The Embers of Society: Firelight Talk among the Ju/'hoansi Bushmen

Polly Wiessner

Appendix 1: //Ukxa’s marriage

Narrated by //Ukxa Kun!oi (born ca. 1941), September 2012 at //Aru, Nyae Nyae. Transcribed by Charlie N!aici and translated by Charlie N!aici and PW.

All stories were recorded, transcribed, translated and then put into a freer translation for ease of reading.

People had seen that he could hunt and kill. Then my father saw him and said, “Yes this adolescent who hunts, I will let him marry my child so that he will kill things and I can eat.” And after he said that, we went to a place called N/oeh. We went and were living there when he said, “Yes. That adolescent who kills eland and whom I saw kill a gemsbok, I will go and let him marry my daughter.”

We who lived at N//oq-la"u left the mongongo nut groves and traveled. Then he killed a gemsbok, hid it and met up with us. And when they met up with us, my mother spent the time with them building……. They and mother built a hut. They built the hut and I got sick and was shivering (with fear of what was happening). They built the hut and we stayed.

We stayed during the day and at sunset they, the elders said, “You must fetch //Ukxa and bring her.”

I replied, “No! I don’t want a man!”

“Get //Ukxa and bring her. You must pick her up and carry her there (to the marriage hut) and lay her down,” my mother said. Then they brought me and accompanied me there. They accompanied me there.

When we met he and I lay apart from one another. I was blithering and shivering. I said, “Oh I got married to a man now,” that’s what I said. “I married a man while I’m still a child,” I said.

We slept and at daybreak when the birds were singing, I got up and went to the adolescent girls’ hut while he was still sleeping. I lay down there and he got up went to his family hut. When the sun rose higher in the sky the people brought us together again. They fetched and brought him and then they fetched me, but I refused. I refused to go but they just took me anyway and brought us in front of the
hut that was our marriage hut, made us sit down and smeared us (with eland fat and ochre). Then they smeared us.

He went back to his family hut and I went back to mine. The others were eating but I just kept bemoaning my marriage saying, “I have married a man.”

We stayed at our respective huts until the sunset when the people said once again: “Go fetch her again so we can bring her (to her husband).” Again they came and struggled to get me. Meanwhile they had already brought the man (to the hut).

“Oh, how is it that I have to marry while I am still a child?” That’s what I said.

They struggled with me, carried me piggyback and put me down (at the marriage hut). Then people smeared us (with eland fat and red earth) and smeared us. They put beads on me and bedecked me with yellow bark cord ornaments. Then they dispersed and I went home where I asked my peers to take those things off of me. They removed them and put them in a heap to the side. My mother said,

“//Ukxa don’t do that. I gave you a man who hunts so don’t do that!” That’s what my mother said. Then we stayed around and stayed around and later and later they caught me again and let me have it. When they grabbed me again I burst out crying and crying. My mother took a little whip of this size, came and hit me saying, “//Ukxa stop doing that. This is the man I gave you to, your father gave to you, so you must marry him."

They accompanied me overnight (at the wedding hut) and in the morning I woke up and stayed there. I said, “Oh yes one should marry a man indeed.”

I didn’t know that one should marry a man, but the elders taught me saying: “Yes. We are going to give you to this man.” From then on the elders thus taught me.

When I woke up in the morning and he work up, I sat with him. Then people came, sat with us and brought us a lot of food. They gave him a dish of honey, that honey from the veldt. He gave the honey to me then I gave it to those who were sitting on my side (my kin) to eat. I just sat and said, “I’m sad. What are they doing?”

After the people had gone their own ways, I got up and followed the girls and spent the time with them gathering. He went with the boys who said, “Let’s go. The sun is about to set so let’s go collect firewood,” and off they went to collect firewood.

We girls started doing the melon dance. That’s what we did. We danced the melon dance until the sun was about to set. People said, “Hey, you all must stop the melon dance so she can go and prepare the bedding (of antelope skins).”

We refused. I refused saying, “I don’t want that any more!” That’s what I said. But they insisted saying,
“Hey, you should go and prepare the bed!”

“No. I don’t want that any more!” I replied.

That’s what I said, but the people and they, the girls, said: “No. You mustn’t talk that way but let us take you back (to the marriage hut).” Then we all went together, I prepared the bedding and we all sat down.

By then the fire was already burning and they (the young people who accompanied her) laughed, told stories and laughed. I just kept quiet while they were telling stories and laughing. At that time he was still a young man and I was a young woman. Your brother was an adolescent and I was a young woman. They kept telling stories and laughing while I still mourned about the fact that I was with a man. That’s what I did. Then we slept.

One day his mother, his mother N=aisa n!a’an said: “You see, I’m going to go back (to) my place.” Then they left and he remained with me.

My parents said, “Yes, we will leave this place and go live over there,” so we left and we left and we traveled and traveled and then my mother and the others and the others told him, “You must put your things there.”

He put our things down, because we were afraid of each other. He was afraid of me and I was afraid of him. He was afraid of me and I was afraid of him. We were afraid of one another and lived separately, and lived separately.

“You two (addressing PW and my assistant, /Aice N!aici) may wonder when a man would come stalking you, making the first sexual approaches.” (Lots of laughter here.) Well, we had moved again and were living at a place that was...? We went and lived at Tomg!aoh. By then he had, he moved into the house with me. We were now sleeping under one skin blanket. And from there...? Since that time we were open to each other and he called me by my name and I did the same. He called me by my name, because he had just moved in with me under one blanket and we were now open to each other. That’s how it was going.

We two worked and we worked and worked (hunting and gathering). From there I got pregnant with //’Ao who died later (as an adolescent). We lived and lived near the mongongo nut groves over there. Then I went with him on a trip with his family to the mongongo groves over there. My mother and her kin stayed behind and I went on a trip with my in-laws when my baby was born. His mother cut the off the baby’s navel and we two stayed together. He (my husband) would go and collect mongongo nuts, bring them home, roast them in the fire and prepare them for me. Then he killed a gemsbok and pounded the meat together with mongongo nuts in a mortar and gave it to me to eat.
I gave birth to my first child at my in-laws place and was afraid of being laughed at and was brave enough to deliver. I just sat down and delivered, because if one is afraid of giving birth, people would say that one is not normal; then they would kill you. People told me, "You are pregnant and are with your in-laws so you mustn’t be afraid of delivering the baby. Be normal and be brave."

The one that I first gave birth to, the late /'Aol, I delivered at my in-law's place and was brave. I just sat and delivered. My mother wasn’t there and I delivered at my in-laws place.

When my mother heard that over there, she came up. She said, "Oh, I haven’t taken care of you and you had a baby at your in-laws place. I am sad (my heart sinks)."

Here //Ukxa goes on to tell of the six children she bore how one died as a baby, two died as adolescents or adults at Tsumkwe, including her first born, and another was killed in 1998 in a tragic car accident. Like other Ju/'hoan mothers who have lost most of their children, //Ukxa is resilient and channels her energy into her social networks.

/Ailae's marriage

Narrated by /Ailae /Ui (born ca. 1939), September 2011 at N=ama Pan, Nyae Nyae. Transcribed by Charlie N!aici and translated by Charlie N!aici and PW.

When I was ready to get engaged, people watched my behavior. I would sleep and then early in the morning get my bow and arrows and go out before anybody saw me. I went out when nobody saw me and shot an eland. When I shot the eland, I came back home.

People saw me and asked, "Yow, what's going on? We woke up early in the morning and this young man had already disappeared. Then I was happy and we all slept well. I went secretly to tell my father that that I yesterday I shot an arrow, it broke on something and that we should go to that area so he (his father) can look for it because only that arrow is really a powerful one.

My father then said (to others), Hey fellows, my son said that he broke his arrow yesterday and that I should go look for it and find it for him.

Then the men just wondered what was up and got ready quickly. We went out and reached a certain place where I said, “Yes, here is where I tracked it and I tried to find it. These tracks here are the ones of the animal I shot.”
Then my father praised me and said, "My son, you can track very well, these are good tracks.

Then we followed the tracks for a distance when I said, "It was here that here that I searched for it and found it. I stalked it so here are my tracks following it until I reached this point and stopped. It was under the tree over there and I shot at it, shot at it."

We followed the tracks and came to an certain place. The men stood and looked and said, " You all, he was just on top of it and then he shot at it."

From there we all continued to track it until we saw it (dead) just in front of us. They slaughtered the animal and separated the meat on a winter’s day just like today. We slaughtered and stripped the meat into pieces and hung it to dry on shrubs and branches. We roasted a lot of the meat there on the fire and before people in other households would know (we had made a kill).

They only wondered, asking: " Hey, why are people moving from those households to the bush? What's going on?"

As they were discussing, my mother said, "No, my son told us that he broke an arrow and asked his father to go and help him find it. His father just asked the other fellows to join them. I don't know what was going on; they went out."

We slept out for two nights then they said, "Yow, we slept in the bush for two nights because we wanted the meat to thoroughly dry." Later that day we carried the netbags (full of meat) on our backs (back to camp).

The children who were playing around saw us coming and said "Hey, here they come! They are bringing all the meat in overloaded netbags."

As we approached, people were listening. People in the households over there listened, stood up and wondered if they could see people approaching. Hey, look at the net-bags!" they said.

We came and put down our loads. Then this woman whom I married, this woman whom I married, with her younger sister, father and mother said, "Hey! "What are they saying?" People were talking and talking.

Then my father-in-law saw them (coming with the meat) and said, "He's that one who's slight and light skinned, not so big and not so tall and so on. He's the one who's thinner and light skinned. "Hey," he said, what a young man this is."

Then looked at daughter and said, "You all, what should I do?" From then on he kept thinking and thinking. One day he then went secretly over and asked in a
soft voice, “My mother and father (terms of respect), my mother and father, what a good son you have. If he does the things he does, what can I do?”

Then my father said: “Woah, he not a good son but I hope he will be a good one, so let’s talk.”

My father-in-law said, “Hey, I was just wanting to cook some parts of the antelope and we can talk.” Eeh, so they went on talking.

They had ended their conversation when the woman whom I married went out for gathering (with other women). They went out gathering for tubers, (Vigna lobatifolia). She dug and dug and dug and dug as many as she could and carried them in her skin kaross. On their way to home, she collected light pieces of firewood and put them on top of the tubers.

When my mother saw what she did, she pinched herself and said, “This girl could be the right woman, because she does things differently (better) than others.” She went to the girl’s parents secretly and talked softly to them saying, “What I really need is a girl who’s always fills her kaross and brings it. How is that I have gotten such feelings, why?”

When I joined them people were already agreed on the marriage. I didn’t know anything because my friends and I had been moving around, fooling around, and play fighting around the camp away from the huts.

In the empty space, away from the other huts, they cleared and cleared and then made an little hut. They cleared and cleaned the area and then piled the firewood aside, made an bed (of skins) and then finished the preparations. Someone said, “Let’s get moving!”

My bow and arrows together with my quiver had already been brought to the new hut. I was not sure what was going on and asked, “What’s going on?” The young men brought me into the hut area and I wanted to sit behind them (out of shyness). The young girls brought her in and she too sat behind them and they sat in front.

They sat and talked and later went back to their homesteads. Afterwards my elder kinsman then brought me in (to the hut) where I went in and laid down. One of her elder kinsmen brought her in and we laid there but would not get close to each other. We laid there facing one another because we were afraid of each other.

We lay there until a certain time that is called ‘girls leave’ (or ‘girls travel by night’) when she went back to the unmarried girls’ shelter. I laid there until after dawn and then moved back to the men’s shelter (adolescents boys and girls used to have their own separate shelters).
When the sun rose higher in the sky, people then called for us to come together and smeared both of us with ointment (fat and red ochre). Then we... then the ornaments... I gave her ornaments and she did the same to me. She put on the ornaments I gave her and my mother and her daughter got mine. From then on, my younger sister wore them and looked so nice!

So now you know about getting married, what we do and that you have to give gifts to each other. When the woman gives you gifts (consummates the relationship), you should kill an eland, and so on. Her father and mother will prepare everything and then your father-in-law will make a shelter for the meat to be put in, and so on ...

Turning to the many young people present, “That’s what people did then. These young boys (today) are...you all, we prospective in-laws decided for a young man. We would not become in-laws with somebody who does not actively kill animals, shoot antelopes. People would not become in-laws with such ones. So it happened and that’s how we did things in the past.

Nowadays people just get married to each other, marry awful things. Women will just marry lazy, horrible men. We did good things like when it rained, when it rained, you would chase a steenbok, kill it and bring it home. Your father-in-law would come and take it aside and skin it and peg out the skin when he was finished. Then he would cook it.

When it rained, you would chase an duiker, kill it and bring it to your father-in-law who would take and then go skin it. Your wife would drain it’s internal fluids and so on and her father would cook it so they could eat.

“You should do so. Then you are a real man who got married.”

(/Ai!ae then goes on to tell long hunting stories from his period of bride service. Clearly hunting stories are where his interest lies.)
Appendix 2.

Two Women Who Chose Their own Husbands. (Excerpt from Sabe’s marriage story)

Narrated by Sabe /Ailae (born ca. 1943), September 2012 at //Aru, Nyae Nyae.
Transcribed by Charlie N!aici and translated by Charlie N!aici and PW.

People were proposing marriage of this woman sitting here’s mother to a man called Ti//xao. People were proposing that she marry him.

“No. I’m not going to marry that man,” she said.

They said: "You will marry him.”

She said, "I'm not going to marry him."

"You will marry him, they said.” And on a certain day they did marry her to him, but they didn’t come to share the same blankets. And they didn’t share the same blankets. Then the two of them lived on and on.

“But I just don’t want this man,” she, /Xoan, said. “He stinks, he gives off a bad odor.”

(Addressing the young men who are listening, Sabe says, “He was not like you guys of nowadays who are powder, Vaseline and deodorant spray using people, you all of today.”)

He smelled badly and she kicked him out. After she kicked him out she went away to the west. She went and married a man called Ku'oan who was short and nicely built and who could kill an eland now and then. He would kill an eland now and then, and he would get a bag of ostrich eggshells and bring them to his wife.

She went and choose that man herself. She, /Xoan, choose him all by herself and married him. When she married him her parents immediately agreed: "Yes!"

People were living on the fat eland meat and Ku...did not beat or mistreat his wife but his wife on lived on the fat.

That is how some people married a long time ago. That’s what they did. And her sister was married to a man with the eyes like those of a black starling. She said, "Aye, who told you that, who told you that I should marry a man with red eyes like the eyes of black starling? I’m a person with a long face, I am Koba /hon=aq’asi, long face. I’ll look for an unmarried man and get him for myself."

The two sisters competed with others for marriage partners. After she saw, a man whose name was /Aice, (addressing a listener); he had the same name as yours. She threw away her first husband and married him. Then he went to Botswana and people killed him.
Appendix 3: The Gathering at Ti’an=ao

Narrated by Nhakxa /Ai’ae (born ca. 1940), September 2013 at Mt. Pos, Nyae Nyae. Transcribed by Tsemkxao /Ui and translated Tsemkxao /Ui and PW.

The gathering at Ti’an=ao described by Nhakxa (born ca. 1940) took place in the early 1950s in the early winter. Ti’an=ao, near G’am (Map 1), is a place with large pans that hold water until the early spring in most years. It is surrounded by vast expanses of highly nutritious morama beans (Tylosema esculentum) that can support large gatherings for weeks at a time in good years. This gathering lasted 2-3 weeks, drawing Ju’hoansi from all over the region including some Nharo Bushmen (from Ghanzi and Gobabia) and Tswana. Dances were held almost nightly and people took the opportunity to arrange marriages, perform rituals requiring larger groups, exchange gifts and make future plans for visiting. Nhakxa was young at the time and so could not give names of people who came from the far north or the far south but else her descriptions of kin ties are detailed.

This story was transcribed and translated line by line but then given a freer translation to capture the spirit by PW. The few parts that are too faint to understand were omitted.

The story

We lived at Ti’an=ao in the early winter when we could eat morama beans. Tsamkxao here was going to come with his mother. We expected Baqu joma n’aan would come with her daughter, her younger sister !Kaia and the late Dahm with whom they were living.

Baqu joma n’aan had said: My grandmother, .... my grandfather old Kaqece and together with my aunt old N=aisa, ... (will come). Baqu joma was the one who led the journey and the late !Kaia was also there with Baqu n’aan. They came together with their mothers as well as Tsamkxao and also the late N’hunkxa. This woman could not go anywhere alone without her children. They always stayed with her. They came to us, they came to stay with us at Ti’an=ao.

My granny said, Yaoh !" My grandfather old Kaqece said," Yaoh ! Why is it taking so long, Baqu told me, ... Baqu told me that she will come to join N=aisa and me by this month and? Why are they taking so long?”

The late =Oma g’usi then added, "Eh! I am now waiting for Kxoara 'oma to arrive. He is just lying around and the spending his time collecting firewood and other such things. I will go with you, Kxao 'oma. Let's go so I can spend time fetching Kxoara.

Then they all came to us at Ti’an=ao including =Oma g’usi and
Kxao !oma who we actually call G/am !oma (meaning owner of the G/am area). Ee! They came to join us at to us at Ti='an=ao. My granny ’s younger children asked, “Yaoh! You all, what are Baqu and Dahm intending to do? Dahm and his younger brother Tsisaba said that they would come. Are Baqu and her namesake deceiving Kaqe n!a'an?”

Some time ago only the women came and G=Kao =ao n!a'an remained at home, that man remained at home and only the women came to join us. And then /Ua coro and late Tsama….

The next morning as we spent time resting at the village, we saw them coming from the direction of the waterhole. When we saw them we said, “Heh, here they are, the people who went south are here.” My granny joked and said, “They are not like Kaqece who is sitting here, whose granny is Baqu joma. This is the month when Baqu promised Kaqece to come…”

Then old N=a n!a'an (N=aisa ) said, “Maybe what is making Baqu take her time is that on her way she is sharing ornaments and things with other people and then she will come to me with empty hands. Baqu joma, the one whose daughter ’s child is sitting here, eh?”

While this was going on, those people arrived bringing eland meat from an animal they had killed along the way. After that we spent all our time in the village. They approached by the waterhole bringing the eland meat and spent the day with us cooking the meat and mixing it with fat to make the meat tender. We ate well and we ate and ate.

(Here N/hakxa goes into the description of two rituals, one a stage in the rites of the first kill for the young men who had killed the eland (34, 36) and the other a ritual to make young people taste bitter and sour so they will learn to behave in such a way as to not create bitter or sour relations in their lives. As far as I can tell the latter is not described in the literature nor was it known to Lorna Marshall, or to Megan Biesele and myself. Large gatherings kick off such events that are not held in single camps.)

After we were done with everything, we spent the next day in the village with Baqu joma. Her mother /Ua !oma n!a'an came along with them. The following day the people fetched water, fetched water and said: “Why don’t you people look for look for the eland chyme, why don’t you look for it so you can cook it into porridge?”

Early the next morning when the sun had not yet risen, they fetched water, fetched water, brought water. Some put the pots on the fire and while others prepared the chyme. They put eland fat into small tortoise shells, put it in there, and poured hot water into the shell to melt the fat.

Then they said (to the young man who had killed the eland), “Come closer, come closer.” When he came, they pounded red ochre and told him to bring his bow. He brought the bow and they smeared the mixture (of red ochre and fat) on his bow and on him. They smeared him, smeared him and smeared him.
They poured out the bitter, sour chyme porridge saying, “You fellows can come closer and the all the women should stay on that side and the men on this side. They should let the young man who shot the eland drink first. That’s what they did. Because it was a male eland, they made cuts on this arm. Yes, they cut this arm, and because it is a large eland, made more cuts on the same side. (Scarification is part of the rites of the first kill.)

When this was done, they told the young men and women to come together and watch the older ones, for we were very young then. We sat and watched while the elders told the young girls to wait until they were asked to join. “You will have chance to participate,” the elders chuckled, “and everyone will get a chance to drink one spoonful, not a real spoon but a tortoise shell spoon full of the chyme.

They let the first one drink and as he swallowed the chyme, they took wet the eland’s tail and splashed water on his chest. They wet the tail again and splashed his upper back. That one just shivered and cried to himself. The others thought, “Kuuuhuh, will it be our turn next?”

The elders refilled the shell for the next person and did the same, giving it to him to drink and then splashing his chest and back with the wet eland’s tail. That one sat and shivering and crying by himself. The elders massaged his sides to cool him down to normal, and massaged his sides and stomach above his liver to cool him down. We watched them and they kept on doing that person by person until the women were also crying (from drinking the stringent, sour and bitter chyme). They shifted to the girls next and the girls drank. They were bowled over and fell down crying. When they had completed the girls, they moved on to the men. After they were they done with the men they said, “You young girls come.”

“No, no, we are afraid!” we replied. “How is it that you see how people were bowled over by the drink but you still want to include us?”

“You should come over here yourselves without saying a word. The girls came over in silence, the elders filled the shell and gave it to one of one of us to drink. Then our hair bristled (in shock). Yes, it's true. They filled up the shell once again and then gave it to the next young girl to drink.

I protested, “Didn’t you tell the young men to go elsewhere and that we should just come over and watch?”

They replied, “When you have tasted such a sour and bitter substance, you won’t do sour and bitter things (i.e. create bad relations).” Then we drank.

(The story then turns back to greeting the visitors.)
As they arrived in our village my Granny got perfumed body powder (made from the *Hemisygia brachteosa* plant) called *san*, went over to Baqu and tossed the power onto her (a greeting that welcomes and assures well-being of the visitor). “Eh, my Granny Baqu jo be well.”

At that time my aunt N=aisa was also now coming from gathering mangetti nuts and sweet potatoes together with the late N//aba, my elder sister. And as they arrived at the village, the very moment she saw them coming N=aisa said, “Oh, I wish I had been home to welcome Baqu with *san* perfume. Why is that every time she comes she only give gifts to =Oma n\oan? She only comes to give him gifts of metal and I get nothing?"

She went over and then tossed *san* perfume onto her. Later that day as the sun set, Baqu n\a'an put on a fine women’s skin apron, got another one and still another one and put a beaded headband on her head and went slowly towards her old grandfather Kaqece. She put the beaded headband on her head and then she again put another one on and went slowly over to her grandfather old Kaqece. She went slowly, slowly she went with her daughters who always stayed close to her….

As she gave the skin dressing cover to Kaqece and said, “What else do you and your daughter want me to do?” She got the other skin apron and shared it with my late grandmother. She took out another skin apron and gave it to her aunt, the late N=aisa n\a’an. And then she gave out more gifts. It was the beginning of gift giving. He (Kaqece) tried to put the beaded headband on his head and but it didn’t fit… so he took it off his head and gave it to my granny and gave other things to her.

In turn my grandmother took out ostrich eggshell necklaces and gave them to her grandfather the late Kaqe n\a'an, who then passed it on to a younger relative. Then he gave an ostrich eggshell necklace to her. =Oma g\usi was the one who brought it, yes, =Oma g\usi was the one who brought it although young men such as his late son /Ukxa was the one who actually carried it. He was the one who carried the bundles of gifts on his back.

/\Angn\ao-di-n\a'an, who is now at /Obaha … people always brought things to him and his kin. Yeh, … that’s what /\Angn\ao-di-n\a'an currently does (i.e. exchanges gifts). His father G/aq\ao-g\o'a from /Du/da was the one who gave out these gifts and ornaments. His hunting bag quiver was always full and he brought many things because he was rich, very, very, very, very rich. Young men from his place worked for him.

Baqu n\a'an did the same thing as those people (give gifts), so they shared with her for first time. And that was how they started the gathering by exchanging gifts. They did the same with the morama beans; they gave them to each other, with N=aisa n\a’an saying, “Baqu, my aunt…”

Di//xao, … Di//xao n\a'an who lived at /Kae/kae and was married to Kaqainacha then said, “Baqu Di//xao brought something to give to your brother Dahm, some ornaments.”
Baqu said, “And you should, you also know where Ti'an=ao and Zam are. You should go there with your aunt //Ua n!a'an and then come over to us so you can give gifts to my father and then we can return.”

Then I just wondered by saying, “Ku u u u u u these women are from far away and they and they are suggesting these things?”

After they came together and exchanged gifts as initial greetings, people said to Tsisaba and his big brother Obe n!a'an (who wanted to go out collecting morama beans), “Wait and let the people rest together and then go gathering.” We stayed, rested and talked because we had been missing one another for a long time.

We had a good time with /Ai!ae's wife Koba n!a'an from /Kae/Kae, who has such a big head, and with the late //Ao, .. and also //Uce nuku who was the one who did translation work here at Tsumkwe. And as people were gathering again in one place (after resting in small groups), we joined them to go collect morama beans. People said, “Yaoh! Can’t these young girls go out and collect morama beans while we spend time with the people here.”

I took a few morama beans few and gave the to the late !Kaia. She bit them open. The late Baqu n!a'an said: "N/hakxa come over to this side and bring me some the morama beans.” We collected for the older women and collected for ourselves until the sun was about to set. Then elders said,

“Now you girls should go collect firewood so you can watch the men (dance) tonight.”

Different people were there. Some were from N//o!a'au (Eiseb Valley). Some from N/oqn/oqni si where there is forest with lots of combretum trees. That is where they late =Oma g!usi’s house was; that is where people lived. And then there the ones who lived where they had only one mangetti tree. That is G!u'u!'oma and those people are my father’s relatives. Some were from N//oq!a'au, the ones who lived on that side as well as those that they called Dshin !arosi. And the ones that they called Dshin !Arosi include Ti!ae n!a'an and her family and the late Kxao //Xai n!a'an whose son I married and had children with. The village is called G!aitsao. The Herero called that land with forest Tcomamapetah when they moved there. And then some had lived with the Tswana (in Botswana) in those beautiful forests of combretum and terminilia trees.

The elders told us: " From now on, no more playing around!"

We were from different places, for example, the northern people were also there; those they called !Uisi also came. Then the owners of N//o!a'a also came and the owners of N/oquin/oqni. The N/oquin/oquinsi came. Do you know (addressing PW) those people from !Xabe? People came from !Xabe and /Kae/kae people were there. Koba n!a'an who passed away and her mother Ti!ae n!a'an who passed away were there and
Ti'ae n!a'an together with her daughter /Uce who is married with late Kxao-daqna. The Tswana people came with donkey carts (from the Qangwa area) and stopped at /Kae/kae where they loaded them up with people. That's how they came over here. The Tswana people came over for the gathering; that's how it was. There was that man Kajinmi who made smaller carts but they came with the bigger ones. We used to load grass and firewood into them as well.

Then people built the fire in the right place (for the dance), while the men dressed up and wrapped themselves with dance rattles and other things. Some people said, “Let the ones with beautiful voices sing while they make the fire. We said, “Sabe n!a'an and Koba n!a'an are the ones with beautiful voices.” People joked and replied " Lets look for the one who has a really beautiful voice.” That was N!oce n!a'an whose younger brother is Kiviet. I am telling you about these places, we challenged (or teased) each other. That was by the waterhole called Ti='an=ao.

All the people were now coming together there. There were all giving gifts to each other; they were all together giving gifts like ostrich shell necklaces, like iron from the Tswana people. People from Dobe and Nharo people (the Nharo are from the adjacent language group between 100-200 km to the south). Eh, it is true. It's true, and when people had built the fire, the late Kxao //xai started dancing and then Baqu joma joined.

In front of all of them the late N=aisa n!a'an, our aunt the late N=aisa n!a'an, my mother's elder sister, put on small irons bangles that make nice sounds and the late N//hauru n!a'an whose daughter is Sabe n!a'an also put them on. And Koba n!a'an who is married with =Oma g!uisi put on the same things.

Ti'ae n!a'an who's daughter is from /Kae/kae, ....who is Kxao daqna 's son-in-law took terminalia seeds that had turned red with the season and playfully put them on like a headband. At that time Baqu n!a'an joined us there and playfully took some eland beans that people had gathered, struck them together to make a head covering of small triangles and her shook her head as she danced. Then my aunt N=aisa n!a'an took another plant, Lapeirousia caudate and put it on her head like a hat.

Tshao taqni who's daughter is //Uce and who is married to /Xoan n!a'an, those who both died at the same time, were like this (gestures) together with N//hauru n!a'an during the dancing. The late N=aisa n!a'an, my aunt, was there and Baqu joma n!a'an was there and Koba n!a’an. //Ao n!a'an who later lived and died at the gate ( G/am) was also there and four women danced with him. They danced with him until the next morning, they danced with him until he moaned, "Ooh my knees, ooh my knees, ooh my knees, ooh my knees, ooh my knees." Really he was suffering and I felt sorry for him but did not need to.

When someone looks very tired like that, a woman who is dancing next to him will come closer to him, take out a bead necklace and put it on him (to encourage him). These women from !Uisi came over to his side and danced with him. Before they did this,
/Xoe-tcoh-n!a'an from N!om/xom whose daughter is the late /Xoan !aunu g=asisi came over. His wife was the late Di//xao n!a'an.

(To PW) “I will show you all these places when we go around together.”

We sang and danced, ... and sang until the next morning. People said, “It looks like you young men were roaming around on the sly last night. We realize that some of you young men did not sleep last night, but we will spent the day with you.” It was early winter, the walleria bulbs were now dry and the morama beans had become ripe. “You young men should return (to camp) now and spent time resting while the older women cook morama beans in the pots.” They also cooked meat from the eland that the visitors had killed on their way here. The meat was already there. Dahm n!a'an who's son I married, fetched fat for his granny Baqu joma and they talked about when, which month, they would meet again.

(This is a long story and I will stop here as it is repetitive, rehashing the gift giving that took place, who gave what to whom etc. She then goes on to another topic: more formal trade with Bantu to procure some of the goods, a topic for another paper. Among the Ju/'hoansi, all possessions were circulated in gift exchange but for trade with the Bantu, Ju/'hoansi traveled far north and south and engaged in barter.)