[Where Global Contradictions Are Sharpest ~ Starting Off]

Map adapted from Willet et al. (2002)

Red sand dunes are set against an endless sky of indigo blue.
At night the Milky Way envelops a seemingly untouched land.
People who come here are changed forever
(Molopo Lodge brochure).

This book deals with three geographically discrete groups of people generally referred to as 'Bushmen' or 'San'. The controversial debates on naming are well known (Gordon 1990a) and need brief mention here. The politically correct terms are 'San' in South Africa and Namibia and, in Botswana, the official naming is 'Basarwa' (singular 'Mosarwa'). I will however use the clan names of the communities with which my students and I have been working, e.g., Ju/'hoansi (pronounced ju-twan-si), ≠Khomani and !Xoo. Often those who call themselves 'Bushmen' or 'Boesmanne', do so as a form of resistance against the politically correct externally imposed naming (Bregin and Kruiper 2004: 52-5). San is derived from a Nama word, meaning bandit (Barnard 1992: xxiv, 8; Hahn 1881: 3), while Saa means 'to pick things up' or forage. It is in this context that I will occasionally use the term Bushmen. Single quotes indicate where I am distancing myself from such use.

The Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park spans both South Africa and Botswana. It features endless rolling dunes with shrubby vegetation and isolated tall savannah thorn trees. The semi-desert is interspersed with numerous pans, ranging from small to well over 50 kms in diameter. The communities with which we worked resided in three locations, Ngwatle in south central Botswana, Witdraai and Blinkwater in the Northern Cape, and the Nyae Nyae, Eastern Bushmanland, Namibia.

Ngwatle was a community of perhaps 100 plus displaced people in 1995, with over 184 in 2004. It is located in the controlled Hunting Area called the Kgalagadi District 1 (KD/1). KD/1 is 13,000 km squared and three villages within its boundary include Ngwatle, Ukwi and Ncaang. It has a total population of about 800. In 2001, the villagers told us that the number had risen to 200 plus, the majority being *inkomers* (newcomers/incomers) mostly of Kgalagadi origin. The !Xoo are the majority at Ngwatle during hard times, but sometimes become a minority in good periods of rain. Ngwatle is living on borrowed time: the villagers have been told to move to other settlements, as the area is reserved for wild animals. Their response is one of resistance, a refusal to move, and requests to publicize their plight.

Ngwatle consists of two main ethnic groups: The !Xoo and the Bakgalagadi, although the !Xoo typically build their shelters away from the Bakgalagadi. The Ngwatle Basarwa community comprises a mixture of Bakgalagadi and !Xoo who have defined themselves as Bushmen. This small group coalesced around two Afrikaans-speaking !Xoo brothers in the late 1980s (Simões 2001a).

The community is severely poverty-stricken and is serviced by a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), some state departments, and a safari company (Flyman 2001). 'Destitute rations' are delivered monthly to a third of the Ngwatle population. In July 2004, we watched as the district officials placed 66 rations of maize meal, sorghum, tea, cooking oil, etc. on a large tarpaulin on the sand, readied for distribution. The goods looked like a multi-coloured miniature magic city glistening in the fading sunlight. Those who qualified for these rations also received a monthly allowance of P55 **[i]** from the Department of Pensions. The community is supplied with one water tank that is filled approximately every two weeks by the government. The larger settlements are also provided with salt water for their livestock. However, because Ngwatle is deemed too small, its villagers have little option but to share their water supply with domestic animals. Their main cash income is through craft sales to tourists, roadwork for the government and through various opportunities available via the Nqwaa Khobee Xeya Trust.**[ii]**

Two hundred kilometres south of Ngwatle, on the South African side of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, the Nama and Afrikaans-speaking ^{1}Khomani live in a variety of scattered settlements in the Northern Cape (1,400 kilometres from Durban). During the apartheid era, 'Bushmen' were classified as 'coloureds', and lived in harsh conditions. The violence and dislocation wrought by colonialism and apartheid resulted in the dispersion of the ^{1}Khomani, their language and their cultural practices. The lodging of a restitution land claim in August 1995 brought together about 200 adults. It was the first time that many of the surviving ≠Khomani (meaning 'large group') had come together as a community. This name was constituted to further the purposes of the land claim. Their diverse backgrounds, however, made it difficult for the ^{1}Khomani to form a cohesive community or clan identity, a contributing factor in conflict and division (cf. Robins *et al.* 2001: 26). The claimants were the ten families of the extended Kruiper clan who had been born in the area later declared the Gemsbok Park, from which they had been evicted in 1972.

The claim was granted in 1999 and culminated in a ceremony attended by the then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, and community leaders Dawid Kruiper and Petrus Vaalbooi. Many previously employed in a cultural tourism venture at the Kagga Kamma Game Park a thousand kilometres to the south, returned to the north. The previously scattered group of a few thousand people, few of whom were connected to the Kruipers, chose different paths following the claim. Some became pastoralists and farm sheep and goats (the Vaalbooi group); others moved into small towns in the area; and one small, self-declared, relatively alcohol-free group lived on a sand dune between April 2000 and May 2005, known as Blinkwater ('Sparkling Water'). The remainder, about eighty, try to live 'traditionally' on an inadequate tract of wilderness opposite a liquor store run by the Molopo Kalahari Lodge.**[iii]** This 'traditional' group has been – on paper at least – the recipient of huge amounts of development aid from both the state and international donors. Its members have been also employed in a variety of cultural villages and game parks in four different provinces. This community is internationally well known in movies, TV-advertisements, photographic books and academic studies (White 1995; Buntman 1996a; Bester and Buntman 1999; Simões 2001a; Ellis 2000; Isaacson 2001; Weinberg 1997).

The extended Kruiper clan constitutes itself as 'traditionals'. The Kruipers seem to be much more embattled than their counterparts to their north in Botswana, or the pastoralists led by Vaalbooi. The Kruipers' encounter with modernity has had a negative impact on their social fabric. Sections of this community are often alcohol-driven, and at Witdraai, the gene pool of the 'traditional ≠Khomani' is further threatened, argues Roger Carter,**[iv]** by incestuous last grasp attempts to retain community, lineage and cultural cohesion (see also Bregin and Kruiper 2004: 106-7). AIDS, spread by unconventional sexual relations, suggested one of our informants during our July 2003 visit, will more than likely see the imminent demise of this community. Where deaths at Ngwatle occur through natural causes and illness, at Witdraai death by murder and domestic violence – often in public – is prevalent. Perpetrators were not held accountable by the police for these acts. In general the 'Bushmen' were ill treated by state agencies; indeed the police may have been part of the problem (*Special Assignment* 2004). This lack of attention to the needs of the community was rectified in 2004, through an inquiry launched by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC). The inquiry concluded that despite the land restitution, the ¹Khomani lived in poverty and neglect. In addition, the conflict between the community and the local police was in need of a fundamental change, accompanied where possible by a change in police personnel, in order to restore positive relationships. Two policemen had been charged with the killing of Optel Rooi, and the court case resulting from the Commission's work was the talk of the area when we visited Witdraai in June 2005. It was via the Commission that the source of community divisions became clear. The original land claimants were encouraged to swell their ranks. Individuals not born in the Park were thus included, resulting in a challenge to Kruiper's authority and his traditional cultural objectives. The communal land managed by the CPA, in which the traditionals are a minority, resulted in Kruiper wanting to secede from the agreement (Ancer, 29 October, 2004).

Dependency characterises the Kruipers, but individual and communal agency was evident amongst the adjacent five family-community of Erin.**[v]** Individuals tend to migrate between a variety of Northern Cape and other locations, however. Witdraai and Erin resist the push towards pastoralism as indicated by the *Westerse* ('Western') (pastoralist) constituency located a few kilometres away at Scotty's Fort where Vaalbooi resides.**[vi]** Where the Kruipers consider themselves 'special' – a status allegedly conferred upon them by donors, media professionals and the state – at Ngwatle, the !Xoo call themselves the 'undesirables', as the government would prefer that they move to better serviced settlements in the KD/1 area, such as Ukwi and Ncaang, which have clinics, schools, borehole supplied water and other amenities.

The Ju/'hoansi **[vii]** in Namibia are part of the broader San population scattered over large tracts of Southern Africa. 'Ju/'hoansi' translates to 'the real people', with about 12,000 living in Namibia and Botswana. It is the Ju/'hoansi which were studied and filmed by the Marshall Family Expeditions during the 1950s, resulting in the most continuous record of any people living anywhere at any time (cf. for example J. Marshall 1993; L. Marshall 1976; 1999; Marshall Thomas 1959; see also Wilmsen 1999).**[viii]** About 3,000 live in small communities in Nyae Nyae, where they have semi-control over their much reduced land area, now a conservancy. The rest live farther west or south in towns or cities with other cultural groups, or on farms.

Our visits to Ngwatle started in 1995. We began visiting the ≠Khomani in 1999 at Kagga Kamma, and Witdraai and Blinkwater in 2000. We also worked with the Ju/'hoansi in 1996, though a systematic analysis of the Marshall Family Film Archive started in 1991 (cf. Bishop 1993; Tomaselli 1999a; Cabezas 1993a).

The Ju/'hoansi coexist with herders and agriculturalists such as the Ovambo and the Herero. The Herero are Bantu-speaking and breed cattle to the south of the Ju/'hoan conservancy. Numbering about 100,000, the Herero have lived in the Namibia area for over 350 years. The Herero came under the colonial rule of Germany at the end of the 19th century. By 1904, a rebellious struggle between the Herero and the encroaching Germans lasted for three years. The conflict was a result of both the racist German attitudes as well as a cattle plague, called the *rinderpest*. Three-quarters of the Herero population was exterminated and the rest were forced to resettle in the mostly inhospitable portions of the Kalahari Desert (Holmes and Ford 2002) where they are locked in a land struggle with the Ju/'hoansi (see Chapters 5 and 6).

The individual actors in our story are mentioned below.

Different People, Different Communities

≠ Khomani

Northern Cape

Belinda Kruiper (Neé Matthee) – lived in Cape Town before working for the Parks Board in the then Kalahari Gemsbok Park, where she met the Kruiper family. She married Vetkat Kruiper, and lived on a rented sand dune, Blinkwater, six kilometres south of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. She worked for the South African San Institute (SASI), but left due to differences with management. Belinda started, but did not finish, her university studies in social work. Her role in the community is that of an organic intellectual. She promotes her husband's artwork (see Bregin and Kruiper 2004; Tomaselli 2003; 2006a).
Vetkat Regopstaan Kruiper Belinda's husband, and the younger half brother of Dawid Kruiper. A talented artist, his work has been exhibited and sold at a variety of museums since 2001 and was in 2004 exhibited at the United Nations. Family conflict resulted in their living at Blinkwater instead of one of the allocated farms. In 2005 he and Belinda moved to the nearby Welkom settlement and established an art centre.
Dawid Kruiper – Traditional leader of the ≠Khomani; lives at Witdraai (cf. White 1995).
Petrus Vaalbooi – Formerly the chairperson of the ≠Khomani San Community Property Association (CPA); has assumed the role of leader of the 'western' Bushmen.
Silikat van Wyk – Artist and craftsman, cultural performer (cf. Dyll 2003).
Elsie Witbooi – Silikat's former wife. Her new boyfriend murdered Elsie in September 2003.
Toppies Kruiper – Dawid Kruiper's son, who makes and sells crafts at the roadside; lives at Witdraai.
Jon Kruiper – Son to Dawid Kruiper; it is expected that he will be their next traditional leader.
Anna Festus – Previously fieldworker for SASI and personal assistant to Dawid Kruiper until 2005.
Anna Swart – Grandmother and original speaker of N/u who lives at Witdraai.
Isak and Lys Kruiper – Worked as cultural performers at Kagga Kamma (cf. Buntman 1996b) and Ostri-San. Returned to Witdraai as crafters in 2005. Isak is a traditional healer.
Rosa Meintjies – Wife of Abraham, previous manager of the Witdraai Tentepark (camp site). She works at Erin making patterns on sheets and other items.

Many of the traditionals have worked as cultural performers at the Kagga Kamma Game Park in the Western Cape (cf. Tomaselli 2002; Buntman 1996a), at Ostri-

San and Mabilingwe in the North West Province and a park at Ellisras, Limpopo province, and elsewhere.

Ngwatle/southern Botswana

Miriam Motshabise – Young single mother who lived at Ngwatle and Monong. Miriam died in April 2004 at Ngwatle.
Pedris Motshabise – Miriam's brother; also lives at Ngwatle. In 2002 he was at Ukhwi, looking after camels for the Nqwaa Khobee Xeya Trust.
Baba (Kort-Jan) Kies Nxai – Kort-Jan is an Afrikaans name meaning Short John, given this name because of his short stature. He is seen as a leader by his family within the Ngwatle community.
Jon-Jon – Kort-Jan and Katrina's son, who worked briefly for SBB
Vista-Jan – Kort-Jan and Katrina's son.
Johannes Nxai – Johannes' family was killed by South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) soldiers, and he was raised by Kort-Jan.
Gadiphemolwe Orileng – Was living at Ngwatle in 1999; worked briefly as a tracker for SBB.
Kaptein – Kaptein ('Captain') is the official leader. He was allocated this role by a local council under the Hukuntsi district and is paid a salary by the government. The position of Kaptein or chief used to be hereditary, but Kort-Jan's late brother, Petrus, was the Ngwatle community's last 'Kaptein' of this family, as he died before he could select the next Kaptein. The present Kaptein is a Mokgalagadi. He is, however, recognised to some extent as a leader or figurehead in the community, although his authority is challenged in some instances.
Tshomu – Worked on the mines in Witwatersrand and retired to Ngwatle.

Ju/'hoansi

≠Oma Tsamkxao – Also known as Leon; acted as the interpreter for the group during the 1996 visit.
N!ai – Subject of John Marshall's film, *N!ai: Story of a !Kung Woman* (1978), and acted also on Jamie Uys' Film, *The Gods must be crazy*, amongst others.

Specifically, what are we doing?
This book deals with the interactions between myself, my co-researchers and students, and the three communities in South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. Each chapter presents a discussion and interpretation of the various interactions

and gives attention to the often overlooked aspects of power, communication, symbolism and fieldwork experience that are usually back-grounded in favour of more objectified information on culture, livelihood and social life. The strength of this participatory project lays in its empirical, real-world basis, namely, a regularized series of field trips to the Kalahari (inaugurated in 1995) (Chapters 2-6). The chapters delineate a broad network of interrelations, within various networks and at different levels of social interaction, and between observers and observed.

On one level, this book deals with the variety of fieldwork experiences around transport, logistics, negotiating entry, and establishing authentic reciprocal relationships, which are important in making research possible in the Kalahari. The project started as a relatively formal exercise in the conceptualisation of the Marshall film record and Jamie Uys' *The Gods must be crazy* films (1980; 1983), and Ju/'hoansi responses to them (Tomaselli 1992; 2006b; McLennan-Dodd and Tomaselli 2005). The project developed into a wider study of researcher/researched interaction, cultural tourism, and the deconstruction of cultural studies, ethnographic research and 'Bushman' studies in general. I discuss experiences in the field recorded over a ten-year period, and I deconstruct essentialised categories often invoked to explain the behaviour of the Other, or in reverse, the behaviour and perceptions of the European Same.

The study is also an extended critique of a disengaged metropolitan cultural studies, one that lets form prevail over content. In reaction, this project is a cultural studies ethnography of doing research. On yet another level, our work is a record of the dialectic between cultural change on the one hand and political and economic change on the other. Another core theme of the study is the importance of human rights issues and politics. Included in the analysis of power relations are the relationships in the following dyads: people:government; female:male; and visitors:hosts.
The product of this approach lies outside conventional ethnography. I call it reverse cultural studies. Our autoethnographies are reflexive of the researchers' impact on the subjects and vice-versa.

Chapter 1, co-written with *Arnold Shepperson*, sets out the basic research questions, which have underpinned the approach as a whole. Shepperson's contribution was to assist in the development of a methodological framework in which to situate the ten-year-study. This chapter should be read in conjunction with Chapter 7, as both offer theorised explanations of the fieldwork experience. Chapter 1 explains the questions within an implicit Peirceian (1965; 1966; 1998) semiotic framework, while Chapter 7 in drawing together the various theoretical strands of the study in general, also deals with questions of ethics, intellectual ownership, and interaction.

Chapter 2 sets the methodological scene. A vehicle breakdown resulted in the genesis of a theorised diary of fifteen field trips to the Northern Cape, Ngwatle, the Kutse and Central Kalahari Game Reserves and adjacent areas. It provides the basis of a reflexive argument in discussing problems in fieldwork, globalisation, academic access, and research accountability. The narrative aims to forge a space in the global publications industry for kinds of cultural studies done in Africa, in which detail is as important as theory, in which human agency is described and recognised, and in which voices from the field are engaged by researchers as their equals in human dignity and thus as producers of knowledge.

Chapter 3 continues the Kalahari story on issues of representation, research methodology, and reverse cultural studies. It discusses relationships between observers and observed in terms of dependency, inclusions/exclusions, and borders and othering. Continuing with autoethnography, it reflexively analyzes tensions and contradictions set in motion by the writing of this chapter within the Ngwatle and Northern Cape communities, and between myself, development, and other agencies.

'*"Op die grond"*: Writing in the San/d, Surviving Crime' (*Chapter 4*) is a theorised, detailed and densely narrated account of a series of unplanned ethnographic encounters which simply happen *en route* to the focal encounters intended to take place with members of the ≠Khomani and Ngwatle communities. Interacting both conceptually and experientially with the host communities in which it is conceptualised, and the scholarly circles within which I am anchored, this study enacts, among other things, the processual coming-into-being of a written ethnographic documentary in contemporary Southern Africa.

Chapters 5 and 6 are interlinked in that they examine the impact of the visual on the everyday life of the Ju/'hoansi in Namibia. The results of a fieldtrip in July 1996 to Otjozondjupa (previously known as Eastern Bushmanland or Nyae Nyae) in Namibia are discussed in terms of the question: How do subjects make sense of the anthropological? The 'texts' interrogated via Ju/'hoansi popular memory were those made by documentary film maker John Marshall, South African feature film director Jamie Uys, and a documentary made for the Discovery Channel.

Chapter 7 presents the theoretical core developed in Chapters 2-6. Where Chapter 1 offers a theoretical entrance into our work in the Kalahari, Chapter 7 systematizes and theorises our early fieldwork. It thus offers a hindsight reflexive argument in discussing problems in fieldwork, academic access and research accountability. Chapter 7 analyzes tensions and contradictions set in motion by the writing of chapters on observer-observed relations within the communities themselves and between myself and other agencies working in these areas. Questions addressed relate to ownership of information, the relationship between the local/particular and the national/policy, and on how to ensure campfire dissemination/involvement of, and popular access to, the written product by a-literate and largely non-English speaking communities.

The kind of writing published here aims to 'show' the making of, rather than simply being the 'telling' of, a story. Each chapter uses scene-by-scene constructions rather than large chunks of narrative. Extensive use is made of dialogue, third person point of view, and detailed dramatic narrative descriptions recording everyday routines, styles and gestures. Multiple narrative digressions are intended to evoke critical response from the reader. At the same time, the style I have developed often resorts to free indirect speech rather than dialogue, frequently using autoethnographic points of view, suggesting a more personalized mode of shared ethnographic documentation (cf. Laden and Kohn 2003). I hope that this style will be both informative and engaging.**[ix]**

NOTES
[i] Pula is the Botswana currency. One Botswana Pula = 0.18 United States Dollars (currency rate on 24 August 2005).
[ii] The Ngwatle community has organised itself into the Nqwaa Khobee Xeya Trust. The Thusano Lefatsheng Trust supports it. There seems to be lukewarm support for the Trusts, which are seen to be unresponsive to the needs of the Ngwatle villagers.
[iii] The Molopo Kalahari Lodge is located in the heart of the Kalahari. It offers extensive accommodation, conference and entertainment facilities. The Lodge was one of the production bases for the *The Gods must be crazy* (1981) film, amongst many others, both features and documentaries.
[iv] Carter was manager of the then German-owned Molopo Lodge situated across

the gravel road from Witdraai. He had developed a corporate social policy for the Lodge *vis-à-vis* its relations with the adjacent ^{1}Khomani communities. The Lodge was bought by a South African concern in 2001.

[v] Erin is one of the six farms returned to the ^{1}Khomani after they succeeded in their land claim in 1999.

[vi] One of the white-owned farms bought by the government for the ^{1}Khomani.

[vii] The apostrophe in Ju/'hoansi calls for a glottal stop, which is a break in the words sound.

[viii] The Human Studies Film Archives in the Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution, hold over a million feet of 16mm film footage and hundreds of hours of video taped observations recorded by John Marshall between 1950 and 1958, and from the late 1970s onwards (see Homiak and Tomaselli 1999). The released films are available via Documentary Educational Resources.

[ix] I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions.