TIME OF TRANSITION

THE EFFECTS OF CHANGE IN HUNTER-GATHERER SOCIETIES

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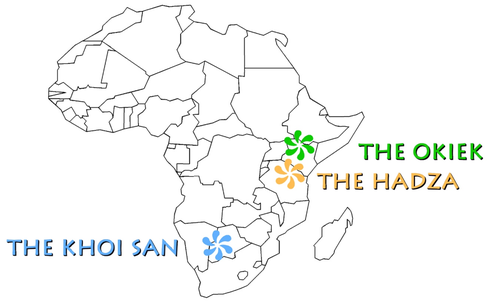
ARGUMENT

Contemporary hunter-gatherers are experiencing great external pressure to convert to agriculture or pastoralism; however, the structure of the hunter-gatherer society may prevent this transition from happening easily.

GROUPS STUDIED



APPROACH

1. Predict the likelihood for a hunter-gatherer group to convert to agriculture or pastoralism based on the degree of external pressures.
2. Determine where the groups studied fit in with the predicted results. If they do not, why not?

ANALYSIS

EXTERNAL STIMULI THAT PRESSURE HUNTER-GATHERERS TO ADOPT AGRICULTURE OR PASTORALISM:

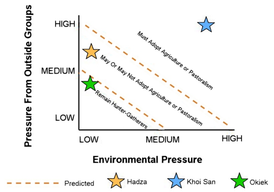
1. Trade and Exchange

2. Government Policy

3. Environmental Degradation from Agriculturalist and Pastoralist Land Use

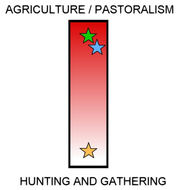
HOW EXTERNAL STIMULI INFLUENCES CHANGE TO AGRICULTURE OR PASTORALISM

PREDICTED RESULTS FOR THE GROUPS



Based on external pressure, the Khoi San ★ should have the greatest investment in agriculture, followed by the Hadza ★; the Okiek ★ should have the least commitment to agriculture. This predicted pattern, however, does not match what is actually occurring.

ACTUAL RESULTS FOR THE GROUPS



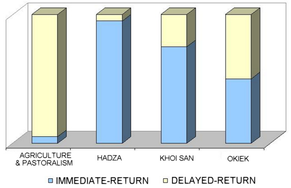
THESE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PREDICTED AND ACTUAL RESULTS RAISE VARIOUS QUESTIONS:

1. Why have the Okiek converted to agriculture and pastoralism when there was little external pressure to change?
2. Why have the Hadza remained hunter-gatherers in the face of continual, strong pressure from outside groups?

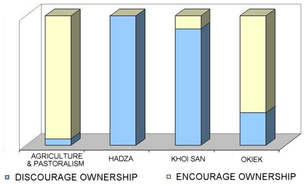
DIFFERENCES IN THE WAYS IN WHICH LAND AND ITS RESOURCES ARE USED CREATE FUNDAMENTAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HUNTER-GATHERERS AND AGRICULTURALISTS & PASTORALISTS

Two Such Differences Are:

1. Time lag in resource returns for labor investment



2. Control over resources



In a further analysis of these groups I found that the Hadza occasionally adopt agriculture, but then as swiftly as possible return to hunting and gathering, a pattern predicted by these data.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The more hunter-gatherer resource use is similar to agriculture and pastoralism, the better hunter-gatherer groups are socially and economically in a position to transition to agriculture or pastoralism.
2. If adopting agriculture is essential to survival of some hunter-gatherer groups, attention must be paid to the social implications of such changes.

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