Chapter 1

Hunter-Gatherers and Anthropology

> [W]here every man is Enemy to every man . . . wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withall. In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; No navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.
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> Political philosopher (Hobbes 1968 [1651]: 186)

> To date, the hunting way of life has been the most successful and persistent adaptation man has ever achieved.
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> Anthropologists (Lee and DeVore 1968: 3)

Hunter-gatherers play a pivotal role in anthropological theory. Nineteenth-century evolutionists saw them as living fossils of early human society. Emile Durkheim's theories of religion and society relied heavily on Australian Aboriginal culture. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's studies of the Andaman Islanders and Australian Aborigines were the foundation of his theory of structural-functionalism. Cultural ecology was grounded in Julian Steward's intimate knowledge of western North America's Shoshone and Paiute. Australian Aboriginal ethnography figured prominently in Claude Lévi-Strauss's search for the elementary structures of kinship. In fact, because anthropology's foundation was the idea of a primal society (Kuper 1988), we could almost write the discipline's entire history in terms of hunter-gatherer ethnology (Yengoyan 1979). Hunter-gatherers are *the* quintessential topic of anthropology (Bettinger 1991).

But who are hunter-gatherers? Over the past century, different ethnographic cases waxed and waned in popularity as the "poster child" for foragers. In anthropology's early days, it was the Australian Aranda. Later, it was the Shoshone of western North America, who were then replaced by the Ju/'hoansi (the !Kung)[1] of southern Africa. In recent years, Paraguay's Ache, Tanzania's Hadza, and Australia's Meriam have each enjoyed their time in the spotlight. Sometimes hunter-gatherers are defined economically, as people without domesticated plants and herd animals,

although this definition covers a variety of social forms. Other times they are defined socially, as *band* societies – people who live in small groups, with flexible membership and egalitarian sociopolitical relations – although this definition encompasses a variety of economic forms (Lee 1992; Roscoe 2002). Through the years, the archetypal hunter-gatherer society changed: from a closed, patrilineal horde to bilateral bands with fluid membership; from Man the Hunter to Woman the Gatherer; from egalitarian bands to rural proletariat; from isolated Paleolithic relics to marginalized members of the contemporary world system.

Yet even a cursory perusal of ethnographic literature shows that there is considerable diversity among ethnographically known foragers, even within a single region such as Africa's Kalahari Desert (e.g., Barnard 1992a; Kent 1996a) or Southeast Asia (Fortier 2009a). They have a variety of kinship systems; hunting is important in some whereas in others, gathering is critical. Colonialism consumed some, but others managed to reject it (Marlowe 2002). Some are territorial, others are not. Some live in large, sedentary groups; others in small nomadic camps. Some are egalitarian but others have social hierarchies. Some have high whereas others have low fertility rates. Would the real hunter-gatherer please stand up!

Anthropologists are aware of this variation[2] but for many years the objective of hunter-gatherer research was to seek out the essential core of the foraging lifeway by explaining away variability as the product of extraordinary environments or particular historical circumstances (Panter-Brick, Layton, and Rowley-Conwy 2001). In *The Hunters*, for example, Elman Service (1966) excluded Northwest Coast peoples because, he argued, they were adapted to a rare environment where food was abundant (more on that assertion in Chapter 9). Although shifts in models or archetypes reflect advances in knowledge and understanding, they also reflect shifts in emphasis, the highlighting of a particular point along a continuum of behavior. For each model proposed, variation is winnowed out, leaving behind a unitary description of the essential hunter-gatherer. Sometimes we are given two categories, such as "simple" and "complex," or "immediate return" and "delayed return" foragers, but one of the categories is usually privileged as capturing the essence of the hunter-gatherer lifeway – and of early human society.

There is indeed much that is common among ethnographically known hunter-gatherers. And, to an extent, the issue is whether one finds the commonalities or the differences among living foragers most intriguing. However, even when a behavior is common to modern foragers, it may only be so because of the current prevalence of a causal variable – for example, circumscription due to European colonization, trade, or low population density (Ember 1975; Schrire 1984a). More important, whatever is commonly associated with ethnographically known hunter-gatherers cannot be causally linked with hunting and gathering because "hunter-gatherer" is a category we impose on human diversity – it is not itself a causal variable. This means that we cannot justify using a common trait to reconstruct ancient foraging society simply because that trait is common to ethnographies.

My goal in this book is to review some of what anthropology has learned about the variability among ethnographically known foragers (Figure 1-1). So, who makes up this group? A hard definition would exclude any group that ever acquired anything from a neighboring nonforaging society; this would leave us with an ethnographic sample of zero. In this book, therefore, "hunter-gatherers" (or "foragers"; I use the terms interchangeably) simply refer to those people whom anthropology has traditionally recognized as hunter-gatherers. In other words, the history of the field, rather than some specific criterion, defines the subject. These people are indeed those who do (or did) procure much if not all of their food from hunting, gathering, and fishing. But the reader should know that many of these "hunter-gatherers" grow some of their own food, trade with agriculturalists for produce, or participate in cash economies. It should not bother us that some groups are not "pure" hunter-gatherers because we are looking for the causes of variation in human behavior, not the essential hunter-gatherer.

I wrote this book with archaeologists in mind, although it contains no prehistory and is by no means limited to archaeological interests. There is seldom enough time for archaeologists to

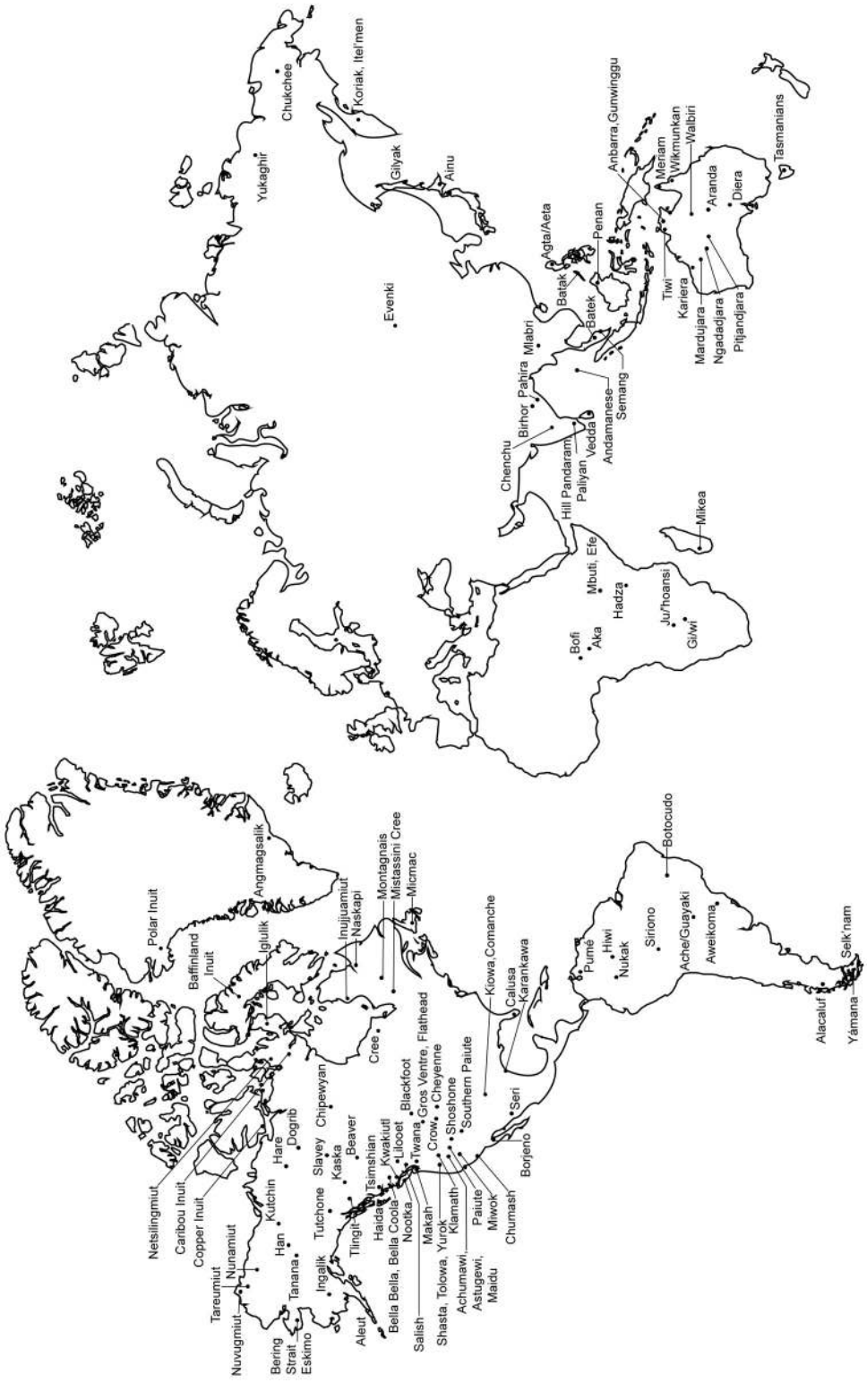

Figure 1-1. World map showing locations of the foraging societies discussed in the text.

read all of the ethnographic literature they would like to read; unfortunately, this tempts us to see prehistoric hunter-gatherers through the lens of a particular ethnographic group, the Ju/'hoansi, say, or the Hadza or Shoshone. My goal is to give fellow archaeologists and ethnologists who are not specialists in hunter-gatherer studies some knowledge of the variation that exists among foragers and some idea of what accounts for it. I do this by examining several areas of behavior: subsistence, mobility, trade, sharing, territoriality, technology, demography, and sociopolitical organization. I have had to leave aside some areas of foragers' lives, particularly cosmology and religion.[3]

To understand this variation, I use the perspective of human behavioral ecology. We'll look at this perspective in depth later, but let me explain why I use it. First, much hunter-gatherer research over the past fifty years has used an ecological or evolutionary perspective, and, in the past thirty years, this has been human behavioral ecology. As an overview of what anthropologists have learned, therefore, this book by necessity must reflect that perspective. Second, in my opinion, human behavioral ecology has proven to be a productive research strategy. It proceeds from theory, makes predictions, and then checks those predictions against empirical data. It's not the only way to study hunter-gatherers, but it has proven useful – and that's the most we can ask of a research paradigm.

To situate this book in the context of hunter-gatherer studies, we will briefly review the history of hunter-gatherer research in terms of three models: the patrilineal/patrilocal model, the generalized foraging model, and the interdependent model. First, however, let us turn to an earlier era and consider the place of hunter-gatherers in nineteenth-century thought. Although later models are often responses to the shortcomings (and racism) of nineteenth-century evolutionism, anthropology nonetheless inherited some characteristics of that century's intellectual posture.

Hunter-Gatherers in Pre-Twentieth-Century Thought

As the study of human diversity, anthropology began as soon as the first hominins wondered why those in the next valley were different. But more conservatively, anthropology appeared as a formal discipline in the late nineteenth century in Europe and the United States. Like much of Western thought, it was intellectually rooted in Enlightenment philosophy, in which ideas about "primitive" societies played a key role.

In Enlightenment thought, history was a record of progress, progress that was reflected in technology and material goods as well as in social order and morality. This view provided Europeans with a way to understand human diversity. In a world thought to be created by a perfect God, diversity in humanity reflected differences in the degree of perfection. And just as God stood above the whole of humanity, so could cultures and ethnic groups be ranked in terms of their perfection. Progress, according to European thinkers, arose from increasingly rational thought that resulted in the control of nature. Allegedly unable to think rationally, members of "primitive" society were controlled by nature. Today, this image of the foraging lifeway is summed up by Hobbes's famous words: "nasty, brutish, and short."[4]

During the nineteenth century, the pageant of technological advancements uncovered by archaeologists and enshrined in the Stone, Bronze, and Iron Ages made clear to intellectuals of the time that Europeans had passed through earlier stages in their progress to modernity. Anthropology developed as part of late-nineteenth-century efforts to reconstruct these past stages. These efforts included Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877), Henry Maine's *Ancient Law* (1861), John Lubbock's *Prehistoric Times* (1865), and Edward Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871).[5] These early evolutionists, however, faced a problem. Reconstructing prehistory requires archaeological evidence, the physical record of the human past. Although scholars had conducted sufficient archaeological research in the late nineteenth century to discern a past, there was not enough to flesh out the picture. What information they did have revealed technological advances and a cumulative domination of nature, but it had nothing to say about kinship, or politics, or

social organization. To reconstruct prehistory where archaeological data were insufficient, the evolutionists fell back on ethnography and the *comparative method*.

With an intellectual pedigree that we could trace back to Greek philosophy (see Bock 1956), the comparative method was a widespread element of Enlightenment thought by the late eighteenth century and was formalized and given theoretical justification by the French philosopher Auguste Comte (the creator of positivism). In linguistics, it was a method of reconstructing dead languages; in biology, a way to reconstruct extinct species; and in anthropology, a way to reconstruct the European past. The comparative method took existing cultural diversity in the world and turned it into an evolutionary sequence. Simply put, different peoples represented different stages in humanity's march to perfection.

The theoretical paradigm of the evolutionists provided the justification for this methodology. Couched within Enlightenment notions of progress, early evolutionist thinking included themes of a "struggle for existence" and "survival of the fittest," themes that students of anthropology know best from the writings of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer. But Darwin's notion of natural selection played no role in the work of early evolutionists. Instead of a selective process, evolutionists saw change as transformative along a more or less single scale of progress, an idea that anthropologists today call *unilineal evolution*. In this paradigm, evolution resulted from the accumulation of ideas over time that improved peoples' minds and morals, as well as their ability to think rationally and to control nature. Some evolutionists, such as Morgan, saw that societies moved along different pathways due to their environments, with some environments placing more restrictions on a people's advance than on others. Diffusion of ideas also played a role. Nonetheless, the evolutionists were primarily intrigued by the general tempo of evolution. In *Ancient Society*, Lewis Henry Morgan described world history in terms of seven periods: the lower, middle, and upper status of Savagery; the lower, middle, and upper status of Barbarism; and the status of civilization, each with its critical discovery or invention that improved humanity's condition and ensured its progress.

This, of course, raised an important question: if everyone has been on earth for the same amount of time, why have some peoples made more progress than others? The Enlightenment paradigm provided the answer: variability among the world's peoples was attributed to variability in the tempo of mental improvement. Some people moved ("progressed") up the evolutionary ladder more quickly than others.[6] Handily enough, this meant that the evolutionists could see less-advanced societies as relics of an earlier age, "monuments of the past," as Morgan put it (1963 [1877]: 41). By placing the world's peoples into a ranked sequence, human prehistory could be reconstructed – and without dirtying one's hands in archaeological sites!

The criteria for constructing evolutionary sequences were various and included technological, social, political, intellectual, and moral factors. These criteria exposed the ethnocentrism of the comparative method, for invariably Western scholars judged other societies against the standard of European society. Monogamy was superior to polygamy, patrilineal descent was better than matrilineal descent, monotheism was morally superior to ancestor worship, and science was the successor to magic and religious superstition. Rankings also had a strongly racialist basis, with people of color at the bottom and Europeans (and especially northwestern, light-skinned Europeans) at the top of the sequence. "Few would dispute," Tylor (1871: 27) asserted, "that the following races are arranged rightly in order of culture: – Australian [Aborigines], Tahitian, Aztec, Chinese, Italian." To be fair, Morgan attributed some differences to environment or technology, and Tylor argued against biology as a cause, but ultimately cultural progress was linked to biological affinity (see Harris 1968: 137–41 on the racial determinism of Morgan and Tylor).

The comparative method generally placed hunter-gatherers at the lower rungs of the evolutionary ladder. Modern foragers were thought to be descendants of prehistoric ones and could, the nineteenth-century polymath Sir John Lubbock claimed, shed light on the past for the same reasons that modern pachyderms could tell us about prehistoric ones. He thought this was a boon to archaeology. Since the study of the past was "deprived . . . of any assistance from history,"

it was also "relieved at the same time from the embarrassing interference of tradition," and the prehistorian was "free to follow the methods which have been so successfully pursued in geology, the rude bone and stone implements of bygone ages being to the one what the remains of extinct animals are to the other" (1900: 407).

This perspective continued into the early twentieth century. The Arctic explorer Vilhjálmur Stefánsson (1966 [1913]: 177–8) said that the Eskimo were not "the remains of the Stone Age but the Stone Age itself." William Sollas (1911: 70) used the reconstructed physical features of Neanderthals (which we now know were incorrect) to argue that Australian Aborigines were their lineal descendants. To Sollas, Bushmen were Aurignacians and Eskimos were descendants of the Magdalenians, genetic relics of European Upper Paleolithic peoples.[7] Sollas (1911: 70) recognized that this was a tenuous approach, but with few archaeological data at his disposal, he saw no more secure alternative "in a subject where fantasy is only too likely to play a leading part."

Two factors helped place hunter-gatherers near the bottom of the evolutionary scale. First, they had few belongings. It might have been obvious that material goods were a hindrance to nomadic peoples, but nineteenth-century European scholars reversed the causal arrow: hunter-gatherers were nomadic because they were intellectually incapable of developing the technology needed to permit a sedentary existence – agricultural implements, storage facilities, houses, ceramics, and the like. Were their moral and intellectual character to be raised, hunter-gatherers would settle down and reap the material rewards of progress.

Second, because many were nomadic, hunter-gatherers had concepts of private property quite different from those of Europeans. Although it is incorrect to say that there are no territorial boundaries among hunter-gatherers (see Chapter 6), the subtlety of the ways in which hunter-gatherers relate people to geography was lost on European explorers and colonizers. To them, hunter-gatherers had no concept of private property, a sure sign of arrested development.[8]

Not everyone was on board with the comparative method. Most notable was Franz Boas, the founder of American anthropology. Unlike the armchair anthropologists of his day, Boas actually had experience with "primitive" peoples (beginning with a long stint in the Arctic), and that experience led him to see that such peoples were no less intelligent than Europeans. Others might also have seen that the comparative method was a remarkable piece of circular reasoning (Bock 1956: 17). If Australian Aborigines matched Neanderthal "culture" so well, it was because Europeans had already presumed what Neanderthal culture was like. This was hardly a demonstration that the Aborigines were a relic population (and no one seemed to worry about how Neanderthals got from Europe to Australia). If the comparative method seemed to work so well, it was because *it conveniently assumed the past it claimed to discover* (Kuper 1988).

Nonetheless, Enlightenment thought and the comparative method influenced social research into the twentieth century. It is why the foraging lifeway was considered undesirable, something people had to leave behind if they wished to avoid extinction. Lubbock, who would have included hunter-gatherers with all other "savages," said that a hunter was

> neither free nor noble; he is a slave to his own wants, his own passions; imperfectly protected from the weather, he suffers from the cold by night and the heat of the sun by day . . . hunger always stares him in the face, and often drives him to the dreadful alternative of cannibalism or death. . . . [H]e is always suspicious, always in danger, always on the watch. He can depend on no one, and no one can depend upon him. (1900: 595)

Perhaps we could excuse Lubbock, who never left Europe and never actually met a "savage." But even those who did were influenced by this view. Decades later, Allan Holmberg described the Bolivian Siriono's adaptation to the tropical rain forest as ineffectual, their lives dominated by a continual concern for food, their personalities as ungenerous and quarrelsome (1950; see commentary by Isaac 1977). Jules Henry (1941: 3) asserted that the Kaingang (Botocudo) of Brazil "resented" their nomadic way of life (since they had allegedly been horticulturalists 300 years previously). Others saw foragers as people who had been forced by agriculturalists into marginal

areas where life was so precarious that their every waking moment was spent in a desperate food quest, leaving no time for cultural advancements. Early twentieth-century descriptions of foragers were often so bleak that they left students wondering "not only how hunters managed to make a living, but whether, after all, this was living" (Sahlins 1968: 85).

Anthropology eventually left this sad image behind, but there was a legacy of unilineal evolutionism that it found harder to shake. Victorian scholars could see that human societies were incredibly diverse – that's what allowed the comparative method. They assumed that this diversity came from a single original social form, a prehistoric hunter-gatherer Adam and Eve. Why? Evolutionists looked for what was common among societies that they thought belonged in the same stage. Some differences arose from diffusion and environment, but if the major cause of change was the accumulation of ideas over time, then, in the early stages of development, not enough time would have passed to produce much variation. There should, therefore, be less diversity in the early reaches of human evolution (when people were hunter-gatherers) than in later stages.

As a result, in the models developed in the twentieth century to describe hunter-gatherers, variation was something to be explained away to uncover the essential hunter-gatherer. We can see this in the succeeding twentieth-century models of foragers.

The Patrilineal/Patrilocal Band

Beginnings are often hard to pinpoint, but the formal concept of a patrilineal/patrilocal band can perhaps be attributed to A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1930–31) and his description of Australian Aboriginal social organization, especially that of the Kariera and Aranda. Radcliffe-Brown argued that Australian Aborigines lived in patrilineal/patrilocal "hordes." We discuss social organization more in Chapter 8 but, briefly, for the uninitiated, a *patrilineal* society is one in which people belong to a social grouping that consists of people who trace their affiliation through a male line (a *matrilineal* society is the opposite). *Patrilocal* refers to the practice in which a newly married couple live where the groom's father lives (and in *matrilocal* societies, the couple lives where the bride's family resides).

Sometimes Radcliffe-Brown described hordes as small patrilineal groups, sometimes as clans, and sometimes as something like clans (but he stuck to the importance of patrilineal groups even when there was evidence to the contrary; see Elkin 1953; Radcliffe-Brown [1954]). Whatever it was, the horde owned a specific tract of land containing its totemic sites, to which it had exclusive use rights. Radcliffe-Brown described the horde as politically autonomous, with no provision that would permit a man to leave one and join another. The horde was also the basic war-making unit.

Only a few years later, in 1936, Julian Steward used ethnographic data, including Radcliffe-Brown's description of the horde, to formalize the concept of the *band*. Steward saw variability in the composition of bands, and he described three major types: patrilineal, matrilineal, and composite. Patrilineal bands had local exogamy, group sizes of fifty to a hundred, political autonomy, patrilineal descent and inheritance, patrilocal residence, and land ownership by the lineage. Theoretically, these bands contained a single patrilineage. Patrilineal bands were said to be the most common social form[9] and, for Steward, this meant they were the earliest. Matrilineal bands mirrored patrilineal bands but with matrilineal descent and matrilocal residence. Steward attributed matrilineal bands to factors such as a shortage of men in the wife's family, more favorable conditions in the territory of the wife's family, the desire to secure assistance of the wife's mother in child rearing, the lack of women for exchange with the wife's band, or diffusion of practices from a neighboring area. Steward gave matrilineal bands little consideration and, in later years, he all but omitted discussion of them (e.g., Steward 1955).

Composite bands consisted of several independent families, were endogamous with bilateral descent (trace relations through both the mother's and father's side), and had no firm rules of residence. Composite bands were frequently larger than patrilineal ones, Steward argued, due

to more abundant food resources, especially herds of migratory game. Steward saw composite bands as resulting from a variety of factors, especially their size and the prior subdivision of land into family tracts for special economic purposes (e.g., Algonquian and Athapaskan fur-trapping territories; Speck 1915). Interband adoption and the legitimacy of cross- and parallel-cousin marriage, Steward argued, also encouraged the formation of composite bands.

Steward saw that some groups, such as the Western Shoshone and Eskimo,[10] did not fit into his classification. For these people, Steward claimed, there was no political unit beyond the family. He described this as the *family level of integration* and attributed it to harsh environments that prevented the formation of bands.

Although Steward clearly recognized that not all hunter-gatherers fit the patrilineal band model, the exceptions were given only slight attention. One reason is that Steward thought we could find the origin of patrilineal bands in natural male dominance (1936: 333, although he later dropped this idea; Steward 1968) and in the need for males (brothers) to bond together to hunt communally. Steward also argued that a hunter needed to remain in the area of his childhood since he assumed that local knowledge was a prerequisite for successful hunting. Although Steward claimed he had ascertained "the causes of primitive bands through analysis of the inner functional or organic connection of the components of the culture and their environmental basis" (1936: 344), he gave nearly equal weight to a priori concepts of land use, adoption practices, kinship, and ideas of human nature (male dominance and territoriality).

A student of Julian Steward, Elman Service (1962) critiqued his mentor's typology and, in the process, discounted variation even more. Steward saw the composite band as the result of ecological factors that prevented the formation of patrilineal bands, but Service claimed that composite bands, as well as family-level cases, were the result of depopulation and the fragmenting effect of European contact. Service emphasized postmarital residence rules more than Steward had, since he felt many cases of unilineal descent were de facto descent groups resulting from a postmarital residence rule (1962: 30–33, 60). Therefore, Service preferred the label patri*local* as opposed to patri*lineal* bands. Because these bands appeared to be common among hunter-gatherers, and because they appeared in many environments, Service concluded that the patrilocal band was the earliest form of human organization above the level of the family. And, in contrast to Steward, Service took the position that "ecological adaptation has nothing whatsoever to do with preventing or 'frustrating' the formation of the patrilocal band," since the patrilocal band was not an adaptation but an "inevitable" form of social organization (1962: 108). Thus, it could be extended to our earliest ancestors.

Within a few years, "patrilocal band" became nearly synonymous with hunter-gatherer (Owen 1965; Service 1966; Williams 1974). Yet, from the beginning, it was clear that the patrilocal-band model could not accommodate all known hunter-gatherer societies. In Australia, the mismatch between the model and ethnographic reality resulted in debates over whether the data were derived from hunter-gatherer behavior or from ideology. Since Radcliffe-Brown recorded "memory culture," he recorded the ideology of land use and descent rather than the actual behavior, but he assumed that the two were the same (Peterson and Long 1986: 18). Melvin Meggitt, and especially Les Hiatt, criticized Radcliffe-Brown's reconstruction of the patrilineal horde as too simple, static, and ignorant of variability in the ethnographic record (Meggitt 1962; Hiatt 1962, 1965, 1966, 1968; see review in Keen 1988).[11] Land-holding social groups, for example, were not universally patrilineal in Australia (Keen 1988: 88). Hiatt also pointed out that matrilineages existed, although they were not corporate land-owning or food-gathering units, and that economic relationships to land had to be differentiated from ritual ties to land.

Arguing that Hiatt had oversimplified Radcliffe-Brown's analysis, W. E. H. Stanner (1965) tried to resolve some of the ambiguity in the concept of horde in Australia with the concepts of *estate* and *range*. An estate is an area that is traditionally recognized as the land (a "country" or "dreaming place" in Aboriginal terms) that "belongs" to a patrilineal descent group, whereas

the range is the actual land over which a foraging group may roam. Sometimes estate and range are identical, but often the range is much larger (Barker 1976). Patrilineal groups can cut across what are recognized as boundaries on other social levels, and members from many descent groups can make up a food-gathering unit. Also, many patrilineal groups did not have distinct territorial boundaries encompassing their ritual (totemic) sites, and food-gathering units could move through areas containing the ritual sites of others.

Clearly, many ethnographers, including Radcliffe-Brown, recognized variability in Australian Aboriginal social organization. They argued over whether this variation should be attributed to environment or to European contact, over whether data collected years after contact were valid, and over the ecological basis of patrilineal hordes (Stanner 1965; Birdsell 1970). But they also argued about whether the variation was significant. Was it that other forms of local group organization were no longer recognizable (L. Hiatt 1968: 100)? Or, were the observed organizations simply variations on a theme, not important enough in themselves to call for explanation? The critical point is seen in Stanner's (1965: 8) observation that "in remarks of wide application, [Radcliffe-Brown] tended to refer to hordes; in matters of detail or in analysis, to clans." Consequently, in the minds of many anthropologists, especially those outside of Australia, the clan and horde became synonymous. Any hints that Radcliffe-Brown gave of variability (and he did) were largely ignored by his readers (see Stanner 1965: 15–16) and, in more general discussions, by Radcliffe-Brown himself – because anthropology was looking for a single descriptive model of hunter-gatherer social organization.

By the 1960s, however, many anthropologists recognized that variation could not be easily subsumed under the patrilineal/patrilocal band model. A new synthesis was in order, and it was provided by the *Man the Hunter* conference.

The Generalized Foraging Model

In 1966, seventy-five scholars from around the world met in Chicago to discuss the state of knowledge about hunter-gatherers. Organized by Richard Lee and Irven DeVore at the urging of Sol Tax, the *Man the Hunter* conference proved to be the twentieth-century's watershed for knowledge about foragers.

The conference covered the topics of marriage, demography, territoriality, social and political organization, and evolution, employing data from Africa, Australia, the subarctic, Arctic, South America, and North America, from ethnographic as well as archaeological cases. It provided new perspectives on marriage practices and descent. Despite its title, the conference introduced anthropology to the importance of plant food and women's labor in hunter-gatherer diet, both of which eventually led to new interpretations of human evolution (see Slocum 1975; papers in Dahlberg 1981).

Since cultural ecology (see Chapter 2) was the order of the day, environment and subsistence took on increased importance at *Man the Hunter*. Presenters discussed marriage practices, for example, as ways of creating social ties to distant areas to facilitate migration in times of famine. They saw group movement, size, and membership as responses to local food density and variability. Lee characterized the Bushmen adaptation as "long term," adapted to environmental conditions as they are manifested over decades. In contrast to earlier descriptions of hunter-gatherers as evolution's failures, in the late 1960s, foragers gained a reputation as savvy lay ecologists. They were *t'xudi kaus*, as the Ju/'hoansi might say, masters of cleverness and bush lore.

Man the Hunter created a new model of foraging society that we shall call the *generalized foraging model* (Isaac 1990). In this model, plant food, rather than meat, was the focus of subsistence. Defense and territoriality were unimportant, and population was thought to be kept in balance with food resources through intentional cultural controls. *Man the Hunter* raised the importance of sharing, bilateral kinship, and bilocal postmarital residence in the hunter-gatherer adaptation.[12] Lee and DeVore described the five characteristics of what they called "nomadic style":

1. *Egalitarianism*. Mobility constrains the amount of property that can be owned and thus serves to maintain material equality.
2. *Low population density*. Population is kept below carrying capacity through intentional, conscious controls such as abstention, abortion, and infanticide.
3. *Lack of territoriality*. Long-term adaptation to resource variability requires that hunter-gatherers be able to move from one region to another, making defended territories maladaptive.
4. *A minimum of food storage*. Since the group is nomadic and food plentiful relative to population density (see characteristic 2), food storage is unnecessary; hence the potential of storage to create social hierarchy is thwarted.
5. *Flux in band composition*. Maintaining social ties requires frequent movement and visiting, which also discourages violence since disputes can be solved through group fissioning rather than fighting.

Where Steward had initially thought of (patrilineal) bands as large groups, at *Man the Hunter*, he used terms such as "minimum band," "multifamily primary bands," "lineage-based bands," and, still, "patrilineal band." He recognized that the ethnographic data could not be easily subsumed by a simple typology, to say nothing of a single concept of patrilineal (or patrilocal) band. After *Man the Hunter*, however, "band" became synonymous with "minimal band," a coresident group of around twenty-five persons. Notwithstanding the many exceptions, foraging as an economy became equated with this concept of band. Discussions of hunter-gatherers focused on "band societies" and excluded large, sedentary groups of North America's Northwest Coast, southern California's Chumash, or the Japanese Ainu (e.g., Leacock and Lee 1982a). In fact, foragers of the Kalahari Desert, and especially the Ju/'hoansi, came to be the model hunter-gatherers (Figure 1-2).

And not just a model but a model we should emulate. Dissatisfaction with modern life had been growing since World War I, and it came to a head in the 1960s and 1970s, with the grinding war of attrition in Vietnam, political assassinations and corruption, and widespread environmental degradation. Nineteenth-century notions of progress collapsed and, instead of an inexorable climb upward, social evolution now seemed to be a long fall from Eden. Increasingly dissatisfied, many rejected the materialism of Western society and searched for an alternative way of life in which material possessions meant little, people lived in harmony with nature, and there were no national boundaries to contest. It was the context for John Lennon's song, *Imagine*, and for the numerous hippie communes. Hunting and gathering had kept humanity alive for 99 percent of its history (Lee and DeVore 1968: ix); what could we learn from it?

Marshall Sahlins (1968, 1972) answered this question with his eloquent formulation of the "original affluent society," perhaps the most enduring legacy of *Man the Hunter*.

Prior to the conference, many social scientists saw foraging as a perpetual and barely adequate search for food (e.g., Kroeber 1939: 220). Paleolithic hunters, the argument went, adopted agriculture and animal domestication to relieve themselves of the time-consuming burden of hunting and gathering. They were evolution's success stories. Living hunter-gatherers, on the other hand, were the unfortunates who had been pushed into environments hostile to agriculture. Spending all of their waking hours in the food quest, hunter-gatherers could not develop elaborate culture because they did not have the spare time to build irrigation systems, bake ceramics, invent complex rituals, or erect pyramids.

Inspired by economist John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society*, Sahlins (1968: 85) sought to overturn this misconception with "the most shocking terms possible." He argued that ethnographic data actually painted the opposite picture: hunter-gatherers spent relatively little time working, had all the food they needed, and spent leisure hours sleeping or socializing. Their devil-may-care attitude toward the future, which many explorers interpreted as stupidity or foolishness, Sahlins claimed was an expression of self-confidence and assurance that nature would