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## Introduction:

### Self- and Other-Images of Hunter-Gatherers

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#### THE PROBLEM

The idea of the 'foraging' or 'hunting-and-gathering society' cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, it is not as old as we might think. There are hints of it in seventeenth-century European writings, but no theory of it. Perhaps the first clear notion of these activities as indicating a type of society lies in Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des lois* [1748: livre 18, chaps. 9-13] or, more especially, his followers in late eighteenth-century Scotland, notably Smith, Ferguson, Beattie, Kames, and Millar (see Barnard [1999]). In Europe, it was only with the Scottish writers, and their notions of society as being based on material forces or economic transactions, that we get an appreciation of hunting and gathering as creating a different order or involving different actions (let alone beliefs) than in the case of non-hunters-and-gatherers.

In Asia, hunter-gatherers or foragers as a generic term based upon a way of life, did not take root until the 1960s. Before modern times eastern Asia was under the sway of Chinese philosophy, a philosophy in which peripheral peoples were referred to simply as barbarians. These peoples, whether pastoralists, agriculturists or hunter-gatherers were all barbarians because they did not exhibit the 'civilised' attributes of China. China envisioned itself as the Middle Kingdom (*zhong hua* or *hua yi*), and peripheral peoples (by Chinese standards) to the east, west, north and south were respectively referred to as *dong yi*, *xi rong*, *bei di*, *nan man*. All these terms were derogatory in nature.

In the eyes of China, Japan was an eastern peripheral (*dong yi*), but internally Japan (*Yamato*) mimicked the Middle Kingdom philosophy of China and called the Ainu 'eastern barbarians' or Ezo (*Yezo*), the Japanese equivalent of the Chinese *dong yi*. The Ainu were not classified as hunter-gatherers, but only as 'barbarians' to be subdued and enlightened. Their hunting-gathering mode of subsistence was but one attribute to the image of barbarism, along with a non-civilised way of life, language and customs that served to accent the self-proclaimed civilised conditions of Japan (*Yamato*).

Indeed, others with a knowledge of hunter-gatherers, such as Tswana and Nama in southern Africa, developed similar notions of the hunting-and-gathering peoples who were their neighbours. In southern Africa, pre-European-contact discussions of *masarwa* (in modern Setswana, *Basarwa*) or *saan* (from which we get the English or Japanese term *San*)

would have involved understandings of individual circumstances. A *mosarwa* (the singular form) lived on fringes of Tswana society, herded cattle or traded. A *saap* or *saas* (respectively masculine and feminine singular of *saan*) was one who lived by foraging; as likely as not, he or she was a poor Khoekhoe-speaker without livestock and therefore without the honour associated with those who called themselves 'People of People' (*Khoekhoe*). Certainly, the terms *saan* and *masarwa* were not used to designate ethnic groups, much less societies. Probably they designated at most a lifestyle of hunting and gathering without livestock or cultivation, and perhaps a lifestyle of trade but with subjugation by those who did possess livestock and crops.

This volume, based on a session of the Eighth International Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies (CHAGS 8), examines issues such as these through ethnographic data on perceptions of hunter-gatherers by intellectuals, by bureaucrats, by traders, by neighbouring agriculturists and by hunter-gatherers themselves.

## POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMAGES

Hunter-gatherers are frequently associated with 'nature' and more specifically with 'natural man'. This is true for many ordinary people in the Far East and in the West, and indeed among anthropologists. In the well-known words of Lee and DeVore [1968: ix]:

We cannot avoid the suspicion that many of us were led to live and work among the hunters because of a feeling that the human condition was likely to be more clearly drawn here than among other kinds of societies.

In contrast, Social Darwinists Sumner and Keller [1927: 16] described groups including Australian Aborigines and African Bushmen in this way:

Not only are these societies small, unstable, and disconnected, but their members harbor sentiments toward outsiders and even toward each other that cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be interpreted as brotherly ... [Hunter-gatherers] are full of hostility, suspicion, and other anti-social feelings and habits.

These representations perhaps are the extremes, but they make us aware of the variety of experience the idea 'hunter-gatherer' connotes. Guenther [1980] traces an historical trajectory in the West from 'brutish and brutal savages' to 'harmless people', the latter associated with savage innocence, egalitarianism, and peacefulness. The contrast to the West, especially as conceived in the 1960s, is clear. Of course images may have truth to them, but Guenther's main point is that understandings of Bushmen and other hunter-gatherers are to a great extent dependent on how we wish to see them.

Just as contrasting images occur in Western culture, so too do contrasting images among peoples who live side-by-side with hunter-gatherers. In Botswana, Tanzania and other African countries negative images predominate. Nevertheless, non-hunter-gatherers there frequently regard hunter-gatherers as having superior knowledge of the spirit world or access

to special kinds of 'medicine'. Some of these mages are touched on in the present volume.

## SELF-IMAGES

Self-images also come in different forms. Indeed, the present volume itself suggests a number of these (see below). Frequently, hunter-gatherers identify with the animals they hunt, and their symbolic and social life may reflect these associations. For example, the spiritual potency of 'medicine' may be associated particular species whose presence is utilised in ritual and even in mundane activities. In the Kalahari, examples might include the medicine dance of Ju/'hoansi, Nharo, G/wi and other groups or the impersonal force (*n!ow*) release at the birth of humans or the death of animals among the Ju/'hoansi or central !Kung (see, e.g., Marshall [1999: 63-90, 168-173]).

In other contexts, hunter-gatherer self-identity is moulded by the forces, often oppressive, of the social world of non-hunter-gatherers, neighbouring horticulturalists or pastoralists, nation-states, non-governmental organisations, tourists, or simply the outside world in general. Such impacts were the focus of the CHAGS 7, held in Moscow in August 1993 (see Schweitzer, Biesele and Hitchcock [2000]). However, what lies in between traditionalist hunter-gatherer understandings of the interplay between their traditional world and outside worlds was to a large extent left untouched there. That focus, rather, became a major element of discussion at CHAGS 8, both the session from which the majority of the papers here come and some other sessions.

## THE PRESENT VOLUME

The present volume contains papers on a number of different parts of the world. Its authors themselves have diverse regional origins and represent diverse anthropological traditions. What they share is a strong interest in the imagery associated with the 'hunter-gatherer', as well as the substance of hunter-gatherer ways of life. That interest is the focus of this volume.

Barnard introduces general themes related to modes of thought among hunter-gatherers (or foragers) and non-hunter-gatherers, especially in a southern African context. Kaare, with a focus on gender, looks at relations between hunter-gatherers and outsiders in an East African context. Guenther and Buntman each look at the impact of tourism on the issue, again in southern African contexts, Guenther concentrating on the presentation of the experience of Bushman life, and Buntman more literally on the images of Bushman in Western iconography.

Stewart examines the politics of imagery with relation to the Inuit of Canada. Omura, in turn, takes up the more specific, self-image notion of *inuinnuqtun* or 'real Inuit way'. Ridington goes a step further towards self-imagery, to emphasise the narratives of the hunter-gatherer lifestyle among indigenous North American hunter-gatherer people.

The papers by Suzuki and Hokari deal with Aboriginal Australia. Suzuki looks at the complexities of ethnicity in an urban context, while Hokari presents a vivid portrayal of the ways of thought of a traditional thinker.

Two papers focus on Japan. Kinase's paper deals with the process of re-contextualisation, by the Ainu, of the Japanese distinction between Japanese (*wajin*) and Ainu. Ogawa takes up the issue of primitivistic hunter-gatherer imagery in archaeology. Finally Kenrick, a specialist on central Africa, returns us to general and theoretical questions.

The majority of the papers are revised versions of ones originally presented in the session 'Self- and Other-Images of Hunter-Gatherers', organised by Henry Stewart and Barbara Buntman. Of those which were not, those by Kaare, Guenther, Ridington and Hokari were presented at other sessions of CHAGS 8 (held at the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, October 1998). Kenrick was not able to attend the conference, but his paper, like those of Kaare, Guenther, Ridington and Hokari, is included here because of its special relevance to the theme of the volume.

Finally, we must note with great sadness the passing of one of our contributors. Bwire Kaare, who very much wanted his paper to be included here, died in Tanzania in the spring of 2000.

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