

Understanding Damara / ǀNūkhoen and ǁUkun indigeneity and marginalisation in Namibia

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1 Introduction

In historical and ethnographic texts for Namibia, Damara / ǀNūkhoen peoples are usually understood to be amongst the territory's "oldest" or "original" inhabitants.² Similarly, histories written or narrated by Damara / ǀNūkhoen peoples include their self-identification as original inhabitants of large swathes of Namibia's

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- 1 *Contribution statement:* Sian Sullivan has drafted the text of this chapter and carried out the literature review, with all field research and Khoekhoegowab-English translations and interpretations being carried out with Welhemina Suro Ganuses from Sesfontein / !Nani|aus. We have worked together on and off since meeting in 1994. The authors' stipend for this work is being directed to support the Future Pasts Trust, currently being established with local trustees to support heritage activities in Sesfontein / !Nani|aus and surrounding areas, particularly by the Hoanib Cultural Group (see <https://www.futurepasts.net/future-pasts-trust>).
 - 2 See, for example, Goldblatt, Isaak, *South West Africa From the Beginning of the 19th Century*, Juta & Co. Ltd, Cape Town, 1971; Lau, Brigitte, *A Critique of the Historical Sources and Historiography Relating to the 'Damaras' in Precolonial Namibia*, BA History Dissertation, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1979; Fuller, Ben, *Institutional Appropriation and Social Change Among Agropastoralists in Central Namibia 1916–1988*, PhD Dissertation, Boston Graduate School, Boston, 1993; Wallace, Marion, *A History of Namibia: From the Beginning to 1990*, Hurst & Co., London, 2011.

central and north-westerly landscapes,³ as a “minority tribe”,⁴ and as comprised of communities that are marginalised and consequently impoverished.⁵ The !Ao-||aexas Community Group established in 1991 to represent the displaced †Nūkhoen community from the |Khomas area west of Windhoek that was proclaimed Daan Viljoen Game Reserve specifically referred to themselves as “the indigenous people” who were moved to “other arid areas such as Sorris-Sorris, Okombahe, etc.”⁶ The Spitzkoppe Farmers Union similarly describe Damara / †Nūkhoen members as “the natural inhabitants of the country”.⁷

Damara Khoekhoegowab-speaking⁸ people name themselves as †Nūkhoen, meaning literally “black” or “real” people and thus distinguished from *Nau khoen* or “other people”. Historically, the ethnonym “Dama-ra” is based on an “exonym”, i.e. an external name for a group of people, “Dama” being the name given by Nama for darker-skinned people generally.⁹ Since Nama(qua) pastoralists were often those whom early European colonial travellers first encountered in the western part of southern Africa, the latter took on this application of the term “Dama”. This usage gave rise to a confusing situation in the historical literature whereby the term “Damara”, as well as the central part of Namibia that in the 1800s was known as “Damaraland”, tended to refer to dark-skinned cattle pastoralists known as Herero.¹⁰

3 For example, Boois, Seth M., *Reflections on Modern Damara History: Ôae Hōxae!*, Seth Boois & ||Garoëb Royal Foundation, Windhoek, 2017; New Mission Films, *The History and Livelihood of the Nami-Daman*, Windhoek, 2015.

4 ||Garoëb, Justus, ‘Preface’ in Boois, Seth M., ‘Reflections on Modern Damara History’, op. cit., pp. iv-v.

5 Ibid., p. vi; Luqman, Cloete, ‘†NuKhoen clan wants ancestral land back’, *The Namibian*, 6 August 2019 (<https://www.namibian.com.na/81647/read/%E2%89%A0NuKhoen-clan-wants-ancestral-land-back>, last accessed 26 August 2019).

6 !Ao-||Aexas Community, ‘Submission to National Conference on Land Reform’, Windhoek, 1991.

7 Spitzkoppe Farmers Union, ‘Submission to National Conference on Land Reform’, Windhoek, 1991.

8 Shortly after independence, the glossonym (language name) and former endonym ‘Khoekhoegowab’ was ‘officially reintroduced for the language that had become known as ‘Nama’ or ‘Nama/Damara’, “a dialect continuum with Nama as southernmost and Damara, Hai||om and †Aakhoe as northernmost dialect clusters”. Khoekhoegowab “is the sole surviving language of the *Khoekhoe* branch of the *Khoe* family”. See Haacke, Wilfred, ‘Khoekhoegowab (Nama/Damara)’, in Kamusella, T. & Ndhlovu, F. (eds), *The Social and Political History of Southern Africa’s Languages*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2018, pp. 133–158, 133–134. Damara / †Nūkhoen (and very small numbers of ||Ubun) are a proportion of the 11.8% of Namibia’s population (244 769 of 2 066 389) recorded in 2010 as speaking ‘Nama/Damara’ (Haacke, ‘Khoekhoegowab (Nama/Damara)’, op. cit., pp. 141–142, after *Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2009/2010*. Haacke suggests that the figure for ‘Nama/Damara’ speakers may be an underestimate for Khoekhoegowab “as most Hai||om and †Aakhoe speakers presumably are included in the latter survey under the meaningless language category ‘Khoisan” (1.3%, 27 764 speakers).

9 With ‘ra’ referring to either third person feminine or common gender plural’, ibid., p. 140.

10 See, for example, Alexander, James Edward, *An Expedition of Discovery into the Interior of Africa: Through the Hitherto Undescribed Countries of the Great Namaquas, Boschmans, and Hill Damaras, Vols. 1 and 2*, London, *Elibron Classics Series*, originally published by Henry Colburn, 2006 [1838]; Galton, Francis, *Narrative of an Explorer in Tropical South Africa*, Ward, Lock and Co., London, 1890 [1851]; Tindall, B.A., *The Journal of Joseph Tindall: Missionary in South West Africa 1839–55*, Cape Town, The Van Riebeeck Society, 1959.

The terms “Hill Damaras” (“Berg-Dama” / *!hom Dama* / and the derogatory “klip kaffir”¹¹) and “Plains Damaras” (or “Cattle Damara” / *Gomadama*) were used to distinguish contemporary Damara or ꞛNūkhoen (i.e. “Khoekhoegowab-speaking black-skinned people”) from speakers of the Bantu language oshiHerero.

In conjunction, these terms also signalled historically constitutive processes whereby pressure on land through expansionary cattle pastoralism pushed Khoekhoegowab-speaking Damara / ꞛNūkhoen further into mountainous areas that became their refuge and stronghold¹² (see section 4). Increasing use by missionaries in the nineteenth century of the exonym “Nama” instead of the endonym “Khoekhoegowab” for the Khoekhoe language contributed to the now disproved “popular claim” that “the ethnically distinct Damara ... adopted the language from the Nama”, a discourse with pernicious marginalising impacts for Damara / ꞛNūkhoen.¹³ Alongside a more recent consolidation and appropriation of a homogenising Damara ethnic identity associated with colonial and apartheid governance processes,¹⁴ ꞛNūkhoen are linked with a diversity of dynamic and more-or-less autonomous lineages (*!haos* or “clans”) associated with different land areas (*!hūs*), with both specific and overlapping livelihoods and lifeworlds enacted by different lineages (see section 3). In total, Damara / ꞛNūkhoen were estimated to number “probably not less than 30,000 or 40,000” at the time of German annexation in 1890, falling to around 13 000 in 1911, according to the official German census of that year,¹⁵ and in 2019 recorded as almost 188 000, or 7.5% of the total population.¹⁶

Khoekhoegowab-speaking ||Ukun currently living in Sesfontein and environs are sometimes referred to as “Nama” and at other times referred to as “Bushmen”, for whom a mythologised origin tale tells that they split from ꞛAonin / Topnaar Nama

11 Identifying terms such as this one can carry derogatory associations. After some consideration we have elected to incorporate them when written as such in quoted historical texts only where their use in such texts conveys information relevant for present understanding, by clarifying the past presence of specific self-identifying groups of people.

12 Lau, B., ‘A Critique of the Historical Sources and Historiography’, op. cit.

13 The proximity (i.e. similarity) of Damara Khoekhoegowab dialects compared with Nama decreases with contemporary geographical distance between groups of speakers, although ‘northern dialects’ (associated with Sesfontein and surrounding area) have been shown ‘to share a considerable amount of lexicon with especially Naro of West Kalahari Khoe’: both observations point to Damara / ꞛNūkhoen speaking Khoekhoegowab “before they encountered the Nama” – see Haacke, ‘Khoekhoegowab (Nama/Damara)’, op. cit., pp. 133–134, 138. Missionary Heinrich Vedder reportedly “searched the whole country to find distant mountain communities of Damara speaking a language other than Nama [and] could not find any” (in Lau, B., ‘A Critique of the Historical Sources and Historiography’, op. cit., p. 23), again indicating long-established and independent ꞛNūkhoen usage of Khoekhoegowab, both geographically and historically.

14 Fuller, B., ‘Institutional Appropriation and Social Change’, op. cit.

15 In Union of South Africa, *Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and Their Treatment by Germany*, Administrator’s Office, Windhoek, 1918, p. 107.

16 <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/namibia-population/>, accessed 24 August 2019.

at Utuseb in the !Khuiseb River valley, following a dispute in which a †Aonin woman refused her sister the creamy milk (*//ham*) that the latter desired.¹⁷ They travelled and established themselves north of the !Khuiseb and are linked with many former dwelling sites located in the Namib close to the ocean (i.e. “*hurib*”)¹⁸ in this westerly area, from which they were progressively displaced and incorporated into the settlement of Sesfontein / !Nani|aus and surrounding area¹⁹ (see section 3). There are only a few elderly people in the Sesfontein area currently identifying themselves as ||Ukun, their distinctive !nara-oriented²⁰ livelihood practices rendered impossible in the twentieth century, for reasons outlined in section 4.

Access by Damara / †Nūkhoen and ||Ukun to land areas lived in by their ancestors has been severely constrained through historical processes of marginalisation,²¹ stimulating calls for restorative justice and compensation,²² for example in the form of “royalties from the profitable proceeds of their stolen land”.²³ Despite observed and documented experiences of marginalisation, however, Damara / †Nūkhoen continue to be excluded from representations of Namibia’s indigenous and marginalised peoples. This is the case, for example, for the 2019 entry (and previous entries) for Namibia in the Yearbook of the Indigenous Working Group on Indigenous Affairs,²⁴ which includes San, Ovattjimba, Ovattue and Nama, but excludes Damara / †Nūkhoen, despite the many sources documenting their long histories of association with central and western areas of the country, their experience of processes of land and resource dispossession, and evidence for their continuous

17 For example, Franz ||Hoëb (near †Os), 06/04/14 and Emma Ganuses (!Nao-dâis), 12/11/15.

18 Interviews with Hildegaard |Nuas (Sesfontein), 06/04/14, and Emma Ganuses (!Nao-dâis), 12/11/15.

19 Sullivan, Sian & Welhemina Suro Ganuses with Franz ||Hoëb, Noag Ganaseb, Christophone Tauros, Michael Ganaseb, Ruben Sanib, Sophia |Awises, Hildegaard |Nuas and Filemon |Nuab, ‘!Nara harvesters of the northern Namib: retrieving disrupted socio-ecological pasts through on-site oral histories’, *Future Pasts Working Paper Series 9*, 2019 (<https://www.futurepasts.net/fpwp9-sullivan-et-al-2019>).

20 ‘!Nara’ is the Khoekhoegowab name for the plant and fruit of the cucurbit *Acanthosicyos horridus* whose present use is associated especially with peoples living along the !Khuiseb, but whose past use stretched north and south of this central Namib ephemeral river, *ibid*.

21 Lau, B., ‘A Critique of the Historical Sources and Historiography’, *op. cit.*; Lau, Brigitte, *Namibia in Jonker Afrikaner’s Time (Archeia Series No. 8)*, National Archives of Namibia, Windhoek, 1987; Wadley, Lynn, ‘Big Elephant Shelter and its role in the Holocene prehistory of South West Africa’, *Cimbebasia* (B), Vol. 3(1), 1979, pp. 1–76, 1979; Sullivan, Sian, ‘Difference, identity and access to official discourses: Hai||om, “Bushmen”, and a recent Namibian ethnography’, *Anthropos*, Vol. 96, 2001, pp. 179–192; Sullivan, Sian, ‘Maps and memory, rights and relationships: articulations of global modernity and local dwelling in delineating land for a communal-area conservancy in north-west Namibia’, *Future Pasts Working Paper Series 7*, 2019 (<https://www.futurepasts.net/fpwp7-sullivan-2019>).

22 Boois, S., ‘Reflections on Modern Damara History’, *op. cit.*, p. vii; Sasman, Catherine, ‘Community wants mineral rights’, *Namibian Sun*, 6 August 2019 (<https://www.namibiansun.com/news/community-wants-mineral-rights2019-08-06>, last accessed 22 August 2019).

23 ||Garoëb, J., ‘Preface’ in Boois, ‘Reflections on Modern Damara History’, *op. cit.*, p. iv.

24 <https://www.iwgia.org/en/resources/yearbook>, last accessed 22 August 2019.

use and habitation in land areas over generations. Khoe-speaking ||Ubus formerly associated with the far western desert reaches of the Namib are not mentioned at all in these representations.

In this chapter we seek to offer some context for understanding present circumstances and ongoing debate regarding Damara / ǀNūkhoen and ||Ubus indigeneity and marginalisation in Namibia. The chapter is organised into sections engaging with the following intersecting themes:

- precolonial Damara / ǀNūkhoen presence in Namibia;
- social organisation of Dama / ǀNūkhoen connecting lineage groups (*!haos*) with land areas (*!hūs*);
- historical processes of displacement and marginalisation;
- specific 20th century historical evictions;
- consideration of land access and administration issues associated with the post-Odendaal creation of the Damaraland “homeland” (from the early 1970s to 1990);
- some post-independence changes in the administration of land in the former “homeland”; and
- a review of reasons for continuing discrimination against Damara / ǀNūkhoen in terms of their inclusion in discourses of indigeneity and marginalisation in Namibia.

The chapter draws on a dataset of oral histories and personal testimonies recorded by the lead authors in west Namibia since the mid-1990s, most recently for the Future Pasts project (www.futurepasts.net) affiliated with the National Museum of Namibia, the Gobabeb Research and Training Centre, and Save the Rhino Trust. Historical documents held in the National Archives of Namibia and other secondary and grey literature sources regarding the governance regimes effected through colonialism, apartheid and the postcolonial state have also been consulted, especially in relation to land distribution and connected policies.²⁵

2 Precolonial Damara / ǀNūkhoen presence in Namibia

The Berg-Damaras (also known as the Damaras or the Berg-Damas) are a people of mysterious origin, difficult to classify. Some say that they vie with the Bushmen for first claim to the country.²⁶

25 This underlying literature review and the ways this has unfolded and been framed is available in a series of iteratively updated texts embedded online at <https://www.futurepasts.net/timeline-to-kunene-from-the-cape>.

26 First, Ruth, *South West Africa*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1963, p. 34.

Numerous historical texts written by early European travellers to areas of the territory now known as Namibia record encounters with dark-skinned peoples who, with Nama, Oorlam Nama and Hai||om, spoke Khoekhoegowab. The earliest written mention of those later named “Berg-Damara” is found in the 1778–79 journal of Hendrik Jacob Wikar, a Gothenberg-born Swede who travelled along the Orange River after deserting from the Dutch East India Company operating from Cape Town, before being pardoned in 1779.²⁷ Wikar learned of different “Dama” groups interacting with Nama but described as “of a darker complexion than the Namacquas”. They lived near the coast and in mountainous areas near the Kai||khaun (“Keykoa”) / Rooinasie Nama settlements and grazing grounds, which stretched at least from Hoachanas in the east to Hatsamas, south-east of present-day Windhoek in what was then known as “Great Namaqualand”. These “Dama” made and traded copper and iron beads and other products for “she-goats” on apparently favourable terms, acted as “middlemen” in cattle trade between the eastern “Bechuana” and the Kai||khaun, were apparently feared magicians, and resisted allegiance to the chief of the Kai||khaun.²⁸

In 1836–37, the British Captain James Edward Alexander encountered so-called “Hill Damara”, stating that they “are a numerous nation, extending from the heights south of the Swakop to the Little Koanquip [Konkiep] river ... in small communities under head men”.²⁹ At “Tans mountain” (ǀGans, now called “Gamsberg”, located in the upper !Khuseb), he writes of “Hill Damara” living apparently autonomously in the foothills (Figure 1). They carried bows, spears and the spoils of hunting, their dwellings contained conical clay pots “in every hut”, and Alexander notes their dances and healing practices, observing that the men dance “with springbok horns bound on their foreheads”.³⁰ It is tempting to consider that the peoples Alexander encountered were associated with Headman (*Gaob*) Abraham ||Guruseb (Seibeb³¹) (preceded by Kai Gaob !Gausib ||Guruseb), understood to have been head of a community at ǀGans from *ca.* 1812–65, before moving to |ǀǀǀgommies (Okombahe).³²

27 Mossop, E.E. (ed.), *The Journals of Wikar, Coetsé and van Reenen*, The Van Riebeeck Society, Cape Town, 1935, pp. 3–4.

28 Wikar in Mossop, E., ‘The Journals of Wikar’, *op. cit.*, pp. 29, 75–81.

29 Alexander, J., ‘An Expedition of Discovery’, Vol. 2, *op. cit.*, pp. 135–136.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 135–138.

31 ‘Dâure Daman Traditional Authority / Dâure Daman di !Hao!nâsi ǀGaeǀguis’, in Hinz, Manfred O. & A. Gairiseb (eds), *Customary Law Ascertained Volume 2: The Customary Law of the Bakgalagari, Batswana and Damara Communities of Namibia*, Windhoek, University of Namibia Press, 2013, pp. 183–189, 186.

32 Haacke, Wilfred, ‘The hunt for the Damara |Haihāb in 1903: contemporary oral testimony’, *Journal of Namibian Studies*, Vol. 8, 2010, pp. 7–25, 23; also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Damara_people, last accessed 25 August 2019.

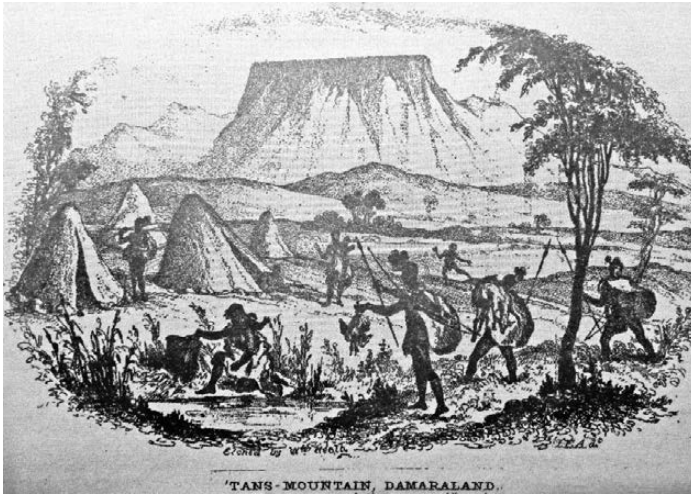


Figure 1a:
“Hill Damara”
village in foothills of
the table-topped Tans
[#Gans] Mountain”,
as sketched in the 1830s
narrative by British
Captain James Edward
Alexander



Figure 1b:
The commercial,
freehold Gamsberg
farming area as
it is today

(Photo: Sian Sullivan,
 8 March 2014)

A “Bergdama” is amongst those baptised by Missionary Scheppman at Rooibank (Scheppmannsdorf / |Awa-!haos³³) on the !Khuiseb in 1846,³⁴ and around this time British mercantile explorer Captain William Messum encounters “a tribe of Berg Damaras” at a “high mountain” inland from Cape Cross, with “water, and plenty of goats, but no cattle”.³⁵ Travelling inland from Walvis Bay in 1850, Francis Galton (British) and Charles John Andersson (Anglo-Swede) observe apparently permanent “Hill Damara” settlements in the Swakop River catchment such as at Onanis

33 Köhler, Oswin, ‘Die Topnaar Hottentotten am unteren Kuseib’, in Ethnological Section (eds), *Ethnological and Linguistic Studies in Honour of NJ Van Warmelo (Ethnological Publications 52)*, Department of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, 1969, pp. 99–122, map.

34 Ibid., p. 107.

35 Messum, William, ‘The exploration of Western Africa’, *Nautical Magazine*, April 1855, pp. 210–215, 211.

(ǀŃ!nani³⁶) and Tsaobis,³⁷ where in the 1890s German Schutztruppe officer Hugo von François photographs a “Bergdamara” village and hut (Figure 2a and Figure 2b), as well as a Schutztruppe target practice (Figure 2c). Galton notes that Berg Damara live at mountain strongholds such as Erongo (!Oeǀgā), Brandberg (Dâures), Auas, |Khomas, Parësis and Otavi (“cattle Damara”,³⁸ i.e. Herero, having taken space on the plains). Accompanied by Berg Damara in his party, he visits their relatives at Erongo (their “remarkable stronghold”), finding them to have “plenty of sheep and goats”, although also to be “always fighting” with Damara of the plains, i.e. Herero.³⁹



Figure 2:
Plates of Tsaobis under German occupation
(Source: Von François, 1896, pp. 293, 299 and 133 – out of copyright originals held at British Library and available on Wikimedia)

Figure 2a:
“Bergdamara” village

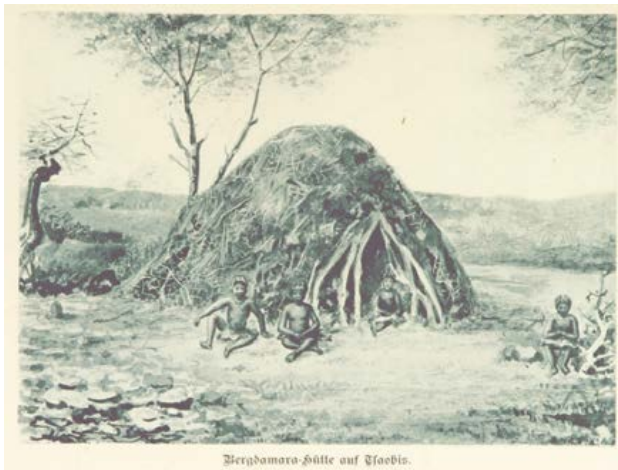


Figure 2b:
“Bergdamara” hut

36 Lau, Brigitte (ed.), ‘The Matchless Copper Mine in 1857: Correspondence’, *Charles John Andersson Papers Vol. 1 (Archeia Series No. 7)*, National Archives of Namibia, Windhoek, 1987, p. 18.

37 Andersson, Charles John, *Lake Ngami or Explorations and Discovery During Four Years of Wanderings in the Wilds of Southwestern Africa*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1861, p. 89.

38 For example, Galton, F., *Narrative of an Explorer in Tropical South Africa*, op. cit., p. 30.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 63.



Figure 2c:
Schutztruppe military exercise

An 1864 Rhenish Mission Society Chronicle of Otjimbingue records that “Bergdama” and “Bushmen” were living in the Sesfontein area when the |Uixamab !Gomen (“Topnaar”) and later Swartbooi Oorlam Nama lineages moved there, in part to escape escalating Herero–Nama conflict in central parts of the territory.⁴⁰ The American trader Gerald McKiernan reports “Berg-Damara” living at the Waterberg in 1875,⁴¹ and Missionary Buttner in 1879 observes that “a few Dama chiefs are living north of the Waterberg plateau who have apparent authority over several 1 000s of people”.⁴² In 1918, Damara Chief Judas Goresib of Okombahe confirms that “[our] Chief’s [Nawabib’s] village used, many years ago, to be at the place now known as Okanjande near the Waterberg. It was known to us by the name of Kanubis [≠Khanubis] ...”.⁴³ In 1896, Captain Peter Möller, a Swedish traveller who journeyed from Mossamedes southwards through “Owampoland” and “Damaraland” to Walvis Bay, photographs “Bergdamara” west of Etosha pan in the area of Okahakana⁴⁴ (see Figure 3a). To the right in Figure 3a can be seen oblong

40 In Köhler, O., ‘Die Topnaar Hottentotten’, op. cit., p. 111. The Swartbooi were defeated in these struggles and forced to leave |Anhes / Rehoboth (previously settled by “Berg Damara”), from where they trekked “along the Kuiseb River, and thence to the Swakop River in order to find new dwelling places in Hereroland”, only to be pursued by the expansionary Oorlam Nama leader Jan Jonker Afrikaner who overtook them and set fire to their wagons in retaliation for Swartbooi support for Kamaherero. This experience sped up their retreat along the Kuiseb, from where they settled at Salem on the Swakop River and then moved towards Fransfontein and Sesfontein where they settled, via Ameib in the Erongo mountains, finding !Oeḡgā “Bergdama” there, some of whom also subsequently trekked north, both with the Swartbooi and independently (see section 3) (see Lau, Brigitte (ed.), ‘The Matchless Copper Mine in 1857’, op. cit., pp. 100, 104; Wallace, M., ‘A History of Namibia’, op. cit., p. 61). !Oeḡgā is the Damara / ≠Nūkhoen name for the Erongo mountains.

41 Serton, P. (ed.), *The narrative and journal of Gerald McKiernan in South West Africa: 1874–1879* (*Van Riebeeck Society Journal No. 35*), 1954, p. 67, cited in Wadley, P., ‘Big Elephant Shelter’, op. cit., p. 8.

42 Buttner, C.G., ‘The Berg-Damara’, *Cape Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 18, 1879, pp. 285–294, 286.

43 Union of South Africa, ‘Report on the Natives of South-West Africa’, op. cit., p. 104.

44 Rudner, I. & J. Rudner, *Journey in Africa Through Angola, Ovampoland and Damaraland 1895–1896* by P. Möller, C. Struik, Cape Town, 1974 (1899).

wooden bowls used especially for making and sharing *sâu* beer,⁴⁵ which appear identical to a bowl found in the area of Onanis in the Swakop River catchment (see Figure 3b).

From 1866, under the Chieftainship of Abraham Goresib (?||Guruseb – see above), many “Berg-Damara” became consolidated at Okombahe / |Âḡgommes. The Okombahe Damara are described in 1877 by the British Cape Colony magistrate, W.C. Palgrave, as making “gardens in which they grow mealies, pumpkins and tobacco”, with “a mile of the river-bed under cultivation” from which “300 muids” of wheat were harvested, “the greater part of which was sold for more than 40 shillings a muid, being also a provident people ... fast becoming rich in cattle and goats”.⁴⁶



Figure 3a:
“Bergdama” group encountered in 1896 at Okahahana, west of Etosha pan. To the right of the image are two distinctive oblong wooden bowls used for making and sharing beer (!khari) made from *Stipagrostis* spp. grass seeds (*sâu*n) and honey (*danib*).

(Source: Scan from Rudner and Rudner [Möller] 1974[1899], opp. p. 147)



Figure 3b:
Wooden bowl bearing close resemblance to those to the right of Figure 3a, found cached in a rock crevice in the vicinity of Onanis

(Photo: Sian Sullivan, 3 April 2018)

Historical encounters and mentions such as those above are too numerous to include more fully here, but are mapped in detail online at <https://www.futurepasts.net/historical-references-dama-namibia> (see screenshot at Figure 4). Figure 4 thus provides an indication of the former wide distribution of Damara / ḡNūkhoen. Compiled through spatialising references in historical texts from the late 1700s on, each placemark on the map represents written mentions of people encountered

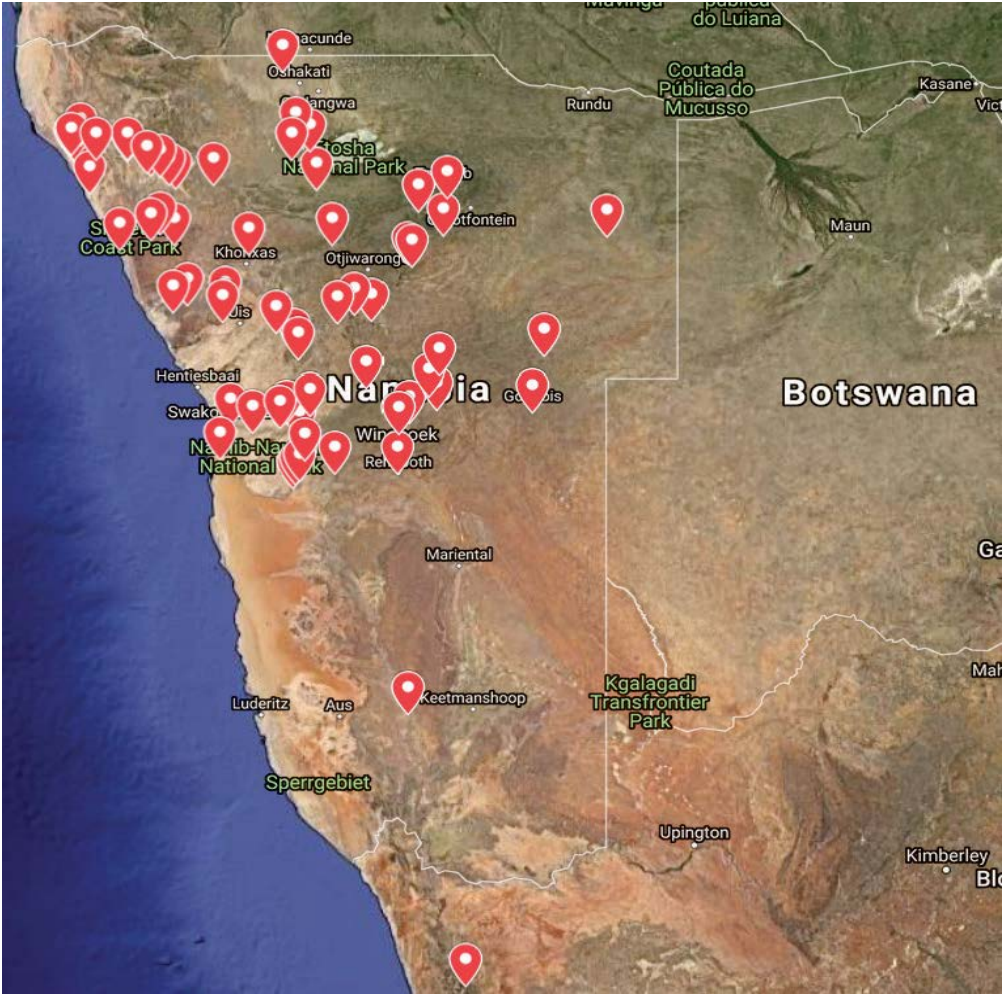
45 As described by Jacobus ||Hoëb of the Hoanib Cultural Group, Sesfontein, on 23 May 2019.

46 Palgrave 1877, quoted in Union of South Africa, ‘Report on the Natives of South-West Africa’, op. cit., pp. 105–106.

for which the name and context clarifies them as Damara / ǀNūkhoen. Clearly the map is limited by the extent of travel by the writers – for example the area north of the Brandberg / Dâures remains more-or-less a blank in terms of historical record until the late 1800s – as well as the biases the writers bring to their encounters and observations. Nonetheless, the map provides some idea of the spread of observed past presence of Damara / ǀNūkhoen.

Figure 4: Screenshot of online map for historical references to the presence of Damara / ǀNūkhoen in Namibia

(Source: <https://www.futurepasts.net/historical-references-dama-namibia>)



Of note in historical texts are the diverse combinations of livelihood practices observed to be enacted by “Berg Damara”, whose “mode of production” incorporated “elaborate hunting methods involving large-scale co-operation and extensive

areas”,⁴⁷ as well as keeping goats and sheep⁴⁸ and sometimes cattle.⁴⁹ Regarding cooperative hunting linked historically with Berg Damara, a report of 1852 “states that the enclosures made from thorn tree branches are 4–6 feet wide, sometimes ‘several hours long’ and become lower in height towards the apex. Along these were posted watchmen who chased the game along”.⁵⁰ Most communities also “grew tobacco, processed it, and traded it with Nama, Herero and Ovambo”,⁵¹ copper smelting was undertaken in central and southern Namibia,⁵² a wide variety of plants and invertebrates were sources of food and medicines,⁵³ and wooden bowls and ceramic containers were made for storing and cooking foods.⁵⁴

In her rigorous student dissertation, historian Brigitte Lau asserts that “the Damaras are *historically* a group apart and settled in the country *before* other Nama and Orlams moved in”, living in “a scattered collection of communities *historically apart and separate* from all other Nama peoples who migrated into the territory”.⁵⁵ They are considered to have migrated south “in remote times”, from probably western-central Africa, to become “widely scattered throughout the country in extended families without centralised political structures”, as probably the “most widely distributed ethnic community, ranging from the periphery of the Namib in the west to the Kalahari in the east and Grootfontein in the north to south of the central plateau”.⁵⁶

Figure 5 provides detail for “closed areas of occupation” (the blue shaded areas) for “Berg Damara” before the German colonial war of 1904–07, listed as:

47 Lau, B., ‘A Critique of the Historical Sources and Historiography’, op. cit., pp. 31–32, citing Berichte, R.

48 For example, Andersson, C., ‘Lake Ngami or Explorations and Discovery’, op. cit., p. 300.

49 Berichte, R., 1852, in Lau, ‘A Critique of the Historical Sources and Historiography’, op. cit., p. 31.

50 Lau, B., ‘A Critique of the Historical Sources and Historiography’, op. cit., citing Berichte, R., 1852, p. 211, also observed by Knudsen in 1844 in Lau, B., ‘A Critique of the Historical Sources and Historiography’, op. cit., p. 50, Appendix 3, and references therein, and by Gürich, G., ‘Deutsch Südwest-Afrika: Reisebilder und Skizzen aus den Jahren 1888 und 1889 mit einer Original Routenkarte’, *Mitteilungen der Geographische Geschichte (Hamburg)*, Vol. 1, 1891, pp. 1–216, p. 138.

51 Lau, B., ‘A Critique of the Historical Sources and Historiography’, op. cit., p. 13.

52 Kinahan, John, ‘Eighteenth century coppersmiths in central Namibia: comments on some sources and syntheses’, *Namibiana*, 2(2), 1980, pp. 17–22.

53 Sullivan, Sian, *People, Plants and Practice in Drylands: Sociopolitical and Ecological Dynamics of Resource Use by Damara Farmers in Arid North-west Namibia, including Annexe of Damara Ethnobotany*, Ph.D. Anthropology, University College London, 1998 (<http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1317514/>), and references therein.

54 Du Pisani, E. & L. Jacobson, ‘Dama clay vessel from Gomatsarab, Damaraland, and its relevance for Dama ceramic studies’, *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 40(142), 1985, pp. 109–111. The making and use of black clay pots called *!nomsus* have been recalled in several oral histories, such as Michael |Amigu Ganaseb (Purros), 13/04/15, who recalled cooking mussels in black pots in his early life in the northern Namib, and a ||Ubun man Franz |Haen ||Hoëb (Sesfontein), 04/04/19, who demonstrated for us how such pots were made in the past.

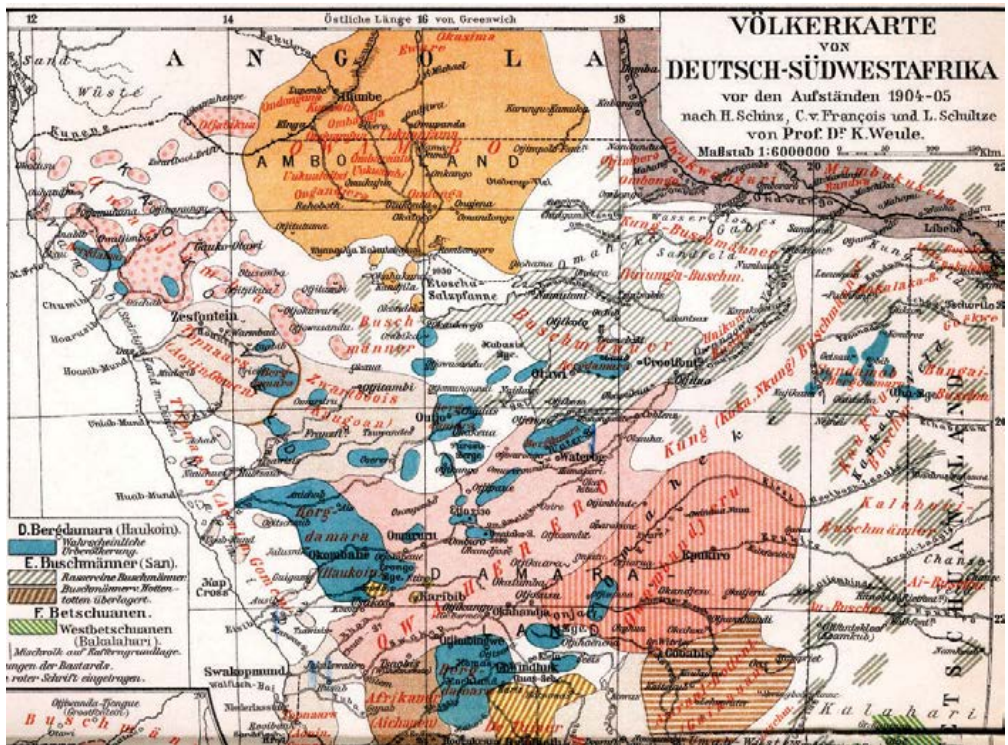
55 Lau, B., ‘A Critique of the Historical Sources and Historiography’, op. cit., pp. 31, 30, emphasis in original; also Hahn, Carl Hugo, ‘Damaraland and the Berg Damaras’, *Cape Monthly Magazine*, 1928.

56 Haacke, W., ‘Khoekhoegowab (Nama/Damara)’, op. cit., pp. 137, 140.

a larger tract of land at the Chumib and two smaller ones at Oachab and at the Hoarusib, further east of Sesfontein at the water source of Anabib and at Urieis, and one larger one south-west of Fransfontein, besides southwards of Okaukuejo at the water sources of Ombika and Otjovasandu and at the central region, the land to the south of the Ugab, which includes the Brandberg, Okombahe, and the Erongo, and furthermore, smaller groups at Esere [southeast of Otavi], Otjikango and Outjo, west of Otavi; in the mountain land of Gaub, at the Waterberg, Otjipaue, Etjo, Omburo, northwestern Omaruru [on the upper Huab], in the Khomas Highlands at Seeis, in the Onjati Mountains and at Otjisauna and in the Kaukauveld.⁵⁷

Although noticeably reduced compared to the spread of localities in Figure 4, it can again be seen that Damara / ǀNūkhoen were documented in the early 1900s as widely distributed from west to east across central and northern Namibia.

Figure 5: 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.)



57 Weule, 1910, in V. Lebzelter, *Eingeborenenkulturen in Südwest- Und Südafrika*, Verlag Karl W. Hiersemann, Leipzig, 1934, p. 107, quoted in Inskeep, A., *Heinrich Vedder's The Bergdama: An Annotated Translation of the German Original With Additional Ethnographic Material (Vol. 1)*, Köln, Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, pp. 62–63.

3 Social organisation of Dama / ꞤNūkhoen connecting lineage groups (!haos) with land areas (!hūs)

An understanding of issues of identity and displacement comes into sharper focus through considering dynamic relationships between Damara / ꞤNūkhoen lineages (!haos or “clans”) and specific land areas or !hūs – or what anthropologist Alan Barnard refers to as “local-incorporative units”.⁵⁸ Contemporary lists of Damara / ꞤNūkhoen clans tend to name around 34 as being linked with specific land areas in Namibia (see Figure 6 and in progress literature review online at <https://www.futurepasts.net/damara-lineages>). As detailed in section 4, Damara / ꞤNūkhoen experienced the appropriation of large areas of land inhabited prior to and during European occupation, an experience shared by many Namibians in especially southern and central parts of the country. Many Damara / ꞤNūkhoen !haoti were uprooted completely from the !hūs that constituted the fabric of their homes and lives.⁵⁹ |Khomaniin of the valleys and mountains of the |Khomas Hochland to the west and south of Windhoek, ꞤAodaman of Outjo/Kamanjab/Etoshia area, |Gaiodaman of Parësis/Outjo/Otjiwarongo area, !OeꞤgān of Usakos/Omaruru/Erongo mountain areas, and |Gowanin of Hoachanas/western Gobabis area lost all legal and autonomous access to their

land. Since much of this land was delineated and settled as commercial farms by Europeans, many Damara / ꞤNūkhoen found their way back to areas they had known as their own as domestic servants and farm labourers for those with legal title to land under the German and



Figure 6:
Approximate locations of major Dama / ꞤNūkhoen lineages (!haos, “clans”) in the recent past

(Sources: Haacke and Boois, 1991, p. 51, supplemented with information in ||Garoëb, J., 1991, and oral history field research in north-west Namibia; also see forthcoming literature review online at <https://www.futurepasts.net/damara-lineages>.)

58 Barnard, Alan, *Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa: A Comparative Ethnography of Khoisan Peoples*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 203.

59 Also see Sullivan, S., ‘Difference, identity and access to official discourses’, op. cit.

South African administrations⁶⁰ (see sections 3 and 4). Others left their *!hūs* to become concentrated in “Native Reserves” and absorbed into the labour system servicing urban areas and industry. From the 1950s onwards, ||Ubus also lost all access to prior areas of dwelling and resource access, for reasons detailed in section 4.

Field research in the Sesfontein area of north-west Namibia – an area north of the Red Line (Veterinary Cordon Fence) (see section 4) where Damara / †Nūkhoen have retained some continuity of habitation for at least several generations can help clarify conceptions of and relationships between *!haos* and *!hūs*. As the late headman of Kowareb, Andreas !Kharuxab, explained, a *!hūs* is a named area of the *!garob* or “veld”:

From the !Uniab River to this side it's called Aogubus. And the Hoanib River is the reason why this area is called Hoanib. And from the !Uniab to the other side (south) is called Hurubes. That is Hurubes. From the !Uniab to that big mountain (Dâures) is called Hurubes. If you come to the ||Huab River – from the ||Huab to the other side (south) is called ||Oba (now Morewag Farm). Khorixas area is called |Huib. And from there if you pass through and come to the !U‡gab River we refer to that area as |Awan !Huba, i.e. “Red Ground “. *Every area has got its names.*⁶¹

Oral testimonies affirm Damara / †Nūkhoen identification with reference to the *!hūs* that they or their ancestors hail from, at least in recent generations, for example:

... the people get their names according to where they were living. ... My mother's parents were both Damara and my father's parents were both Damara. I am a Damara child; I am part of the Damara 'nation' (*!hao*). I am a Damara (*Damara ta ge*). We are Damara but we are also Dâure Dama. We are part of the Dâure Dama “nation” (*!hao*). We are Dâure Dama. (*Dâure Dama da ge*).⁶²

My father was really from this place [Sesfontein/!Nani|aus], and my mother was from Hurubes. Really she's from Hurubes. She's ||Khao-a Damara.⁶³

!Narenin were living in the western areas of Hoanib and Hoarusib. Where we were just now [i.e. Hûnkab area] was ||Ubus land. ||Ubu people were living in the places close to the ocean like Hûnkab, !Uniab, |Garis, Xûxûes. Those are the areas of *Huri-daman* ||Ubus *di !huba* [lit. the ‘Sea-Dama (referring to !Narenin) and ||Ubus land’].⁶⁴

60 Also see Suzman, James, *In the Margins: A Qualitative Examination of the Status of Farm Workers in the Commercial and Communal Farming Areas of the Omaheke Region (Research Report Series No. 1)*, Farm Workers Project, Legal Assistance Centre, Windhoek, 1995, who observes this situation for land-dispossessed Hai||om and Sān.

61 Andreas !Kharuxab, Kowareb, 13/05/99.

62 Ibid. (Nb. ‘Dâures’ is the Khoekhoegowab name for the Brandberg massif).

63 Philippine |Hairo ||Nowaxas, Sesfontein, 15/04/99.

64 Ruben Sauneib Sanib (|Awagu-dao-am), 19/04/15.

Dynamic relationship with a lineage-associated *!hūs* is further reflected in the location and orientation of families in larger settlements, and the directions to which people travel when venturing into the *!garob* to herd livestock, gather foods and other items, and previously to hunt.

Figure 7 shows named land areas (*!hūs*) for a series of *!haos* in north-west Namibia who have been associated with these areas for at least several generations, such that despite recent restrictions on access (see section 4) some claims for continuous habitation can be made. Oral histories clarify these *!haos* / *!hūs* relationships and interactions over the last few generations, as outlined below. In southern Kunene, these different groupings are now categorised under the broader linguistic, lineage, and land-based grouping of *Namidaman* and represented by the Namidaman Traditional Authority (TA).

!Narenin are Damara / *‡Nūkhoen* 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), Gantias and Sarusa springs:⁶⁵

... my great, great-grandfathers and mothers were there at Sarusa, and I was born here [in Hoanib] at *‡Hoadi||gams*.⁶⁶

... 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.⁶⁷

... they would move in between the Hoarusib and Hoanib. In Hoanib in the rain time they came here to collect food, especially *‡ares*⁶⁸ and *‡namib*⁶⁹ – the latter is not found in 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*.⁷⁰

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,

65 Reportedly the *‡Aonin* of the *!Kuiseb* River have also at times been given the alternative name of *!Narenin* or *!Naranin*, derived from the word “*!nara*” and inflected with a derogatory connotation when used by other Nama people – see Budack, K.F.R., ‘The *‡Aonin* or Topnaar of the lower *!Kuiseb* Valley, and the sea’, in Traill, A. (ed.), *Khoisan Linguistic Studies* 3, *A.S.I. Communication No. 6*, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1977, pp. 1–42, 2.

66 Christophine Daumú Tauros (Purros), 13/11/15.

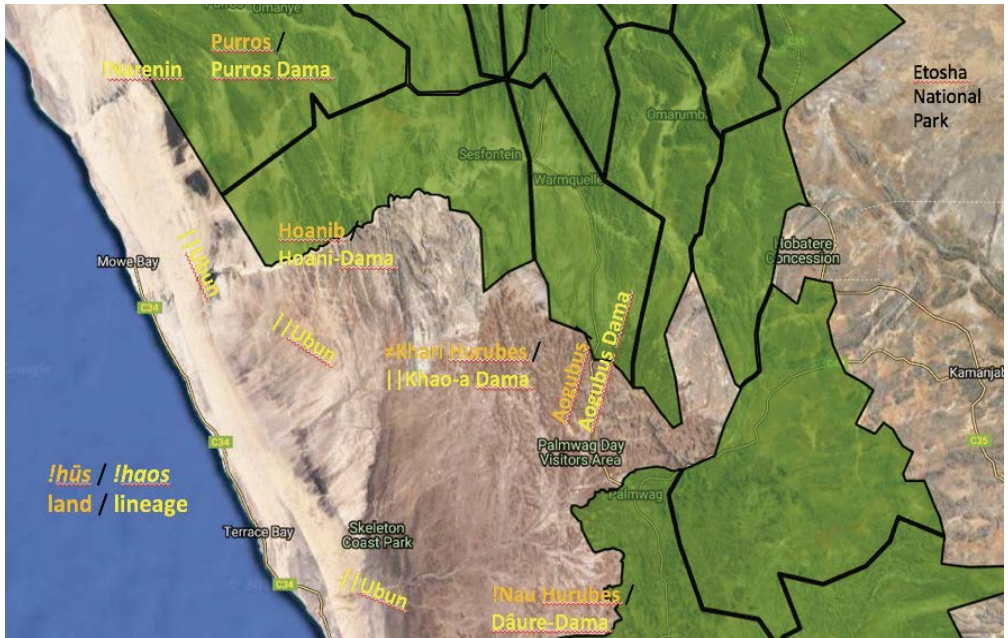
67 Hildegaard |Nuas (Sesfontein), 06/04/14.

68 Meaning 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’ of 1917 (National Archives of Namibia).

69 Grass seeds of *Danthoniopsis dinteri* that appear white when ‘cleaned’.

70 Eva |Habuhe Ganuses, née *‡Gawuses* (Sesfontein), 1995.

Figure 7: Named land areas (*!hūs*) as dynamically known in recent generations by Damara / #Nūkhoen and ||Ukun inhabitants of present-day conservancies in southern Kunene (shaded green, see section 7)
(Source: fieldnotes and on-site oral histories)



and the *xoris*⁷¹ 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.⁷²

In recent generations, at least, !Narenin and ||Ukun 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 ||Ukun 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 ||Ukun women and the ||Ukun women take the !Narenib,⁷³ like that. So they were moving from place to place because of the *sāu* and *bosû* – when it's now the time of the *sāu* and *bosû* they came to ||Gams [Amspoort], and Dubis and |Aub [Hoanib] – those are the places where they stayed because of *sāu* and *bosû*. So at the *!nara* time then they go back to !Ui||gams.⁷⁴

71 Fruits of *Salavadora persica*.

72 Christophine Daumû Tauros and Michael |Amigu Ganaseb (Purros), 13/11/15.

73 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.

74 Christophine Daumû Tauros and Michael |Amigu Ganaseb (Purros), 13/11/15.

As noted above, //Ubus are a Khoekhoegowab-speaking people sometimes referred to as “Nama” and at other times as “Bushmen”, who “a long time ago” split from peoples living along the !Khuiseb and are likely to be amongst those coastal peoples associated with the term “Strandloper” in historical texts. The story goes that when they came north to the !Uniab River a *!nara* plant was found by their dog and when they saw the dog eating the *!nara* without being harmed they also started eating the *!naras*.⁷⁵ //Ubus would move between *!nara* fields at the mouths of the !Uniab and Hoanib Rivers via Kai-as and Hûnkab springs, now in the Palmwag Tourism Concession.⁷⁶ //Ubus also stayed at Dumita where there is a fountain,⁷⁷ 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 //Ubus – my great grandparents were coming from those rock houses.⁷⁸

... when other people saw them in the Namib with their houses built very close together (i.e. ‘//ubero’) they said exclaimed over the way the houses were being made – hence the name ‘//Ubus’.⁷⁹

The grave of a remembered //Ubus ancestor called †Gieb is located in the lower !Uniab (at -20.13615, 13.31687). †Gieb was the maternal grandfather of Franz |Haen |Hoëb, an elderly //Ubus man now living in Sesfontein who was born at |Ui|gams / Auses in the dunes of the Hoanib. Franz remembers his family harvesting *!nara* in the lower Hoanib and moving between *!nara* fields in the !Uniab and Hoanib via Kai-as. †Gieb’s grave is next to a former dwelling site called Daniro, where †Gieb and others first encountered German men travelling along the !Uniab – possibly 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 [using] a narra knife made from elephant rib at the Hoarusib River (Jacobson and Noli 1987: 174).⁸⁰ This encounter was described to Franz as being the first occasion when these //Ubus had seen white men and encountered food in tins. //Ubus presence in the northern Namib appears to be confirmed at least as far back as 1893 by the name “Hubun” in the lower reaches of the Hoarusib and Hoanib Rivers on the *Deutscher Kolonial Atlas* of this year (see Figure 8).

75 Hildegaard |Nuas (Sesfontein), 06/04/14; Franz |Hoëb (near †Ös), 06/04/14.

76 Documented through journeys with Franz |Hoëb and Noag Ganaseb, 20-26/11/15, and Franz |Hoëb, 5-9/05/19.

77 Hildegaard |Nuas, op. cit.

78 Franz |Hoëb op. cit.

79 Emma Ganuses (!Nao-dâis), 12/11/15.

80 Jacobson, Leon & D. Noli, ‘An eye witness account of coastal settlement and subsistence along the northern Namibian coast’, *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, Vol. 42, 1987, pp. 174. Or possibly even the 1896 journey by L. Von Estorff to the Uniab mouth, *ibid*.

Figure 8: Detail from the Deutscher Kolonial Atlas of 1893, naming “Hubun” as one of the peoples of the northern Namib
 (Source: Sam Cohen Library, Swakopmund)



As noted above, *||Khaos Dama* are associated with the land area known as Hurubes and are a lineage that in times past were associated with *||Khaos* as mountain, a large mountain at the confluence of the †Gâob (Aub) and !Uniab Rivers in the present-day Palmwag Tourism Concession. A known ancestor of the |Awise *||Khaos 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 †Khari Hurubes.⁸¹ Three *||Khaos 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).

Purros Dama are descendants of a small group of !Oe†gā (Damara / †Nūkhoen from Erongo / !Oe†gā and Omaruru areas) who moved autonomously northwards in the late 1800s, fleeing conflict in these southern areas. They established themselves in Purros and surrounding areas, encountering !Narenin there and becoming entangled with the Himba Mbomboro family under the leadership of Guseb Mbomboro, described as also arriving in Purros at around the same time.

81 Multiple oral histories with especially Ruben Sauneib Sanib and Sophia Opi |Awises.

A number of graves of those !Oe#gā Damara who first trekked to the Purros area and their immediate descendants are located at Purros (for example, at -18.78712, 12.95551 and -18.78755, 12.95552⁸²). Most of the “Purros Dama” family relocated to Sesfontein in the 1960s following the death of Guseb but continued to go into the field to the northwest of Sesfontein to harvest honey, grass seeds and other foods.⁸³

Aogubu-Dama were associated with the mountainous area in the vicinity of the #Gâob (Aub) and #Khabaka (Kawaka) Rivers which flow from north to south into the !Uniab. At Bukuba-#noaehes, multiple Damara / #Nūkhoen graves (at -19.47947, 13.64738) attributed to late 1800s conflict with incoming Oorlam / !Gomen Nama, attest to some of the dramatic events that played out in this land area. Some decades later, both Damara / #Nūkhoen and Herero families and their livestock were forced to leave this area, as detailed in section 4.

4 Historical processes of displacement and marginalisation

As noted above, a high proportion of Damara / #Nūkhoen and ||Ubun do not now occupy their former land areas. It is thus observed by today’s Damara leader, Gaob Justus ||Garoëb, that recognition of the loss of land experienced by specific #Nūkhoen communities “is the first genuine start to the realities of the decolonisation process”.⁸⁴ In this section we outline some of the processes by which the majority of Damara / #Nūkhoen and ||Ubun lost rights over and access to land areas with which they had understood themselves to be in relationships of belonging and custodianship.

As clarified in section 2, historical records describing encounters with Damara / #Nūkhoen indicate the presence of diverse relatively autonomous groups of dark-skinned peoples speaking Khoekhoegowab rather than a Bantu language, who were spread from the coast to the Waterberg Plateau (!Hos), and from the southern Namib to Etosha. These peoples were variously displaced, subordinated and incorporated by peoples considered to have become established more recently in areas already lived in by Damara / #Nūkhoen.

From the early to mid-1800s, and as indicated in multiple historical documents, Oorlam Nama from the Cape Colony and Herero pastoralists from the north competed for pastures and trade routes in the central and north-west parts of the territory, progressively squeezing Damara / #Nūkhoen into mountainous

82 Malhana !Oe-amses and !Hanre’s first daughter, !Gôahe, respectively the maternal great grandmother and second cousin of Julia Tauros, visited at Purros, 18/05/19, and following numerous interviews with Julia Tauros and her late mother, Elizabet Ge!abasen Tauros.

83 Sullivan, Sian, ‘Folk and formal, local and national: Damara cultural knowledge and community-based conservation in southern Kunene, Namibia’, *Cimbebasia*, Vol. 15, 1999, pp. 1–28.

84 ||Garoëb, J., ‘Preface’ in Boois, ‘Reflections on Modern Damara History’, op. cit., p. iv.

“strongholds”, or incorporating them into various patron-client relations, at times described as servitude. Although some authors of historical texts are probably guilty of exacerbating tales of instability and conflict between “groups”, enough descriptions emerge to suggest that Damara / ǀNūkhoen were significantly disadvantaged from the mid- to late 1800s: for example, the Afrikaners following Jonker Afrikaner northwards took “possession of a part of Damaraland, most likely the country of the Berg or Mountain Damaras”;⁸⁵ a two-week march from Otjimbingwe to Rehoboth of “Maharero’s and [Charles John] Andersson’s forces” in 1864 robbed “Damara settlements of sheep and goats to provision the troops”⁸⁶; Andersson himself recorded on 21 June 1864 that they “more or less surprised some Bergdamara werfts” from whom they took “a few hundred sheep and goats”⁸⁷; and in 1883 around 200 Damara / ǀNūkhoen who had settled in the Sesfontein area under their leader !Nauriseb reportedly fled this area and moved south to Okombahe, complaining that incoming Oorlam Nama (!Gomen from Walvis Bay under the leadership of Jan |Uixamab) were making war on them.⁸⁸ Experiences such as these are suggestive of the considerable displacement and fluidity for all Africans in the territory during this time.

Damara / ǀNūkhoen were also unable to escape the increasing hunger for labour on the part of European colonial enterprise, both within the territory and stretching to the Cape Colony. From 1879–1880s, labour recruitment and shipment of “Berg Damara” as well as Herero and others from central Namibia to the Cape Colony saw several hundred men, women and children recruited as indentured labour for households and farms through a labour recruitment programme of the Cape administration. They were listed on arrival by “the Immigration Agent for the Cape Colony (IAC) as either ‘Damara’, ‘Damara emigrants’, ‘natives from Damaraland’ or mostly, ... as ‘Berg-Damaras’”.⁸⁹ Testimonies recorded in the 1920s by missionary Heinrich Vedder recall this experience: for example, “Bergdamara |Ubeb” at Otjimbingwe recalls “that the Cape Commissioner Coates Palgrave, who was instrumental in the Cape Labour recruitment programme for central Namibia in the 1870s, ‘put the poor Bergdama, who neither had goats nor cattle, together and sent them with a ship for work to Cape Town’”, some of them returning at a later date.⁹⁰ Historian Dag Henrichsen argues that the shipment to the Cape of predominantly “Berg-Dama” played a part in facilitating re-pastoralisation and the

85 Tindall, B., ‘The Journal of Joseph Tindall’, op. cit., p. 32.

86 Wallace, M., ‘A History of Namibia’, op. cit., p. 71.

87 Lau, b., *Namibia in Jonker Afrikaner’s Time*, op. cit., p. 133.

88 Reported in Köhler, Oswin, *A study of Omaruru District South West Africa (Ethnological Publications 43)*, Government Printer, Pretoria, 1959, and in oral histories, for example Philippine |Hairo ||Nowaxas (Sesfontein), 15/04/99.

89 Henrichsen, Dag, “‘Damara’ labour recruitment to the Cape Colony and marginalisation and hegemony in late 19th century central Namibia”, *Journal of Namibian Studies*, Vol. 3, 2008, pp. 63–82, 63–64.

90 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

establishment of Herero chiefdoms during the late 1800s, as well as consolidating “a more rigid identity politics”.⁹¹

As German occupation took hold in the late 1800s, appropriation of land accelerated and Damara / †Nūkhoen were further impoverished, particularly in productive areas desired for European settlement such as Otavi and Parësis. The presently acknowledged leader of Damara / †Nūkhoen, Gaob Justus ||Garoëb, recalls that in 1895 Damara / †Nūkhoen were ordered to vacate their water-rich land in Otavi area and became concentrated around the Rhenish Missionary Society mission station established in the same year on the farm ||Gaub⁹² that constitutes one of the early 1900s areas of “Bergdama” occupation illustrated in Figure 5. Land and livestock were appropriated from Damara people at Parasib (the Parësis mountains),⁹³ a process forcing them “into towns such as Otjiwarongo, Outjo, Kalkveld, and Omaruru”.⁹⁴ Chief Judas Goresib of Okombahe recalls that further south, in 1918, cattle and sheep used to be taken for debts to traders.⁹⁵

These negative colonial processes were both avoided (through displacement and retreat) and resisted by Damara / †Nūkhoen. As an example of the latter, from the late 1800s it was reported that “a small band of marauders” were causing significant disruption to consolidating colonial ox-wagon transport and cattle stock-posts between Otjimbingwe and the coast. The group was associated with a Damara / †Nūkhoen man called |Haihāb ||Guruseb, a son of Abraham ||Guruseb, who had been a chief (*gao-aob*) in the vicinity of the Gamsberg (†Gans; see above) who “had had to leave that area for the area near |Ā†gommes (Okombahe)”.⁹⁶ Named after his grey (*|hai*) horse (*hāb*), |Haihāb ||Guruseb became an outlaw in the Khan (†Khanni) River and Usakos (!Ūsa!khōs) areas to the east of Swakopmund (see Figure 9). The disruption caused by |Haihāb and followers led to a price of 500 Marks being placed on his head by 1901 (and 100 Marks for each of his proven allies). A local German newspaper published suggestions that Africans – specifically Witboois – should be hired to “assist in the hunt for |Haihāb”. By early 1903, |Haihāb’s activities had reached as far as the colonial authorities in Berlin, leading to a request to the imperial government in Windhoek “to terminate the robberies through appropriate action”. In May 1903, German colonial Governor Theodor Leutwein approached Captain !Nanseb Hendrik Witbooi in Gibeon for the supply of horsemen to search for

91 Ibid.

92 ||Garoëb, Justus, ‘Questions related to land rights in Namibia: A brief summary for presentation by the King of the Damaras on the occasion of a meeting with the United Evangelical Mission – Germany, 21 January 2002’, letter shared by Max Haraseb, |Gao Traditional Authority, and referred to with permission; Moritz, Walter, ‘Der Begim der Rheinischen Mission Unter den Damara in Tsumamas, Gaub, Okombahe und Anderen Plätzen’, *Heft 21 der Reihe Aus alten Tagen in Südwest*, Werther, Westphalia, 2015.

93 Max Haraseb, Khamdescha, 02/11/14.

94 Boois, S., ‘Reflections on Modern Damara History’, op. cit., p. 2.

95 Quoted in Union of South Africa, ‘Report on the Natives of South-West Africa’, op. cit., p. 109.

96 Haacke, ‘The hunt for the Damara’ |Haihāb’, op. cit., p. 23.

|Haihāb. The commando based itself at Aukas / Aukhās – an outspan on the Khan River some 16km south-west of Usakos. They found footprints of |Haihāb’s “gang” at various locations in this rugged terrain. At Charadeb waterhole they startled a group who took flight, at which point a Lieutenant Müller von Berneck ordered his men “to fire on the fleeing”, killing several, including a woman and a boy. The tough and “extremely shrewd” |Haihāb was eventually shot on 30 September “in the area between the Khan River and the Chuos mountains”. His hand was reportedly cut off at the wrist for presenting to the authorities.⁹⁷

Figure 9: Map showing |Haihāb ||Guruseb’s sphere of influence from the late 1800s to his death at the hands of the German colonial authorities and collaborating Witbooi troopers in 1903 (reconstructed drawing on Haacke 2010)⁹⁸



⁹⁷ Narrative summarised from *ibid*.

⁹⁸ A fully referenced and annotated map can be viewed online at <https://www.futurepasts.net/sphere-of-influence-of-haihāb>.

One of the relatively well-known series of displacements is associated with the creation of Daan Viljoen Game Reserve for recreational use by white inhabitants of Windhoek following the deproclamation of the Aukeigas (!Ao||Aexas) Reserve in 1945 “to rid Windhoek and |Khomas Hochland from Damara influence”.¹⁰³ Damara / †Nūkhoen were relocated to the Okombahe Reserve on the Ugab in 1938 and 1941. In 1948, more were uprooted from the former Aukeigas Reserve and displaced to Okakarara in the east.¹⁰⁴ In this 1950s, |Khomanin Damara / †Nūkhoen were further evicted from Aukeigas and relocated several hundred kilometres away to the farm Sores-Sores on the Ugab (!U†gab) River, purchased by the administration to enlarge the Okombahe Reserve.¹⁰⁵ This was a significantly more marginal area in terms of rainfall and productivity, and many of the promises for state assistance remained unmet.

In the early 1960s, Fritz Gariseb, described as “Windhoek spokesmen of the Berg-Damara”, related to South African journalist Ruth First that he had been born “on Aukeigas” in the late 1800s, saying that during this time “we were living as a free people and we lived wherever we pleased. Our flocks, and we had many livestock, used to graze everywhere.” German occupation began to increasingly control their lives through the imposition of passes, government taxes and restrictions on livestock ownership for workers on white-owned farms.¹⁰⁶ Gariseb spoke of how Damara / †Nūkhoen labour built the large dams for water storage at Aukeigas, work that improved and thus raised the real estate value of the land, for which Damara / †Nūkhoen have not been compensated:

[t]he first dam was built by our people with the aid of the Boers and was Aukeigas dam, the second one was Autos, the third Kawabas. Here we lived until the South West African Administration deemed it fit to uproot the homes in the Reserve of Aukeigas without consulting the people ... We were promised a Canaan in our new homes, but even so this trek can be described as a national suicide. Thousands of their cattle died, and from the people who moved originally from Aukeigas only forty-six families remain. Today the Damara people are a fallen race in Sorris-Sorris and other Reserves. What happens in the Aukeigas district at the present moment? Two or three rich Whites have bought farms there and make use of the water storage left by the people. ... The other part of the Reserve was declared a game reserve. This means that even the animals have more state protection than human souls.¹⁰⁷

103 ||Garoëb, Justus, ‘Questions related to land rights in Namibia’, op. cit., p. 4.

104 Ibid.

105 Cf. Köhler, ‘A study of Omaruru District’, op. cit.

106 Quoted in First, R., *South West Africa*, op. cit., pp. 35–36.

107 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 146. First adds that “[t]he home of 401 Africans, Aukeigas was divided into two White farms of 4,950 hectares each, with the rest turned into game reserve. The Berg-Damara were removed 250 miles north to land bordering on the Okombahe Reserve. The new area was slightly smaller than their Aukeigas home, but the size was not its main defect. In the judgment of the Agricultural Commission, a minimum of 10,000 hectares in the area was needed to provide a living for one farming family (White).”

In 1999 we recorded the late Meda Xamses (Figure 10), then living at ||Gaisoas on the Ugab (!U#gab), relating her own experience of these evictions from Aukeigas / !Ao||Aexas. Meda described how after she had had her fourth baby, the government requested that they move from Aukeigas saying that the land they would go to “is a good land and we will make gardens and provide seeds – nothing will be difficult, the water will be free, and the plains are beautiful”. But when they moved to Sores-Sores they found that:

the good life we had at !Ao||aexas is not here! The water we drank freely is not here; the plains just lie there, stretching out; the seeds they said would come they didn't give to us; until now a garden hasn't been planted. And we get too much drought. At !Ao||Aexas we lived from our cattle, we lived from our goats; we farmed and sold for ourselves. Now we have no life. We were moved to this land by a white man called Holom and a white man called Elan. Those white men brought us to live on these plains which have no life, and then they left us. And now the people who were brought here have died, the chiefs who came with us have died, the people have died. And we struggle to ask for our land back. Give us back our land, so that we can go back and stay at our place – at !Ao||aexas. But the government said now you must not want your land anymore. It has been made into a place for wild animals and no one can go back.¹⁰⁸

Figure 10: Meda Xamses and her partner Trougod photographed in 1995 at their home at ||Gaisoas on the Ugab River



108 Meda Xamses (||Gaisoas), 19/04/99.

Less well known are evictions affecting Damara / ǀNūkhoen and ǁUkun in the westerly areas of southern Kunene Region, overlaying already complex circumstances of land use and access (see section 3). Archive records for this rugged westerly area are sparse but nonetheless connect with oral histories confirming “Berg Damara” presence in this area. In 1906, George Elers (mentioned above) builds a road so as to travel northwards towards Sesfontein, accomplished with:

a large number of Berg-Damaras who live in this *[sic]* Velds. I may say that these natives gave me every assistance and made nearly 100 miles of new road taking in new water places, as so many of the known ones were dry.¹⁰⁹

On the coast near the Hoanib mouth he encountered “[a]n old sea Bushman [who] remembered the birds [white breasted cormorants] nesting there as he used to kill them for food and take the eggs”.¹¹⁰ Between the Hoanib and Hoarusib he found “some Berg-Damaras and Bushman who live close to the sea ... constantly walking up and down the coast in search for whales that come ashore [with] their Kraals all the way to Khumib”.¹¹¹ In 1910 a geologist for the Kaoko Land und Minengesellschaft notes “Bergdamara” at places along the !Uniab River called “Gamgamas” and “Swartmodder”, and also meets “Bergdamara” (possibly ǁUkun) returning from “Uniab-Mund”.¹¹² In 1917, the First Resident Commissioner for ‘Ovamboland’, Major Charles N. Manning, encountered “Berg-Damara” at Kowareb, Sesfontein and north-west of Sesfontein along the Hoanib and Hoarusib Rivers (Manning did not travel south of Sesfontein so his report is unable to provide information about this more southerly area).¹¹³ In 1946, a settler farmer, David Levin, looking for grazing in the area of Twyfelfontein / |Ui-ǁaes, found a Damara / ǀNūkhoen family living there who regularly moved for grazing between “Gwarab” (Kowareb, south-east of Sesfontein), Grootberg and |Ui-ǁaes.¹¹⁴

The presence of Damara / ǀNūkhoen and ǁUkun families in these and other areas of the north-west was impacted by several layers of land reorganisation. In early decades of the twentieth century a livestock-free zone north of the Red Line veterinary fence dissecting Namibia from east to west was coercively cleared of people living there so as to control the movement of animals from communal areas in the north to settler commercial farming areas in the south.¹¹⁵ Africans including “Berg Damara” were repeatedly and forcibly moved out of the western

109 Quoted in Jacobson, L. & D. Noli, ‘An eye witness account of coastal settlement’, op. cit., p. 173.

110 Ibid.

111 Ibid.

112 NAN.A.327 Krause and Kuntz, *report to the Kaoko Land und Minengesellschaft*, 25/8/1910.

113 Manning Report, ADM 156 W 32 National Archives of Namibia, 1917.

114 Levin, M. & M. Goldbeck, *David Levin of Twyfelfontein: The Unknown Story*, Gondwana Collection, Windhoek, 2013, p. 17.

115 Miescher, Giorgio, *Namibia's Red Line: The History of a Veterinary and Settlement Border*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2012.

areas between the Hoanib and Ugab Rivers, although inability to police this remote area meant that people tended to move back as soon as the police presence had left.¹¹⁶ Some years later, an Inspection report for the Kaokoveld by an Agricultural Officer recommended that the then derelict gardens at Warmquelle, at the time under small-scale agriculture by several families, be used “... to provide grazing and gardening ground for the Damaras who moved to Sesfontein from the Southern Kaokoveld”.¹¹⁷ Moments of this clearance process are vividly remembered by elderly informants in the present. At the waterhole of †Khabaka, Ruben Sauneib Sanib of the |Awise ||Khaos-a Damara family, recalled his experience of being evicted from the formerly large settlement of Gomagorra in Aogubus (see Figure 11), now in the Palmwag Concession. This was an event that occurred prior to the memorable death of Husa, then Nama captain of Sesfontein / !Nani|aus, who in 1941 was mauled by a lion at the place known as †Ao-daos!¹¹⁸

Figure 11: The locations of Gomagorra and |Gui-gomabi-!gaus in the !hūs known as Aogubus



116 Ibid., p. 152; SWAA 1930 *Territory of South-West Africa, Report of the Administrator For the Year 1930*, Windhoek, p. 14.

117 SWAA.2515.A.552/13, *Inspection report, Kaokoveld. Principal Agricultural Officer to Assistant Chief Commissioner Windhoek*, 06/02/52.

118 Personal fieldnotes and Van Warmelo, N.J., *Notes on the Kaokoveld (South West Africa) and its People (Ethnological Publications 26)*, Department of Bantu Administration, Pretoria, 1962 (1951), pp. 37, 43–44.

The government said this is now the wildlife area and you cannot move in here. We had to move to the other side of the mountains – to Tsabididi [the area also known today as Mbakondja]. Ok, now government police from Kamanjab and Fransfontein told the people to move from here. And the people moved some of the cattle already to Sesfontein area, but they left some of the cattle [for the people still in Hurubes and Aogubus] to drink the milk. Those are the cattle the government came and shot to make the people move.

Some of these cattle belonged to a grandfather of Ruben's called Sabuemib:

And Sabuemib took one of the bulls into a cave at |Gui-gomabi-!gaus and he shot it there with a bow and arrow [so that they would at least be able to eat biltong from the meat and prevent the animal being killed by the authorities]. Other cattle were collected together with those of Hereros [also herding in the area] and were shot by the government people at Gomagorras [named after the word *goman* for cattle and located in the hills south of Tsabididi]. Some of Sabuemib's cattle were killed in this way.¹¹⁹

In the 1950s relief grazing and farm tenancies were made available in this north-western area for Afrikaans livestock farmers under Namibia's South African administration,¹²⁰ who were thereby able to gain from the prior clearances of local peoples. As shown in Figures 12a and b, these newly surveyed farms overlapped with former Damara / ǀNūkhoen living places (||*an*||*huib*): the settlement of Soaub, for example, formerly under the leadership of a man called !Abudoeb and the place where the ||Khaos-a Dama man Aukhoeb |Awise is buried¹²¹ (see Figure 13), is located in what became Farm Rooiplaat 710.¹²²

From 1950, several diamond mines were established in the northern Namib, at Möwe Bay, Terrace Bay, Toscanini and Saurusa,¹²³ making this territory a "restricted access area". This is a remembered process that displaced especially ||Ubun people living and moving in this far-westerly area (as indicated in Figure 14), as well as offering new employment opportunities in the new mines.

119 Ruben Sauneib Sanib (ǀKhabaka), 20/11/14.

120 Kambatuku, Jack R., 'Historical profiles of farms in former Damaraland: Notes from the archival files', *DRFN Occasional Paper No. 4*, Desert Research Foundation of Namibia, Windhoek, 1996.

121 Ruben Sauneib Sanib and Sophia Opi |Awises (Soaub), 07/11/15; revisited with Ruben Sanib, 15/05/19.

122 Kambatuku, J., 'Historical profiles of farms', op. cit., p. v.

123 Mansfield, C., 'Environmental Impacts of Prospecting and Mining in Namibian National Parks: Implications for Legislative Compliance', unpublished Masters dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 2006.



Figure 12a:
 Sites of two farm
 dams at Rooiplaatz,
 positioned next to a
 living place called Soaub,
 remembered by elderly
 Damara / #Nükhoen

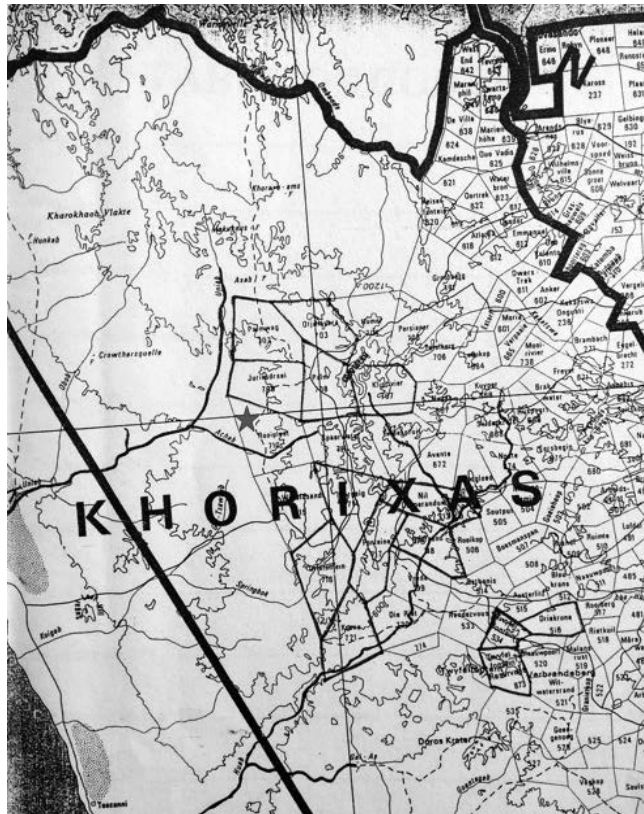


Figure 12b:
 1950s–1960s farm
 boundaries for farms
 established in the
 north-west following
 relocation of the “Red Line”
 in 1955 – the asterisk
 marks farm Rooiplaatz 710

Figure 13: Ruben Sauneib Sanib sitting at Aukhoeb's grave at the former living place of Soaub
(Photo: Sian Sullivan, 15/05/19)



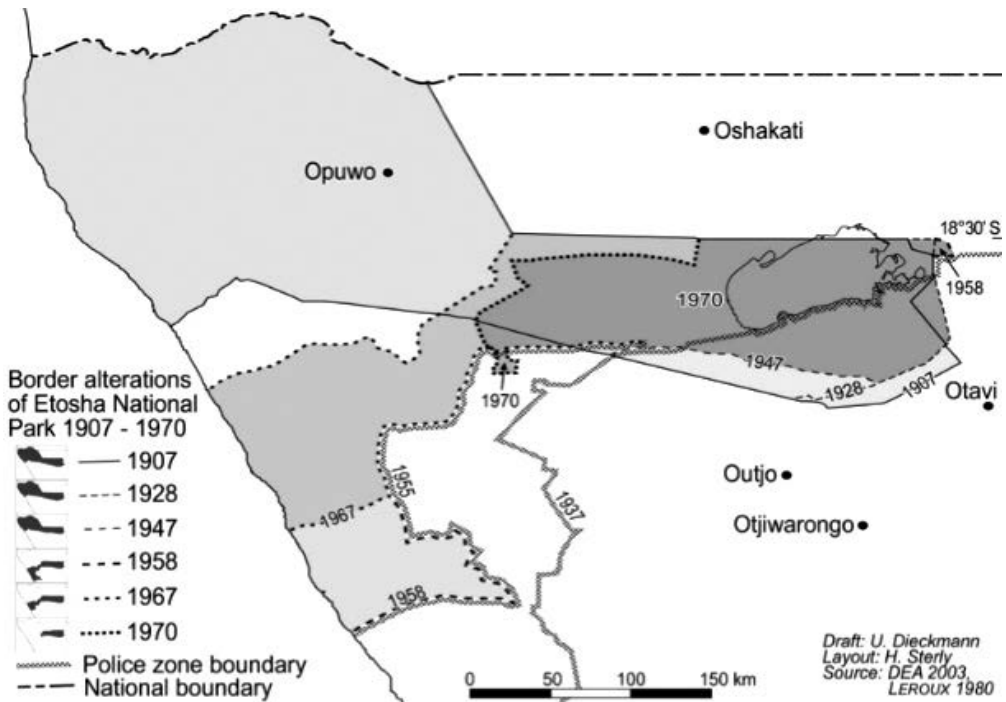
Figure 14: Former living places and associated springs east to west along the Hoanib from Sesfontein



In 1958, and following the westward and northward shift in 1955 of the so-called Police Zone boundary and the opening up of farms for white settlers in this area, the boundary of the former “Game Reserve no. 2”, now Etosha National Park (ENP), was extended westwards to the coast following the Hoanib River in the north and the Ugab River in the south¹²⁴ (see Figure 15), further justifying the removal of people and livestock from this area.

Figure 15: The shifting boundaries of Game Reserve No. 2 / ENP, 1907–1970

(Source: Dieckmann, 2007, p. 76, reproduced with permission)



In sum, these overlapping processes particularly affected the land areas (!hūs) known as †Khari Hurubes, !Nau Hurubes,¹²⁵ Aogubus, and Namib (see Figure 7), where a number of Damara / †Nūkhoen and ||Ukun families recall living in the past at specific places where their family members are buried. ||Khao-a Dama of †Khari Hurubes and Aogubus mostly became consolidated in the northern settlements of Sesfontein / !Nani|aus, Anabeb, Warmquelle and Kowareb. Dâure-Dama of the more southerly !Nau Hurubes mostly became concentrated in the vicinity of the Ugab River and the associated former Okombahe Reserve. The map¹²⁶ at Figure 16 shows places

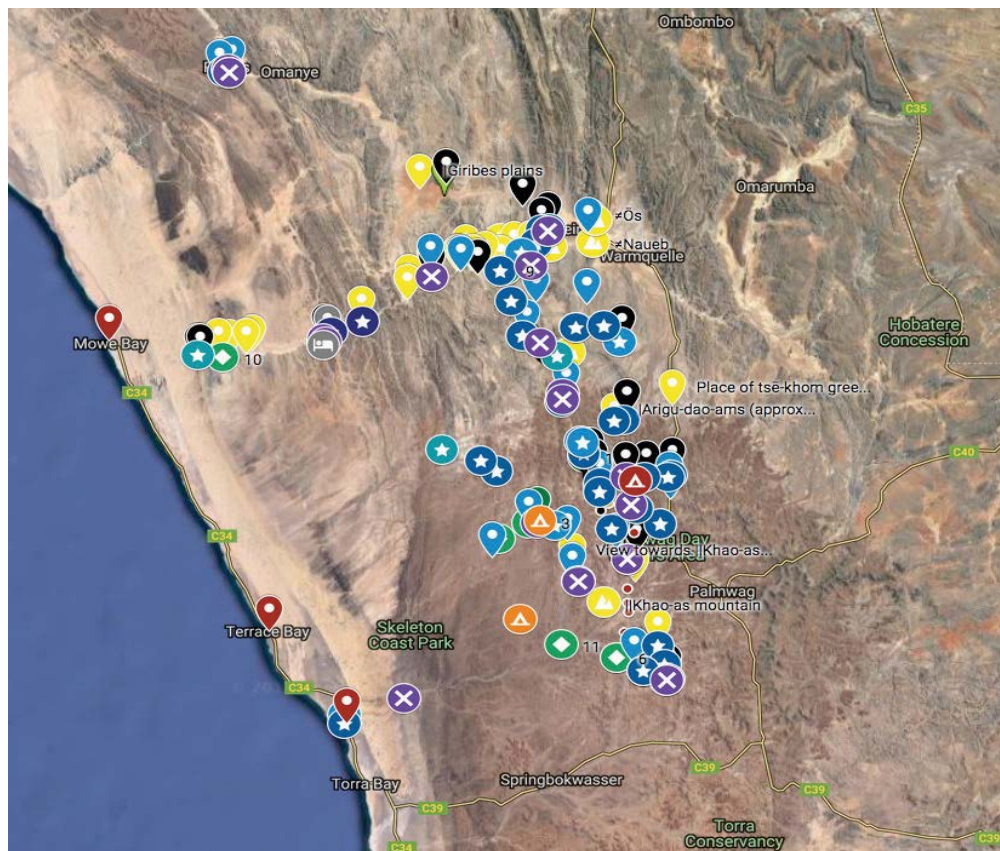
124 Tinley, Ken L., 'Etosha and the Kaokoveld', *Supplement to African Wild Life*, Vol. 25(1), 1971, pp. 3–16.

125 Also '||Hurubes', see Dâure Daman Traditional Authority in Hinz, M. & A. Gairiseb (eds), 'Customary Law Ascertained', op. cit., p. 186.

126 Available online at <https://www.futurepasts.net/cultural-landscapes-mapping>.

mapped in this north-western area through recent on-site oral history research with elderly members of Damara / ǀNūkhoen and ǁUbus families now living in the vicinity of Sesfontein and Kowareb.¹²⁷ It has formed the basis for reporting to the Namidaman TA¹²⁸ and is currently being mobilised as part of this TA's submission to the Ancestral Land Commission established by the Namibian government in 2019.¹²⁹

Figure 16: Screenshot of online map showing former ǀan-ǁhuib (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 in the late 1990s)



127 Also see Sullivan, S., “Maps and memory”, op. cit.

128 Sullivan, Sian & Welhemina Suro Ganuses, Filemon ǁNuab and senior members of Sesfontein and Anabeb Conservancies, ‘Dama / ǀNūkhoen and ǁUbus Cultural Landscapes Mapping, West Namibia’, in *Progress Report to Namidaman Traditional Authority, Sesfontein*, Bath Spa University, Future Pasts, 6 August 2019.

129 Tjitemisa, Kuzeeko, ‘President appoints ancestral land commission’, *New Era*, 22 February 2019 (<https://neweralive.na/posts/president-appoints-ancestral-land-commission>).

6 Consideration of land access and administration issues associated with the post-Odendaal creation of the Damaraland “homeland” (from early 1970s to 1990)¹³⁰

Various further boundary changes took place in connection with the creation of new enlarged “homeland” areas following government recommendations in the 1960s,¹³¹ established in part to remove so-called “Black Spots” of African habitation in “white areas”.¹³² The farms that had been opened up by the 1955 westward repositioning of the Police Zone boundary were reallocated as part of the “homeland” of “Damaraland”, the western ENP boundary being moved eastwards to its 1970 (and current) position (see Figure 15). The process allowed the Skeleton Coast National Park to be gazetted (in 1971) from the northern Namib,¹³³ already progressively emptied of people, in part through its establishment as a restricted access mining area from 1950.

The new “Damaraland Homeland” of the 1970s provided an opportunity for many Damara / ǀNūkhoen to become established as relatively independent farmers whose former land areas (see Figures 4, 5 and 6) were bypassed by the “homeland”. In the southern parts of the homeland territory in particular, surveyed farms that had been settled by predominantly Afrikaans farmers (see Figure 12b) were “communalised” (i.e. turned into communal land) through their (re)allocation to ǀNūkhoen herders.¹³⁴ It is noticeable, however, that such farmers were disadvantaged relative to the prior settler farmers, both through being required to support more families on the same land areas and through receiving relatively little in terms of subsidies, loans and other elements of state support. Later, the Damara Regional Authorities under the leadership of Justus ||Garoëb committed a large area of land between ENP and Skeleton Coast Parks as the hunting and then tourism concession of Palmwag, an area that had been successively emptied of people and livestock through the processes outlined in section 5.

Whilst the creation of “Damaraland” offered an expanded settlement area for Damara / ǀNūkhoen living at the time in other parts of the country, it also led to some further displacements. For example, the settlement of Warmquelle/|Aexa|aus

130 Drawing on Sullivan, S., ‘The “Communalization” of Former Commercial Farmland’, op. cit.

131 Republic of South Africa, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs 1962–1963* (‘Odendaal Report’), Government Printer, Pretoria, 1964.

132 Memorandum N.2/10/3, 10 on ‘Removal of Black Spots’, Department of Bantu Administration, Pretoria, February 1962.

133 Tinley, K., ‘Etosha and the Kaokoveld’, op. cit.

134 For detail regarding this process and case studies of the farms Blaauwpoort 520, Malansrust 519, Rietkuil 518 and Morewag 480 near the Aba-Huab River, see Sullivan, S., ‘The “Communalization” of Former Commercial Farmland’, op. cit.

became part of Opuwo District to the north and thereby (re)created as a Herero/Himba constituency, i.e. as located in the Kaokoland ovaHimba “homeland”. Warmquelle/|Aexa|aus had been lived in by Khoekhoegowab-speaking people from at least prior to German colonial rule, with the incoming captain of Sesfontein, Jan |Uixamab of !Gomes (Walvis Bay), being able to assert such a position of prominence in the area in the late 1800s that on 3 October 1898 he “sold” 4 000 hectares constituting the farm Warmbad (Warmquelle) to the colonial Kaoko Land and Mining Company.¹³⁵ This farm was later taken over by a German settler called Carl Schlettwein,¹³⁶ and under German colonial rule Damara / †Nūkhoen of the area contributed labour for the newly established German outpost and farm at the growing settlement.

Andreas !Kharuxab, former †Nūkhoen (Dâureb Dama) headman of Kowareb, and his peer and friend, Salmon Ganamub, recalled these dynamics in an interview recorded in May 1999:

First, Damara people were staying at |Aexa|aus/Warmquelle. Damara were there. ... At that time Gabriel, who is now dead, was the headman [at |Aexa|aus/Warmquelle]; it was he who passed the leadership on to me. You're asking how long had the Damara people been there? Those people were born there, they grew up and worked there. Look at that man [points to Salmon, who is very old]. It was a German place then. ... Damara people were already there, then the Germans came and they gathered other people who were in the veld [!garob] and they gave them work [for food]. They rounded them up with horses and some people came of their own accord.

First before we came to Kowareb we stayed for years and years at |Aexa|aus/Warmquelle and we worked the gardens there. Here (i.e. Kowareb) was the farm-post of Nama people. !Nani|aus/Sesfontein and |Aexa|aus/Warmquelle were big villages and the Nama people of !Nani|aus/Sesfontein and the Damara people of |Aexa|aus/Warmquelle used to keep livestock here at Kowareb.¹³⁷

But there are reasons why we came here and made this garden [at Kowareb]. Political things¹³⁸ came in which were not here before in our lives. Political things were introduced which made |Aexa|aus/Warmquelle part of Opuwo district. That commissioner of Opuwo made |Aexa|aus/Warmquelle part of Opuwo district and

135 Rizzo, Lorena, *Gender and Colonialism: A History of Kaoko in North-western Namibia*, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, Basel, 2012.

136 !Haroës, I., 'Max !Gâgu Dax: In the footsteps of the uncrowned prince (1869-1972)', *The Namibian*, 17 September 2010; Miescher, G., 'Namibia's Red Line', op. cit., p. 33; Rizzo, L., 'Gender and Colonialism', op. cit., pp. 64–67; 'Manning Report 1917', op. cit., p. 7.

137 As Manning confirms, on 8 August 1917, 'Manning Report 1917', op. cit., p. 6; also in oral histories, for example Manasse & Hildegaard |Nuab/s, Sesfontein / !Nani-|aus, 11/05/99.

138 This is a literal translation of 'politiek xun'. Andreas is referring to the 1970s enacting of the recommendations of the Odendaal Report which amounted to the establishment of “homelands”, and the redrawing of administrative boundaries in the name of *apartheid* or “separate development”.

he gave it to Herero people. We sat then on the plains and then we came here (to Kowareb) and talked with the government and they built us this garden; they built the dam and they pushed the water here (for irrigation). Then we founded this garden here.¹³⁹

This narrative describes the 1970s displacement of Khoekhoegowab-speaking people inhabiting Warmquelle /|Aexa|aus southwards to Kowareb in what became designated as “Damaraland” – the “homeland” of “the Damara”. It is apparently only since this time that Herero families who are now so important in the local politics of the area settled permanently in Warmquelle, and more recently (since the 1990s) have become prominently established at Kowareb. Additional local displacements were effected through the relocation in the early 1970s of a community known as “Riemvasmakers” from Riemvasmaak near Upington in South Africa’s northern Cape (where a new SADF military base was to be established),¹⁴⁰ to what was Ward 11 around Bergsig, now part of one of the first established communal area conservancies in the former “Damaraland homeland” (see section 6).

7 Subsequent post-independence changes in administration of land in the former “Damaraland homeland”

An array of new laws and policies in post-independence Namibia have precipitated further far-reaching changes with implications for Damara / ǀNūkhoen in their short-lived designated ‘homeland’ in north-west Namibia. In this section we touch on two intersecting dimensions:

- the diverse opportunities and constraints engendered by post-independence establishment of conservancies in and around the former homeland area as a core element of a national and donor-funded programme of community-based natural resources management (CBNRM); and
- some implications of an unclear policy setting for asserting exclusionary rights to and control over communal area land.¹⁴¹

Since 1996, a national CBNRM policy framework has allowed Namibian citizens in communally managed areas to register new natural resource management institutions called conservancies. Communal-area conservancies enable Namibians inhabiting communal land to receive benefits from, and make some management decisions over, the natural resources within the territory demarcated

139 Interview with Andreas !Kharuxab, Kowareb, 13/05/99.

140 Clemans Miyanicwe, ‘Riemvasmakers seek recognition’, *The Namibian*, 22 October 2014 (<https://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=129523&page=archive-read>, accessed 29 August 2019).

141 Haring, Sidney & Willem Odendaal, *Our Land They Took: San Land Rights Under Threat in Namibia*, Legal Assistance Centre, Windhoek, 2006.

as a conservancy.¹⁴² Legally, a number of requirements have to be satisfied in order for a communal-area conservancy to be registered: its territorial boundaries have to be agreed upon; its membership has to be decided and registered; and a constitution and a management plan have to be drawn up, focusing particularly on the management and distribution of conservancy wildlife and associated income. Conservancies are now described in part as organisations established to enable business, particularly with tourism and trophy hunting operators.¹⁴³ A recent report of the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations thus states that a conservancy is “a business venture in communal land use ... although its key function is actually to enable business”, such that conservancies:

do not necessarily need to run any of the business ventures that use the resources themselves. In fact, these are often best controlled and carried out by private sector operators with the necessary know-how and market linkages.¹⁴⁴

The premise is that it is through business that both conservation and conservation-related development will arise. CBNRM is thereby clearly positioned as a state-, NGO- and donor-facilitated process of outsourcing access to significant public natural/wildlife resources and associated potential income streams to private sector (frequently foreign) business interests – a governance arrangement associated with neoliberalism. CBNRM in Namibia strengthens market-based approaches to biodiversity conservation in particular by increasing income sourced from international tourism travel and trophy-hunting, and increasing the area of land available for such activities.¹⁴⁵ With its populations of rare desert-dwelling elephant and rhino,¹⁴⁶ the former Damaraland “homeland” area of southern Kunene has become a primary focus for this conservation-oriented governance, and is now a high-end “wilderness” tourism destination.

142 Note that this demarcation does not ascribe ownership over the land, which legally remains with the state – see discussion in Sullivan, S., ‘How sustainable is the communalising discourse of “new” conservation? The masking of difference, inequality and aspiration in the fledgling “conservancies” of Namibia’, in Chatty, Dawn & Marcus Colchester (eds), *Conservation and Mobile Indigenous People: Displacement, Forced Settlement and Sustainable Development*, Berghahn Press, Oxford, 2002, pp. 158–187; Harring, S. & W. Odendaal, ‘Our Land They Took’, op. cit.

143 Naidoo, Robin L., Chris Weaver, R.W. Diggle et al., ‘Complementary benefits of tourism and hunting to communal conservancies in Namibia’, *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 30(3), 2016, pp. 628–638.

144 NACSO, *The State of Community Conservation in Namibia: A Review of Communal Conservancies, Community Forests and Other CBNRM Initiatives (2013 Annual Report)*, Windhoek, NACSO, 2014.

145 Lapeyre, Renaud, ‘The Grootberg Lodge partnership in Namibia: towards poverty alleviation and empowerment for long-term sustainability?’, *Current Issues in Tourism* Vol. 14(3), 2011, pp. 221–234; Naidoo, Weaver, Diggle et al., ‘Complementary benefits of tourism and hunting’, op. cit.

146 The area is home to the largest population of endangered black rhino (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*) outside a national park, Muntifering, Jeff R., Wayne L. Linklater, Susan G. Clark et al., ‘Harnessing values to save the rhinoceros: insights from Namibia’, *Oryx*, Vol. 51(1), 2017, pp. 98–105.

Through improving use rights and devolving some management decisions to communal area conservancies, CBNRM is rightly described as progressive in relation to past restrictions. At the same time, it is noticeable that conservancies in independent Namibia are being established on top of the pattern of land control set up during Namibia's colonial and apartheid history. As shown in Figure 17 and described above, most of the central and southern parts of the country were surveyed, fenced and settled by commercial white farmers once indigenous peoples – other than those that became labourers in commercial farming areas – had been constrained to more marginal areas (coloured green in Figure 17a). It is these remaining *communally managed areas* that have been the focus of CBNRM and the establishment of communal area conservancies (also coloured green in Figure 17b) as a new process of “... land acquisition for conservation in the non-formal sense”¹⁴⁷ that facilitates access by investors, as noted above. Many analyses also ask questions of this arrangement in relation to unequal distributions of new conservancy-related income, impacts on rural livelihoods of amplified human-wildlife conflict, and decreased local autonomy over land and natural resources.¹⁴⁸

It is important to note that conservancies in communal areas give residents, more specifically the conservancy management committee, some specified rights over wildlife resources occurring within conservancy areas, but do not give conservancy members formal property rights over land in a conservancy. Tensions can arise between new conservancy management structures, former Ward administrative boundaries and TAs, and be exacerbated by recent shifts in constitutional boundaries, especially where these units of governance do not fully correspond, or where how they might correspond is unclear. The Namibian Traditional Authorities Act (No. 25 of 2000) recognises ethnic difference and the specificities of cultural heritage, as well as the legitimacy of previous so-called “traditional” leadership structures,¹⁴⁹ whilst new conservancy institutional structures have been intended, rhetorically at least, to foster a modernising endeavour for “communal area dwellers” that nominally downplays cultural-ethnic difference. This postcolonial homogenising of cultural-ethnic identities and associated pasts and knowledges

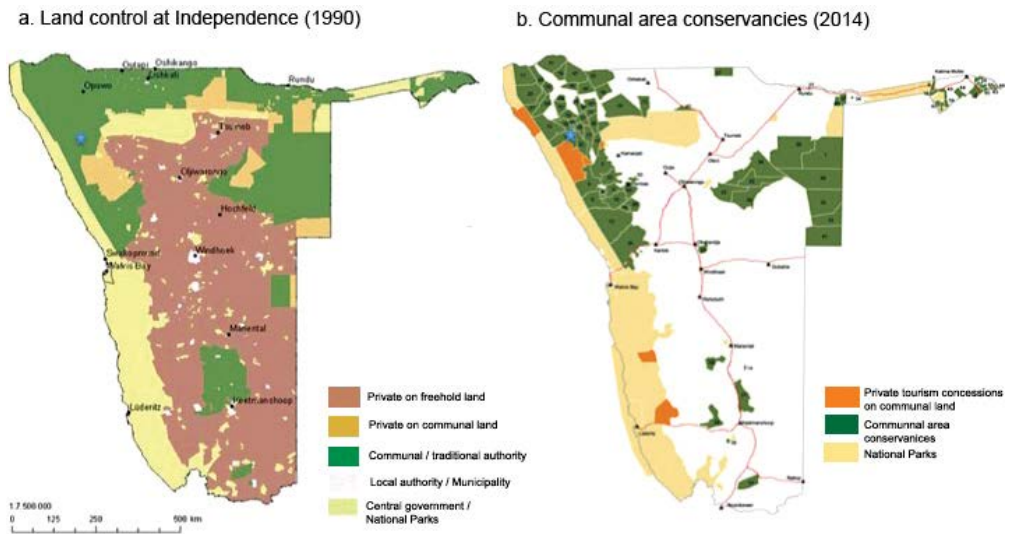
147 Jones, Brian T.B, ‘Community-Based Natural Resource Management in Botswana and Namibia: An Inventory and Preliminary Analysis of Progress’, *Evaluating Eden Series Discussion Paper 6*, International Institute for Environment and Development, London, 1999, p. 47.

148 For conservancies in the former “Damaraland”, see, for example, Sullivan, Sian: ‘The elephant in the room? Problematizing “new” (neoliberal) biodiversity conservation’, *Forum for Development Studies*, Vol. 33(1), 2006, pp. 105–135; Sullivan, Sian, ‘Dissonant sustainabilities? Politicising and psychologising antagonisms in the conservation-development nexus’, *Future Pasts Working Paper Series 5*, 2018 (<https://www.futurepasts.net/fpwp5-sullivan-2018>); Bollig, M., ‘Towards an Arid Eden? Boundary-Making, Governance and Benefit-sharing and the Political Ecology of the New Commons of Kunene Region, Northern Namibia’, *International Journal of the Commons*, Vol. 10.2, 2016, pp. 771–799; Schnegg, Michael & Richard D. Kiaka, ‘Subsidized elephants: community-based resource governance and environmental (in)justice in Namibia’, *Geoforum*, Vol. 93, 2018, pp. 105–115.

149 Hinz, M. & A. Gairiseb, ‘Customary Law Ascertained’, op. cit.

Figure 17a: Pattern of land control in Namibia showing areas under private and communal tenure (the pink and green coloured areas respectively)
 (Source: Adapted from ACACIA Project E1 2007 online: http://www.uni-koeln.de/sfb389/e/e1/download/atlas_namibia/pics/land_history/control-over-land.jpg)

Figure 17b: The area now administered as communal area conservancies (in green; the blue asterisk indicates the location of Sesfontein Conservancy)
 (Source: NACSO, Windhoek, online http://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Conservancies_A1.jpg)



may give an appearance of modernising away axes of difference, but it does not in itself succeed in removing power struggles based on these differences.¹⁵⁰

It is worth making this point in relation to conservancies in the former “homeland” of “Damaraland”. Here, anxieties over land rights are compounded by two further elements:

- concerns over pastoralists with relatively large cattle herds moving into conservancy areas that are also under varied TA jurisdictions, creating pressure on resources and generating experiences of displacement;¹⁵¹ and
- a lack of clarity regarding tenure and decision-making rights over high-value tourism and conservation-value landscapes in the area.

¹⁵⁰ Also Rapold, Christian J. & Thomas Widlok, ‘Dimensions of variability in Northern Khoekhoe language’, *Southern African Humanities*, Vol. 20, 2008, pp. 133–161, 135.

¹⁵¹ As noted elsewhere in the country – see Botelle, A. & R. Rohde, *Those Who Live on the Land: A Socio-economic Baseline Survey for Land Use Planning in the Communal Areas of Eastern Otjozondjupa (Land Use Planning Series Report No. 1)*, Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation, Windhoek, 1995; Harring, S. & W. Odendaal, ‘Our Land They Took’, op. cit.; Taylor, Julie J., *Naming the Land: San Identity and Community Conservation in Namibia’s West Caprivi*, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, Basel, 2012.

With regard to the latter, southern Kunene Region is currently the focus of re-energised thinking around transforming a large area into a “People’s Park” that moves towards linking the inland ENP with the Skeleton Coast Park via the valuable Palmwag Concession.¹⁵² The latter area is understood to have been allocated for conservation by the former Regional Authority for the “homeland” under the leadership of Gaob Justus ||Garoëb. Since 2012 the “concessionaire” has been understood to be the Big Three Trust formed by the neighbouring conservancies of Sesfontein, Anabeb and Torra, seen as able to enter into contracts with tourism operators in the concession. People locally in both conservancy and TA structures now have new questions regarding who has what rights to the Palmwag and other concession areas in southern Kunene, in relation to both new proposals for a “Kunene People’s Park” (or something along these lines) and a context wherein the 2007 National Policy on Tourism and Wildlife Concessions on State Land is currently being revised.

8 Review of reasons for a continuing discrimination against Damara / ǀNūkhoen in terms of their inclusion in discourses of indigeneity and marginalisation in Namibia

As noted in our introduction, Damara / ǀNūkhoen continue to be excluded from representations of Namibia’s indigenous and marginalised peoples, such as in the 2019 entry (and previous entries) for the Yearbook of the Indigenous Working Group on Indigenous Affairs.¹⁵³ We find this exclusion mystifying and hope that the material shared above clarifies both that Damara / ǀNūkhoen claims to indigeneity are justified, and that Damara / ǀNūkhoen and ||Ukun have been significantly marginalised through historical processes. In this brief final section, we consider a few reasons for this ongoing exclusion.

It seems to us that the ongoing exclusion of Damara / ǀNūkhoen is linked with deep-rooted prejudice that in many contexts continues to occlude and demote their perspectives, agency and concerns. Except for in the earliest historical texts, “Berg Damara” were consistently placed on the lowest rung of colonial racial hierarchies by multiple early writers, and often written about in strongly derogatory terms.¹⁵⁴ They were stripped by onlookers of their ability to speak their

152 Massyn, P.J., E. Humphrey & D. Grossman, *Tourism Scoping Report: Kunene People’s Park*, Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Windhoek, 2009; <http://www.nacso.org.na/news/2018/05/women-for-conservation-a-first-step-towards-africa-s-first-people-s-park>, last accessed 30 August 2019.

153 <https://www.iwgia.org/en/resources/yearbook>, last accessed 22 August 2019.

154 As discussed in Lau, B., ‘A Critique of the Historical Sources’, op. cit., p. 32, drawing on references therein.

own language, and viewed as people without agency who “lived mainly by serving others”.¹⁵⁵ These perspectives are repeated even in the most up-to-date analyses of genetic history, a recent one of which asserts that “it is reasonable to assume that the Damara, like the Tjimba, are a cattleless branch of the Himba/Herero who changed their original Herero language after entering into a subordinate, peripatetic-like relationship with the pastoral Nama”.¹⁵⁶ Such a conclusion seems to return understanding to colonial perspectives that have been discredited and discarded in historical, ethnographic and linguistic research (as cited above), and that conflicts sharply with Damara / ǀNūkhoen perspectives. It is in marked tension with what is known about Damara / ǀNūkhoen’s prior presence in areas independent of the historical reach of Nama, and begs questions of sampling strategies, decontextualised ethnic identifications of individuals, and reconstructed time-depths of genetic connections between “groups”. An additional issue is a legitimate practice in archaeology that refuses to ascribe researched material culture remains to contemporary peoples, thereby perhaps denying possible overlaps and connections between the ancestors of present peoples, and sites and artefacts that may overlap with what is understood about their pasts.

Added to this prejudicial mix is a view that Damara / ǀNūkhoen have allied themselves or sided with oppressor administrations, without considering contexts. For example, Okombahe “Berg-Damara” considered to have “remained neutral during the Herero rebellion” were disadvantaged through being disarmed and living in the shadow of German control through a military station at the reserve, where reportedly:

our customs and laws were over-ruled, and the soldiers at Okambahe became the real governors ... [o]ur people were flogged and beaten, and there were no courts to which they could go for justice.¹⁵⁷

The apparent decline by perhaps more than two-thirds in the Damara / ǀNūkhoen population during German rule speaks for itself. Today, Gaob Justus ||Garoëb is outspoken regarding the deprivations experienced by Damara during this period in the country’s history, and perceived discrimination in terms of the absence of formal apology, reparation and compensation.¹⁵⁸ More recently, Damara recruitment by the SADF as trackers during the war for independence (for example in Battalion 10, understood to have worked from Otjiwarongo, which recruited several Damara

155 Quoted in First, R., *South West Africa*, op. cit., p. 35.

156 Oliveira, Sandra, Anne-Maria Fehn, Teresa Aço et al., ‘The maternal genetic history of the Angolan Namib Desert: A key region for understanding the peopling of southern Africa’, *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 165(3), 2018 (<https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/162230v1.full>, last accessed 30 August 2019).

157 Simon Tsobasib, senior councillor and cousin of then Chief Judas Goresib, quoted in Union of South Africa, ‘Report on the Natives of South-West Africa’, op. cit., p. 109.

158 Miyanicwe, C., ‘ǀNūkhoen clan wants return’, op. cit.

men from Sesfontein), combined with persistent Damara / ǀNūkhoen political support for the UDF over SWAPO, perhaps lends itself to an attitude of distrust and even discrimination.¹⁵⁹ Conversely, a visibly strong and consolidated political leadership under the South African administration, combined with the fact that the current President of Namibia is Damara / ǀNūkhoen, can create the impression that Damara are far from marginalised.

Amidst this historical and present complexity, we hope to have demonstrated that Damara / ǀNūkhoen and ǁUbun achievements, adaptations and resilience in contemporary circumstances are both unevenly enjoyed and have been accomplished against a background of significant marginalisation and deprivation. Recognising Damara / ǀNūkhoen and ǁUbun presence and indigeneity, as well as their experiences of marginalisation through historical processes causing their loss of land and resources, is an important step towards fair redress.

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159 Cf. as documented for San former employees of the SADF, Harring, S. & W. Odendaal, 'Our Land They Took', op. cit.