

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Khoisan

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): Ngh, Kqu, Xeg, Xam

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Most live in the northern reaches of Gordonia, at Witdraai, Askham and Welkom, just south of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, and in the towns of Rietfontein, Upington, Loubos, Olifantshoek and surrounding villages and settlements.

1.4 Brief history: The ꞛKhomani San are descended from several original San groups, including the ||Ng!u (close relatives of the !Xam, who lived south of the !Gariep River), the ꞛKhomani who spoke the same language as the ||Ng!u but had a distinct lineage, the |'Auni, the Khatea, the Njamani and probably others whose names are now lost to us. Most San of this bloodline now speak Khoekhoegowap and/or Afrikaans as their primary language. The ꞛKhomani are the last surviving indigenous San community in South Africa and their living cultural landscape is an important aspect of national culture. The San of southern Africa have left a unique artistic tradition and archaeological record throughout the sub-continent. In very few places is there any documented historical or contemporary evidence of their less tangible cultural practices, or recorded evidence for interpretation of what remains physically evident. The "Southern Kalahari San" were evicted from the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park soon after its formation in 1931 and dispersed over the southern Kalahari in a wide diaspora into South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia. At the time of the land claim's launch, they were no longer a functioning or definite community. In common with other displaced indigenous peoples, they had to a large degree become assimilated in or dominated by the local pastoralist groups, and their ancient cultural practices were sporadically maintained in isolated groups. The Southern Kalahari San were comprised of disparate groups known as the ꞛKhomani, |Auni, and N|amani-speaking San. In seeking out members of the various clans and families with origins in the claimed land, anthropologists working for SASI discovered at least 20 old San community members still speaking a San language confidently pronounced "dead" in the early 1970s. After further study and analysis by socio-linguist Nigel Crawhall, this ancient language was named N|u (see page 49). A dynamic cultural resource management project is under way now with the aim of recording all existing forms of San culture and encouraging ways of reincorporating them into daily life. An entire dictionary is being prepared for the language, N|u songs are being taught to children and elders, and N|u original place names are being recorded. The process of restoring the language and associated culture from a position of near-extinction is dynamic, and has great power to resonate with and empower the reviving community. To be San today in Siyanda District means different things to different people in the community. Some people still live in their traditional leather clothing, most dress in western dress like the majority of South Africans. A lot of the young people have very little idea about their heritage. Until the land claim many youth had no idea that they were San. The very old people in the community know pieces of their history and have a lot of traditional knowledge and skills.

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: SASI works together with the ꞛKhomani leadership to help young people and old people come together to talk about the past, their history, and learn skills, which can be used to create new types of livelihoods.

1.6 Ecology:

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: Approximately 1 500 adults are spread over an area of more than 1 000 square kilometres in the Northern Cape Province. They made their homes in caves, under rocky overhangs or in temporary shelters.

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): They ate various species of plants. They make use of over 100 edible species of plant. While the men hunt, the women, who are experts in foraging for edible mushrooms, bulbs, berries and melons, gather food for the family.

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Their selection of food ranges from antelope, Zebra, porcupine, wild hare, Lion, Giraffe, fish, insects, tortoise, flying ants, snakes (venomous and non-venomous), Hyena, eggs and wild honey.

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Bow and arrow and some trapping. They use poison on the end of their arrows to slowly kill the animal. Depending on the size of the animal this could take several hours or even days to finally kill it. They make the poison from the larvae of a small beetle but will also use poison from plants, such as the euphorbia, and snake venom. A caterpillar, reddish yellow in color and about three-quarters of an inch long, called ka or ngwa is also used. The poison is boiled repeatedly until it looks like red currant jelly. It is then allowed to cool and ready to be smeared on the arrows. The poison is neuro toxic and does not contaminate the whole animal. The spot where the arrow strikes is cut out and thrown away, but the rest of the meat is fit to eat. The effect of the poison is not instantaneous, and the hunters frequently have to track the animal for a few days. When catching small animals such as hares, guinea fowls, Steenbok or Duiker, traps made of twisted gut or fibre from plants were used. These had a running noose that strangled the animal when it stepped into the snare to collect the food that had been placed inside it. Hunting is a team effort and the man whose arrow killed the animal has the right to distribute the meat to the tribe members and visitors who, after hearing about the kill, would arrive soon afterwards to share in the feast.

2.4 Food storage: The meat is boiled or roasted on a fire. The Khomani San are not wasteful and every part of the animal is used. The hides are tanned for blankets and the bones are cracked for the marrow.

2.5 Sexual division of production: Gender roles are not jealously guarded in the Khomani San society. Women sometimes assist in the hunt and the men sometimes help gather plant foods. Children stay at home to be watched over by those remaining in camp, but nursing children are carried on these gathering trips, adding to the load the women must carry.

2.6 Land tenure: Membership in a group is determined by residency. As long as a person lives on the land of his group he maintains his membership. It is possible to hunt on land not owned by the group, but permission must be obtained from the owners.

2.7 Ceramics:

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: San are largely egalitarian, sharing such things as meat and tobacco.

2.9 Food taboos: They categorized thousands of plants and their uses, from nutritional to medicinal, mystical to recreational and lethal.

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

4.22 Evidence for couvades

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

4.24 Joking relationships?

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: Land is usually owned by a group, and rights to land are usually inherited bilaterally.

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? A man will play the part of the Eland bull, usually with horns on his head. This ritual will keep the girl beautiful, free from hunger and thirst and peaceful. As part of the marriage ritual, the man gives the fat from the Elands' heart to the girls' parents. At a later stage, the girl is anointed with Eland fat.

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):
- 4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and Interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): The Khomani San have no formal authority figure or chief, but govern themselves by group consensus. Disputes are resolved through lengthy discussions where all involved have a chance to make their thoughts heard until some agreement is reached.
- 5.4 Post marital residence:
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:
- 5.8 Village and house organization:
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:
- 5.12 Trade:
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

- 6 Time allocation to RCR:
 - 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): When shaman (medicine men) painted an Eland, they did not just pay respect to a sacred animal; they also harnessed its essence (N!um). By putting paint to rock, they would be able to open portals to the spirit world.
 - 6.2 Stimulants:
 - 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Birth, death, gender, rain and weather were all believed to have supernatural significance, for example, people acquired good or bad rain-bringing abilities at birth and this ability was reactivated when the person died.
 - 6.4 Other rituals: Another shared belief was the fact that, when the world was first created, animals and people were indistinguishable. People had not yet acquired manners and culture and only after the second creation, were they separated from the animals and educated in a separate social code.
 - 6.5 Myths (Creation): The Khomani San belief system generally observes the supremacy of one powerful god, while at the same time recognizing the presence of lesser gods along with their wives and children. Homage is also paid to the spirits of the deceased. Among some, it is believed that working the soil is contrary to the world order established by the god. Some groups also revere the moon. The most important spiritual being to the southern San was /Kaggen, the trickster-deity. He created many things, and appears in numerous myths where he can be foolish or wise, tiresome or helpful. The word '/Kaggen' can be translated as 'mantis', this led to the belief that the Khomani San worshipped the praying mantis. However, /Kaggen is not always a praying mantis, as the mantis is only one of his manifestations. He can also turn into an Eland, a hare, a snake or a vulture - he can assume many forms. When he is not in one of his animal forms, /Kaggen lives his life as an ordinary Khomani San.
 - 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Contrary to popular belief, these paintings and engravings of strange human figures and animals, especially the Eland (a species of antelope), did not depict every day life but had a deeper religious and symbolic meaning. Khomani San rock paintings are found in rocky areas of the KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and the Western Cape provinces. They mainly used red, ranging from orange to brown, white, black and yellow in their paintings. Blue and green were never used. Red was derived from haematite (red ochre), and yellow from limonite (yellow ochre). Manganese oxide and charcoal were used for black; white, which does not preserve well, was probably obtained from bird droppings or kaolin. The blood of an Eland, an animal of great religious and symbolic significance, was often mixed into the color pigments. Another striking feature of the rock art is the embodiment of action and speed.
 - 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:
 - 6.8 Missionary effect:
 - 6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Most believed that upon death, the soul went back to the great god's house in the sky. Dead people could, however, still influence the living and, when a medicine man died, the people were very concerned lest his spirit become a danger to the living.

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: In the trance dance, the Eland is considered the most potent of all animals, and the shamans aspire to possess Eland potency. They believed that the Eland was /Kaggen's favorite animal. Khomani San people have vast oral traditions, and many of their tales include stories about the gods that serve to educate listeners about what is considered moral behavior. Of prime importance in all Khomani San groups is a ritual dance that serves to heal the group. The great 'medicine or healing dance' and the rain dance were rituals in which everyone participated. During these dances, the women usually sat around a central fire as they sang and clapped their hands. The men then first danced around the women in a clockwise direction and then vice versa. As the dance increased in intensity, the dancers reached trance-like, altered, states of consciousness and were transported into the spirit realm where they could plead for the souls of the sick. These trance dances are depicted in the rock art that was left behind. The shamanic figures are often painted in strange 'bending forward' postures. Shamans or 'medicine men' explained later that they adopted this posture during their trance dances because they experienced a great deal of pain when the 'potency' started boiling in their stomachs and their stomach muscles started contracting. They also often experienced spontaneous nosebleeds at this time. These nosebleeds are depicted in the many rock paintings of trance dances. As other groups invaded the territory of the Khomani San and influenced their way of life, the pictures of soldiers, wagons and horses served to record historical events. The Khomani San held similar beliefs and revered a greater and a lesser god, the first associated with life and the rising sun, and the latter with illness and death. The shamans, who went into trances and altered states of existence during ritual dances, thus acquired access to the lesser god who caused illness.

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: In the girls' puberty rituals, a young girl is isolated in her hut at her first menstruation. The women of the tribe perform the Eland Bull Dance where they imitate the mating behavior of the Eland cows. A ritual is held where the boy is told how to track an Eland and how the Eland will fall once shot with an arrow. The boy will become an adult when he kills his first large antelope, preferably an Eland. Once caught, the Eland is skinned and the fat from the animal's throat and collarbone is made into a broth.

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: Kinship bonds provide the basic framework for political models. Membership in a group is determined by residency. As long as a person lives on the land of his group he maintains his membership. It is possible to hunt on land not owned by the group, but permission must be obtained from the owners.

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them): The world-renowned Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park invisibly straddles the border between Botswana and South Africa. No fences, no boundaries separate the participants in this celebration of trust and peace, acknowledging and respecting time-honored movements of the land's people and wildlife. Movements are both purposeful and opportunistic, as demanded by this arid environment, and are based on the need for food and moisture, as rains tease by their absence or bring blessing and patchy abundance in this vast arid area. At the south-western tip of the Park, lies some 28 000 hectares of land, restored to the †Khomani San in the historic settlement of one of democratic South Africa's significant land claims. Together with a similar area granted to the neighboring Mier Community, the Heritage Park, as it has been named, provides an opportunity for †Khomani San and sensitive visitor alike to immerse themselves in all facets of Kalahari life. Water is hard to come by, as the San are constantly on the move. Usually during the dry season, these migrants collect their moisture by scraping and squeezing roots. If they are out hunting or travelling, they would dig holes in the sand to find water. They also carry water in an ostrich eggshell.

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