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*A KALAHARI FAMILY: THE MAKINGS OF A FAMILY, A FILMMAKER AND A  
FILM*

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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## CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: An Historical Synopsis of the Marshalls,  
Toma's Family and John Marshall's Filmmaking Career.

*"A film is so difficult to explain because it is so easy to understand"*<sup>1</sup>

## THE FILM, *A KALAHARI FAMILY*

On April 22, 2005, John Kennedy Marshall, exemplar visual anthropologist and humanitarian, passed away. John Marshall will be most remembered for his work with the Kalahari San or Bushmen, who he worked with for over fifty-years. As Matthew Durlington aptly writes, “In the course of his career and through his works, John Marshall has embodied many representational debates in anthropology and ethnographic media production... Simultaneously, he has been the subject of praise for his advocacy and an exemplar of ethnographic film practice. His family’s research and his film record are necessarily referenced in almost any time period of ethnographic or applied fieldwork conducted among the Ju/’hoansi in Namibia. His oeuvre is addressed in almost every piece of literature concerning ethnographic film and his activity as a filmmaker and advocate is a historical precedent to any representational media enterprise conducted among indigenous groups throughout the world.”<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps portent of his nearing death was the release of his final film, *A Kalahari Family*. Cut from over 2,000,000 feet of film and countless hours of digital video, *A Kalahari Family* is literally John Marshall’s final interpretation of his footage, and literally, his final say.<sup>3</sup>

For someone unfamiliar with the San of the Kalahari, or with John Marshall and his vast repertoire of films, the best place to begin to understand the six hour, five-part film series, *A Kalahari Family*, would be with the film’s own synopsis, found on the cover of the VHS or DVD and on the series’ website:

*A Kalahari Family* is the product of 50 years of documentation and research among the Ju/’hoansi of Nyae Nyae. For the last ten years, John Marshall, project academic advisors and collaborators have been constructing the series’ scripts to weave an accurate and compelling story about struggle and survival in Namibia for ≠Oma Tsamkxao and his extended family. A combination of first person accounts and outside narration, the series’

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1 C. Metz in Monaco, 1981, quoted in Keyan Tomaselli, *Appropriating Images*. (Højbjerg: Intervention Press, 1996), 159.

2 Matthew Durlington, “John Marshall’s Kalahari Family,” *American Anthropologist*. 106, 3. (Washington: American Anthropological Association, 2004). 589-594. 589.

3 Ibid.

scripts are a synthesis of historical events and personal reflection. The production team wrote the outside narration for the series with input from academic advisor Robert Gordon, professor of anthropology, University of Vermont. The outside voice places the words and experiences of the characters – as articulated in interviews and images – within a historical and political context. The words of the Ju/'hoan characters presented throughout the series were extracted from interviews conducted over the last five decades. Between 1978 and 2000, in preparation for *A Kalahari Family*, over 20 extensive interviews were recorded with the principal Ju/'hoan characters of the series by John Marshall and his crew. The voice of Lorna Marshall in *A Far Country* was recorded in 1992. Her words were extracted and synthesized from her diaries and field notes compiled during the Marshall expeditions of the 1950s. John Marshall wrote his narration based upon his previous writings and new reflections upon his extensive contact with the Ju/'hoansi that were generated by his experience editing this fifty-year long story.<sup>4</sup> –documentary educational resources (production and distribution company founded by John Marshall)

The release of *A Kalahari Family* (2003) marks a significant moment in ethnographic filmmaking.<sup>5</sup> Never before has there been a film which visually depicts fifty-years of anthropological interaction and also documents the transformation of a people from hunter gatherers to agro-pastoralists on the periphery of a commercial economy. What's more, *A Kalahari Family* coalesces both macro and micro histories and touches upon key discourses in a variety of disciplines and sub-disciplines: anthropology [and its descendent disciplines], Kalahari studies, development studies, politics, cultural studies, film and media, visual anthropology, visual ethnography and ethnographic filmmaking. Through the stories of the Ju/'hoansi, many more stories and histories are divulged including: the evolution of western anthropological history; the history of the Kalahari; the political and developmental history of South West Africa/Namibia; and the life story of John Marshall. In short, this dissertation seeks to ask and answer fundamental questions surrounding *A Kalahari Family*: What is the narrative? How was the film created? What does the series mean? Why is it important? What does the series outwardly appear to be doing? What does it actually do?

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.der.org/kalfam/film-transcripts.html> (2003) [Online]. Retrieved: [2006, May 07].

<sup>5</sup> Chapter two takes issue with the current academic fragmentation of visual anthropology and examines other hypotheses including Visual Ethnography and Cultural Filmmaking. What is momentarily important is that this paper takes Karl Heider's (1976) pluralist view. That is, it uses the broadest definition of ethnographic film—i.e. people making films about people.

## THE GENESIS OF A KALAHARI FAMILY

Throughout John Marshall's literature and films, he references the tracks his family left on the landscape of Nyae Nyae; he contends that it was these tracks which led to a South African government presence in the remote South West African/Namibian territory of Nyae Nyae. Similarly, John Marshall has left metaphorical tracks on the discipline of anthropology; just as Malanowski opened up the Trobiand islands, so to, the Marshalls the Kalahari. Not only did they pioneer a new field replete with archetypal anthropological subjects, John Marshall also played a significant role in the formulation of anthropological filmmaking.

The beginning of the Marshalls' expeditions is frequently attributed to Laurence Marshall<sup>6</sup>. During World War II Laurence Marshall co-founded Raytheon, a company which developed microwave communication technologies, which helped, "turn the tide against German U-boats in the Battle of the Atlantic and win the carrier war in the Pacific."<sup>7</sup> Raytheon, and thus Laurence Marshall, amassed a fortune from US government war expenditures. This left Laurence Marshall in a position to retire after the war. Given Laurence Marshall's new found time, he decided to take a long trip with his son, John, a buff of explorer accounts. As chance would have it, Laurence met a doctor on a previous business trip to Cape Town, who was planning an expedition for the following year to search for the "Lost City of the Kalahari," in South West Africa.<sup>8</sup> Laurence agreed to join the expedition.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, John Marshall was the impetus to start the Marshall "tracks" in the Kalahari and Laurence was the means.

Before the two men left on their adventure, Laurence visited nearby Harvard University to ask archaeology professors Lauriston Ward and J.O. Brew, if he and John, "could

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<sup>6</sup> Edwin Wilmsen, "Knowledge as a Source of Progress: The Marshall Family Testament to the 'Bushmen,'" in Paul Hockings, ed., *Visual Anthropology: Encounters in the Kalahari*, 12, 2-3. (Malaysia: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999), 213-265.

<sup>7</sup> John Marshall, Producer, *A Kalahari Family: Part One*, "A Far Country."

<sup>8</sup> A.J. Farini, "'Lost City' of the Kalahari: the probable solution," *South African Journal of Science*, 61: 208-212.

<sup>9</sup> John Marshall, "Filming and Learning," in Jay Ruby, ed., *The Cinema of John Marshall*. (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993), 23-25.

serve a useful purpose while looking for the Lost City.”<sup>10</sup> Brew and Ward advised Laurence to keep his eyes open for “wild Bushmen,”<sup>11</sup> like those published in “The Bushmen,” article in *Life* magazine in 1947.<sup>12</sup> Laurence and John didn’t find the “Lost City” but they did manage to meet two Bushmen whose relatives were subsisting by hunting and gathering. Laurence made an agreement with the men to return the following year to study and document their ways of life through writing and film.

The Ju/'hoansi of Nyae Nyae, who are classified along with other groups as San people, are more commonly referred to as Bushmen. Ju/'hoansi live in a northeastern region in Namibia. Until 1989, Namibia was administered by the Republic of South Africa who was mandated the territory under the League of Nations Treaty of Versailles in 1915. The territory, excluding Walvis Bay, was known as South West Africa and was subjected to apartheid policies and financially supported the larger South African economy. Nyae Nyae, the home of the Ju/'hoansi, is in north eastern region of South West Africa/Namibia and covers over 30,000 square miles and includes twelve permanent waterholes.<sup>13</sup> Archaeological evidence suggests that the Ju/'hoansi's ancestors have hunted and gathered in Nyae Nyae for over 20,000 years.<sup>14</sup> One of the great debates surrounding the Ju/'hoansi and other San groups is to what extent they were and remain hunters and gatherers.<sup>15</sup> For example, the Marshalls contend that their early expeditions were carried out with people whose only means of subsistence was hunting and gathering. In fact, their initial expeditions are arguably the beginning of an academic field—Kalahari Studies. This debate will be expanded upon in chapters six and seven.

In 1958, after six separate Marshall family expeditions to the Kalahari, John Marshall released his first film, the award winning, *The Hunters*. Shortly thereafter, John Marshall was thrown out of the South West African/Namibian Kalahari by the South African

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<sup>10</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 25.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Donald Burke, “The Bushmen: an ancient race struggles to survive in the South African deserts,” in *Life*, 22 (3 Feb. 1947): 91-97. Cited in Wilmsen, 1999, 215.

<sup>13</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 29.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Cites J. Yellen. “Comments,” *Current Anthropology* 31(5):507. 1990. Willemien Le Roux and Alison White, eds., *Voices of the San*. (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2004), 2. Tomaselli, 1996.

<sup>15</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 28.

government for supposedly fathering a child with a San woman. Though the accusation was false, John Marshall was banned from South West Africa/Namibia for what would be twenty years.

Almost simultaneously, on Christmas morning in 1959, a South African administrator was sent to establish an administrative post in Nyae Nyae at Tsumkwe.<sup>16</sup> It was then, according to John Marshall,<sup>17</sup> that Ju/'hoansi were first acculturated to agro pastoral life (although the Ju/'hoansi arguably had knowledge of agropastoralism from neighboring Herero herders). Claude McIntyre, the administrator, taught them to farm maize and raise goats. He drilled a borehole, which drew other Ju/'hoansi and Bushmen groups to Tsumkwe, as N!ai, one of John Marshall's informants says, "like flies to meat."<sup>18</sup> However, agropastoral efforts were derailed by hyenas and jackals which took out the goat population. What's more, many Ju/'hoansi were being pushed off their land and relocating to Tsumkwe; many starved and the Ju/'hoansi death rate dramatically rose.<sup>19</sup>

Around the same time in the 1960s, white farmers from the Gobabis region, just south of Nyae Nyae, began "blackbirding" the Ju/'hoansi (kidnapping Bushmen and forcing them to labor on farms and mines for virtually no pay).<sup>20</sup> However, with the introduction of mechanized farming, in addition to drought and mismanagement, many of these labourers in the 1970s were released from their farms, with nowhere to go, and nothing to eat. Mr. Claude McIntyre left his post on New Year's Eve 1969.<sup>21</sup> Sadly, in 1970 in the spirit of apartheid, the South African administration proclaimed a "Bushmen" homeland, which reduced the size of their land by over seventy percent. The new homeland, with the exception of 6,000 square kilometers was desiccated. John Marshall has described the homeland as, "a waterless waste of dry forest and deep sand."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 75.

<sup>17</sup> John Marshall, Producer, *A Kalahari Family*: Part Three – "The Real Water," 2003.

<sup>18</sup> John Marshall, Producer, *N!ai: The Story of a !Kung Woman*, 1980.

<sup>19</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 75-77. John Marshall and Claire Ritchie, Claire. *Where Are the Ju/wasi of Nyae Nyae?* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, African Studies Program, 1984).

<sup>20</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 14.

<sup>21</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 78.

<sup>22</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 2.

Lack of employment and the enforcement of the Bushmen homeland on arid land led to rampant malnutrition and disease in the 1980s. Approximately 30,000 Ju/'hoansi were dispossessed, with fifty percent of the population dying before age ten.<sup>23</sup> In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a few "lucky" Ju/'hoansi were recruited by the South African Defense Force (SADF) to fight the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), which was engaged in an anticolonial war against South Africa. This new source of revenue brought new problems: soldiers and their families became dependent on cash incomes for survival; the establishment of national parks led to a ban on hunting local game; lack of water prevented Ju/'hoansi from harvesting their own food. Even more problematic however was how the majority of soldiers' income was spent—at the bottle store, or on materials to make home brewed beer. Alcohol consumption led to other ills including an increase in babies born with fetal alcohol syndrome and a rise in violence, particularly in the form of domestic abuse.<sup>24</sup>

With the assistance of anthropologist Claire Ritchie, John Marshall started an NGO, the Ju|'wa Bushman Development Foundation (which later became the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation in 1991) in 1981. The initial aspiration of the Foundation was to encourage Ju/'hoansi to move back to their traditional geographic territories to farm. In 1982, the first groups of Ju/'hoansi left to re-establish themselves in Tsumkwe District West. Unfortunately, farming initiatives were stymied by preying lions and hyenas and elephants that destructed water sources. Today, the Conservancy's endeavors are based on generating income.<sup>25</sup> They also support the experimental Village Schools Project; sponsored by the Namibian government, the Village Schools Project trains San teachers to provide mother-tongue education in San villages.<sup>26</sup>

Despite these achievements, the problems of old exist today. For example, one-third of the San still work at cattleposts for the Herero where they are only paid in food and

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<sup>23</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 15.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Lee, "The Gods must be Crazy, but the State has a plan: Government Policy towards the San in Namibia," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 210, 12, pp. 181-190.

<sup>25</sup> Le Roux and White, 2004, 140.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

beer.<sup>27</sup> Also, many San today work on white-owned farms where they endure threats of lay-off and lower wages than non-San employees. Concerns over land and resource rights, discrimination, health and education remain current problems faced by the Kalahari San today.<sup>28</sup>

#### JOHN MARSHALL

John Marshall's oeuvre is eclectic and capacious. It includes Fred Wiseman's revered cinema vérité film, *Titicut Follies* (1967), over ten feature-length films, a series of shorts of the Pittsburgh police in action, multiple short sequence anthropological films, a documentary about the local collapsing shoe industry in Haverhill, Massachusetts, entitled, *If It Fits* (1977). In addition to production, John Marshall was also committed to distribution. In 1967, John Marshall, in conjunction with distinguished visual anthropologist, Timothy Asch, founded the Center for Documentary Anthropology. Reincarnated today as Documentary Educational Resources, the organization is committed to the procurement and distribution of anthropological films for educational purposes.<sup>29</sup>

In 1978, with the assistance of an acquaintance in the South African administration, John Marshall was permitted back into what was then South West Africa/Namibia. There, he found the Ju/'hoansi exploited, hungry and dispossessed. In response he released *N!ai, the Story of a !Kung Woman* (1980), which incorporates the nineteen-fifties footage of the Ju/'hoansi living nomadically, hunting and gathering, juxtaposed with late nineteen-seventies footage where the Ju/'hoansi are localized, destitute, and dying of tuberculosis. The film won the grand prize at the Cinema du Reel in Paris as well as a blue ribbon at the American Film Festival.

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<sup>27</sup> Renée Sylvain, "Disorderly Development: Globalization and the Idea of 'Culture' in the Kalahari," in *American Ethnologist*. 32 (3) 2005: 354-370.

<sup>28</sup> Kalahari Peoples Fund, "Current Problems faced by the Kalahari San," <http://www.kalaharipeoples.org/documents/San-otl.htm> (accessed March 12, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Documentary Educational Resources, "About," [www.der.org/about](http://www.der.org/about) (accessed March 21, 2006).

After releasing *N!ai* in 1980, John Marshall “put down the camera and picked up the shovel.”<sup>30</sup> By 1981, John Marshall was an active participant in the Ju| wa Bushman Development Foundation’s work, namely drilling, building kraals and lobbying for Ju/’hoansi land rights. In 1984, John Marshall and Ritchie published a survey and record of Ju/’hoansi diet, mortality and birth rates in a report entitled, *Pull Ourselves Up or Die Out*. A year later they released a twenty minute documentary of the same name.

While in the US, between trips to the Kalahari in 1987 and 1988, John Marshall undertook a unique project. With the assistance of some Massachusetts schoolteachers, he re-edited Ju/’hoansi footage into films to be taught to elementary school children studying social studies. Two elementary-films were created, *!Kung San: Traditional Life* and *!Kung San: Resettlement*. Still committed to the Kalahari, in 1988, John Marshall made a follow-up documentary to *Pull Ourselves Up or Die Out*, named *Fighting Tooth, (Nail) and the Government*. Following this, he made a film for the 1990 Land Rights Conference in Namibia called *To Hold Our Ground*. John Marshall’s political advocacy for Ju/’hoansi land rights merited him a place in drawing up the Namibian constitution.

After ten years of working mainly in Namibia and on the Ju/’hoansi cause, John Marshall returned to the US where he began teaching film at Hampshire College. In 1991, for Harvard’s Peabody Museum (the original partners of the Marshalls’ expeditions) he produced a two-part video exhibit aptly called the *!Kung San Exhibit*. The first part of the exhibit, which addresses five main issues- dispossession, water and development, the new economy, and rights, threats and hopes- resembles the format of John Marshall’s final work, then in a nascent stage, *A Kalahari Family*.

John Marshall spent the remainder of his life teaching, advocating and raising funds for *A Kalahari Family*, which was in production for fourteen years. In the course of his lifetime, he produced over fifty films, co-founded two organizations (Documentary Educational Resources and the Ju/’hoan Bushman Foundation), published a variety of written accounts and earned the

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<sup>30</sup> Carolyn Anderson and Thomas W. Benson. “Put Down the Camera, Pick Up the Shovel: An Interview with John Marshall,” in Jay Ruby, ed., *Cinema of John Marshall*. (Amsterdam: Harwood

American Anthropological Association's Lifetime Achievement Award. John Marshall's real legacy however, as Keyan Tomaselli and J.P. Homiak note, "...will be to the scholars of visual anthropology and documentary film that now have rich visual data on which to build theories and methods of representation."<sup>31</sup>

The breadth, depth and significance of John Marshall's work and experience in addition to the global intrigue with the San, makes *A Kalahari Family* particularly intriguing and valuable. For the first time, over fifty-years of anthropological involvement—(a relationship initiated for ethnographic pursuits, despite whatever change of relationship and roles between anthropologist and subject over time) with one people is portrayed and reflected upon. In short, the objective of this dissertation is to provide a general reading of the series in relationship to John Marshall's life, his work as a filmmaker and his other bodies of work.<sup>32</sup> The following are some of my questions: What does a close reading of the series reveal about John Marshall and his relationship to his subjects? How and why does he write himself into the narrative? What arguments are overtly or reticently articulated and why? How does the film relate to previous films and literature circumventing the Ju/'hoansi and John Marshall's work? What parts of the story have been prefaced or omitted? What's remained consistent in John Marshall's archive?

This research project is multifaceted. First and foremost, I familiarize myself with the history and contexts of the San, and specifically the Ju/'hoansi. A similar inquiry is made into John Marshall and his family. Both investigations require a survey of texts (films and literature). Once this background research is complete, I detail my methodology—how I approach and work through *A Kalahari Family*. I explain media theorist Keyan Tomaselli's appropriation of C.S. Peirce's theories of semiotics (1877 & 1878)<sup>33</sup>

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Press, 1993), 135-167, 135.

<sup>31</sup> John Homiak and Keyan Tomaselli, "Powering Popular Conceptions: The !Kung in the Marshall Family Expedition Films of the 1950s," in Paul Hockings, ed., *Visual Anthropology: Encounters in the Kalahari*, 12, 2-3. (Malaysia: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999), 289-338, 179.

<sup>32</sup> Including films, essays and articles.

<sup>33</sup> C.S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vols. 1-6, Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (eds.), vols. 7-8, Arthur W. Burks (ed.), (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931-1935, 1958).

(essentially a theory of how meaning is made) I attempt a semiotic reading of *A Kalahari Family*. The multiple layers of meaning found throughout *A Kalahari Family* necessitate dissecting the six hour series shot by shot, 2,891 shots and 102 stills in all. This process provides a look into the minutiae of meaning but also allows for examination of the ways in which these shots relate to one another and collectively comprise a whole, ultimately creating the meaning of the series. I reflect upon why John Marshall made his life work helping the Ju/'hoansi, I address the series' narrative, detailing the ways in which it is constructed and buttressed by cinematic conventions. I also discuss the cinematic conventions, the signs and codes, used by John Marshall in *A Kalahari Family* and how they relate to his tenure as a filmmaker.

#### A NOTE ON SPELLING AND TERMINOLOGY

Unlike most other languages, the languages of the San include clicks. The Ju/'hoansi have four clicks. In her book, *The Old Way*, Elizabeth Marshall Thomas provides an explanation of the clicks for English speakers:

“The dental click (/) resembles the sound we represent as *tsk*, as in *tsk tsk*. The alveolar click (≠) is somewhat the same but farther back in the mouth, where *t* and *d* come from. The alveol-palatal click (!) has no corresponding sound on our part and is made by pressing the tongue against the top of the mouth and popping it down. And the lateral click (//), made in the cheek, resembles the click one makes to urge a horse.”<sup>34</sup>

As Europeans came to subjugate the San, they appropriated their language—assigning phonetic letters to their sounds and spellings to their words. For example, Tjumk!ui, a town in Nyae Nyae, is also spelled Tsumkwe in English and Tshumkwe in German. Many of the people and places referenced in this dissertation are known by a variety of spellings, most specifically, the Ju/'hoansi themselves, also known as the Ju/wasi. In fact, the pronunciation and spelling of Ju/'hoansi was determined by Lorna Marshall; according to Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, “when Lorna Marshall wrote the first important ethnography of these people, she rendered the *j* and *je* or *jolie*. Others have followed her example. Today, her *j* rendition seems to be standard.”<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, comments further that the /'hoan part of Ju/'hoansi, is also spelled /hoan, and is an

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, *The Old Way*. (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2006), xiii.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas, 2006, 1.

attempt to reproduce phonetic subtleties. However, Thomas spells Ju/'hoansi, Ju/wasi throughout her text. Like John Marshall and Keyan Tomaselli, I use the spelling, Ju/'hoansi. Other names and places have discrepant spellings such as ≠Toma and Herero. I have similarly adopted John Marshall's spellings because the majority of the films and literature discussed in this dissertation are either about John Marshall or produced by him.

The majority of this dissertation refers specifically to the Ju/'hoansi, however, it is important to remember that the Ju/'hoansi have historically been referred to as the !Kung. Classification as !Kung was linguistically based and proved an insufficient categorization considering the heterogeneous cultural and linguistic practices of the different groups of !Kung speakers. Today, !Kung call themselves by the names of their individual groups. I attempt to do the same but there are moments when referring to others' scholarship, where I use !Kung because they have used. Similarly, I also use "Bushman" or "Bushmen" when referencing Bushman myths or a homogenized conception of San.

Another term that I use in this dissertation worthy of explanation is ethnographic filmmaking. There has been a tremendous fragmentation of what was originally visual anthropology. This paper is not concerned with defining and corresponding to these various disciplinary descendents, nor is it interesting in defining ethnographic film. Rather, Karl Heider's broad perspective of ethnographic filmmaking is adopted because it asserts that ethnographic films are simply films about people.<sup>36</sup> That said, I acknowledge that historically, the creators of these films have been Europeans and Americans and the subjects have been non-European, non-Americans. However, the ethnographic field has widened and is redefined in the new millennium. Cultures, and thus, the exploration of them through ethnography, are ubiquitous all over the world—including first world nations. For example, Amanda Coffey, an anthropologist whose work I discuss later, did her ethnographic fieldwork in an accountancy firm in a United Kingdom city.<sup>37</sup> Although, as I will later argue, John Marshall's initial intentions in filming the Ju/'hoansi

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<sup>36</sup> Karl Heider, *Ethnographic Film*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976).

<sup>37</sup> Amanda Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self*. (London: SAGE Publications, 1999), 28.

was to provide primary anthropological evidence, later, his films change entirely and become largely advocacy.

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## CHAPTER TWO

Historical Contexts: Anthropology, Visual Anthropology,  
and the Kalahari San

One of the most intriguing but challenging facets of *A Kalahari Family* is the way in which it draws upon a variety of academic discourses. The aspiration of the first part of this literature review is to detail the various debates in which the series is part and parcel to. They are: Bushman or “San” studies, anthropology and visual anthropology.

## BUSHMAN/SAN STUDIES

In the following pages I hope to provide an outline of the complex and rich history of the indigenous inhabitants of southern Africa but first there must be a clarification of terms. Throughout history and today, various names have been applied to southern Africa’s endemic people; *Bosmanneken*, Bosjeman, Bushman, San, and their cultural band names such as !Kung, Khwe, Khoe, etc. An etymological investigation into these terms reveals the prevailing thought and attitude towards these individuals. Below, I discuss the engenderment of these terms and the reasons for their incorporation into various vernaculars. Herein and throughout this dissertation, I will largely be referencing the Ju/’hoansi, but, will use the term San to reference the larger ethnic grouping found throughout southern Africa. However, there are several instances where I use “Bushman” or “Bushmen” in reference to the theories, paradigms and stereotypes which capitalize on a monolithic and mythic Bushman.

Like much of the colonized world, the history of the San is marred by "Eurocentrism." Though the San had "history," meaning herein knowledge of their forbearers and preceding events, their ideologies, methodologies and over arching cosmologies diverged so profoundly from the colonial discourse of history, that San history was left out of the written record. As Peter Ekeh writes in his article, “European Imperialism and the Ibadan School of History,” “The leading mantra of these ideologies of imperialism was the contention that Africa and Africans had no history and civilizations of their own making.”<sup>38</sup> Not surprisingly, the initial history of the San correlated to the arrival of Europeans and the written record. Questions such as, what constitutes a San individual?

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<sup>38</sup> Peter Ekeh, “European Imperialism and the Ibadan School of History,” Conference, *Problematising History and Agency: From Nationalism to Subalternity*. 22-24 October 1997. (Center of African Studies: University of Cape Town, South Africa) 7.

What are their cultural values and practices? What do they believe? Have all been exhaustively asked by observers. Their findings are reported in a myriad of books, journals and articles. Alan Barnard's bibliographic essay, "The Kalahari Debate" details over five hundred and thirty publications related to the San.<sup>39</sup> The lack of San voices inspired the publication, *Voices of the San* (2004).

At a Working Groups of Indigenous Minorities in South Africa (WIMSA) conference in 1997, a group of more than fifty San representatives decided that they themselves should be carrying out research into their own identity, history and life stories. As a result, thirty different San individuals carried out extensive interviews and research, resulting in the publication, *Voices of the San* (2004), compiled and edited by Willemien Le Roux and Alison White. The book "brings their voices together to tell the story of what their people have suffered ever since others moved into their lands. But their story is also about the vibrancy and beauty of being San, both yesterday and today."<sup>40</sup> While the majority of the book is dedicated to quotes and works of art by San, it also offers a concise but thorough history of the San.

By using *Voices of the San* in addition to anthropologist and historian, Robert Gordon's, *The Bushman Myth: The Making of a Namibian Underclass*, I hope to offer an outline of the complex and tragic history of the San.

Archaeological evidence suggests that ancestors of the San have been living in southern Africa for over 20,000 years.<sup>41</sup> As written in *Voices of the San*, "We can only speculate about what happened before they started to feature in ships' journals and records kept by Portuguese and other seafarers, and on maps in letters and in travel descriptions of explorers."<sup>42</sup> The early explorers encountered and interacted with a variety of groups in southern Africa, including but not limited to the Khoe Khoen, Hai||om and !Xun. These groups were so culturally dissimilar to the early explorers and colonialists and they

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<sup>39</sup> Alan Barnard, *The Kalahari Debate: A Bibliographic Essay*, (Edinburgh: Center for African Studies, Edinburgh University, 1992).

<sup>40</sup> Willemien le Roux and Alison White, eds. *Voices of the San* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2004), xi.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Gordon, *The Bushman Myth: The Making of a Namibian Underclass*. (Boulder: Perseus Books, 1992); le Roux and White, 2004.

mistakenly, described and understood these distinct groups to be one ethnic people, the Bosjeman or Bushman. This classification was largely physiologically based (the anthropological paradigm of the time) and belied the cultural differences between the groups, including language and religion.

In 1880 Gustav Fritsch, a European physical anthropologist, wrote in his ethnography *Eingeborenen Südafrikas: Ethnographisch und anatomisch beschribt*, that the origins of the word Bushman was derived from the Dutch word meaning 'bush person.' Fritsch looks to the first Dutch commander, Jan van Riebeeck's diary, as evidence, wherein he references the *Bosmanneken*, which in Batavia referred to orangutans. In this etymological context, "Bushman" translates to a sub-species of man.<sup>43</sup>

The term "San," dates back to the Nama word *Sonqua* (or *Soaqua*), or *Sa-au*, used by cattle herding Khoekhoen to refer to those who forage.<sup>44</sup> Europeans adopted the Nama term, San, and used it synonymously with Bushmen in the the seventeenth century, to refer to those living without livestock. In this literal sense, "San" denotes "scavenging, begging or robbing."<sup>45</sup> Like "Bushman," "San" also unifies distinct cultural groups under a monolithic term. To rectify this misnomer, scholars today tend to identify the specific cultural groups to which they refer, by their indigenous names, i.e., the !Kung, Ju/'hoansi, Nama, etc.<sup>46</sup> However, particular groups, especially in Namibia have reclaimed the term Bushman, since it invokes their indigenous status.<sup>47</sup>

The first most notable settlement in southern Africa occurred in what is present day Cape Town. In 1652 Jan van Riebeeck, commissioned by the Dutch East India Company

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<sup>42</sup> Le Roux and White, 6.

<sup>43</sup> Gustav Fritsch. *Die Eingeborenen Südafrikas*. (Breslau: Hirt, 1872) quoted in Gordon, 1992, 43.

<sup>44</sup> Le Roux and White, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Barnard, 1992, 9.

<sup>46</sup> Keyan Tomaselli, *Appropriating Images: The Semiotics of Visual Representation*. (Højbjerg: Intervention Press, 1996), 39.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Hitchcock and Megan Biesele, "San, Khwe, Basarwa, or Bushmen?: Terminology, Identity and Empowerment in Southern Africa," in *Kalahari Peoples' Fund*. 28 December 2000.; Le Roux and White, 6.

established a small refresher station for ships sailing to and from Europe and the East.<sup>48</sup> Prior to van Riebeeck's arrival, the Khoekhoen herders prospered. Their prosperity was of great assistance to the Dutch, who soon expanded the settlement into a colony replete with a castle and several batteries. Though there is evidence of Khoekhoen resistance, the Europeans were able to abrogate them with the assistance of foreign disease and sophisticated armory. Within a hundred years, most of the Khoekhoen had been displaced to the North, where they had to fight other San groups for land. In fact, fighting amongst Khoekhoen and other San was so fierce in the interior that it effectively halted northern colonial expansion by 1770. Often, Khoekhoen, especially women and children, were assimilated into other San groups or became indentured servants on nascent farms.

More pioneer farmers arrived in southern Africa in the late eighteenth-century in search of farmland. Indigenous groups resisted often through cattle raids or by burning farms to the ground. In retaliation, colonialists established commandos, which were sent out to arrest San, but in most cases killed them. It is estimated that between 2,700 and 3,200 San were killed during this period. Women and children were often spared death and instead utilized as labor on farmland. Others escaped into the arid interior, where farmers didn't venture because the land was unfit for farming. When the British came to rule the Cape in 1795, they established a Bushmen Reserve to stop the "incessant bloodshed." Naturally, the culture of the San had already significantly deteriorated. As Neil Bennum writes in, *The Broken String: The Last Words of an Extinct People*:

When the /Xam-ka !ei lost their land to the sheep farmers it was a spiritual catastrophe. The disintegration of their culture and the loss of their land were inextricably linked since the landscape dictated the culture it supported; where an agriculturalist people can rebuild a temple or a shrine should they be forced from their place, the /Xam-ka !ei could not rebuild *vleis*, a rock formation like a standing man or the view of a vast and literally timeless landscape seen from the top of a pile of black igneous boulders. Their ritual and their beliefs worked *there*, directly permitting a lifestyle practiced since the first people to make it that far from wherever our species was born crossed the Orange River and invented the stories they needed to survive.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Gerald L'ange, *The White Africans: From Colonisation to Liberation*. (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2005), 10-19.

<sup>49</sup> Neil Bennum, *The Broken String: The Last Words of An Extinct People*. (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 298.

In 1793, Walvis Bay, which is located in present day Namibia, was declared a Dutch territory. Settlers began to move into the interior of southern Africa from the west, moving east. These settlers also faced resistance from local San groups, though it is rarely documented as such, as it was considered social banditry and was instead integrated into a mythological discourse which portrayed the San as vermin, savages, cannibals and the "yellow peril." Though these attacks initially fettered colonial expansion, by the middle of the nineteenth century, a greater number of settlers were moving into the interior, as typified by the 1838 Afrikaaner Great Trek. By the late 1800s, physical anthropologists, using an evolutionary discourse, concluded that San came prior to humans, providing a justification for colonial and missionary dominance over the San.<sup>50</sup> In 1884, present day Namibia, (without the Caprivi strip) became Südwest-Afrika. A year later, one of the most publicized and significant events leading to European settler/San tension was the establishment of Upingtonia in October 1885. An estimated five hundred Boers came to farm but were met with resistance from the San. Robert Gordon writes, "The small Boer community had to cope almost daily with Bushmen reprisals, in which Bushmen invariably had the upper hand because they were often well armed with rifles, which were a legacy of ivory hunting, and were more mobile than the trekkers."<sup>51</sup> Upingtonia eventually dissolved after a San man murdered its founder in May 1887. Land encroachment by Europeans, like in the case of Upingtonia, and environmental factors such as drought and the hunting out of game, led to the formation of San bandit gangs which were most influential from 1906-1939.<sup>52</sup> Bandits were notorious for murdering white colonialists, stealing their stock, burning their farms and robbing migrant workers returning from the recently opened mines.<sup>53</sup> These acts of retaliation were reported in the local papers, under headlines such as "Bushman Plague," "The Bushman Danger" and the "Yellow Peril."<sup>54</sup> Naturally, a climate of fear grew and existed among settlers. "Farmers preferred to give credence to wild rumors circulating in the district, namely, that Bushmen were engaging in

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<sup>50</sup> Gustav Fritsch. "Die afrikanischen Buschmänner als Urrasse," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 1880 12 (3): 289-300. Quoted in Gordon, 1992, 44.

<sup>51</sup> Gordon, 1992, 41.

<sup>52</sup> Gordon, 1992, 197.

<sup>53</sup> Gordon, 1992, 57.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

cannibalism and had sworn to kill every white farmer.<sup>55</sup> Eventually, the colonial authorities intervened by forcing land companies to sell more farmland. The intent was to increase the settler presence and thus strengthen their control over the San.<sup>56</sup>

As noted above, by the late 1800s, the San were increasingly becoming objects of study. Because San were thought to be less than human, physical anthropologists, archaeologists and linguists sought to "collect, dissect, preserve as specimen and display as curiosity," these disappearing people.<sup>57</sup> They were often taken from their homelands and sent on display to Europe and the Americas as was the case with a San woman named Flora as well as the famous Khoekhoen woman, Sarah Baartman, the "Hottentot Venus."<sup>58</sup> San became such a curiosity, that people privately collected their body parts. To date, many of these human curios have been collected by the British Museum in London, which now has the remains of thousands of San.<sup>59</sup>

The climate of fear experienced in the interior likely led to the extermination discourse purported by anthropologist Siegfried Passarge in 1907. During his travels between 1896-1898 Passarge found Bushmen incapable of adapting to agriculture or pastoralism and thus, the only solution to the "Bushmen problem" was to exterminate them much like vermin.<sup>60</sup> Though not official policy, the police and the military were encouraged to use fire arms in cases of even the slightest insubordination. This effectively led to a warrant for genocide.<sup>61</sup> Undoubtedly, it was the Bushmen reprisals that led to the creation of the myths of Bushmen as vermin, cannibals and killers.

Between 1906 and 1908, a railway line was established between the South West African coast and three of the recently established settler communities. As a result, there was a massive increase in European settlements. Gordon articulates, "The influx of settlers

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<sup>55</sup> Gordon, 1992, 74.

<sup>56</sup> Gordon, 1992, 53.

<sup>57</sup> Le Roux and White, 54.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Gordon, "The Life and Times of Sara Baartman: The Hottentot Venus," *American Anthropologist*, 102, 3 (2000), 606-607.

<sup>59</sup> Le Roux and White, 60.

<sup>60</sup> Gordon, 1992, 60.

<sup>61</sup> Gordon, 1992, 59.

and 'development' led to a labor shortage and a renewed appreciation of the value of Bushmen as labourers."<sup>62</sup> To meet the demand, police patrols were sent out to round-up Bushmen. After being captured, they were sent to work on farms or in the mines, where they were often only paid in food and/or tobacco and alcohol, since many employers felt Bushmen didn't understand the value of money.<sup>63</sup> There, Bushmen were forced to do rigorous labor. Due to the enforced travail it seems only natural that they were less than enthusiastic and diligent workers, leading farmers to conclude that Bushmen had no work ethics, were lazy and incapable of assimilating to agricultural and pastoral life.<sup>64</sup> Commonly, Bushmen deserted their posts which in turn, resulted in a piece of legislation entitled, "the Vagrancy Proclamation" (Proc. 25/1920). Essentially, it provided police the authority to arrest and enslave for mine or farm labor, any Bushmen not already employed. This piece of legislation insured that all Bushmen become productive members of a colonial society.<sup>65</sup>

Coexisting with the Bushmen extermination and labor discourses was the call for a "Bushman Reserve" in the interest of science.<sup>66</sup> The idea first appeared in 1908 but was dismissed on the basis that it was too difficult to determine how "pure" Bushmen were and further, a reserve might serve as a hideout for runaway labourers.<sup>67</sup> Despite the rejection, the discourse continued. Many believed Bushmen to be "living fossils"; the link between Paleolithic man and the modern, civilized man. Much like reserves to preserve animals, the intent of a Bushmen reserve was to protect (what was widely believed to be) near extinct Bushmen.<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately, for the proponents of the Bushmen reserve, the South African government stalled and finally with the outbreak of World War II, opted out.<sup>69</sup> However, the fight for the reserve engendered one of the most popular and widely held Bushmen myths—the Bushmen as fauna.

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<sup>62</sup> Gordon, 1992, 54.

<sup>63</sup> Gordon, 1992, 142.

<sup>64</sup> Gordon, 1992, 60.

<sup>65</sup> Gordon, 1992, 102.

<sup>66</sup> Gordon, 1992, 60.

<sup>67</sup> Gordon, 1992, 60-61.

<sup>68</sup> Gordon, 1992, 148.

<sup>69</sup> Gordon, 1992, 150.

The typology of “wild,” “semitame” and “tame” Bushmen became well established by the early 1920s in the settler discourse on understanding Bushmen behavior. The establishment of these distinctions reflects the integration of many Bushmen into the settler system. The basis of this typology was both spatial and economic. “Wild” Bushmen were those who were not permanently incorporated into the settler economy and generally lived beyond what was known as the Police Zone. The “semitame” Bushmen came from beyond the Police Zone to work on settler farms on a temporary or seasonal basis. The “tame” Bushmen were permanently integrated into life on settler farms. This typology formed the basis from which Bushmen behavior was explained.<sup>70</sup> Generally, it was accepted that stock theft was committed by “wild” Bushmen or those not indoctrinated into the system. This distinction seems to have two purposes; first, by pronouncing working Bushmen “tame” it addressed farmers’ fears of their Bushmen labourers, and second, it justified the capture and enslavement of “wild” Bushmen for labor.

Gordon writes, “By the end of WWII the overwhelming majority of Bushmen had become part of Namibia’s invisible rural proletariat, eking out an existence on settler farms. A survey conducted at the end of 1947 showed that 65 percent of the 179 farms in Grootfontein and 52 percent of the 135 Gobabis district farms had Bushmen residents.”<sup>71</sup> What resulted was a shift in concern by the public and government from Bushmen within the Police Zone, to those living beyond it. Its culmination, in true apartheid fashion, was to be the creation of a Bushmen reserve.<sup>72</sup> In 1951, the South African legislative assembly passed a motion which called for all “vagrant” Bushmen to be placed in a special reserve for the following, rather contradicting reasons: Bushmen were the first representatives of *Homo sapiens*; they were largely a ‘bastard race’ and rife with venereal disease and more importantly, vagrant Bushmen were a threat to farmers because apart from depleting the farmers’ livestock, they were responsible for most bush fires and the killing off of the territory’s game. Not mentioned in the legislation was the common knowledge of Herero employing Bushmen to do their work for them, thus resulting in

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<sup>70</sup> Gordon, 1992, 90.

<sup>71</sup> Gordon, 1992, 157.

lower productivity from Herero.<sup>73</sup>

The 1960s saw a collapse of white agriculture and a feeble situation in the fishing and mining industries. With the completion of tarred roads linking South West Africa with South Africa, mass white tourism became plausible.<sup>74</sup> Tourism discourse emphasized the “natural and wild” parts of South West Africa, which Bushmen embodied. In the 1980s, the South African government instituted the Department of Nature Conservation in South West Africa, effectively allowing this new department to appropriate “black homelands” for tourism initiatives. The Ju/’hoansi agreed to have a habitable portion of their land allocated as a game park. Part of the tourist draw to the park was to come see the “primitive” Bushmen living unscathed by civilization.<sup>75</sup> Once again, the discourse of Bushmen as fauna was invoked.

While the fauna myth was resurfacing so was an older Bushmen myth— Bushmen as the best hunter/trackers in the world. In 1974, the South African Defense Force (SADF) was engaged in a low-intensity war with the South West African People’s Organization (SWAPO). SWAPO was fighting for the liberation of South West Africa from South Africa. SADF established a base in the Caprivi (northern South West Africa), to use their presence to keep SWAPO guerillas at bay and at the same time, recruit Bushmen to aide the fight.<sup>76</sup> As a defense measure, SADF intended resettling 4-5,000 Bushmen in Bushmanland by the end of 1979.<sup>77</sup> SADF “developed” Bushmanland, by establishing agricultural plots, pre and post natal clinics, schools and permanent housing. It appeared that their intention was to bring about cultural change for the Bushmen.<sup>78</sup> Around this time, the press’ depiction of the Bushmen shifted. They began representing them as “the beautiful and pristine people.” This shift is most likely a result of their involvement in SADF and the reemergence of the fauna Bushman myth.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Gordon, 1992, 161.

<sup>74</sup> Gordon, 1992, 184.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Gordon, 1992, 185.

<sup>77</sup> Gordon, 1992, 180.

In 1988 South West Africa gained independence and became Namibia. With the new government, it appeared that the San would hold onto what was left of their land. After independence, several organizations were established to redress San exploitation and oppression. Among them are, the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA), the South African San Institute (SASI) and the San Foundation Eastern Seaboard.<sup>79</sup> In 1990 the term "San" was called into question and according Tomaselli, "consumed hundreds of pages of books and journals...."<sup>80</sup> San today identify themselves as San, as evidenced at the WIMSA AGMs meeting in 1996.<sup>81</sup> Though scholars and some San themselves identify themselves by their specific cultural group, i.e. the Ju/'hoansi, Nama, etc.<sup>82</sup>

In Namibia today, six San (with the exception of the Khwe) chiefs hold authority over their land, and one Ju/'hoan man, Royal IOMloIo is a member of parliament.<sup>83</sup> Several community based organizations have been established to assist the San with land acquisition, income generation and establishment of educational institutions. These community based organizations are often supplemented and supported by foreign development agencies, which have had both positive and negative affects upon the San. *Voices of the San* states, "In many cases, injustices are done in the name of 'development', and are perpetrated by policy implementers or benefactors who have the best of intentions, but who almost invariably come from different cultures and worldviews. In still other cases, 'development' is once more the justification for land theft, and reflects the image that the architects of such programs have of themselves rather than the real needs of the San."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Gordon, 1992, 191.

<sup>79</sup> Le Roux and White, 74.

<sup>80</sup> D. Wiley, *et al. Africa on Film and Videotape 1960-1981: A Compendium of Reviews*. (East Lansing: African Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1982); Edwin Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Edwin Wilmsen and J.R.Denbow, "Paradigmatic History of San-Speaking Peoples and Current Revision," *Current Anthropology*, 31 (5), (1990): 489-524; Robert Gordon, "The Prospects for Anthropological Tourism in Bushmanland," *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, 14, (1990): 6-8. Gordon, 1992.

<sup>81</sup> Le Roux and White, 220..

<sup>82</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 39.

<sup>83</sup> Le Roux and White, 148.

<sup>84</sup> Le Roux and White, 152.

From the brief outline of historical events detailed here, several points need to be clarified and reiterated. First, the state has been involved in both the destruction and preservation of San. Second, and the crux of Gordon's larger argument is that representations and discourses surrounding San were and are discordant. He eloquently writes, "The discursive power of the settlers and their kindred is dramatically demonstrated in their ability to switch their stereotypes of the Bushmen almost at will. That phenomenon is perhaps the most mundane indicator of Bushmen underclass status. It is the underclass status of Bushmen that exaggerates their cultural ambiguity and makes them susceptible to genocide when they are enveloped by the state."<sup>85</sup> Third, and most importantly, these discordant representations of San have always coexisted.

#### THE HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY: UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL (WO)MAN

This segment of the literature review does not attempt in any way to provide a complete compendium of anthropological history. Rather, it attempts, like the works of anthropologists Paul Erickson and Liam Murphy's texts, *A History of Anthropological Theory* (2003) and *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory* (2006), to pinpoint important moments in the history of the discipline. However, my summary is far less detailed than that of Erickson or Murphy; much has been omitted. What is included emphasizes theoretical shifts that are particularly relevant to the Ju/'hoansi and the variety of researchers who've studied them.

Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy in their text *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory* (2006) argue that the philosophical genesis of anthropology, like other Western Academic disciplines, dates back to antiquity. The philosophies of Socrates, Aristotle and Plato were the foundation in which people began to ask and answer questions regarding human nature, human behavior and human relationships. As Erickson and Murphy write, "The legacy of Antiquity to anthropology, then, was the

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<sup>85</sup> Gordon, 1992, 213.

establishment of humanistic, religious, and scientific intellectual outlooks.”<sup>86</sup>

Ideas surrounding anthropology were fairly nonexistent throughout the Middle Ages, however a few important institutions were established; Universities and the idea of human history created by the Medieval Church. The idea of human history represents a vast change in thinking. Prior to the concept of human history, it was believed that everything was created and controlled by God. The emergence of human history implies that people began to believe that human agency affects reality.<sup>87</sup>

Erickson and Murphy write, “No other event in history was as significant for anthropology as the voyages of geographical discovery, which put Europeans in contact with the different kinds of people anthropologists now study, sometimes called the anthropological ‘Other.’”<sup>88</sup> The encounter with previously unknown peoples and their corresponding lived practices, gave rise to the need to describe and understand these people and their practices for knowledge's sake, as well as to dominate and legitimate colonial rule. What is more, because of the early missions and the idea that anyone can convert to Catholicism and/or Christianity, the idea of monogenesis, (the belief that all humans are from the same biological species and share a common origin) was adopted.<sup>89</sup>

However, there is good reason why Marvin Harris in *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (1968) argues that before the enlightenment, anthropology did not really exist.<sup>90</sup> His arguments are based upon the fact that two important anthropologically related philosophical thoughts emerged during the enlightenment. The first was purported by Jean Jacques Rousseau who in the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality Among Men* (1751) argued that the differences between man had developed over time. Using fourth-world people as models for past ‘savages’, Rousseau implemented the comparative method; prehistoric artifacts are described by fourth-world people who use

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<sup>86</sup> Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy, *A History of Anthropology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Orchard Park: Broadview press, 2003), 26.

<sup>87</sup> Erickson and Murphy, 2003, 26, 57.

<sup>88</sup> Erickson and Murphy, 2003, 30-31.

<sup>89</sup> Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy, (eds). *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Orchard Park: Broadview press, 2006.), 6-7.

similar objects to those artifacts. The use of “primitive” subjects to gain insight into man’s past became the preferred methodology of American salvage anthropology.<sup>91</sup> The second, but equally important, philosophy espoused during the Enlightenment but maintained today is the idea that humanity has evolved through stages. An apropos example is the belief that man has transitioned from hunting to pastoralism to farming.<sup>92</sup> Later, the idea of human progress had profound implications in the age of imperialism and colonial domination.

Much like modern social science, anthropology was influenced by positivism. Anthropologists believed that by using a scientific methodology that the truth could be revealed. What resulted was a detached, subjective model for social science research.<sup>93</sup> Around the same time of positivism, the age of classical cultural evolutionism appeared. In this moment scholars began to inquire and research the history of non-literate (namely European) people. Much like the Renaissance, classic cultural evolutionists used “primitive” peoples to understand ancient artifacts.<sup>94</sup> It may be argued that it was the classic cultural evolutionists’ integration of ethnography and archaeology that may have led to the American four-field approach.

The appointment of Edward Burnett Tylor as a professor of anthropology at Oxford University in the late nineteenth century marks the formalization and institutionalization of anthropology as a discipline. Tylor wrote the first anthropology textbook, *Anthropology* (1881) and was the first to provide a concise definition of culture. In *Primitive Culture* (1871) he writes, “[that] complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*. (Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press, 2001).

<sup>91</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau and N. Singh (Ed.). *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*. (New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2006).

<sup>92</sup> Erickson and Liam, 2006, 1-8.

<sup>93</sup> Erickson and Liam, 2006, 42-43.

<sup>94</sup> Erickson and Liam, 2003, 47.

<sup>95</sup> Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture*. (New York: Gordon Press, 1871) quoted in Paul Ericson and Liam Murphy, 2003, 52.

The late nineteenth century witnessed a shift in belief from God to science. Meanwhile, many scientists became consumed with the idea of biological evolution. Eventually, in 1859, Charles Darwin published *Origins of Species* wherein he argued that nature selects advantageous traits which survival is dependent upon.<sup>96</sup> However, in industrial times, human survival was no longer based on hunting and gathering, and “advantageous traits” had to be reconsidered. The supposition became that *Homo sapiens* had evolved mentally and morally. This led in 1871 to the publication of *The Descent in Man* wherein Darwin goes on to argue that the evolution of favorable traits is a mechanism of sexual selection—an individual selects their mate based upon attraction. Some of the examples Darwin provides of advantageous traits are intelligence and altruism.<sup>97</sup> What followed was the idea that because the West had writing, science and imperialism, they had greater intelligence and hence, were more evolved than their colonial subjects. Undoubtedly, the appropriation of Darwinian theory had a racist affect on nineteenth-century anthropology.

The early twentieth-century saw the professionalization of anthropology in the United States. The implementation of the discipline was broken into the four-fields approach: archaeology, physical anthropology, linguistic anthropology and cultural anthropology.<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile, in Britain, the discipline was divided between physical anthropology and the study of society and culture. These national distinctions continue today, as the British practice, "social anthropology" which has traditionally prefaced law, status and kinship structures and the U.S.'s "cultural anthropology," which attempts to detail and analyze cultural experience including kinship, political structure, as well as folklore, language, technology and childrearing. Despite this fission, both the British and American schools in the early twentieth century emphasized the practice of ethnographic fieldwork.

In short, ethnography is the study of the culture or social organization of a particular group or community and the published result of that study. The methodologies of fieldwork in addition to the process of the writing up are multifold and have evolved over time. In fact, the history of ethnographic methodology makes up a large portion of the

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<sup>96</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* Erickson and Liam, 2006, 67.

<sup>97</sup> Erickson and Liam, 2003, 69-72.

<sup>98</sup> Erickson and Liam, 2003, 73.

history of anthropology. Two distinct ethnographic methods emerged in the late nineteenth century: one based on survey and travel data gathered by “amateur” observers like missionaries, hunters, rogue travelers and explorers, natural scientists; and the other (often known as the armchair method) which was based on direct observation by the trained anthropologist. As anthropologists were trained in universities, grew in number, and the standards of research improved, the direct model largely came to replace the indirect one, and the speculative, comparative, “armchair” approach was discredited and replaced with a “direct observation and participation” model.

Since anthropological practice was largely determined by the colonial power and its subjects, “direct observation” also meant different things. For example, American anthropologists observed American Indians namely in unnatural environments, while British “direct observation” had anthropologists observing people in their natural surroundings. Another ethnographic method which became popular in the early twentieth century is “participant observation”. As espoused by Bronislaw Malinowski, participant observation requires anthropologists to understand their subjects through participation and observation.<sup>99</sup> Later, after the demise of the American Indians, American anthropologists, such as Margaret Mead, also adopted participant observation and cultural immersion in the field.

Traditionally, ethnography has been practiced with distance and objectivity in order to observe and record organic behaviors.<sup>100</sup> In recent years, the question of objectivity and the affect of the literary genre have profoundly affected ethnographic methodologies. Thick description, proposed by Clifford Geertz in *Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) emphasizes detail over sweeping generalizations, and attempts to interpret the relationship between symbol and context. Geertz used the example of “Balinese cockfighting” as an example of thick description. In this singular event, multiple messages about the culture are conveyed, i.e. the gendered and hierarchial nature of the society.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Erickson and Liam, 2006, 171-185.

<sup>100</sup> Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self*. (London: SAGE Publications, 1999), 26.

<sup>101</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures, New Edition*. (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

Another ethnographic methodology occurred after the publication of *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986)<sup>102</sup> what some call the confessional. Amanda Coffey writes, “The ‘confessional’ has been coined as a mode of ethnographic representation that emphasizes the writing of the self into the process of research. Atkinson (1990, 1996) has noted that as a genre, the ethnographer’s confessional tale encompasses and draws on literary conventions of the narrative or story, in order to construct a specific sort of text... This sort of text of the self is now relatively accepted by ethnographers and ethnographic audiences.”<sup>103</sup> There seem to be two important benefits of writing the self into ethnography; it may bring greater authenticity to the work and it provides readers a context and understanding of the process of the ethnographic research. Also, acknowledgement of the self is the antithesis to a master narrative and thus “gives voice” to others.<sup>104</sup>

As outlined above, anthropology has long been influenced by other paradigms; particularly religious, scientific and more recently literary thought. The intention of this synopsis is to demonstrate the multiple approaches and theories regarding the study of cultural man. Later, in considering the Marshalls’ work, it is important to remain cognizant of their multiple theoretical and methodological applications. For example, the Marshalls began their work steeped in a scientific, positivistic paradigm but John Marshall’s final work, *A Kalahari Family*, is blatantly post-modern and self-reflective.

#### A BRIEF HISTORY OF VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY: FILMMAKING FROM SCIENCE TO ART

The development of visual anthropology is a result of mainly two things; social/cultural anthropology and cinema. Ironically, the genesis of both anthropology and cinema occurred near the turn of the nineteenth century. Noted visual anthropology scholar Jay Ruby comments, “Cinema and anthropology have a parallel history and development.

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<sup>102</sup> James Clifford and George Marcus, *Writing Culture*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

<sup>103</sup> Paul Atkinson, *The Ethnographic Imagination*. (London: Routledge, 1990); Paul Atkinson, *Sociological Readings and Re-readings*. (Aldershot: Avebury, 1996) quoted in Coffey, 116.

They came from the same nineteenth-century Euro-American intellectual and cultural foundations...They were founded upon the Western middle-class need to explore, document, explain, understand and hence, symbolically control the world, or at least that part of the world the middle class regards as being exotic.”<sup>105</sup>

According to the Ilisha Barbash and Lucien Taylor, the authors of *Cross-Cultural Filmmaking*, the inventors of the first camera, Louis and Auguste Lumière were, “Motivated by ‘scientific curiosity,’ he [Louis Lumière ] was convinced that cinema could be an extension of the artistic concept – *sur le vif* – that is presenting a live subject.<sup>106</sup> He wanted spectators to witness ‘nature caught in the act’ and enjoy such simple pleasures as seeing ‘the ripple of leaves stirred by the wind.’”<sup>107</sup> The belief that film could mirror real life gave it its initial popularity. Thus, it’s not surprising that the first films were about normal daily life; a train arriving at the station, workers leaving the factory, a baby learning to walk, etc.

Near the same time, science became indoctrinated into the discipline of anthropology. Ruby writes, “These philosophies of science, which dominated the development of social science, cause social scientists to strive to be detached, neutral, unbiased, and objective toward the object of their study, to withhold value judgments; and to disavow political, economic, and even moral positions—in other words, to attempt to negate or lose all traces of their culture so that they can study someone else’s culture.”<sup>108</sup> Worse, ethnographic scholars didn’t just lose vestiges of culture, they “lost” themselves. Any opinions or traces of subjective presence were discouraged by the academy.

In the early 1920s museums and universities began to supplement courses and lectures on anthropology. Museums often showcased visual ethnographies much as theatres today

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<sup>104</sup> Coffey, 118.

<sup>105</sup> Jay Ruby, *Picturing Culture*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 168.

<sup>106</sup> Patricia Hayes, “Examiner’s report on Anna Luty, MPhil mini-dissertation in African Studies, UCT, 2007,” (Cape Town, University of Cape Town, 2007).

<sup>107</sup> Ilisha Barbash and Lucien Taylor, *Cross Cultural Filmmaking*. (Berkeley: UC Press, 1997), 15.

<sup>108</sup> Ruby, 2000, 161.

display Hollywood movies.<sup>109</sup> The late reintegration of film and anthropology may be attributed to the technological limitations of early film, i.e., the expense of cameras, the cumbersome and immobile characteristics of the cameras, and further, the hazard of flammable nitrate film.

Emile de Brigard writes in his essay, “The History of Ethnographic Film,” “In anthropology, the middle of the 1930’s was the watershed between film’s unimportance and its acceptability.”<sup>110</sup> Many anthropologists during this period, notably Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead, began to use film. Film’s value, as Mead put it, was that it could “record the types of non-verbal behavior for which there existed neither vocabulary nor conceptualized methods of observation...”<sup>111</sup> Unfortunately, in Jay Ruby’s words, “she failed to have the influence she should have had.”<sup>112</sup> Visual anthropology’s progress was stymied by the outbreak of World War Two. It isn’t till after the war, that the first visual ethnography is credited; Jean Rouch’s film *Les Maîtres Fous*, 1954.<sup>113</sup> Brigard asserts, “...under Rouch’s care, the genre of ethnographic film acquired scientific and political as well as artistic stature in the postwar decade.”<sup>114</sup>

By 1959, a German institute for anthropological visual ethnography published “Rules for film documentation in ethnology and folklore.” Brigard explains these rules, “These require that filmmaking be done by persons with sound anthropological training or supervision, and that an exact log be kept; that the events recorded be authentic (technical processes can be staged for the camera, but not ceremonies), filmed without dramatic camera angles or movement, and edited for representativeness.”<sup>115</sup> This comment affirms that early visual ethnography was subject to the same scientific ideals as those of the larger discipline of anthropology. But moreover, since film was still a relatively new phenomenon, it was still commonly believed that it depicted reality as is. Thereby, visual

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<sup>109</sup> Emile De Brigard, “The History of Ethnographic Film,” Paul Hockings, ed., *Principles of Visual Anthropology* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995), 20.

<sup>110</sup> Emile De Brigard, 26.

<sup>111</sup> Quoted in De Brigard, 26.

<sup>112</sup> Jay Ruby, 2000, 170.

<sup>113</sup> Emile De Brigard, 28.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

ethnography doubly occluded its own subjective construction.

It was only at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s that visual anthropology emerged as a distinctive sub-discipline.<sup>116</sup> Despite its newly awarded recognition, anthropology as a discipline remained largely one of “words.” Margaret Mead laments in the introduction of *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, entitled, “Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words,” “What we have to show for almost a century’s availability of instruments are a few magnificent, impassioned efforts...[emphasis added]”<sup>117</sup> Things have changed since Mead wrote this introduction nearly twenty years ago. Since then, technology has grown in leaps and bounds. Visual ethnographers now have access to affordable, portable DV cameras. Digital video provides for faster and simplified editing as well as easy distribution. Today, courses and whole departments in Universities are dedicated to visual anthropology.

Currently, there are a host of theoretical approaches to anthropological filmmaking. In *Appropriating Images*, Keyan Tomaselli identifies general but discrepant modalities of ethnographic film, they include but are not limited to: diaries/notebooks/descriptive, observational/descriptive, cinema vérité, participatory/shared anthropology, didactic, processual, character narration, conceptual/associative, testimonial, seasonal cycles, filmmaker as ‘griot,’ subject-generated or indigenous media, sociotherapy, documentation modality, explanatory mode, explanation rejected, context enrichment, experience/theoretical understandings.<sup>118</sup> However, as in the case of *A Kalahari Family*, an array of modalities and theoretical positions might be used. What’s more, a filmmaker may employ methodologies of visual anthropology but may combine them with cinematic conventions associated with fiction or documentary filmmaking. The result is a film difficult to categorize—it is at once ethnographic and a documentary, and yet belongs to neither genre. Thus, as Tomaselli comments, “The concept of ethnographic film, however, is fraught with conceptual difficulties, opposing schools of thought and

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<sup>116</sup> Anna Grimshaw, *The Ethnographer's Eye: Ways of Seeing in Modern Anthropology*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>117</sup> Margaret Mead, “Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words,” in Paul Hockings, ed., *Principles of Visual Anthropology* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995), 3-11.

<sup>118</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 164-172

interdisciplinary rivalry between anthropologists, visual anthropologists, ethnographers, sociologists and not least, film-makers and film theorists.”<sup>119</sup>

Today, there are a few important considerations in determining whether a film is anthropological. One must ask: what is the academic affiliation of the filmmaker? Has the filmmaker been trained as an anthropologist? Did they carry out ethnographic fieldwork or did they simply make a film about people? How was the fieldwork carried out? As Karl Heider has articulated, the value of an ethnographic film may be relational to the research and the analysis that precedes the product.<sup>120</sup> Thus, it is also important to consider: who(m) funded the film? How have the funders affected the film (i.e. if the film is funded by a public broadcasting company, for example, the narrative and cinematic conventions will be less academic and more geared towards a general audience)? What cinematic codes does the film use? How is the film put to use? Is it aired on public television or, is it namely used in anthropological courses?

## CONCLUSION

The rich and complex history of the San begins over 20,000 years ago. Unfortunately, the majority of this history is largely unknown, namely because it has been superseded by the written record. Outsiders have traditionally recorded an erratic, simplified and one-sided history of the San. Even more tragic, is the irrevocable effect of foreigners on the lives of the San—they have taken their land, enslaved them, and manipulated and oppressed them through state institutions and public policies. It is especially important to note that the state has been involved in the destruction and preservation of the San.

Arguably, the Marshall expeditions also preserved and destroyed the Ju/'hoansi. The initial objective of their expeditions was to capture the practices of the last hunters and gatherers through the medium of film. Their objective reflects the academic paradigms of the times. What is more, those paradigms sit atop a stratification (a strata of...) of

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<sup>119</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 162.

<sup>120</sup> Karl Heider, *Ethnographic Film*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976)

knowledge that's base begins with primary questions regarding human nature, human behavior and human relationships.

One of the most valuable aspects of *A Kalahari Family* for a student of ethnographic filmmaking is the host of conceptual, methodological and technical approaches employed. One can correlate the footage to the various paradigms in ethnographic filmmaking in the last fifty years. Despite the legitimization of advancement of visual anthropology as a discipline, it is important to remember, as Ruby reminds us, that the notion of anthropological filmmaking comes from the same western need to explore, document, explain and make sense of the world.

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# CHAPTER THREE

## Questions of Methodology

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## INTRODUCTION

In order to make connections between the vast amount of literature surrounding John Marshall, the numerous films, and the variety of discourses with which his life and work relate, I need what media theorist Keyan Tomaselli calls, “a methods of methods.” In *Appropriating Images: The Semiotics of Visual Representation* Tomaselli explicates, “Clearly, a method of methods is required to overcome this conceptual fragmentation and inter-academic othering. Semiotics, the study of how meaning is made, offers one way of redesigning the differently inflected lenses and replacing them with an inter-perspectival one. Such a lens should be able to cast light on other disciplinary lenses within the field, while simultaneously drawing these differently refracted lights into itself.”<sup>121</sup> The following is an abridged explanation of Tomaselli’s complex appropriation of the theory of semiotics.

### TOMASELLI’S CINEMATIC SEMIOTICS

Specifically, semiotics is the study of meaning manifested in human communication, (particularly in images, stories, performances, music and the media, to name only few) and the ways in which one’s location, (culture, race, class, religion) and other adopted schemas affect one’s interpretation of the purported meaning of a text.

Utilizing C.S. Peirce’s theories of semiotics (1877 & 1878) which *argue* that knowledge operates in a triadic system of meaning that involves, the sign, its object and an interpretant (the meaning generated by the viewer/reader/listener). Tomaselli utilizes Peirce’s conceptual tools of signs to interpret the implicit and explicit meaning in visual and multi-media texts.<sup>122</sup> “Signs are the basic building blocks of communication. Signs stand for something else, the things or ideas to which they refer.”<sup>123</sup>

Pierce categorizes signs into three categories; iconic, indexical and symbolic. Explicitly,

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<sup>121</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 22.

<sup>122</sup> Peirce, 1877, 1878.

<sup>123</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 30.

iconic signs are representations that mirror the thing that is being represented. Indexical signs draw attention to the thing that it refers; the example provided by Tomaselli is that of a weathercock; it indicates the direction in which the wind is blowing though one cannot physically see the wind. And, symbolic signs that have no obvious connection to the idea that it represents except through context. A simple but famous example of a symbolic sign is that of George Bush, Sr.'s use of the peace sign in Australia. In the U.S. it means peace, but in Australia, it is the American equivalent of raising the middle finger. Thus, symbolic signs are accorded meaning through conditioning and context<sup>124</sup>.

Technology itself can be a sign, as in the case with stills, that is non-moving images. Tomaselli explains, "in industrialized societies, black and white photography has come to be associated with reality, immediacy and actuality."<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, Tomaselli posits, "Films are thus to a large degree interpretations of situations already largely pre-determined by the nature of the technology used. Each kind of recording device generates semiotic properties specific to that equipment."<sup>126</sup> Over the course of John Marshall's fifty-year career he used a variety of technologies including 16mm slow-wind cameras, to video to DV. It is therefore not surprising that technological signs are abundant in *A Kalahari Family*, ranging from still photographs to re-mastered nineteen-fifties film stock to crisp DV footage. These technical signs are interwoven throughout *A Kalahari Family* providing visual evidence of John Marshall's long tenure with the Ju/'hoansi.

Groupings of individual signs are considered paradigms. A group of analogous signs comprise what Tomaselli calls a paradigmatic set. His example is aptly of the indigenous people of the Kalahari. Today the paradigmatic set is: 'Bushmen', 'hunter/gatherer', 'San' or 'Khoisan.' However, as Tomaselli reminds us, signs are unstable, so too paradigmatic sets. The explorers and colonialists paradigmatic set of the San is: 'Boesemanjs', 'bandit', 'robber' and 'Bushman.'<sup>127</sup> Over history, discordant

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<sup>124</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 30-31.

<sup>125</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 54.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 39.

paradigmatic sets have been circumventing one another, struggling to be the first thought or belief in the minds of the semiotic receiver. More often than not, capital has the greatest influence on the adopted paradigmatic set.

Another important conceptual tool of semiotics is that of codes. Codes basically are a combination of signs that collectively purport meaning. The concept of semiotic codes is particularly evident when looking at visual texts. Most visual texts are defined by their visual codes—i.e. a film that uses hand-held shots, of DV quality, and relies heavily upon narration, coheres to the codes of “documentary.”<sup>128</sup> Often, it is these visual codes that guide the audience through the meaning of the film and curbs their visual imaginations. However, as Tomaselli reminds, “...audiences rarely make sense of films exclusively through their styles...”<sup>129</sup>

The process in which a producer/creator uses codes to construct meaning is known as “encoding”, and the act of the viewer/listener/reader interpreting codes to comprehend the meaning is known as “decoding” in cultural studies.<sup>130</sup> Tomaselli however refers to the decoded meaning as the text, or, interpretant. “The text in the semiotic sense is the mental reconstruction of the idea, the thought, the associations, the image mentally generated, by the act of reading, decoding or interpreting.”<sup>131</sup> However, Tomaselli makes clear that the encoding intended by the author may not always coincide with the meaning understood by the reader, this is known as “discrepant decoding”. What’s more, there is no absolute or single given way to read signs:

“Thus, signs are unstable—their meanings change depending on who is speaking or using them for what purpose in different context...Meanings of signs also change over time and across space in response to peoples historical experiences...[But,] specifically closely knit communities, however, tend to demonstrate consistency of responses, where meaning do remain stable...Thus, signs and their meanings are bound by social, cultural and historical experiences of groups of people who agree on broad meanings at particular moments.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 46.

<sup>129</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 204.

<sup>130</sup> Stuart Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*. (Birmingham [UK]: Centre for Cultural Studies, University of Birminham, 1973).

<sup>131</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 32.

<sup>132</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 35-36.

“Discourse” refers to relationships, ways of talking, using specific codes, understood by subjects of that discourse.” “Discursive practices ‘frame’ meanings in pre-agreed ways recognizable to both producers and readers of the discourse.”<sup>133</sup> The struggle for and over meaning often is affected by capital. As Tomaselli notes, the more powerful the group controlling the discourse, the more likely it is to be popularly disseminated through the media and in agitprop. “Film-makers thus find themselves often locked into a political economy which forces treatments of accepted themes to be in sympathy with the dominant system.”<sup>134</sup>

That said multiple interpretations of signs and discrepant readings exist. However, the more alike audience members’ schematic networks, the greater the likelihood they’ll interpret signs and the meaning of a film in an analogous way.

The struggle over meaning is why it’s imperative to analyze how meaning is made. As Tomaselli so eloquently and aptly writes, “It is important to understand how meanings are made and remade, shifted, reinterpreted, and revised through divergent cultural uses of the signs. Different historical experiences out of which the same images or discourse have emerged account for variances in use.”

Tomaselli’s semiotics of visual anthropology “is the method by means of which we can study and account for the signs, codes and rules of inference that film/TV/video makers employ when making films/videos about groups, people and distinguishable cultures, from conceived to perceived texts, including social texts, con-texts and concealed texts. Analysis might also include reception analysis of viewer interpretants.”<sup>135</sup>

My approach to *A Kalahari Family* is guided by Tomaselli’s appropriation of the theory of semiotics. Using the conceptual tools of signs and codes, I read *A Kalahari Family* and interpret the purported meaning and significance of the series while also considering the intention/perspective of the maker(s), funders, process-subject/crew relations, editing,

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<sup>133</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 32.

<sup>134</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 202.

distribution politics, and reception. During this process, I ask: why and how was *A Kalahari Family* made? Why did John Marshall make this film? What is he trying to communicate—what discourses are prefaced? What narrative and cinematic devices are used? Why did the series take fourteen years to make? What is John Marshall's relationship to the Ju/'hoansi and how is depicted? Where and how was the film distributed? How might audiences understand the film?

Answering the above questions requires familiarization with existing texts (films, books, articles, and websites) and discourses surrounding John Marshall and the Ju/'hoansi. There are a myriad of texts to consider, over thirty-five films, two books and innumerable articles. It also requires an examination of the narrative, so to specifically address how and why the narrative is constructed. A shot by shot analysis of all six-hours of the series is also undertaken. For each shot, I look for signs and codes, be they aural or visual. The following analysis of the opening segment, "Stumpy and Longface" is provided as an example of how I work through and interpret shots.

#### DECODING "STUMPY AND LONGFACE" SCENE ONE

Shot one is cinematically coded like an observational shot. It's over thirty-six seconds in length, the camera doesn't move, but slightly shakes indicating a hand-held "thereness." The sound is diegetic—natural to the scene. At eighteen seconds, voice-over narration by John Marshall begins. "The people here call themselves Ju/'hoansi..." As articulated by Jay Ruby, a voice-over omnipresent narration has a history as being scientific and positivist.<sup>136</sup> However, voice-over narrative is a conventional documentary code, in which the narration adds the meaning to the visual. In this case, John Marshall's pronunciation and etymological explanation of "Ju/'hoansi" signals that he has considerable knowledge of the Ju/'hoansi, and will serve as ambassador to the audience as they come to know them. John Marshall then goes on to introduce the location, Nyae Nyae, further, locating audiences.

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<sup>135</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 226.

Shot five is a black and white still of ≠Toma. As mentioned above, black and white photographs are a sign in and of themselves. In this particular application it seems to direct viewers to an historic “thereness.” This is further buttressed with the addition of color photographs, that when combined represent a thorough and coherent archive, signaling many years of involvement between John Marshall and the Ju/’hoansi. Twice, later in the series, John Marshall verbally says “I was here, I know” when arguing over land rights.

Not only is technology a sign in these stills, the positions and actions of ≠Toma are also symbolic. The first still of ≠Toma, is a three-fourths degree profile shot, so typical of early ethnographic, particularly, San, photographs. The second still, is a medium shot of ≠Toma wearing a loin cloth, ready to throw an arrow. Again, a sign, which to John Marshall may have been encoded to prove he knew the Ju/’hoansi when they “hunted and gathered.”

Near the one minute mark John Marshall introduces himself, “My name is John Marshall [Camera zooms closer on John Marshall] I’ve known ≠Toma and his family for fifty years.” This statement symbolically references John Marshall’s remarkable tenure with the Ju/’hoansi (for which the film is so acclaimed) but also hints at John Marshall’s own understanding of his self—that he is defined by the Kalahari family.

Still four visually supports John Marshall’s statement of knowing ≠Toma for over fifty years. It is a black and white photograph in which a young John Marshall and adult ≠Toma shake hands. Not only does this photograph point to their fifty-year tenure; the shaking of the hands is also symbolic of acceptance, friendship and connection. The next five stills are quick and are individual black and white photographs of John Marshall and ≠Toma, the John Marshall voice-over narrative explains how he received ≠Toma’s name, another signal to his rapport with ≠Toma and an indexical referent to the “Kalahari Family.”

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<sup>136</sup> Jay Ruby, 2000, 168.

The fourteenth shot is re-mastered archival footage of ≠Toma gathering berries, corresponding non-diegetic music plays, analogous, if not the same, as in the epic, *The Hunters*. The sixteenth shot, is a beautifully re-mastered archival shot of Tsamkxao shooting a bow, which includes diegetic sound of him laughing. John Marshall's narration explains that he met ≠Toma and his family, while "they were gathering bushfoods and hunting with various success." In this particular example, the narration illustrates the visual and provides the indexical sign that John Marshall met authentic hunter/gatherers.

At the two-minute mark is a black and white photograph of a young John Marshall holding a camera. Again, the technological implication of a photograph is that it signifies an "I was there-ness" but, it is also a sign of the technological limitations of the time—the curbed access to filmmaking cameras and their corresponding expense. Early on the Marshalls only had one camera. Accompanied over this black and white photograph and the four following, is John Marshall's voice-over narration, which as mentioned above has connotations of an omnipresent, monolithic voice. However, herein, he reflects upon his early filmmaking. "When I started to shoot," [Zoom out on John Marshall to reveal what is probably his father, mother and Jo Brew standing below him holding his tripod steady] "I used a tripod and followed the directions of the Kodak film boxes." These pictures of John Marshall and the camera have a whole new meaning when accompanied by this narration—the photographs are reflexive signs of *how* he filmed. The second black and white photograph is a beautiful shot of John Marshall filming four children. The discrepancy between his physical and material stature to the Ju/'hoansi children is striking. His voice-over narration explains he used Kodak's directions: "First distant shot," "Then middle shot," "then close-up."

The twentieth shot is back to film and is archival footage of a Ju/'hoan man bent over carrying a bow. Without narrative, it's uncertain what meaning to make of this visual. However, John Marshall adds, "I had to ask people to start and stop again." With this verbal information, it is elucidated what the Ju/'hoan man is doing, he's waiting on John Marshall--he is performing for the camera. This visual and aural revelation indexically

points to the processes of filmmaking and what occurs off camera.

Shot twenty-one is a black and white photograph of a man, most likely /Kunta, falling into trance while physically supported by another Ju/'hoan man. Interestingly, during this shot, which is just over five seconds in length, there is "diegetic" sound of clapping and chanting. Because the majority of the above stills have been without diegetic sound, it seems aberrant. One wonders, why the inclusion? It seems there is a likely chance that the sound is organic to that particular event, but, it also serves as another sign, similar in meaning to "I was there." After a few seconds, the camera zooms out of the photograph revealing John Marshall filming it. He says, "Later I got faster and shot handheld." When this bit of narrative is combined with the image, it is an indexical sign that handheld filmmaking resulted in a more authentic or real filmmaking, with less starting and stopping. Similarly, shot twenty-two is a black and white photograph of John Marshall shooting from a tree without a tripod. He says, "I liked to think I could shoot on the fly." This comment seems overtly to refer to the independence of the camera from the tripod and the start and stopping of winding the camera, but it is also an interesting choice of words considering the famous conception of cinema vérité or CV film as the camera acting like a "fly on the wall."

Shot twenty-three is back to the opening scene, and similarly lengthy, at about twenty-five seconds. The camera is wobbly, signaling it's hand-held, and thus also communicating an organic "I was there". The sound is of a diegetic grumbling John Marshall. He takes a few moments to get the Baobab where the memorial is being erected into frame, finally he does. His voice-over says, "Now I'm filming Toma's memorial and you can tell when I shoot my foot I'm slowing down again. Planning my shots, asking people to wait." John Marshall then shoots down at his foot, then you hear him diegetically speak in Ju/'hoan; subtitles appear, "back up a little." The two men, pushing the wheelbarrow do. Non-diegetic Ju/'hoansi music begins to play, John Marshall's voice-over says, "Ju/'hoansi don't erect memorials for their dead, it was my idea to put up the memorial." The inclusion of the footage as the camera finds its frame, is distinctively reflexive. Adding to the reflective tone is John Marshall's

acknowledgement of “slowing down and asking people to wait again,” which reminds the viewer that John Marshall is orchestrating this film. Not only does John Marshall say this, he shows it by saying diegetically to the two Ju/'hoansi men to back up, which they do.

One also must consider what John Marshall is saying and doing in this shot. By erecting a memorial for ≠Toma Tsamkxao, John Marshall, quite literally, is paying tribute to ≠Toma at the site where they met. It may also be argued that the series, *A Kalahari Family*, is also a tribute to ≠Toma and his extended family. The next three shots are of the various men erecting the memorial, Tsamkxao, and two other Ju/'hoansi. John Marshall voice-over narrative explains who the men helping out are. The close-up shots of these men working visually conveys that they're supportive of the endeavor and indicate that John Marshall is not solely behind it. Non-diegetic music continues to play. The next shot is of two men rolling rocks to hold the memorial under the tree. There is diegetic sound, signing the authenticity of the moment, as well as non-diegetic music. John Marshall's voice-over narrative says, “My big name ≠Toma was respected. If people began fighting or wanted to run away without resolving conflict ≠Toma stopped their feet and sat them down to talk. Among the values he taught me were perseverance.” The memorial says, “Toma Tsamko” 1911-1988 Ha du g//a e/kais He stopped our feet. Ha N!aroh E He taught us.” It is interesting to note, and think about, of all the things John Marshall could say about ≠Toma, John Marshall discusses how he resolved conflict and in turn, taught John Marshall perseverance. Though this series is a tribute to the Ju/'hoansi it is also an entreaty to audiences and viewers of the ill affects of the Bushman myth and development agendas.

## CONCLUSION

As I try to demonstrate later, a shot by shot analysis enables a reading of the minutiae of meaning in a film and illuminates the ways in which the minutiae flows together to create overall meaning. Through this process, I identify and examine signs in relation to paradigms in ethnographic filmmaking and the particular context of John Marshall's life.

## CHAPTER FOUR

≠Toma Longface and the Ju/'hoansi:

A Kalahari Family

## INTRODUCTION

My central argument is that *A Kalahari Family* is most interesting and valuable for what it reveals about John Marshall. In other words, the film seems most significant for the ways in which its signs and codes reflect John Marshall's subjectivities as well as his evolution as a researcher, filmmaker, friend, and advocate of the Ju/'hoansi. Therefore, I contend that in order to really "read" and understand the many layers of meaning in *A Kalahari Family*, one must familiarize themselves with John Marshall, his work and the contexts surrounding his work. Even though there were five academic advisors, two Ju/'hoansi informants and several other individuals involved in the production of *A Kalahari Family*, ultimately, John Marshall is officially credited as the main producer, author and editor. Further, I submit, in the same way that through the telling of the Ju/'hoansi story, the larger story of San oppression is told, so too does the work of John Marshall exemplify the history of ethnographic filmmaking. In essence, when we look at John Marshall's work, we see ourselves—we see how our approaches to filmmaking and researcher/researched relationships have changed in the last fifty years. As John Bishop said in a lecture given for the *Visual Origins Conference* in 2001, "Reviewing Marshall's body of work with the [Ju/'hoansi], one experiences the entire range of technical, conceptual and moral ideas in ethnographic media of the last half century."<sup>137</sup>

This chapter details John Marshall's rather diverse and lengthy filmmaking career. I explore the various cinematic theorizations espoused by John Marshall and review three of John Marshall's most famous filmic texts. By detailing the various ways in which John Marshall has engaged filmmaking I hope to make a connection to the ways in which *A Kalahari Family* was cinematically constructed.

In the last segment of this chapter I reflect on the nature of John Marshall's ethnographic relationship with the Ju/'hoansi. I argue that it was John Marshall's "ethnographic" identity and ethnographic relationships which led to his life long work with the Ju/'hoansi

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<sup>137</sup> John Bishop, "Life By Myth: The Development of Ethnographic Filming in the Work of John Marshall," for *Visual Origins Conference*. (Göttingen: IWF, 2001).

and ultimately, to the creation of *A Kalahari Family*.

### TRACKING A FILMMAKER

John Marshall's filmmaking career was thrust on him in 1951 when his father armed him with a hand-held but cumbersome, Bell and Howell™ camera (which only held 100-foot rolls of film stock, had to be wound every twenty seconds, and lacked lens focus and subject viewing) and charged him with the task of making a record of the Ju/'hoansi.<sup>138</sup> Guiding John Marshall were two texts, the Royal Anthropological Institute's *Notes & Queries* (1929) and the Eastman Kodak *How to Make a Movie guide. Notes and Queries* provided what John Marshall calls, "a shopping list for anthropologists," i.e. a conceptual shooting script of important activities and behaviors to shoot. The Kodak instructions taught John Marshall *how* to shoot: "First take an establishing shot; then a middle shot; then a close-up."<sup>139</sup> Given this basic guidance, it's not too surprising that John Marshall's early footage resounds with the scientific doctrines of the day—detachment, neutrality, objectivity, rationality and positivism. A scientific influence is clear in two of John Marshall's films, *The Hunters* and *Bitter Melons*. Both films will be discussed in detail later.

In 1955, John Marshall watched a German war film, *Manner Gegen Panzer*, which revolutionized his approach to filmmaking. The film was the continuous action of one event, shot on a triple lens camera, and utilizes a variety of distances and angles. The film is edited so that every subject is visible to the viewer throughout the film. Inspired by the film, John Marshall hypothesized:

“...most of us arrange our social life—or have it arranged for us—in events. Whether as participants or observers, we share a general idea about when one event stops and another begins. Events are not stories with a beginning, a middle and an end; everyone carries their own experience from one event to the next...Events correspond to sequences in film, and the concept is useful in filmmaking. While reinventing the language of angle and distance, I could use the fact that activities in many events are organized by the participants like little dramas and are continued in time and space. In the theatre of the

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<sup>138</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 26.

<sup>139</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 35.

real event, the camera can be directed by the action of the participants.”<sup>140</sup>

It’s important to pause and consider the ideological implications of “sequence filmmaking.” In a co-authored article, “Idea and Event in Urban Film” John Marshall and Emile de Brigard expound:

“Sequence filming is an attempt to prevent the words and actions of people in a documentary film from being confused with what the audience wants to see and what the filmmaker wants to say. A sequence may be thought of as the verifiable film record of a small event. Sequence filming replaces the ordinary process of shooting and editing a thematic film, or overview, with the attempt to report the events themselves in as much detail and for as long as possible. Sequences may be combined in a variety of ways, but the connections between them cannot be made editorially with film.”<sup>141</sup>

Sequence filmmaking is a theory which acknowledges the subjectivities of filmmakers and offers a method to limit them, thereby recording reality more accurately. Though this theory sounds like an argument which gives credibility or authenticity to John Marshall’s films, he reminds his readers that all films are constructions--distortions are inevitable. The benefit of sequence filmmaking is that it helps minimize distortions.

Part and parcel to the idea of sequence filming is the use of angles and distance. John Marshall writes:

“While reinventing the language of angle and distance, I could use the fact that activities in many events are organized by participants like little dramas and are contained in time and space...I thought: If I try to shoot from the perspectives of the participants in an event—stand beside one person while I film the others, then move around beside another person and shoot—my camera angles and distances will be motivated by the people in the event...When we use film language properly, we can add content and clarity to our films. Angles, distances and screen direction are the visual means of maintaining relationships between content on and off the screen. When the language is used well, the audience can stay involved with what they are seeing...”<sup>142</sup>

The application of sequence filmmaking and the use of angles and distances coalesce noticeably in 1957. In the chapter, “Hot Footage/Cold Storage: The Marshall Ju’hoan Bushman Archive,” in *The Cinema of John Marshall*, John Bishop enumerates the Marshall archive and offers general comments on the footage of each expedition, six in total. Of the sixth expedition, between 1957 and 1958, Bishop writes, “There is a greater feeling of intimacy than in previous coverage, and more of a sense that you, the camera,

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<sup>140</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 40.

<sup>141</sup> Emilie De Brigard and John Marshall, “Idea and Event in Urban Film,” in Paul Hockings, ed., *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995), 133-145.

<sup>142</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 41.

are among the group, not watching from the periphery.”<sup>143</sup> Though the theory of angles and distance produces the effect, Bishop reminds readers that the technology of the camera provides a greater sense of “intimacy.” The smaller, three lens, battery-powered Arriflex gave John Marshall the physical means of movement, whereas, previously he was inhibited by the unwieldy size of the camera. Maybe also contributing to this increased sense of intimacy is John Marshall’s own growing relationship with his subjects. He comments in “Filming and Learning,” that his closest informant, #Toma, began to include him in the group and taught him how to use social space [the natural space between two people which is contextually determined] while shooting.<sup>144</sup>

### THE FILM, *THE HUNTERS*

Undoubtedly, John Marshall’s first film, *The Hunters*, is his most famous and possibly, one of the best known ethnographic films.<sup>145</sup> The release date of *The Hunters* is nebulous, it’s cited as both 1957 and 1958. However, there is no doubt that the film set the bar for anthropological filmmaking. Not only were the subjects of the film unique, the structure of the ethnography was novel. In *The Hunters* John Marshall (Gardner), shifted from scientific ethnography to ethnographic drama.<sup>146</sup> Much like the poetic *Nanook of the North* which dramatically pits man against nature, *The Hunters* is the story of four Ju/’hoansi men battling nature as they hunt a giraffe for days. Inspired by *Moby Dick*, the film is comprised of film vignettes, wherein, the audience witnesses a series of short sequences of single events, such as a hunter reading spoor or trekking across a pan.<sup>147</sup> The film has a happy ending when the men successfully kill the giraffe and “eat

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<sup>143</sup> John Bishop, “Hot Footage/Cold Footage,” in Jay Ruby, ed., *Cinema of John Marshall*. (Amsterdam: Harwood Press, 1993), 223.

<sup>144</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 19.

<sup>145</sup> Alan Lomax, “Review of *Bitter Melons*,” in *American Anthropologist*, 74 (1972): 1018-20. Quoted in Edwin Wilmsen, “Knowledge as a Source of Progress,” in *Visual Anthropology: Encounters in the Kalahari*, 12, 2-3, (Malaysia: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999), 213-265, 241.

<sup>146</sup> John Collier, “The Future of Ethnographic Film,” in Jack Rollwagen, ed., *Anthropological Filmmaking*. (Chur: Harwood Academic Press, 1988), 87. An argument may be made that *Nanook of the North* (1922) was the first ethnographic drama, however, the lack of authenticity of the film has discredited as an ethnography, although, the same argument may be made for *The Hunters*.

<sup>147</sup> Marshall, J: letter, 28 Jan. 1991, ms. 1:11-12, 1991: 118-121, 1993: 36-37 cited in Wilmsen, 1999, 227.

and eat”. John Marshall, the voice-over narrator says, “They got bloody all over and enjoyed themselves.” The film finally ends with the hunters telling the story of the hunt.

*The Hunters* is interesting for a myriad of reasons. Shot in 1952, 1953 and 1955, John Marshall had yet formalized the language of angles and distance.<sup>148</sup> As mentioned above, the film is an ethnographic drama and yet, it retains characteristics of scientific ethnography. That is, the cinematic conventions—an obscured camera, long takes, slow pacing, seamless editing, and an omnipresent voice-over narrator—endorse what film theorist Bill Nichols calls “disembodied and universalized knowledge.”<sup>149</sup>

Just as early anthropological discourses are cousin to colonial exploration, the film also possesses features of the explorer account. Mary Louise Pratt’s comment regarding explorer accounts and early travel writing in southern Africa in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* is pertinent, “...the narrative of travel is organized by the cumulative, observational enterprise of documenting geography, flora and fauna. The encounter with nature, and its *conversion into natural history*, forms the narrative scaffolding [emphasis added].”<sup>150</sup> One only needs to view the opening shots of *The Hunters* to see Pratt’s argument visually verified. The shots in consecutive order are: a medium shot of a Ju/’hoan man, not looking at camera that walks through the frame. Cut to close up of a butterfly, cut to a long shot of a giraffe, back to close up of butterfly, cut to medium shot of Ju/’hoansi walking, cut back to close-up of butterfly. Throughout the entire film, often cut between events, are flora and fauna shots.

The conversion and documentation of natural history isn’t limited to the flora and fauna; the Ju/’hoansi, by virtue of their foraging strategies, are representative of the natural history of man. It’s likely that for that reason, that *The Hunters*, till the U.S. release of *The God’s Must Be Crazy*, was the most screened film on Africa at American schools,

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<sup>148</sup> Sue Marshall Cabezas, “Filmography of the Works of John Marshall from 1951 to 1991,” in Jay Ruby, ed., *Cinema of John Marshall*. (Amsterdam: Harwood Publishers, 1993), 233.

<sup>149</sup> Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality*. (Bloomfield: University of Indiana Press, 1991), 89.

<sup>150</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 51.

colleges and universities.<sup>151</sup> *The Hunters* served as a visual aid for teachers, providing a moving window on the Pleistocene.<sup>152</sup>

What's ironic about *The Hunters*, as Keyan Tomaselli and John Homiak, comment is that it perpetuates the very myths, which John Marshall later in his career so vehemently repudiated. They write:

"Misrepresentation of the !Kung, Marshall [1992, 1993], Ritchie [1993] and Gordon [1990] argue, have contributed to their "death" through the process of mythmaking. And herein lies the irresolvable contradiction in Marshall's approach: both "reality" and "myth" are social constructions. Both are made, mediated, shifted and rearticulated via language, the media, the academy and other social institutions, in response to changing historical conditions. Neither "reality" nor "myth" exists in-and-of themselves. Myths convey certain kinds of interpretations as "natural", as "common", as the way things are and always have been. Myths change in response to shifting conditions. They myths that Marshall is now contesting are the self-same ones encoded in *The Hunters*."<sup>153</sup>

In other words, as Tomaselli argues in *Appropriating Images*, the decoded meaning of a text changes with context. For example, the genesis of *The Hunters* footage was to capture the real, lived practices of a people thought to be disappearing. One of the products of this footage was *The Hunters*, which is a romanticized ethnographic drama where prehistoric man lives peacefully and in harmony with the land. However, as John Marshall and many others came to understand, though the Ju/'hoansi were able to "survive" off their land, their life was difficult. Many individuals died from preventable maladies such as dehydration and malnourishment. As N!ai states in Part Two, "End of the Road," "The old life was too thin." Yet, *The Hunters* was appropriated to justify and support a proposal for a Bushmen reserve, wherein Ju/'hoansi and other San would be forced to live in a "plastic stone age."<sup>154</sup> In this case, John Marshall's work justifies, and in a sense, advocates, freezing the Bushmen in prehistoric time.

The gross romanticization of Ju/'hoansi life found in *The Hunters* may not be all John

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<sup>151</sup> Wiley, et al., *Africa on Film and Videotape* 1960-1981, Xix.

<sup>152</sup> Sven Ouzman in "External Examiner's Report, Anna Luty," (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, Centre for African Studies, 2007) comments that bow and arrows were invented during the Holocene, though both Tomaselli and Marshall use, "Pleistocene".

<sup>153</sup> Keyan Tomaselli and John Homiak, "Structured Absences: Shot Logs on the Marshall Family Expeditionary Films, 1950-1958," in Paul Hockings, ed., *Visual Anthropology: Encounters in the Kalahari*, 12, 2-3. (Malaysia: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999). 289-338.

<sup>154</sup> Wilmsen, 1999, 240.

Marshall's doing. As Wilmsen, Ruby and Collier have commented, the revered visual anthropologist, Robert Gardner's affect on the outcome on the film has been largely unknown.<sup>155</sup> According to Wilmsen, Gardner was supposed to assist John Marshall in the editing of the film and only visited Nyae Nyae once. After filming, while back in the United States, John Marshall and Gardner had several disagreements and ultimately, their relationship turned sour.<sup>156</sup> Several of their dissensions concerned *The Hunters*. According to Collier, John Marshall was displeased with Gardner's dramatic editorializing, which was meant to shock western audiences. The example provided is of a scene in which Toma scoops some hungry baby birds out of their nests and the narrator comments that they will be made into a broth.<sup>157</sup>

It's likely it will never be known how much of *The Hunters* is John Marshall and how much Gardner. What is on the books, so to speak, is John Marshall credited as the filmmaker, and Gardner as "collaborator" On the other hand, Gardner's manifesto on the makings of Harvard's Film Study Center, gave Jay Ruby the impression that Robert Gardner made *The Hunters* by himself.<sup>158</sup>

Another factor inhibiting the authenticity of *The Hunters*, which John Marshall reminds readers of in "Filming and Learning" were the technology of the cameras. He writes, "Technology partly explains why so much reality and content was omitted from the film, but even with a Bell & Howell [camera] I could have shot for context and filmed events more thoroughly."<sup>159</sup> John Marshall discredits *The Hunters* as, "a romantic film by an American kid that revealed more about me than about Ju/'hoansi."<sup>160</sup>

Aside from projecting his perceptions, John Marshall also tweaked his footage to correspond with his preconceived narrative. For example, the giraffe was first shot from

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<sup>155</sup> Wilmsen, 1999; John Collier, 1988; Jay Ruby, "Robert Gardner und der anthropologische Film" in R. Kapfer, W. Petermann, and R. Thoms, eds., *Rituale von Leben und Tod: Robert Gardner und seine Filme*. (München: Trickster, 1989), Pg. 51-67.

<sup>156</sup> Wilmsen, 1999, 229.

<sup>157</sup> John Collier, 1988, 87.

<sup>158</sup> Wilmsen, 1999, 221.

<sup>159</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 36.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

the back of John Marshall's moving jeep, but the jeep is omitted from the film. John Marshall also admits to using multiple giraffes to represent one, and using stand-ins to represent some of the four characters.<sup>161</sup> Sharon Sherman, author of *Documenting Ourselves*, notes, "*The Hunters* isn't based on one event but rather creates an event through editing and narration."<sup>162</sup> Despite these manipulations, Nancy Gonzalez in her essay, "An Argument about a Film," in *The Cinema of John Marshall*, harangues, "...*The Hunters* was and remains a masterpiece—that it not only tells important truths about a now defunct way of life, but that it touches and teaches the viewer in ways that his more 'objective' pieces (e.g., *A Joking Relationship*, 1962) have not and cannot."<sup>163</sup>

#### TRACKING A FILMMAKER: THE SIXTIES

John Marshall was thrown out of the South West African/Namibian Kalahari by the South African government in 1958 for unexplained reasons. Later, it was revealed that the government believed he had fathered a child with a San woman.<sup>164</sup> Though John Marshall was married to a San woman, the accusation was false. John Marshall was expelled and blacklisted from South West Africa for what would be twenty years. He returned to the U.S. and enrolled in a graduate program in anthropology at Yale. During this time, John Marshall released two of what would be several, short, single-subject anthropological films; *A Group of Women* (1961) and *A Joking Relationship* (1962). According to Wilmsen, these "short, single-topic film records of cultural traits" were conceived of by J.O. Brew, the head of Harvard's Peabody Museum. Wilmsen credits him as the man which brought "institutional legitimacy and the financial channel" for the Marshalls' work.<sup>165</sup> Unlike *The Hunters* where the shots circumvent the narrative, these short films (5 and 13 minutes) are sutured sequences which capture Ju/'hoansi social

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<sup>161</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 36-37.

<sup>162</sup> Sharon Sherman, *Documenting Ourselves*. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1998), 36.

<sup>163</sup> Nancy Gonzalez, "An Argument About a Film," in Jay Ruby, ed., *The Cinema of John Marshall*. (Amsterdam: Harwood Publishers, 1993), 181.

<sup>164</sup> Carolyn Anderson and Thomas Benson, "Put Down the Camera and Pick Up the Shovel: An Interview with John Marshall," in Jay Ruby, ed., *The Cinema of John Marshall*. (Amsterdam: Harwood Publishing, 1993), 141.

<sup>165</sup> Wilmsen, 1999, 218, 221.

practices, like collective mothering and joking.<sup>166</sup> It has been argued that these films are anthropologically sound and have been used, as Laurence hoped, as “source material” for anthropologists.<sup>167</sup> For example, J.O. Brew used the film *!Kung Bushman Hunting Equipment* to illustrate weaving, for his technology course at Harvard.<sup>168</sup>

These short films were not without their critics; Richard Lee, discredited *N/um Tchai: the Ceremonial Dance of the !Kung Bushmen* because he felt the footage indicated that the cinematographers (John Marshall, et al.) didn’t understand the significance of the dance.<sup>169</sup> Lee’s criticisms, in addition to the revelation of the factual manipulations in *The Hunters* had an overall detrimental affect on John Marshall’s ethnographic reputation.<sup>170</sup>

## CINEMA VÉRITÉ

While working on his graduate degree, John Marshall did an internship for Ricky Leacock and D.A. Pennebaker, the fathers of the North American cinema vérité (CV) movement. CV was a direct response to the technical innovation of portable synchronous sound built into the camera; CV allowed the camera to move around in accordance to the action of a scene.<sup>171</sup> Because action no longer had to be limited to scripted space, it could unfold as if the camera wasn’t there. The camera was conceived of as a “fly-on-the-wall.”<sup>172</sup> Though John Marshall’s work with Leacock and Pennebaker was fairly limited to writing grants and administrative duties, he began to engage with the notions, ideas and possibilities of CV. In “Filming and Learning,” he posits that the greatest benefit of CV is that it requires filmmakers to know their subjects, to have a rapport allowing filmmakers to be “flies on the wall.” He says, “...access increases with mutual

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<sup>166</sup> Cabezas, 1993.

<sup>167</sup> Per Wilmsen’s argument that Laurence’s initial intent was to create “source material.” Wilmsen, 1999, 221.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Wilmsen, 1999, 238.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> *Cinema Vertie: Defining the Moment*. Peter Wintonick. 2000. Beckman Visual Publishing. 193 minutes. CV movie.

<sup>172</sup> David MacDougall, “Beyond Observational Cinema,” in Paul Hockings, ed., *Principles of Visual Anthropology*. (New York: Mouton, 1975), 109-124.

understanding.”<sup>173</sup>

Eventually, John Marshall deregistered from Yale to pursue a career as an independent filmmaker. His first job as a freelance filmmaker was for the American National Broadcast Corporation filming the civil war in Cyprus. After two years in the Mediterranean, he returned to the U.S. and shot the revered cinema vérité film, *Titicut Follies* (1967) for Frederick Wiseman. The film is described in the essay, “Filmography of the Works of John Marshall from 1951 to 1991,” by Sue Marshall Cabezas, as, “A film about Bridgewater, Massachusetts Prison for the criminally insane.”<sup>174</sup> Later in 1967, John Marshall, together with distinguished visual anthropologist, Timothy Asch, founded the Center for Documentary Anthropology, and is known today as Documentary Educational Resources. Equipped with a film studio, John Marshall revisited his ‘Bushmen’ footage and began again to make single-subject sequence films; ten years had passed since he shot the footage.

1969 and 1970 were fecund years for John Marshall; he released five Ju/'hoansi short sequence anthropological films and a short film which might be considered his first “advocacy” film (*An Argument About a Marriage*). During this time, John Marshall also took a job with the department of the Study of Violence at Brandeis University. He was employed to film the Pittsburgh police in action, long before reality law-enforcement television shows such as *Cops*, existed. Between 1969 and 1973, John Marshall shot and released twenty Pittsburgh police films, many of which are short sequence films theoretically similar to the Ju/'hoansi anthropological sequence films, which John Marshall coincidentally released eleven more of during this time. Independently, John Marshall screened the films for the police, promoting dialogue and discussion on issues pertaining to law enforcement.<sup>175</sup> In 1973, Professor James Vorenberg showed his “Pre-arraignment Law at Harvard Law School” John Marshall’s police films. Vorenberg’s use of the films grounded the class in case studies and affirmed for John Marshall the value of sequence filmmaking. John Marshall writes, “To my mind, the discussions in

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<sup>173</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 72.

<sup>174</sup> Cabezas, 1993, 265.

Vorenberg's class showed the value of using sequences as case studies for teaching, rather than using a film that tells audiences what they should see, know and think. The class was analyzing what the people in the police films were doing and saying, rather than interpreting the minds, intentions and projections of some filmmakers."<sup>176</sup> John Marshall made the class discussion of the film, *Investigation of a Hit and Run*, into a twenty-eight minute film, *A Legal Discussion of a Hit and Run*.

#### THE FILM, *BITTER MELONS*

In 1955, while the Marshalls were scouring southern Angola, South West Africa and Bechuanaland for other groups of hunter/gatherers, they came across a group of eleven Khwe people who were surviving in the Central Kalahari by gathering bush foods and getting water from wild *tsama* melons. By providing water for the band, the Marshalls were able to film the group in the Kalahari for a couple of weeks.<sup>177</sup> The corresponding footage resulted in *Bitter Melons*, released in 1971. The back cover of the film reads:

"This is a film about a small band of /Gwi San. Ten people share a camp, including a blind musician Ukxone... Ukxone plays music that he has composed on his hunting bow: songs in praise of melons, about trapping antelopes, about shouting and being lost in the bush. "Bitter Melons," his favorite song, is about a woman who learned from her Bantu neighbors to plant melon... The fluidity of /Gwi bands is revealed when !Gai and his family depart with their other relatives disappearing into the tall grass of the veld to the sound of Ukxone's 'Bitter Melons'."

The film's narrative, which is structured around Ukxone's songs is perhaps John Marshall's attempt to portray the Khwe more accurately. Essentially, Ukxone's music dictates the included images and footage. What's more, as a footnote in "Filming and Learning" John Marshall reveals that he did an experiment in which he played Ukxone's songs over arbitrary shots of the group carrying out daily activities. He found that the beats of Ukwane's songs "synchronized" with the movement of the people.<sup>178</sup> Though this narrative approach is rather progressive as it attempts to be more accurate to real life, the cinematic conventions of the film are characteristic of John Marshall's early footage—detached (lack of close-ups of people), objective (shots are long and correspond

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<sup>175</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 73.

<sup>176</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 110.

<sup>177</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 57.

<sup>178</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 56, 127.

to beginning and end of action) and positivist (omni-present, voice-over narrator).

Like *The Hunters*, *Bitter Melons* includes blatant manipulations of reality. At the end of the film, the band moves on, leaving Oukwane and his wife behind because they are too old to travel. In reality, the group was moving back to their permanent water holes, since the Marshalls would be moving on and no longer providing water. The band moved on together but John Marshall learned in 1972 that on the group's way back to their waters, Oukwane, and two other women died of thirst and one man died of hunger.<sup>179</sup> In "Filming and Learning" John Marshall writes, "...In 1955 it did not occur to me to find out what would actually happen to the people I filmed at /Ei hxa o [The Khwe]. It also did not occur to me to lie outright in my films."<sup>180</sup>

#### TRACKING A FILMMAKER: THE SEVENTIES

From 1972 to 1974, John Marshall returned to the Kalahari, (though he was restricted to the Botswana side) to film an update on the Ju/'hoansi for National Geographic. The fifty-eight minute film, *Bushmen of the Kalahari*, was released in 1974. Though John Marshall wasn't filming, he learned a very important lesson from cameraman Robert Young. In "Filming and Learning," John Marshall writes, "We make statements about people with the level of our camera. Low angles make people in our shots imposing. High angles diminish people. If we are tall and the people we are filming are short, the audience is always looking down on everyone unless we lower our basic camera level...In 1973 Bob Young taught me to shoot looking down through my viewfinder. I finally had an easy way to film Ju/'hoansi at the right level."<sup>181</sup> Attention to camera levels added another dimension to John Marshall's conception of the language of angles and distance.

During this same time, between 1972 and 1974, John Marshall released ten short Ju/'hoansi anthropological sequence films. From 1975 to 1977, he busied himself with

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<sup>179</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 57.

<sup>180</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 58.

<sup>181</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 43.

two projects in the U.S.A. One was shooting the 1976 Festival of American Folklife; the second was a documentary entitled, *If it Fits*, which depicted the demise of a once thriving industrial (shoe manufacturing) town in Massachusetts. Shortly after releasing *If it Fits*, John Marshall returned, with the assistance of an acquaintance in the South African administration, to the South West African side of the Kalahari. There, much to his dismay, he found the Ju/'hoansi living permanently in Tsumkwe, hungry, dispossessed and exploited.

Equipped with his theory of sequence filming and the knowledge of angle, distance and level, John Marshall began filming in Tsumkwe in 1978. Not long thereafter he had another cinematic quandary—how could he portray and account for the major events which transformed Ju/'hoansi [1958-1978] without having filmed them? Also, how does a filmmaker represent plural events or slots with only one “tiny window”? John Marshall’s pondering led to his formulation of “slots.” He writes in “Filming and Learning:”

“When I watch a film, I think of the action that is taking place off-screen as happening in the imaginary places I call ‘slots’ that surround the camera and the screen...Visual slots are created by angles and distances. Story slots are created by the order of events in a film. Since most of the reality around a camera is either unseen or invisible, I started using the idea of slots to help my shooting, and guide by choice of events to film....When shooting, visual slots provide a quick way to keep track of people. The visual slots remind me that my camera is looking through a tiny window and prompt me to change my angles and distances to see from the perspectives of other participants and record more of what is happening....Story slots remind me that the outside people and events impinging upon the people I am filming do not disappear when I am not looking.”<sup>182</sup>

As written above, there are a variety of “slots;” they can be anything from stories, visuals, events, people, ideas, audience schemas, etc. For example, John Marshall uses the diagram below to demonstrate “audience expectation” slots.

A    B    C    D    E    F...etc.<sup>183</sup>

Assume the letters above represent slots. “A” and “B” are people slots. If a viewer watches a shot of “A” and “B” speaking, and then, the camera zooms in on “A,” the audience will mentally maintain that “B” is still next to “A.” In other

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<sup>182</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 83-85.

<sup>183</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 83.

words, the audience has been conditioned. When filming, a filmmaker can preface or disregard the audience “slot.” As John Marshall notes, the horror genre exploits audience expectations. Overtly or not, a filmmaker’s conception of his audience tends to affect the film’s production.

Though John Marshall spends twelve pages in “Filming and Learning” on “slots” it is still unclear, as Gonzalez notes, as to how the theory aides filmmakers in their selection of events or occurrences over others.<sup>184</sup> Rather, it seems that the value of “slots” for a filmmaker is that it opens them up to a variety of influences (which are often invisible) which collide together producing the reality before the camera. Though one film could have an infinite amount of “slots,” the better acquainted a filmmaker is with his “slots” the better chance a filmmaker has to record life with increased accuracy and detail.

#### THE FILM, *N!AI, THE STORY OF A !KUNG WOMAN*

Shot on Éclair NPR (silent running, through the lens viewing, 400-foot quick change magazine loads, sync sound) and ACL cameras, *N!ai, the Story of a !Kung Woman* (1980) is John Marshall’s first film which incorporates the theories of sequence filming, “slots” and the language of angles, distance and level. Not only is the film advanced for its incorporation of multiple cinematic theories, it is also, according to Tomaselli, the first film to portray modernity amongst Bushmen.<sup>185</sup> John Marshall uses the life story of N!ai to portray the transformation of Ju/’hoansi society.<sup>186</sup> Illustrating her reminisces of better days is 1950s footage of the Ju/’hoansi living by hunting and gathering. Footage of N!ai in the present (1978) analogously corresponds to N!ai’s laments of sickness and death.

Interestingly, John Marshall’s use of one woman to speak for Ju/’hoansi life seems akin to Geertz’s ethnographic method of “thick description,” (1973) wherein sensitivity to

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<sup>184</sup> Gonzalez, 1993, 181.

<sup>185</sup> Keyan Tomaselli, “Myths, racism and opportunism: contemporary film and TV representation of the San,” *Film as Ethnography Conference*. Manchester. (1990), 7. Quoted in Wilmsen, 1999, 224.

<sup>186</sup> Wilmsen, 1999, 230.

detail, (i.e. one detailed life) implies multiple significations and contextual relationships (Ju/'hoansi womanhood, capital power, etc.)<sup>187</sup> However, the idea for the film could date back before Geertz's hypothesis; in the 1950s, while still working with the Marshalls, Robert Gardner proposed making a film about the life of a typical Zhu woman entitled, *The Gatherers*.<sup>188</sup> In many ways, *N!ai* is a testament to Gardner's idea.

*N!ai* opens with a observational shot of a mass of Ju/'hoansi receiving their government rations of maize meal. When the scene concludes the voice-over of N!ai laments the deplorable situations of the Ju/'hoansi. Within her first few sentences, N!ai mourns the days when Ju/'hoansi could still travel and "leave sickness behind." As the footage transitions to the 1950s, audiences watch N!ai, her mother and other Ju/'hoansi women collecting berries, nuts, digging for roots and collecting water in ostrich shells. Much of the 1950s footage and N!ai's recollections revolve around gender issues. In fact, Karl Heider, in his text, *Seeing Anthropology: Cultural Anthropology Through Film*, uses *N!ai* to teach the section, "The Cultural Construction of Sexuality and Gender," in his introductory cultural anthropology courses. Heider argues that the film gives viewers an idea of what is it like to be a Ju/'hoansi woman.<sup>189</sup>

Halfway through the film, at the twenty-six minute mark, the footage changes back to 1978. The seventies footage, as John Bishop notes, is remarkably cinema vérité in style; the camera captures events, rather than using words, to "tell" the story. There are two excellent examples. The first is a scene in which N!ai is acting in Jamie Uy's film, *The God's Must Be Crazy*. Shots of Uys positioning and directing the Ju/'hoansi—staging their authenticity—is betoken of the Bushman fauna myth being thrust upon them. John Marshall has publicly denounced *The God's Must Be Crazy* for its glorification and popularization of the Bushman (Fauna) myth on a global scale. The second example is the segment of the film when the peripatetic army doctor, diagnoses baby //Kxuka's (≠Toma's niece) TB as a minor cough, and the next morning //Kxuka is dead. These two scenes poignantly let the events captured on film tell the story.

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<sup>187</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

<sup>188</sup> Wilmsen, 1999, 230.

<sup>189</sup> Karl Heider, *Seeing Anthropology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Needham Heights: Allyn and Bacon, 2000).

N!ai's popularity amongst filmmakers like Uys and John Marshall gave her relative wealth and social power, which in turn, led to resentment amongst other Ju/'hoansi in Tsumkwe. The tacit umbrage towards N!ai, the resulting rumors, and the frustration of those living in destitution--slots which are else wise invisible, appear in a scene in which an enormous fight between N!ai's daughter, the daughter's husband, N!ai and many others erupts.<sup>190</sup>

Like the beginning of the film, the end is somber. Several Ju/'hoansi join the South African Defense Force and leave to fight against SWAPO in the bush. The final shots cut between N!ai singing, "Death is stealing, will death kill me too?" and a close-up of a Ju/'hoansi soldier.

*N!ai* signifies another transition in John Marshall's evolution as a filmmaker. Wilmsen articulates, "In this film [*N!ai*], John Marshall moves from the theoretically naïve attempt to make apolitical descriptive records to intersubjective recordings of historically formed political context..."<sup>191</sup> In other words, John Marshall uses the life story of N!ai to tell the story of the dispossession of the Ju/'hoansi at large. In this sense, John Marshall creates a cinematic "thick description."

#### "PUTTING DOWN THE CAMERA, PICKING UP THE SHOVEL"<sup>192</sup>

In 1981, John Marshall, Claire Ritchie, and select Ju/'hoansi, founded the Ju/'hoansi Bushman Development Foundation with \$30,000 that Laurence Marshall willed John Marshall, before his death in 1980. The aspiration of the foundation was two fold. First, they wanted to relocate people back onto their land where they could produce food to eat. More importantly however, they wanted people on the land to keep the government from appropriating it. The government had plans to create Nyae Nyae into a nature reserve. John Marshall knew that "evicting settled communities would be far more difficult for the administration than expropriating empty

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<sup>190</sup> John Marshall, "Filming and Learning," *The Cinema of John Marshall*, 85.

<sup>191</sup> Wilmsen, 1999, 244.

<sup>192</sup> Anderson and Benson, 1993, 135.

land.”<sup>193</sup> To assist the Ju/’hoansi farming endeavors, the foundation provided materials like axes and shovels. John Marshall was an active participant in the foundation’s work, namely drilling, building kraals and lobbying for Ju/’hoansi land rights. John Bishop writes, “Somewhere along the way John learned that action is more important than observation, that loyalty to your friends trumps research, and any story you weave gains its merit through your integrity and having lived it.”<sup>194</sup>

In 1984, John Marshall and Ritchie published a survey and record of Ju/’hoansi diet, mortality and birth rates in a report entitled, *Pull Ourselves Up or Die Out*. A year later they released a twenty minute documentary of the same name. In 1986, the Nyae Nyae Farmer’s Co-operative was formed, providing institutional legitimacy over the land, as well as a forum in which Ju/’hoansi could share information and air grievances. By 1991, thirty farming communities were established.

After ten years of working mainly in Namibia and on the Ju/’hoansi cause, John Marshall returned back to the US where he began teaching film at Hampshire College. In 1991, for Harvard’s Peabody Museum (the original partners of the Marshalls’ expeditions) he produced a two-part video exhibit aptly called the *!Kung San Exhibit*. The first part of the exhibit, which addresses four main issues- dispossession, water and development, the new economy, and rights, threats and hopes- resembles the format of John Marshall’s opus, then in a nascent stage, *A Kalahari Family*.

John Marshall spent the remainder of his life teaching, advocating and making and raising funds for *A Kalahari Family* which was in production for fourteen years. In the course of his lifetime, he produced over fifty films, co-founded two organizations, published a variety of written accounts and earned the American Anthropological Association’s Lifetime Achievement Award. John Marshall’s real legacy however, as Keyan Tomaselli and John Homiak note, “...will be to

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<sup>193</sup> John Marshall, 1999, 102-103.

<sup>194</sup> Bishop, 2001.

the scholars of visual anthropology and documentary film that now have rich visual data on which to build theories and methods of representation.”<sup>195</sup>

## THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SELF

Given the outline of John Marshall’s life and work, it is evident that his life story and the history of the Ju/’hoansi converge. The aspiration of this segment is to ask why and how did this happen? Using concepts surrounding ethnographic senses of self I reflect upon the history and nature of John Marshall’s relationship with the Ju/’hoansi. Finally, I hope to argue that John Marshall’s “ethnographic self” is the catalyst for the creation of *A Kalahari Family*. Anthropologist Amanda Coffey in *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity*, (1999) takes issue with the ways in which personal, emotional and identity is affected by prolonged fieldwork.<sup>196</sup> Coffey writes, “In writing [editing], remembering and representing our fieldwork experiences we are involved in a process of self presentation and identity construction.”<sup>197</sup>

In *Appropriating Images*, Keyan Tomaselli articulates Edwin Wilmsen’s inquiry, “The question for Wilmsen is how anthropologists interpolate themselves into the societies into which they have ‘inserted’ themselves. And then, how do they resolve the inevitable tension between their determining identities as ‘ethnographers’ and their adopted or assumed interpellations as ‘immersed subjects’. It is this process of ‘becoming the Other’ that is central to the anthropological method.”<sup>198</sup> Throughout her text, Amanda Coffey describes the ways in which ethnographers reform their sense of “self,” in order to integrate, assimilate and ultimately understand-through-being, the cultures they study. There are many assertions made by Coffey that apply to John Marshall.

Coffey writes, “Fieldwork involves the enactment of social roles and relationships, which place the self at the heart of the enterprise. A field, a people and a self are crafted through personal engagements and interactions among and between researcher and

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<sup>195</sup> Homiak and Tomaselli, 179.

<sup>196</sup> Coffey, 1999, 1.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

researched. This negotiation or crafting of ethnographic selfhood in the process of fieldwork can be thought of as the establishment of a field identity or field role.”<sup>199</sup> One of the most common recasts of self according to Coffey is through the adoption of fictive kin and familial-type relationships.<sup>200</sup> As explained in the first five minutes of “A Far Country,” through John Marshall’s voice-over narrative, when the Marshalls first met ≠Toma and his family, they were given their Ju/’hoansi names. Laurence was named after ≠Toma’s father, Lorna after ≠Toma’s mother, Elizabeth, after ≠Toma’s sister and John after ≠Toma himself. However, John Marshall had “long face” affixed to his name; he was ≠Toma Long Face. As Lorna says in shot 302 of Part One, “≠Toma gave our family the names of his family. He said it made us closer.” Tsamkxao says in regards to the Marshalls’ Ju/’hoansi names in shot 15 in Part Three, “it made us like family.” It seems that in a sense, by adopting these particular Ju/’hoansi names, the Marshall’s were inducted into the Kalahari Family.

With the adoption of new names, came new identities--John Marshall became like a son to ≠Toma. As !U, !oma’s wife says, in an interview in “A Far Country” to John Marshall, “he raised you long face.” John Marshall describes in “Filming and Learning” how ≠Toma took John Marshall under his wing and helped him to learn Ju/’hoansi, the history and stories of the people, how to hunt and use local flora and fauna, and the cultural values and structures of the people. In a very literal sense, ≠Toma gave John Marshall an awareness of what otherness might be like. Yet, their relationship extended beyond one of cultural informant and researcher; moreover, John Marshall and ≠Toma were best friends. As Coffey posits, “A sense of self and belonging is enhanced by a ‘friendship’ relationship with an informant.”<sup>201</sup> Audiences witness the intimacy of their relationship when John Marshall and ≠Toma reunite after twenty years apart. Lasting over a minute and fifty seconds in length, this scene is perhaps one of the most poignant of the series. John Marshall and ≠Toma embrace for a long time. John Marshall appears emotional and even looks like he may cry. In this moment it is clear that ≠Toma is more than anthropological subject, he is family. As Coffey articulates, “The people of the field

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<sup>198</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 96.

<sup>199</sup> Coffey, 1999, 23.

<sup>200</sup> Coffey, 1999, 25.

and our relationships with them provide not only the bulk of our data. They also provide us with the building blocks of our identity in and beyond the field.”<sup>202</sup>

John Marshall’s ties to the Ju/’hoansi were further reified when he fell in love and married a Ju/’hoan woman<sup>203</sup>. As Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, John Marshall’s sister writes, “Although they [John Marshall and his Ju/’hoan bride] had no children together, their relationship placed him forever in the social fabric, giving him obligations that he willingly accepted. In ways, he was less like an expatriate who had come to help the Ju/’hoansi and more like one of the people themselves, albeit with a vehicle, with English and Afrikaans in addition to the language of the Ju/’hoansi, and with the knowledge one needs to move through the Western world with all its politics and complications.”<sup>204</sup> Throughout *A Kalahari Family* there are multiple visual references to John Marshall’s place within the family. Namely, these are repeated shots where you see /Ui, G!kao, Tsamkxao and other Ju/’hoansi and John Marshall sitting around in a circle; these shots are labeled in the transcript as “family meetings”.

Coffey writes, “The crafting of selves in the context of fieldwork is not just about presenting an acceptable or plausible self, as a means to an end. It can actually be about becoming a different self over the course of and beyond the fieldwork. This process, moreover, is interactive and negotiated—the outcome of relationship or collusion with others.”<sup>205</sup> As evidenced by John Marshall’s work at the conservancy and foundation, as well as the release of *A Kalahari Family*, it is clear that John Marshall’s identity as Ju/’hoansi had a lasting impression. How and why did this identity remain? One answer may be that when John Marshall began his fieldwork he was only eighteen years old. As Coffey notes, “There is a saying that you never forget your first love—and like a first ‘romance’ there is something very special and long-standing about first fieldwork.”<sup>206</sup> Another reason may be because of the length and repeated experience of “becoming the

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<sup>201</sup> Coffey, 1999, 43.

<sup>202</sup> Coffey, 1999, 39.

<sup>203</sup> Unfortunately, this woman is not named in Elizabeth Marshall Thomas’, *The Old Way: A Story of First People*. (New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2006).

<sup>204</sup> Thomas, 2006, 286.

<sup>205</sup> Coffey, 1999, 28.

Other” during fieldwork. As Coffey argues, an ethnographer becomes an insider or “native” over time.<sup>207</sup>

There are several references to the Marshalls’ evolution of relationships with the Ju/’hoansi, their attempts to become comfortable and to understand them in *A Kalahari Family*. In Part One, Lorna Marshall reads from her diary and explains through voice-over narrative atop of footage of a healer collapsing in trance, “I was frightened, in another month the dances weren’t so frightening but romantically strange to me.” Following Lorna’s comments are several inclusions in which we see the Ju/’hoansi sitting on the ground clapping and see three white people in colonial dress taking notes. This image seems to exemplify the history of anthropology as the “Other” culturally performs and the “researcher” takes note, and eventually, comes to participate.

More poignantly, in Part One, shot 616, over footage of dying baby, John Marshall’s voice over narrative says, “!U was right, after knowing the family six years, at last I was fully understanding what it was like to always be thin and hungry and watch your children die.” This comment is significant for a few reasons. One, it posits that John Marshall thought he “fully understood” what it was to be Ju/’hoansi, which is contestable; anthropologists are still debating whether an “outsider” can ever truly be “inside.” The second interesting thing about this comment is that John Marshall references time (six years) to be the reason he has “full understanding.” This comment exemplifies the idea that the more time one spends with the “Other” the greater knowledge and understanding an “outsider” can have. The concept that John Marshall has greater insight into the Ju/’hoansi is supported by !U’s and Tsamkxao’s voice-over narrations in Part Five. She says to John Marshall, “I know that you are also old but you were the one who used to help us.” Then, Tsam’s reads a letter, “the reason we want you [John Marshall] to visit us is very simple, it is because you have worked with Ju/’hoansi for many years, and sometimes we need your advice.”

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<sup>206</sup> Coffey, 1999, 101.

<sup>207</sup> Coffey, 1999, 33.

Elizabeth Marshall Thomas writes that by the time John Marshall was forced out of the Kalahari in 1958, “He belonged among the Ju/wasi of Nyae Nyae, particularly among the people of /Gautscha, and he spoke !Kung fluently if with an American accent.”<sup>208</sup>

Though John Marshall returned to the United States and had a successful career as a filmmaker, he comments in Part One, that while away he thought of everybody [the Kalahari Family] regularly. Considering his lengthy tenure in the Kalahari and the bonds he established with the Ju/’hoansi, it is not surprising that John Marshall maintained his connection to the Ju/’hoansi. Ultimately, when John Marshall returned to destitute Nyae Nyae (Tshumkwe) in 1978, it was this connection which propelled him into advocacy work for the Ju/’hoansi. In *The Old Way*, Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, John Marshall’s sister comments, “he [John Marshall] was tied to those people [Ju/’hoansi of Nyae Nyae] in a way that other non-Bushmen were not...”<sup>209</sup>

Though John Marshall felt deeply connected to the Ju/’hoansi and as Elizabeth Thomas writes, “belonged among them,” there are crucial differences between John Marshall and the Ju/’hoansi. Namely, in an apartheid society, John Marshall had two important things going for him that the Ju/’hoansi did not: he was white and he had money. Coffey writes, “The ability to serve as advocate or representative or participant is mediated by our physical looks (looking ‘right’, looking the part) and the status of our bodies.”<sup>210</sup> This meant, that John Marshall had the ability to stand up to outside world influences such as the Herero and the South African and Namibian governments and the resources to start an organization which physically supported the needs of the Ju/’hoansi. One of the best examples of John Marshall in an advocacy role is in Part Three, when John Marshall meets with the Namibian Minister of Wildlife, Mr. Shipanga. Had it not been for the fact that Marshall was a wealthy American filmmaker, it is hard to say if Mr. Shipanga would have had time to hear the grievances of the Ju/’hoansi. However, as the film reveals, John Marshall’s influence could only go so far, as Mr. Shipanga failed to make good on his promise of protecting Ju/’hoansi boreholes.

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<sup>208</sup> Thomas, 2006, 286.

<sup>209</sup> Thomas, 2006, 287.

<sup>210</sup> Coffey, 1999, 71.

Arguably, it is the fact that John Marshall can access both the Ju/'hoansi world and the outside world which led him to establish the Ju/'hoansi Bushman Foundation, which later became the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation and later still, the Nyae Nyae Conservancy. In Part Two, over footage of John Marshall digging, his voice-over narration explains that the foundation was trying to stop a game reserve from being established in Nyae Nyae by building a legal case and interviewing individuals who could attest to traditionally owning and occupying the land. Though these efforts were necessary to protect the Ju/'hoansi, there can be no doubt that they were motivated and preempted by John Marshall. Without his ability to straddle both worlds, protection of Ju/'hoan land arguably wouldn't have happened.

Though John Marshall capitalizes on his social capital and financial power, in the film he vacillates between a Ju/'hoansi identity and that of his western white self. For example, his insider status is exemplified by his repeated use of "we" throughout the series when referring to the Kalahari Family; it's also visually coded with shot of John Marshall sitting in the Kalahari family's circle. What's more, is John Marshall's precarious use of the term "whites." At once he uses it to define the other "experts" or foreigners, excluding himself, but the Ju/'hoansi often use the term in reference to him, as Tsamkxao does several times. For example, in "Death by Myth" shot 196, John Marshall's voice-over narrative comments, "G!kao Dabe, whom the whites called Petrus, was eager to be heard." However, in shot 458, after Tsamkxao reads the foundation report, he says diegetically to John Marshall, with subtitles, "It's you who wrote that, you white people. You long hairs do these things. No Bushman would do this...You white people can't stay far away." Coffey posits, "...self and identity are not singular, fixed, bound entities. Selves and identities are fragmented and connected; open to shifts and negotiation. They are ambiguous, the outcome of culturally available and defined interactions, actions, meanings and values."<sup>211</sup> What's more, Coffey adds, "Yet the fragmentation of our lives that may come with prolonged fieldwork can throw our perspectives of who we are and where we belong into chaos. With the momentum of fieldwork, and our desire to be part

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<sup>211</sup> Coffey, 35.

of the field, the self can be lost, found, altered and recast.”<sup>212</sup>

## CONCLUSION

There does not seem to be one answer as to why John Marshall gave his life to the Ju/'hoansi cause; rather it seems to be an amalgamation of multiple reasons: his identity was bound to them, his ability (due to physical stature and capital power) to straddle both the Ju/'hoansi world and the outside world and be an agent of positive change, because of his familial responsibility as #Toma's pseudo heir and also, out of basic moral obligation. What is undeniable is as Coffey articulates, “Where there is a long-term ethnographic commitment to a place and a people our lives and theirs are fundamentally interconnected, as Ottenberg suggests, ‘In one time research the anthropologists does fieldwork, leaves and writes of that time. In long term research one is always writing of the new and relationship to the old, seeing people one knows change, mature, die, notching one's life experiences against theirs’ (Ottenbert, 1994:115-115).”<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter Five

### Narrative Analysis: Many Stories, Many Voices

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<sup>213</sup> Coffey, 115.

## INTRODUCTION

The questions this chapter addresses are as follows: What is/are the narrative(s)? Whose stories are at work in *A Kalahari Family*? Who(m) is telling or authoring the stories? What is the narrative structure or the series?

My attempt to answer the above questions involved a variety of research methods. I first watched the series without note taking, to understand the film on a very basic level. I then re-watched the film taking notes only on things that really struck me, including everything from narrative accents, to horror at the destitution of the San, to poetic statements made by characters, to cinematic devices. Equipped with the downloaded transcript of the series provided on its web page, I went shot by shot, applying Tomaselli's use of a theory of film semiotics. I spent innumerable hours reading the film, looking for the minute details. After compiling a record of all these shots, I organized my notes topically and began to organize my impressions and responses.

Though my questions seem disparate, answering one often leads to answering others. I have found it nearly impossible to answer one without somehow referencing or incorporating others. While this chapter attempts a topical organization, I ask the reader to keep in mind the interrelatedness of these questions and answers.

### SEGMENTS: THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF THE SERIES

Arguably, the most striking aspect of *A Kalahari Family* is its narrative structure which, in essence, is a pastiche of smaller stories (with different actors, events, times and places) that coalesce into one overarching narrative: the story of the maladroitness of the Bushman Myth on the Ju/'hoansi Bushmen of Nyae Nyae over the course of fifty-years. These smaller stories, referred herein as narrative segments, are often a montage of shots coded together to create meaning. The transcript of the series, often demarcate segments with titles, as does the DVD main menu with a "Scene" selection. Part one, "A Far Country" has over forty segments, that are titled to reflect the segment's meaning or story; examples include, "Toma's Story," "Black Farmers and the Herero," Lorna's Story: How

the Marshall's Got Started," "Tsamkxao's Story," "N!ae's Story," and "The Ovambo, a First Contact."

A quintessential example of a segment is "≠Toma's Story," in Part One, "A Far Country." "≠Toma's Story" begins with a shot of a band of people and then cuts, to a close-up, interview style shot of ≠Toma. He introduces himself and with the assistance of a voice-over translator, begins his life story. ≠Toma explains the name of his father, where he was born and how growing up he and his family traveled constantly in search of water. As ≠Toma's voice-over narrator speaks, archival footage of a band of Ju/'hoansi traveling across pans and bush is presented. ≠Toma's voice-over narrator actor explains that the family frequently visited G!am, where the local water owners' had a daughter of marriageable age. ≠Toma's father wanted him to marry this girl in order to secure water access for the family. However, another family also wanted their son to wed her. Over footage taken at dusk, which mostly appears as blackness on screen, ≠Toma's voice-over narrator explains that the rivaling family killed ≠Toma's father with a poisoned arrow. His dying words to ≠Toma were to care for the family by hunting and marry so that he could have a family of his own. The footage then changes, to the slaughtering of a warthog. The voice-over narrator says, "I not only hunted, I chased girls," ending this segment, and transitioning into a new segment entitled, "!U and ≠Toma" in which the story of their courting, marriage and family life begin. "≠Toma's Story" is three minutes in length and twenty-six shots.

Segments are the building blocks of the narrative—they collectively form larger narratives, such as those in each installment. Further still, each installment's story combines with the others to provide the overarching narrative, "Death by Myth." There are hundreds of segments throughout *A Kalahari Family* and correspondingly multiple narratives—even narratives within narratives. Signs and codes abound. Rather than detailing them all, the following is a narrative synopsis of each installment.

## THE NARRATIVE CRUX: THE DISABUSE OF THE BUSHMAN MYTH

Part One, “A Far Country” is in many ways an introductory film. The audience meets a family of Ju/’hoansi, headed by ≠Toma Tsamkxao, who are arguably the last living hunter/gatherers in southern Africa. Archival footage taken by John Marshall in the nineteen-fifties of ≠Toma and his family engaged in activities such as making tools, scarification rituals, hunting and gathering, are incorporated to show audiences how the Ju/’hoansi once lived. Voice-over narration, often accompanied by footage, discloses the history of the San and Namibia (South West Africa). Audiences also meet the Marshalls, a wealthy American family and learn the story of how the Marshalls came to the Kalahari; told from both the Marshalls’ point of view, as well as from their key informants, ≠Toma and !U. Collectively, the Marshalls and Ju/’hoansi discuss their early encounters—their fears, curiosities and impressions. “A Far Country” divulges the ways in which the families learnt to trust and relate to one another.

Part Two, “End of the Road,” begins with John Marshall’s return to Nyae Nyae after being expelled for nearly twenty-years. He finds the once independent Ju/’hoansi of Nyae Nyae, localized and dependent on a negligent government at Tshumkwe—a place of death. At Tshumkwe people are living in destitution, dependent upon government rations and South African Defense Force cheques. Their dependency and despair is poignantly illustrated by juxtaposing nineteen-fifties footage, similar to the footage in Part One, of the Ju/’hoansi living freely. Audiences meet N!ai, the star of *N!ai, the Story of !Kung Woman*. Similar to the film *N!ai*, Part Two depicts the hardships of life in 1978 and is accompanied by N!ai’s elegies to the camera. The end of Part Two hints at a turn for the better when Tsamkxao, ≠Toma’s son, and others terminate their dependency on the South African government, by leaving Tshumkwe to resettle and farm at /Aotcha.

In Part Three, “Real Water,” the audience become better acquainted with Tsamkxao ≠Toma, son of ≠Toma and !U. This episode details the efforts of Ju/’hoansi, as well as those of John Marshall, to farm and resettle their land. As the title indicates, much of the action centers on drilling boreholes and installing water pumps. Conflict comes to a head

when the Department of Nature Conservation threatens to establish a game reserve on Ju/'hoansi land where Ju/'hoansi would be forced back into a “plastic Stone Age,” forced to survive solely by hunting and gathering.<sup>214</sup> John Marshall incorporates two interviews in which a nature conservationist and trophy hunter articulate and invoke the Bushman Fauna Myth as justification for their reserve and camps. The trophy hunter goes as far as to say, “These people are just so simple in their expectancy of life that we must definitely not try to push the Western civilization onto them too fast because they wouldn't be able to cope.” John Marshall cheekily juxtaposes this bit of narrative atop of footage of Tsamkxao driving a car—a blatant symbol of modernity. Fortunately, Tsamkxao organizes a petition and leads a delegation to the capital city, which results in the Department of Nature Conservation reneging on their initial idea and instead, promoting trophy hunting in the area. Again, there is a positive ending, with the Nyae Nyae Ju/'hoansi forming a cooperative, so that together, they will “grow like a strong tree.”

“Standing Tall,” Part Four, refers not only to the triumph of the first democratic election for the new nation state of Namibia, but also the efforts of relocated Ju/'hoansi (now part of an official farmers cooperative) to find dispossessed relatives and return them to their homelands. Gkao, the star of the South African blockbuster, *The God's Must Be Crazy*, finds his brother on a white farm, where he works for food. With the help of UN officials, the Nyae Nyae Farmer's Cooperative returns Gkao's brother, /Ui Chapman, to Nyae Nyae where he is given land and tools to begin farming for himself and his family. The final shot depicts /Ui dancing for joy. This film really accretes to “Death by Myth,” in that it provides visual evidence of the success of Ju/'hoansi farming.

While each installment has its own unique narrative, I believe that the series coalesces and crescendos in Part Five, “Death by Myth.” For example, in Part Two, “End of the Road,” is a segment entitled, “Shooting the ‘Gods,’ Using the Myth,” which exposes Jamie Uys, the director of the high-grossing film, *The Gods Must Be Crazy*. Uys invokes the living “Noble Savage” Bushman Myth to propagate his film. “Death by Myth” also illustrates how the international popularity of the film perpetuated the Myth on a global

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<sup>214</sup> Marshall, 1993, 2.

scale. In Part Three, “The Real Water,” the segment “War, Myth and Dispossession,” details the ways in which the South African Defense Force recruited San groups because they were thought to be “natural trackers” (a widely held Bushman myth) and then left them dependent, socially despised and penniless after Namibian independence. “Politics and Myth,” a segment in Part Four, elucidates how South West African and Namibian politicians have used Bushmen myths to inform policy; i.e. creating Bushmen territories, where San must subsist solely by hunting with arrows and gathering diminished flora and fauna. Though each of the above installments tells a distinct story with different actors and events, they also collectively illustrate the various myths and their maladroitness effects on the destitute Ju/'hoansi.

“Death by Myth,” exposes an often unpublicized reality—development agencies don't always ameliorate the lives of the people they're meant to. Bearing the original name of the series, the film details the continued exploitation of Ju/'hoansi. Sadly, this time, the oppressor is closer to home—the foundation which John Marshall constituted—the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia (previously the Ju/'hoan Bushman Foundation). Instead of supporting farming initiatives, the NNDFN, amongst other non-government organizations such as USAID and WWF, pursue wildlife management and cultural tourism initiatives that revert Ju/'hoansi back to the “plastic Stone Age.” Though the members of the Nyae Nyae cooperative initially reject their plans, the lure of riches ultimately convince a majority of Ju/'hoansi in 1996 to establish a nature conservancy. However, promised riches don't materialize; the film ends in 2000 with shots of abandoned farms and Ju/'hoansi returning to a life of squalor at Tshumkwe, what the Ju/'hoansi call, “the place of death”. *A Kalahari Family* does what writing cannot; it *shows* how Bushmen myths are engendered, articulated and implemented in real life.

#### WHOSE STORIES ARE THESE?

*A Kalahari Family* is set apart from other films because of the subjects themselves--the Ju/'hoansi San. The film's website, in addition to the summary found on the back cover of the film and festival compendiums all preface the Ju/'hoansi in their synopsis of the

series. “*A Kalahari Family* is a five-part, six-hour series documenting 50 years in the lives of the Ju/’hoansi of southern Africa, from 1951 to 2000.”<sup>215</sup> On a surface level this is true, the film is namely about the Ju/’hoansi. But, one must remember that *A Kalahari Family* is not the story of the Ju/’hoansi collective, but rather about a select group of Ju/’hoansi—#Toma’s extended family. The individual stories of #Toma, !U, N!ae, Tsamkxao, G#kao Moses, /Kunta, /Ui, Gkao, Kxao, and Bau represent and reference the larger collective, historical story of not only the Ju/’hoansi, but the San of Namibia (South West Africa). One cannot neglect the fact that these individuals have been subjectively selected and incorporated into the narrative; some appear and share more than others. For example, Bau’s story is limited to her work as the first independent nurse practitioner in the Nyae Nyae region. Whereas, much of Tsamkxao #Toma’s life story is shared: the context and story of his mother and father, his youth, his role as community leader, his trials and tribulations farming, and holding his land. It is important to remember that these are subjective stories of individuals, and that through their specific stories, the larger narrative of neglect, oppression and dispossession of the Ju/’hoansi at large is conveyed.

The story of the Ju/’hoansi, and specifically #Toma’s extended family is undoubtedly prefaced throughout the series, but one cannot help but notice that *A Kalahari Family* it is also very much about their friend and advocate, filmmaker John Marshall. Throughout the series, particularly, the first installment, John Marshall shares his story of how he came to work with the Ju/’hoansi. With archival footage and voice-over narration, he poignantly meditates on his relationship with #Toma; how they learned about one another, the activities they did together, and how their bond extended beyond the classic subject-observer ethnographic relationship. In essence, the audience witnesses the evolution of their anthropological relationship. In Part Two, John Marshall shares his horror and guilt at returning to Nyae Nyae twenty-years later to find #Toma’s band starving and dispossessed. He then famously “put down the camera and picked up the shovel,” thereby changing the course of his life’s work. For the rest of the series, John

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<sup>215</sup> Documentary Educational Resources, *A Kalahari Family*, [www.der.org/films/a-kalahari-family.html](http://www.der.org/films/a-kalahari-family.html) retrieved [2006, May 07].

Marshall is frequently on camera, sharing in the Ju/'hoansi struggles. Anthropologist Amanda Coffey argues, "Tales of the self represent ways of combining ethnography and autobiography in explicit and self-conscious ways. They serve as exaggerated examples of the ways in which the self and the field are interwoven, illustrating how, as well as collecting and writing the biographies of others, we are engaged in biographical work of our own<sup>216</sup>." It is undeniable that the stories found in *A Kalahari Family* belong not only to the Ju/'hoansi but also the filmmaker.

### REMEMBERING THE CREATOR

At a time in which equal attention is paid to the artist as to the art, i.e., an epistemological approach to the ways in which we construct knowledge, it is imperative to be cognizant of the fact that it is John Marshall who is ultimately credited as the main producer, author and editor of the series Karma Foley, the associate producer and editor of *A Kalahari Family* posited in a personal correspondence:

"It was really the events of the 1990's that changed the series so much from the original plan of three one-hour shows. You've seen film five, so you know what the story is and how John felt about it. He was very upset that after all their efforts to stop the game reserve in the 80's, practically the same thing was happening in the 90's – but with the help of his own foundation and under the name of "development". I think he felt the film series was his last option for getting the story out and helping the Ju/'hoansi to stay in control of their land and their lives. In many ways, film five is more of an activist effort than a story-telling one."

Elizabeth Marshall Thomas writes in her book, *The Old Way*, "John Marshall made the film to alert the world to the desperate situation of the people he knew so well, the people who had taken him in as one of them, the people who over a lifetime had helped him, and who looked to him to help them."<sup>217</sup> John Marshall's subjectivity cannot be ignored. His passionate advocating for the Ju/'hoansi is ubiquitous in his archive. Films such as *Pull Ourselves Up or Die Trying*, *N!ai, the Story of a !Kung Woman*, *Fighting Tooth*, *(Nail) and the Government*, and essays like "Filming and Learning," and *Where are the Ju/wasi of Nyae Nyae*, which all inform the audience of the harsh realities of the Ju/'hoansi, expose the malicious affects of Bushmen myths and urge audiences to empathize with the Ju/'hoansi and their fight against oppression. The first chapter in John Marshall's autobiographical chapter, "Filming and Learning," is "Death by Myth," wherein he begins the

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<sup>216</sup> Amanda Coffey, 1999, 123.

chapter with an exposition of the historical exploitation (which was often fueled by Bushman myth) of the Ju/'hoansi and other San. Much of the included Ju/'hoansi history reads like a compendium of Robert Gordon's book, *The Bushman Myth: The Making of a Namibian Underclass* (1992). Gordon's text illuminates the variety of social and economic conditions that engendered an assortment of Bushmen myths. Unlike Gordon who details each Bushman myth, John Marshall emphasizes one—the Bushman “Fauna myth.” The Fauna myth as explained by John Marshall, conceptualizes Bushmen as “children of nature”, “... ‘Bushmen’ have no notions of land rights or concepts of property. They have no sense of time and cannot distinguish the past from the future; they cannot foresee a crop when they plant a seed.”<sup>218</sup> Like an endangered species, the Fauna myth purports protecting Bushmen so that they may continue hunting and gathering in their natural environments; freezing them, as John Marshall writes, like flies in amber<sup>219</sup>. John Marshall writes, “The main reason I propose the kind of filmmaking I describe in this essay [Filming and Learning], and urge documentary filmmakers to try to show reality, is because fantasies projected onto Ju/'hoansi by writers and filmmakers were among the worst threats the people faced in their struggle to develop their farms and keep their land.”<sup>220</sup>

#### A FINAL WORD

John Marshall's subjectivity affects *A Kalahari Family* beyond its activist agenda. Parts of the film appear to be John Marshall's retort to critics and in many ways a final word on his life's work. In his tenure as a filmmaker and activist, John Marshall has had many critics, particularly in the academic circles where his work has been publicly spurned. John Marshall's critics (of varying degrees) include: Richard Lee, Alan Barnard, Robert Hitchcock, Megan Biesele, Richard Katz and Keyan Tomaselli.<sup>221</sup> Several aspects to *A*

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<sup>217</sup> Thomas, 2006, 300.

<sup>218</sup> Marshall, 1993, 2.

<sup>219</sup> Marshall, 1993.

<sup>220</sup> Marshall, 1993, 3.

<sup>221</sup> Keyan Tomaselli, “Revisualizing the San in the Nineteen-Eighties,” in *Visual Anthropology*, Vol (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993). 97-104. Alan Barnard, Megan Biesele, Lewis Binford, Carolyn Boyd, et al (eighteen authors in total), “Visual Ethics and John Marshall's *A Kalahari Family*,” in *Anthropology Newsletter*/May 1996, pgs 15-16. Megan Biesele, “Speaking Truth to a Powerful Film” in *Anthropology News*, Vol. 45, Part 2, 2004. 8-9.

*Kalahari Family* respond to their criticism. One of the most evident examples is John Marshall's stance on the isolation argument, or great "Kalahari Debate".

As mentioned in the literature review, the "Kalahari Debate," which many contend has been raging for over a hundred years<sup>222</sup>, is between the traditionalists or isolationists, who contend that Bushmen represent cultural isolates, and, the revisionists or integrationists, who argue that Bushmen were in fact in contact with "a host of outside others."<sup>223</sup> The former acknowledges the problems with the concept of a "cultural isolate" model but asserts nonetheless that trade, doesn't necessarily mean cultural fusion, or in their words, a "loss of autonomy."<sup>224</sup> The revisionists or integrationists posit that the notions of "Bushman" or "San," are invented categories, which de-emphasize other subsistence strategies, like cattle raiding, and trade.<sup>225</sup>

The hunting/gathering status of the Ju/'hoansi gave the Marshalls' expeditions purchase. Therefore, it was, and is imperative, that they maintain that they met the Ju/'hoansi when they were "pure" hunter/gatherers; though as Tomaselli and Homiak, and Wilmsen assert, that the Marshalls knew of contact, kinship and trade networking with Herero and Tswana people. Tomaselli and Homiak articulate their arguments in their article, "Powering Popular Conceptions" in two sections; "Searching for the Last Hunter-Gatherers" and "The 'Wild Bushmen': Window on the Pleistocene?" Therein, they contend that the Marshalls knew of foreign acquisitions such as metal knives, arrow heads and axes but failed to ask or record where they came from.

In an unpublished paper entitled, "The Tasaday and the !Kung: Reassessing Isolated Hunter-gatherers," Nancy Howell, a member of the Harvard Kalahari Research Group led by Richard Lee discusses how the "historical context was missed." Howell states that the

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<sup>222</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 105. Gordon, 1992. Robert Gordon, "People of the Sandface: People of the Great White Lie?" *Commission on Visual Anthropology Review*. Spring: 30-34. W.J. Makin, *Across the Kalahari Desert*. (London: Arrowsmith, 1929). JMarshall, 1993, 25.

<sup>223</sup> Barnard, 1992.

<sup>224</sup> Jacqueline S. Solway and Richard B. Lee, "Foragers, genuine or spurious? Situating the Kalahari San in history," in *Current Anthropology*, 31, 1990. 109-46.

<sup>225</sup> Edwin Wilmsen and James R. Denbow, "Paradigmatic history of San-speaking peoples and current attempts at revision," in *Current Anthropology*, 31, 1990.489-524.

group arrived to find the Ju/'hoansi living in traditional villages, and hunting and gathering; she writes:

“In the months that follow, we go with them and see for ourselves that the animals they eat really are hunted (even if not as persistently and dramatically as in John Marshall's film, *The Hunters*). We see mothers giving birth, collecting food, feeding their families. We see children playing from dawn to dusk, in the villages, day after day. We also see men (and less often women) disappearing from the bush villages for weeks at a time to conduct 'busnessie' (a !Kung word), working on wage work projects, children carving toy trucks out of roots and drawing trucks and guns on spare pieces of cardboard with a pencil we give them. But these we ignored, relatively speaking, because we didn't come half the way around the world to see these things. We could have stayed near home and seen people behaving as rural proletariat, while but the Kalahari and a few other remote locations allow a glimpse of 'the hunting and gathering way of life'. So we focus upon bush camps, upon hunting, upon old fashioned customs, and although we remind each other once in a while not to be romantic, we consciously and unconsciously neglect and avoid the !Kung who don't conform to our expectations.”<sup>226</sup>

Edwin Wilmsen is equally critical of the Marshalls' isolation stance in his article, “The Marshall Family Testament.” Wilmsen uses a quote from Lorna to Lauriston Ward in regard to the 1952-1953 excursion to illustrate the family's cognizance of Bushmen-Bantu interactions. She writes, “We'll be interested in Gam and would have a good chance to observe the relation between Hereros and Bushmen there [PMA 1952 e].”<sup>227</sup> In 1991, while speaking at the Smithsonian in conjunction with John Marshall's 1950s footage, Keyan Tomaselli was interrupted by an archaeologist who hotly contended Tomaselli's assimilationist position, accusing Edwin Wilmsen, Tomaselli's source, of manufacturing his archaeological evidence.<sup>228</sup>

John Marshall maintains his isolationist stance throughout entire series. Near the one and a half minute mark, atop of footage of ≠Toma collecting berries, John Marshall's voice-over narration comments, “In the 1950s people lived by gathering wild bush foods and hunting game with poisoned arrows with varying success.” Several Ju/'hoansi recall and describe life as hunters and gatherers in the film, thereby affirming John Marshall's assertion. Through a voice-over narrator, ≠Toma says in shot 185 and 186 of “A Far

<sup>226</sup> Nancy Howell, “The Tasaday and the !Kung: Reassessing Isolated Hunter-gatherers.” Unpublished paper. (1988). Personal Communication, January 24, 2007.

<sup>227</sup> Wilmsen, 1999, “The Marshall Family Testament to the 'Bushmen,' 161. Originally quoted in Peabody Museum Archives-Harvard, 1952 e. SWA58-43G Lorna Marshall to Lauriston Ward, 14 July.

Country,” “we heard of the Herero from travelers. We just stayed here by the Baobab, at G//autcha, the way you found and filmed us.” Tsamkxao in shot 524 remarks that the first time he ever saw a black person was when the Marshalls forced everyone out of Nyae Nyae because of a flood in 1953. Further endorsing the isolationist argument is the objective, disembodied historian narrator whom explains the encroachment of Bantu people and colonialists on San, she says, “In more arid areas, like Nyae Nyae, the hunting way of life endured.” The final lines in “A Far Country” spoke by John Marshall are, “we had no idea how soon, or how willingly, most people would give up the hunting/gathering life.”

As Tomaselli and Homiak note, the Marshalls (and ironically their successors led by Richard Lee) depict the end of isolation for the Ju/'hoansi occurring after their meeting. Moreover, John Marshall asserts in “Filming and Learning” and twice in “A Far Country;” that it was the Marshall family’s vehicle tracks which opened the world to Nyae Nyae. Hence, several shots in “A Far Country” are extreme long shots of the bush with a vehicle moving through it, or, are simply shots of vehicle tracks. These images visually reify John Marshall’s position and appear at large throughout the series.

Interestingly, John Marshall’s contention responds directly to one of Tomaselli and Homiak’s arguments in “Powering Popular Conceptions.” Essentially, they look to *An Argument About A Marriage* (1969) to illustrate the sizable degree of interaction between Ju/'hoansi and other groups.<sup>229</sup> But, in “A Far Country,” John Marshall says through voice-over narration, “While we were home in America, white ranchers followed our tracks into Nyae Nyae to round up the Ju/'hoansi by persuasion or force.” In other words, were it not for the Marshalls, the Ju/'hoansi would not have ended up on white owned ranches. However, in “The Marshall Family Testament,” Wilmsen includes two quotes by John and Elizabeth, which indicate that the Ju/'hoansi went to the farms, rather than the farmers coming to them. According to them, ≠Toma was gored by a buffalo and

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<sup>228</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 95.

<sup>229</sup> Tomaselli and Homiak, 168.

in need of medical attention, he went to a farm where he was nursed and stayed until he escaped.<sup>230</sup>

One must wonder, with all of the success and fame that John Marshall and his family generated, and all the evidence to the contrary, why does John Marshall maintain that the Ju/'hoansi were isolated? Part of the reason as Nancy Gonzalez writes in "An Argument About a Film," is because there are "major discrepancies in the 'facts' concerning the Marshall expeditions."<sup>231</sup> Wilmsen exemplifies this by contrasting two quotes, one by Laurence in which he writes that there are Bantu cattle posts at every waterhole in Nyae Nyae but Gautcha, and one by Lorna where she writes that the Ju/'hoansi are the only inhabitants in the area. Rather than preface one's assertion over the other, Wilmsen argues that both quotes "are expressing different truths, or better, different facets of truth."<sup>232</sup> He explains that Lorna had only been to Nyae Nyae in the dry season and remained at Gam the majority of the time, while Laurence had been present during most seasons and traveled throughout the Kalahari. In short, subjective locations, in addition to the unreliability of memory, have led to factual discrepancies.

Another reason why John Marshall may have maintained his isolation position is to sell the series; as the popularity of *The God's Must Be Crazy* and anthro-tourism illustrate, the public remains fascinated with "authentic" Bushmen. While these two facts are important, it's likely that the real reason lies with the intent of the series—simply said, to "save" the Ju/'hoansi. As Tomaselli and Homiak write, "Presumably the more-or-less sudden collapse of the last free hunter-gatherers in Africa is an image which conveys considerably more urgency to international aid organizations than does a perspective which depicts the Nyae Nyae Ju/'hoansi as the victims of a centuries-long inexorable process of incorporation by native and European forces."<sup>233</sup>

Though the making of *A Kalahari Family* was collaborative, including input from

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<sup>230</sup> Thomas, 2006, 193-194.

<sup>231</sup> Gonzalez, 1993, 179.

<sup>232</sup> Wilmsen, 1999, 225.

<sup>233</sup> Tomaselli and Homiak, 168.

Tsamkxao and Kxao Moses, outside advisors and other filmmakers; ultimately, John Marshall is credited as author, editor and producer. One cannot overlook the ways in which John Marshall is manifest in *A Kalahari Family*. What's more, one also must be cognizant of the ways in which John Marshall's subjectivities affect the outcome of the series.

## CONCLUSION

By asking the following fundamental questions a rich and dynamic narrative is unveiled. What is the narrative of *A Kalahari Family*? Who is it about? Who is sharing or authoring the story? *A Kalahari Family* is extraordinary in the way in which it amalgamates multiple narratives and voices, and yet really seems to resound one—John Marshall's and the destructive affects of the Bushman myth. Prior to the release of *A Kalahari Family*, a story about one group of indigenous, unacculturated people, over the course of fifty years, had ever been told on film. What's more, there has never been a film that depicts a prolonged (fifty plus years) anthropological relationship. In many ways, the story of the iconic Ju/'hoansi and John Marshall is a founding story of the theories and discipline of visual anthropology.

## CHAPTER SIX

Cinematic Devices: The Filmmaking Conventions and  
Technologies of *A Kalahari Family*

## INTRODUCTION

The cinematic equivalent of asking the literary question, how is the story told, is asking, how is this film made? What cinematic conventions are used in the series? Specifically, what kind of film stock is used? What kinds of filmmaking modalities are used? How is the series edited? What is the soundtrack like? Questions surrounding the cinematic composition of the film are particularly important when considering that *A Kalahari Family* was in production for fourteen years—thousands of hours were dedicated to selecting footage, moulding it together, editing, building and editing the soundtrack. Every facet of the film has been considered and included for a reason. The intent of this chapter is to identify these conventions and reflect upon their inclusion.

Throughout this chapter, various technical cinematic terms are employed. Herein, there definitions are provided. In Ilie Barbash and Lucien Taylor's *Cross-Cultural Filmmaking* six basic shots are identified:

“‘extreme close-up,’ which focuses on a particular body part like the eyes or mouth; ‘close-up’ is a very dramatic, tight shot, often of someone’s head, usually full-face; ‘medium close-up’ the standard of which is a head and shoulders shot; ‘medium shot’ shows most of the body, generally cutting off somewhere between the waist and knee; ‘long shot’ where subjects fill most of the frame in the vertical dimension; ‘extreme long shot’ which is like a panorama, where the subject will be relatively small in the frame.”<sup>234</sup>

Definitions are also assigned to camera movement. Barbash and Taylor write, “There are three kinds of camera movement—movement of the (zoom) lens, movement of the camera head (i.e., horizontally, vertically), and the movement of the camera in space, together with whatever it is mounted on (a shoulder, tripod, Steadicam, or dolly).”<sup>235</sup>

Finally, two terms relative to film sound need to be defined: diegetic and non-diegetic sound. The former relates to sound as it naturally occurs in the shot; the latter to sound that is edited or transposed in and is unnatural to the scene.

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<sup>234</sup> Ilie Barbash and Lucien Taylor, eds., *Cross-Cultural Filmmaking: A Handbook for Making Documentary and Ethnographic Films and Videos*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 107.

<sup>235</sup> Barbash and Taylor, 113-114.

## THE REAL WORLD A/EFFECTS

John Marshall and Claire Ritchie began conceptualizing *A Kalahari Family* in 1982, with Claire as the producer, and John Marshall assisting. They conceived a three-part, three hour series, to be called *Death by Myth*, similar in narrative to Parts One through Four of *A Kalahari Family*. Part One would be similar to “A Far Country,” in that it would provide the background and history of the Ju/’hoansi; “End of the Road,” Part Two would convey the dispossession and desperation of the Ju/’hoansi in 1978; and Part Three was meant to show the activist efforts of the foundation and their struggle against various apartheid government departments. The series would have ended with Namibia’s first democratic elections in 1989. However, three years into editing, things began to sour again for the Ju/’hoansi and John Marshall kept filming. Ultimately, it was the events of the late nineties which extended the narrative of the series.

“Real world” events and realities also affected the editing of the series. In *Appropriating Images*, Keyan Tomaselli reflects upon the “institutional considerations” which affect the making and editing of a film. Utilizing the notion of Althusser’s Ideological State Apparatus, Tomaselli argues that the political and economic environments in which a film is made affect a filmmaker’s coding. He eloquently posits, “Whatever the scientific, information or ethnographic intentions the film-maker may have started with, these will inevitably be modified in terms of the consensual discourse of the institution, itself embedded within the ruling hegemony.”<sup>236</sup> In John Marshall’s case we must consider that the film series was financed by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, The Rockefeller Foundation, The National Endowment for the Humanities, Tim Disney—all American organizations. Their contract was for a three-part, three-hour series but, as the story continued to unravel, John Marshall pushed for a five-part format of fifty-six minute films. In the process of editing, it became obvious to John Marshall that he still needed more time;<sup>237</sup> that’s when Part One and Five became ninety minutes in length. As Karma Foley, John Marshall’s assistant producer and editor writes, “John felt very strongly about certain scenes, storylines, and characters being in the films. He was willing to

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<sup>236</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 161.

adhere to the standards of 60 min or 90 min because he really hoped to have the series broadcast. But he wasn't willing to compromise on the scope of the story – he felt it couldn't be told properly in just five hours.”<sup>238</sup>

When we consider *A Kalahari Family* as a final product, it is important to keep real world considerations in mind.

## THE FILM STOCK

One of the most notable aspects of *A Kalahari Family* is the film stock itself. *A Kalahari Family* adroitly pieces together a variety of film types, ranging from black and white photographs and film to crisp digital video footage. Theoretically, there are several reasons for this fusion approach and why it works.

In 1950, when the Marshalls first made contact with the Ju/'hoansi, they were equipped with a still camera and a wind-up moving camera that only could record for thirty-seconds at a time. The moving camera was bulky and rather immobile and what's more, the Marshalls were unable to review their footage till they returned to their lab in the United States. For these reasons, images from the early expeditions tend to be black and white photographs. John Marshall uses them frequently throughout Part One to illustrate ≠Toma and his family's history, as well as the story of the Marshalls' and ≠Toma's family meeting. The aesthetic of black and white photographs as Tomaselli argues is a sign to an “I was there-ness” in the distant past (at least prior to the advent and popular use of color photography), which indicates how long John Marshall has known and worked with ≠Toma and his extended family.<sup>239</sup> *A Kalahari Family* also has a significant portion of color photographs, which when combined with black and white photographs signify many years of involvement between John Marshall and the Ju/'hoansi.

Similarly, photographs are used in Part Two to illustrate stories that were not captured on camera. However, their inclusion doesn't appear to sign towards limited technology but

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<sup>237</sup> Karma Foley, personal communication

<sup>238</sup> Karma Foley, personal communication

rather because no filming was done; John Marshall was physically absent. Thus, he resorts to using color and black and white photographs to tell the story of the first settlement in Nyae Nyae by South African administrator, Claude McIntyre. In 1978 John Marshall was permitted back into South West Africa, major events from there on were filmed with portable, synchronous sound cameras. Coincidentally, Parts One and Two, which chronologically happen prior to 1978, incorporate the most photographs of the series, a combined ninety-five photographs. Whereas, Parts Three, Four and Five, which chronicle the period 1980-2000, have a combined five photographs.

In its entirety, *A Kalahari Family* has one hundred photographs, which comprise a considerable portion of the series. It is important to understand that their appearance in the film largely corresponds to the poor technology in the early years of the Marshall expeditions and/or are a result of the absence of the filmmaker, John Marshall. It is also important to be cognizant of the ways in which audiences tend to receive photographs, particularly black and white ones, as a sign that alludes to the past and an “I was there-ness.”

Media anthropologist and *A Kalahari Family* cameraman John Bishop was hired in 1984 to oversee the transfer of the expansive Marshall archive to the Smithsonian Institution Human Studies Film Archives. In the essay, “Hot Footage/Cold Storage...” John Bishop provides concise but extensive detail on the cinematic technicalities of the 2,000,000 feet of film that comprise the archive. Throughout the essay, Bishop explains the variety of film stocks and cameras which were used throughout the early Marshall expeditions. For example, he pinpoints the kind of film used, i.e. color, black and white, Kodachrome, etc and specifies the kind of camera used to shoot the footage. Bishop also describes the lab work which restores old and damaged footage and corrects color and lighting. John Bishop’s work is a reminder that the physical form of the film itself is an important sign to the economic and technical contexts of filmmaking.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 54.

<sup>240</sup> John Bishop, “Hot Footage/Cold Storage: The Marshall Ju/'hoan Bushman Archive,” in Jay Ruby, ed., *The Cinema of John Marshall*. (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993).

Various shots found in *A Kalahari Family* point to the technical constraints John Marshall encountered early in his tenure. His first camera was a wind-up, 16mm slow Kodachrome which was so bulky that it was virtually impossible to shoot hand-held. Most of these shots are no longer than thirty seconds in length, and as John Bishop has commented they are very scientific; that is they are detached and unmediated.<sup>241</sup> John Marshall includes these shots in *A Kalahari Family* and comments on the amateur technology and style of them in Part One, “A Far Country.” By the third Marshall expedition from 1952-1953, John Marshall had two cameras each of which held a 100-foot 16mm spool load but did not have viewing through the lens. In 1955, on the fourth expedition, John Marshall had an Arriflex camera with an electric motor, focus, through the lens viewing that could also hold 100-foot spools, but lacked a track for synchronous sound. Some of this footage is included in *A Kalahari Family*, but in a re-mastered version<sup>242</sup>. An excellent example of an archival re-mastered shot is shot seven in “A Far Country,” which is 1952 footage of #Toma hunting in vivid color. The early footage shows its age; it’s black and white, 16mm but in relatively good condition. Re-mastering dramatically improves the quality of image, particularly, when color correction is undertaken as in *A Kalahari Family*. Despite the fact that these shots have been aesthetically upgraded closer to contemporary standards, their quality is still such that it conveys a time in the past and an “I was there-ness,” –an important function for John Marshall, considering the majority of the selected footage depicts Ju/’hoansi engaged in hunting and gathering activities, as in the example above.

The majority of the footage in *A Kalahari Family* is on 16mm, which John Marshall used well into the 1980s. He then began concurrently using various formats of video, like U-matic, Beta, SVHS and DV. Though John Marshall used the same film stock for over thirty years, his style of filmmaking is markedly different. After reviewing over 2,000,000 feet of film and hundreds of hours of video, Bishop writes:

“As a body of work, there is a continual sense of growth and development: in the subjects before the camera who grow up in the footage; in the changing ideas and approaches toward ethnographic film over forty years; in new opportunities for seeing afforded by developments in equipment; in the evolving social and political struggle of the Ju/’hoansi

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<sup>241</sup> John Bishop, “Life By Myth” For *Visual Origins Conference*, IWF, Gottingen 2001.

<sup>242</sup> John Bishop, “Hot Footage/Cold Storage” 218-219

as a people; and in the maturing of John Marshall as a filmmaker and humanitarian.”<sup>243</sup>

## THE EVOLUTION OF A FILMMAKER

“Movements and styles come and go. What is exciting initially soon becomes commonplace and exhausted, and other innovations are in order...The challenge is to invent and improvise new twists to old styles, not for their own sake, but as you wrestle with and respond to your subject. Documentary is on an impossible and unending quest to depict the depth of life as it is actually lived. Life will always run away from our films, and exceed our grasp, but the task, however vain, is run after it again.”<sup>244</sup>

There are multiple modalities to filmmaking. The presence of numerous genres, as well as their corresponding approaches and codes attests to this fact. What is so remarkable about John Marshall’s tenure is the way in which his work reflects the various cinematic theories and approaches to documentary/ethnographic film. When John Marshall began filmmaking the possibilities were limited; the technology was inhibiting and the orthodoxies of documentary/ethnographic filmmaking yet to be established. In his extensive archive are examples of a multitude of cinematic styles. Most notably, there is his film *The Hunters*, which is in essence a poetic and romantic ethnography loosely based on the narrative structural plot of *Moby Dick*, there are seventeen short, ethnographic films about various cultural practices, a political advocacy documentary, two films created to help second-grade Massachusetts school children understand hunting and gathering societies, and *A Kalahari Family* which weaves a variety of cinematic styles into a whole. John Bishop writes, “Reviewing Marshall’s body of work with the [Ju’hoansi], one experiences the entire range of technical, conceptual and moral ideas in ethnographic media of the last half century.”<sup>245</sup> The pastiche of footage in *A Kalahari Family*, taken from different historical moments, visually demonstrates the variety of ways in which Marshall used the camera, which were often tied to economic, political, and technological considerations.

In “A Far Country” John Marshall discusses his early approach to filmmaking and the ways in which it changed over time. Shots from the early 1950s record use simplistic cinematic language— the camera is still on a tripod, rarely moves but for an occasional

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<sup>243</sup> John Bishop, “Hot Footage/Cold Storage” 228

<sup>244</sup> Barbash and Taylor, 33.

<sup>245</sup> John Bishop, “Life by Myth...”

pan, and the subjects appear aware of the camera, if not blatantly performing it. This cinematic approach correlates to John Marshall's lack of training at the time. Rarely in the early film record is there a hand-held shot, zoom, pan or tilt—the only way a subject gets closer to the camera by cutting to another shot.

On his sixth expedition from 1957-1958, John Marshall articulated a new approach to filming. He writes, "I thought: If I try to shoot from the perspectives of the participants in an event—stand beside one person while I film the others, then move around beside another person and shoot—my camera angles and distances will be motivated by the people in the event. As a participant-observer, I could shoot and cut documentary film so the action would appear almost as continuous as it does in a screenplay."<sup>246</sup> John Marshall called his new approach, "sequence filming." There are really no examples of "sequence filming" from the 1950s in *A Kalahari Family*, probably because of John Marshall's expulsion from South West Africa in 1958. There are however, several examples from the late 1970s in *A Kalahari Family*, which were shot when John Marshall returned to Nyae Nyae to make the film *N!ai, the Story of a !Kung Woman*. In Part Two, "End of the Road" there is a segment entitled, "Jealousy Explodes" wherein a fight between N!ai's daughter and her husband breaks out and many others join in. The coverage of the fight is outstanding, capturing the critical words and actions of the multiple participants of the fight. Holistic coverage of the event was largely possible by the fact that two cameras filmed it.<sup>247</sup> Viewing this footage, in comparison with that from earlier periods, suggests that the filming was motivated by the subjects and their organic actions. Bishop articulates John Marshall's change of approach from asking just show me what you do to just let me observe what you do.<sup>248</sup>

Unfortunately, John Marshall doesn't divulge his growth and change as a filmmaker later on in his career, as he does in "Filming and Learning." Audiences fail to learn about CV or cinema vérité, which arguably had the greatest affect on John Marshall's approach to

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<sup>246</sup> Marshall, 1993, 41.

<sup>247</sup> John Bishop, "Life by Myth..."

<sup>248</sup> John Bishop, "Life by Myth..."

filming. The CV movement was engendered by the invention of camera which recorded synchronous sound. The implication of this invention was that the camera was free to move about and depict events as they happened undisturbed by the requirements of the camera. Essentially, this changed the emphasis in filming from the camera to the subjects. CV proponents often characterize the approach as “on the fly”. John Marshall’s own conception was, “CV filmmakers try to shoot the activities of their subjects as thoroughly as possible while interfering with them as little as possible.”<sup>249</sup> Characteristics of CV footage tend to be that whole actions and events unfold in real time, that is, there is minimal editing.

There is a proliferation of CV shots in *A Kalahari Family*. An apt example is the opening shot of Part Three, “The Real Water.” There is a quick fade in and the shot is an extreme long shot of land, with a watering hole in the middle of the shot and approaching it in the distance is a herd of cattle. The camera is noticeably still and likely on a tripod. After about seven seconds, the instrumental theme song of the series stops playing and diegetic sound of cattle takes over the soundtrack. The shot has minimal action and to a western viewer who is bombarded with fast cut images, the shot seems to drag; the shot occurs in real time. A simple title appears on the screen, “PART THREE REAL WATER” for three seconds. Another two to three seconds go by, and another title appears, “/GAUTCHA WATERHOLE”, its held for three seconds. Over twenty seconds have passed before the cows get to the water. The shot carries on for another five seconds as the cattle drink, finally the voice-over of Tsamkxao ≠Toma begins.

The presence of a voice-over narrative is also a referent to CV. In the 1960s when the CV approach to filmmaking was gaining momentum, the technology of recording sound changed. Instead of having to use the optical track that was connected to the film, filmmakers began using a magnetic sound stock that was separate to the picture and could easily be cut and replaced with any sound the filmmaker desired. This resulted in the

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<sup>249</sup> John Marshall, 1993, 72.

voice-over, which is a cinematic device heavily utilized throughout *A Kalahari Family*.

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Matthew Durlington writes in his comprehensive review of *A Kalahari Family*, that the series is the “most consciously reflexive film of his [John Marshall] career...”<sup>251</sup> It is true, there are several shots that appear overtly reflexive. For example, the opening of the film wherein some Ju/'hoansi are erecting a monument to ≠Toma. Cutting between the men laboring over the monument are archival shots where John Marshall's voice-over narrative explains how he learned to film. The film then cuts back to a shaky handheld image of dirt. There is a diegetic sound of grunting, John Marshall's voice over narrative says, “Now I'm filming ≠Toma's memorial.” In the frame a shoe is visible. John Marshall continues, “And you can tell when I shot my foot that I'm slowing down again”, the camera moves from John Marshall's foot up to a long shot of two men heading back to the memorial with a wheelbarrow. “I'm planning my shots, asking people to wait.” There is then a diegetic sound of John Marshall speaking in Ju/'hoan, subtitles appear, “back up a little” and the two men with the wheelbarrow oblige. They once again begin walking. John Marshall goes on, “Ju/'hoansi don't erect memorials for their dead-it was my idea to put up the memorial.” There are several reflexive facets to this shot—he explains how he films, how he orchestrated the construction of ≠Toma's memorial and perhaps more importantly alludes to the fact that *A Kalahari Family* is in many ways his cinematic tribute to ≠Toma and his family.

John Marshall is also honest and reflexive in regard to his relationship with the Ju/'hoansi. In Part One he includes several snippets about the initial meeting and evolution of a relationship between ≠Toma's family and the Marshalls; both families narrate their remembrances. The voice-over narrative by Lorna Marshall is honest about her pre-conceived notions going into the expedition. She recalls seeing a banner over Coney Island as the family sailed off which said, “9 out of 10 nudists prefer Coppertone,” and admits to being afraid when the Ju/'hoansi first started trancing. John Marshall also

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<sup>250</sup> Barbash and Taylor, 22-26.

<sup>251</sup> Durlington, 2004, 593.

shares an intriguing photograph, 280, in Part One in which Laurence shows Polaroids to Ju/'hoansi women. Through voice-over narrative, Lorna Marshall explains, that "Laurence responded with the help of a Polaroid camera; he explained that we had come to meet and get to know the people who lived in Nyae Nyae. He explained how the camera worked and explained that it was a box that helped us remember."

Another way in which John Marshall appears reflexive is by including footage of his film being appropriated. For example, In Part Four, shot 13, there are a group of Ju/'hoansi, sitting on the ground, clustered around a TV. John Marshall is also in the shot. People are pointing at the screen. Tsamkxao's voice-over narration says, "Longface showed us some of his old films to help us remember people." In other words, the Ju/'hoansi used John Marshall's old footage to identify missing relatives. In shots 172 through 175 in Part Four, Tsamkxao explains that they also used "the camera" to keep track of their cattle, i.e. providing visual evidence of ownership. The inclusion of shots where the Ju/'hoansi actively use John Marshall's films seem to serve as an acknowledgement of the power and effect of the filmic medium.

Perhaps most intriguing is the way in which John Marshall is reflexive about his identity as a White westerner and thus significantly more powerful than the Ju/'hoansi. There is one particular interesting scene. In Part Four, beginning with shot 265, where there is an encounter with two Herero men and a small group of the traveling Ju/'hoansi. They diegetically speak and subtitles translate. The Herero man asks, "Who speaks for the Ju/'hoansi?" G !kaxo Dabe responds, "We do, Tsamkxao and I." The Herero man asks, "Does this white man help you?" Gkao Dabe responds, "No, he doesn't speak for us. He's nothing" ! The other Herero man chimes in, "Don't say he's nothing. You are nothing. You're trying to deny that he is your boss." The first Herero speaker says, "Only Bushmen, Hereros, and the law, nobody else." A few shots later, the first Herero speaker continues, "Only Bushmen and Herero sharing their country. Nobody else. Nobody has to come and interfere in our matters here. Nobody else. It's not how wealthy you are ... how rich you are ... how white you are ... It's only Bushmen and Herero discussing their country. That's all." This is such a fantastically reflexive scene in that it

acknowledges what most people see—who holds the power and leads the way. By including this footage John Marshall seems to recognize his powerful differentiation.

While John Marshall is arguably reflexive in *A Kalahari Family*, he fails to be reflexive where it seems most important—namely about the impact his films have had in propagating Bushmen myths. In terms of the latter, in Part Five, John Marshall opens the door to be reflexive by including a shot of Megan Biesele diegetically saying that the Ju/'hoansi are getting money "by some miracle of media, a lot of which has to do with your films earlier." Rather than including John Marshall's response in that meeting, the shot fades into an archival shot of two Ju/'hoansi men digging roots for hydration, it cuts to a few shots of Ju/'hoansi men going after some vultures find a rotting Kudu head. John Marshall's voice-over narrative responds to Biesele, "I wasn't so keen on having film I shot in the 1950s influencing planning in the 1990s." Rather than doing it this way, it seems it would be more reflexive to have shown John Marshall's gut reaction, his expression and his response.

It is worth considering the manners in which John Marshall is being reflexive. In the aftermath of *Writing Culture*, several film theorists hypothesized cinematic reflexivity. One of the most popular theorizations is that of Jay Ruby as published in *Picturing Culture* (2000). Ruby writes:

"To be reflexive is not only to be self-conscious but to be sufficiently self-conscious to know what aspects of the self must be revealed to an audience to enable them to understand the process employed, as well as the resultant product, and to know how much revelation is purposive, intentional, and when it becomes narcissistic or accidentally revealing. This knowledge—that is, knowing how much of the self it is necessary to reveal—is the most difficult aspect of being reflexive. When successfully mastered, it separates self-indulgence from revelation."<sup>252</sup>

When considering Ruby's criteria, it appears that John Marshall is self-conscious, enables audiences to understand the process employed, and how it has affected the resultant product. However, it is difficult to determine how purposive and intentional John Marshall's revelations are. I have argued that John Marshall's life story converges with the history of the Kalahari Family. So in this sense, *A Kalahari Family* is at once a

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<sup>252</sup> Jay Ruby, *Picturing Culture*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 155.

biography and auto-biography. In the *Ethnographic Self* Coffey writes, “Tales of the self represent ways of combining ethnography and autobiography in explicit and self-conscious ways. They serve as exaggerated examples of the ways in which the self and the field are interwoven, illustrating how, as well as collecting and writing the biographies of others, we are engaged in biographical work of our own.”<sup>253</sup> In these terms, the “reflexive” moments in *A Kalahari Family* are more auto-biographical.

John Marshall also employs advocacy or activist strategies in *A Kalahari Family*, which are a throwback to his early activist films, like *Pull Ourselves Up or Die Out* (1985). In *Pull Ourselves Up or Die Out* John Marshall shares the history and tragic conditions in which the Ju/'hoansi live. Through scenes and interviews, John Marshall demonstrates the dispossession of the Ju/'hoansi and elicits sympathy from the audience, if not action in the form of a donation.<sup>254</sup> Similarly, *A Kalahari Family* was made in the spirit of advocacy. Elizabeth Thomas Marshall writes, “John Marshall made the film to alert the world to the desperate situation of the people he knew so well, the people who had taken him in as one of them, the people who over a lifetime had helped him, and who looked to him to help them. His film is devastating, and for this it will continue to be criticized. But its object was not to show all points of view or to present all aspects of a situation.”<sup>255</sup>

Another filmmaking approach found in *A Kalahari Family* is that of voyeur—a cinematic strategy made popular by documentary filmmaker Michael Moore.<sup>256</sup> Essentially, cinematic voyeurism has the filmmaker “surprise” individuals with the camera. There are several moments in the film that John Marshall employs voyeuristic filmmaking, such as when he appears at the front door of the farmer who is illegally holding Ju/'hoansi as labourers on his farm as in Part Four, shot 123, however, it is best typified in Part Five, shots 489 through 490. The scene is a meeting in which LIFE, World Wildlife, the

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<sup>253</sup> Coffey, 1999, 123.

<sup>254</sup> John Marshall writes about the donation of \$500,000 by the Virginian recluse who watched a staged documentary on NBC in American on saving the last Bushmen.

<sup>255</sup> Thomas, 2006, 300.

<sup>256</sup> Michael Moore, *Roger and Me* (1989), *The Big One* (1997), *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004).

Namibian government's Department of Nature and Tourism and three Ju/'hoansi representatives discuss the possibility of turning Nyae Nyae conservancy into a wildlife game reserve, wherein, as John Marshall argues, they will be forced back into a "plastic stone age." Despite John Marshall's valuable tenure in Nyae Nyae, he is barred from attending the meeting. What's more, only three Ju/'hoansi were invited. As Elizabeth Marshall Thomas writes, "They [the Ju/'hoansi] say they had wanted to attend the meeting but were prevented from taking conservancy vehicles to Waterberg [the location where the meeting was held; 300 miles away from Nyae Nyae], even though, as registered residents of the conservancy, they owned the vehicles. Then, when they asked for rides from the white people, the white people said that their vehicles were full."<sup>257</sup> John Marshall thrusts himself into the meeting with a cameraman, all the while he is holding a camera at his side that he "forgot" to turn off. He catches the leader of the meeting, Barbara Wycoff-Baird, in frame. The diegetic sound is as follows:

"Cameraman, 'Is there any problem with us filming a little bit of this?' Barbara Wycoff-Baird, 'Yes, there is actually, partly because the team, the group here, earlier this morning talked about not having observers at the workshop, because there were some other people - it wasn't so much directed to you, but we were talking about another group of people, and our group decided they didn't want them as observers, and that they would prefer to talk to them in the evenings. And also as one of the co-facilitators and funder of the workshop through the LIFE program, I'd prefer if you didn't film.'"

Shortly after Wycoff-Baird finishes speaking, one of the conservancy's higher up, heads towards the camera, in an effort to block the lens. The shot stops. Though John Marshall comments in "An Interview with John Marshall" that he has, "never shot anything hidden. I've never shot anything like spying..."<sup>258</sup>, this shot is crucial to *A Kalahari Family* as it confirms his suspicions; the donors and non-Ju/'hoansi conservancy members will present the Ju/'hoansi as hunter/gatherers to secure lucrative donations from World Wildlife, et al.

The opposite of a voyeuristic shot is the reenactment shot. Many of John Marshall's films use reenactments because the original moment ellipses without the camera capturing it. A perfect example is in Part Five, shot 144, wherein Tsamkxao tells the camera,

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<sup>257</sup> Thomas, 2006.

<sup>258</sup> Carolyn Anderson and Thomas W. Benson, "An Interview with John Marshall," in Jay Ruby (ed.) *The Cinema of John Marshall*, 151.

"There are two kinds of films. Films that show us in skins are lies. Films that tell the truth show us with cattle, with farms, with our own water, making our own plans." According to Megan Biesele and Robert Hitchcock in "'Two Kinds of Bioscope': Practical Community Concerns and Ethnographic Film in Namibia," "The original statement was neither filmed nor taped, but was heard by Megan Biesele as a passing utterance from Tsamkxao =Oma on arrival at one of the then nine reconstituted *n !ore* communities when the Nyae Nyae Farmers' Cooperative (NNFC) traveled around Nyae Nyae to explain the coming of UN Resolution 435 and Namibian Independence."<sup>259</sup> Another need for reenactments is when a filmmaker may be prohibited from filming the real event. In Part One there is an old shot of Ju/'hoansi women sitting in a circle clapping and dancing. Over the image, !U's voice-over narrates, "John Marshall couldn't film the *real* menstruation dance because he was a man." Tomaselli comments, "'Cheating'--the arbitrary rearrangement of objects and/or subjects in front of the camera to ensure naturalness when photographed--is an accepted documentary convention which has the effect of naturalizing events and situations."<sup>260</sup>

Another important cinematic approach John Marshall has utilized is that of repeated footage. Considering the exhaustive amount of footage in John Marshall's archive, one wonders, why would he repeat footage? There seems to be three main answers. The most obvious answer is because of the film series' structure. Considering that *A Kalahari Family* is six hours in total, it is likely that some audiences will only watch select installments, such as the feature length Part One or Part Five. Thus, for people who missed other segments, significant shots are reused. Examples abound. Several interview shots from a hunting safari operator, Grellman, and the ITN Conservationist are reincorporated in Part Five because they exemplify the Bushman myth. Shots 113 and 114 are the same as shots 379 and 380 in Part Three, where Grellman says, Bushmen can survive, "Collecting as they have done for thousands of years," and advocates, "To keep them in their environment and even turn back the clock a little bit," Shot 111 in Part Five is shot 121 from "The Real Water," where the ITN Conservationist says in defense of the

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<sup>259</sup> Megan Biesele and Robert Hitchcock, "'Two Kinds of Bioscope': Practical Community Concerns and Ethnographic Film in Namibia," in Paul Hockings (ed) *Visual Anthropology*, 138.

proposed game reserve in Nyae Nyae, ‘they’re going to allow them to hunt as much as they want with bows and arrows.’” The second reason why footage may be reused seems to be for dramatic affect. For example, at the end of Part Four, /Ui, has been relocated to Nyae Nyae, where he is given his own plot of land to work. He dances for joy. The shot is incredibly poignant on its own but becomes particularly powerful when it is juxtaposed, as in Part Five, with the narrative of Nyae Nyae being appropriated for a game reserve. This seems to be also true of another repeated shot, from the “Real Water” wherein a lioness eats a bulls head, illustrating the detrimental affect of game animals on Ju/’hoansi farming endeavors. The final reason why John Marshall may reuse footage is because other footage does not exist. For example, in shot 110, Part Four, which is also shot 459 of Part Three, which is of a muddy watering hole. It is likely that there was only one time that the watering hole was filmed, simply for filming the watering hole. Other footage which included the watering hole probably featured other people or action. The same can be argued about the location shot of Baraka, which is used in both Part Five and Part Four.

John Marshall also makes use of several cinematic tropes to reify his narrative. The most obvious trope is that of tracks and roads, which John Marshall argues exposed Nyae Nyae to the world. In Part One, shot 571, John Marshall’s voice over says, “Our roads had opened up Nyae Nyae. The remoteness which had protected the Ju/’hoansi and preserved their independence was gone.” Then, in Part Two, “End of the Road,” shot 308, G!kao Dabe, one of John Marshall’s Ju/’hoansi informants comments:

“It was the roads you and your father made that brought us kxadi [a home brewed alcohol beverage made of sugar which G!kao argues led to drunken violence]. Before your roads came to /Aotcha, we had no sugar and no knowledge of kxadi. Everything came with your roads. The police came on your father’s roads when they told you to leave. It was your roads McIntyre used to come here. When you and your father left, you left behind those ugly things. Roads.”

There are numerous shots of roads and vehicles traveling on roads in Nyae Nyae throughout the series, but, especially in Parts Four and Five. “Standing Tall,” Part Four opens with an extreme long shot of road with three dips in it, a blue van approaches in the distance, traveling towards the camera; the shot is over thirty seconds in length. There

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<sup>260</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 199.

are five other similar shots in Part Four and nine like in Part Five.

Another trope which John Marshall uses which also illuminates the remoteness of the Kalahari is a map. The thirty-first still in Part One is a map of southern Africa. Two cities are depicted, Johannesburg and Windhoek. The Kalahari Desert is highlighted. There is a slow zoom onto the Kalahari and the narrator says, “the San of the Kalahari desert were unique in the 1950s because of the remoteness of their land-[a small striped region pops up, above it reads Nyae Nyae] the vast Nyae Nyae region stretched across 18,000 square miles of dessert. Throughout the 1950s about 1200 Ju/'hoansi were hunting and gathering in Nyae Nyae.” Then, in Part Two, a map appears around the 48<sup>th</sup> shot, it is the same map from Part One and the same narrator, however, her narration is slightly different, “Even Nyae Nyae, the last land where independent Ju/'hoansi hunted and gathered, had been vastly reduced. Southern Nyae Nyae was given to Herero farmers. Northern Nyae Nyae was proclaimed a game reserve. The only land where people called Bushmen had a right to live was Bushmanland. But Bushmanland had only one permanent waterhole, /Aotcha, and there were not enough bushfoods to feed the people. Tjum!kui was the administrative headquarters for Bushmanland.” In Part Three, at shot 115, the same map is displayed. However, this time John Marshall narrates over the map, and the map is further enhanced demarcating the expropriations of Nyae Nyae and where the proposed game reserve would be. The narration is again different, but, similar in what it attempts to articulate :

“I first came to the Kalahari in the 1950's ; Nyae Nyae was the only land where Ju/'hoansi lived independently. Then, the government expropriated northern Nyae Nyae for a game reserve. Southern Nyae Nyae was allocated to the Herero ethnic group, and all Ju/'hoansi were evicted. Only Bushmanland remained. Western Bushmanland was waterless. Eastern Bushmanland was the only land with water left for Ju/'hoansi. Now the Department of Nature Conservation was actively pursuing a plan to establish a game reserve in eastern Bushmanland. ”

Similarly, in Part Four, four shots into the segment, the same map as in Part Three appears on screen. Once more, John Marshall explains the appropriation of the land. However, this time he adds, “In the 1950's, about 1200 Ju/'hoansi had lived in an area called Nyae Nyae, but thousands of others had been dispossessed of their lands and forced to work in the white ranching district of Gobabis, where we were headed. Then in 1970, the government expropriated most of Nyae Nyae and gave the southern part to

Herero cattle farmers. Thousands more Ju/'hoansi were dispossessed." The map appears again, shot 78 in Part Five. The map is more alike to the first map in that it only markates Nyae Nyae and Eastern Bushmanland. Again, John Marshall narrates, "In the 1960's the South African government expropriated 70 percent of Nyae Nyae. The water, bush foods and game in the remaining 30 percent, which was called Eastern Bushmanland, could not possibly support the people." Much like the roads trope, the maps visually allude to the seclusion of Nyae Nyae.

## EDITING

Unfortunately, very little has been written about John Marshall's editing of *A Kalahari Family*. The reason may be because John Marshall favors a simplistic, non-manipulative style of editing. As John Bishop shared, while he and John Marshall were in the Kalahari, John Marshall went off on a fifteen minute diatribe against dissolves as weak cuts, intrusions of the filmmaker into edit.<sup>261</sup> *A Kalahari Family* like the vast majority of John Marshall's film, uses rather straight forward and simple editing. Shots seem to be cut in relation to narrative, and on occasion, are cut in connection to action or similarity of size of the camera's object. There are no wipes and there are a few fades, which appear to only be used as transitions between film stocks and between various narrative segments. Tomaselli articulates, "Editing is taken for granted. However, editing is itself a code-bound produced text. Editing brings with it certain ways of seeing and encoding as well as preferred readings of content."<sup>262</sup> Given Tomaselli's assertion, it seems that John Marshall's editing is in accord to his sequence-filmmaking hypothesis—that is, it attempts to remain as true to the way things unfolded in real life as possible.

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<sup>261</sup> Bishop, 2001.

## SOUND

Little has been written about the soundtrack of *A Kalahari Family*. From simply listening, it seems to have a three-tier sound track. One track for diegetic sound, one for non-diegetic sounds like music or sound effects and finally, one for voice-overs, though it is feasible that voice-overs and non-diegetic sound share a track.

What is unique about *A Kalahari Family* as argued is the ways in which *A Kalahari Family* articulates a variety of voices. Even more interesting is the fact that many of these “voices” are articulated by voice-over actors. What often occurs is the real person will begin speaking in their native language and five seconds into it, a voice-over actor will be speaking in English. There are five voice-over actors in Part One, five in Part Two, one in Part Three, two in Part Four and four in Part Five. While it may seem to give “voice,” the voice-over actors play a significant role for audiences. It is likely that the majority of the Ju/'hoansi speak little, if any English. Thus, their attempts to translate something might be slow and thus, distracting to audiences. What's more, these voice-over actors according to the credits are coached, so that inflections correspond to context. The appearance of these voice-over actors may also be linked to institutional considerations; the public broadcasting station is for English speakers.

Also present in *A Kalahari Family* is a disembodied, neutral narrator, or what film theorist Michel Chion terms, the “acousmetre.” An acousmetre is a voice that appears without a face and hence seem all present and omnipotent.<sup>263</sup> Didactic and expository documentaries have traditionally used the acousmetre and thus, the presence of one typically seems synonymous with positivism. The acousmetre in *A Kalahari Family* is the voice of white, female, American whom narrates the history of the Kalahari San and John Marshall, and conveys the larger picture of what was happening in southern Africa. While an acousmetre is typically associated with a positivist documentary code, since it is blended with other voices, it seems less positivist and more informative.

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<sup>262</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 221.

<sup>263</sup> Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 23-24.

Unlike the majority of John Marshall films, *A Kalahari Family* utilizes sound effects, namely over the hundred stills included in the series. For example, in Part One, still 20 is of a young John Marshall on the ground shooting an air rifle, a non-diegetic sound of a gun being fired. Then, John Marshall's voice-over narrative comes in and explains that he "was fascinated by African adventures" at which point, a non-diegetic roar is sounded. These pictures are brought to life by the addition of non-diegetic sound and narrative. As Tomaselli posits, "...stills (particularly of alien environments and unknown people) lack con-texts—they are simply replicas or inactive texts. They become active only when edited into some form of explanatory con-text anchored by captions and words..."<sup>264</sup>

Perhaps another reason for the non-diegetic sound effects and the heavy voice-over narration has to do with the lack of or poor quality of sound. John Marshall shot for five years without synchronous sound.<sup>265</sup> As John Marshall articulates in "Filming and Learning," "I knew that without synchronous sound equipment, the problem of 'fudging' what people said to match the pictures would be daunting and inaccurate, but I thought some sound was better than silence."<sup>266</sup>

Also helping to mask flawed sound is the musical soundtrack of *A Kalahari Family*. The musical soundtrack was organized by renowned ethnomusicologist, Nicholas England. England was an early member of the Harvard-Peabody Smithsonian Kalahari Expeditions and recorded Ju/'hoansi in the early fifties. Just some of the notable recordings in his archive are Uxkone's songs from *Bitter Melons*, N!ai's songs, and innumerable chants and songs. Just as John Marshall weaves pieces from his archive, so too does England from his sound archive. Much of the musical soundtrack is Ju/'hoansi created, however, England also composed a melancholy, cello and bass theme piece for the series which opens and closes each segment and plays during especially devastating footage. Throughout the six hour series multiple musical tracks are played; identifying each piece,

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<sup>264</sup> Tomaselli, 1996, 54.

<sup>265</sup> Bishop, 1993, 222.

<sup>266</sup> Marshall, 1996, 41.

its significance, and the context in which it was recorded would be an entire research project.

## CONCLUSION

When you deconstruct *A Kalahari Family* in cinematic terms, it becomes apparent how reflective it is of John Marshall's tenure as a filmmaker. The signs and codes reveal his subjectivities: his personal identities, his personal relationships, his moral and ethical positions, his evolution as a filmmaker, and his reflection upon himself. Through the exercise of specifying and analyzing these encoded subjectivities, we become aware of the ways in which we, as filmmakers, affect our films. As Tomaselli and Bishop have commented, as filmmakers, film theorists, visual anthropologists and all those who use a camera to tell stories about people unlike them—we will forever be grateful to John Marshall's pioneering work. For the mistakes he made and the many successes.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion: The Significance of *A Kalahari Family*

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*A Kalahari Family* has been viewed by audiences all over the world. For the most part, the film has been screened in a host of ethnographic themed film festivals including: *Margaret Mead International Film Festival*, New York City (2002); *Bilan du Film Ethnographique*, Paris (2003); *RAI 8<sup>th</sup> Ethnographic Film Festival*, England (2003); *Beeld Voor Beeld, Ethnographic Film Festival*, Amsterdam (2003); *Ethnographic Film Festival of Belo Horizonte*, Brazil (2003); *XII International Festival of Ethnographical Films*, (Italy) 2004; *Interuniversity Ethnographic Film Festival of Montreal*, Canada (2005). *A Kalahari Family* was also presented at a variety of environmental themed film festivals such as: *International Environmental Film Festival*, Turkey (2003); *CineEco Festival*, Portugal (2003); *Environmental Film Festival of Accra*, Ghana (2005); *Ecocinema Festival*, Greece (2005). Moreover, *A Kalahari Family* was also entered into several international film festivals; for example: *Sithengi International Film Festival*, South Africa (2002); *17<sup>th</sup> Parnu International Film Festival*, Estonia (2003); *Göttingen International Film Festival*, Germany (2004); and *Zimbabwe International Film Festival* (2004). Not only has *A Kalahari Family* been exhibited at these various film festivals, in many cases, it won awards. In total, *A Kalahari Family* won eight festival awards and arguably led to John Marshall's "Lifetime Achievement" award from the *American Anthropological Association*.<sup>267</sup>

Aside from film festivals, several Universities have screened *A Kalahari Family* including Harvard, University of California Los Angeles, University of Waterloo, and the University of Kent. Given that the film can be purchased from Documentary Educational Resources, one can only speculate as to how many professors and teachers have shown their classes *A Kalahari Family*. At the University of Cape Town, for a course entitled *Images of Africa*, I gave two lectures on the film series to demonstrate the spectrum of change in visual anthropological approaches in the last fifty years. However, another professor in the anthropology department, Leslie Green, uses the film in her introduction to anthropology course to illustrate how development agencies and policies have a detrimental affect on the populations they attempt to serve.

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<sup>267</sup> [www.der.org](http://www.der.org) (2003) [Online]. Retrieved: [2006, May 07].

Given the extensive distribution of *A Kalahari Family* it seems especially important to understand: what are the stories in *A Kalahari Family*? whose stories are they? who is the author of these stories? what is so significant about these stories that they need to be told to the world? cinematically how are they told?

Answering the above questions has been an epic academic endeavor. It required an exploration of a variety of academic disciplines, histories and innumerable texts. My reading of the film was made possible by Tomaselli's articulation of visual semiotics. His conception gave me the theoretical tools to read the film shot by shot, thus enabling me to understand signs and codes on a micro and macro level. However, understanding the signs and codes the film also required understanding the subjectivities and motivations of the creator—John Marshall. Amanda Coffey's notions of ethnographic self gave me this opportunity and elucidated the main objective of the series—to raise awareness of the noxious affect of Bushmen myths on the lives of the Kalahari family.

Despite all of the issues and contexts which *A Kalahari Family* refers, my central argument remains that *A Kalahari Family* is most interesting and valuable for what it reveals about John Marshall. The film's signs and codes reflect John Marshall's subjectivities as well as his evolution as a researcher, filmmaker, friend, and advocate of the Ju/'hoansi. Therefore, one of the aspirations of this dissertation was to familiarize readers with the work and contexts of John Marshall's life to enable them to really "read" and understand the many layers of meaning in *A Kalahari Family*. I submit, in the same way that through the isolated example of the Ju/'hoansi, the larger story of San oppression is told, so too does the work of John Marshall exemplify the history of ethnographic filmmaking. In essence, when we look at John Marshall's work, we see ourselves—we see how our approaches to filmmaking and researcher/researched relationships have changed in the last fifty years. John Marshall's tenure as a filmmaker raises awareness to the challenges and complexities of filmmaking and while it is easy to

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be critical of his work and actions, it is important to stop and think about how you might have acted if you were in his shoes. Asking this question gets to the heart of who we are as filmmakers and allows us consciousness of our relationships, biases, and the uncontrollable circumstances that affect our films. *A Kalahari Family* reflects this history but also reveals the evolution of a complex ethnographic relationship that defies academic theorizations and methodologies.

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<http://www.kalaharipeoples.org/documents/San-otl.html> [Online]. [2005, April 28].

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## Filmography

### *An Argument About a Marriage*

1969 Director: John Marshall. Producer: Laurence Marshall, John Marsall.  
Distributor: Documentary Educational Resources.

### *Bitter Melons*

1970. Filmmaker: John Marshall. Production Company: Documentary Educatiohnal Resources. Distributor: DER.

### *Bushmen of the Kalahari*

1974 Director: Robert Young. Producers: Wolper Productions; National Geographic.  
Distributor: National Geographic.

### *Cinema Verite: Defining the Moment*

2000 Director: Peter Wintock. Distributor: Beckman Visual Publications.

### *Cops*

1989 Creator: John Langley and Malcolm Barbor. Broadcaster: Fox Network.

### *Fighting Tooth, (Nail) and the Government*

1988 Director: John Marshall. Producer: John Marshall, Claire Ritchie, Cliff Bestall.  
Distributed by Documentary Educational Resources.

### *The Gods Must Be Crazy*

1986 Director: Jamie Uys. Producer: Boet Troskie. Distributor: RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video.

### *A Group of Women*

1961 Director: John Marshall. Producer: Laurence Marshall, John Marshall.  
Distributor: Documentary Educational Resources.

### *To Hold Our Ground*

1990 Director: John Marshall. Producer: Documentary Educational Resources with Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia.

### *The Hunters*

1957 Filmmaker: John Marshall. Producers: Laurence Marshall; Film Study Center, Peabody Museum, Harvard University. Distributor: Films Inc.

### *If it Fits*

1978 Director: John Marshall. Producer: Hugh Carter Donahue.

### *Investigation of a Hit and Run*

1972 Director: John Marshall. Producers: Lemberg Center, Brandeis University; Dr John Speigel. Distributor: Documentary Educational Resources.

*A Joking Relationship*

1962 Director: John Marshall. Producer: Laurence Marshall, John Marshall.  
Distributor: Documentary Educational Resources.

*A Kalahari Family.*

2001. 5-part series. Producer: John Marshall. Production Company: DER.

*!Kung Bushmen Hunting Equipment*

1972 Director: John Marshall. Producer: Laurence Marshall, John Marshall.  
Distributor: Documentary Educational Resources.

*!Kung San Exhibit/Peabody Museum/DER*

1991 Director: John Marshall. Producer: Documentary Educational Resources, Michael  
Ambrosino and Sue Marshall Cabezas.

*!Kung San: Traditional Life*

1987 Director: John Marshall. Produced and distributed by Documentary Educational  
Resources.

*!Kung San: Resettlement*

1988 Director: John Marshall. Produced and distributed by Documentary Educational  
Resources.

*A Legal Discussion of a Hit and Run*

1973 Directors: John Marshall, Timothy Asch. Producer and distributor: Documentary  
Educational Resources.

*Les Maîtres Fous*

1954 Director: Jean Rouch. Distributor: Interama (U.S.) and Films du Jeudi (France).

*Männer Gegen Panzer*

1944 Producer: German Wehrmacht. Distributor: George Eastman House Collection.

*N!ai, the Story of a !Kung Woman*

1980 Directors: John Marshall; Adrienne Miesmer. Producers: John Marshall; Sue  
Marshall Cabezas. Production Companies: Documentary Educational Resources;  
Public Broadcasting Associates. Distributor: DER.

*Nanook of the North*

1922 Director: Robert Flaherty. Distributor: Modern Museum of Art.

*N/um Tchai: The Ceremonial Curing Dance of the !Kung Bushmen*

1969 Director: John Marshall. Producer: Laurence Marshall, John Marshall.  
Distributor: Marshall Films.

*Pull Ourselves Up or Die Out*

1985 Director: John Marshall. Producer: Claire Ritchie. Distributor: Documentary Educational Resources

*Titicut Follies*

1967 Director: Frederick Wiseman; co-directed by John Marshall. Producer: Frederick Wiseman. Distributor: Zipporah Films.

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