discussions in each region*

| Cultural characteristic | Omaheke | Otjozondjupa | Kunene, Oshikoto, Oshana | Ohangwena | Omusati | Kavango | BNP | Caprivi |
|-------------------------|---------|--------------|--------------------------|-----------|---------|---------|-----|---------|
| Language | | | | | | | | |
| Hunting and gathering | | | | | | | | |
| Sharing | | | | | | | | |
| Clothing | | | | | | | | |
| Dancing | | | | | | | | |
| Housing | | | | | | | | |
| Cooking | | | | | | | | |
| Traditional healers | | | | | | | | |
| Initiation rituals | | | | | | | | |
| Games | | | | | | | | |
| Musical instruments | | | | | | | | |

* The cell shading indicates that the characteristic was mentioned in the applicable region.

Sharing among community members – an important feature of traditional San livelihoods – was mentioned in all regions except Omusati and Ohangwena, but it was mentioned only in contexts other than culture, i.e. mainly in discussions on livelihoods and poverty, thus it was not mentioned as a characteristic that distinguished the San from other ethnic groups. It could be that the San habit of sharing constitutes a behaviour that underlies many social interactions, rather than being a separate and palpable cultural activity such as hunting and gathering. Although sharing was not mentioned in any context in the FGDs in Omusati and Ohangwena, the research team observed the San sharing among themselves in Ohangwena at least.⁷

15.3 Similarities between San cultures

The preceding section conveys that the San living in different areas under different circumstances clearly perceive themselves as distinct from other ethnic groups, and without doubt, the principal distinction is the extent of social exclusion that the San experience. This social exclusion is partly linked to various cultural characteristics cited in the FGDs – e.g. language and former subsistence practices. Although San communities in different parts of Namibia have been subject to different historical developments over the last few centuries, and were affected by colonialism in different ways, and now live under diverse sets of circumstances, interacting with neighbouring ethnic groups to different degrees and in different ways, there are certain similarities between them. In this section

⁶ Physical appearance, though not a cultural difference, was mentioned in four research activities as a feature that distinguished the San from other ethnic groups (in Omaheke, Kunene and Caprivi Regions, and in the BNP).

⁷ This was confirmed by Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN) staff members working at the resettlement projects in Ohangwena.

we shed some light on these similarities from an analytical perspective, as these similarities might have implications for the success of current and future development efforts.⁸ In the context of this study, the relevant similarities concern (former) modes of production, social organisation, values and land-use patterns.

In seeking to understand the differences between certain hunter-gatherer economies/cultures and other economies/cultures (i.e. agricultural, herding and capitalist), social anthropologist James Woodburn suggested distinguishing between **immediate-return and delayed-return systems**. This distinction is based on the argument that these two systems entail radically differing modes of organisation of labour (Endicott 1981: 2) – an idea based on data which had been empirically confirmed.

In **delayed-return societies**, people need to work for an extended period of time before a yield (e.g. a harvest, a monthly salary, meat from slaughtered livestock or income from selling livestock) is produced or consumed. The delay between the investment of labour and the eventual production/consumption results in social inequality, as it becomes necessary to establish hierarchical structures of authority to distribute the labour and the yields, and to control vital assets. Most Namibian communities are delayed-return societies.⁹

Immediate-return societies are strongly orientated to present time, in that people usually obtain a direct and immediate return for their labour, and consumption is usually immediate (e.g. an animal killed in a hunt is eaten immediately or shortly after the hunt). Accumulation of resources or assets is strongly discouraged, while sharing is a moral obligation (Lewis 2008/2009: 12). The various San groups have been generally classified as societies which employ the immediate-return system (Woodburn 1982: 433; Widlok 1999: 13), and such societies also generally classified as egalitarian societies.

Box 15.3: Egalitarian societies

Social anthropologist James Woodburn summarised the basic differences between egalitarian societies and other societies in his classic article titled “Egalitarian Societies” (Woodburn 1982: 431):

“Greater equality of wealth, of power and of prestige has been achieved in *certain* hunting and gathering societies than in any other human societies. These societies, which have economies based on immediate rather than delayed return, are assertively egalitarian. Equality is achieved through direct, individual access to resources; through direct, individual access to means of coercion and means of mobility which limit the imposition of control; through procedures which prevent saving and accumulation and impose sharing; through mechanisms which allow goods to circulate without making people dependent on one another. People are systematically disengaged from property and therefore from the potentiality in property for creating dependency.”

⁸ In academic circles, during a discussion (known as the “Kalahari debate”) that persisted for almost 20 years, one point of contention was whether these similarities were based on ecological circumstances (i.e. barely affected by historical developments) or whether they originated in the San’s marginality in the surrounding system – a system which included their dependency relationships with regional agropastoral societies and/or the colonialist and post-colonialist, and the system of the capitalist world (Guenther 2007: 375-376). However, an investigation into the possible causes of the similarities between the San and other groups is beyond the scope of this study.

⁹ Indeed, most of the world’s societies are delayed-return societies.

To summarise, immediate-return systems may be characterised as egalitarian in nature: individual autonomy is highly valued, and food production does not depend on the control of other people. Delayed-return systems, by contrast, are characterised by the development of hierarchical structures and authority.

Egalitarianism also pertains to **gender relations**, thus immediate-return societies demonstrate a high degree of gender equality. Anthropologists have characterised the Ju|'hoansi, for example, as representing one of the least sexist societies (Endicott 1981: 1).¹⁰ We deal with this in more detail in Chapter 18 on gender.

Egalitarianism also has implications for the **upbringing of children**. San parents do not exert a great deal of authority over their children; the children are generally granted considerable autonomy, and are allowed to make their own decisions. Therefore, the view that San parents do not appreciate the value of education for their children must be understood in the light of egalitarian values and socialisation practices. We deal with this in Chapter 16 on education.

As mentioned previously, **sharing** is of great importance in immediate-return societies:

“The sharing systems we find are mainly focused on food. People who obtain more food than they can immediately consume are obliged to share it, to give it to other people and to do so without making the recipients indebted to them or dependent on them. Recipients are under no obligation to reciprocate, though they too must, of course, share when they in their turn obtain more food than they can immediately consume.” (Barnard and Woodburn 1988: 21)

The (former) **land-use patterns** of San communities were connected to their subsistence practices and social organisation (dealt with in Chapter 13 on access to land). Extended families or bands formed co-residential units – usually occupying and ‘owning’ a specific territory – and customary law regulated the access to resources. These San groups were mobile in the past – their movements were dependent on the availability of natural resources at any given time – hence the accumulation of property was not feasible. Woodburn wrote:

“All these societies are nomadic ... They do not accumulate property but consume it, give it away, gamble it away or throw it away. Most of them have the knowledge of techniques of storing food but use them only occasionally to prevent food from getting rotten rather than to save it for some future occasion. They tend to use portable, utilitarian, easily acquired, replaceable artifacts – made with real skill but without hours of labour – and avoid those which are fixed in one place, heavy, elaborately decorated, require prolonged manufacture, regular maintenance, joint work by several people or any combination of these. The system is one in which people travel light, unencumbered, as they see it, by possessions and by commitments.” (Woodburn 1980: 99, in Endicott 1981: 2)

Connected to these societies’ egalitarianism are strong **mechanisms of levelling**. This ‘levelling’ does not mean that everyone is equal or that everyone has equal access to material goods; rather, it means that everyone has equal access to food, to the technology needed to acquire resources, and to the paths leading to prestige (McCall 2000: 140). Co-residential units are ‘led’ by headmen or headwomen, but these are not institutionalised authority roles based on inheritance, for example; rather, this leadership role is allocated on the strength of personal qualities – such as wisdom,

¹⁰ Gender equality does not mean that the activities carried out by men and women are identical – for example men were more likely to hunt and women were more likely to gather veldfood, but there was no strict division of labour. In this context, gender equality means that the activities of women are not controlled by men, and that the activities undertaken by men and women are considered to be of equal value (Endicott 1981: 1-2).

experience, charisma and persuasiveness (Endicott 1981: 4). Therefore, the type of person who might be accepted as leader is an individual possessing a certain degree of firmness of personality, as well as expertise in one field or another (e.g. hunting or locating plants), and who is able to listen and to reach decisions in a way that is fair and acceptable to the applicable community. However, the institution is situational and non-binding, and leaders can be replaced (Guenther 1999: 33). As Lorna Marshall reported of the Ju|'hoansi, headmen were "as thin as the rest"; they could wield little authority and did not possess any regalia of office, nor were any special honours conferred on them (Marshall 1976: 194); and moreover, "[a]ll you get is the blame if things go wrong" (Marshall 1976: 34).¹¹ Therefore it is not surprising that "a person generally does not seek out the position of headman or leader. The position held no rewards." (Guenther 1999: 34) In a way, by virtue of their position, San headmen and headwomen ought to be 'first among equals', but in effect, their situation is fraught with contradiction, given the nature of San societies: on the one hand these leaders are supposed to be generous, unassuming, unaggressive, modest and soft-spoken, and on the other hand their actions must be strong and decisive at times.

Although various San communities have experienced major changes in their subsistence practices over the last century, and hunting and gathering are now practised only to a very limited degree (gathering now being far more common than hunting), many aspects of the former way of life – which some refer to as a "foraging way of life" (McCall 2000: 140, 142) or the "foraging mode of thought" (Barnard 2002: 5) – are still maintained. Egalitarian levelling and sharing mechanisms still play an especially important role in food distribution mechanisms, but also come into play in new manifestations in contemporary life – for example the sharing of cash (e.g. Old Age Pension money). The mobility of many San today is perhaps a reflection of this "foraging mode of thought". Alternatively, the lack of land available to members of San communities may explain this mobility in Namibia. Widlok pointed out the following in respect of the Hai||om specifically:

"Immediate-return expectations continue to shape Hai||om strategies in their encounters with neighbours who engage in delayed-return activities. Thus, it may be more precise to talk about two modes of *social practices* [chapter authors' emphasis] rather than two seemingly unrelated polar types or systems." (Widlok 1999: 73)

In conclusion, much more research is needed to identify the ways in which the characteristics of these particular shared norms, values or social practices continue to be (or might become) relevant today, and in which particular circumstances. As conveyed in the next section, our research made evident that the critical aspects of the San peoples' cultural practices have to be taken into account when development initiatives are planned and implemented, and that ignorance of these practices might partly explain why many such initiatives have reaped little success to date.

15.4 Cultural considerations regarding development

Typologies defining immediate- versus delayed-return systems are never as clear-cut as they might initially appear to be from an idealised description. For one thing, an ethnic group, through contact with a neighbouring ethnic group, might adopt, in whole or in part, specific cultural characteristics of that group (e.g. inheritance practices, dress codes or names). Another consideration in this regard is the connection between values, social practices and mode of production – a subject of much debate. It could be argued that a change of subsistence practice (i.e. from hunting and gathering to sedentary agriculture or diversified livelihood strategies) should entail a change of values (i.e. from

¹¹ Ju|'hoansi at Skoonheid Resettlement Project (Omaheke Region) said the same to DRFN fieldworkers.

egalitarianism and the moral obligation of sharing to the accumulation of food, land and other assets) and hence a behavioural change. However, our study has found that many of the values and social practices connected to the (former) hunter-gatherer subsistence practices are still highly relevant in Namibia's San societies.

In the following subsections we reflect on six aspects of culture in terms of their implications for development. We are unable to present clear-cut answers to every challenge, but at the minimum, we stress the need for more awareness and consideration of a particular aspect of San culture in the planning and implementation of development programmes and projects. It is also relevant to stress that site-specific approaches are needed to accommodate regional and historical differences.

15.4.1 Immediate return

At some of our research sites (e.g. in Ohangwena, Omusati, Kavango and Caprivi Regions), the San preferred to do piecework for neighbouring farmers rather than invest labour in their own fields. At other sites, the San were engaged in other income-generating activities that provided immediate returns – mostly driven by the philosophy that “we need to *zula* to survive”.¹² For example, San in Ohangwena made crafts which they sold to locals for direct gain – regardless of the often minimal monetary benefits. Such activities that bring immediate returns might be said to reinforce the common stereotyping of San as people who do not think about the future – because they are either incapable of doing so or unwilling to do so. However, there are many explanations for the San's preferences in this regard. One explanation is simply the reality of a life of poverty: a person who has nothing to eat now is not able to plant today and wait a couple of months to harvest and eat. Another explanation derives from the underlying structures of San societies (and a few other hunter-gatherer societies): their economies are based on immediate-return yields. Thirdly, other factors, not least the acculturation of nomadic traditions when the San came into contact with agricultural practices in northern Namibia, might have enhanced rather than diluted San preferences for immediate-return yields. A good example of this is their familiarisation with sedentary agriculture and Christianity which commenced in the 1960s when the San in what is now Ohangwena Region were brought together in projects implemented by Finnish missionaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-Kavango Church (ELOC – renamed the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) in 1984).¹³ In these projects the San cultivated the church's fields in return for food rations and other fairly immediate benefits (e.g. tobacco and clothing) as well as basic healthcare.

More research is needed to determine whether the elimination of daily poverty would suffice to encourage San to engage in agriculture, or whether the immediate-return system is too deeply rooted in their social and economic structures, as Widlok (1999) has argued. Should the latter indeed be the case, the elimination of poverty alone would clearly not be sufficient reason for the San to involve themselves in agriculture.¹⁴ The case of the Ohangwena San, who have been brought together in resettlement projects around Okongo, seems to substantiate this point, as many of the San in these projects prefer to work in the fields of the neighbouring Kwanyama farmers rather than actively cultivate their own fields.¹⁵ It is also noteworthy that although some San communities

¹² The term *zula* means using any means necessary to make a living.

¹³ Some of these projects were converted into resettlement projects under the auspices of the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (MLRR – now Ministry of Lands and Resettlement) a few years after Independence.

¹⁴ These reflections do not imply that agriculture is the only way forward for San development.

¹⁵ The San at Ekoka Resettlement Project, for example, preferred to give away the most fertile part of their crop land to neighbouring Kwanyama farmers, and then do piecework on that land, rather than keeping the land for themselves. The need for employment only partly explains this choice: limited capacity to protect their fields from wandering cattle, and insufficient capacity to work large tracts of land with household labour, are other explanatory

(e.g. the Khwe in West Caprivi) have engaged in agriculture for decades (if not centuries), many of the recently implemented garden projects in their area have not realised the desired results. On the other hand, San in Omaheke Region – many of whom were farmworkers on commercial or communal farms – have aspirations to become livestock (cattle or small-stock) farmers like their previous employers, and some, when given the opportunity to be trained and technically supported, have shown a sincere interest in rain-fed and irrigated crop production too. Therefore, a closer look into this matter and a comparison between the various San communities might be useful.

15.4.2 Sharing

The moral obligation to share is closely connected to the expectation of immediate return for labour. Woodburn provided an example based on the work of Lee with the Ju|'hoansi (Lee 1979: 409-414). Their difficulties in deriving a livelihood from agriculture and keeping domestic animals were not technical ones or related to know-how:

“[T]he overwhelming difficulties lie in the egalitarian levelling mechanisms: There is no way that farming can be carried on without some accumulation, without stores of grain and of agricultural tools, and the major difficulty for the few individual !Kung [i.e. Ju|'hoansi – chapter authors' note] who wish to make a real effort to farm is not that they themselves are unable to exercise self-restraint and to build up their stocks but that they are unable to restrain their kin and affines from coming to eat the harvested grain.” (Woodburn 1982: 447)

In our research discussions, sharing was mentioned a great many times as an obstacle to escaping poverty. A young San woman studying in Windhoek with the assistance of the OPM made this clear by stating that she would never want to get employment close to home, because then she would be left without anything, since she would be obliged to care for her extended family. (This issue is not specific to the San; it also affects members of other ethnic groups in Namibia). Thus, since the practice of sharing makes accumulation difficult, San individuals would have to move out of their community should they wish to acquire some personal wealth. On the other hand, those who share can expect others to share with them in turn; indeed they can even *demand* that others reciprocate the habit of sharing – thereby guaranteeing access to resources when needed. Thus, instead of acquiring a personal safety net by means of individual accumulation, sharing ensures that a person will not be left without resources in the future, as others would be obligated to share with him/her.

It is important to note that the practice of sharing is usually applied only with members of the extended family or clan, or members of the same language group, rather than with the wider local community. This factor has tended to be overlooked in a number of group resettlement initiatives, but it should be taken into account when selecting beneficiaries of collective resettlement initiatives. In some regions of Namibia, San of different origin (e.g. Ju|'hoansi and Naro) or San and members

factors; and, against the backdrop of a value system based on immediate returns and sharing, this choice can also be attributed to reciprocal development needs, in the sense that, by cultivating the fields which they had given to Kwanyana farmers, the San community obtained the 'right' to claim support from these farmers during the dry season and in other times of dire need. DRFN project staff hailing from the same part of Ohangwena referred to this practice as “buying favours”, and Berger and Ayisa (2001: 29) referred to it as a “symbiotic relationship”. It may also be viewed as a type of informal insurance against economic, social and environmental shocks.

The livelihood support projects of the MLR and the DRFN between 2007 and 2013 provided further evidence that most of the San in these resettled communities took little interest in the cattle and draught animals donated to them through the Draught Animal Power Acceleration Programme of the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF). This indifference might be due to the challenges of collective management, but it also seems to indicate that the time and energy needed to rear cattle represents an investment that is contrary to the value system of the Ohangwena San.

of other ethnic groups (e.g. Ju|'hoansi and Nama/Damara) have been brought together in certain resettlement projects, but they do not necessarily cooperate for the success of the whole community as they share (and collaborate) with their (extended) families only. Whereas one might attribute this simply to the common property management problems that might be expected to arise when 50 or more families are settled together, the cultural dimensions of this challenge should not be ignored in future development projects with the San.

Moreover, the obligation to share must be taken into consideration when introducing agricultural initiatives (e.g. livestock and crop cultivation schemes) in San communities, as certain losses that would not occur in other communities and traditions might have to be factored in. For example, San involved in gardening initiatives in Omaheke (e.g. Skoonheid Resettlement Project) and Kavango (e.g. Bravo Project) were sharing considerable amounts of their produce with relatives who lived in town or passed through for a visit, rather than storing it for their own use. Similarly, beneficiaries in Omaheke complained of children picking crops from their rain-fed fields and irrigated plots, to the extent that they wondered whether it was worthwhile to continue planting their fields. Although San participants in our research discussions referred to this as 'theft', in reality it may simply be another manifestation of the common practice of sharing.

The habit of sharing creates the following predicament for the San: on the one hand it provides a safety net for individuals in times of need; and on the other hand it prevents individuals from accumulating some personal wealth, because, instead of focusing on individual accumulation to save for the future (which is usually not possible for San anyway), San individuals engage in the social networks that would insulate them against the effects of dire circumstances, should these materialise.

In conclusion, our research has made clear that development efforts may not succeed if the San communities' moral obligation to share is ignored.

15.4.3 Leadership

Former leadership structures are another important factor that must be taken into account in future development efforts targeting the San, because where strong cultural levelling mechanisms prevent individuals from becoming assertive leaders, this has serious implications for the involvement of San in development initiatives and their capacity to represent their communities effectively.

The recognition of San traditional authorities (TAs) in certain parts of the country might indicate that the Namibian Government and society are increasingly valuing San culture and traditions. Nevertheless, there are still regions (e.g. Ohangwena, Kavango and Caprivi) where the San do not have their own TA, and where, as subjects of the TAs of other ethnic groups, the San naturally feel that their concerns are not necessarily adequately represented. Therefore, ensuring that the San in these areas are given the opportunity to be represented by their own formally recognised leaders should be a priority issue.

The formal recognition of San TAs should be effected on the understanding that the appointment of a chief as leader of a certain San community is merely a first step, and that the leadership functions ascribed to these new leaders by way of policies and legislation may differ from the characteristics and values attached to the concept of 'leadership' in various San traditions. Therefore, in addition to training on the formal roles and functions of the TA, dialogue and training may be needed on the very notion of leadership itself. Further issues related to San leadership are discussed in Chapter 19 on consultation, participation and representation.

15.4.4 Language

The fact that language was the feature that San participants in our research discussions mentioned most frequently as their primary cultural marker emphasises the need to give this feature greater attention. In particular, the languages spoken by the Ju|'hoansi and the !Xun, which belong to the Ju language cluster, are completely different to other languages in the country, and are thus rarely understood by others. Combined with their low degree of proficiency in English, this entails a serious problem for the Ju|'hoansi and !Xun – especially for the elderly – in communicating with the rest of Namibian society, and most importantly public servants. Many Ju|'hoansi and !Xun can speak Afrikaans, but Afrikaans is no longer Namibia's official language, nor is it generally the second or even third language of other Namibians (especially in the north). This has serious implications for service delivery, and also, it reinforces the perception of some San that they are a marginalised people, since the language barriers encountered in public institutions all too often prevents their receiving the treatment or service to which they are entitled. The quality of certain services in the public sector is a national problem that affects all ethnic groups, not only the San, but their particular feeling of being socially excluded is certainly partly attributable to the challenge of communication.

Finally, San children encounter considerable challenges in the Namibian education system due to the fact that they cannot be educated in their mother tongue in the absence of curricula for different San languages, and teachers who are proficient in San languages. These issues are addressed in Chapter 16 on education.

15.4.5 Access to land

Issues relating to the various Namibian land tenure systems (communal land, commercial land, conservancies and national parks) have been dealt with in Chapter 13 on access to land (see especially Box 13.1 on page 455 in this regard), but it bears repeating here that the subsistence practices that characterise a semi-nomadic lifestyle have to be taken into account in the attempt to find solutions to the landlessness of the San in Namibia. The group rights tenure initiative of the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement and other stakeholders mentioned in Chapter 13 is a promising approach for some communities, but for others, individual plots might be a more viable alternative.

Importantly, the concept of 'underutilised land' also has to be revisited. Certain areas where the San formerly derived their livelihoods from hunting and gathering (e.g. parts of Nyae Nyae and N#a Jaqna Conservancies and Kavango Region), which have been deemed 'underutilised', are due to be allocated – or have already been allocated – to Namibians from other ethnic groups. In this process, the authorities have failed to take into account the fact that traditionally, the !Xun and Ju|'hoansi living in these areas depended to a considerable extent on the land for their livelihoods through the non-intensive land-use strategies of hunting and harvesting natural resources for food security, medicine and income generation.

15.4.6 Mobility

Mobility is an aspect of San culture which outsiders have often referred to as characteristic of San traditions. People in hunter-gatherer societies have historically moved around in specific areas in search of natural resources, but in contemporary Namibia, San mobility is due primarily to their need to find employment (often temporary), and this need is exacerbated by the fact that so many San lack land which they can call 'home'. In relation to jobs, perhaps this 'roaming' tendency can also be understood in terms of the egalitarian nature of the San tradition, where a high value

is attached to individual autonomy: when a San worker is unhappy with his/her job or working conditions, the best option may be to move on, either to stay with relatives (and to rely on sharing obligations) or to return 'home' (if there is a place to call 'home'), with the aim of looking for new and more appealing employment opportunities. The high degree of mobility of former generations of San farmworkers in Omaheke Region has been captured in H el ene De Kok's novel titled *By The Roadside*, in which the author refers to the farmworkers who used to move around in donkey-carts as "karretjies people" (carts people) (De Kok 2009: vi, 1).

Since mobility is associated with both former subsistence practices and current circumstances, it has to be taken into account in planning and implementing San development initiatives.

Box 15.4: The need for mobility in modern Namibia and constraints experienced by San

The mobility of many San is relative and contingent. For many of the San living in remote areas, it is difficult to access services and institutions due simply to a lack of means of transport. Many San rely on 'catching a ride' with a vehicle on the main access roads, or alternatively donkeys/donkey-carts, horses or simply walking the considerable distances from where they live to the towns where they can shop and access various services. Where traffic is limited, as is common in remote areas, vehicle owners often charge the San (and other remote-area dwellers) considerable sums of money for taking them where they want to go. As the San have limited finances, this often means that they cannot travel when they need to, or cannot reach a destination as fast as they need/hope to.

The constraints associated with distance and mobility have serious implications for the delivery of services to the San, particularly health services and the provision of national documents, pensions and grants. The procedures/practices of government institutions and NGOs are not always designed in a way that is practicable for the San (and other people who have to travel far to access services), and for San who have to register for IDs and other national documents, and for grants and Old Age Pensions, these procedures/practices are very difficult to navigate. In addition to the difficulties of travelling, those lacking the necessary documentation may be refused the services and payments to which they are entitled for procedural reasons. Furthermore, San pensioners who must travel long distances are sometimes left stranded in towns due to payment delays, which often result in the loss of a pre-arranged ride home, or the absence of any form of transport home due to the late hour.

Similarly, the distance issue and the administrative practices of service providers often pose very serious problems for patients who need to acquire their medication on a regular basis. For example, patients being treated for chronic conditions (e.g. TB and HIV) are often compelled to collect their medication from different clinics: in one month they manage to find a ride to a certain clinic, but in the next month they can only find a ride to a different clinic. Furthermore, certain mobile clinics prescribe chronic medication for a maximum of four weeks, but then return to the same village or farm only six to eight weeks later. Such scheduling leads to patients defaulting on treatment regimes, which is particularly problematic for TB and HIV/AIDS treatment.^a

Some of these problems have been partially alleviated by the recently increased mobile phone coverage that resulted from government-led advocacy and private sector investment in the country's mobile networks. Although this does not eradicate the economic and time constraints that many San face in terms of transportation, it does allow for increased communication and coordination around access to transport to administrative centres and the scheduling of access to services. Similarly, increased radio coverage allows for transmitting messages about social services, mobile clinics, meetings and incidents to more rural audiences.

^a Dr Bell, N/a'an ku s e Lifeline Clinic, personal communication, 7 September 2013.

15.5 Recommendations

In summation, the characteristics that distinguish the cultures of the San from the cultures of their neighbouring ethnic groups are interlinked, and cannot be understood separately as they constitute a system of social operation. However, examining specific features separately can shed light on certain widely held perceptions that consolidate the stereotyping of the San to this day. For example, it is a commonly acknowledged truism that San people ‘do not think about their future’, but their egalitarian values and moral obligation to share make the individual accumulation of property virtually impossible, and bring about a situation that can easily be mistaken for a failure to invest in the future, with outsiders ignoring the fact that through kinship ties, the sharing mechanism ensures that a San person is not left helpless in times of need.

The central argument here is that cultural differences between San and more dominant agricultural traditions in Namibian society have to be taken into account in the process of development planning and implementation, especially in respect of the unique social traits of San communities that their cultures present. Since a one-size-fits-all approach is neither feasible nor sustainable, it is critical to develop site-specific approaches that take into consideration the circumstances specific to a given San community, and to elicit the active engagement of the project participants or beneficiaries. The following subsections provide some details of how these aims can be achieved.

15.5.1 Promoting intercultural sensitivity

It is important to recognise that Namibia needs to engender a better understanding of San cultures, – i.e. the culture of each San community in the country – as such an understanding could potentially beget more respect for the San and reduce the discrimination against them. There have already been some efforts (especially under the ILO PRO 169 programme mentioned in Chapter 3) to sensitise public servants and other stakeholders to the rights of indigenous peoples. The external evaluation of the ILO PRO 169 programme undertaken in 2012 found that the programme had raised awareness of indigenous peoples’ rights within government and civil society, and had built capacity through training workshops and advanced courses that focused on these rights (Hays 2013: 5). The previous Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Libertina Amathila, is “widely considered to have made important strides towards improving the visibility of San issues and concerns in the public discourse” (Hays 2013: 30). However, being aware of the rights of indigenous peoples and acquiring knowledge about the relevant international instruments do not suffice to drive a change in Namibian society that would improve attitudes towards San communities and begin to eliminate the common practice of discrimination. What are the mechanisms and activities through which a better understanding, more respect and less discrimination can be achieved?

- **Workshops and trainings on intercultural sensitivity.** These would involve efforts by the San and development practitioners to understand their own perceptions of San culture, such as the issues of sharing and immediate returns, egalitarian values and leadership structures, as well as the implications of these perceptions for development initiatives.
- **Participatory community meetings** in which civil servants and San communities focus on the issues of discrimination and stereotyping.
- **Research and raising awareness** on the resilience of cultural characteristics and their impacts on development.
- **Participatory action research with each San community**, including a ‘visioning’ activity in which the participants examine their needs and aspirations in relation to their culture/heritage/traditions. Such research should go beyond the mere formulation of wish-lists in preparation for new development projects, and should entail contextualising the transformative aspects of

development processes for the recipient communities, and the obligations involved in these – irrespective of whether the development initiatives are to be implemented now or later.

15.5.2 Language, remoteness, mobility and access to public institutions and services

With regard to language, we agree with the recommendations of the various countries taking part in the 2011 Universal Periodic Review on Namibia published in the *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review Namibia* (United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 2011b). These recommendations involve efforts to acknowledge language barriers faced by the San in the public domain, and measures to ensure that San people can properly access and enjoy quality services in public institutions, e.g. by providing translation services. To quote UNGA directly (2011b: 15-16):

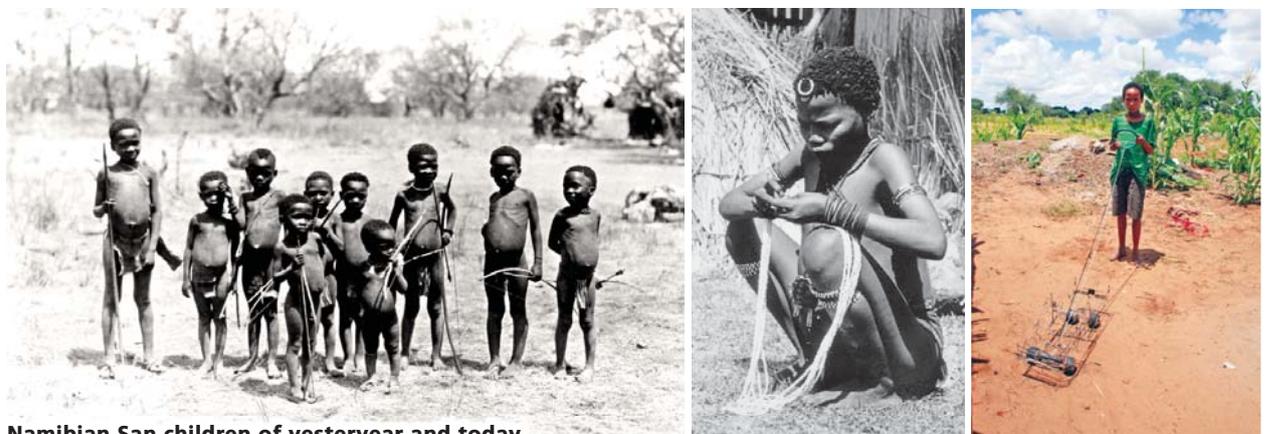
- Ensure that persons who only speak **non-official languages** used widely by the population are not denied access to public services (Austria); ...
- Take effective measures to enhance the access to public services concerning persons who do not speak the **official language** (Germany); ...
- Adopt measures to ensure access to public services for persons **who do not speak English** as they are a significant proportion of the Namibian population. This was recommended by the Human Rights Committee in 2004 (Spain).

Further recommendations on language are put forward in Chapter 16 on education.

Regarding remoteness and mobility, various efforts should be made to overcome the service-access challenges that the San and other illiterate or semi-literate remote-area dwellers experience. These efforts could include:

- **more comprehensive healthcare outreach services**, which are adequately resourced so that they can return to remote communities on a more regular basis;
- **adjustments to administrative procedures and practices in various sectors** to accommodate the needs of San communities as well as highly mobile San individuals, and to minimise the constraints associated with the distance to be covered by remote-area dwellers; and
- **improved communications infrastructure**, particularly mobile phone and radio coverage.

On the following pages we present an eye-opening case study of the value of San traditional skills in the contemporary world.



Namibian San children of yesteryear and today

Left: Photo from the Denver-African Expedition 1925/26 collection housed in the National Archives of Namibia

Centre: Photo from the collection of H. Kendzia

**Box 15.5: CASE STUDY OF THE VALUE OF SAN TRADITIONAL SKILLS:
Ju|'hoan trackers explore Ice Age caves in southern France**

By Dr Tilman Lenssen-Erz and Team

In June and July 2013, in a cooperative endeavour of African Archaeology at the University of Cologne, the Neanderthal Museum (Germany) and Namibia's Nyae Nyae Conservancy, and in consultation with the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia (NNDFN), the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA), the National Museum of Namibia and the Archaeology Department of the University of Namibia (UNAM), a research project was carried out in which the indigenous knowledge of San hunters was called up to elucidate an old riddle in European prehistory:

In some caves in southern France, rock art from the Ice Age and human footprints of people dating back 17 000 years are preserved. These footprints received considerable western research attention, but were never inspected by contemporary experts in tracking.

Therefore, three trackers hailing from the Ju|'hoan community at Tsumkwe, namely |Ui Kxunta, |Ui Ga!o and Tsamkxao Ciqae, were invited by Dr Tilman Lenssen-Erz (University of Cologne) and Dr Andreas Pastoors (Neanderthal Museum) to explore some of the very few caves with prehistoric footprints. The basic idea of the project was: **western science can count and measure these tracks very well, but only the San can read them, and without reading, there can be no understanding.**

The German team members travelled to Nyae Nyae to meet the trackers and to prepare them for what they would experience in France. The San hunters demonstrated their tracking skills during several tracking trips in the Kalahari, at sites such as the Gautscha and Nyae Nyae pans. A visit to the baobabs near Tsumkwe served the purpose of tangibly getting into contact with something so very old that it transcends the individual imagination and experience of time. To acquaint the trackers with a cave environment, the team visited the deep dripstone cave on Farm Ghaub (40 km north-west of Grootfontein). The next stop was the World Heritage Site of Twyfelfontein, where prehistoric hunter-gatherer rock art depicts many animal tracks, which served to provide a rich repertoire of signs for the trackers to interpret. The last stop was the White Lady rock painting at the Brandberg/Daureb, which epitomises depictions of the age-old culture of hunting and tracking. Following a press conference in Windhoek, the group travelled to Europe.

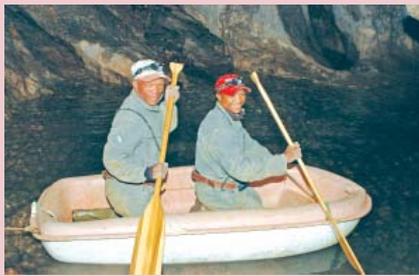
In Germany, a visit to the zoo in Cologne was arranged to give the San hunters an opportunity to observe bears whose tracks they would encounter more often than human tracks in the caves. After another press conference, the group drove to the Pyrenees mountain range in southern France where the caves are located.

The visits to these European Ice Age caves were worth every second, and have yielded stunning new insights. Four caves were visited, and in a fifth cave the team inspected a replica of human tracks – viewing the originals would require some challenging scuba diving. The trackers exhibited a highly professional attitude, and rendered the strenuous cave visits extremely prolific.

In the cave of Niaux, a hitherto poorly understood patch of ground with some 24 footprints has now been identified as the result of a 12-year-old girl having stood there, as opposed to several people having performed a ritual dance there – as some archaeologists have believed. In the cave of Pech Merle, where archaeologists had identified footprints of just one or two people who had walked over the spot where human footprints are preserved, the Ju|'hoan trackers identified the footprints of five people. In the cave of Fontanet, the footprints of 17 individuals were identified (distributed over three locations), and the one and only presumed Ice Age spoor of a shoe was also examined closely. In this imprint, the Ju|'hoan trackers discerned clear marks of toes, thus this imprint does not in fact stand as proof that people wore shoes in the Ice Age.



Above: |Ui Kxunta and |Ui Galo with a custodian in the cave named Niaux



Left: |Ui Kxunta and |Ui Galo in the cave named Tuc d'Audoubert

Below: |Ui Kxunta in Tuc d'Audoubert

(The third tracker, Tsamkxao Ciqae, is pictured on the next page along with the other members of the project team.)



Finally, in the cave of Tuc d'Audoubert, there is an area with a puzzling array of dozens of footprints on the side of a small pit, which archaeologists have again interpreted as being the tracks of ritual dancers, but the San trackers have a different explanation: they identified the tracks of a man and a boy walking twice to and fro to the pit to extract clay, and in addition they discerned imprints revealing that the man and boy knelt down at the pit in this process.

All of the trackers' discussions and arguments about the tracks inspected were audio-recorded. The Ju|'hoan Transcription Group in Tsumkwe will transcribe these recordings in Ju|'hoansi, and then translate the transcriptions into English.

Now, for the first time, there are plausible explanations as to what occurred in some of the places where Ice Age footprints are preserved. For the trained western scientists involved in this project, the experience of witnessing the San trackers at work was enlightening: the San exhibited a thoroughly empirical attitude towards their 'data', never speculating but rather clinging to meaningful facts, and in this sense there is a profound methodological accord between the western and the San approaches to interpreting tracks. Accordingly, the San were even able to detect the sex and age of those whose tracks they could clearly interpret. Henceforth, every scientist working with human tracks from the Ice Age will have to refer to the findings of these San experts, as never before has there been an equally competent inspection of such tracks.

A German television crew accompanied the group throughout the project period in Namibia and Europe. One outcome of this coverage will be a 90-minute documentary, scheduled for broadcast on the French-German channel Arte in 2014. Dr Tilman Lenssen-Erz (African Archaeology at the University of Cologne), Dr Andreas Pastoors (Neanderthal Museum, Mettmann, Germany) and Dr Megan Biesele (anthropologist in Namibia and authority on the San of the Kalahari) will produce an English version of the documentary, for screening in the participants' villages around Tsumkwe and elsewhere in Namibia. The project stirred huge media interest in Germany, with TV, radio and especially print-media coverage. (See also the project website, www.trackingincaves.com, which is continuously updated.)

Back from left: **Andreas Pastoors, Megan Biesele, Robert Bégouen and Jean Clottes**

Front from left: **|Ui Kxunta, |Ui Ga!o, Tsamkxao Ciqae and Tilman Lenssen-Erz**

