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Multigenerations and Multidisciplines: Inheriting Fifty Years of Gwembe Tonga Research

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CHAPTER NINE

MULTIGENERATIONS AND MULTIDISCIPLINES: INHERITING FIFTY YEARS OF GWEMBE TONGA RESEARCH

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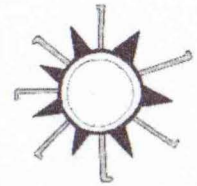

Introduction

In March 1994, a month before leaving to begin eighteen months of dissertation research in Zambia, I made a decision to shift my field site from Zambia's Eastern Province to the Gwembe Valley in the Southern Province. Ted Scudder, crawling on his hands and knees around a ten-foot-square lab table covered with detailed maps of the Gwembe Valley, acted as the catalyst in my decision. It remains unclear whether it was Ted's show alone or the combination of his animated persuasion, his description of the Gwembe project history, and the opportunity to "jump-start" my research with forty years of data on the village where I would work that led to my decision. The specific reasons for turning my research gaze to the southern border of Zambia no longer seem important; the outcome of that decision, however, remains one of the most important forces in both my professional and personal life.

That decision of March 1994 was only one of many twists on my long and circuitous path toward establishing a research focus and site for my dissertation, which is not such a new story for many anthropologists. Tales abound in the discipline of doctoral research plans gone awry, and of chance happenings and resulting transformations in focus, region, and scholarship. In my case, the meandering path included initial graduate training focused on Caribbean anthropology, including religion and ethnomusicology, but eventually crystallized around household economy and social organization in Haiti. Political upheavals in 1991, which reached a peak within a month of my return from preliminary research, made it clear that I needed to reframe my research plans to accommodate an alternative research site. At about the same time, one of my graduate advisors became involved in a collaborative research project on aging in Zambia. Since he was a demographer familiar with highly quantitative data, and his Zambian colleague was a sociologist specializing in public health, and they knew my anthropological research interests centered on aging and household economics, they asked if I would consider joining their project as an ethnographer, to provide the ethnographic context and qualitative data that would complement the survey research they were proposing.

Lisa Cliggett and Elizabeth Colson at the Choma Museum, 1998. Photo by Grazyna Zaucha.

After much reflection on the ramifications of "jumping the Haitian ship," I decided to join their project. Of course, this meant prolonging my graduate training to gain more background on Africa in general and Zambia more specifically, to learn a new language, and to "retool" for an African focus in my dissertation research. Little did I know then that I was training myself for joining one of the oldest and most comprehensive anthropological studies carried out on the African continent.

How Does One Become the Next Generation?

Two years after turning my research interests farther east and south from Haiti, I found myself funded with my own Fulbright Fellowship, while the survey project remained unfunded and in a holding pattern after two rounds of proposal writing. In my last month of preparing for departure to Zambia, with functional language skills for a region in the Eastern Province, on the Malawian border, I met Ted Scudder. Or rather, he tracked me down as I passed through Bloomington, where I was a graduate student at Indiana University, between a variety of prefieldwork trips. Ted had heard about my plans to do research on household decision-making and support systems for the elderly from Rhonda Gillett-Netting, one of my graduate school colleagues who had linked her own dissertation work to Gwembe data (she is now one of the three members of "the next generation" of the Gwembe Tonga Research Project). When Ted learned about my planned dissertation research, he thought that my theoretical interests and topical focus meshed well with

the Gwembe project and that my own work could benefit from the vast quantity of data he and Elizabeth Colson had collected over the years.

In fact, Rhonda had been trying to convince me to shift my Zambian regional focus to the Southern Province since I had first decided to work in Zambia, partly so that we could collaborate on certain aspects of our research. By telling Ted about my research interests, she gained a solid comrade with unmatched persuasive skills. Although Ted enthusiastically encouraged me to conduct research in the Gwembe, there was no discussion at that time about my becoming any kind of "project member." I would benefit from shifting my dissertation field site to the Gwembe through access to data, to which Ted and Elizabeth agreed, as well as the ease of "setting up shop" in a location where locals have previously lived with anthropologists. The project would benefit from my presence in the Gwembe in terms of the field notes and data I would share with Elizabeth and Ted, through my help in maintaining contact with communities and individuals during my stay, and simply by having another researcher show interest in the region. At the time, I saw the gains for both me and the project as short term: I could contemplate a timely completion of my dissertation, while the project would have a researcher in the region for a significant period of time.

Now—seven years, four field trips, and two research projects later—I am one of three social researchers comprising the next generation of the Gwembe Tonga Research Project (Cliggett 1997a, 2000). I feel deep gratitude for Ted's persuasive tendencies, Elizabeth's patience and insight, and their openness and encouragement. The benefits of joining a long-standing, systematic, and respected research program are immense, but the challenges can be daunting. In reflecting on my experience with long-term fieldwork, I highlight some of the benefits and challenges by considering the future of our project research among the Gwembe Tonga specifically and in anthropology generally.

Inheriting Relationships: Arriving in the Field as the Next Generation

As any social scientist conducting research among peoples already accustomed to our odd behaviors, activities, and incessant questions will point out, the ease of starting fieldwork in such a setting cannot be taken for granted. In the Gwembe Valley, I lived in the homestead of a man and his family who have been Elizabeth Colson's hosts since the early 1960s. Kaciente's familiarity with the anthropologist's need to spend a few hours every day writing in solitude (and most Americans' general preference for periods of privacy), without any explanation on my part, greatly facilitated my settling into Sinafala village. As soon as I said, "after eating, I will go to my house to write for a little while," Kaciente would appoint himself official greeter for any potential visitors and inform them that I could not be disturbed at the moment. Prior to conducting my field research, I never would have thought of the value of such "protection." Arriving into a system already in

place (including my need to filter or boil water and other such peculiar behaviors) was one of the unanticipated, but extremely valuable, benefits of linking myself to the Gwembe project. These pragmatic and logistical details may appear somewhat superficial, but they can make a significant difference in how quickly a researcher can dive into the business that brought her to the field in the first place.

Of course, the value of the immense data resources, and especially detailed information on the group of people with whom a researcher will work, is one of the biggest draws to collaborating on a long-term research project. Aside from Ted's persuasive "table performance," it was the detailed histories of households, families, and individuals that made me forsake my earlier intentions to work in Zambia's Eastern Province and instead work in the Gwembe Valley. Even prior to my departure for Zambia, Ted provided me with a "checklist" (one of our Gwembe project terms, meaning a printed and bound book with detailed histories of all the households and their members) for the village where I planned to establish my home base and for the village I planned to use as my comparison site. Within the covers of these checklists, I had all the baseline demographic, genealogical, and educational information I needed to identify the ninety-two elderly individuals and their families with whom I would work during my year and a half living in the Gwembe. To identify, prior to setting foot in the region for the first time, not only a village site but also the individuals with whom a researcher will work, reduces the confusion common at the start of new research projects when there is so much to do, but no clear place to start.

Settling into a previously established research site also includes access to an established social infrastructure. Over their forty years of continuing research, Elizabeth and Ted have established close friendships, excellent working relationships, and good reputations for themselves as caring, committed, and generous individuals not only in the Gwembe Valley but throughout Zambia. Stepping into this social infrastructure was rewarding, though sometimes frustrating. Mentioning my association with Elizabeth and Ted almost always brought forth welcoming smiles, invitations to sit and talk, and a level of trust that would have been hard to establish during a first field season in a "virgin" field site.

I became acutely aware of the trust issue when I began working in a frontier migrant community, in search of individuals and families who had left the Gwembe to pioneer new farms in a region with better agricultural potential. Whenever I found a family from one of the Gwembe communities, they immediately smiled, greeted me in their distinctive style by asking many questions about me (including my body, my day, and my family), and brought me a wooden stool so that we could sit and have a good chat. In our ensuing conversations, though they had not met me before, they answered sometimes-delicate questions with little or no hesitation and willingly shared sensitive information. They did this simply because they understood that I worked with Elizabeth and Ted.

In contrast, when I went to ask about migration issues among the frontier region's non-Gwembe Tonga local leaders and residents, they did not try to conceal

their suspicion of me. Presenting my official letters of introduction from the University of Zambia and letters from my home institution did nothing to allay their fears that the government might have sent me to inform on their activities—perhaps related to nonsanctioned land transfers, the boundaries for the nearby national park, or other of their many activities that they prefer to conduct without outside interference. Even my research assistant's attempts to build alliances and reduce suspicions did nothing to further the openness of our conversations. This type of interaction occurred at least five times during my first extensive fieldwork. From these encounters I became deeply aware of my good fortune in having the legacy of Elizabeth's and Ted's good reputations to help open doors, and lines of communication, with people I had never met. These encounters also emphasized to me the importance of participant observation and living close to people with whom we hope to gain trust.

One of the Gwembe project's well-established protocols is a commitment to continue gathering information about all the individuals and families whom Ted and Elizabeth first met in 1956. This not only serves our research purposes, but also fulfills local expectations. For many people, the primary purpose of our project is the detailed recording of their social history. Whenever I arrive in any community where Elizabeth and Ted have worked, a steady stream of visitors flows in my direction—to greet me, ask about their old American friends, and update me on their lives. This "updating" has become one of the primary research activities for Elizabeth and Ted on their return visits and is increasingly the responsibility of the next generation.

Upon my first arrival in the Gwembe, I was not aware of the significance of this updating activity. Neither Ted nor Elizabeth had charged me with the duty of doing an update of the checklists. Once I had identified the elderly individuals and their families with whom I expected to work—both in the village and wherever they might have migrated—I hoped to focus on this fairly large research population, containing close to 250 adults whom I planned to interview at least once. However, I quickly learned that all the people living in any of the research villages expected that I should work equally with each member, and family, of the village. They were not prepared for me to define a research problem and then limit my intensive work to a subset of their community. I, on the other hand, already felt daunted by the main research task ahead of me.

The local people's resistance to my focused research plan did not take the form of aggression or overt attempts to control my work. Rather, people simply demanded my time, attention, and, in some cases, resources. Unanticipated visits, during which people expected me to update their entries in the checklist, were one way that people forced me to realize that my involvement in the Gwembe project included a commitment to working with everyone in the village, not just a group on my particular research agenda.

Additionally, it became important that I recognize and reward close relationships that Elizabeth and Ted had established, even if I had very little contact

with the particular individuals. In many cases I eventually developed friendships out of those contacts, but initially I felt put upon to engage in relationships for which I had little basis. In Gwembe society friendships and close relationships, whether between local community members or distant relatives, inherently include gift giving and exchange of material things. Additionally, their belief system that the inheritance by one individual of a deceased person's spirit, and all of the rights *and* responsibilities of the deceased, creates a context in which people expect an inheritor to fulfill obligations of those who came before her.

Although Elizabeth is still alive and well, and although she continues to return to the Gwembe for months at a time and writes frequent letters to her Gwembe friends, local people believed me to be Elizabeth's inheritor—at least for the period during which they had access to me. This meant that they expected me to honor their friendships with Elizabeth not only through my time and attention, but also through an exchange of some material goods. Since I conducted my research during a severe multiyear drought, assistance with food (whether cash to purchase, or actual packages of maize) was a primary request. I managed to acknowledge these relationships whenever possible and did what I could to assist people in coping with the drought, but I also struggled with feelings of being exploited and frustrations over attempting to establish relationships on my own.

Of course, over time I did build my own friendships and working relationships, but at times it felt (and sometimes continues to feel) that I bear a double burden—the desire to fulfill responsibilities to my own cohort of relationships and the obligation to fulfill responsibilities to the "Ted and Elizabeth" generation, without whose patience, acceptance, and friendship the Gwembe project would not exist.

Beyond the First Research of the Next Generation: How Does a Longitudinal Project Survive?

Conducting my dissertation research within the context of the Gwembe project most certainly benefited me in the short term. I settled into my field site quickly, began collecting data on my study population almost immediately upon arrival, and supplemented the data collected on my own with a storehouse of forty years' ethnographic observations. All this resulted in a relatively fast write-up of the dissertation and completion of my doctoral program (Cliggett 1997b). But what led me to stick with the project beyond the dissertation phase?

In fact, the process of my more formal incorporation into the project began *during* my first year and a half in the Gwembe. Just two months prior to the end of my dissertation fieldwork, the National Science Foundation awarded Ted a grant for a continuation of the Gwembe project. The major thrust of this grant involved systematizing the demographic component of Elizabeth's and Ted's data, instituting formal demographic data collection methods, training village research assistants to update the checklists throughout the year, and handing

over the project to a new generation of social researchers. In attempting to hand over the most onerous work of the project (the detailed and regular updating of each person ever included in the original study population, and their descendants), Ted wrote three new colleagues into the grant to perform various duties. Sam Clark, previously Ted's undergraduate student at CalTech and later a graduate student in demography at the University of Pennsylvania, was brought in to develop the demographic database and data collection system. Ted included Rhonda Gillett-Netting (then a visiting professor at the University of Arizona) and me to participate in training the local research assistants and to conduct a resurvey of secondary school students whom Elizabeth and Ted had interviewed in the 1970s, as well as to continue collecting ethnographic and biocultural data that complemented the quantitative data.

As my earlier plan to work on the aging survey project in the Eastern Province demonstrates, I already had an interest in collaborative projects, and multidisciplinary studies in particular. I liked the idea of sharing perspectives and data, and what I perceived to be the benefit of examining questions from the view of different intellectual backgrounds. The opportunity to work in such a project, even temporarily (which is how I viewed my tie to the Gwembe project at that point), appealed to me, simply as a way to gain experience in collaboration. The grant also provided funds for field trips over the following three years, which obviously appealed to me because I would have a chance to return to my dissertation field site to fill in the inevitable gaps and update information.

By the end of my year and a half in the Gwembe, I had developed strong ties with many of the community members where I worked and also had a strong affection for the region and Zambia in general. I had also met and become friends with a number of other scholars from Europe and the United States who frequently conducted research in Zambia. During our chance meetings, as we passed through the Research Affiliation Office of the University of Zambia in Lusaka, we shared stories of our experiences and often had useful and provocative discussions about our ideas and interpretations. One of these scholars, an agricultural economist with whom I had discussed my exploration of the relationship between migrant relatives and elderly people in home villages, later offered me a consultancy on one of his projects examining the effects of migration on agricultural labor (Cliggett 1997a, 2000). Through that consultancy and the NSF grant, I was able to return to Zambia for three-month field visits during three consecutive years (1996 through 1998). The consultancy also allowed me to begin a new research project while remaining connected to the Gwembe project.

By the end of my doctoral research, I had begun to feel a growing sense of membership within both the Zambianist scholarly community and within the local communities where I did fieldwork. The three return field trips solidified this feeling and also helped me develop my self-perception as a professional anthropologist.

The Transition from "Employee" to "Manager"

The turning point in how I viewed my association with the Gwembe project came after completing my dissertation, during the final year of the NSF grant for which Ted was the principal investigator. Until then, I had seen myself somewhat like an employee of the project—carrying out a variety of tasks that did not necessarily link to my own work. I saw my dissertation research and consultancy work as independent from the project obligations, and thus I had a dual identity at times—independent researcher and project employee.

However, as I began to think about my next big research project, and consequently to consider in more specific terms the process of systematically incorporating the now close to fifty years of Gwembe data, I began to see those decades of data as a frontier for investigation. My increasing recognition of the importance, and potential for my own research interests, of the Gwembe materials came about through my own intellectual development. In addition to the village checklists that they had given me at the start of my doctoral research, Elizabeth and Ted hold vast quantities of data on innumerable topics. The opportunity to draw from that data, not only at the outset of my research career but, more importantly, as time has moved on and I develop more subtle lines of inquiry, has been one of the greatest benefits of joining this longitudinal study. In fact, during my dissertation write-up, I did not draw as extensively as I might have on the thousands of pages of ethnographic field notes that Elizabeth and Ted made available to me. At the time, I was struggling with learning to interpret my own field notes and data. To attempt systematic interpretation of forty years of someone else's data seemed daunting, and posed the risk of "dissertating" for decades.

With time, however, I felt a greater sense of "ability" in understanding Gwembe life, and with that I developed more confidence to read my colleagues' field notes, reflections, interpretations, and thoughts, and to make my own sense of their views and their data. Indeed, the cognitive process of learning to trust yourself can be a never-ending challenge in collaborative longitudinal fieldwork. Especially during my dissertation write-up, I often felt that I could not say anything useful or new because Elizabeth and Ted already had written on all the important topics and had made all the meaningful interpretations of Gwembe life to which my work would speak. Indeed, Elizabeth and Ted already had published on aging (Colson and Scudder 1981) and on the relationship between rural populations and their migrant relatives (Colson and Scudder 1975; Scudder and Habarad 1991)—the two areas of my research at that time. I felt that all I could do was make a statement about how things are now compared to their earlier writings.

Part of working through those mental barriers meant having Elizabeth and Ted read what I had written. The first time I had them read my work was one of the most intellectually vulnerable moments in my young career. However, their detailed reading, commentary (almost like a conversation with my writing), and

critical praise allowed me to continue writing, even with a bit more confidence. Although in comparison to Elizabeth and Ted I still feel rather like a child in my knowledge of the Gwembe, I now have greater confidence to attempt interpretations. This may be due, in part, to internalizing what Elizabeth has said about writing and publishing when working on long-term studies. She suggested that there is an inherent sense that our work is always "in process" when you engage in longitudinal studies—each publication is more like a "status report" than some kind of definitive statement (Colson 1999). Thus, unlike the case of those anthropologists who do "one-shot" studies, with each new article or book we have the chance to clarify (or correct) earlier statements.

With greater confidence in my skills of interpretation, even of someone else's field notes, I began to have a strong desire to work closely, and systematically, with the five decades of Gwembe materials, not just to use selected anecdotes and incidents from those years. I began to see the Gwembe data as a foundation on which to develop potentially more significant findings than I could produce through summer field studies as I pursued tenure at an academic institution.

Tied to the data were the ideas that drove Elizabeth and Ted to collect such detailed information in the first place. The intellectual framework inherent to the Gwembe study—a concern for community continuity, change, and adaptation—also was my own general area of interest. When I recognized that those fifty years of field notes, surveys, diaries, field maps, and so forth provided ways to examine these important questions, it became clear that taking some responsibility for the Gwembe project not only benefited the project, but also would benefit my own career.

At that turning point in my self-perception from employee to something more, I also knew that, at this stage in their careers, Elizabeth and Ted were unlikely to take responsibility for finding funding to manage data that they had already analyzed for their particular concerns. I realized that, in order to make the half century of data accessible and meaningful to me and my colleagues, I would need to take some responsibility for planning how that data should be processed, coded, and stored. Suddenly, I saw myself as a decision maker in the project, not merely as an employee.

Multigenerations and Multidisciplines: Synthesizing for the Long Term

Making the fifty years of qualitative data more easily accessible has become a primary concern for me and my other next-generation colleagues. By computerizing those data and, ultimately, linking them to the demographic database, we will create a unique and massive data resource that has applications not only for anthropology, but also such fields as comparative economics and political science, public health, ecology, demography, and development studies, to name only a few.

The challenge at this stage in the Gwembe project's life cycle is the tension between the next generation's desire aggressively to pursue support for continued data collection, data management, and fieldwork and our individual needs to establish ourselves within our disciplines and subdisciplines. In the spirit of the "publish or perish" tradition, we need to balance our work on these diverse opportunities so that we *can* remain committed to the broader project goals.

All three of us in the next generation of the Gwembe project face similar publishing and research requirements for tenure track positions at research universities—multiple articles in top-tier journals, a published book by the tenure review year, and external grants demonstrating an active research agenda. Of course, in the early years of being assistant professors, we also have commitments to develop, prepare, and teach new courses at our institutions. The pressures of all of these (and other) job components make these pretenure years a difficult time for sustaining our collaboration and our stewardship of the Gwembe project.

At times, any one of us may feel a need to carve out a particular research question of our own. We may feel a need to have "first rights" to publish on that topic and thus ensure recognition for "new and significant research activity" from our universities and tenure review committees. This same individualism also may emerge in terms of access to and control over portions of the data. Over time, particularly as we move beyond the tenure hurdle, tendencies toward individualism surely will give way to the cooperative and collaborative styles that led us to join this project in the first place.

My particular coping strategy for the stress of the tenure process includes planning smaller and more easily defined research projects from which I can publish articles relatively quickly. In one case, analyzing a small data set of diaries written by Gwembe research assistants offers the opportunity to explore a number of themes, including domestic violence and theft (Elizabeth initiated the analysis on this latter topic, and we are currently collaborating on a manuscript). In this sense, the Gwembe project remains active and relevant, but in some cases more in the form of an archive.

While many social scientists and scholars in the humanities conduct research that makes use of primary and secondary databases, anthropologists typically rely on collecting their own data through fieldwork. One of the great benefits of a longitudinal study is that, even when there is no time or funding for fieldwork, there always are data awaiting analysis. In the case of the Gwembe project, the data sets are too vast to analyze in their entirety (which is why we plan to computerize the data sets to render them more accessible), so pieces will need to be assembled, analyzed, and published in numerous separate articles—a strategy perfectly compatible with getting tenure.

During the moments when my next-generation colleagues and I can look beyond the immediate future of our careers, we do see a long-range and ambitious

plan for the Gwembe Tonga Research Project. Recently, Rhonda Gillett-Netting and I, on behalf of the Gwembe team as a whole, submitted a proposal to a new program for infrastructure development for multidisciplinary social science projects at the National Science Foundation. If funded, this grant would have provided the necessary funding to computerize the fifty years of qualitative data and to create an interactive database linking the ethnographic data to the demographic information. Unfortunately, the grant proposal was turned down, partly because it was very ambitious (particularly given our "junior" status in our disciplines), and partly because multidisciplinarity means different things to different people (and disciplines) and consequently is difficult to achieve. Since hearing the outcome of that round of proposal submissions, we have decided to break the proposal into smaller sections and attempt funding for various components through different foundations. This approach will be much slower, and the ability to make the links between the ethnographic and quantitative data will be significantly delayed, but we are learning that, in longitudinal studies, time plays a role even in the search for funding.

The question of how to achieve multidisciplinarity plays out not only in our search for funding, but also in the collaboration among our project members. All five of us have differing strengths and research interests. Four of us have training in anthropology, although within the discipline we each tend toward different emphases. Sam Clark comes to the project with a background in computer science and demography, both of which are extremely valuable to the project as it now stands. Since the end of 1995, when we began the more formal collaboration under the NSF grant Ted secured, all of us have been learning the process of seeing research goals through other researchers' lenses. In some cases, this has been a long and difficult lesson. I have had to struggle with ideas, methods, and jargon from quantitative perspectives to which I have not been accustomed. At the same time, other team members consider the ethnographic emphasis on participant observation and narrative field notes too vague, subjective, and anecdotal to be of comparative value. Despite these differing viewpoints, we continue to discuss what data are so crucial that they *must* be collected regularly and systematically. After long and repeated discussions, we agreed on the need for maintaining detailed demographic records, a core of socioeconomic data, and diaries kept by village research assistants. In addition, insofar as possible, we are committed to continuing local ethnography.

In the end, we believe that our work benefits from the collaboration. We have been forced to rethink our views regarding data, methods, and research questions. We have become more critically aware because we must explain, clarify, and sometimes justify our desires and research plans to each other long before our ideas reach a grant review panel or peer reviewers for publication. In short, we have better data, better analysis, better interpretations, and better answers for important questions about the human condition than if we worked within the traditional solitary framework of most anthropologists.

Individual Personalities and Project Results: Toward a Conclusion

At the outset I suggested that deciding to join the Gwembe Tonga Research Project significantly influenced both my professional and personal life. Pushing myself to handle different kinds and vast quantities of data has made me into a much different anthropologist than I would have been using my own field notes collected over a much shorter time frame. Remaining committed to one field site and study population, and to the questions that matter most within that context, helps to define how my individual research interests will develop. Learning to communicate effectively across disciplines, and within a team of individuals, challenges me not only to resist the temptations of individualism often associated with the anthropological persona, but also to make my research relevant beyond the discipline of anthropology.

But how does long-term research affect our personal lives? Certainly, it provides a sense of having an additional home and an additional family. I know that many fieldworkers feel their research sites to be like a second home. In my case, Zambia really is a second home, in the sense that I feel obligated to return. At times I love this obligation, but at times I resent it (much like I have felt about my home in the United States). I have responsibilities—both social and material—in Zambia that require my presence on a fairly regular basis. The project, and I, have numerous possessions (including household supplies, bedding, clothing, and equipment) that we must care for in Zambia. We also have social relationships that need regular nurturing through our presence if we expect to maintain them.

Although I feel close to some of my Tonga friends and research assistants in the Gwembe, they are *not* the second family of which I speak. Somewhat to my surprise, the Gwembe project "team," in a fascinating transformation from coworker to relative, has become like a new family. I say this not to suggest that we have bonded into a harmonious domestic group, but to recognize that, in family relationships, people remain connected despite conflicts and individual desires that at times might push nonfamily members away from each other. Individuals within families and households work together and remain linked because of what they achieve through their collaboration (Netting, Wilk, and Arnould 1984; Wilk 1989). The five team members—Colson, Scudder, Gillett-Netting, Clark, and myself—in the Gwembe Tonga Research Project find that the sum of our research efforts far outweighs the work we do alone, even when we find struggles in our collaboration. By working together, we also ensure the continuation of the project, something that we could not achieve as individuals.

Of course, there are many other ways that my association with the Gwembe Tonga Research Project has influenced my personal life, including my aesthetic tastes and dietary preferences, the way I think of seasonality and time, how I create a social life and friendships, and even my changing ideas of what is important in life. Anthropologists tend to merge our personal selves with our professional selves; it goes

with the job. The inverse may also be true: individuals willing to blend their personal and professional lives can more easily become successful as anthropologists.

We can say something similar about long-term anthropological studies. Individuals, working together and apart, shape and ultimately determine the direction, focus, results, and longevity of long-term projects. When a field research enterprise like the Gwembe Tonga project is sustained over decades, it is because individuals become committed to making it work. Only when we are willing to take on the challenges of longitudinal research can its professional and personal rewards accrue to us as individuals, to our discipline and to science in general, and to the people whose social history we preserve through our fieldwork among their households and communities.

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