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(*Mr. Rusere Nyongoni — Nairobi*)

**Hans - Joachim Heinz and Marshall Lee — Namkwa:
Life among the Bushmen. Jonathan Cape
London . 1978 . 271 pp . £6.50**

Hans-Joachim Heinz's narrative of his life among the San communities of the Kalahari in Botswana, is technically a well written book. It is free of either linguistic or conceptual complications, and is vivid in terms of the pictures and situations it evokes. Thanks to the cooperation of Marshall Lee who collaborated with Hans-Joachim Heinz in the writing of the book.

If this book had been written perhaps thirty years ago, it would have been even better received, for in a way, its total import lacks sensitivity to modern critical anthropological thinking, and the sensibilities of the post-war generation of Africans particularly in Southern Africa would find Heinz's story subtly distasteful. In her foreword to the book, the late Margaret Mead writes that:

"This book is a unique story of one of the more romantic episodes in the history of the encounters between a European scientist and a primitive people. The encounter began as a scientific expedition by a middle-aged parasitologist into the Kalahari desert, where he fell in love with a Bushman girl, became enamoured of Bushman culture, and returned again and again, to investigate new aspects of Bushman life, and finally to attempt to introduce the Bushmen to a settled way of life which would mediate their relationship to the impinging modern world".

Indeed the uniqueness, the romantic character which Margaret Mead refers to is as the saying goes, one of "a man biting a dog". The story of a civilized westerner brought up in an atmosphere of

classical music, Bach, Lehar, Stolz, and Strauss, who ultimately surfaces in darkest Africa to marry a primitive African girl. The underlying paternalism is undeniable. Also, the Namkwa stage of Heinz's life seems to be the final stage of a rather, to say the least, strange history of a young first-generation German-American who leaves America for the attractions of emergent Hitlerian Germany with commitment enough to fight as a soldier for the Third Reich. The author informs us that although he and his first major love,

"...experienced the shock of profound disillusionment with Hitler's Germany. Still it was not enough to force me to turn my back on the Fatherland, or avoid Arbeitsdienst, and military service. I didn't want to be branded a fugitive from my duty". (page 9)

The war was followed by a spell of studies, after which the author came to South Africa, which country at that time was institutionalizing a state based on the same philosophy of fascism as the Third Reich, this time under the aegis of the Nationalist Party of South Africa. What coincidence! From South Africa Heinz went into the bush and to Namkwa.

In the bush with Namkwa the author led one life and in the Republic of South Africa another. In order to protect his life in South Africa with its racist sexual laws, the author tried to keep his relationship with Namkwa secret from South African society, to the extent that when Namkwa is raped by one of the white farmers of the Kalahari he was unwilling to take the matter up to the authorities. He writes that:

"I would be bound to confess my true relationship with Namkwa, and thereby let loose the forces I suspected would destroy the very thing I was trying to preserve. I wanted retribution but I feared disclosure more. And the more I rationalized the consequences of any report or charge the less I felt able to make one". (page 182)

Yet when Namkwa on an occasion went off with a boyhood lover, the author felt strong enough to assert himself.

"In days gone by a husband might have killed the man and thrown the woman on the fire. Now my impulse was to throw him on the coals, but figures sprang to stop me; Thxale's father, Gruxa and some elders... I couldn't throw him off without horrifying every Bushman there, and demeaning all the norms I'd come to live by. I dropped Thxale, and when the men released me, I stood over him and told him to get out, to leave the village and not come back while I was there". (page 126)

Namkwa was taken to America among other things, as "an ideal choice to demonstrate to Americans the intellectual capacity of the Kalahari Bushman" (page 246). All this and more leaves many question marks about this "unique story of one of the more romantic episodes in the history of the encounters between a European scientist and a primitive people". But perhaps basically the book is written for "civilized westerners". That is why Margaret Mead writes that; "Not unless we some day encounter men on some distant planet are we likely to be afforded such a drama". For an African reader all the old assumptions of the westerner towards "natives" and "primitives" are there to be read between the lines.

(K. Prah. UBS. Gaborone)