

**COMMUNITY-BASED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN
NYAE NYAE, EASTERN NAMIBIA: AN APPROACH BY THE
JU/HOANSI TO COMMON PROPERTY MANAGEMENT**

**A Paper Prepared for the Annual Meeting of the International
Association for the
Study of Common Property**

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INTRODUCTION

Chairperson, invited guests and conference participants on behalf of the Nyae Nyae Farmers Co-operative I would like to thank the conference organizers for inviting us to this conference and allowing our organization to address the participants on common property management in Nyae Nyae.

Our paper will look at the history of Nyae Nyae and how it has affected our approach to common property management strategies today.

AN HISTORICAL VIEW OF NYAE NYAE

Prior to the 1950's, the Ju/'hoansi of Nyae Nyae occupied a vast tract of land which encompassed parts of Namibia and Botswana, mainly in what is now known as the Kalahari desert. The people were able to collect food and hunt game over wide ranging areas and food availability and sustainability were no problem to the Ju/'hoan.

Management of the land was based on a system of "N!ores" or villages in which resources were shared by a collection of family groups that were headed by a N!ore Kxao or "owner". A N!ore is a piece of land, roughly equal to a farm, which included veld food, water and hunting areas. The N!ore Kxao was picked by a family group from amongst its elders and could be either a man or a woman. Where two or more N!ores had a stake in a common resource they would come together and talk about how to manage it properly.

Conflict between the common property owners was extremely rare, however, if people who were not part of the common property ownership used this property without the permission of ALL the N!ores then often blood would be spilt in protecting this communal asset.

Types of resources considered to be common property included veld foods such as mangetti nuts, morama beans, marula nuts and berries. All game was also considered to be common property and historically this food source was seen by the Ju/'hoansi to be inexhaustible. Natural water points were also considered to be common property among the Ju/'hoansi of Nyae Nyae.

Since the 1950s, however, much has changed for the Ju/'hoan of Nyae Nyae. The border fence between Namibia and Botswana has separated our people. Legislation by the previous South West African administration led to major land seizures which has been made worse by encroachments of other language groups, who do not share our approach to resource management, onto our land. To add to these burdens of land seizure and establishment of national boundaries many commercial farmers seized on the opportunity to exploit the generally passive character of the Ju/'hoansi by essentially kidnapping Ju/'hoansi people to work on their farms as slave labour.

It was also during this period that the previous Government established the administrative centre of Tsumkwe and encouraged people to move to this centre with promises of work, training and government services such as health care and education. This led to further efforts by the Government to dispossess people of their ancestral land and establish game reserves in Ju/'hoan N!ores. This is particularly true for the Kaudom Game reserve which was established in the 1980's when the South West African Administration used troops to move the Ju/'hoan out of the area and into Tsumkwe, and the nearby resettlement area of Aasvoelnes, thus enabling the then Department of Nature Conservation to establish the Kaudom reserve.

During the 1980's there were also efforts made by the Government to turn the little land left to the Ju/'hoansi into a game reserve encompassing all of Nyae Nyae. Some Ju/'hoansi were offered the chance to stay on the land, but only if they agreed to remain in our traditional loin clothes and hunt and gather for the entertainment of tourists to the area. If this plan had succeeded, it would have meant that in less than forty years the Ju/'hoan lands would have shrunk from over 70 000sq. kms to no land at all.

The Ju/'hoansi would have become landless.

A RESPONSE BY THE JU/'HOANSI

As a result of the Government attempts to remove the last of the Ju/'hoan people from their land, the people formed the Nyae Nyae Farmers Cooperative to promote their interests and guide development in the area. As a grassroots organization we were determined to hold onto this last of the Ju/'hoansi land. With the assistance of people from America, in particular Mr. John Marshall, we were able to support and encourage people to leave Tsumkwe and re-occupy their traditional N!ores. This resulted in the Government abandoning plans to establish the game reserve in Nyae Nyae.

Since this time we have been grappling with the issues of self management and how we as a people and an organization can enter the new Namibia as equal partners in national development.

A major problem we have faced is how to manage the land we have left in a sustainable way which also allows us to benefit economically. Up until now trophy hunters and tourist have been able to enter Nyae Nyae and exploit our resources without any obligation to provide an economic return to the people who are the custodians of the land. Likewise, we continue to experience periodic incursions by groups from outside our N!ores. They have brought large numbers of cattle into the area, causing environmental damage, without compensation to the Ju/'hoansi. After overgrazing the land, the people from outside our area leave and we are left to suffer the consequences.

However, the new Government of Namibia has provided the opportunity for the Ju/'hoansi to control the land and manage it for the benefit of the traditional owners for the first time in this new era. The Government is currently completing legislation that will allow the Ju/'hoansi people to form a "conservancy" in the area.

WHAT IS A CONSERVANCY AND HOW DOES IT WORK

The conservancy is a legislative arrangement which allows the communal residents of a specific area to apply for the right to own wildlife resources and gain some control over tourism based on this resource. Wildlife benefits will accrue through the capture and sale of live game, game viewing and the sale of trophy hunting permits. The quota or number of animals we can offtake will be determined in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. The NNFC will also be able to control the flow and numbers of tourists entering Nyae Nyae to see or hunt game, or experience our way of life. We can also specify which areas of Nyae Nyae tourists can and cannot visit and the payment due to the NNFC. With respect to tour operators, they will also be obliged to negotiate with the NNFC for visiting rights to the area, including payments to the NNFC, employment of local staff, etc.

- b. Managing the resources on behalf of the conservancy members
- c. Determining all management arrangements including fee negotiations for all business ventures in Nyae Nyae
- d. Employing staff and consultants specifically for conservancy activities
- e. Making sure all contractors involved in conservancy activities meet their obligations
- f. Settling disputes involving conservancy issues

The members of the conservancy committee are elected from the RADA (a meeting involving all villages in Nyae Nyae) and are elected for a two year period. However, they can be removed from the committee if the community does not believe they are working for the good of all conservancy members.

TODAY VERSUS YESTERDAY: A MANAGEMENT MODEL BASED ON TRADITIONAL SYSTEMS OF COMMON PROPERTY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.

On the surface, the NNFC may not appear to reflect traditional systems. In fact we have structured the NNFC on our traditional land tenure system. However, the NNFC also allows for the adoption of new approaches and methods that enable us to face the conditions and changes of post Apartheid Namibia. We now manage common property and resources owned by thirty five N!ore compared to common property management owned by 3 to 6 N!ore in the traditional model.

Through the NNFC and our conservancy, we will be able to work with all our resources – such as bush foods, game and grasses – as one in an integrated way. We don't want to say 'we only have cattle' or 'we only have game' or 'we only have bush food'. We also want to cultivate veld foods in the communities of Nyae Nyae. We plan to limit the number of cattle so that the grasses will not run out, and we plan to make sure the game has the water and grazing it needs to recover its numbers, which we can then benefit from. Finally, we want to use our resources as our grandparents did, so our children will have then in the future, as our grandparents left them to us.

HOW HAVE WE MANAGED TO ACHIEVE THIS AND WHAT ARE THE LESSONS FOR OTHER PEOPLE

In Nyae Nyae we were fortunate to have seen the problems which occur through uncontrolled development. We have seen the trophy hunter come to Nyae Nyae and shoot our food sources without any compensation. We have also experienced tourists and tour operators

arriving unannounced and camping next to water points and disturbing the wildlife with no respect for our needs or culture. We have also seen the results of overgrazing in other parts of Namibia and Africa in general and we did not want these things to continue to the detriment of our land and people.

After meetings within the community and with outside organizations and people, we realised that an important way to help manage our resources was to seek support from the international donor community. We approached the LIFE program to support the NNFC to establish the CBNRM, which they agreed to do, and this support continues today. We would like to say that this support has been invaluable in ensuring our common property strategy has been implemented successfully. This funding support has enabled us to employ the community rangers, provide training in natural resource management and to hold many meetings throughout Nyae Nyae.

At meetings held at the village, district and RADA level we talked at length about the need for a common approach to our common problems. The people of Nyae Nyae were able to identify the same issues as the NNFC and this made the process of understanding and agreement easier to reach. We were able to relate the issues to the traditional notion of common property management which also assisted the NIOres to understand the issues at stake. Through this process of extensive meetings, we have also been able to highlight the community's concerns about the management of common property resources and have these concerns addressed. At the end of the day the villages recognised that it was in their best interests to support a common approach to the problems of uncontrolled development; development which left them empty handed both financially and in terms of lost or damaged natural resources.

The outcome of this process will be the establishment of the conservancy, a conservancy which ensures the sustainability of the wildlife and veld foods, controls the pace of development in Nyae Nyae and allows us to reap the benefits of development in our area.

It should be noted that we were able to achieve this outcome because there was a commitment on behalf of the donor to support the process. Through this, the NNFC has held many meetings to address the needs and aspirations of the communities. We were able to show the communities that there will be real benefits distributed and we were able to get a commitment from all the Ju/'hoansi people of Nyae Nyae to support this strategy.

Once again we would like to thank the participants for allowing us to address this conference and if you have any questions we would be happy to respond.

Again thank you

Status of Wildlife Resource and Benefits in Nyae Nyae

Currently

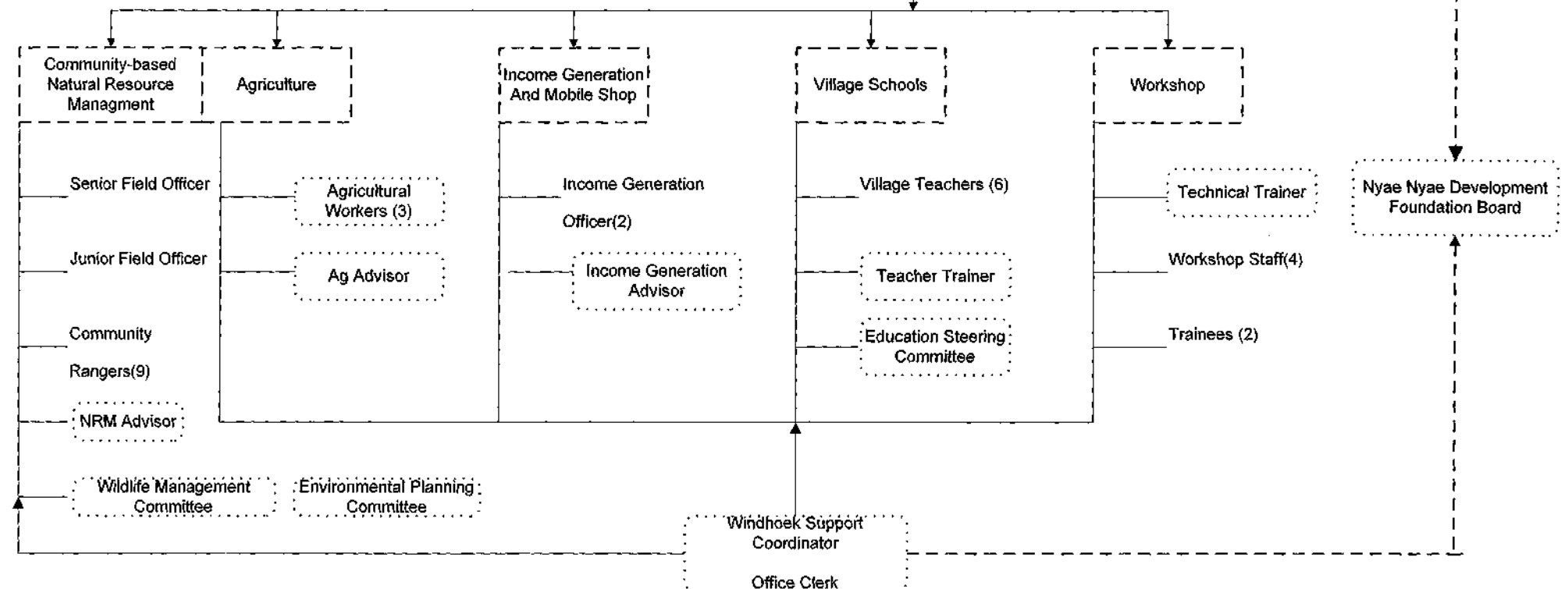
- Wildlife is "King's Game" and belongs to the State; therefore local people have no incentive to conserve or manage the resource sustainably
- Ministry polices Nyae Nyae to conserve wildlife instead of working with the community on conservation and sustainable offtake
- All benefits from using game (i.e., trophy hunting, wildlife safaris, live capture and sale) go directly to the central treasury
- Tourism is controlled by the State and private sector with only minor benefits (i.e., casual labour and sale of crafts) to local community
- Insecure land tenure in communal areas of Namibia (only customary tenure recognized) makes Nyae Nyae an open access system which further discourages people to conserve resources

Expected Under Conservancy

- ★ Community regains ownership of wildlife and incentive to conserve and use it sustainably returns
- ★ Ministry begins to support communities to manage their wildlife through technical assistance and training, and supports process of community development
- ★ Benefits from sustainable offtake (money and meat) go directly to local community and can be used by people to meet development needs
- ★ Community gains increasing control of tourism; investment in tourism sector results in jobs, capacity building and money for local residents
- ★ While not secure tenure, rights to own and utilise game on the land goes back to the community and system again becomes closed access
- ★ NNFC is strengthened by developing the skills and capacity to manage wildlife as they do their livestock
- ★ Wildlife conservancy becomes a model for other government agencies to return user rights back to the community

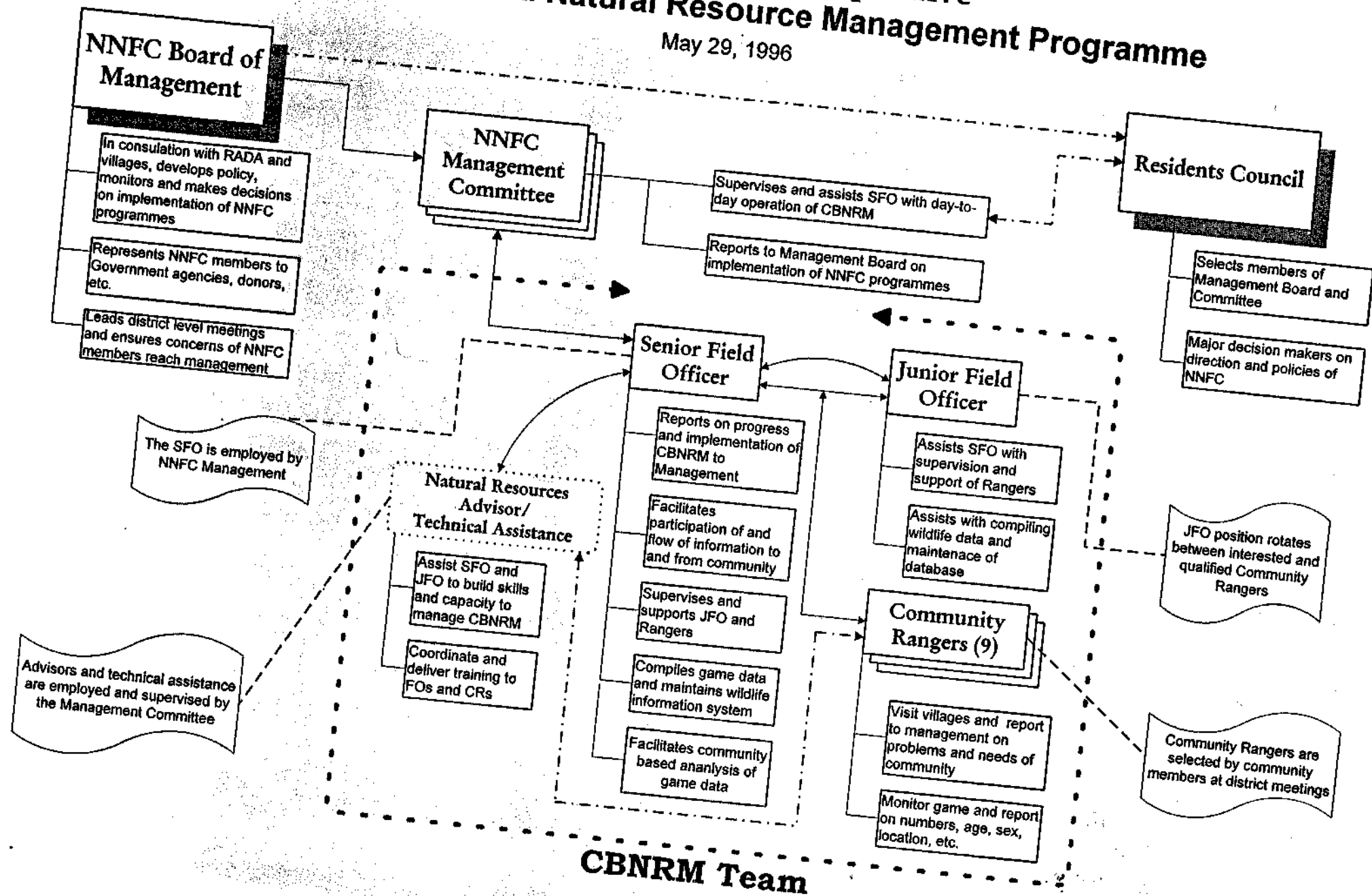
Nyae Nyae Farmers Cooperative Organigram (28.5.96)

- direct managerial/implementation relationship
- - - advisory or support relationship
- support or temporary position
- - - NNFC Programme

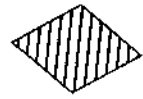


Nyae Nyae Farmers Cooperative Community Based Natural Resource Management Programme

May 29, 1996



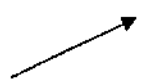
Common Property Resources in Nyae Nyae



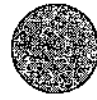
Wildlife: may be resident or migratory



Hunting Area: always shared between more than one Nlore



Wildlife movements



Veld Food Gathering Area: Including tubers, roots, berries, etc.



Indigenous Fruit Tree Area: may be an individual tree or grove

A Nlore is roughly equal to a village or farm.



Nloresi resources are managed by a Nlore Kxao or "owner" who makes decisions in consultation with the other residents of his or her Nlore.

Rights to live in or use the resources of a Nlore are inherited at birth or gained through marriage.

Resource areas can be "owned" by one Nlore or they may be shared between several.

Rights to use the resources owned by another Nlore may be shared, but only when permission is given by the Nlore Kxao. Hunting or gathering without permission is considered "stealing", which was traditionally punishable by death.

