Mutual Aid and the Foraging Mode of Thought: Re-reading Kropotkin on the Khoisan*

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ABSTRACT

Peter Kropotkin's work offers an insight into the workings of pre-state as well as state societies. This paper utilizes Kropotkin's notion of 'mutual aid' and argues for a consideration of mode of thought (rather than mode of production), both in the analysis of certain kinds of stateless societies and in the analysis of differences between societies of differing levels of complexity. It examines specifically Kropotkin's ideas on 'mutual aid among savages' and his comments on Khoisan (Bushman and Khoekhoe) social organization in light of later ethnographic findings. The conclusion is that Kropotkin's optimistic social theory remains applicable, and that the historical trajectory he saw, emphasizing the significance of voluntary organizations over state formations, is worthy of renewed interest.

INTRODUCTION

The social milieu of the people known as Bushmen or San has long been subject to anthropological debate, particularly between evolutionists (*e.g.*, Richard Lee) and historical revisionists (*e.g.*, Edwin Wilmsen). Some of the former have a special concern with the Marxist notion of 'mode of production'. The latter argue, also in Marxist

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terms, that it is best to see 'Bushmen' not as a collectivity of related ethnic groups, but rather as an underclass subjugated for centuries by agro-pastoralists. This paper proposes an alternative framework for the understanding of hunter-gatherer and pastoralist political and economic relations: one based on the ideas of scientist, anarchist, and Russian prince, Pyotr Alexeyevich Kropotkin (1842–1921).

Kropotkin wrote many works. Some were purely political, others geological, geographical, historical, or ethnological, while still others combined these interests. He often saw his diverse interests as related. His masterpiece was *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Kropotkin 1987a [1902]). It can be read simply as an anthropological text, and indeed one with special relevance to the understanding of Khoisan society (including hunter-gatherer Bushmen and pastoralist Khoekhoe). This is not only because of Kropotkin's brief but incisive comments on Khoisan peoples themselves, but also because the idea of 'mutual aid' is relevant for the understanding of the evolution and history of Khoisan society in its encounters with wider social and state formations.

KROPOTKIN'S 'MUTUAL AID AMONG SAVAGES'

> The mutual-aid tendency in man has so remote an origin, and is so deeply interwoven with all the past evolution of the human race, that it has been maintained by mankind up to the present time, notwithstanding all vicissitudes of history.
>
> Peter Kropotkin (1987a: 180).

The concept 'mutual aid' (*vzaimopomoshch'*) is attributed to Russian zoologist Karl Fredorovich Kessler and dates from about 1880 (Kropotkin 1987a: 14, 24–27). The chapter of concern here is Kropotkin's Chapter 3, 'Mutual Aid among Savages' (1987a: 74–101), written in 1891 and first published as part of a series in the journal, *The Nineteenth Century*. Kropotkin used the word 'savages' in its neutral, and not its modern derogatory sense, and I shall do the same in this summary of his chapter.

The first thing Kropotkin does is to dispel the Hobbesian notion that primitive life was one of 'war of each against all'. He suggests that mutual support, rather than mutual struggle, is evolutionarily adaptive. He says that those 'tribes' who develop an avoidance of internal competition stand the best chance of Darwinian survival. He imputes a 'tribal' origin to human society and rejects what he regards as a seventeenth and eighteenth-century notion that the family was the basis of early human existence. For Kropotkin, the family was a late invention. 'Societies, bands, or tribes – not families – were thus the primitive form of organization of mankind in its earliest ancestors' (1987a: 76). He stresses the fact that, with the exception of some carnivores and a few 'decaying' species of apes (gorillas and orang-utans), higher mammals all live in societies. The first human societies, in his view, were a further development of these. Kropotkin then goes on to consider the archaeological evidence of his time for 'the earliest traces of man' in glacial and post-glacial Europe, Asia, and North America. He briefly traces the prehistory of tribe and clan organization, based on evidence culled from Bachofen, Morgan, McLennan, Lubbock, and Tyler. After this, he takes up the system of mutual aid that operated among Bushmen prior to the destructive forces of European expansion in the Cape Colony of South Africa.

Kropotkin regarded Bushmen as occupying 'a very low level of [technological] development' (1987a: 83), yet he praised their meat-sharing practices, their affection for their comrades, their love of children, and their trustworthiness, as marks of their high degree of mutual aid. He was not a person to emphasize any sharp distinction between hunting and herding societies. He went on immediately to suggest: 'The same social manners characterize the Hottentots [Khoekhoe pastoralists], who are but little more developed than the Bushmen' (1987a: 83–84). Kropotkin's main (secondary) sources on 'savage' society were Reclus (1878–94) and Waitz (1859–72). Kropotkin comes to the conclusion that Bushman and Khoekhoe societies are characterized by sharing and kindness. He notes, for example, that the Cape Khoekhoe described by Kolben (*e.g.*, Kolben 1731: 332–36) shared food widely and divided whatever they had among all present.

Although he devotes only two pages to the Khoisan peoples, Kropotkin paints a vivid picture of them as exemplars of the splendid ethos of sharing and co-operation which, he says, characterizes 'savages' generally.

The remainder of his chapter concerns other ethnographic examples. He concentrates on two other pairs of geographically contiguous and (in his view) ethnologically similar peoples: 'Australians' and those he calls the 'Papuas', and 'Eskimos' and those he calls the 'Aleoutes'. Among the former pair, he emphasizes strong and wide kinship links, and among the latter, morality and communism. He finishes the chapter with a discussion of 'features of savage life [which are] a puzzle to Europeans' (Kropotkin 1987a: 91). These features include contradictions between *infanticide and parricide* (killing of children and parents) on the one hand and *generosity* on the other, and notably the explanation of such customs as blood feuds and consequent 'head-hunting' among the Dayaks of Borneo. Dayak head-hunting, he argues, reflects a moral obligation towards the tribe and not a personal passion; thus it promotes internal solidarity. Kropotkin's general concern here is with the distinction between 'relations within the tribe' and 'relations with outsiders' (1987a: 100). He concludes with the suggestion that society not only stands apart from the state, but also can be maintained in spite of the state. Citing Charles Darwin as his inspiration, Kropotkin (1987a: 98–99) explicitly rejects both the idealization of 'the state of nature' in Rousseau's works and the 'savagery' imputed to 'savages' by Darwin's contemporaries. He wants us to see 'savage' life as it is. But he also wants us to recognize in it both the foundation of human society in general, and the survival of fundamental social principles. These, he believed, were all too often obscured, though not destroyed, later in evolutionary time by the anti-social nature of the state.

MUTUAL AID AMONG KHOISAN HUNTERS AND HERDERS

> It seems very unequal when you watch Bushmen divide a kill, yet it is their system, and in the end no person eats more than any other... It is not the amount eaten by any person but the formal ownership of every part that matters to Bushmen.
>
> Elizabeth Marshall Thomas (1959: 57–58).

These two sentences hint at different but complementary aspects of property relations in Bushman society. It is not the eating which is socially important, but the sharing. Sharing, in turn, implies not simply equality, but rights to dispose of property, and indeed requirements to dispose of it. Whatever aspect of 'primitive communism' they may exhibit (cf. Lee 1988; Barnard 1992a, 1993a), Bushmen are as much involved in exchange relations as their pastoral and agricultural neighbours.

The trends in Khoisan studies have followed, or in some cases have led, other, broader trends in social anthropology. The first phase of modern studies (from the 1950s to the early 1970s) concerned the accumulation of facts, especially within functional and ecological frameworks. The work of the Marshall family, as well as of Tanaka, Lee, and in some respects Silberbauer, was typical of this period (see, *e.g.*, Tanaka 1980). A second phase (beginning in 1970s and continuing) has involved the development of structural models, both for the understanding of particular groups and for comparative purposes. In this I would include much of the work of Cashdan and Silberbauer, as well as my own (see, *e.g.*, Barnard 1992b). A third phase (also beginning in the 1970s and prominent in the 1980s and since) has given a more direct concern with social change: much of Guenther's work, and that of Hitchcock, as well as some of the work of Tanaka (1991), Sugawara (*e.g.*, 1991), Ikeya (*e.g.*, 1993, 1999) and Osaki (*e.g.*, 2001). A fourth is the 'Kalahari debate' (see, *e.g.*, Barnard 1993b): traditionalists (evolutionists) see Bushmen or San as exponents of a hunting-and-gathering culture and isolated until recent times, while revisionists see Bushmen as an underclass and part of a larger social system. The revisionists argue that that larger social system has affected Bushman life for many centuries.

Through recent decades, writings in Khoisan studies have focused attention on sharing and reciprocity, and this interest transcends these other, more specific, emphases. This was a concern of the Marshall family in their early work, notably in Lorna Marshall's classic article, 'Sharing, talking, and giving' (Marshall 1961). Newer writings also mark a return to the interests of the ecological school and of Sahlins in his *Stone Age Economics* (1974) period, and to some extent a continuation of them. In her richly documented study of Ju/'hoan (!Kung) reciprocity, Wiessner (1977) draws attention to a number of features which have wide applicability for Khoisan. Close kin engage in generalized reciprocity, while more distant individuals, classified as 'kin', engage in *hxaro*, the giving of non-consumable, movable property with the expectation of an eventual return. *Hxaro* represents a system of delayed and conceptually balanced reciprocity, and, in turn, it overlies a system of generalized rights of access to resources. This ultimately reduces risk. Whatever the real reasons behind individual choices in these matters, Ju/'hoan *hxaro* and its Nharo (Naro) equivalent, the //*aî* relationship, do serve to equalize access both to movable property and to the resources shared between exchange partners. They also represent part of a social system of responsibilities in which the purely economic ones are only a part.

Where virtually all commentators are wrong is in the assumption that such mechanisms represent either a typically Bushman or an exclusively hunter-gatherer mode of exchange. The fact is that *hxaro* has been recorded only among relatively few Bushman groups; other groups often have quite different arrangements for reciprocity and mutual aid. For example, among the Kua of Kutse, there is no *hxaro* but there is a practice of long-term 'borrowing' between kin (Kent 1993: 496–97). This is quite a different custom from *hxaro*, but it is one that may serve some of the same functions. Kent's study of sharing among the Kua also shows that sharing practices can remain important after sedentization, a fact I also found in my fieldwork with the Nharo of the Ghanzi district in the 1970s and early 1980s. At Kutse, meat is still the most important shared item, and it can be shared in diverse ways (which Kent terms 'formal' and 'informal').

Social aspects operate well beyond economic necessity, as in the case Kent cites of the sharing of a small and therefore virtually meatless squirrel (1993: 493). Of course there are both continuities and changes with sedentization, and the relationship between continuity and change is complex. Sugawara (1991) has dealt with such issues in his article on the economics of social life among the G/wi and G//ana of !Koi!Kom.

Among the G/wi, who similarly lack *hxaro*, Silberbauer draws yet more specific attention to the social nature of sharing:

> The G/wi repeatedly spoke of harmonious relationships as something toward which to strive, to be desired, and, when experienced, to be celebrated. Good fortune, pleasure, and contentment were referred to in terms of being shared (Silberbauer 1994: 130).

Although Silberbauer refers to the past, some of this ethos remains today. We need an approach that takes account of the continuity of foraging culture. The idea of a 'foraging mode of thought' may be helpful (Barnard 2002); and this should direct our attention away from production, in the narrow, Marxist sense, and towards an understanding of social relations as the key to a wider Khoisan ecology. We also need a framework for understanding the continuity of Khoisan culture across boundaries between hunters and herders and between hunters or herders and wage laborers.

If the Kua differ from the Ju/'hoansi, might the Nama and Damara (who are linguistically related to the Kua) be more similar? Many have long denied a simple relation between economic system and language (see, *e.g.*, Barnard 1992b: 16–36), but might some aspects of economics, like some aspects of kinship, display linguistic relationship? My preliminary answers to both these questions are negative, but not perhaps in the way one might expect. The fact is that there seems to exist a pan-Khoisan, and in some respects pan-southern-African, set of economic relationships which cross-cut hunter/herder boundaries. These relationships can endure also among recently settled or otherwise disrupted Khoisan communities. Even

economic relations can be resilient, especially where they do encode social and not merely material functions.

One of the several small debates in hunter-gatherer studies is especially relevant here. This is the question of the relation between egalitarianism and a foraging economy. Woodburn (*e.g.*, 1982: 449), echoing numerous Bushman ethnographers, asserts that the value of equality is deeply embedded in the ethos of foraging society and is not easily shed, except in a community of 'mixed origin' such as the mainly G//ana one described by Cashdan (1980). In contrast, Cashdan (1980) and following her, Gulbrandsen (1991), have seen 'fierce egalitarianism' as a constraint that is removed when the former foragers of the Kalahari settle down. I see no reason not accept the fact that both sides are right; both an egalitarian spirit, and a set of social pressures which serve to keep it intact, are present. What both sides fail to take into account is the fact that Khoisan systems of thought possess contradictions like this; these contradictions are what makes for flexibility and adaptation. This, in turn, is perhaps a good reason to see the transition to settled existence as one which makes use of principles inherent in Khoisan thought and not one which is simply antithetical to Khoisan life.

Contrary to popular anthropological opinion, *hxaro*-like exchange networks are found among herders as well as among hunter-gatherers; and marriage gifts which might reasonably be considered 'bridewealth' (a paragon of herding society) are found among hunters. The latter include the gifts of *kamane* (Nharo), *kamasi* (Ju/'hoan), or *gamasi* (Hai//om), which often coexist with brideservice. The notion of 'helping' (the verb *wi,* found in Nharo, Ju/'hoan, and Khoekhoe alike) is distinguished among all these groups from 'buying and selling' (the verb *//ama,* similarly found in all these languages). There is much scope here for comparative linguists to find out how such words came to be found in all these and other languages (whether they are cognates or loan words); and there is much work for anthropologists to find out exactly how they are used and what precise social practices they designate.

Sharing and reciprocity bear a strong relation to kinship. The well-known joking relationship known as //*nuri*//*gāb* or //*nuri*//*gās*, including teasing and in past times cattle-snatching between sister's son and mother's brother, is found among both Nama and Damara – the pastoralist Khoisan peoples of Namibia. Yet family exchange is wider than such specific relationships may imply, and generalized reciprocity is widely extended. Nama and Damara family members are continually giving gifts to each other at weddings, confirmations, etc., as well as in less formal ways. Ben Fuller sums up some of these relations as follows:

> In the generalized reciprocity of Damara/Nama life, goods of low value – puffs on a cigarette, a piece of candy, a few cents here and there – are so commonly exchanged they go unnoticed. Yet, the more regular the exchange, the more likely it will be with a family member (Fuller 1993: 221).

Fuller adds that non-relatives who exchange on a regular basis come to call each other by kinship terms. Thus the notion of family (/*nîkhoen*) is at least metaphorically extended beyond ties of blood and marriage. Much the same happens among those Kalahari Bushman groups who lack the naming practices and system of extension through namesakes of the Ju/'hoansi (or !Kung) and Nharo. Among G/wi and G//ana, friends are classified and treated as kin, more specifically as 'cross-cousins' or 'grandrelatives' (cf. Barnard 1992b: 48–50, 111, 150–152).

Fuller (1993: 222) also notes the significance of extended-family mutual aid in pastoral pursuits. The /*nîkhoen* are expected to manage and look after the resources of the land they occupy; and labour is shared in the sense of herding each other's cattle, sheep, and goats. Any herd will have within it sub-herds actually belonging to various relatives of the apparent 'owner'. Grazing rights are traditionally communal but established through kin links, and the system of communal grazing reduces risk due to drought, stock raiding, and contagious disease (1993: 276). The Damara equivalent of *hxaro* goes by a different name and, unlike the Ju/'hoan form, includes consumable items. It is called *mā!unigus* and involves the giving of things in de-

layed exchange. Like may not be exchanged for like, but the goods may be similar; *e.g*., a bag of white sugar may not be exchanged for another bag of white sugar, but it may be exchanged for a bag of brown sugar. This practice is distinguished from simply asking for something (with the verb *mā*, 'give', or *ou*, 'feed') without any expectation of a return (≠Atani Fuller, pers. comm.).

The Nama may not have *hxaro* but they do have *soregus*, in the past any close relationship between people, or an exchange relation between friends (see also Barnard 1992b: 190–191, 246). In some areas the term may now imply more specifically an improper sexual relationship. Nama also have a custom known as *aoboa-gus*, the pooling of money to give to one who needs it. Some of these various relationships among the Nama, *//nuri//gāb* (the exchange between mother's brother and sister's son), *soregus* (in the sense of free giving between friends) and *māgus* (giving in exchange relationship), are touched on in a thesis by Johanna Hoff (1981: 19–22, 46). Yet they hardly figure at all in the better-known literature on the Khoekhoe. I suspect that if the customs of Nama and Damara herders were more widely known among Bushman ethnographers, and indeed among hunter-gatherer specialists generally, the current debates on reciprocity would be quite different than they are. When we comment on the changes that affect Kalahari hunter-gatherers, we would do well to compare not only hunting and gathering populations in other parts of the world, but also, as Kropotkin did, those affecting related herding populations in southern Africa.

At the same time, we must not idealize either the hunting-and-gathering lifestyle, with its emphasis on mutual aid, or the transition to food production and storage. In all the cases mentioned here, sharing and reciprocity are partly strategies for social well-being and partly strategies for material well-being. Cashdan's (1985), idea of sharing is broadly of the 'insurance policy' school (sharing among hunter-gatherers is like insurance in an industrialized society). She sees sharing in contrast to the alternative, an economy based more on accumulation and storage. The ideals of sharing and storing, the social and the material, and other such variables, present us with a con-

stellation which individuals and social groups choose in order to survive. An ideal of mutual aid is itself, ultimately, of both social and material benefit. From Cashdan's data it would seem that the pressure to share is greater among Bushmen than among their Tswana and Kgalagari neighbours, but this pressure is as much culturally as ecologically-driven. The sharing of food on the basis of such concerns has been dubbed 'vigilant sharing' (Erdal and Whiten 1994: 177), and this principle may complement the abstract ideal of mutual aid in Khoisan society generally.

Add to these theft, raiding, and banditry, the examples of 'negative reciprocity' which might reasonably be related also to a foraging ethos with a devaluation of property rights. On the basis of the frequency of such practices at certain times in the past, an argument could be made for tendencies within Khoisan society towards 'anarchism' is its negative sense, as well as towards a (federalist) 'anarchist communism' in Kropotkin's sense. However, it might be best to consider, as did Sahlins (1974: 185–275) in his classic statement on the problem, the fact that negative reciprocity is always predominantly practised with reference to outsiders, with balanced reciprocity the norm in one's 'tribe', and generalized reciprocity in one's family. (Negative reciprocity is trying to get something for nothing; balanced reciprocity involves equal exchange; and generalized reciprocity is giving things freely.) The changing aspects of 'reciprocity' in Sahlins wide sense among the Khoisan reflect, of course, not only ethnic differences but also historical ones. These in turn hinge on relations between internal Khoisan political structures and the outside forces of dominant neighbouring groups, colonial and state authorities, and even benevolent foreigners.

SOCIETY, THE STATE, AND THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

> It is said that the history of peoples who have a history is the history of class struggle. It might be said with at

> least as much truthfulness, that the history of peoples without history is the history of their struggle against the state.
>
> Pierre Clastres (1977: 185–86).

One of the main aims of the revisionist school (*e.g.*, Wilmsen 1986) is to rectify the absence of an active history in the literature describing Bushman society. Yet history tends to be something that is written about states, and not about societies or even peoples. That history does describe peoples is actually something of an illusion championed by nationalists, and indeed statists.

At the other end of the scale, Clastres (1977: 159–160) points out that the very designation of 'primitive' societies as stateless carries with it both an ethnocentric and an evolutionist assumption. Stateless societies are somehow seen as not quite true societies; and the premise of those who use the term 'stateless society' is that all societies eventually evolve either to form states, or to form smaller units within states. For Clastres, as for many other anarchists, the essence of the state is violence. The force that it implies turns an economy into a political economy (1977: 166), while the economies of 'primitive' societies remain lacking in what economic anthropologists often consider primary to economic organization: social control in the hands of but a few members of society.

The problem of the relation between state and society is hardly new, and it has long been the subject of much confusion. Kropotkin (1987b [1897]: 9–16) situated the confusion in the fact that many of his contemporaries (especially 'the best German thinkers and many of the French', p. 10) simply could not conceive of society without the state. Even one of my closest colleagues in British hunter-gather studies, Tim Ingold (1999) has expressed similar views as part of his argument that hunter-gatherers do not have society; they have instead sociality without a fully-formed society. At any rate, Kropotkin's opponents, if not Ingold, follow the erroneous seventeenth and eighteenth-century notion that society and the state had emerged through an almost literal social contract. Kropotkin adds that while such an idea may have been of utility in the fight against the supposed divine

right of kings, it was not borne out by the comparative evidence from stateless societies. For Kropotkin, both society and government were logically distinct from the state. Although a state cannot exist without government, stateless societies nevertheless can govern their members. The anarchists, he said, did not want to destroy society; they wanted to abolish that relatively recent invention of human history: the state. Society, in contrast, was part of both animal and human nature: 'there cannot be the slightest doubt that the first human beings with human attributes were already living in societies' (1987b: 12).

Kropotkin was not alone among social thinkers of his time in his views on the evolution of society and the early state, but he differed in refusing to distinguish early from modern states with regard to their abilities to coerce. Herbert Spencer (1994 [1860]: 152–157), for example, had also pointed out that in the evolution of society, customs to 'regulate conduct' precede 'definite government'. He even mentioned the (somewhat anarchical) Korana as one of his examples. Far from guaranteeing individual rights, Spencer wrote, early states acted to infringe upon the rights of their individual citizens. Where he disagreed with the anarchists was in his assumption that in the most advanced forms of state organization, the state does protect the individual. In their dealings with the state, Bushmen throughout southern Africa, and other Khoisan in Namibia and South Africa, have until recently had Kropotkinist rather than Spencerian experiences. What Dorothea Bleek reports for the Nharo in the early 1920s might not be misplaced if reported five or ten years ago:

> They let themselves be tyrannized over with very little resistance. They are dreadfully afraid of the white man, particularly the policeman, who appears to them merely an arbitrary tyrant, as they do not understand the laws, and never know what they may be arrested for. They have no idea that the law can protect as well as oppress them... (Bleek 1928: 42)

Although large-scale anarchist society is an ideal that remains elusive, neither Kropotkin's social theory nor some of his suggestions on general social improvement have proven fallacious, especially in a context of Khoisan society. His vision of networks of small federa-

tions resembles what we know today of Bushman social organization better than it does of what was known of Bushman social organization in Kropotkin's own time. Kropotkin's advocacy of small-scale, non-specialized production (*e.g.*, Kropotkin 1912 [1898]) has been found effective in many Third World contexts, including development projects in Botswana and Namibia. Above all, Kropotkin's advocacy of voluntarism has been vindicated. A favourite example of his was the Lifeboat Association in Britain, as well as unions and the clubs and lodges popular in his day (*e.g.*, Kropotkin 1987a [1902]: 216–223; cf. 1968 [1892]: 179–184). What would he have made of Oxfam, Save the Children, or the host of smaller organizations that operate across the Third World? I would argue that he would have seen them as a global extension of his notion of mutual aid. He might even have seen them as 'anarchist' in motivation.

I once suggested that in the distant, unknown past, as the range of social interaction increased with geographical range, mechanisms for kin category extension developed. These in turn produced ideologies of universal kinship, systems in which all members of society were classified as 'kin' and behavior between individuals was regulated by belonging to given egocentric kinship categories (Barnard 1978: 69–71). Many Khoisan societies still operate on this principle, whereas other societies make distinctions between 'kin' and 'non-kin' which are quite foreign to such an ideology. The ideology of the major NGOs, and indeed states in their benevolent forms, represents a further extension of social range for the purpose of widening the scope of mutual aid and support. In this sense they are analogous to, though certainly not identical to, systems of universal kinship. They are a further way to define and expand the limits within which mutual aid is given.

CONCLUSION

At the time of his death in 1921, Kropotkin had returned to Russia and was working on a book on ethics. His unfinished text (Kropotkin 1924 [1922]) was an attempt to apply the scientific argument of *Mutual Aid* to the solution of practical problems. As one of his biogra-

phers puts it, 'Since man is inseparable from nature, he imbibes his moral conceptions from the experience of nature' (Miller 1976: 246). Nature itself contains the elements of an ethical system in which mutual aid is the most prominent principle. At the end, Kropotkin saw mutual aid as a principle that was increasing in prominence, though it was not be sustained in his native Russia nor extended to the world at large for some time to come.

Kropotkin held that the mutual-aid principle is retained in all forms of society: from animal to savage, from barbarian to feudal, from agrarian to industrial. Similarly, a case could be made for a continuity of the foraging mode of thought, at least beyond the narrow confines of 'pure' hunting-and-gathering society. Thus one should not think of distinctions like that between immediate and delayed-return economies (*e.g.*, Woodburn 1982) as absolute, each entailing its own radically-opposed mode of thought. As Woodburn himself has pointed out, at least some immediate-return hunter-gatherers do have a strong incorporative principle, which I see in their universal extension of kinship. He sees is it in economic terms, but what he says of the Hadza could apply to many, if not all, Khoisan foragers and former foragers:

> Equality is, in a sense, generailsed by them to all mankind but, sadly, few of the rest of mankind, so enmeshed in property relations, would be willing to extend parity of esteem to hunter-gatherers who treat property with such a lack of seriousness (Woodburn 1982: 448).

In southern Africa, both the foragers and those who were recently foragers retain attitudes to wage labor, the redefinition of property rights, and the increasing dominance of the state, all of which are reminiscent of attitudes in 'purer', immediate-return economies. The further understanding of this foraging ethos and its relation to systems of mutual aid, both indigenous and imposed, is a problem not only of theoretical, but also of practical importance.

NOTE

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