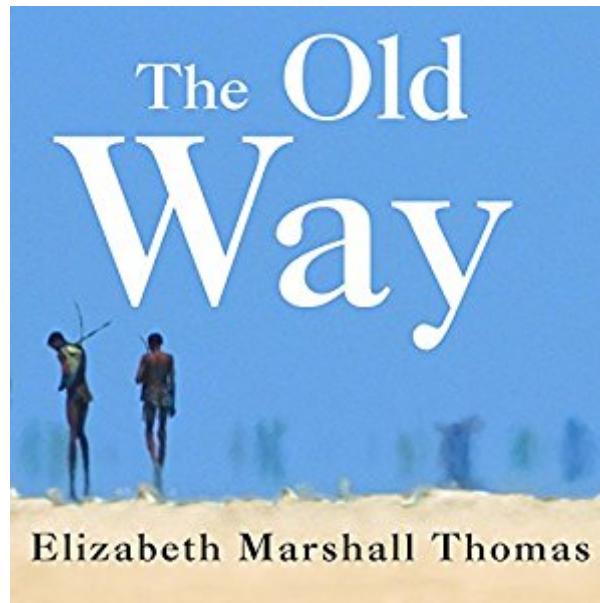




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# **The Old Way: A Story Of The First People**



## Synopsis

One of our most influential anthropologists reevaluates her long and illustrious career by returning to her roots-and the roots of life as we know it. When Elizabeth Marshall Thomas first arrived in Africa to live among the Kalahari San, or bushmen, it was 1950, she was nineteen years old, and these last surviving hunter-gatherers were living as humans had lived for 15,000 centuries. Thomas wound up writing about their world in a seminal work, *The Harmless People* (1959). It has never gone out of print. Back then, this was uncharted territory and little was known about our human origins. Today, our beginnings are better understood. And after a lifetime of interest in the bushmen, Thomas has come to see that their lifestyle reveals great, hidden truths about human evolution. As she displayed in her bestseller, *The Hidden Life of Dogs*, Thomas has a rare gift for giving voice to the voices we don't usually listen to, and helps us see the path that we have taken in our human journey. In *The Old Way*, she shows how the skills and customs of the hunter-gatherer share much in common with the survival tactics of our animal predecessors. And since it is "knowledge, not objects, that endure" over time, Thomas vividly brings us to see how linked we are to our origins in the animal kingdom. *The Old Way* is a rare and remarkable achievement, sure to stir up controversy, and worthy of celebration. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book had a lot of great details about the San way of life and , was overall an eye opener to the

way these Ancient African people SURVIVED AND THRIVED on nature only! I don't like how the author kept comparing these African people to and cave men! They are the FIRST PEOPLE and since when did the First People come out of a cave ? When Europe was going through an Ice Age , Africa and Africans always had a warm and habitable climate . African people were NEVER in a cave! Im not sure where she got that info from . And she constantly refers to them as her ancestors. Really? Since when does anyone of European descent claim anything from Africa? I appreciate the info she brought to light about how OUR ancestors lived. But when you KNOW THYSELF NO ONE CAN FEED YOU ANY BS

The Old Way is an intimate profile of the Ju/wasi people, an ancient hunter-gatherer population that subsisted peacefully for centuries in the Kalahari desert until the 1950's when their efficient and industrious way of life fatally collided with modernity, poverty, drugs and alcohol abuse. Elizabeth Marshall Thomas' portrait of the Ju/wasi is well-written, informative and not without humor. My favorite passages are the reflections on the author's interaction with women and children. Here's a representative example:"To lift a Ju/wa child is an interesting and wonderful experience. An American child is heavy by comparison and comes up off the ground like a sack of grain with arms and legs dangling--dead weight. A Ju/wa child almost lifts himself because he participates in the action with his arms and legs ready to clasp you so that the two of you instantly fuse as if you were a magnet and he a little piece of steel. And you don't have to hold him up--he clamps himself right on you and holds himself in place. You need merely to keep an arm around him. I love to carry Ju/wa children..." (114).Some parts were less warm and more clinical, reading like an ornithologist's description of a flock of birds. (The author makes no ontological distinction between man and beast.) While I don't agree with her view that the only fundamental difference between chimps and us is time, I still enjoyed her tenderly rendered portrait of a people she obviously cares very much about.

I have always found anything written about the bushmen of the Kalahari fascinating. Many of Laurens Van der Post's books, for instance. This particular account was written by a woman who in her youth, along with family members, actually lived for some time among bushmen who were still living according to their ancient culture. I found it tremendously interesting, though sad in the parts that dealt with their difficulties brought about by the modern world.

Interesting and very written. The author is a writer and it shows. She is passionate too. That adds to

engage the readers. Only thing is the book is printed on poor quality paper.

This is a simply wondrous book. The author was one of the first modern white people to actually study the Bushmen, and liked the experience so much that she kept going back. If you have seen "The Gods Must Be Crazy" (and everyone should see "Gods" several times), the star is a real "wild" Bushman and personal friend of the author. For as much speculation as there is on "early humans", life among the Bushmen has probably not changed in 60,000 years. And they don't live on the edge of starvation and they don't spend their days plotting to kill the tribe who lives on the other side of the hill.

This book caps off a lifetime of involvement with the hunter-gatherer people. Her first book, *The Harmless People* was from the eyes of a teenage Elizabeth Thomas. I enjoyed both immensely, and these brought me to her mother's books, *Kung of Nyae Nyae*, and *Nyae Nyae !Kung Beliefs and Rites*. These books have finally helped me fully comprehend our species as the animals we are, and not the civilized wonders we ideal ourselves.

This is a great read but with a very sad ending. Elizabeth Marshal Thomas talks about her time she spent living with the Bushmen of the Kalahari. The books talks about how they live, hunt, marry and live in harmony within their natural environment. It makes you think a lot about our society and how we are so out of tune with the natural world. Instead of destroying the way these remarkable people lived we should have studied how they lived and learned from them. The same can be said for the Australian Aboriginal people whose culture has been destroyed in much the same way. The ending is sad and like every ancient society that has been destroyed by western culture, the few remaining Bushmen that are alive have turned to alcohol and have no sense or purpose in life, just like what happened to the Australian Aboriginal people.

This was one of the best books on the subject that My wife and I have read for a long time. We went to that part of Africa and we could relate to every experience that she wrote about as we followed the San Bushman (original people) on a hunt.

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