Future Pasts

FUTURE PASTS WORKING PAPERS NO. 12

Cultural heritage and histories of the Northern Namib:

historical and oral history observations for the Draft Management Plan, Skeleton Coast National Park 2021/2022-2030/2031

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Future Pasts draws on Arts and Humanities research methodologies to document and analyse culturally-inflected perceptions and practices of sustainability. The project has a particular geographical focus on west Namibia, where three of our core research team have long-term field research experience.

The project seeks to:

- enhance understanding of sociocultural, economic and environmental changes in historical and post-independence contexts;
- document and support cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge regarding present and historical cultural landscapes of west Namibia;
- extend analysis and understanding of the historical ecologies of the Namib;
- interrogate interpretations of 'sustainability', particularly those contributing to the promotion of a growth-oriented 'green economy';
- foster cross-cultural public discussion of concerns relating to environmental change and sustainability;
- critically engage with the power dimensions shaping whose pasts become transferred forwards to the future in contemporary approaches to environmental conservation and sustainability.

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Namibian partner organisations have included the National Museum of Namibia, Gobabeb Research and Training Centre, Save the Rhino Trust, the Namidaman Traditional Authority, Sesfontein Conservancy and Mamokobo Film and Research.

Although the formal funding period of the project is now over, we continue to have research material to share through this Working Paper Series. We also continue to be interested in making available work that fits with the project's research themes, but has not yet found a publication home – see below.

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Cultural heritage and histories of the Northern Namib: historical and oral history observations for the Draft Management Plan, Skeleton Coast National Park 2021/2022-2030/2031

Sian Sullivan[1]

Abstract
This report shares documented information for indigenous cultural heritage and histories associated with the Northern Namib, designated since 1971 as the Skeleton Coast National Park. The paper draws on two principal sources of information: 1) historical documents stretching back to the late 1800s; and 2) oral history research with now elderly people who have direct and familial memories of using and living in areas now within the Park boundary. The research shared herein affirms that localities and resources now included within the Park were used by local people in historical times, their access linked with the availability of valued foods, especially *!nara* (*Acanthosicyos horridus*) melons and marine foods such as mussels. Memories about these localities, resources and heritage concerns such as graves of family members remain alive for some individuals and their families today. These concerns retain cultural resonance in the contemporary moment, despite significant access constraints over the last several decades. Suggestions are made for foregrounding an understanding of the Northern Namib as a remembered cultural landscape as well as an area of high conservation value, and for protecting and perhaps restoring some access to sites that may be considered of significant cultural heritage value. Such sites include graves of known ancestors and named and remembered former dwelling places. The material shared here may contribute to a diversified recognition of values for the Skeleton Coast National Park for the new Management Plan that will shape ecological and heritage conservation practice and visitor experiences over the next 10 years.

Key words. Northern Namib; on-site oral history; cultural landscapes; Khoekhoegowab; *!nara* (*Acanthosicyos horridus*); Skeleton Coast National Park; Namibia

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> It can be concluded that the coast in the west of the Kaokoveld was not a no-man's-land, but rather that there were south-north and north-south relations and migrations of a sparse coastal population and that memories of it have been preserved right down to the recent past. (Köhler 1969: 106)

1. Introduction

The research shared here provides a review of historical and cultural information for the Northern Namib. It has been written as a contribution to the development of the Draft Management Plan for Namibia's Skeleton Coast National Park, 2021/2022-2030/2031.

The current draft Plan (MEFT 2021) foregrounds the significance of archaeological and cultural sites in the Northern Namib alongside biodiversity protection, sustainable use, stakeholder participation and a landscape approach to conservation. At the same time, it includes rather little in terms of historical literatures regarding the Northern Namib, or recall of its prior cultural and livelihood significance for peoples who once accessed and lived in this area.

Chapter 7 (section 7.3) of the Draft Plan on 'Archaeological sites' states that virtually no sites from the Holocene (*ca*. 11,650 years ago to the present) have been recorded for the Skeleton Coast National Park. It is assumed that people "may not have inhabited the coastal part of the Northern Namib during the Holocene"; although

> their presence is recorded on the eastern margins of the Northern Namib from where they probably conducted temporary forays into the coast as also clear from the huge number of white mussel shells in shell middens (dated approx. 1,000 to 2,700 years old) which may have been the most important marine species used for food.

The historical and oral history information shared below indicates instead that some people did indeed utilise and live at times within the area that is now the Park. Some elderly people now concentrated in the Sesfontein area of the Hoanib River valley retain vivid memories of named places and livelihood practices in the Northern Namib – including harvesting of *!nara* melons (*Acanthosicyos horridus*) and marine resources such as mussels. They also affirm cross-generational depth of habitation of this area.

Given the paucity of available cultural information for the Northern Namib, the Deputy Director of Wildlife Monitoring and Research (Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism – MEFT), invited this report as a contribution to the new Draft Management Plan for SCNP. The document summarises observations from review of historical texts regarding the area (Section 2). It also presents oral history research with Khoekhoegowab-speaking people now living in the Sesfontein area who remember accessing and using resources and sites within and close to the Park boundary in the past (Section 3). Suggestions are made for foregrounding an understanding of the Northern Namib as a remembered cultural landscape as well as an area of high conservation value, and for protecting and perhaps restoring some

access to sites that may be considered of significant cultural heritage value. Such sites include graves of known ancestors and named and remembered former dwelling places.

Sources

The material shared below outlines cultural histories and remembered resource-use practices linked with the Northern Namib, now protected as the Skeleton Coast National Park (SCNP). It is the outcome of three main threads of research:

1) **oral history research and interviews** over the last 25 years with primarily Khoekhoegowab-speaking individuals now living in the Sesfontein area.

2) **on-site oral histories and cultural landscapes mapping journeys** with elderly individuals who remember living in, moving through, and harvesting from areas now located inside the SCNP. These journeys were undertaken to follow-up leads recorded in prior oral histories as part of research carried out through a project called *Future Pasts* (www.futurepasts.net), funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council. This project was supported by an ongoing Research Affiliation Contract with the National Museum of Namibia. Access to localities in the SCNP was enabled as part of a project led by Dr Gillian Maggs-Kölling, Gobabeb Desert Research Institute, on *The significance of the Namib Desert endemic* !nara *(*Acanthosicyos horridus*) as a keystone species in ecology, phenology, culture and horticultural potential*[2]. The following statement in Chapter 5 of the Draft SCNP Management Plan derives from this on-site oral histories research:

> *(!nara)* colonies associated with all the ephemeral rivers which have supported human occupation in the Namib Desert for thousands of years … were used by Damara and Nama people in addition to the well-known association with the Topnaar people.

3) **iterative review of historical literatures** regarding *!nara* harvesting and harvesting peoples connected with the Namibian coastal areas, collated in the following timelines:

> - *Archaeological and historical records that mention* !nara *use in Namibia*, linked at https://www.futurepasts.net/nara-in-archaeology-and-history (direct link here), plus map of references to *!nara* use linked at (direct link here).
>
> - *Historical references to habitation of the !Khuiseb delta*, linked at https://www.futurepasts.net/khuiseb-historical-habitation (direct link here).

In combination, these threads of research are being written up as a *Future Pasts Working Paper* (Sullivan et al. forthcoming)[3]. Please note that all interview material shared below is

[2] Field research was supported through Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET –MEFT) Research Permits 2023/2015; 2190/2016; 2311/2017, plus a one special day permit in 2019, and one short preparatory day-journey through the Hoanib into the Skeleton Coast National Park with Gobabeb Namib Research Institute staff on 7 April 2014.

[3] This research has also been presented in 2018 to Gobabeb Namib Research Institute, Namib-Naukluft Park, Namibia (29 March), the Research Colloquium at Institut für Ethnologie, Hamburg University, Germany (3 July) and as a Public Lecture, Swakopmund Museum, Namibia (13 September).

from field research carried out with Sesfontein resident Welhemina Suro Ganuses. All interview transcriptions in Khoekhoegowab and translations from Khoekhoegowab to English have been led by Ms Ganuses, and all interpretations of this material worked on with her, as well as with other interviewees. Ms Ganuses is a Councillor with the Nami-Daman Traditional Authority and an administrator with the rhino monitoring NGO Save the Rhino Trust at the NGO's field base-camp near Palmwag Lodge. All journeys reported on in Section 3 were also carried out under the guidance of Mr Filemon |Nuab, a recognised 'Rhino Ranger' based in Sesfontein whose knowledge of the west Namibian landscape is renowned. The expertise of both Ms Ganuses and Mr |Nuab is integral to the field research shared below in Section 3.

Policy context

The material shared in this report is intended to support the 5th Strategic Management Objective listed in the Draft SCMP Management Plan, namely:

> To protect and maintain cultural and historic, archaeological, and paleontological assets (Ch. 2).

It is thus also aligned with Namibia's National Heritage Act of 2004, as well as recognising the ethos of Article 19 of the Namibian Constitution that:

> [e]very person shall be entitled to enjoy, practise, profess, maintain and promote any culture, language, tradition or religion […] subject to the condition that the rights protected by this Article do not impinge upon the rights of others or the national interest (GRN 2014[1990]).

For the southern parts of the Northern Namib, the lead organisation neighbouring the SCNP that represents local cultural concerns is the newly designated Nami-Daman Traditional Authority (TA) (NBC News 2021). This TA considers its jurisdiction to stretch east of the Park boundary from the Hoarusib southwards to the vet fence (pers. comm., Secretary and Senior Councillor, Nami-Daman TA, 29 July 2021). Although not mentioned in the Draft Management Plan, this TA is a key stakeholder regarding SCNP management alongside the communal-area conservancies neighbouring the park, particularly regarding heritage, historical and cultural concerns relating to the Northern Namib.

Recognising the diverse past cultural, resource management and livelihood associations with this landscape for which fragmented memories remain in the present, is also an important means of supporting the 'biocultural heritage' of Indigenous peoples, i.e. heritage understood as entangled with specific environmental contexts, whose resilient diversity has the potential to also support biological diversity (for example, Gorenflo *et al*. 2012). Recognition of and support for emplaced cultural environmental knowledge and appreciation – or 'biocultural heritage' – can be viewed as contributing to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal 15 on terrestrial ecosystem health, as well as to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as acknowledged in the Draft SCNP Management Plan (Chapter 5). Recognising the presence of indigenous knowledge custodians regarding the

former use of the Northern Namib – as encouraged in Chapter 6 (6.4), as well as enhancing knowledge regarding cultural sites in and close to the Park – as promoted in Chapter 7, may widen the appeal and value of the Park whilst respecting prior use and knowledge.

As documented below, heritage and historical realities connect sites now within the SCNP boundary to sites beyond the Park. In alignment with the intended 'key conservation and management outcomes' identified in Chapter 4 of the Draft SCNP Management Plan, information regarding these dimensions of value can thus support the management of the Northern Namib Conservation Landscape as an open, connected landscape. In addition, increasing awareness of how the Northern Namib landscape is understood, remembered and experienced by a wider complement of stakeholders, can assist with ensuring that historical, heritage and archaeological sites (which may overlap) are better contextualised and protected from interference. As such, the information shared here – including former place names, and sites of cultural heritage and historical significance – might contribute to the shift in the public image of SCNP proposed in Chapter 4 of the Draft Management Plan so as to broaden the appeal and relevance of the Park to a wider range of Namibian society, as well as international visitors.

Mapped cultural sites in the SCNP: a summary

A number of cultural dimensions relating to the broader landscape formerly used by especially Khoekhoegowab-speaking residents of Sesfontein and surrounding area have come into focus through on-site oral histories and cultural mapping research (as documented in Sullivan *et al*. 2019; Sullivan and Ganuses 2021; Sullivan in press). The screenshot in Figure 1 shows localities of several remembered sites either within or close to the SCNP. Key places documented through field research within and close to the SCNP are listed in Annex 1, together with their coordinates and other clarifying information.

Given the terrain of the Northern Namib, and the difficulties of carrying out on-site field research with contemporary elders of the Hoanib communities with direct memories of sites within the SCNP, the localities retrieved in this way are sparse but significant. As documented in more detail below, they should also be understood as forming part of complex past patterns of mobility and livelihood practices connecting coastal sites and resources – especially *!nara*, but also marine resources such as mussels and seals – with inland sites where a different complement of foods could be obtained. Grappling with the detail shared below takes some effort, especially given the click consonants in Khoekhoegowab terms that are unfamiliar to non-Khoekhoegowab speakers. The reward is a greater sense of the rich cultural diversity and dynamism of the Northern Namib in connection with areas inland and to the south, as known in historical and contemporary times. In combination, these records draw into focus a landscape known and lived in by diverse peoples in the remembered past.

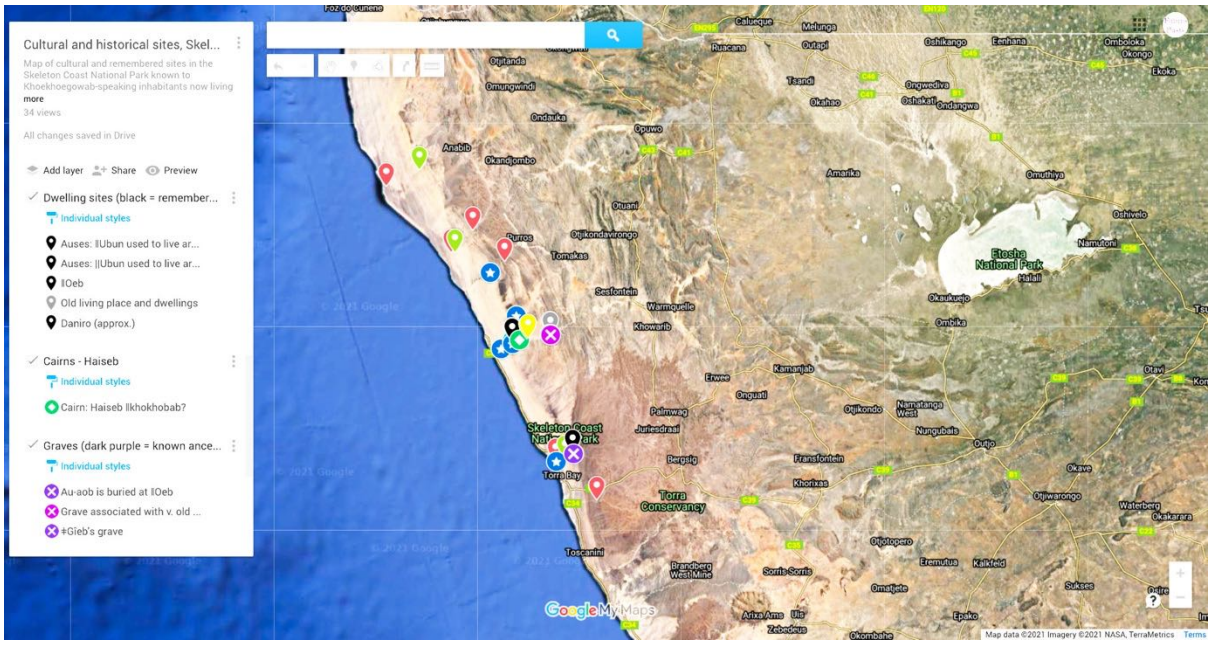

Figure 1. Screenshot of a preliminary map of cultural and historical sites in the Northern Namib linked with Khoekhoegowab-speaking people in north-west Namibia, located within or close to the eastern boundary of Skeleton Coast National Park. Online annotated map is linked here: https://www.futurepasts.net/cultural-sites-skeleton-coast-np

It is likely that the sites mapped in Figure 1 under-represent cultural information for the broader Norther Namib landscape, since this time-consuming research was constrained by the places we were able to access, and the community elders we were able to travel with. As can be seen, some sites are located in the area now gazetted as the Skeleton Coast National Park, and sites were also connected in the past through peoples' mobilities through the landscape. For example, people would harvest *!nara* at their fields in the lower Hoanib and !Uniab rivers, moving inland to localities such as Kai-as and Hûnkab (both localities now in the Palmwag Tourism Concession) where different foods could be accessed and social gatherings with people from other lineages (*!haoti*) would take place. Thus,

> I was born at Auses where *!nara* grow, and I grew up in the Hoanib river. And from there we moved to the !Uniab river. And at the !Uniab mouth we collected the *!naras*. We put them into a big pot and then we strained that juice through a pot that has holes [in the bottom], and spread this juice on the dunes so that it can get 'ripe'. And the seeds – we roasted the seeds and then mixed with the cooked juice and stored [the seeds] in the skin of a springbok.[4]

Those involved in this research recall techniques for storing foods at remembered localities as a major part of their ability to survive in this extreme environment. They also recall, with great feeling, the importance to them of times when different family groups would gather and share food at sites in the broader Northern Namib landscape, as well as play their praise songs (sing. |*gais*, pl. |*gaidi*) and healing dances (sing. *arus*, pl. *arudi*) together. A significant locality in this regard is the spring Kai-as to the east of the SCNP to which people in the past

[4] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (ǂŌs, near Sesfontein), 6 April 2014.

travelled from *!nara* areas at Auses (close to the *!nara* area around !Uiǁgams) in the lower Hoanib, and in the !Uniab river mouth to the south, as well as from other localities in the Sesfontein, !Uniab and Ugab (!Uǂgāb) areas. A 2020 film *The Music Returns to Kai-as* – online at https://vimeo.com/486865709 – draws on oral history research to document these remembered connections and musics. It is likely that there is at least some overlap between the experiences and localities recalled by elderly participants in this research (see Section 3), and the observations of archaeological research for sites located in or close to the SCNP.

In this broader cultural histories mapping research, the main types of sites with remembered use value and cultural significance are:

- *graves* of known (and unknown) ancestors;

- *named dwelling places* linked with the harvesting of key resources such as *!nara*, mobilities through the landscape connecting coastal to inland areas, and springs with potable water;

- specific cultural sites, for example, '*Haiseb cairns*';

- *sites of cultural memory* – i.e. sites where specific remembered experiences and events took place.

All these kinds of remembered sites are sparsely present in the Northern Namib of the SCNP and are also connected with sites to the immediate east of the SCNP boundary: as indicated in the screenshot in Figure 2 (online map at https://www.futurepasts.net/cultural-landscapes-mapping).

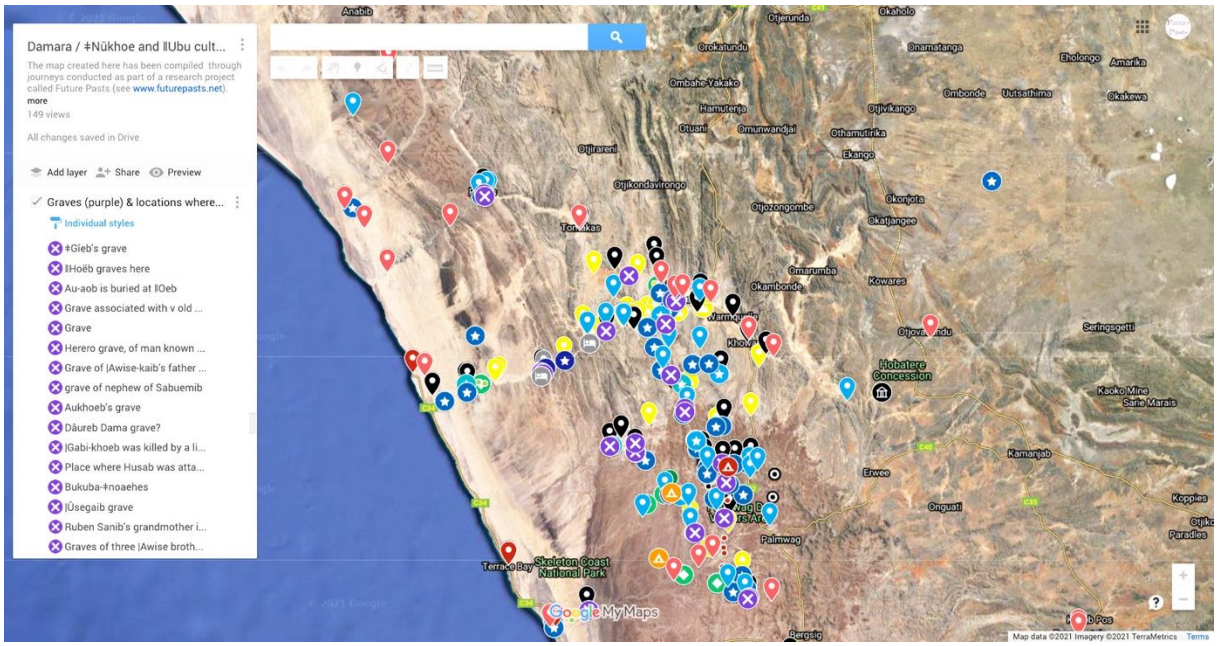

Figure 2. Screenshot of online map indicated former living places and other sites (such as springs, graves, Haiseb cairns and topographic features) in the broader landscape of the Sesfontein, Anabeb and Purros conservancies. Source: on-site oral history research, 2014–2019, building on oral history documentation from the 1990s.

The presence of different site categories within the SCNP is explained in more detail in Section 3, drawing on material gathered through recent oral history accounts with elderly residents of the Sesfontein area who remember living in the area that is now the Park and utilising its coastal resources. But first, in Section 2 these recently recorded sites are set in the context of a review of historical literature regarding the Northern Namib, so as to clarify what is known about its historical use according to accounts by the earliest known European colonial travellers through this landscape.

In combination, both sets of accounts demonstrate that until recent decades the Northern Namib was very much a diversely known, utilised and valued 'cultural landscape', the memories of which have lived on in the hearts and minds of elderly individuals alive today. These Indigenous cultural and human dimensions of the SCNP are rather little known and more-or-less invisible today, beyond references to mysterious 'strandlopers' seen wandering up and down the shoreline by viewers on ships approaching the coast[5]. The historical and oral history accounts shared below, however, reveal a resilient community of diverse and connected peoples able to live – even to thrive – in the extreme environment of the Northern Namib, through combined practices of hunting, harvesting and storing foods, and mobility across large areas, all guided by a symbolically-rich shared cosmology reinforced through shared songs and collective healing events. These practices were enacted until the Namib became closed off from Indigenous use in recent decades, for commercial, conservation and administrative reasons.

For ease of reference, places, rivers and springs named in this report are mapped in Figure 3 below.

[5] Mention of 'strandlopers' invokes an almost mythical trope, as in the following quote:

> [s]hips travelling to India in the sixteenth century via the Cape were so fearful of the coastline that they travelled 250 miles offshore to avoid its hidden rocks and treacherous currents. The Dutch, the master navigators of their age, dared to come closer, as they headed to their empire in the East Indies. Their sailors reported that, when peering through the fog, they could on occasion spot black figures on the shores staring back at their ships. The Dutch called these unknown people *strandloopers* – beach runners. From the fifteenth to the end of the eighteenth century this was the limit of human contact between the peoples of south-western Africa and Europe (Olusoga and Erichsen, 2010: 18).

Following the sixteenth century, however, there was rather more interaction between the coastal peoples of Namibia and explorers and traders from afar than indicated here, as documented in J.H.A. Kinahan (1990, 1991, 2000, 2017), J. Kinahan (2001[1991], 2014, 2020) and J.H.A. Kinahan and J. Kinahan (2009).

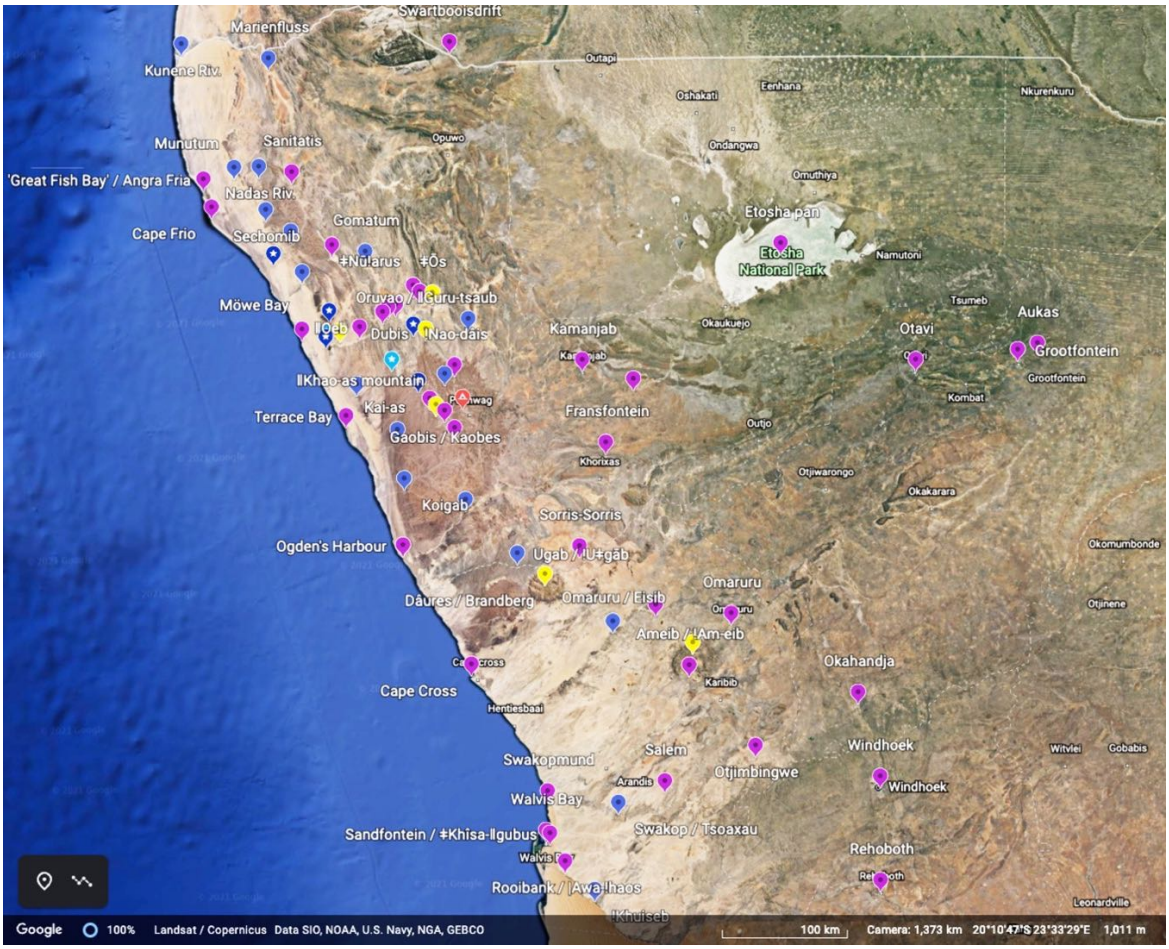

Figure 3. Locations of many of the named places, rivers and springs mentioned in this report: pink markers are places; blue markers are rivers; starred blue markers are key springs (turquoise = brackish); yellow markers are topographic features. The red campsite marker is the Save the Rhino Trust base-camp near Palmwag Lodge.

2. Historicising the Northern Namib

Mapped historical records of observations and encounters with autochthonous Namibians in the Northern Namib provides background and context to the material documented through peoples' recall in Section 3 below.[6] Whilst these historical accounts need to be read with a critical eye for accuracy, as well as for the prejudices and racism with which they are often imbued, in the absence of other sources they can be informative regarding the past presence of peoples in localities from which they are now absent. Several actors are particularly visible in this respect, in part because they left reports documenting encounters and impressions from these journeys. Although often focused on the commercial potential of the coastal area – many were carried out in the course of prospecting for the Kaoko Land and Mining Company (Kaoko Land und Minengesellschaft, KLMG) established during the German colonial period of Namibia's history – they also report encounters with people in the landscapes through which they travelled. Read together, these accounts clarify that the Northern Namib was lived in and utilised by diverse peoples, up to the recent past. Historical records for the Northern

[6] A broader, in progress mapping of historical journeys through the wider north-west Namibian landscape is linked at https://www.etosha-kunene-histories.net/wp4-spatialising-colonialities.

Namib are outlined below for the following periods: pre-German colony; German colonial times (1884-1915); and post World War 1 South African rule.

Pre-German colony

Overland journeys to the Northern Namib were difficult for the earliest European travellers to Namibia, and recorded observations from the coast are also fragmented and tricky to interpret for accuracy. Nonetheless, some pre-German colonial-era observations/projections are relevant in terms of drawing into focus the Northern Namib as an inhabited and utilised landscape.

One controversial narrative, by American sealer Captain Morrell who travelled northwards along the coast in 1828-29, writes that some "two leagues"[7] north-east of "Ogden's Harbour"[8] (Huab River mouth) his expedition encountered "a small village, inhabited by about two hundred natives" which he refers to as "of the Cimbebas tribe" (Morrell 2014[1832]: 316). 'Cimbebas' here is understood to invoke the name given for an inland "region between Cape Negro and Tropic of Capricorn" on a 1591 Italian map of Africa (by Filippo Pigafetta), and does not refer to 'Tjimba' (a contemporary term for cattle-less ovaHerero), as is sometimes thought (J. Kinahan 2020: 2, drawing on J.H.A. Kinahan 1988: 5). Indeed, Morrell remarks of the people he encountered that they differ "but very little from the proper Hottentots[9] [i.e. Khoekhoegowab speaking Nama]", writing enthusiastically of the locality that,

> [t]here are … many fine springs of water, of an excellent quality, in the valley where this village is situated; from which it may be inferred that this would be a fine place for a rendezvous to establish a trade with the interior of the country (Morrell 2014[1832]: 316).

At "Great Fish Bay" (roughly half way between Möwe Bay and the Kunene River mouth), Morrell remarks on the excellent opportunities for seine fishing, saying:

> thousands of barrels of excellent fish may be caught in the course of a year. This might be made a first-rate business, by taking the fish to the Portuguese colonies, a little farther north, and exchanging them for the products of the country; or they might be taken to St. Helena, or to the Brazil coast, where they would command a ready market and an excellent price. (Morrell 2014[1832]: 318-319).

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[7] Two leagues at sea here may translate roughly into six nautical miles (= 3.452 miles; 5.556 kilometres) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_(unit)), in which case this locality – if we can trust Morrell's account – would be around 11kms north of the Huab Mouth, well within the southern boundary of present-day SCNP.

[8] Morrell named "a beautiful harbor of smooth water" north of Cape Cross as Ogden's Harbour, in honour of a member of his crew (William Ogden) who died in the course of a sealing expedition at Mercury Island in the south in 1828 (Morrell 2014[1832]: 316). The 'Originalkarte des Herero & Kaoko-Landes' by A. Petermann – drawing journeys and observations by Rhenish missionaries, especially J. Böhm and F. Bernsmann – locates Ogden's Harbour at the Huab River mouth (Perthes 1878, Tafel 18, online at https://digital.library.illinois.edu/items/251774e0-e946-0133-1d3d-0050569601ca-4#).

[9] This term is today considered derogatory (Elphick 1977: xv). No offence is meant by its occasional inclusion here when quoting directly from historical texts, in which the term denotes the specific ethnic and cultural identity for Khoekhoegowab-speaking pastoralists known today as Nama or Khoe / Khoikhoi. It is included here *only* when quoting directly from such texts. I hope the positive dimension of using the term to draw into focus the past presence of Nama at localities mentioned in these texts outweighs otherwise negative aspects of its use.

On “the southeast side of the bay” he and his crew were reportedly

> met on the beach by a small party of the Cimbebas tribe, who gave us a very pressing invitation to accompany them to their village, which was about ten miles from the coast, in the direction of east-by-south. It is situated in a well-watered valley of three miles in length, and two in breadth, surrounded by moderately elevated hills. The springs which water it are never dried up, by the longest droughts, as we were assured by the natives’. (Morrell 2014[1832]: 318-319).

The huts making up this village, as described by Morrell, were constructed of “closely woven mats of coarse grass”, or “of the fibres of some plant”:

> [t]he two sides generally correspond with each other, as do also the two ends, with the exception that there is a door or opening in one end, just large enough for the occupants to creep in and out. Each hut is covered with an arched or sloping roof, supported by upright posts fixed in the ground, and thatched with matting. The materials are all so light that they can be removed at a very short notice, and without much trouble. I have seen them taken down and put together again in thirty-five minutes. The value of one of these huts is that of a sheep. (Morrell 2014[1832]: 318-319).

This description matches the well-known reed-mat huts historically specific to Nama / Khoe pastoralists (see Figure 4). Such structures were lived in within recent memory in localities connected with present-day SCNP (such as Sesfontein), where they were no doubt linked with later (*ca*. 1860s) movements to this area by !Gomen Topnaar pastoralists – although as documented in Section 3 there is early oral history evidence that this migration was itself linked with prior experience of the Northern Namib. Thus the late Philippine |Hairo ǁNowaxas, who described herself as ‘ǁKhao-a Dama’ recalled in 1999 that,

> [t]hese dung houses we didn’t know about before, in the old time. Now Julia [Ganuses, deceased] is storing the |*haru* reeds [*Cyperus marginatus*] in her house to make a reed house [|*haru oms*]. We make the reed houses like this: we cut the reeds and put some in dung [to blacken them] and some in water and then we weave in the black ones on one side and the white ones on the other side; we built reed houses and we didn’t know about these dung houses. When I was small I lived in the |*haru oms*.[10]

[10] Philippine |Hairo ǁNowaxas (Sesfontein), 15 April 1999.

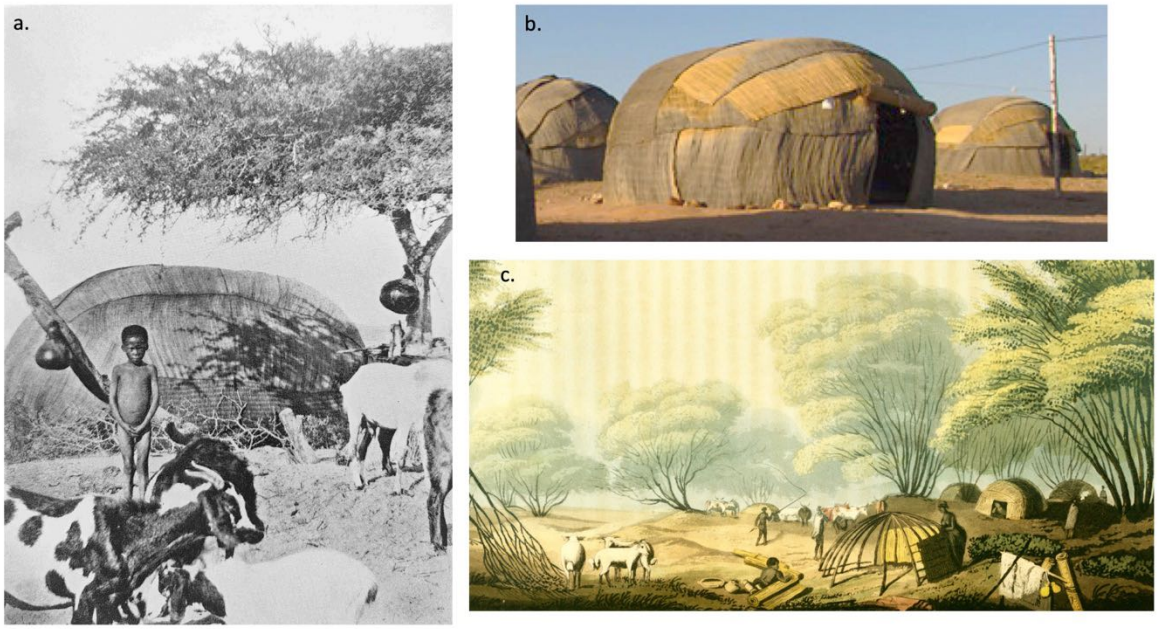

Figure 4: a) “Topnaar hut under Giraffe acacia”, by L. Schultz. Source: scan from Schapera 1965[1930]: Plate XV; b) contemporary Nama hut in the Richtersveld showing anchor stones at the base. Source: open image at https://www.exploring-africa.com/en/namibia/nama-people/nama-huts-and-villages, 2 October 2021; c) “A Hottentot [Khoe] Kraal, on the Banks of the Gariep [i.e. Orange River]”, from Burchell 1822: vol. 1, 325. Source: https://library.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/africa/burchell/burchell5.jpg 2 October 2021.

Reed mat huts leave only subtle traces by way of material remains, but may be visible in the archaeological record as a circle of anchor stones used to help fix the frame poles and mats in place (Speich 2010: 48-52; J. Kinahan 2020: 354-356 – see Figure 4b). It is tempting to link Morrell’s account above with limited archaeological data for stone hut circles in the Northern Namib confirms the presence of anchor stones for reed mat huts associated with Khoe pastoralists (see below), that would have been transported by oxen as pack-animals (Steyn 1990: 26-27) – as depicted in the well-known image shared in Figure 5 (also see J. Kinahan 2020: 357). Pack oxen were presumably herded in connection with inland pastures (J. Kinahan 2020: 263, 292).

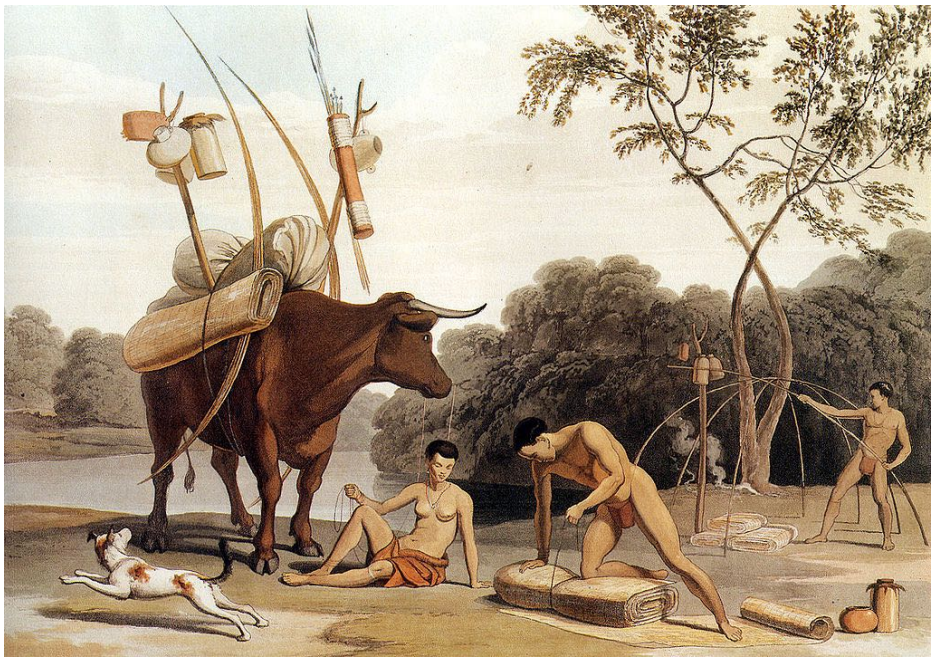

Figure 5. "Korah-Khoikhoi dismantling their huts, preparing to move to new pastures", by Samuel Daniell 1805. Source: public domain image at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sameul_Daniell_-_Kora-Khokhoi_preparing_to_move_-_1805.jpg, 2 October 2021.

Wide diameter (around 4m) circles of hut anchor stones with a central fireplace and room divider have been found near the !Uniab river mouth (within the SCNP) and dated to *ca*. 1,000-1,300, and are consistent with Nama / Khoe hut construction (Blümel *et al*. 2009: 136; J. Kinahan 2020: 263). An eye-witness account from 1896 reported in the following section also observes "deserted, circular reed huts at the Uniab River mouth" (see below). Speich (2010: 49) writes that,

> [t]he production of the [hut] framework is complex and the procurement of the suitable material for the hut frame was probably not possible everywhere. Therefore the frequent occurrence of this type of hut in the arid Uniab Delta … raises some questions. In any case, however, the frame can be distinguished by its construction.[11]

It should be noted, however, that the poles and mats of which this hut type were built were both durable and portable (with pack oxen). These materials were no doubt in part derived from elsewhere in the landscape, travelling with those inhabiting this !Uniab site which was perhaps visited so as to access *!nara* and shellfish specifically. In addition, |*haru* sedges (*Cyperus marginatus*) from which the mats were made are found at sites of moisture throughout the Northern Namib and adjacent areas.[12] Indeed, they are common to the coastal spring known into contemporary times as |Garis[13] that is close to the !Uniab mouth (see Figure 6).

[11] All German to English translations have been made by the author with the help of Google Translate and DeepL.

[12] In the western and southern Cape of South Africa, the endemic sedge *Cyperus textilis* was used for this purpose (Steyn 1990: 26-27).

[13] Documented during journey with Franz ǁHoëb and Noag Ganaseb, 20-26 November 2015.

Figure 6. Sedges (|*haru* / *Cyperus marginatus*) known to be used in the making of Khoe reed mat huts at the water source known in recent times as |Garis, at the !Uniab river mouth, Skeleton Coast National Park. Photo: Sian Sullivan 24 November 2015.

Archaeologist John Kinahan interprets the presence of apparently Khoe reed mat huts in the Northern Namib as consistent with an hypothesised "northward pulse of pastoral expansion" from the Orange River area, subsequent to westward movements of Khoe pastoralists from the northern Kalahari along the Orange that then branched north and south into the south-western landscapes of present-day Namibia and South Africa (J. Kinahan 2020: 262; also Elphick 1977: 16). The remains of Khoe reed mat huts in the Northern Namib are additionally consistent with proposals for southwards migrations of Khoe pastoralists from further north (cf. Stow 1905). These complexities and uncertainties aside, the archaeological traces of pastoralist reed mat hut structures appear to evidence past Khoe pastoralist presence in the Northern Namib, perhaps associated with wetter climatic conditions from around 1,000-1,350 AD:

> [d]uring the Middle Ages a humid phase seems to have transformed parts of the Namib desert into a savanna-like ecosystem. Under the hyperarid conditions of the Little Ice Age [*ca*. 1,500-1,850 AD] the desert margin shifted to the east again. Apparently, the Namib-desert has been no stable arid region during the younger Holocene. Substantial landscape change happened especially in the area of the desert margins. (Blümel *et al*. 2009: 125)

Different types of stone hut circles, as well as contemporaneous shell middens indicating consumption of shellfish such as mussels, have also been documented archaeologically at multiple localities in the Northern Namib. In the vicinity of the

!Uniab mouth, the remains of huts formed by “coarse boulders” assumed to serve “for the fixation of wooden poles and rods … and covered with leaves, branches, grass, or skins for protection” are attributed to “former Bushmen” (Blümel *et al*. 2009: 135-136). Further north, the remains of hut circle settlements have also been documented close to the coast north of the Munutum river mouth, in between the Nadas and Sechomib rivers, and at the Khumib river mouth (Eichhorn and Vogelsang 2007: 147). Note that these Khoekhoegowab names for northern Namib ephemeral rivers have been recorded since the area was first visited and mapped by incoming Europeans, their stability and longevity again indicating past presence of Khoekhoegowab-speaking peoples in the Northern Namib (see Figures 8, 9, 13 and 14).

A site between the Nadas and Sechomib rivers includes “a total of 35 stone circle features” and some stone circles including whale bones, as well as stone artefacts, potsherds of “Khoi” pottery, ostrich eggshell beads, bones and hunting blinds found at or near the sites (Eichhorn and Vogelsang 2007: 149, 150). Three dates obtained for the sites were “within the period AD 1680 to 1940” with coastal sites considered strongly connected to the hinterland (Eichhorn and Vogelsang 2007: 149, 145). Soot on potsherds from the site north of the Munutum “yielded an unexpected age” of 840 ± 50 AD (Eichhorn and Vogelsang 2007: 151). Further south, but within or on the eastern edge of the SCNP, John Kinahan (2020: 288) records “high local densities of pastoral settlement” dated to within the last 1,000 years, whose “distinctive archaeological features” – namely “stone hut circles with associated livestock enclosures, as well as pottery [used for storage of *!nara* and grass seed plant foods] and stone artefact assemblages” – comprise “the archaeological signature of the ǂNūkhoen”.

Crossing back into the historical (as opposed to archaeological) record, in the 1850s the coastal area west of the “Kaoko mountains” in the north-west (“the barren Kaoko”, Galton 1852: 144) was recorded by British explorer Francis Galton as inhabited by peoples known as “Nareneen”, an appellation presumably connected with their use of *!nara* in this northern part of the Namib: see detail from Galton’s map published in 1852 in Figure 7.

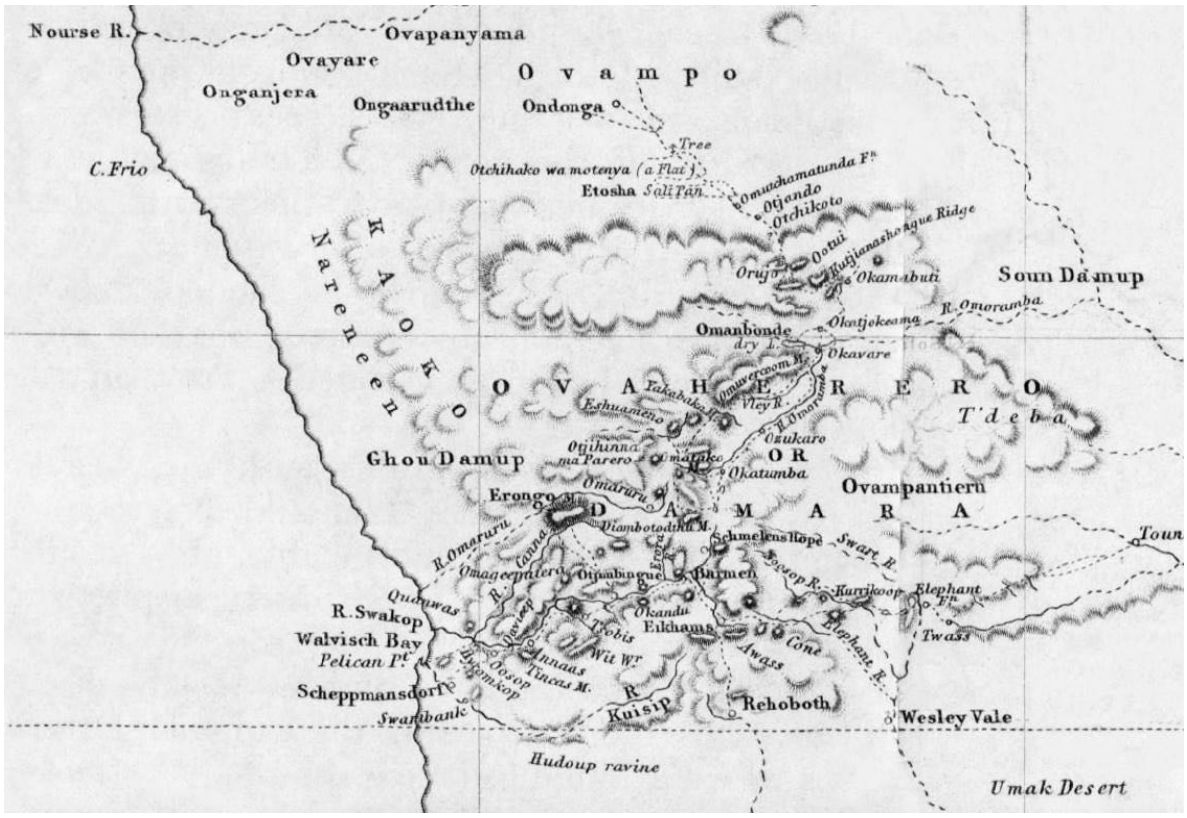

Figure 7. Detail from Galton's map of Africa between 10 and 30 degrees South latitude, showing 'Nareneen' to west of 'Kaoko' mountains. The Nourse River at the top of the map is the Kunene River. Detail from Galton 1852: unnumbered.

Galton (1852: 157-158) writes specifically that,

> [t]he Nareneen lived by the sea, and the Ounip (called by the Dutch Toppners [i.e. ǂAonin]) about the parts of which we are now speaking [presumably Walvis Bay area], and south of these were the Keikouka [Kai‖khauan / Rooi Nasie / Red Nation], now represented by the red people, by Swartboy, the Kubabees [‖Habowen / Veldschoendragers], and Blondel Swartz [!Kami ǂnûn / !Gami ǂnûn]. … The Toppners [ǂAonin], however, not being at that time accustomed to the mountain-passes with which the Ghou Damup [Damara / ǂNūkhoen] were familiar, were, as I said, greatly cut off [towards the coast]. And it is curious, that within very late times (about eight years ago), exactly the same thing occurred to the Nareneen living west of the Kaoko. … The more northerly Toppners [ǂAonin] were thus quite cut off from all communication with those about Walfisch Bay …

As indicated in this quote, the mid-1800s were turbulent times. Oral history recorded in Rhenish Missionary Society (RMS) Chronicles of the 1800s describes the coastal landscape connecting the Northern Namib with Walvis Bay as one of mobilities between 'Topnaar', (i.e. Nama 'split off' from the main body of 'Kai‖khauan / Rooi Nasie / Red Nation' in the central parts of the territory), in the north and those of the Walvis Bay area. 'Topnaar' migrating south from Kaokoveld in these years are described as

> spread[ing] further south [via the Swakop River mouth] … allegedly led by their captain Khaxab to one place ǂKisa-‖guwus commonly known as Kuwis or Sandfontein, located

about three miles from the coast and settled south of what is now Walvis Bay (Köhler 1969: 106).

Late 19th century archives of the Rhenish Mission, drawing on missionary Baumann (based at Rooibank / |Awa-!haos from 1878-83), assert that "[a]ccording to the ancients, the Topnaars came from the north towards the end of the eighteenth century", and that "[a]t the beginning of the 19th century the Topnaar are said to have reached the mouth of the Swakop (tsoa-xou-b)", their migration perhaps "related to the advance of the Herero into the Kaokoveld" (Köhler 1969: 106).

In 1913 at apparently Sandfontein (ǂKhîsa-ǁgubus), south of Walvis Bay, South African anthropologist Winifred Hoernlé (1985[1925]: 47; see Bank 2016: ch.1), relates a conversation with Khaxas[14], "the daughter of one of the last [Topnaar] chiefs", and "some of the headmen of the last recognized chief of the tribe, Piet ǁEibib [ǁHaibeb]", in which she learns that according to "these old people, *the tribe originally lived far to the north in the region to which one branch has again retired*" [i.e. to become the Sesfontein !Gomen Topnaar – !Gomen = Walvis Bay]; and that "[w]hen they first came to Walvis Bay another Nama people, the '|*Namixan*', were in control" (emphasis added).

It seems that historically recorded Northern Namib mobilities from the 1860s onwards should be understood as connected with the earlier mobilities reported by Galton, Hoernlé and Köhler: i.e. in which a section of 'the Topnaar tribe' retreated to Kaokoveld "after the defeat of the Hottentots by the Herero in the sixties of the last century", leaving "the other section … in the dunes around Walvis Bay and in the bed of the Kuiseb river at various places" (Hoernlé 1985[1925]: 47). These mobilities became amplified after 1864 when Swartbooi Oorlam Nama, then living in Rehoboth in the south, were attacked by Oorlam Nama leader Jonker Afrikaner's son (Jan Jonker Afrikaner), in retaliation for Swartbooi alliance with the ovaHerero leader Maherero against the Oorlam Afrikaners (Lau / Andersson 1987: 104; Wallace 2011: 61). The Rehoboth Swartbooi retreated coastwards along the !Khuiseb River, from where they settled at a short-lived RMS mission station called Salem on the Swakop River, before moving towards Fransfontein and Sesfontein where they settled, via Ameib in the Erongo mountains where a Rhenish Mission was established in 1864 (Rudner and Rudner 2004: 203 after Stals in Palgrave 1876-85: 5 note 11). The RMS chronicle of Otjimbingue thus documents that,

> Topnaar living in the Kuiseb valley joined forces with the Zwartbooi, headed northward under the leadership of the missionary Bohme, and settled in !Am-eib on the Erongo mountains. When the water in !Am-eib became scarce, the Zwartbooi and the Topnaar moved northwards to reach Okombahe, Otjitambi or Franzfontein. From there, many Topnaar moved to Zesfontein (aka Sesfontein), where at that time lived Bushman and Bergdama, who were being influenced by the Herero. The Topnaar were later followed by a smaller group of Zwartbooi and also settled in Zesfontein. (Köhler 1969: 111)

[14] See Hoernlé's field diaries, Carstens *et al*. 1987: 72.

Through the middle of the 1800s, European travellers found it hard to access present-day Kunene Region in the north-west and few documented encounters with the Northern Namib exist. In 1858, for example, the Anglo-Swedish hunter, naturalist and trader Charles John Andersson travelled through Kaokoveld "in a vain attempt to reach the Kunene River" (Rudner and Rudner 1974: 188), entering a region of arid mountains but being halted by the ruggedness of the area (Owen-Smith 1972: 29). In this pre-German colonial moment commercial concerns affecting the Northern Namib and connected landscapes were linked with the export of ivory from the north through Walvis Bay, in part via a coastal route from north to south through the western desert beyond rival European access (Rizzo 2012: 37).

In 1877 Rhenish missionaries Böhm and Bernsmann travelled northwards to the east of the Northern Namib. Their route took them from Otjimbingwe on the Swakop river as far as the Hoanib River in the north-west, circling what are named as the Etendeka mountains in the uplands of the !Uniab via Ameib, Okombahe, Sorris-Sorris on the Ugab river, Urunendis [Uruhunes], Kai-as, and Hûnkab, 'Ub' [|Ūb] on the Hoanib (west of Sesfontein) and 'Zesfontein', for which they also record a Herero name [Ohamukehe?][15].

1879 saw two notable crossings of the Kaokoveld that reached the Northern Namib coast, for which fragmented documentation exists. Although containing little information regarding local encounters, they demonstrate how the Kaokoveld to the coast was starting to be traversed by colonial-era travellers. Trekboers returning from the Okavango in this year thus turn westwards from "Ovampoland" "to the so-called Kaokoveld south of the Kunene River and continued on right down to the sea" (Rudner and Rudner / Möller 1974[1899]: 41-42). In this same year, a philanthropic collection organised for the Trekboers by settlers of the Cape led to a relief mission being sent north from "Walfish Bay" bringing "clothes, medicine, provisions and ammunition" (Rudner and Rudner / Möller 1974[1899]: 42), in the course of which the Trekboer Gert Alberts led "a small mounted party down the valley of the Hoarusib River to the sea, in an attempt to collect [the] supplies" arriving on the coast (Owen-Smith 2010: 52).

German colonial times – 1884-1915

Commercial interests in the north-west intensified as the 1880s ushered in German colonial rule and a consolidated effort to survey and control the colony's natural and human resources for economic gain.

One of the first and most ambitious of the business deals precipitating German colonial protection incorporated the Northern Namib. In March 1885, a German scientist – Waldemar Belck – working for the entrepreneurial Lüderitz brothers visited Otjitambi, south-east of Kamanjab, a locality then occupied by Topnaar / !Gomen and Swartbooi families under Jan |Uixamab's [!Gomen] leadership (Rizzo 2012: 63-64). Belck conducted anthropometric

[15] See map at https://digital.library.illinois.edu/items/251774e0-e946-0133-1d3d-0050569601ca-4#, last accessed 14 October 2021.

measurement research here and entered into negotiations with Kaptein Cornelius Swartbooi (|Hôa-|arab !Âbemab – |Uirab 2007: 22) and his Raad (circle of leaders) with a view to gaining land and mining concessions in the north-west (Förster *et al*. 2016: online). In this process, Cornelius Swartbooi of Fransfontein and Jan |Uixamab of Sesfontein 'sold' "their respective territories" in "the Kaoko-area" to businessman August Lüderitz (brother of Adolf), through which Lüderitz acquired "the right of development and utilization of all mineral resources, while the captains reserved control over their places of residence and their pastures" (Rizzo 2012: 63-64; also Esterhuyse 1968: 107). Although contested by ovaHerero Captain Manasse (then located at Omaruru) in a later meeting at Okahandja (with Dr Göring of the colonial administration), Lüderitz thereby acquired the 'coastal strip' comprising the Northern Namib from 22°S (around the mouth of the Omaruru / Eisib River) to Cape Fria. This deal was made with "Jan |Uixamab, chief of the !Gomen, whose father |Uixab had moved on to Sesfontein after a spell in the Bokberg [Erongo]", and was later described as "the most devious" "[o]f all the devious land acquisition treaties negotiated by [colonial administrator] Leutwein" (Vigne 1994: 8 quoting Dreschler 1980: 25).

The boundaries of the treaty indicate a negotiated formal claim by the Oorlam Nama leadership of the north-west with a detailed "territorial outline of the region" (see Figure 8a): its western border corresponded with the Atlantic ocean; its northern border with the Kunene River eastwards to Swartbooisdrift; its southern boundary – pushing up against Herero claims – was the Ugab River eastwards to where it crosses 15° longitude; and its eastwards boundary was from this point upwards in "an imaginary line running east of Fransfontein, … eventually reaching Swartbooisdrift on the Kunene" (Rizzo 2012: 63 – nb. in Figure 8a it appears that this boundary runs west of Fransfontein). In the midst of broader colonial carving up of the territory as sources of exploitable resources (see Figure 8b), this negotiated territory became the basis for commercial colonial claims to a large area of the north-west that included the Northern Namib. In 1893 the German Colonial Society transferred all Lüderitz's 'rights' in the north-west to Hirsch and Co., later the Kaoko Land and Mining Company (Kaoko Land und Minen Gesellschaft – KLMG), represented in the territory by German geographer and surveyor Georg Hartmann[16] in strategic alliance with the German colonial governor Leutwein (Rizzo 2012: 63-64). It was in service to the KLMG that the first more systematic surveys of the Northern Namib were attempted, as detailed below[17].

[16] It is this Hartmann that both the 'Hartmann's Valley' in Kaokoveld, and the Hartmann's mountain zebra (*Equus zebra hartmannae*) of north-west Namibia and south-west Angola, are named after (e.g. Hartmann 1897: 118-119).
[17] Hartmann's journeys are also reviewed in Bollig (1997, 2020) and Bollig and Heinemann (2002).

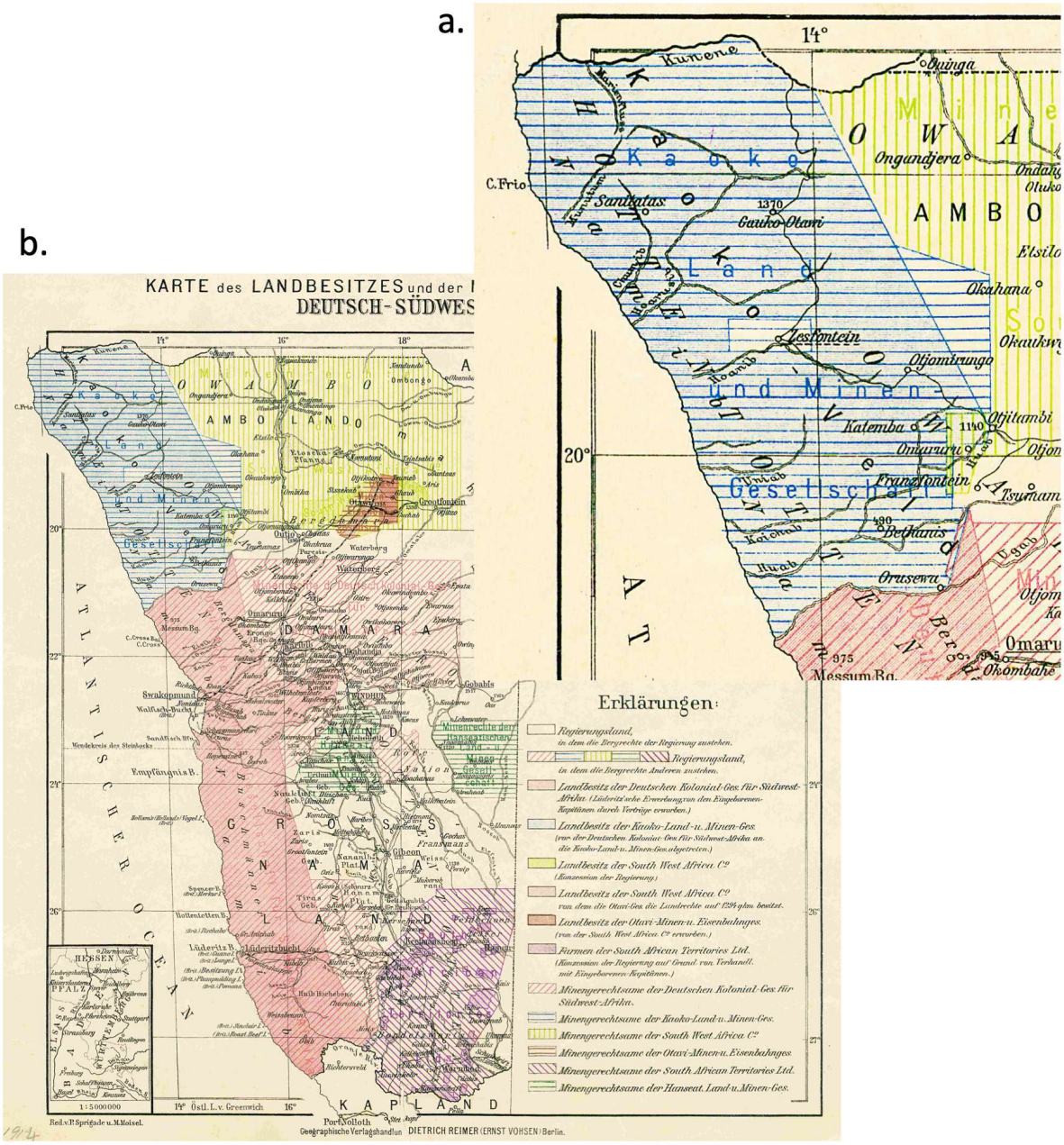

Figure 8. Karte des Landbesitzes und der Minengerechtsame in Deutsch-Südwestafrika, by Max Moisel and Paul Sprigade 1914, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz: a) detail of the Kaoko Land und Minen Gesellschaft area; b. full map. Source: Public Domain image, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karte_des_Landbesitzes_und_der_Minengerechtsame_in_Deutsch-S%C3%BCdwestafrika.jpg, accessed 19 August 2021.

Hartmann embarked on his first survey of the 'Kaoko-Feld' for the KLMG in 1894, whilst working for the South West Africa Co. in Otavi District (Gebiet) south of the Etosha salt pan (see Figure 8b). At this time the Kaoko-Feld appears understood as an area defined by the company boundaries above: i.e. the area from the coast to the 15th longitude and from the Kunene river in the north to the 'ǂUgab' (!Uǂgāb) in the south. Hartmann writes that:

> [t]he main task of this expedition was the mining and agricultural investigation of the middle Kaoko area to beyond Seßontein. On top of that it should try to travel along the Hoanib River to the coast and to investigate the landing conditions there. This expedition should therefore be the first attempt to explore the unknown coast at this point and I confess that I accepted with great enthusiasm to execute this expedition. (Hartmann 1897: 118)

Hartmann travelled from Otavi, to Otjitambi, along the Hoanib to 'Seßfontein', then west along the Hoanib to the coast, returning southwards on the gravel plains across the Uniab and Huab rivers to a meeting point at Sorris-Sorris (east of the Brandberg), thence back to the 'concession area' of the South West Africa Co. by a route south of Etosha Pan. In the text reporting his travels he opens by observing that in the map of the day of 'Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika',

> the whole unknown coast from Swakop-Mund to the northern border is like a blank white sheet of paper, and yet we see a lot of names and numbers there, proof that up to a certain extent the exploration of the coast has been attempted (Hartmann 1897: 115).

Hartmann is making reference here to Morrell's earlier reports, as recounted above.

With Nama guides who were clearly familiar with the terrain, Hartmann travelled west of Sesfontein along the Hoanib towards the coast. His impressions are worth quoting in full: for those familiar with the terrain, they are strongly evocative of the Northern Namib and its neighbouring landscapes:

> [t]o the west of Seßontein, there seemed to have been little or no rain. The consequence was that we had to march to the coast under great thirst and terrible heat. In addition the stony and curly [bumpy?] ground over all was bad for travelling with ox carts. After three days' west of Seßontein, our ox carts under the engineer Rogers turned south and drove across the mountains in a southerly direction to the west side of the central mountain range [at |Ūb?]. I myself walked along the Hoanib with a small cart and some riding horses to reach the coast. Especially on this leg we suffered from thirst again. The Hoanib itself retained its lush bush vegetation. Gradually towards the coast it became lower and reminded us of the influence of the coastal climate. … In the Hoanib we suddenly couldn't go any further, because of a mighty sand dune wall of 50-100 m high, which seemed to extend to the N and S into the infinite distance. My Hottentot guides told me, that the coast was not far on the other side of the sand dunes, and in fact we reached it on horseback after a six-hour ride. The surf was quite significant and seemed to have the same texture both to N and S, as far as we could see through binoculars [as far as our glass reached]. With our lack of provisions we could only stay for two days and had to try to catch up with our ox carts as fast as possible. From the beach, which was almost without vegetation, we returned over the mighty sand rampart to our camp behind it at the end of the Hoanib River, where our small cart was standing, and from here we drove in a SE direction in order to get the tracks of our ox carts under Rogers' guidance. When we had the Hoanib River valley behind us, we found ourselves on a mighty plain, the so-called Namieb [Namib], which seemed to extend to the S as well as to the N in an infinite way, and which would have formed a single connected table or terrace, if I may say so, if it had not been cut by the Hoanib River valley. Far to the west, towards the coast, the

> eerie sand dunes shimmered, of the same nature as those sand dunes which prevented the Hoanib from flowing directly into the sea; on the other side, far to the east, there was a broad front, as it were a wall, the table and cone mountains of the inner Kaoko-Feld.
>
> The Namieb was almost as flat and smooth as a table and the travelling on it is extremely pleasant. But the vegetation here was very low: very sparse grass growth, here and there small crippled bushes and the also very occasionally occurring strange Welwitschia. We were in the barren coast region, which, like at Walfisch-Bai and Swakop-Mund, was around 60 km wide. … The many brackish water points on the Namieb prove no less than the evidence of the sea from which the African continent became raised. By moving diagonally and southeast across the Namieb, we approached the central mountain area of the Kaoko-Feld from which the Namieb ran away. In the western part of this mountainous area we continued our journey to the south. We crossed the |Uni!ãb and ǁHu!ãb river and found our ox carts northwards from the Brandberg. This last part of our journey in the middle of the mountain country, past deeply cut gorges with steep embankments downwards and just as steep higher up, the ground is literally sown only with rocks which consisted of fist-sized to child-sized pieces of basalt, this part of our journey was extremely tedious and arduous. (Hartmann 1897: 124-127).

Hartmann's second expedition to the 'Kaoko-Feld' in 1895-96 – "on behalf of the Otavi Minen- und Eisenbahngesellschaft [Otavi Mining and Railway Company] to investigate a route for transporting copper by rail from the Otavi area to the coast, and to explore the coast for a suitable harbour" – included the Swedish naval captain Eberhard Rosenblad, who also published a narrative recounting this journey (Rudner and Rudner 2007: 6). At the time, Rosenblad was working as a hunter and trader for the Swedish trader Axel Eriksson, and was based at "Eriksson's farm" Aukas near Grootfontein. This second commercial expedition to the Northern Namib involved an arrangement whereby different German officers would lead expeditions down different ephemeral rivers to the coast (see Figure 9 – Hartmann's and Rosenblad's journeys are also mapped at https://www.etosha-kunene-histories.net/wp4-spatialising-colonialities). As Hartmann relates:

> Lieutenant Volkmann took over the organization of the three southern river expeditions and carried out the ǂUgab expedition himself. Lieutenant Helm took over the expedition along the ǁHu!ãb, finally Captain v. Estorff the one along the |Uni!ãb. The latter wanted accompany me to the northern Kaoko-Feld and from there to return to station at the |Uni!ãb mouth before my appearance there. I liked to weave in here the judgement of the old and famous elephant hunter Erikson, who has probably travelled the farthest around in our protected area, who at first thought my plan was unfeasible, and described the whole expedition as a first class achievement. … [each river expedition was supplied with "1 ox cart, 10 trek oxen, slaughter cattle, 4-6 riding horses, provisions and especially oats for three months, the necessary instruments, magnesium light, rockets and red flags"]. (Hartmann 1897: 130).

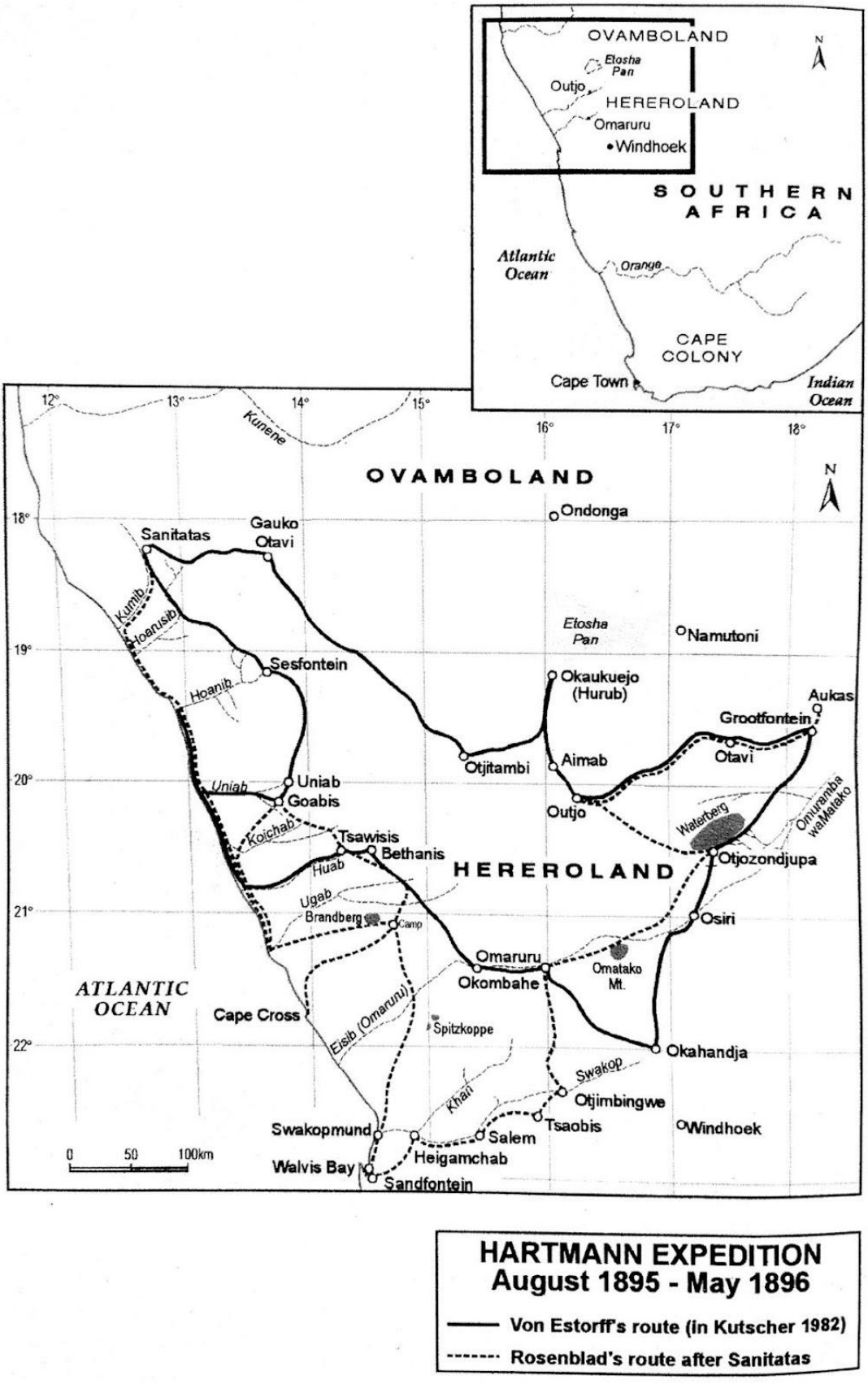

Figure 9. Journeys through the Northern Namib by Eberhard Rosenblad with Dr Georg Hartmann and Von Estorff in 1895-96, and Von Estorff's route after Sanitatas. Nb. Although not mapped here, on this journey Hartmann does apparently make it separately to the Kunene River, see text. Source: scan from Rudner and Rudner 2007: 22.

Again, it is worth quoting Hartmann regarding his impressions of the localities he was able to visit in the Northern Namib in the areas of the !Nadas, Khumib, Hoarusib and Hoanib Rivers:

> [f]rom our main camp near Sanatantas [Sanitatis – reached on 23 December according to Rudner and Rudner (2007: 169, 170-171)] in the !Khumib river with an ox cart, the 16 best trek oxen and the 8 best horses I advanced to the watering place !Nadas in the !Nadas river, of that watering place, which, as already mentioned before, is located on the western edge of the central Bergland. In front of us the Namieb-plain, and from a mountain blurred and foggy small hills could be seen, which we took for the sand dune wall. We were now in the driest time of the year, and according to the statements of natives [image caption describes them as a "group of poor Damara (Ovatjimba)" – see Figure 10], which we met here, there was no water either west nor north of !Nadas, with the exception of the Kunene River. (Hartmann 1897: 132).

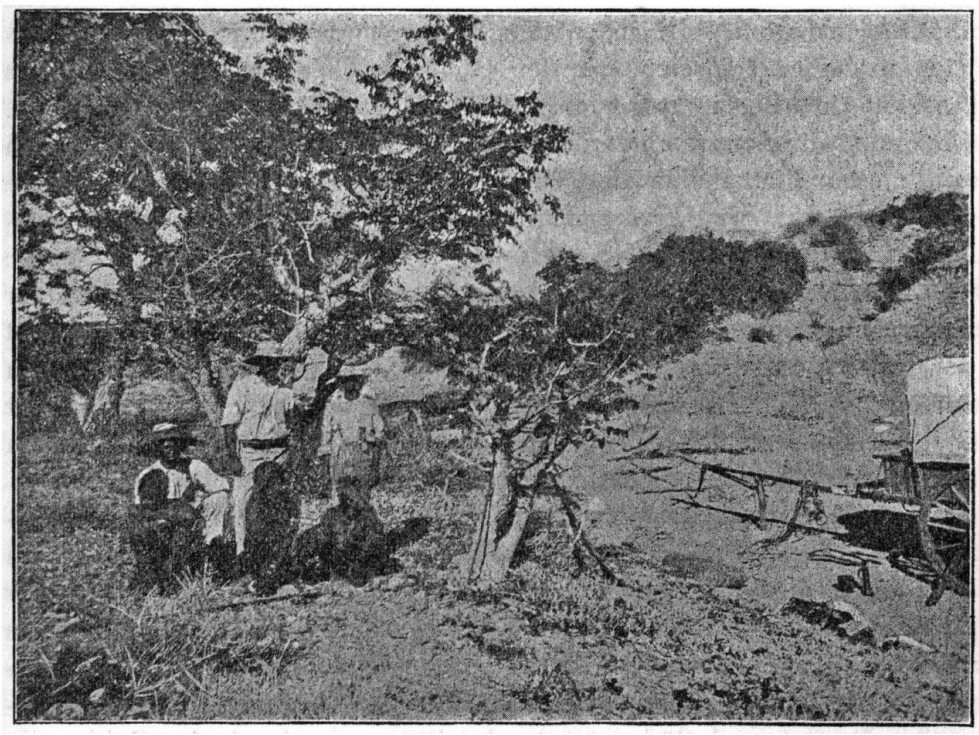

Figure 10. "!Nadas, watering place in the !Nadas river. Mr. Crighton [perhaps the English mining engineer mentioned in Hartmann's text?] with group of poor Damara (Ovatjimba)". Source: Hartmann 1897, Figure 4: 123.

Travelling west of !Nadas through "the vegetationless rough coastal region, where we do not have access to food for our cattle" Hartmann's expedition crossed

> … the Namieb and drove into the range of hills, from which we left !Nadas for the sand dune wall. It turned out that these hills were smaller granitic and basaltic hills, with sand blown against them everywhere on the north-eastern side. Sand dunes were only sporadically present. The sand dune wall was small and single sand dunes were shrunk and showed their inner core, namely the naked rock, whose weathering led to the formation of sand and thus the sand drifts or sand dunes. Only with difficulty could we find our way through the heavy sand, which everywhere covered the ground, and we soon

had to leave the cart behind. Only the next morning at around 10 o'clock from one of the granite hills could we see in the far west the sea surface, which stretched dark black to the horizon, and the surf as a fine white line. It was an uplifting feeling and with a longing heart, we looked at the goal of the project, which we now saw so close at hand. But still we had to ride four full hours until we could see the coast itself. A mighty salt pan, which we could only cross carefully held us up for a long time shortly before the beach. It was separated from the sea by a low beach wall of 2-1 m in height, which extended to N and S for miles. The surf was very heavy, just like at the Hoanib mouth, and through our glass it seemed to the north and south not to be better. Since our horses had neither food nor drinking water, we had to return inland through the following night and arrived on the third day with our oxcart happy to again be at !Nadas, after we had been on the Namieb a misfortune happened, when the cart drawbar broke. But our animals had their great performance behind them, the distance of 80 km from !Nadas to the coast and back without drinking water and with very meager food. From !Nadas we had visited the coast in exactly a western direction and [travelling] … north of the Munutum mouth, reached about 40 km south of the Kunene. Water and food shortages had made it impossible for us to continue our journey to walk along the coast. (Hartmann 1897: 132-133).

Although not marked on the route map shared in Figure 9, Hartmann's text indicates that he made it to the Kunene River, via the Marienfluss, which runs parallel to the eastern boundary of the SCNP. He remarks especially on the plentiful and diverse animal species encountered that cause him to frame the area as "a true El Dorado for the hunter":

After some rest days in !Nadas we undertook a 'proof' [Vorstofs] trip to the Kunene, but only on horseback. We rode away at noon 12 o'clock, and every two hours one unsaddled for half an hour. I assumed that we were going to reach the Kunene the following morning but were still riding by the next noon, early around 10 o'clock. We were tired, hungry and thirsty, as were our horses, on the eternally same looking grass steppe along the St. Marien river [Marienfluss] when suddenly around a rock corner we saw the Kunene River winding with its lush tropical vegetation, its palms and ana trees and especially its running water. On seeing this we felt as if electrified, and all tiredness was forgotten. The same feeling was shared by our horses. In full gallop we ran towards the river, cheering and cheering hurrah. – But since we are thinking of the way back and the coastal expeditions still to come, we could not give our horses a chance to stay here more. We tried to ride along the Kunene River on this side of the river but rocks and sandblows prevented this and finally, and with the full ignorance of the fords, which are found through the Kunene, I thought it advisable to turn back instead of losing more time here. It was with really sad hearts that we said goodbye to this wonderful river and after a twelve-hour ride, not counting the rest breaks, we reached our small stock at !Nadas. So the northernmost part of the coast is closed to us.

The enormous abundance of game in the whole northern area was remarkable, it is a true El Dorado for the hunter for all antelope species up to the rare rooibuck[?] and waterbuck[?], one sees ostrich herds up to 100 animals; from big game the elephant appears in herds, in smaller troops the giraffe, and isolated rhinoceros. The traces of lions are numerous, they only clear the field where the elephant appears, and they move with the big antelope-herds which move around to the good grass-grazing pastures in the country.

> In the following days I tried to travel along the Sechomib river, a small river between the !Nadas and the !Khumib, to penetrate the coast. Here I also found neither grass nor water, but only a brackish swamp, which the Sechomib disappears into after travelling through the middle of a granite hill range, which is again interspersed with small sand dunes. Here on the coast, where I only have the most reliable servants, the misfortune happened to us that the horses ran away from us at night. We had them tied to a log of driftwood but it was probably the humid cold, and above all the hunger and thirst, which caused them to get rid of it to disperse. While I spent the night at this desolate deserted place alone wrapped in a blanket on a small fire behind a sand dune close to the beach and the monotonous lamentation of the jackals, the raging and roaring listened to the surf and the howling of the cold and humid southwest wind, my servant marched on foot after the horses, which he brought back following afternoon after an absence of 14 hours. I probably do not need to explain how much I longed for his return and with what indescribable joy I welcomed him. So this was the second time a futile attempt was made to find a place for a station on the coast.
>
> Only at the !Khumib estuary did we succeed in finding grass and drinkable brackish water relatively close to the beach which would enable a small station for longer stays. The same was also possible on the Hoarusib, and from the Hoanib I already knew from my first Kaokofeld expedition, that it would be possible to create a provisioning station at the estuary on the western side of the sand dune wall. From the !Khumib estuary the coast, both in northern direction to the !Nadas, as well as in the southerly direction to Hoarusib, was subject to a thorough examination for landing places and guano was made, performed step by step from station to station along the entire coast to the ǂUgab river[18]. … While I was on horseback along the beach, the ox carts moved in parallel further inland around 60 km away on the same path I took one and a half hours year before. But at that time it was the rainy season and even then there were not numerous water points full of water. Now we were in the driest time, and most water holes were dry or so brackish that they were undrinkable. The little available grass was withered, and the sun was burning in the on the barren desert surfaces. Cold ruled at night, due to the fast loss of radiation. (Hartmann 1897: 133-135)

Eberhard Rosenblad, who as mentioned above was also part of this 1895-96 expedition, pursued a different route in connection with Hartmann's expedition, travelling southwards down the coast from the Khumib to the Ugab Rivers. Between the Hoanib and the Ugab he writes of plentiful springbok which they hunted for meat, and that "[i]n this area we were never safe from attacks by lions"; an experience also repeated on a journey inland to the vicinity of "Goabis" (Kaobes, south-east of the confluence of the !Uniab and Aub / ǂGâob Rivers) where "innumerable springbok … literally swarmed around us, we often had ostriches and large herds of quagga [zebra] within range" (Rudner and Rudner / Rosenblad 2007[1924]: 97, 100).

The infrequent references to the presence of local guides suggests that whilst local guides were clearly essential for these journeys as well as patently familiar with the terrain,

[18] By the time of Hartmann's expedition, guano and seals were the focus of commercial extraction to the south of the present day Skeleton Coast Park boundary with the British Damaraland Guano Company operating from Cape Cross (Hartmann 1897: 129-130; Bridgeford and Bridgeford 2002).

Hartmann and Rosenblad rather mute the presence of these actors, bringing to the fore their own agency and economising surveillance of the Northern Namib and the 'Kaoko-Feld'. The presence through the north-west landscape of local peoples is similarly muted (as well as strongly racialised). Nonetheless, Hartmann notes the presence of numerous peoples in these areas: "Berg-Damara" in mountainous areas of the "southern part of the Kaoko-Feld", as well as "numerously at the Brandberg, on whose plateaus small independent tribes still live, practising small animal husbandry (sheep and goat breeding), and [also] north to the |Uni!ãb and Franzfontein"; ovaHerero in the north-eastern Kaokoveld, their relatives migrating south-eastwards; and "Zwartboois" and "Toppnaers" Nama at Fransfontein and Seßfontein, feared by northern ovaHerero but who "rendered outstanding services" as guides and "[a]t my instigation … recognized German patronage in 1894 [sending] … for the purpose of deputations … the main players at the top to Windhoek" (Hartmann 1897: 136-137).

Of particular relevance for the Northern Namib / SCNP is Hartmann's encounter with a "decimated tribe" he inscribes in derogatory terms as "the 'Seebuschmänner', the apparently bastardized Hottentot or crossbreeds between Hottentotten and Berg-Damara", living "at the mouths of the |Uni!ab-river up to the Hoarusib and sleep[ing] where in the dunes the ǂNaras [*!naras*] fruit is to be found" (Hartmann 1897: 138). Hartmann includes in his text a photograph of these "Seebuschmänner" (labelled "Hottentotten" in Hartmann 1902/03: 413), reproduced here in Figure 11: their body language appears proud and defiant; their attire a combination of what look like springbok and seal skins, as well as a hat worn by their 'captain' that seems to be of European design; and with *!nara* knives worn around their necks. "Seebuschmänner" huts assumed to be abandoned are also photographed at "Rietgrasfontein" close to the mouth of the Hoarusib (Figure 12) (perhaps those using them were just avoiding Hartmann's expedition). Also as part of the 1895-96 Hartmann expedition, von Estorff observes "deserted, circular reed huts at the Uniab River mouth", and on return a month later finds here "a band of 30 'Bushmen' who had just arrived from the Hoanib River. They were living off narra for the most part", with one "narra knife" reportedly "made from elephant rib at the Hoarusib River" (Jacobson and Noli 1987: 174 and references therein). In 1910, geologist Kuntz similarly meets "Bergdamaras" upstream on the !Uniab returning from the Uniab mouth, where presumably they had been harvesting *!nara*[19].

[19] NAN.A.327 Krause and Kuntz, Kuntz 25/8/1910, report to the Kaoko Land und Minengesellschaft.

Figure 11. “Group of sea-bushmen at Hoanib mouth; captain with a woman in the foreground”. Source: Hartmann 1897 Figure 6: 129.

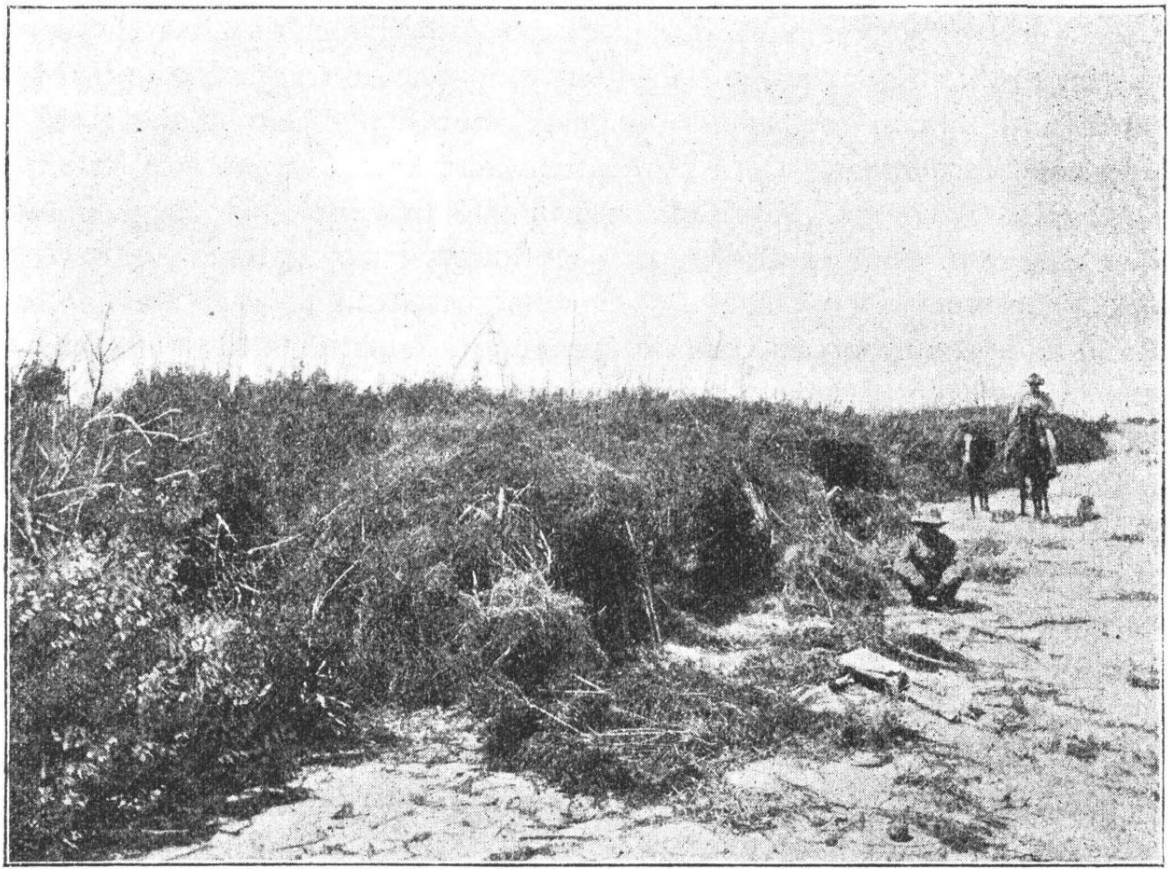

Figure 12. “Rietgrasfontein close to the mouth of the Hoarusib, on the north side of the spring, protected from the southwest wind, abandoned huts of the Seebuschmanner; two servants of Dr. Hartmann with horses”. Source: Hartmann 1897 Figure 5, p. 127.

Overall, Hartmann stresses the potential economic qualities of the Northern Namib. He emphasises: “fresh guano” at Cape Fria, the Hoanib mouth and “|Uni!ãb mouth”; the “convenient landing place” of the Khumib mouth, “which is about 600 km or by ship 3 to 4 days closer to Europe, than the Swakop mouth and Walfisch-Bai” and could be connected by railroad to “the Otavi mines”; and the “[t]he great value of the inland of Kaoko-Feld as cattle breeding land” (Hartmann 1897: 140-141). Drawing on information from his Khoekhoegowab-speaking guides, he also makes an intriguing comment regarding possible environmental change in the preceding decades:

> [a]t the mouth of the Hoanib they showed me living sea-bushmen reed grass places between the sand dunes, which only fifty years ago were ponds, on whose islands thousands of birds nested. These ponds stirred from the groundwater of the Hoanib. In the same proportion as the country raised, the water level sank deeper. Today the ponds are dry. The birds can no longer live on the small islands where they were protected from the jackals, brood and flew away. But the fresh guano, which rubs here still meter thick, reminds of their activity. (Hartmann 1897: 139)

This observation seems to match information for the more southerly !Khuiseb Delta area of the Namib where freshwater springs in the dunes bordering the coastal lagoons at Walvis Bay and Sandwich Harbour made possible a rich cultural landscape of more than 220 archaeological sites in the !Khuiseb Delta area, with extinct springs also evidenced by “dense beds of reeds, *Phragmites australis*” (J. Kinahan 2001[1991]: 90).

Use and habitation of the Northern Namib by Khoekhoegowab-speaking peoples is also signalled for the German colonial period in various maps, as indicated in the following four figures:

1) the *Deutscher Kolonial Atlas* of 1893 – Figure 13 – names “Hubun” as one of the peoples of the Northern Namib in the vicinity of the Sechomib, Hoarusib and Hoanib rivers, which corresponds with the name ǁUbun referring to a particular grouping of *!nara* harvesters (as detailed in Section 3). This map also positions “Hottentot” towards the coastal areas stretching north to south from the Sechomib to the Eisib/Omaruru rivers;

Figure 13. Detail of the *Deutscher Kolonial Atlas* of 1893. Source: Sam Cohen Library, Swakopmund.

2) the *Karte von Deutsch-Südwestafrika* of 1898, positions "Hottentot" along the coast from Walvis Bay north to Nadas (Figure 14);

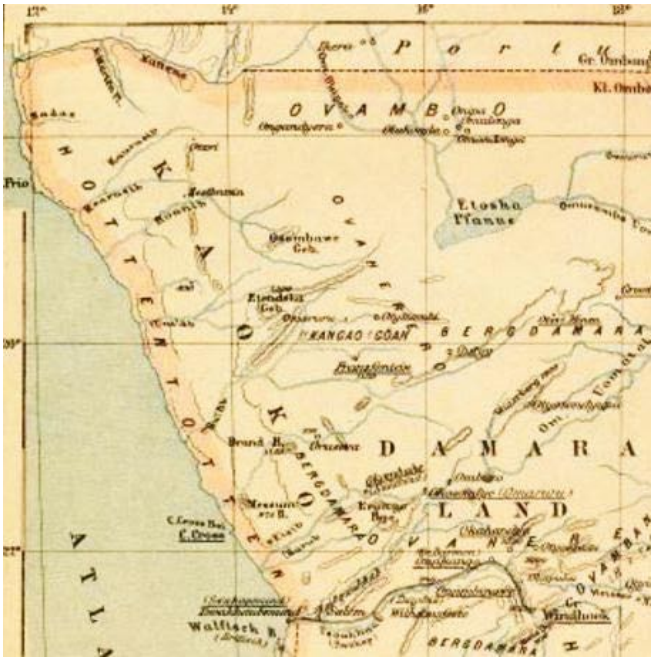

Figure 14. Detail, Karte von Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1898. Source: https://www.dhm.de/lemo/bestand/objekt/karte-von-deutsch-suedwestafrika-1898.html, accessed 14 August 2020.

3) a 1905 map of the territory positions "Bergdamara" in the western reaches of the Khumib River area, "Owatjimba" stretching towards the coast in the far north-west, and "Topnaar Hottentotten" west and south of Zesfontein (Sesfontein) (Figure 15);

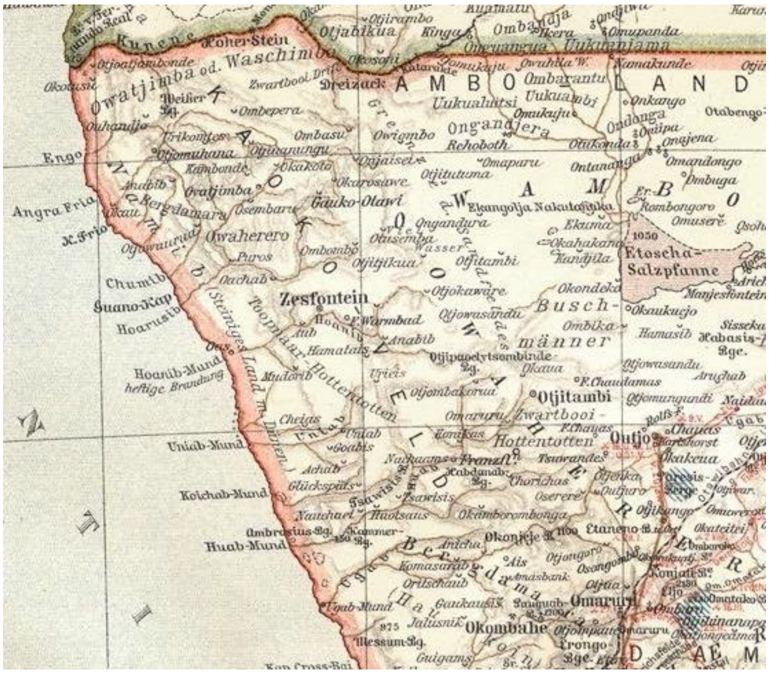

Figure 15. Detail 1905 map by Herrmann Julius Meyer - Meyers Geographischer Hand-Atlas, Public Domain. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10997145, accessed 14 August 2020.

4) and a 1910 map of "areas of occupation" prior to the "Herero Wars" positions "Bergdamara" in the far north-western area of the Khumib, "Owatjimba" in the north-west towards the Kunene – including towards the coast, and "Topnaars (Aunin) Gomen" towards the coast between the Hoanib and the Eisib/Omaruru Rivers – Figure 16.

Figure 16. Detail from "Map of nations (Völkerkarte) for Deutsch-Südwestafrika before the uprisings of 1904-05", by Prof. Dr. K. Weule (I am grateful to Ute Dieckmann for sharing a scan of this map).

The extreme disruptions of the German colonial regime in the early 1900s followed hot on the heels of livestock decline caused by rinderpest in 1897. In the north-west, Swartbooi and !Gomen / Topnaar Nama led one of the first significant Indigenous uprisings of the German colonial era, specifically resisting the western extension of a militarised livestock control cordon crossing Namibia from east to west, that represented the limits of the territory under colonial control. This uprising was crushed in 1898 at the 'Battle of Grootberg' to the south of Sesfontein (see Miescher 2012; Rizzo 2012), by military troops led by Captain Ludwig von Estorff who previously had learned something of the terrain as a member of Hartmann's expedition in 1895-96 (Rizzo 2012: 66; see Figure 9). The !Gomen Topnaar captain Jan |Uixamab of Sesfontein was forced into a protection treaty (*Schutsvertrag*) with the German colonial government (Leutwein in association with Hartmann of the KLMG) as well as charged 1,000 head of small stock and requested to hand over all arms and ammunition owned by himself and his followers (Rizzo 2012: 64, 67). The KLMG began selling farms to German and Boer settlers with Jan |Uixamab of Sesfontein selling 4,000has constituting the farm Warmbad (Warmquelle) on 3 October of 1898, later taken over by Carl Schlettwein (Rizzo 2012: 65). In 1901 a military station was established at Sesfontein by Lieutenant Viktor Franke "to supervise the entire area up to the Kunene" – so as to "undermine the smuggling of arms and ammunition within the area and through Kaoko into Owambo" and "to put an end to illegal hunting activities by Portuguese and Boer hunters regularly entering Kaoko from the north … successfully cooperating with local guides and hunters" (Rizzo 2012: 25; also Miescher 2012: 34). A colonial "commando of 40 soldiers with 25 horses was deployed" here (‖Hawaxab 2019: 1), and further impoverishment ensued with colonial restrictions on African livestock ownership (Dreschler 1980). These events radically reshaped the fortunes and governance of peoples living close to and within the present-day SCNP boundary, and accessing its coastal resources.

Nonetheless, travellers continued to report encounters with people in the Northern Namib. North of the Koigab and Huab rivers in 1906, George Elers, on an expedition to seek northern deposits of guano, built a road so as to travel northwards towards Sesfontein, doing this with "a large number of Berg-Damaras who live in this [*sic*] Velds" who show him where water may be found (Elers' report 1907 quoted in Jacobson and Noli 1987: 173). At Sesfontein, by now a German military post with a brick fort under the command of a Lieut. Smidt, Elers was informed that travel further north is ill-advised because of drought, but he nonetheless proceeded with guides westwards down the Hoanib, writing:

> although it looked hopeless I decided to try and am glad to say got through to the mouth of the Hoanib. I got the cart down to the high dunes and proceeded over them with carriers.
>
> I found plenty of water in the sand dunes but of very bad quality [e.g. at Auses?] and my oxen would hardly touch it although they had come through a long thirst. I also found much better water on the sea-side of sand dunes and there made my base. I stayed and examined all this part of the coast thoroughly. An old sea Bushman remembered the birds [white breasted cormorants] nesting there as he used to kill them for food and take the eggs.
>
> From Hoanib I proceeded to Hoarusib, I found this the only river that has run for many years. I have no difficulty with water but could not get cart nearer the sea than 40 miles, on account of wash outs and dense reed and bush … I found some Berg-Damaras and

> Bushman who live close to the sea and these people are constantly walking up and down the coast in search for whales that come ashore, *you will find their Kraals all the way to Khumib and also a long way south to the Hoanib* … North of the Khumib it was impossible to go on account of the drought. (Elers' report 1907 quoted in Jacobson and Noli 1987: 173, emphasis added).

The German colonial commercialising visions of the Northern Namib outlined above include the area now protected by the SCNP, somewhat belying its contemporary popular visibility as an untouched 'wilderness'. It seems likely that the entrepreneurial intentions of the KLMG were already in tension with contemporaneous colonial concerns regarding the over-exploitation of hunted indigenous fauna – especially elephant. In 1907 these concerns played a part in the overlapping designation of the north-west as part of Game Reserve no. 2, stretching from Etosha Pan in the east north-westwards towards the coast. Game Reserve no. 2 thus incorporated the northern part of the present-day SCNP (see Figure 17), as well as the later 'Native Reserves' based around three chieftaincies in the north-eastern part of Kaokoveld (Bollig 1997: 24).

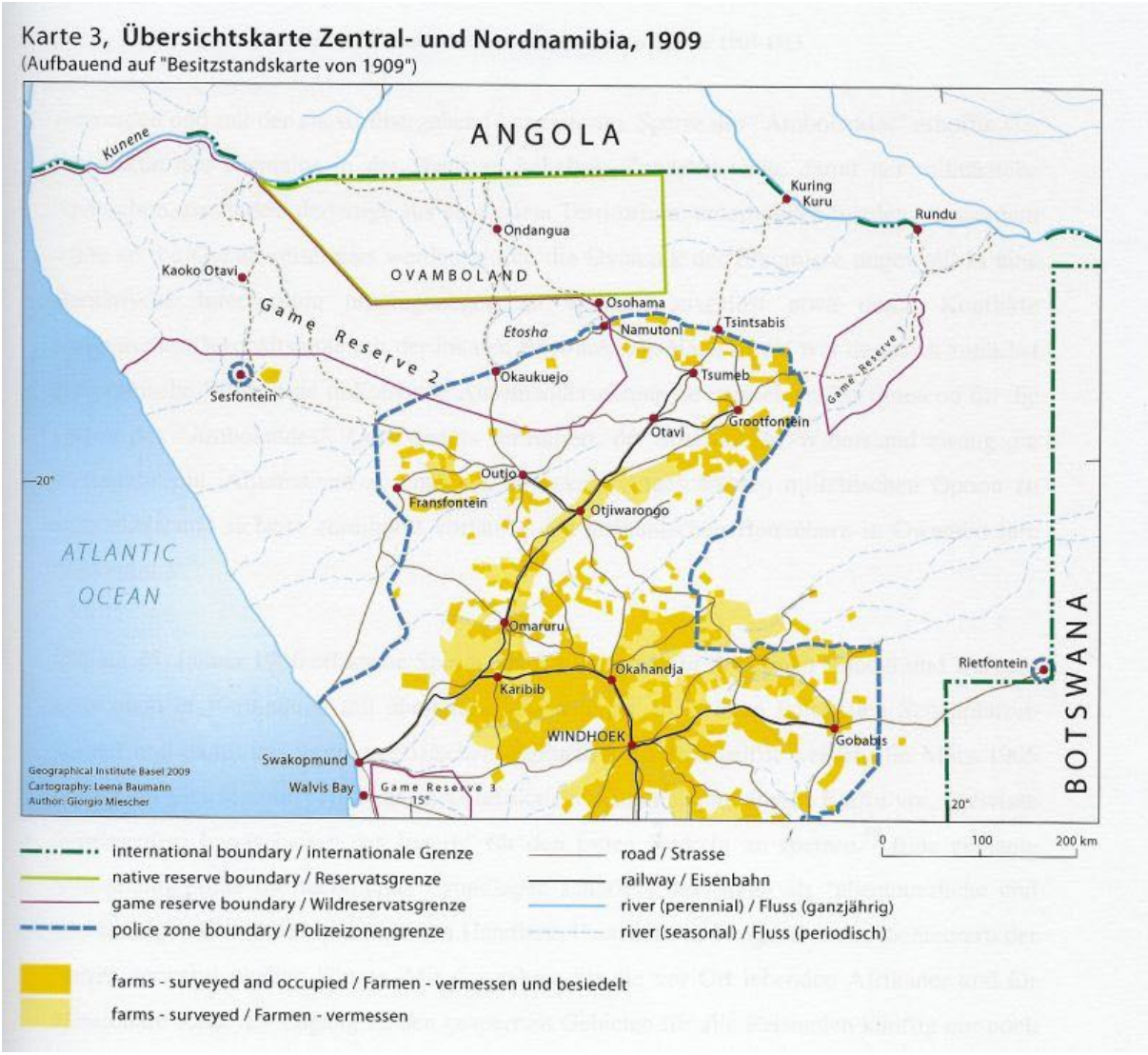

Figure 17. "Overview map of central and north Namibia, 1909". Source: Miescher 2009: 94f (thank you to Ute Dieckmann for sharing this image and Figure 20).

Protectorate – South African administration: 1915-1990

Fragmented accounts through the changing South African administrative period again report local uses of the Northern Namib. For example, in his report of a journey to Kaokoveld in 1917 Major Charles John Manning, the Resident Commissioner for 'Ovamboland' in the immediate post-WW1 years, refers to "Nama or Hottentot speaking people living at Zesfontein and nearer coast"[20]. In 1942, Sesfontein Nama were recruited to assist an overland rescue mission to the shipwrecked British liner the *Dunedin Star* just north of Angra Fria. They appeared to know routes and waterholes through the Northern Namib (Marsh 1978[1944]: 74-75). In 1951 a scientific expedition to Kaokoveld financed by businessman Bernhard Carp collected thousands of different insects including "over 100 new forms", underlining "the exceptional status of the Kaokoveld as a repository of biodiversity", as well as "the 'otherness' of the Kaokoveld's fauna and people" (Bollig and Olwage 2016, p. 67 referencing SWAA 1336/A198/39, Carp Expedition, also Bollig 2020: 84-85). Bollig (2020: 22) quotes a letter from Carp to the Administrator of South West Africa mentioning

> a forager population at the mouth of the Hoanib River. He records them as comprising "3 bushmen, 2 bushwomen, 3 Damas and 3 Dama-women", and continues: "They were called Sandloopers as they lived in the sand and also part of the year on the beaches of the coast, where they ate dead fish etc. Inland their diet consisted of grass veldkos and anything they could catch. They lived in scherms, no proper huts and had a very primitive life.[21]

This description clearly connects the people encountered on the coast with mobilities inland to acquire complementary foods.

In May 1953 a Mr Louis Knobel from Pretoria in the company of Dr PJ Schoeman – "the Game Warden of South West Africa" – encountered in the Sesfontein community a group of people later described by archaeologist Raymond Dart in a somewhat dated text:

> a small group of coastal Bush-Hottentot folk consisting of three males and an ancient doddering female, said to be their mother, who were reported by the Topnaar Hottentot elders, their overlords, to be the last remnants of what was once a large body of Strandlopers. It was the custom of the Hottentots to allow these Strandloper retainers to go down to the coast each year when the *narra* fruit was ripe. … On the coast this Strandloper group still subsists for several months on these fruit and the sea food found along the coast …, especially on the rocks about the mouth of such rivers as the Kumib and Hoarusib. This group, however, were not being allowed by the Hottentots to go to the coast for the past three or four years because of the bad seasons. (Dart 1955: 175).

Knobel's photos form the basis of Raymond Dart's 1955 hierarchised account of this encounter. He tells Dart that "the boy who took them to the isolated huts where the Strandlopers were living informed them that his own father had been a Strandloper, but that his mother was a Topnaar Hottentot"; Schoeman on the other hand notes that "according to these Strandlopers' own story, their stock had branched off from a Name [*sic*] Hottentot tribe, somewhere near the Brandberg … in the Kaokoveld, but their predecessors had lived along

[20] NAN SWAA 2516 A552/22 Kaokoveld, Major Manning's Report, 1917, p. 11, for 22 August 2017.
[21] Referencing NAN SWAA Kaokoveld A522.

the Skeleton Coast and up towards Rocky Point for hundreds of years" (Dart 1955: 175). Knobel and Schoeman, however, met no person along the coast from Rocky Point (between the Hoarusib and Khumib) to the mouth of the Khumib. The three "Strandloper" men photographed in Sesfontein stand before a circular hut made of "pieces of wood, branches and palm fronds" and are "clad in front and back aprons of buck-skin suspended from a girdle string, ear-rings and in one case a necklet of the type usually encountered amongst Bush peoples as well as rude sandals tied about their ankles with leather thongs" (Dart 1955: 175-177; see Figure 18). The paper proceeds with a rather objectifying account of the physical characteristics of the three men photographed.

Figure 18. (L) "Three Strandlopers of Sesfontein S.W.A., standing in front of their rude hut built of wood, bark, palm fronds and grass; (R) "The same three Strandlopers seated or squatting. the tall one on the right side of the previous picture having, changed over to the left side in this picture". Source: Dart 1955: 176. In May 2019, when showed these images, Franz |Haen ǁHoëb, born *ca*. 1935 (see below), recognised one of the men here as called |Gabenae.

A government ethnologist for the former Dept. of Bantu Administration based in Pretoria also states in the early 1950s that "[t]his group of Bushmen calls itself Kubun (with click //ubun)" and that "the informant said they originally came from a place called !kuiseb which is south of Walvis Bay, near the sea", with he himself (called !Hu-!gaob) and his nephew |Nanimab "born where the !Uniab flows into the sea, about seven days walk from Sesfontein". His informant had "never had a Bush wife", but instead also "had a Bergdama wife with whom he had several children, amongst them three daughters all living in Sesfontein", one of whom "was married to a Hottentot, another to a Bergdama, now dead, the third though old enough to be married had not yet found a husband and was living with her brothers" (Van Warmelo 1962[1951]: 45). Revealing preoccupations of the day with 'pure' and 'wild' 'Bushmen', Van Warmelo (1962[1951]: 45-46) states further that "[i]t seems as though there is only one pure Bush woman of this group still surviving", who "also lives in Sesfontein and is married to a Bergdama", and that only "[t]wo other pure Bushmen of this group survive", who also normally "live out in the Namib and along the coast, eating what veldkos they can get and especially fish found along the shore".

A couple of decades later, “recently extinct Strandlopers along the coast” are invoked by Etosha ecologist Ken Tinley (1971: 4) in a report commissioned by the Wildlife Society of South Africa regarding shifts to the then boundaries of Game Reserve no. 2 and Etosha Game Park (see below). Enacted as a result of the 1964 Odendaal Commission (Odendaal Report 1964), these boundary changes were perceived by conservationists to have “sacrificed” the protected area connected with the former Game Reserve no. 2 “to the land needs of Owambo, Kaokoland and Damaraland” (De la Bat 1982: 20). Of the “Strandlopers” Tinley (1971: 4) writes that their “distribution … was discontinuous as they were governed by the occurrence of freshwater in the mouths of the seasonal rivers crossing the Namib Desert”, although “they also extended up some of the rivers traversing the desert”, and “are extinct today except for one or two very old individuals living in Sesfontein”. He lumps together “the Nama people at Sesfontein and Warmquella, the extinct Strandlopers, and the Heiqum ‘Bushmen’” as “all of the Hottentot or Nama stock and shar[ing] the same language”; stating – in the dehistoricising apartheid-*volkekunde* discourse of the time (Gordon 2000; Heydinger 2021) – that “[o]ne homeland should suffice, as they are a single language group”, and advocating that “[t]he Nama people at Sesfontein and in the adjacent country should be moved to the same homeland area as the Fransfontein people” (Tinley 1971: 5, 14). In his report, Tinley appears to neglect mention of Damara / ǂNūkhoen, elsewhere documented as the most populous of the Khoekhoegowab-speaking peoples of the Sesfontein Native Reserve and surrounding area in these decades (see population figures in Van Warmelo (1962[1951]: 40), Special Committee for South West Africa (1962: 13) and National Planning Commission (1991); also summary in Sullivan 1998: 46).

During the later years of the South African administration, three key things happened that were significant for peoples with histories of accessing the Northern Namib.

The first was the establishment of diamond and semi-precious stones mining concessions through the area, notably at Sarusas in the Khumib River, Möwe Bay, Terrace Bay and Toscanini (see Figure 19). In order to establish the Namib as an area restricted for mining, peoples who utilised the coastal resources were increasingly advised that they could no longer access these areas and must become more permanently settled in the formal settlement area of Sesfontein, although at least some of those removed from the Namib area found their way back there as labourers for the mines – as recounted in Section 3.

Figure 19. Diamond mining in the northern Namib, pre-1980. Source: data from Mansfield 2006. Map created in 2017.

Simultaneously, iterative and incomplete efforts by the state to create the landscape immediately north of the 'Red Line' as a livestock free zone acted to further constrain the mobilities of people and livestock (see Figure 20). The intention was to protect the southern (European) commercial freehold farming areas from southwards movements of livestock diseases and potentially marketable livestock from the northern (African) communal areas (Miescher 2012: 151-152). This endeavour was both contested and somewhat incomplete: people continued to enter and utilise this area, although eviction – sometimes involving the shooting of livestock by government officials – also occurred and is recalled in living memory (Sullivan and Ganuses 2020: 309-310 and references therein).

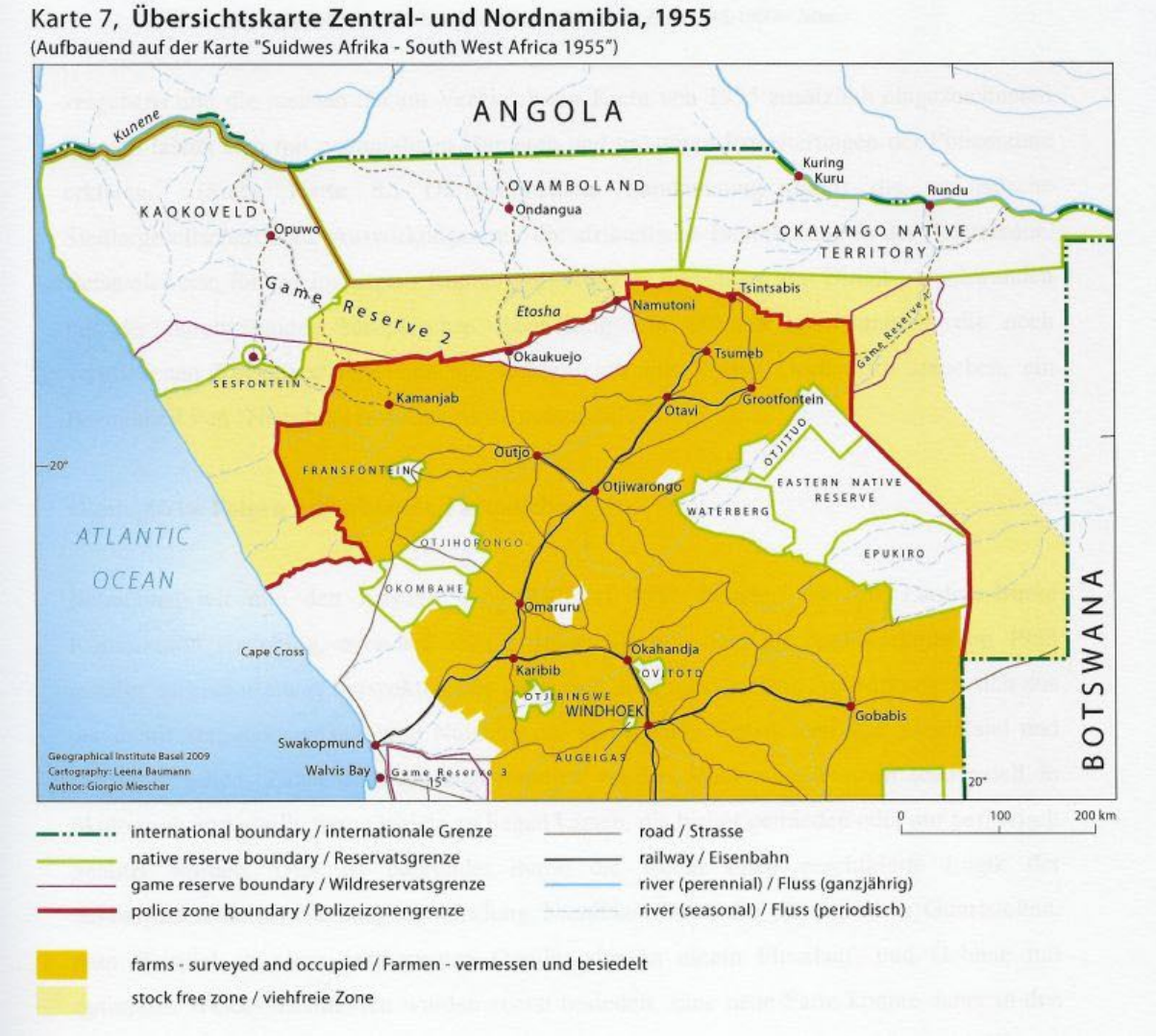

Figure 20. Source: Miescher 2009: 282f.

These iterative clearances of people and livestock from the landscape south of Sesfontein also facilitated a shift in the boundaries of 'Game Reserve no. 2'. Under the German colonial regime from 1907, this Game Reserve had connected Etosha Pan in the east with 'Kaokoveld' in the north-west – an area incorporating the Northern Namib from the Hoarusib to the Kunene rivers (Figure 20) – creating a landscape wherein access to what is called 'game' was restricted locally, and access to the area overall was restricted from the outside. With Ordinance 18 of 1958, a radical shift in the boundaries of Game Reserve no. 2 took place such that it also included the area south of Sesfontein towards the Ugab River westwards to the coast (see Figure 21) – incorporating the Northern Namib from the Ugab to the Hoanib rivers, with the area around Etosha Pan in the east proclaimed as 'Etosha Game Park'. The southern boundary of Game Reserve no. 2 was shifted again in 1967, moving slightly northwards to lie between the Koigab and !Uniab Rivers. The 'Kaokoveld Native Reserve' in the north-west remained part of Game Reserve no. 2 until the Kaokoland 'Homeland' was established after 1970, at which point the western areas stretching to the coast were removed from the boundaries of 'Etosha National Park' – a protected area

established with some adjustments along the boundaries of the 1958 'Etosha Game Park'. Disruptions to mobilities, landscape use and access previously connecting the Sesfontein/Hoanib and Okombahe/Ugab 'Native Reserve' areas in the west are recalled in oral histories that also recount experiences of eviction (Sullivan and Ganuses 2020).

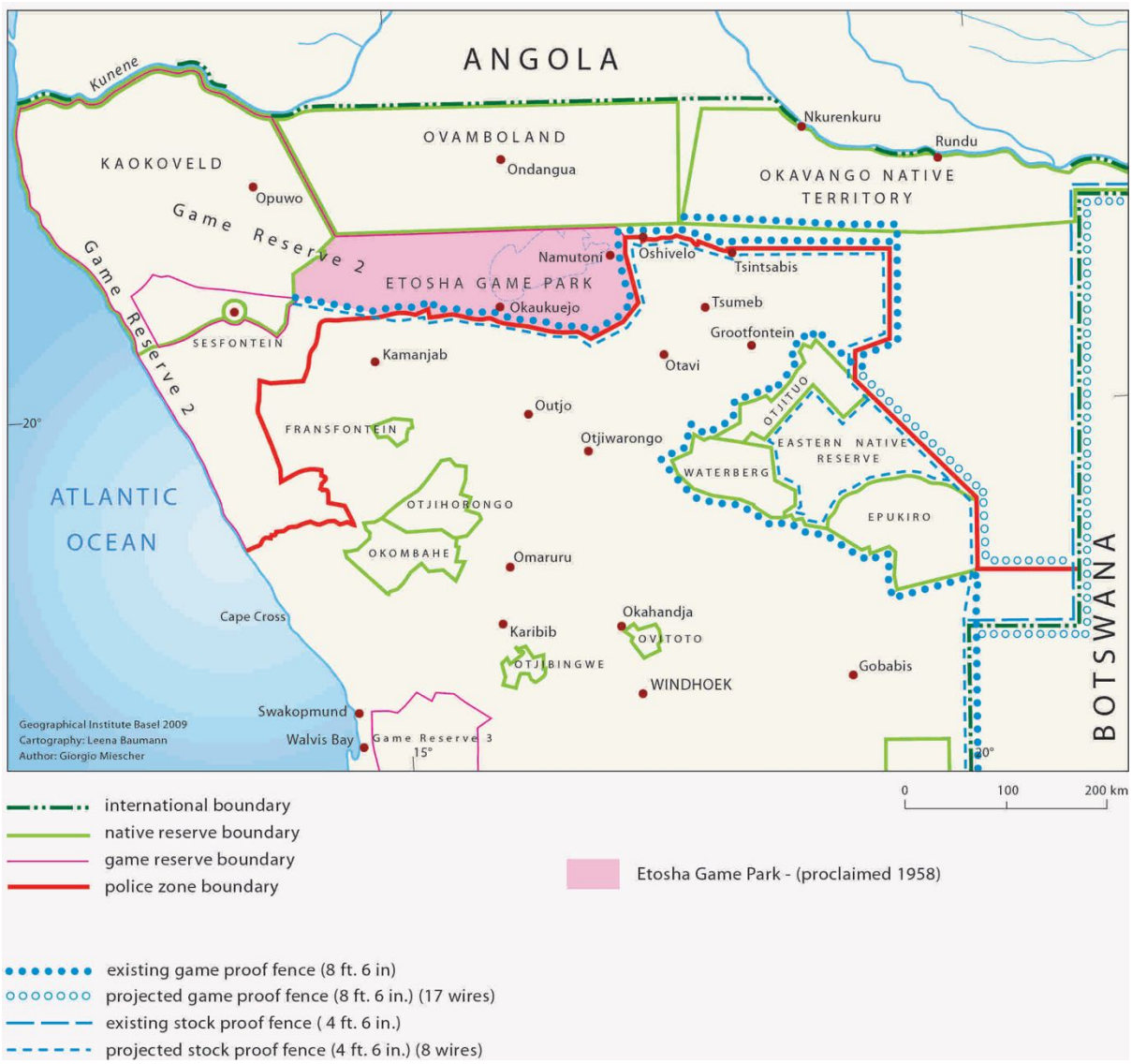

Figure 21. Boundaries in 1965, showing the extent of Game Reserve no. 2 which then surrounded an area of 'Native use' around Sesfontein, to stretch north-west towards the Kunene, south-west to the Police Zone boundary and along the Namib coast; plus existing and projected game and livestock fences. Source: scan from Miescher 2012: 170, colour version received from the author and included with permission.

The third key administrative change was the proclamation of this already restricted area as Skeleton Coast National Park in 1971: a narrow band of land encompassing the Northern Namib from the Ugab to the Kunene rivers (see Figure 22).

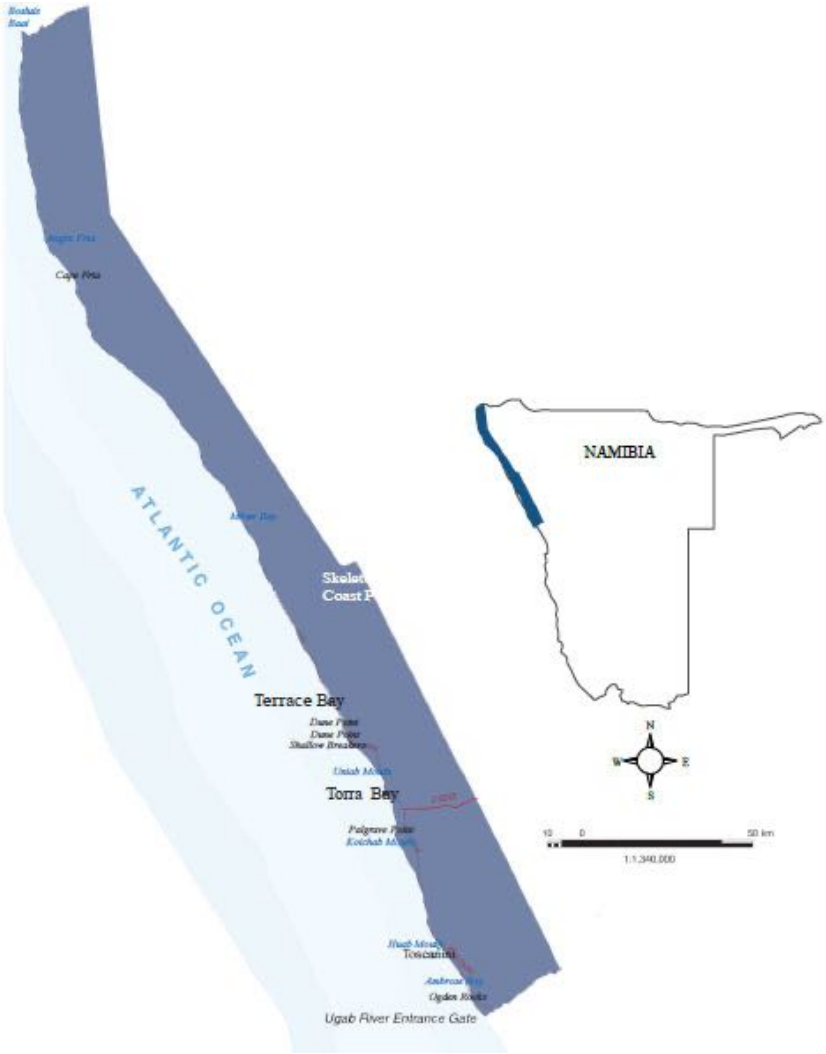

Figure 22. Boundaries of Skeleton Coast National Park, as proclaimed in 1971. Source: MEFT online: https://www.met.gov.na/national-parks/skeleton-coast-park/227/

To summarise, Section 2 clarifies that for the duration of written accounts about the Northern Namib overlapping into the pasts recorded in archaeological research a diversity of peoples and practices accessed, used and inhabited this area. As well as peoples without livestock, they included Khoe / Nama and ǂNūkhoe pastoralists, with livelihoods and other practices of living probably overlapping in diverse and changing combinations so as to respond to dynamic environmental and political circumstances. The historical influences and boundary changes ushered in by European colonial venture, however, acted increasingly to fix new, bounded conceptions of the landscapes of the Northern Namib that restricted and contained prior mobilities, whilst creating new regimes of access, governance and use. Section 3 brings into focus the ways the Northern Namib was once accessed and utilised by contemporary Indigenous Namibians, bringing to the fore their own accounts of who they are and why the coastal resources were important to them.

3. *!Nara* harvesters of the Northern Namib: contemporary oral history accounts

> When the ǁUbun and ǁKhao-a peoples met in the rain time, for example at Kai-as, the ǁUbun would bring *!nara* [from the coast] and share with the others. The *!nara* has oil/fat inside. They would mix the *!nara* and the *sâui* and *bosû* together – it was delicious food![22]

Many of the fragmented observations recounted in Section 2 are visible in the recorded oral history accounts below. These accounts put cultural and experiential flesh on the bones of the historical records above. In doing so, they are in keeping with moves to rehumanise and re-individualise the anonymising and objectifying observations of historical narratives and administrative documents (Förster *et al*. 2018). They also confirm that a recorded "absence of Khoisan-speaking foragers in the oral record" of more easterly "Himba and Herero informants in the 1990s and 2000s" (Bollig 2020: 23) is an artefact of that particular oral record, rather than a reflection of lives lived in the coastal area by those whose accounts are documented below.

This section reports on remembered *!nara* use in interviews and oral histories gathered with Khoekhoegowab-speaking peoples in and around the northern settlement of Sesfontein (also known in Khoekhoegowab as !Nani|aus and ǂGabiaǂGao, and in otjiHerero as Ohamuheke[23]). A number of elderly people now residing in Sesfontein and environs and who refer to themselves as ǁUbun, !Narenin, Hoanidaman and ǁKhao-a Dama (ethnonyms explained further below) remember growing up in areas of what is now the Skeleton Coast National Park, harvesting from tended *!nara* 'fields' there. Although drawing on research conducted in this area since 1992, most of the recollections below are from more recent oral histories conducted both at peoples' present homes and on a series of journeys west of Sesfontein to the lower reaches of more northerly westward flowing ephemeral rivers (the !Uniab, Hoanib and Hoarusib) – see Table 1 and images of some of these 'key informants' in Figure 23 (included by request and with permission).

This material draws into focus the Northern Namib as a peopled landscape criss-crossed by mobilities, aligning into recent years with Köhler's description in the quote that opens this report. It should be noted that when this research was initiated in the 1990s, in the course of studying for a PhD which became *People, Plants and Practice in Drylands* (Sullivan 1998), it was not known or assumed that peoples of the Sesfontein-Kowareb area of the Hoanib valley were so connected with the wider landscape. The use of coastal *!nara*, as well as places remembered in this wider landscape, kept being mentioned by people, however, leading to subsequent research to more fully document these histories and practices.

[22] Ruben Sauneib Sanib (|Awagu-dao-am), 18 February 2015.

[23] !Nani|aus ('Nqanicaus') and Ohamuheke are both recorded on Manning Map produced from expeditions to the Kaokoveld in 1917 and 1919, National Archives of Namibia.

Table 1. Primary interviews and oral histories by S. Sullivan and W.S Ganuses drawn on here regarding *!nara* (*Acanthosicyos horridus*) use in the northern Namib, selected from a larger dataset of testimonies compiled since 1992.

Date	**Name**	**Ethnonym**	**Place**
Interviews conducted at peoples' homes:			
May 1995	Eva |Habuhe Ganuses, [née ≠Gawuses]	Purros Dama	Sesfontein / !Nani|aus
1999	Manasse |Nuab Hildegard |Nuas	ǁUbun !Narenin / Hoanidaman	Sesfontein / !Nani|aus
060414	Hildegard |Nuas	!Narenin / Hoanidaman	Sesfontein / !Nani|aus
060414	Franz |Haen ǁHoëb	ǁUbun	Near ǂŌs
060414	Christophine Daumû Tauros Michael |Amigu Ganaseb	!Narenin Hoanidaman / ǁUbun	Sesfontein / !Nani|aus
121115	Emma Ganuses	ǂNūkhoen / ǁKhao-a Dama[?]	!Nao-dâis
On-site oral histories recorded whilst journeying to remembered places:			
17-190215	Ruben Sauneib Sanib	ǁKhao-a Dama	Journey Kowareb, Kai-as, Hunkab, Sesfontein
13-141115	Christophine Daumû Tauros Michael |Amigu Ganaseb	!Narenin Hoanidaman / ǁUbun	Journey Sesfontein, Purros, Hoanib
20-261115	Franz |Haen ǁHoëb Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb	ǁUbun	Journey Sesfontein, Hoanib, coast, Kai-as
May 2019	Franz |Haen ǁHoëb [filmed material still being worked on]	ǁUbun	!Uniab, Hûnkab, ǁOeb, Hoanib

Figure 23. Portraits of several Sesfontein residents who participated in the oral history research drawn on in this report. Top, L-R: the late Manasse |Nuab; Hildegaart |Nuas; Franz ǁHoëb; Noag Ganaseb. Bottom, L-R: Christophine Tauros; Michael Ganaseb; Ruben Sanib. All portraits by Oliver Halsey, May 2019, except Manasse |Nuab's by Sian Sullivan 1994.

The transcripts from selected interactions are shared with permission here, including from the Nami-Daman Traditional Authority which has oversight over heritage concerns in this north-westerly area. They bring to life some of the minimal historical accounts of the peoples of the Northern Namib to communicate something of past practices of living engaged in by generations associated with this north-west Namibian landscape, prior to historical events that radically constrained peoples' options. Paying attention to the detail of these narratives and recollections clarifies a differently known Northern Namib, adding complexity to this already multiply valued landscape. Note that all transcriptions, translations and interpretations have been worked on with Ms. Welhemina Suro Ganuses, as mentioned towards the start of this report.

Who and where?

> !Narenin were living in the western areas of Hoanib and Hoarusib. Where we were just now [i.e. Hûnkab area] was ǁUbun land. ǁUbu people were living in the places close to the ocean like Hûnkab, !Uniab, |Garis, Xûxûes. Those are the areas of *Huri-daman ǁUbun di !huba* [lit. the 'Sea-Dama (i.e. !Narenin) and ǁUbun land'][24].

For the Northern Namib within living memory, harvesters and consumers of *!nara* have tended to be associated with four main land-lineage groupings (*!haoti*): !Narenin, ǁUbun, Hoanidaman and ǁKhao-Dama (see Figure 24), all of whom are now represented by the Namidaman Traditional Authority. In this area of north-west Namibia beyond the 'Red Line', where Damara / ǂNūkhoen and ǁUbun have retained some continuity of habitation for at least several generations, relationships of belonging linking familial groups (*!haoti*) with named areas of land (*!hūs*) – termed "local-incorporative units" by anthropologist Alan Barnard (1992: 203) – have continued into recent years to shape peoples' understandings of their identity and histories (Sullivan and Ganuses 2020, 2021). As noted above, from especially the 1950s onwards, these lineages became concentrated in Sesfontein and associated settlements, whilst continuing to travel to places dwelled in and known from past experience, as well as to retain memories of these places.

[24] Ruben Sauneib Sanib (|Awagu-dao-am), 19 February 2015.

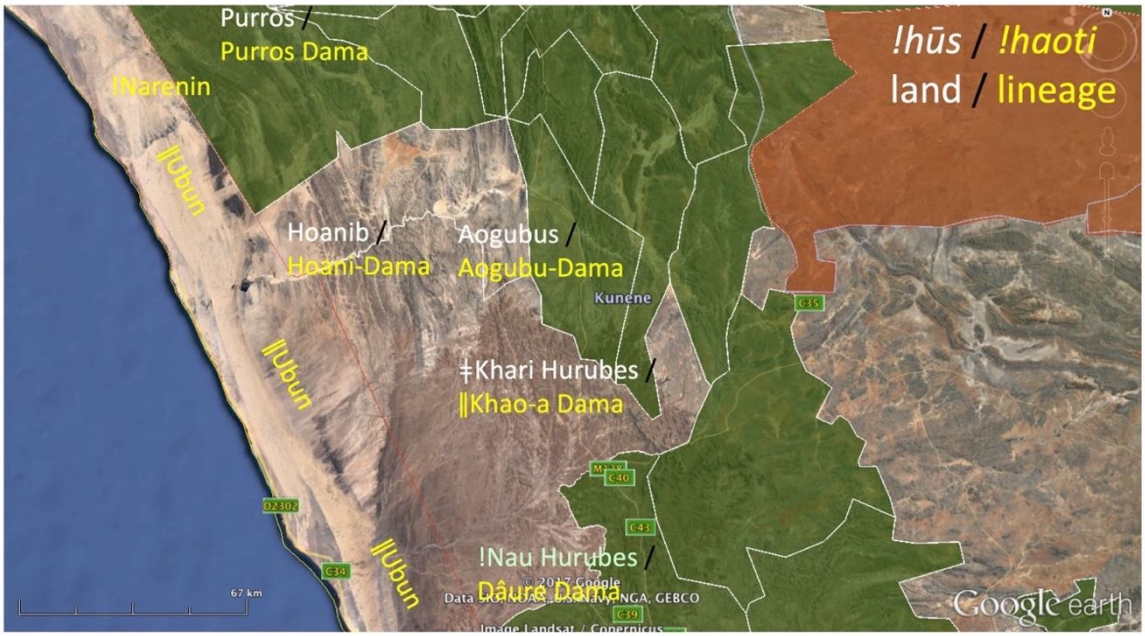

Figure 24. Roughly reconstructed land-lineage groupings for Khoekhoegowab-speaking Damara ǂNūkhoen and ‖Ubun in north-west Namibia. The green areas are current communal-area conservancies, the orange line running from north to south in the west marks the eastern boundary of the Skeleton Coast National Park, and the orange-shaded area in the east is the present-day Etosha National Park. This map should be read with the understanding that there were mobilities between these areas and family groups, as well as by other ethnic groups, especially Nama, and ovaHimba / ovaHerero.

!Narenin were/are Damara / ǂNūkhoen associated with the western reaches of the northerly Hoanib and Hoarusib rivers, who for as long into the past as people can remember, relied significantly on *!nara*, hence their ethnonym. They harvested *!nara* from the Hoarusib River and from near Dumita (towards the mouth of the Hoarusib), Ganias and Sarusa springs, combining *!nara* food products with other plant foods (species mentioned in this section are listed in Annex 2)[25]:

> … my great, great-grandfathers and mothers were there at Sarusa, and I was born here [in Hoanib] at ǂHoadi‖gams.[26]
>
> … my family are the people who are/were living in the *!nara* area, and they collect the *!naras* – that's where the name [!Narenin] is coming from.[27]
>
> … they would move in between the Hoarusib and Hoanib. In Hoanib in the rain time they came here to collect food, especially ǂ*ares*[28] and ǂ*namib*[29] – the latter is not found in

[25] The ǂAonin of the !Kuiseb River have also at times been given the alternative name of !Narenin or !Naranin, derived from the word "*!nara*" and reportedly inflected with a derogatory connotation when used by other Nama people (Budack 1977: 2).

[26] Christophine Daumû Tauros (Purros), 13 November 2015.

[27] Hildegaart |Nuas (Sesfontein), 6 April 2014.

[28] i.e. Grass seeds from *Setaria verticillata* collected from underneath especially *Acacia tortilis* trees. Nb. Manning reports so-called 'Klip Kaffirs', i.e. 'Berg Damara' harvesting these seeds in the Hoarusib river on his 'Traveller's Map of Kaokoveld' based on journeys in 1917 and 1919 (National Archives of Namibia) and deposited with the Royal Geographiucal Society in London in 1921 (NAN A450 Vol.4 1/28, Manning - Royal Geographical Society, London 19/12/1921, also see Hayes 2000: 53).

[29] Grass seeds of *Danthoniopsis dinteri* that appear white when 'cleaned'.

> Hoarusib. At this time they wore leather skirts from springbok leather. They would collect *lots* and take back bag by bag to the Hoarusib. The *!naras* grow ripe in the Hoarusib at this time and were harvested by *!narab* Dama, i.e. !Narenin.[30]
>
> The !Narenin people were the people living next to the ocean [i.e. "Huri-dama", see above]. And when the *!naras* is ripe then they go to the ocean side of the *!naras* and then they stay there, and when they are finished with the *!naras* it's now the *xori*-time, and the *xoris*[31] is now ripe and so they came to the Hoanib [to harvest *xoris*] and they stay there. So they are not the people who are staying in one place – they are moving from place to place.[32]
>
> Now the time that they are collecting the *!naras* was the time when they are there at !Ui‖gams [near Auses] and in Ganias that side.[33]

Coastal foods were clearly important alongside *!nara*. Michael Ganaseb, for example, described cooking mussels in black ceramic pots – *!nomsus* – in his early life in the northern Namib[34]. These coil pots were made using clay – *sohai* – whose sources in the landscape were surrounded by some secrecy[35].

In recent generations at least, !Narenin and ‖Ubun would interact and intermarry in these northern Namib areas:

> The !Narenin people were living in Purros and the ocean side is where the *!naras* are living, and the ‖Ubun were at !Ui‖gams / Auses in the Hoanib. Now when they are looking for the food they meet and it's where the !Narenin men take the ‖Ubun women and the ‖Ubun women take the !Narenib,[36] like that. So they were moving from place to place because of the *sâu* and *bosû* – when it's now the time of the *sâu* and *bosû* they came to ‖Khams [Amspoort], and Dubis and |Aub [all places in the Hoanib] – those are the places where they stayed because of *sâu* and *bosû*. So at the *!nara* time then they go back to !Ui‖gams.[37]
>
> The !Narenin were staying to the north of the Hoanib, and the ‖Ubun people were staying in !Uniab in the south. And they knew that when the *!naras* get ripe then we come together – !Narenin and ‖Ubun – and we collect together.[38]
>
> The !Narenin people are the people of Sarusas and down there in Hoanib, but the ‖Ubun people are the people who are coming from Walvis Bay. Now along the ocean there are

[30] Eva |Habuhe Ganuses, *née* ǂGawuses (Sesfontein), 1995.

[31] Fruits of *Salvadora persica*.

[32] Christophine Daumû Tauros and Michael |Amigu Ganaseb (Purros), 13 November 2015.

[33] Christophine Daumû Tauros and Michael |Amigu Ganaseb (ǂNū!arus), 7 April 2014.

[34] Michael |Amigu Ganaseb (Purros), 13 April 2015. In the late 1800s, Gürich describes the use of clay vessels by Damara / ǂNūkhoen in the Brandberg preparing grass seeds in a clay pot: '… for cooking they use thick, large pots, which are made of coarse material and have scarcely been fired; these bulge in the middle and are placed on ash with the lower pointed end' (Gürich 1891: 140 quoted in Du Pisani and Jacobson 1985: 109).

[35] Franz |Haen ‖Hoëb (Sesfontein), 4 April 2019.

[36] Khoekhoegowab is a gendered language in which nouns and names ending in 'b' are denoted as masculine whilst those ending in 's' are feminine, thus '!Narenib' here means a !Narenin man.

[37] Christophine Daumû Tauros and Michael |Amigu Ganaseb (Purros), 13 November 2015.

[38] Franz |Haen ‖Hoëb (ǂŌs, near Sesfontein), 6 April 2014.

> the huts of the ǁUbun people they built with ribs of the whale. So the !Narenin are this side – Purros side. ... The ǁUbun, they move from the !Uniab to the Hoanib, and the !Narenin are also moving from Sarusas [north of Hoarusib] where they are to the Hoanib.[39]

The reference here to the ǁUbun people building huts with ribs of the whale is intriguing. Based on archaeological research reported in the Draft Management Plan (ch. 7), the use of a whalebone hut and shell midden located south of the Ugab River mouth in Dorob National Park is dated to approx. 1,000 years ago. As mentioned in Section 2, whale bone material is also reported in association with hut circles north of the Munutum in the Northern Namib (Eichhorn and Vogelsang 2007: 152-153). Jill Kinahan (2000: 16) writes that

> [a]fter catching and stripping the blubber from a whale, the Americans [whalers] would dump the carcass overboard, providing the coastal people with a bonanza of fatty meat, and gigantic bones which could be used for building material.

Whaling along Namibia's Atlantic coast took place through the 1700s into the early 1800s, so it could be expected that whale bone huts benefitting from whale hunting would also be of a more recent age. Indeed, information attributed to surveyor Carel Brink who accompanied a 1761-62 expedition north of the Orange River from the Cape Colony led by Hendrik Hop, depicts a 'Strand Bosjemans' ('Beach Bushmen') village constructed of whale bones, positioned on the coast, north of the Orange (then !Garieb) River (Figure 25). In the image, the huts are placed very close to each other, the family grouping is accompanied by several dogs, a beached whale is being butchered to the left of the huts, and one human figure in the centre is carrying on their back what appears to be a heavy bag filled with round shapes interpreted to be ostrich eggs used for storing potable water. It is possible that there may once have been whalebone settlements in the Northern Namib that looked something like this – as indicated by the remains of a whalebone "encampment" at the mouth of the Ugab "constructed from ribs and mandibles of the Southern Right Whale *Eubalaena australis*" (J. Kinahan 2020: 319).[40]

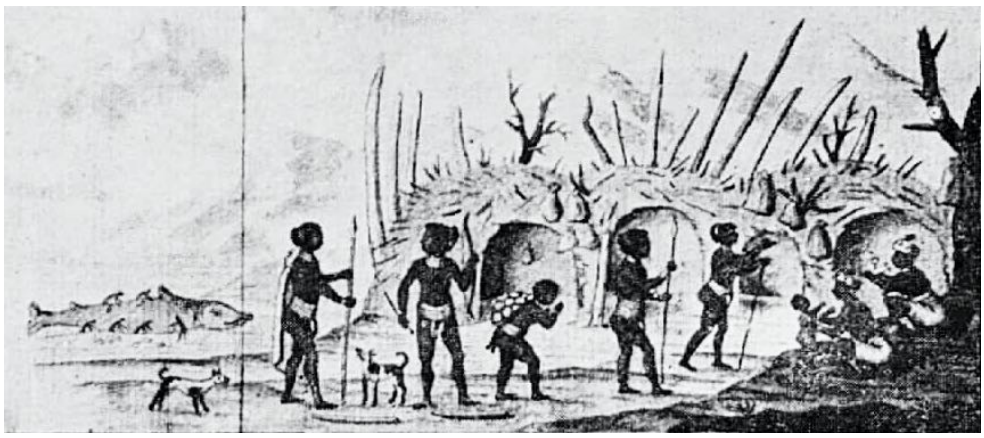

Figure 25. Detail of 'Strand Bosjmans' village from 'Historical map, Orange River to Karas Mts., SWA', apparently created as a composite of multiple sources of information from different expeditions, including that led by Hendrik Hop in 1761-62 accompanied by surveyor Carel Brink. Adapted from Mossop 1947: opp. p. 50.

[39] Christophine Daumû Tauros and Michael |Amigu Ganaseb (ǂNū!arus), 7 April 2014.

[40] More detail regarding the Hop/Brink expedition is included in Sullivan *et al*. 2021: 2-3.

As noted above, ǁ***Ubun*** are Khoekhoegowab-speakers sometimes referred to as 'Nama' and at other times as 'Bushmen', who had been living in the ocean side north of the !Khuiseb reportedly for generations[41], and are likely to be amongst those coastal peoples associated with the term 'Strandloper' in historical texts. In recent generations they are known to have experienced conflict with !Khuiseb Topnaar when those who became known as ǁUbun requested to be given milk but were refused. Thus, long ago a woman on the !Khuiseb (at Utuseb) did not want to give her sister the creamy milk [ǁ*ham*] that the latter desired[42], leading ǁUbun to retreat northwards close to the ocean ['*hurib*'][43] – "[t]hat's why they called them Hurinin"[44]. As Franz ǁHoëb describes,

> there in the !Khuiseb there was a conflict between the families. One doesn't want to give the other the milk of the goat – that's why they are angry. And they left the !Khuiseb for the !Uniab[45].

ǁUbun are linked with many former dwelling sites located in the Namib close to the ocean in this far westerly area. At the !Uniab River, reportedly a *!nara* plant was found by their dog and when they saw the dog eating the *!nara* without being harmed they also start eating the *!naras.*[46]

In recent generations, ǁUbun moved between *!nara* fields in the !Uniab and Hoanib river mouths via Kai-as and Hûnkab springs, now in the Palmwag Tourism Concession.[47] They also stayed at Dumita in the lower Hoarusib where there is a fountain,[48] and are considered to be:

> … the people who built the houses at Terrace Bay and Möwe Bay and were living there. Those circle houses with the rocks at !Uniab are also the houses of the ǁUbun – my great grandparents were coming from those rock houses.[49]

> … when other people saw them in the Namib with their houses built very close together (i.e. 'ǁ*ubero*') they said exclaimed over the way the houses were being made – hence the name 'ǁUbun'.[50]

---

[41] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (Kai-as), 25 November 2015.

[42] As related in multiple interviews and oral histories: for example, Manasse ǁGam-o |Nuab and Hildegaart |Gugowa |Nuas (*née* Ganuses) (Sesfontein), May 1999; Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (near ǂŌs), 6 April 2014; Emma Ganuses (!Nao-dâis), 12 November 2015.

[43] Hildegard |Nuas (Sesfontein), 6 April 2014, Emma Ganuses (!Nao-dâis), 12 November 2015.

[44] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (near ǂŌs), 6 April 2014.

[45] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (near ǂŌs), 6 April 2014.

[46] Hildegaart |Gugowa |Nuas (*née* Ganuses) (Sesfontein), 6 April 2014; Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (near ǂŌs), 6 April 2014. This story itself iterates a trope in which dogs are considered closely linked with human being and perception, attributes also conferred to lions (see Hannis and Sullivan 2018: 287).

[47] Documented through journeys with Franz ǁHoëb and Noag Ganaseb, 20-26 November 2015, and Franz |Haen ǁHoëb 5-9 May 2019.

[48] Hildegaart |Gugowa |Nuas (*née* Ganuses) |Nuas, (Sesfontein), 6 April 2014.

[49] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb 5-9 May 2019. Following Blümel *et al*. (2009) the SCNP Draft Management Plan (ch. 7) dates remains "of an ancient settlement in the Uniab River delta" to 1,000-1,300 years ago. The oral history material shared here indicates that this area was also lived in and used more recently than this.

[50] Manasse ǁGam-o |Nuab and Hildegaart |Gugowa |Nuas (née Ganuses), May 1999; Emma Ganuses (!Nao-dâis), 12 November 2015.

It seems possible that contemporary ǁUbun are descendants of a 'Topnaar group' called |Namixan, who in the 1800s under their "Chief ǂGasoab, lived in the !Khuiseb" coming into conflict with Topnaar groups called !Gomen and Mu-ǁin, which continued "between ǂGasoab's successor, *Chief ǂHieb*, and Chief Khaxab of the Mu-ǁin" (Vigne 1994: 8, emphasis added[51]). The |Namixan reportedly withdrew "to the sea-coast" from where "Chief ǂHieb and two companions travelled secretly to Rooibank [in the lower !Khuiseb] to look for any of his people left there", being "surprised at a Mu-ǁin werf [settlement] by a commando which attacked from the dunes rather than approaching them along the river, killing Chief ǂHieb and his companions" (Vigne 1994: 8). The |Namixan were again driven away "*under Chief ǂHieb's son*" (Vigne 1994: 8). As noted in Section 2, the presence in the northern Namib of people named ǁUbun appears to be confirmed during German colonial times by the name "Hubun" in the lower reaches of the Hoarusib and Hoanib rivers on the *Deutscher Kolonial Atlas* of 1893 (see Figure 13).

Given known naming practices in which sons of especially lineage leaders may be named after their fathers, the possibility exists that "Chief ǂHieb's son" mentioned above is the maternal grand-father ǂ*Gîeb* remembered by the elderly ǁUbun man Franz ǁHoëb, born at the *!nara* fields near Auses / !Uiǁgams in the lower Hoanib river and now living in the vicinity of Sesfontein / !Nani|aus: see reconstructed genealogy in Figure 26. Franz remembers his family harvesting *!nara* in the lower Hoanib and moving between *!nara* fields in the !Uniab and Hoanib via Kai-as (see below).

ǂGîeb's grave is next to the former dwelling site called Daniro (the place of honey, *danib*) , where ǂGîeb and others first encountered German men travelling down the !Uniab, described to Franz as being the first occasion when these ǁUbun had seen white men and encountered food in tins. This encounter was perhaps the 1896 journey by L. Von Estorff related in Section 2, which finds "deserted, circular reed huts at the Uniab River mouth" and on return a month later finds here "a band of 30 'Bushmen' who had just arrived from the Hoanib River. They were living off narra for the most part …" (in Jacobson and Noli 1987: 174).

[51] Vigne (1994) draws on an archived late 1800s statement by "Piet !Haibeb", son of Mu-ǁin "Topnaar" leader Frederick Khaxab, to an agent of German colonial settler Adolf Lüderitz.

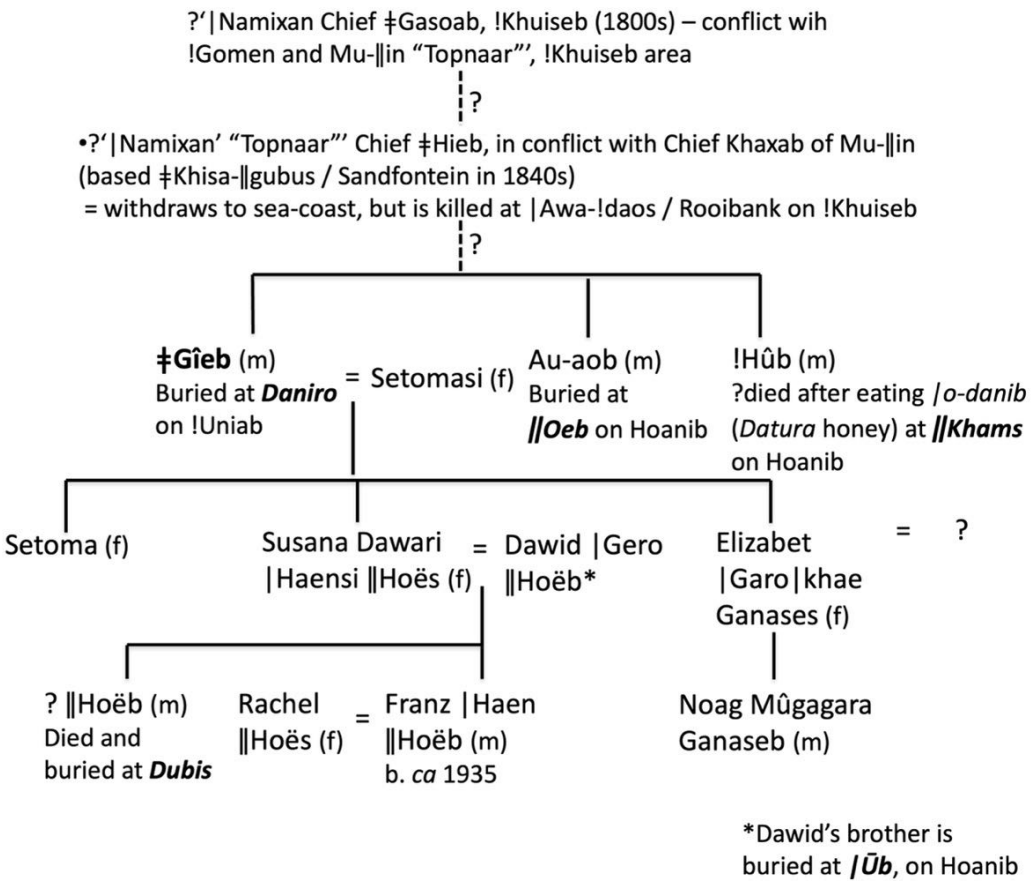

Figure 26. Reconstructed geneaology of remembered ‖Ubun leader ǂGîeb, drawing on oral histories with especially Franz |Haen ‖Hoëb and historical material in Vigne (1994: 8).

In May 2019, Franz ‖Hoëb led us to this grave of his grand-father ǂGîeb in the lower !Uniab river, located exactly as mentioned in numerous prior interactions, in the present-day Skeleton Coast National Park at -20.13615, 13.31687 (see Figure 27). When we relocated this grave spoken of in previous interviews, there were imprints of footsteps all around it which we later learned were from a running event of around 40(?) people across the park, held in April 2019. It would mean a lot to descendants of ǂGîeb living in the Sesfontein area today for this grave to be marked and protected from human and animal disturbance into the future.

Figure 27. Top – Franz |Haen ǁHoëb stands at the grave of his grand-father ǂGîeb, having told us repeatedly about this grave in previous interviews. The footsteps from a recent sports run across the desert are clearly visible to Franz's left; middle – ǂGîeb's grave, clearly showing multiple footsteps close by; bottom – ǂGîeb's grave from the side, looking north to the dwelling place of Daniro (the place of honey / *danib*), where ǁUbun lived in the past.

Hoanidaman is an ethnonym attributed to those linked especially with the lower reaches of the Hoanib River, where the plant foods *!nara*, *xoris* and ǂ*ares* were found. One of Sesfontein's most senior people, Hildegaart |Gugowa |Nuas (*née* Ganuses), now in her 90s and sadly in poor health, provides a vivid description of life as a 'Hoanidama', including the harvesting and processing of *!nara*, in a short film linked, with permission, at https://vimeo.com/380044842 and described in the blog article at https://www.futurepasts.net/post/celebrating-hildegaart-nuas-of-sesfontein.

Hildegaart lived her first years with her parents at places where plants of the *!nara* melon (*Acanthosicyos horridus*) grow in the dunes of the !Uniab and Hoanib Rivers (see Figure 28), close to the Atlantic Ocean in what is now the Skeleton Coast National Park. In the Hoanib, the places where Hildegaart's parents stayed were called ǁHoas and !Uiǁgams, near Auses waterhole. Here, and as detailed further below, each family had their own *!nara* plants from which to harvest. This is why they were also known as '!narab Dama'. They were Damara / ǂNūkhoe people who knew how to harvest and prepare *!nara*. Hildegaart remembers how when she was little at the Hoanib *!nara* fields her parents would harvest the *!nara* fruit. When the *!naras* were yellow in colour they would test them for ripeness with a long stick that could reach into the spreading and spikey *!nara* bushes. They would put the ripe *!naras* into a big container, then cook and stir them to make the pulp of the fruit become like liquid. That juice they poured into another tin with holes in the bottom to separate it from the seeds, and then they threw the juice onto the dunes to dry. When the edges of the dried juice could be picked up off the dunes, they would roll it up and eat this rolled cake of *!nara* juice. They would also spread the seeds out on an animal skin, and when they became dry they would eat those seeds. Sometimes they would pound them before eating.[52]

Figure 28. *!Nara* growing on the dune of the lower Hoanib river catchment, formerly harvested by multiple people now concentrated in the Sesfontein area. Photo: Sian Sullivan, 23 November 2015.

Hildegaart relates that Nama headmen from Sesfontein came to them and said "you cannot stay here alone, you have to move to Sesfontein so that the government can recognise you"[53]. It is likely that there was not only one event in which people were 'encouraged' to remain in Sesfontein: people recall being moved to Sesfontein to work for Nama in the gardens there at the time when Husa |Uixamab – who died in 1941 – was 'captain'[54]. When the Northern

[52] Hildegaart |Gugowa |Nuas (*née* Ganuses) (Sesfontein), 6 April 2014.
[53] Also Manasse ǁGam-o |Nuab and Hildegaart |Gugowa |Nuas (*née* Ganuses) (Sesfontein), May 1999.
[54] Christophine Daumû Tauros and Michael |Amigu Ganaseb (ǂNū!arus), 7 April 2014.

Namib became restricted as a mining area (see Section 2) it again became harder to enter the area to harvest *!nara*:

> now when the whites started making the diamond mines, now the government told the people that they have to move out and stay in Sesfontein. That's why they are moving out from the places where they are living.[55]

Even then, however, people would travel up and down the Hoanib between Sesfontein and Möwe Bay. For example, Franz ǁHoëb, now resident in Sesfontein, worked as a labourer for both Sarusas and Möwe Bay mining operations, reporting how he and others from Sesfontein would travel to Möwe bay on donkeys for work in the diamond mine at Möwe Bay. Someone would come with them to take the donkeys back to Sesfontein. Others would also come to Möwe Bay bringing goats for consumption by the mine managers. The goats were grazed at |Garis on the coast at the !Uniab mouth (see Figure 6), before being slaughtered for consumption by the mine managers. Sesfontein resident Jacobus ǁHoëb and former headman Simon ǁHawaxab, as well as ovaHimba residents, were also mentioned in this regard, i.e. as those who delivered goats down the Hoanib and across the Namib dunes to Möwe Bay[56].

When the *!nara* harvesters of the Northern Namib relocated more fully to Sesfontein, the Nama leadership gave them gardens so they could start planting food. They began wearing European-style clothes instead of the skins of springbok they had worn when 'in the field'. But Hildegaart's parents continued to go to the *!naras* at the time of the year when they became ripe. They would move down the Hoanib and bring *!nara* cakes back to Sesfontein. More recently, Hildegaart's husband, the late Manasse ǁGam-o |Nuab, continued to go to the *!nara* fields of the Hoanib, bringing back bags of *!nara* on a donkey to Sesfontein[57].

ǁ***Khao-a Dama*** are associated with the area further inland known as (ǂKhari, i.e. 'small') Hurubes (also ǁHurubes), and are a grouping that in times past were connected with ǁKhao-as mountain, a large mountain at the confluence of the ǂGâob (Aub) and !Uniab rivers in the present-day Palmwag Tourism Concession (see below).[58] Although apparently not harvesting *!nara* themselves, they appreciated the !nara that was shared by others, as illustrated in the

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[55] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb and Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb (Hoanib Camp / ǁOeb), 22 November 2015.

[56] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb and Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb (|Garis), 24 November 2015. These recollections echo practices reported for further south by Bridgeford and Bridgeford (2002: 23), who write that in 1895-1904 supplies of fresh meat were acquired 'from the inhabitants of Okombahe in Damaraland, who trekked down the Omaruru River with cattle, watering stock at various waterholes in the river' with a farmer/shop-keeper (called du Toit) at Cape Cross herding the cattle the last 60kms to Cape Cross. John Kinahan (2001[1991], 2020) describes such inland-coastal livestock movements in detail drawing on archaeological and historical sources for especially the !Khuiseb area.

[57] Manasse ǁGam-o |Nuab and Hildegaart |Gugowa |Nuas (*née* Ganuses), May 1999.

[58] A known ancestor of the |Awise ǁKhao-a Dama family is buried at the former settlement of Kai-as (at -19.7588, 13.59574), and a more recent ancestor (Aukhoeb |Awise), alive at least until the ca. 1930s, is buried at Soaub in !Nau ("fat") Hurubes (at -20.09555, 13.86885), having also previously herded livestock at Sixori south-west of Sesfontein in ǂKhari Hurubes (see below). Three ǁKhao-Dama brothers from the |Awise family of several generations back are buried on the edge of the settlement of Sesfontein (at -19.12971, 13.61739). All these graves are damaged: the first two by wild animals in the Palmwag Tourism Concession; the latter by livestock. (Images available by request. Information derived through multiple oral histories with especially Ruben Sauneib Sanib and Sophia Opi |Awises. An *arus* or healing song linking ǁKhao-a Dama with ǁKhao-as mountain can be heard at https://soundcloud.com/futurepasts/arus-about-khao-asmountain-081115).

quote opening Section 3.

The extent of past mobilities of these peoples through the north-west landscape and Northern Namib is often commented on by elderly people interviewed today who lament the loss of area access and social autonomy characterising these remembered pasts:

> we moved also from Kai-as to the places where the food is. Even we go *far* away: behind that Puros side !Homeb[?], it's also the place where the *kai khoen* (old people) go for *!naras*. They carry also the children on sticks on their shoulders. One this side and one this side and they walk. And the children hold onto the head of the person carrying them.[59]

For illustrative purposes, Figure 29 provides an indication of how the carrying sticks recalled so vividly by Noag Ganaseb might have looked.

Figure 29. 'OvaTjimba' with carrying sticks, at the Kunene. Source: Nitshe 1913: 593.

It should be noted that Khoekhoegowab-speaking peoples were/are not the only inhabitants documented in recent decades as accessing the Northern Namib and utilising *!nara.* After rain in December 1984, anthropologist Margaret Jacobsohn (1995: 117-118) observed possibly Tjimba lineage members spend about three months at "Sechomib wet season camp" – described as a few kms from "Ochams spring" (Sarusas?), "70kms N-W of Purros" – taking "advantage of good local pasture for their goats and a large crop of ripe *!nara*".

[59] Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb (Sesfontein), 25 May 2019.

When?

Oral histories are clear that the harvesting of *!nara* required sensitivity to its seasonality, and its complementary use with other seasonally available foods:

> And the people also knew when it's the *!nara* time – for collecting, for harvesting – and when the *!naras* were finished then we would move to Kai-as and collect the honey and the grass seeds [*sâui*[60]]. And we were also hunting springbok and oryx. And if we saw, ok, this is now the time of the *!naras* then we would go from Kai-as to !Uniab again to collect the *!naras*.[61]

> And when that time of the *!naras* is finished then we come to the Hoanib and we collect *xoris*. This is the way we are changing [what we do during the year] and we know which time is the *!naras* time for harvesting. Then we move again to the !Uniab and the !Narenins to Purros side down there to Sarusa where the !Narenins are staying. They have to go back there to collect the *!naras* there, and the ǁUbus to the !Uniab [as well as formerly to Auses].[62]

> Ok, now, from Hûnkab to the other side it's a ǁUbun area and the ǁUbun people were living in that ocean side [Namib *!hūs*]. And when it is now the rainy season, and after the rain, June-July, they came to Kai-as and Uruhunes [Urunendis] looking for *sâu*, *bosû* and honey [*danib*]. And then when it is finished they go back again to the *!naras* places where the *!naras* is, and they eat the *!naras*. They collect the *!naras* and eat. And when it's finished and when it is raining, and after the rain, they come again to those places – Kai-as and Uruhunes, and collect the *bosû* and *sâu*, and eat. They bring and they share with the other people, the *!naras*, because the *!nara* has got oil and they pound it and they mix with the *bosû* and they eat. And even when they go to Sesfontein they bring also the *!naras* and gave it to other people. And the people who are living in ǂGâob [i.e. places in the area of the Aub River, now in the Palmwag Concession], when they go to that side [Kai-as, Uruhunes] they bring also their food and the others bring their food and they share.[63]

It is said that Franz's ǁHoëb's grandfather ǂGîeb, whose grave is located behind the !Uniab river mouth dunes (Figure 27), would observe when the *Boscia* fruit is ripe (*Boscia albitrunca*, *|hûnis*) and use this as the signal that now is the time for the *!naras* at !Uiǁgams in the Hoanib to also become ripe:

> Now that time the people they don't count the months. They only check it on the trees. They say ok, if the shepherd tree is ripe then they know that the *!naras* is also ripe and they go [there] at that time to the !Uniab. But the shepherd tree – the time when this is ripe is October.[64]

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[60] Seeds of *Stipagrostis* spp. collected from the nests ['homes'] of harvester ants, ǂ*goburun oms* (see Sullivan 1999).

[61] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (ǂŌs, near Sesfontein) 6 April 2014.

[62] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (ǂŌs, near Sesfontein) 6 April 2014.

[63] Ruben Sauneib Sanib (|Awagu-dao-am), 19 February 2015.

[64] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (ǂŌs), 6 April 2014; Franz |Haen ǁHoëb and Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb (journey Möwe Bay to Kai-as), 25 November 2015.

Franz ǁHoëb's grandfather ǂGîeb would reportedly walk alone to !Uiǁgams / Auses to check the *!nara*. When he saw the *!nara* is ripe he would return to !Uniab side and say to the people you can go now and "milk the cattle", but you must not take the ones that are not ready yet to get calves (i.e. only take the ones that are ripe)[65].

Franz and his cousin Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb recalled these mobilities which they experienced as children and young people: "[w]hen we are young now we move from place to place and when we get tired so we sleep there. … until we reach Auses, for the *!nara*".[66] Their elders – *kai khoen* – are remembered as being very strong:

> [t]hey walked from Auses to ǂHabadi-|aus (for hunting) and then to the Hoanib mouth. If they didn't get any wild meat they came to the coast to 'collect' seal meat [not seen as hunting]. They believe very much in bow and arrow. But they would also find the seal on the beach and would shoot them too.[67]

How?

The oral histories of *!nara* harvesters of the Northern Namib echo what is known for practices of ownership, management, harvesting and preparation of the !Khuiseb delta *!nara* harvesters (see, for example, Budack 1977, 1983; Dentlinger 1977; Botelle and Kowalski 1997; Henschel *et al*. 2004). References to these practices as also those of their 'great-great-grand-fathers' indicates cross-generational longevity of *!nara* harvesting in these areas.

Ownership and management of plants:
At Auses and elsewhere in the northern Namib, specific *!nara* patches were owned and managed in the same ways as described above for !Khuiseb *!nara*. Thus,

> When they came to the *!nara* plant, everyone has got their own *!nara* – they are divided. So if you collect the seeds and the *Salvadora* berries [*xoris*] then you can come from Ganias to the !Uniab to collect grass seeds [*sâui*]. But not the *!nara*. If you came from Ganias to !Uniab then the people who are there can give you the *!naras*, but you can't go and collect [from these plants]. So the thing is also, they divided the plants – when it is the *!nara* harvest time then everyone goes to their *!nara* – ǁUbun go to the !Uniab [and Auses], and !Narenins go to the Ganias [north of Auses] for the harvest time. But for the grass seeds time – they came together. And they can move to another place, like the !Uniab, and collect the grass seeds. But when it comes to the *!nara* time then each person can go to their own places and collect the *!nara*. Their great great grandfathers who were there had those rules to divide the *!nara* plants. It was their great great grandfathers.[68]

And,

[65] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb and Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb (Kai-as), 25 November 2015.
[66] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb and Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb (Hoanib Camp / ǁOeb), 22 November 2015.
[67] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb and Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb (Kai-as), 25 November 2015.
[68] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (near ǂŌs), 6 April 2014.

> Now when they are there at Auses each person has got their own *!naras*. Nobody goes and collects another person's *!naras*. If you collect another person's *!naras* then they will argue so nobody takes another person's things. Each person has got their own *!naras* and you have to go and collect your own, not another person's *!naras*.
> Sian – so how do they know which is which?
> Franz / Suro – Ok now, the people divide the *!naras* and they show the people, now this one is yours, this one is mine, and this one is Noag's *!naras* like that, and they know which one is Noag's and which one is mine and which one is yours, like that. Now if a person goes to another person's *!naras* then those foot tracks – they know from the foot tracks – and they say why do you come to my *!naras*? why are you not going to your *!naras*? – like that.
> Sian – they can track them..?
> Suro – yes they can track them.
> Sian – and these bushes – the *!naras* – are they with the same people each year going forward like that?
> Franz / Suro – *ī*! [yes!].. Ok now each person has got their own *!naras*. Now if I go maybe to Sesfontein and my *!naras* is now ripe, he [another person] cannot collect for himself – he will collect for me and when I came back he will give me my *!naras* back to say now this was your *!naras*. So he cannot take it because I am not there.
> Sian – oh, ok, I understand. So you might harvest for somebody else.
> Suro - yes… [69]

> And that time the people also was respecting each other and if somebody said now let's move to Oruvao [ǁGuru-tsaub] there was no argument and the people just follow the person who said let's go to that side. And that time they even dig the hole and store the honey there and they go and when they came back and take it out and eat, and use it.
> Ok now in the past the people were so respectful of each other, and if one said now let's go to Kai-as now the whole group would go there and there was no argument, nothing.
> … and there was no jealousy that time – but today if you talk something the people take out the knife to stab another person.[70]

Cooking/preparing:

Perhaps unsurprisingly, cooking and preparing *!nara* fruits and seeds for consumption is consistent with the processing technologies documented for the !Khuiseb delta *!nara*:

> We collect the *!naras* and break them open and put the flesh in a big tin and cook it. And that juice we put [spread] it on the ground and when it get dry we pick it up, and also for the seeds. There are many things [seeds] which are left in the pot and we also make these dry, and put them in the skin of a springbok – not a goat.
> It's like maize meal – when you harvest the maize then you store it. So, we also make the *!naras* to eat the whole year [i.e. they are stored].
> Ok, in the past there is no knife or spoon, so that's why we are using the rib of the whale – as a spoon and also like a knife. So, what we are doing – the rib was divided here – we

[69] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (near ǂŌs), 6 April 2014.
[70] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb and Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb (Hoanib Camp / ǁOeb), 22 November 2015.

cut it here and one we make sharp like a knife, and the other [part] we make it like a spoon. Now in the past there was no knife. That's why we are using the rib.[71]

Ok when they were there at Auses they stay there for a long time to collect the *!naras* and they cook it and then they pour the soup there through the tin that has the holes in it on the bottom and they |*naga* – they shake it [and pour]. And then they pour that soup on the dunes and they leave it there for some days and when it get 'ripe' then they roll it up and tie it with bark of the |*naras* (*Acacia tortilis*). … They bring the bark from Sesfontein.
That juice that they pour on the dunes they leave it and when it gets dry they roll it up and then tie it with that bark and then they store it for the next drought [dry period] and then they are going back to Sesfontein and they take it there.
The pips they would store in a bag and eat with *xoris* [fruits of *Salvadora persica*]. And if you eat just a little circle of this mixture you will be full. You only need to drink water. It was an energy food![72]

Ok, the *!nara* plants are also different. There are two different types of the *!naras*. Some are sweet and some are bitter. So, now we taste [the fruits] and when it is sweet then my parents collect the *!naras* and [they peel and] they put it [the pulp] in the tin and they cook. And when they cook they use the stick for stirring and after that they take also a tin like this one, that has got the holes [in the bottom], and they pour it [the cooked juice = ǂ*goabe*] into the tin and |*hâka* this juice [i.e. shake the tin] and then they pour this juice onto the dunes to dry. And the things which are remaining in the tin [the seeds], then they pour these to one side so that they are separate [and they pound these]. So the seeds have also got a milk, and they use that milk in the ǂ*gôub* [shallow wooden bowl] for the children to drink. Now that juice [from the *!nara*] – they called it ǂ*goabe* – it's the name of the juice that they put in the ǂ*gôub*. From the fruits. You pour that juice on the dunes. Now the remaining seeds which is in the tin you also put these on the dune [to dry and then they can be peeled – *gora* – and eaten]. Now when it [the juice] gets dry on the dunes then we roll it.[73]

There are also differently shaped *!nara* fruits, with rules around who can eat them:

xā-!nara is long / oval shaped, not round. It makes the old woman sick. Also the *!nara* that is shaped like a breast – only men can eat that *!nara* and women cannot touch it.[74]

The loss of access to this valued food is lamented by those who remember harvesting it in the Northern Namib:

it was the food we are eating in the past and we also want to go and collect it, but now the government doesn't want the people to collect the *!naras*. You have to have a permit to go and collect.[75]

[71] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (near ǂŌs), 6 April 2014.
[72] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb and Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb (journey to Auses), 23 November 2015.
[73] Christophine Daumû Tauros and Michael |Amigu Ganaseb (Sesfontein), 6 April 2014.
[74] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb and Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb (Kai-as), 25 November 2015.
[75] Christophine Daumû Tauros and Michael |Amigu Ganaseb (Sesfontein), 6 April 2014.

Storage:

A notable aspect of food procuring practices amongst the *!nara* harvesters of the Northern Namib was the emphasis placed on technologies of food storage, clearly important for being able to survive and thrive in such an arid, but also productive, environment:

> [n]ow the way how we stored the food was – that time we are using the springbok skin as a bag and we put the *!naras* pips in that bag and we dig the hole and in that hole we pour the ash and when we put the first bag in, we pour the ash on that first bag and then we put the second one in and we pour the ash on the second one and the third one we put in and then we pour the ash on top of the bag and then we cover this again with sand and on top of that sand we pour also the ash again and when we go back to |Garib [further east along the Hoanib], and if we want to eat the *!naras* we will come back [to Auses] and take out the *!naras* – that one was the 'trunk' of the old people. And if the rain is even falling the water won't get in there. On top we pour also the ash.[76]

> The people would store these foods in the skin of a gemsbok and bury them at living places so that there would be food for them there when they returned[77].

Sharing:

As mentioned above, a repeated refrain in the oral histories relates how foods from different localities were shared when people would meet each other. Ruben Sanib thus spoke of how the ǁUbun collected *!nara* at the ocean side, and when this was done they would move inland and share with ǁKhao-a Dama, for example at Kai-as, and they would all also eat the valued foods of *xoris*, *sâun* and *bosû*[78]. Thus,

> ǁUbun made bags with young oryx skin and they put the *!naras* in there and when they came to Kai-as and Uruhûnes they bring it along and share with the other people of ǂKhari Hurubes. !*Naras* seeds were pounded and mixed with *sâu*, *bosû* and ǂ*ari* and eaten. *!Naras* has got an oil/fat inside. When they are going to Sesfontein the ǁUbun people took the *!naras* and shared with other people in Sesfontein.[79]

Medicine

!Nara were also utilised for medicinal purposes. For this the male and female plants were distinguished, with the thinner roots of the male plant considered to be medicinal and used as a decoction to treat coughing and also to cleanse the kidneys.[80]

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[76] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb and Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb (Hoanib Camp / ǁOeb), 22 November 2015.

[77] Ruben Sauneib Sanib (|Awagu-dao-am), 19 February 2015. In the 1840s, 'Strandlopers' living at Wortel (just south of Walvis Bay) are described as burying '[t]he hide, head, entrails and surplus meat' of a springbok hunted for them by Jacob Afrikaner 'in a hole dug in the mud on the lake shore, under the water and just before the waterline' to keep it safe from jackals (Bell 1977: 32-33).

[78] Ruben Sauneib Sanib (|Awagu-dao-am), 19 February 2015.

[79] Ruben Sauneib Sanib (|Awagu-dao-am), 19 February 2015.

[80] Franz ǁHoëb (near ǂŌs), 6 April 2014. Cf. a decoction taken for kidney and stomach pains (roots) 'male *!nara* roots' / '*aore !nara !noma.b*' taken for 'men's illness' (Du Pisani, 1983: 5; Sullivan 1998: 390).

Hunting:
As mentioned above, hunting was an integral part of the assemblage of practices through which *!nara* harvesters of the Northern Namib sustained themselves and understood their identities. Hunting is recounted as guided by strict rules designed to ensure the presence of animals into the future: for example, reportedly no hunting should take place of animals with females who have young, and no man should take more than one animal – if he did he would be prohibited from hunting for two months and would have to leave his bow and arrow in the hut[81]. The skill of hunting a large animal for meat was highly valued and ritually recognised. Clearly animated by this memory, Noag Ganaseb recalled how when he was growing up his father made a bow and arrow for him and taught him how to hunt; and he even gave him a dog [*arib*] so that he can go out with the dog and bow and arrow and hunt and kill an oryx. When he brought that meat home he carried it on his carry stick and with the raw meat they '|*gara*', which means they painted marks on his feet, legs and arms so that when he would hunt again he will do this in a 'good way' and will be able to run fast, like the oryx.[82]

How people lived with animals in the past came up frequently in oral histories:

> if they saw an elephant or a rhino now they said ok 'Move out from the road so that I can go through'. And they move out and the people go through.[83]

The significant changes people have witnessed that have brought motor vehicles and other technologies into the Northern Namib are considered to have caused animals such as elephant and lion to become more 'naughty'.

4. Concluding summary

The oral history recollections shared in Section 3 bring both detail and texture to peoples' lives in the Northern Namib. Only a small number of elders of the Sesfontein area remain to tell of these pasts. Their repeated references to others with whom they shared their experiences, however, clarifies that the Northern Namib was once utilised, moved through and lived in by a connected and cross-generational fabric of multiple families who shared language, values and practices. Those remaining who recall these pasts are happy that something of what the *!nara* harvesters of the Northern Namib know and experienced is being documented and may be communicated to future generations. At the same time there is sadness about what has been lost:

> when we are thinking about the past, about how we lived in the field – it's painful. We want to cry.[84]

[81] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb and Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb (Kai-as), 25 November 2015.
[82] Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb (Hoanib Camp / ǁOeb), 22 November 2015.
[83] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb and Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb (Kai-as), 25 November 2015.
[84] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb and Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb (Kai-as), 25 November 2015.

Read together, the historical and oral history material shared in Sections 2 and 3 conveys a different version of the Northern Namib to that which is vivid in the popular imagination, namely the wild, desolate beauty of the 'Skeleton Coast'. Instead, the Northern Namib comes into focus as a known and remembered landscape, vivid in the minds of Namibians of the north-west as filled with memories, as a source of highly valued foods, and where known and unknown ancestors are buried. Key elements are:

- Khoekhoegowab-speaking Namibians were present in many localities of the Northern Namib, concentrating particularly around sites where *!nara* melons can be seasonally harvested: for example, Sarusas and Ganias, the Uniab River mouth, the Auses area of the Hoanib and the Hoarusib River;

- The peoples of the Northern Namib were clearly very mobile. Von Estorff's observations from 1896 (Section 2) link the same group of people with the Uniab, Hoanib and Hoarusib Rivers. These interlinkages between places and peoples of the Northern Namib are confirmed in recent oral history research (Section 3).

- Further field research with remaining *!nara* harvesters of the Northern Namib would be helpful, especially in connection with known archaeological sites on the coast. Such research requires sensitivity and should preferably build on prior work and collaborations where trust has been built up.

- For the southern parts of the Northern Namib area, the lead organisation neighbouring the SCNP that represents local cultural concerns is the newly designated Nami-Daman Traditional Authority (TA) (NBC News 2021). This TA considers its jurisdiction to stretch east of the Park boundary from the Hoarusib southwards to the vet fence (pers. comm., Senior Councillor, Nami-Daman TA, 29 July 2021). Although not currently acknowledged in the Draft SCNP Management Plan, in combination with the communal-area conservancies neighbouring the SCNP, this TA is a key stakeholder regarding SCNP management, particularly regarding heritage, historical and cultural concerns relating to the Northern Namib.

In a world creaking under the weight of fossil-fuelled climate change the ability of the *!nara* harvesters of the Northern Namib to survive – even to thrive – in the extreme environmental circumstances of the area now protected as Skeleton Coast National Park could be a celebrated thread of Namibian history. Their experiences of the Northern Namib as not only a ferociously inhospitable terrain, but also as a cultural landscape filled with foods, localities and memories that are valued and appreciated, are humbling for those of us whose lives are brimming with material comforts of the techno-industrialised world. The significance of these human desert lives will be lost now, however, without effort towards inter-generational communication about these pasts and their significance. This is not about land claims, but about restoring dignity through contemporary acknowledgement of peoples' past associations with sites now within the Skeleton Coast National Park and on its borders.

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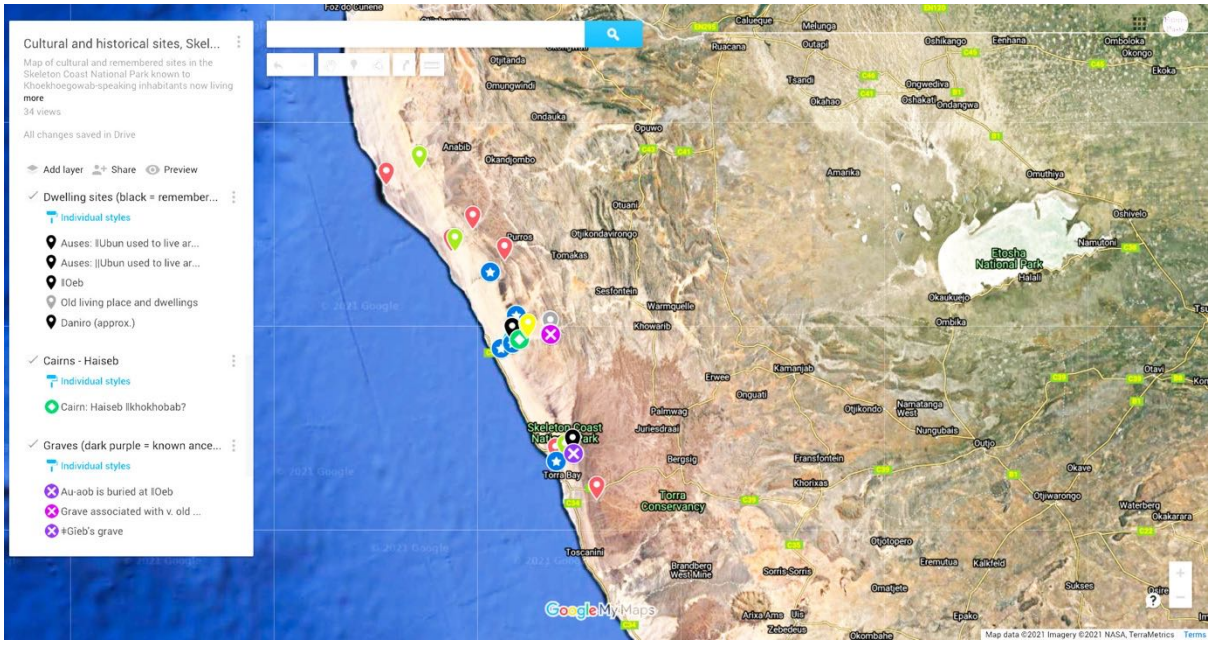
Annex 1. List of specific remembered cultural sites in the Noerthen Namib, within Skeleton Coast National Park and close to the Park's boundary

All site categories below are listed from north to south. Googlemap with text information and images (where available) for sites is linked at https://www.futurepasts.net/cultural-sites-skeleton-coast-np



Places and springs named and recalled in on-site and off-site oral histories:

Sarusas -18.82829, 12.49849
Source of potable water and access to *!nara*. e.g. '… my great, great-grandfathers and mothers were there at Sarusa, and I was born here [in Hoanib] at ǂHoadiǁgams'.[85]

Dumita -18.95836, 12.73913 (approx..)
Water source in lower Hoarusib from where *!nara* could be accessed.

Ganias -19.24251, 12.92212
Source of potable water and access to *!nara*. e.g. 'So the thing is also, they divided the plants – when it is the *!nara* harvest time then everyone goes to their *!nara* - ǁUbun go to the !Uniab [and Auses], and !Narenins go to the Ganias [north of Auses] for the harvest time'.[86]

Hoanib River places (west to east)

Hoaswater = ǁ*Hoas?* -19.45496, 12.81797 (needs checking)

[85] Christophine Daumû Tauros (Purros), 13 November 2015.
[86] Franz ǁHoëb (near ǂŌs), 6 April 2014.

!Ui‖gams / !Hui‖gams -19.42654, 12.8928 approx.
Source of potable water. *!Nara* harvested near here (repeatedly mentioned).

Auses -19.39914, 12.8911
Large spring of brackish water. Repeatedly mentioned as water source and place near where people slept when harvesting *!nara* nearby.

!Gaub visible in view looking south from -19.39318, 12.99226
View south from here points to where a prominent rock balances on the mountain (see image), known as !Gaub. This feature marks the route towards the !Uniab river via Hûnkab spring. Water collects here at this rock.[87]

‖Khams / Amspoort -19.38601, 13.00265

‖Oeb -19.36334, 13.15233
Former dwelling place. When the Franz Franz ||Hoëb, Noag Ganaseb, and their families lived in this area they would alternate between harvesting *!nara* (*Acanthosicyos horridus*) from their *!nara* plants near the waterhole of Auses / !Ui‖gams, and walking southwards to Kai-as and the !Uniab River where different foods as well as *!nara* could be found. The image below shows Franz and Noag returning to the site of *‖Oeb* in 2015, combined with high resolution aerial photographs for this area:

Photo: Sian Sullivan, November 2015, composite made with Mike Hannis using three 10 x 10 km aerial images from Directorate of Survey and Mapping, Windhoek, July 2017, as part of a series of images for the exhibition *Future Pasts: Landscape, Memory and Music in West Namibia*: see https://www.futurepasts.net/memory. © Future Pasts CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

[87] Recorded in on-site oral histories with Franz ||Hoëb and Noag Ganaseb, 23 November 2015, and Christophine Daumû Tauros, 7 April 2014.

!Uniab River places *west to east*

|*Garis* -20.191, 13.19471
Spring & grazing area where reportedly goats brought from Sesfontein to feed diamond mine managers at Möwe Bay in the 1950s would graze before being slaughtered.[88] There were lion here in May 2019. nb. '|Garis', meaning 'weeds', is also a remembered residential area for Topnaar near ǂKhîsa-ǁgubus / Sandfontein, just south of Walvis Bay (Köhler 1969: 102). Possibly the name is connected with |*harus* referring to *Cyperus marginatus* sedges, which in the past were used by Nama to make |*haru oms*, i.e. reed mat houses, portable with pack oxen.

Lower !Uniab in vicinity of -20.16756, 13.25745
!nara melons (*Acanthosicyos horridus*) in this area were harvested into the remembered past, as described in multiple interviews with Franz |Haen ǁHoëb, pictured below at *!nara* in this area in May 2019.

Daniro -20.13425, 13.30921, approx.
Daniro (the place of honey, *danib*) was a dwelling place close to the !Uniab, near to which the maternal grand-father of Franz ǁHoëb is buried. ǂGîeb's grave (see below) is next to this former dwelling site and is where ǂGîeb and others first encountered German men travelling down the !Uniab, described to Franz as being the first occasion when these ǁUbun had seen white men and encountered food in tins.[89] This encounter was perhaps the 1896 journey by L. Von Estorff which finds "deserted, circular reed huts at the Uniab River mouth" and on return a month later finds here, a band of 30 'Bushmen' who had just arrived from the Hoanib River. They were living off narra for the most part …' (in Jacobson and Noli 1987: 174).

Graves of known and unknown ancestors
Named places through the north-west Namibia landscapes are often associated with graves, including those of known and named ancestors. It is possible that with more field research more known graves than those listed here could be relocated within and close to the SCNP.

Au-oab, buried at ǁOeb on Hoanib -19.36351, 13.15067, approx.
Au-aob was a ǁUbun man, and the great-uncle of Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (see genealogy in Figure 26). He was the younger brother of ǂGîeb who is buried behind the dunes on the !Uniab River (see below). These ǁUbun and their families would move between Auses, the Hoanib, Kai-as and the !Uniab for food-gathering and hunting. Au-aob died and was buried at the dwelling place called ǁOeb. The Hoanib River has moved its course since Franz lived at ǁOeb, creating a big meander that appears to have washed away the actual grave site.[90]

[88] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb and Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb, on-site 23 November 2015.
[89] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (Daniro), 7 May 2019.
[90] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (ǁOeb), 22 November 2015 and 9 May 2019.

Unknown grave associated with old settlement site -19.36708, 13.15709

ǂ*Gîeb's grave, near Daniro on !Uniab* -20.13615, 13.31687
This is the grave of the maternal grand-father of Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (see genealogy in Figure 26 and photographs in Figure 27). ǂGîeb was a ǁUbun man considered to be the leader of a group of people harvesting from their *!nara* fields in the coastal areas the !Uniab and Hoanib/Auses, and moving between these areas via Kai-as and Hûnkab inland.[91] When we relocated this grave that had been spoken of in previous interviews, there were imprints of footsteps all around the grave which we later learned were from a running event of around 40(?) people across the park, held in April 2019. It would mean a lot to descendants of ǂGîeb living in the Sesfontein area today for this grave to be marked and protected from human and animal disturbance into the future.

Haiseb cairns
A cairn described as a Haiseb ǁ*khokhobab*, i.e. cairn marking a burial site of the mythical ancestor-trickster-hero Haiseb[92], is located in the lower Hoanib at -19.40102, 12.94187.
nb. since this cairn is not positioned to be visible on a hill-top (as with Hartmann's Beacon, north of the Khumib River mouth) it is considered to be a Haiseb ǁ*kho*ǁ*khobab* (cairn), rather than a survey beacon, and was described as such[93], although it should be acknowledged that it is difficult to be exactly certain of what this site is and why it was placed here.

Historical records for Northern Namib (north to south)

Great Fish Bay
At "Great Fish Bay", north of Cape Fria (roughly half way between north Möwe Bay and the Kunene River mouth), Morrell remarks on the excellent opportunities for seine fishing, saying:

> thousands of barrels of excellent fish may be caught in the course of a year. This might be made a first-rate business, by taking the fish to the Portuguese colonies, a little farther north, and exchanging them for the products of the country; or they might be taken to St. Helena, or to the Brazil coast, where they would command a ready market and an excellent price. (Morrell 2014[1832]: 318-319).

On "the southeast side of the bay" he and his crew are

> met on the beach by a small party of the Cimbebas tribe, who gave us a very pressing invitation to accompany them to their village, which was about ten miles from the coast, in the direction of east-by-south. It is situated in a well-watered valley of three miles in length, and two in breadth, surrounded by moderately elevated hills. The springs which water it are never dried up, by the longest droughts, as we were assured by the natives. (Morrell 2014[1832]: 318-319).

[91] Franz |Haen ǁHoëb (Daniro), 7 May 2019.
[92] More commonly known by the Nama appellation Heitsi-eibeb, with the name Haiseb used more usually by Damara / ǂNūkhoen (see Schmidt 2014).
[93] By Franz ǁHoëb and Noag Ganaseb (on-site), 23 November 2015.

Interestingly, their huts, as described by Morrell, were

> constructed of closely-woven mats of coarse grass, or of the fibres of some plant. The two sides generally correspond with each other, as do also the two ends, with the exception that there is a door or opening in one end, just large enough for the occupants to creep in and out. Each hut is covered with an arched or sloping roof, supported by upright posts fixed in the ground, and thatched with matting. The materials are all so light that they can be removed at a very short notice, and without much trouble. I have seen them taken down and put together again in thirty-five minutes. The value of one of these huts is that of a sheep. (Morrell 2014[1832]: 318-319).

Nb. "Cimbebas" here is understood to refer to the name given for an inland "region between Cape Negro and Tropic of Capricorn" on a 1591 Italian map of Africa (by Filippo Pigafetta), and does not refer to 'Tjimba' (a term for cattle-less ovaHerero), as is sometimes thought (J. Kinahan 2020: 2, drawing on J.H.A. Kinahan 1988: 5).

Sechomib river

After rain in December 1984, anthropologist Margaret Jacobsohn (1995: 117-118) observed possibly Tjimba lineage members spend about three months at "Sechomib wet season camp" – described as a few kms from "Ochams spring" (Sarusas?) "70kms N-W of Purros", "take advantage of good local pasture for their goats and a large crop of ripe *!nara*".

'Chumib' "Bergdama" area

A list of 1910 specifies 'a larger tract of land at the Chumib and two smaller ones at Oachab and at the Hoarusib' as closed areas of occupation for the Bergdama before the Herero Wars' (see Weule 1910).

Khumib to Hoanib rivers, along the coast

> From Hoanib I proceeded to Hoarusib, I found this the only river that has run for many years. I have no difficulty with water but could not get cart nearer the sea than 40 miles, on account of wash outs and dense reed and bush … I found some Berg-Damaras and Bushman who live close to the sea and these people are constantly walking up and down the coast in search for whales that come ashore, you will find their Kraals all the way to Khumib and also a long way south to the Hoanib … North of the Khumib it was impossible to go on account of the drought' (Elers 1907 report quoted in Jacobson and Noli 1987: 173).

Lower Hoarusib

Manning's map of the north-west positions Damara / [which he identifies denoted using the derogatory name 'klip, i.e. mountain, kaffirs'] around here along the Hoarusib River.

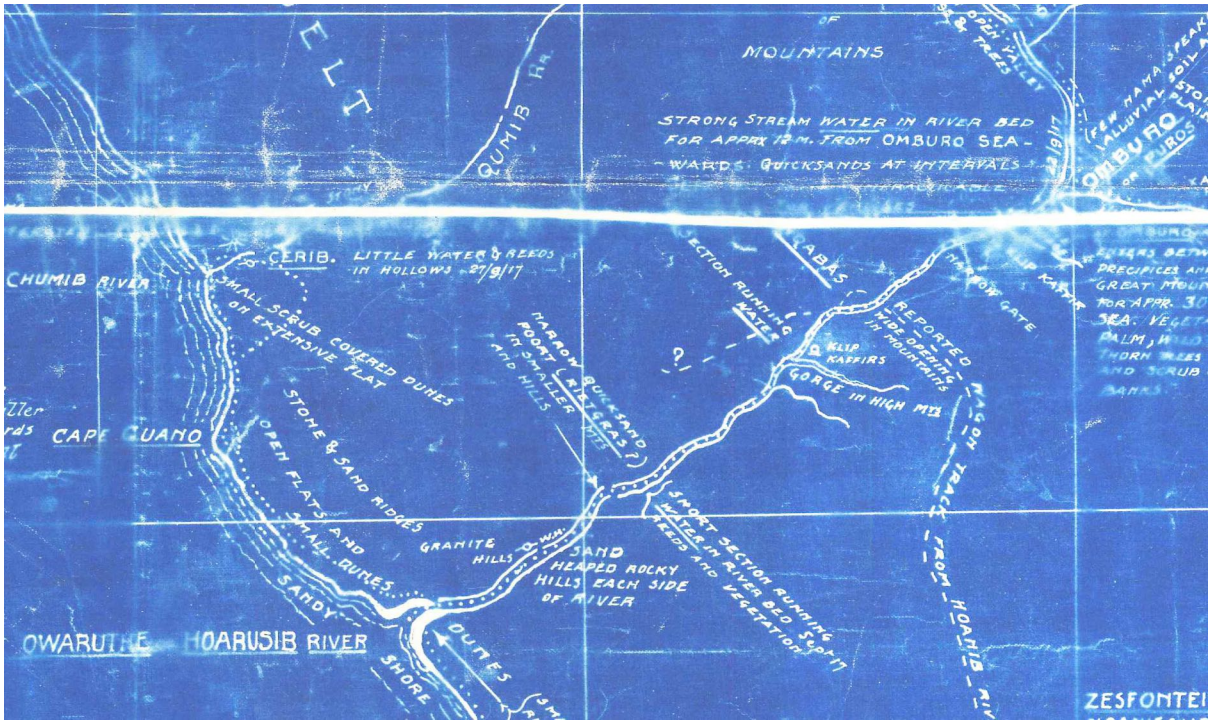


Image: detail of lower Hoarusib from Manning Map, during on travels through Kaokoveld in 1917 and 1919, positioning Damara / ǂNūkhoen in vicinity of Hoarusib, west of Puros and 'Nama-speaking' individuals at Puros. 'Sarusa' in the Khumib ('Qumib') River appears to be named 'Cerib' here: nb. 'q' and 'c' in these names are likely to denote click consonants. Source: National Archives of Namibia.

!Uniab River

In January 1896 L. von Estorff finds "deserted, circular reed huts at the Uniab River mouth" and on return in February finds here "a band of 30 'Bushmen' who had just arrived from the Hoanib River. They were living off narra for the most part" and he also mentions finding "a narra knife made from elephant rib at the Hoarusib River" (Jacobson and Noli 1987: 174 and references therein).

At "Zwartmodder", upstream on !Uniab, near "Gamgamas", geologist Kuntz meets "Bergdamaras" returning from Uniab-Mund. (NAN.A.327 Krause and Kuntz, Kuntz 25/8/1910, report to the Kaoko Land und Minengesellschaft).

Lower Huab (ǁHuab) River

One narrative, by American sealer Captain Morrell who travelled northwards along the coast in 1828-1829, writes that some "two leagues" north-east of "Ogden's Harbour" (Huab River mouth) Morrell encounters "a small village, inhabited by about two hundred natives" which he refers to as "of the Cimbebas tribe" (Morrell 2014[1832]: 316 – see note above re: this name). Morrell remarks of the people he encountered here that they differ "but very little from the proper Hottentots [i.e. Khoekhoegowab speaking Nama]", writing enthusiastically of the locality that,

> [t]here are … many fine springs of water, of an excellent quality, in the valley where this village is situated; from which it may be inferred that this would be a fine place for a rendezvous to establish a trade with the interior of the country (Morrell 2014[1832]: 316).

Annex 2. Plants mentioned in the text

Listed alphabetically by Latin binomial, and including Khoekhoegowab names. For a fuller list of plant names and uses see ‘Ethnobotany Annex’ in Sullivan (1998).

Acacia tortilis / *|naras*

Acanthosicyos horridus / *!nara*

Boscia albitrunca / *|hûnis*

Cyperus marginatus / *|haru*

Danthoniopsis dinteri / *ǂnamib*

Monsonia spp. (mostly *M. umbellata*) / *bosûi*

Salvadora persica / *xoris*

Setaria verticillata / *ǂares*

Stipagrostis spp. / *sâun*