

Voici donc un ouvrage original en matière d'ethno-
alcoologie, qui va en profondeur, allie de manière serrée
données d'observation et réflexion théorique, et illustre on
ne peut mieux les passages de l'ethnographie à l'ethnolo-
gie puis à l'anthropologie, la prise en compte de la diver-
sité humaine en vue d'en dégager une vision de l'homme
en son unité.

Pierre Erny

Bieseles, Megan, and Robert K. Hitchcock: *The Ju/'hoan San of Nyae Nyae and Namibian Independence. Development, Democracy, and Indigenous Voices in Southern Africa.* New York: Berghahn Books, 2011. 269 pp. ISBN 978-1-84545-754-9. Price. £ 55.00

Known historically as the !Kung Bushmen, !Kung San, or simply the !Kung, the Ju/'hoansi are the most studied and well-documented indigenous group in anthropology. Although ethnographers described various Kalahari San foraging groups throughout the beginning of the 20th century, the Ju/'hoansi San began to capture the world's attention in the early 1950s through the films and documents of the Marshall family, whose work became standard fare for students of anthropology, ultimately reaching a much wider audience. Joined by Harvard anthropologists and others from the U.S. and abroad, two primary study sites were established – Nyae Nyae in Namibia and Dobe in Botswana – and the tale of a most remarkable group of Stone Age foragers turned eclectic “plastic age” survivors began to unfold. In anthropology, if not for all humankind itself, this may be “The Greatest Story Ever Told,” a heroic epic of the “First Peoples” transition from independent self-sufficient hunting and gathering to a highly resourceful mixed economy complexly interwoven into the politics of postcolonial southern Africa. In spite of almost unbelievable obstacles of forced development, apartheid-era oppression, encroachment by pastoral neighbors, governmental communal land reallocations and the recurring threat of game parks, disease, starvation, and social and economic marginalization and discrimination, the Ju/'hoansi are still strong and the world still looks to them as a model to better understand humankind's development, struggles, and triumphs.

In “The Ju/'hoan San of Nyae Nyae and Namibian Independence,” coauthors Megan Bieseles and Robert Hitchcock bring alive the second half of the both tragic and inspirational sixty-year transition from the “Old Way” to the “New Way” among the Nyae Nyae !Kung. Megan Bieseles, former director of the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia during Namibia's final struggle to independence (1987–1992), founder of the Village Schools Project (VSP), and current director of the Kalahari Peoples Fund, is fluent in the Ju/'hoan language having conducted over forty years of fieldwork with the Ju/'hoansi in cultural heritage preservation, linguistics, education and empowerment, folklore, and a host of related topics. Robert Hitchcock, former chair of the departments of Anthropology at the University of Nebraska and at Michigan State University, has conducted fieldwork over the past thirty-five years with the Ju/'hoansi and other neighboring San groups and is one of the most prolific anthropologists

in the world in the areas of applied research and development, human rights, land and resource use, and hunter-gatherer studies. Their unique combination of firsthand experience and expertise with the Ju/'hoansi and other San groups provides a platform for analysis that would be hard to match anywhere in anthropology. Employing an emic and etic perspective, multiple forms of triangulation, member checking, informative narratives and in-vivo descriptions, co-constructive interpretation of lived realities by anthropologists and participants, this case study is a qualitative methodologist's dream.

The authors state that a main goal of “The Ju/'hoan San of Nyae Nyae and Namibian Independence” was to “draw attention to the history and dynamic activism in Ju/'hoan society” and to “specifically achieve a wider awareness of the heroic events that led to the establishment of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy” in 1998, the first conservancy in Namibia. In so doing, Bieseles and Hitchcock outline the history of Nyae Nyae prior to Namibian independence (1990) to the present, documenting the complex interplay of individuals and groups from multiple perspectives as the story unfolds. The text details the ongoing expropriation and reorganization of the Ju/'hoan land base and the various political and socioeconomic factors these issues entail in terms of changing subsistence strategies, and the relationship to various grassroots movements and organizations that attempted to accommodate this change. Indigenous and externally-based advocacy groups are discussed in detail such as the Ju/wa Cattle Fund that evolved into the Ju/wa Bushman Development Foundation (JBDF), and later the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia (NNDNFN); the Ju/wa Farmers Union (JFU), later called the Nyae Nyae Farmers Cooperative (NNFC), and ultimately the Nyae Nyae Conservancy (NNC); the Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE) Project, etc. Struggles within these organizations and their relationship to broader issues within Namibian society are meticulously described and bolstered with transcriptions of firsthand accounts of events. Readers learn about the ongoing role of Tsumkwe as an administrative center in Nyae Nyae, the conflicts between the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) and the South African Defense Force (SADF) and its aftermath, challenges of the looming encroachment of the Herero and other pastoralists, the shifting role of the Namibian government in its dealings with the Ju/'hoansi, potential threats to undermine the iconic economic and gender egalitarianism of the Ju/'hoansi, conflicts between older and younger Ju/'hoan leaders in adjusting to change, the movement towards Ju/'hoan education and literacy, and a necessitated shift to a multi-level subsistence strategy. This strategy rests on the raising of domesticated livestock, farming, various forms of wage work, government rations, selling crafts and other natural resources, safari hunting, and other tourist proceeds, and the option to hunt and gather.

“The Ju/'hoan San of Nyae Nyae and Namibian Independence” includes an amazingly comprehensive body of illustrations, maps, figures, tables, chronologies, photographs, and bibliographic, orthographic, and other sup-

plemental information. This thorough attention to detail makes the text invaluable to some and perhaps too dense for others. It is also repetitive at times, but this repetition may be necessary to continually track the volume and detail of information presented from chapter to chapter. Another strength of the text that could have been made even stronger would have been to provide more critical insights into the films and work of John Marshall as the authors seemed to dance around this in places, likely out of respect for the great legacy of Marshall's work. The text also cries out for a companion study detailing the changes throughout this period occurring at the other major Ju/'hoan study site in Botswana.

In conclusion, "The Ju/'hoan San of Nyae Nyae and Namibian Independence" serves as an illustrative model for the anthropology of development and indigenous activism accomplished through an interpretive narrative of the insights and experiences reflecting Biesele's and Hitchcock's multiple roles and lifelong interactions with this group. The text holds broad appeal in a number of key areas. It provides a much needed update to the historic work of the Marshall family and specifically John Marshall's films, as well as offering hope for this amazing group of people that goes beyond the gloomy and perhaps overstated portrayal of the Ju/'hoan future offered in "Death by Myth," John Marshall's final installment of the five-part "A Kalahari Family" film series. Citing the various successes resulting from the combined efforts in self-government, advocacy, education, literacy, and resilience outlined in "The Ju/'hoan San of Nyae Nyae and Namibian Independence," perhaps it would be better to replace "Death by Myth" with "Life through Advocacy" as a theme for the Ju/'hoansi to go forward. The book also provides an updated complement to the historical work of other anthropologists documented in textbooks, research articles, and in ethnographic readers. Instructors of both introductory and advanced courses in anthropology can use this text to locate the study of the Ju/'hoansi effectively in the present.

The Nyae Nyae Ju/'hoansi book also offers a very realistic and much-needed account of anthropological activism, indigenous land and human rights issues and grass-roots movements, and the potential of cooperative and interactive partnerships forged between anthropologists and indigenous groups. Finally, it serves as a terrific example of an ethnographic case study in anthropology, based on thoughtful and rigorous interpretive analyses gleaned through extensive fieldwork in naturalistic settings. It is hard to think of another ethnography quite like this one.

Wayne A. Babchuk

Chesnut, R. Andrew: *Devoted to Death. Santa Muerte, the Skeleton Saint.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 221 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-976465-5. Price: £ 15.99

This book illuminates one of the signature events of recent Mexican narco-culture. Over the last twenty years, but particularly under president Felipe Calderón's ill-fated "War on Drugs," a folk saint cult has emerged that venerates a Grim Reaper protectress and has turned into Mex-

ico's second largest devotion beyond the Virgin of Guadalupe herself. La Santa Muerte, or "Saint Death," as her devotees have taken to calling her (among other, more adoring and feminized monikers), has in turn deserved much better from academics North and South, who are generally prone to ignore or to dismiss such superstitious and criminally associated irrelevancies; in R. Andrew Chesnut's ethnography, we finally have more than a passing reference to this fascinating outbreak of popular effervescence. The great merit of "Devoted to Death" lies with its thoroughgoing overview of La Santa Muerte's followers, ritual practices, and Catholic historical associations. Chesnut follows this devotional cult across the "religious marketplace" (his phrase, p. 172) of Mexico, a country historically sundered by neocolonialism, extreme poverty, and labor exploitation that is presently being carved up by warfare over drug monopolies in the hardest-hit cities of the Gulf Coast and borderlands with the United States.

Under Calderón's political regime, many large-scale public displays of homage to Santa Muerte such as roadside shrines have been identified as "satanic," narco-related, and quickly demolished, and several of the founding members of the cult have been persecuted and/or imprisoned. A major part of Chesnut's writing strategy is to cast doubt on liberal media representations of this supernatural skeleton as merely the "patron saint of criminals" (188) – a textual goal that he achieves both in form and in content. "Devoted to Death" emphasizes the rich, multifarious lived practices of venerating this supernatural figure. The book divides into seven chapters. The rhetorical conceit of each is to explore a different standard "color" of Santa Muerte's ex-voto candles, along with their devotional rationale; the narrative strategy works quite well, in my opinion, as these idealized "functions" of veneration help to illuminate possible relationships and conflicts with this popular saint. Such ex-votos include: "Brown" (History and Origins of the Cult); "White" (Beliefs and Practices); "Black" (Protection and Harm); "Red" (Love and Passion); "Gold" (Prosperity and Abundance); "Purple" (Healing); and last but not least, "Green" (Law and Justice). The book's concluding chapter, "Seven-Color Candle," provides a helpful, if somewhat repetitive summary of the author's findings. Overall, "Devoted to Death" is a crisply written work that, for better or worse, does not systematically probe the more deeply buried, intercultural problems that animate the author's own interest in this "illicit cult." What we have instead is a colorful, all-points-explored "culturalist" survey of the phenomenon at large. "Devoted to Death" indulges in Santa Muerte's similarities and differences to Mexican folk Catholicism and particular Spanish American cults, from Mexico's saintly bandit Jesús Malverde and the Virgin of Guadalupe, to Spain's La Parca and Argentina's San La Muerte, among many others, that helps to situate Santa Muerte's place in the licit and illicit *santoral* of Latin American Catholicism.

The book's unmistakable contribution to Mexican Studies, however, is the way in which Chesnut shows how drug warfare and ethno-racial hyper-incarceration have doubled back, and refracted the spiritual lives of working class citizens, serving as the unconscious foun-