

Densities of meaning in west Namibian landscapes: genealogies, ancestral agencies, and healing

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Introduction¹

This chapter draws on an oral history and cultural mapping project in west Namibia that has documented remembered former dwelling places, particularly in today's Sesfontein and Purros communal-area Conservancies and the Palmwag Tourism Concession (see Figure 1). The research draws into focus past practices of dwelling, mobility, livelihood and environmental perception amongst Khoekhoegowab²-speaking peoples who refer to themselves

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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 carried out with #Nūkhoe-Nama researcher Welhemina Suro Ganuses from Sesfontein / !Nani|aus. We have worked together on and off since meeting in 1994.
 - 2 Shortly after Namibia's independence in 1990, the glossonym (language name) and former endonym "Khoekhoegowab" was "officially reintroduced for the language that had become known as 'Nama' or 'Nama/Damara': Khoekhoegowab "is the sole surviving language of the Khoekhoe branch of the Khoe family", "a dialect continuum with Nama as southernmost and Damara, Hai||om and #Aakhoe as northernmost dialect clusters" (Haacke 2018: 133-134). Damara / #Nūkhoen (and small numbers of ||Ukun) are a proportion of the 11.8 percent of Namibia's population (244,769 of 2,066,389) recorded in 2010 as speaking "Nama/Damara" (ibid: 141-142, after Namibia Household Income & Expenditure Survey 2009/2010). Haacke suggests that this 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 percent, 27,764 speakers) (ibid: 141-142).

as Damara / ǀNūkhoen and ǁUbu³, who lived into at least the recent past as hunter-harvesters and small stock pastoralists throughout the wider west Namibian landscape.

A combination of historical factors cleared people from these lands, causing disruption to cultural, family and individual identities (see Sullivan/Ganuses 2020; Sullivan in press – we draw on both these texts in this chapter). Using a combination of methods – from recorded oral histories and musics associated with remembered sites, to logging mapped coordinates and associated information on google maps – this research aimed to (re)inscribe dimensions of cultural significance now occluded from maps of the area (see <https://www.futurepasts.net/maps-1>, last accessed August 10, 2020). The project has thereby made visible named places and other localities of significance not usually found on contemporary or historical maps, through working with people removed historically from large areas of land to which they formerly had access.

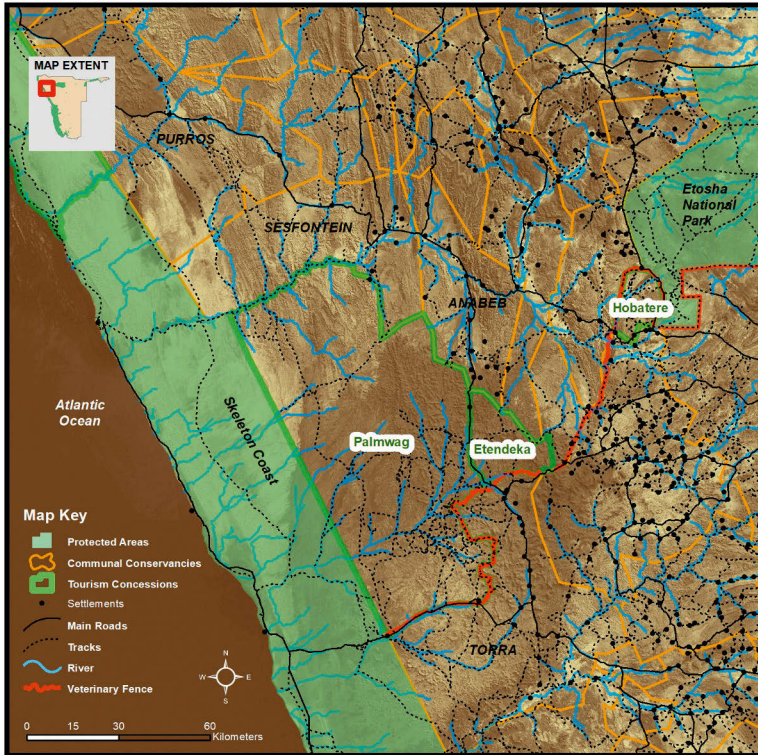
In this chapter we focus additionally on three dimensions that can be hard to make visible using conventional cartographic techniques:

1. the rhizomatically interwoven relationships between people, places and ancestors that on-site oral histories draw into focus as densely connected through past mobilities and genealogies;
2. the greeting practice *tsē-khom* that foregrounds the agentic presence of known ancestors and anonymous spirits of the dead associated with specific places and land areas;
- and 3. the remembered significance of *ǀgaidi* praise songs and *arudi* healing dances linked with former living sites (sing. ǁan-ǁhuib).

Shorthanded as genealogies, ancestral agencies, and song-dances connected with varied registers of healing, our aim is to explore the unanticipated and sometimes surprising appearance of these dimensions of significance, as they arose in our mapping research. Their apparent significance contributes to

3 Many of the Khoekhoegowab words in this chapter include the symbols ǀ, ǁ, ! and ǂ. These symbols indicate consonants that sound like clicks and which characterise the languages of Khoe and San peoples who live(d) throughout southern Africa. The sounds these symbols indicate are as follows: ǀ = the ‘tutting’ sound made by bringing the tongue softly down from behind front teeth (dental click); ǁ = the clucking sound familiar in urging on a horse (lateral click); ! = a popping sound like mimicking the pulling of a cork from a wine bottle (alveolar click); ǂ = a sharp, explosive click made as the tongue is flattened and then pulled back from the palate (palatal click).

Figure 1: Map showing the boundaries of current tourism concessions, surrounding communal area conservancies and state protected areas in southern Kunene Region, west Namibia (Source: Jeff Muntifering, October 2, 2019)



understanding of the detrimental cultural and livelihood effects of disrupting relationships people had with land areas from which they were removed (as also documented for Khoekhoegowab-speaking Hai||om by Dieckmann, this volume). We also share some of the attempted ways through which we have sought to convey the significance of these dimensions in representational terms.

Anthropologist Keith Basso writes in *Wisdom Sits in Places* (1996) that research that “maps from below” faces the challenge of how to represent layers of cultural significance entangled with land in a way that bridges gaps

between oral and written dimensions of this knowledge and experience. He asserts further that as places and their histories come into focus, the landscape starts to take on a “density of meaning” (ibid: 28). As highlighted in the introduction to this volume, such representational challenges come into even sharper focus when considering the range of agency enacting entities that may be salient for specific cultural contexts but that are other to, and othered by, the parameters of modern cartographic techniques and categories.

Damara / ǀNǀkhoen and ǁUubun, as well as those speaking Khoekhoegowab more generally (cf. Widlok (1999) and Dieckmann (2007) for Hai||om; Guenther (1999) for Naro), have framed, conceptualized and experienced land and the entities sustained thereby in terms and categories that sometimes exceed those tethered to conventional cartographic practices and their collusion with modern ideas of property and static representation (see e.g. Sullivan 1999, 2017a; Hannis/Sullivan 2018; Vermeylen, this volume). As theorized in the anthropology of landscapes more generally (Bender 1993; Tilley 1994; Ashmore/Knapp 1999; Ingold 2000; Bender/Winer 2001; Tilley/Cameron-Daum 2017), these ‘other’ (and othered) understandings and experiences arguably emerge for onlookers only when culture and land are perceived as mutually constitutive domains, produced in relation to lived and remembered practices and experiences (Sullivan in press). Such analyses point towards both contrary and competing “regimes of visibility” at work in the deployment of cartographic techniques of representation (Tsing 2005: 44; see also Harley 1988, 1992 and as discussed by Goldman, this volume), and to the density of known, used and remembered places in the broader landscape that can remain diminished and displaced in postcolonial contexts. Recovering and historicizing elements of this “density of meaning” for elderly Khoekhoegowab-speaking inhabitants in the geographical context of southern Kunene Region, north-west Namibia, combined with emplaced exploration of the three dimensions noted above, is the focus of the remainder of this chapter. We argue that bringing these ‘unmapped’ culturally dense dimensions more systemically into present management and investment choices, might be a route towards amplifying equitability and recognition for diverse pasts linked with the present high-value biodiversity conservation areas of west Namibia. First, however, and given the focus of this volume, we consider the term “hunter-gatherer” and its relevance (or otherwise) for the Khoekhoegowab-speaking peoples of west Namibia, combined with a historicized ‘positioning’ of the peoples forming the focus of the mapping research discussed below. We elaborate the latter in some detail because of an ongoing context wherein the autonomous pre-

colonial presence of Damara / ǀNūkhoen and ǁUbus is poorly recognized in archaeological, historical and anthropological discourse for Namibia.

Hunter-(herder-)harvesters of west Namibia?

We prefer the term “hunter-harvesters” instead of the more commonly used “hunter-gatherers” or “hunter-foragers”, to emphasize that past peoples of west Namibia engage(d) in ways of living involving active tending and management of species from which food and other items were procured, as well as the strategic mobilization of considered technical knowledge in the accessing, harvesting, preparation and *storage* of these items (Sullivan 1999; also discussion in Budack 1983: 2). Such knowledge, access and management practices were/are consciously intended to ensure abundance into the future, as well as to enable the storage of suitable food items (Sullivan 1999), rather than deployed in a reactive mode based on a more-or-less opportunistic encountering of items of utility whilst moving ‘in the field’. This perspective, then, is a departure from an “immediate returns” conception of a hunter-gatherer mode of subsistence (cf. Woodburn 1982) in favor of a mode of sustenance that acknowledges practices of care for both ancestral pasts and future socioecological abundance; combined with containment of the accumulative tendencies and inequalities fostered by ‘delayed returns’ economic practices and stockpiling (Skaanes, this volume, expresses similar concerns).

Although ecological circumstances were undoubtedly harsh and constrained at times, and as critiqued by anthropologists such as Sahlins (1972) and Clastres (2010 [1976]), it does not therefore follow that the hunter-herder-harvesters of west Namibia into the Namib desert sustained themselves through an ‘economy of poverty’ allowing them to barely assure society’s subsistence. Instead, and mirroring circumstances elsewhere, we might imagine combinations of autonomy, autarky and affective/symbolic affluence to have infused the guiding values and principles of west Namibian ‘social groups’ (Sullivan 2006 [2001]), prior to historical encounters with cattle pastoralists and mercantile and capitalist economies in which accumulation (including of livestock) and a monetary profit motive were/are made possible through being relatively decoupled from egalitarian societal constraint (Polanyi 2001 [1944]; also discussed in Sullivan et al. 2021).

Archaeological research in west Namibia stretching towards the Namib suggests multiple and patchy in-migration events introducing livestock and

associated symbolic and material culture (especially pottery) to the Namib (Sadr 2008), combined with indigenous dynamism and change incorporating new material and symbolic cultural elements (John Kinahan 2001[1991]). Material culture associated with the pastoral care of small stock from some 2,000BP⁴ is seen in these landscapes to have become an integral and functional part of subsistence strategies in which gathered foods and hunted fauna were/are also central. Pottery conventionally associated with herders thus becomes an innovation in the collection, storage and preparation of the flesh and seeds of *!nara* melons (*Acanthosicyos horridus*) in coastal sites (connected through mobility with sites inland), as well as the seeds of grasses and *Monsonia* species acquired from harvester ant nests at sites inland (John Kinahan, 2001 [1991]: 116, 125; 1993: 381-382). Such combinations of hunting-herding-harvesting have continued in west Namibia into contemporary times (Sullivan 1998, 2005) and are deeply and repeatedly invoked in on-site oral histories with elderly people at places of past dwelling (Sullivan et al. 2019).

Historicizing the presence of Khoekhoegowab-speaking peoples of west 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. (First 1968: 34)

The Damaras in the area have all been – the word was in quotes – ‘removed’ and herded into a Reserve somewhere, the entire population. ... Damaras? – talking about Klip Kaffirs, in the stony hills around the dry [Khan] river bed.

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- 4 Sheep remains found in Namib and pro-Namib sites have been dated to the first millennium, specifically 1550±50 BP at the Mirabib inselberg in the gravel plains of the Central Namib, where hair resembling that of fat-tailed sheep has been found (Sandelowsky 1977: 222, 255; Sandelowsky et al. 1979: 50; for early evidence of small-stock in Erongo and Brandberg sites, also see Wadley 1979: 13-14; John Kinahan 2001 [1991]: 35-36; Smith et al. 1996: 38). More recent archaeological research pushes back the patchy presence of livestock in south-western Africa: Caprinae (sheep and goat) teeth found at Leopard Cave, Erongo, are dated to between 2312-2042BP and the associated faunal assemblage indicates ‘that the inhabitants were hunting and consuming wild meat, such as birds, reptiles and antelopes [with]... limited exploitation of domesticated species, probably sheep’ (Pleurdeau et al. 2012: n.p.; see also Sadr 2008).

We used to come upon them when we were youngsters out hunting buck, though how a buck or a man survives in a place like that is a mystery. They are there like the stones – no, were there like stones, apparently they aren't anymore. (Gordimer 1974: 113-114)

As noted above, this chapter focuses on Khoekhoegowab-speaking peoples who refer to themselves as Damara / ǀNǀkhoe and ǁUbus. ǀNǀkhoe means literally “black” or “real” people and establishes a distinction 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 pastoralists for darker-skinned people generally, with ‘ra’ “referring to either third person feminine or common gender plural” (Haacke 2018: 140). Since Nama(qua) pastoralists were often those whom early European colonial travelers 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 cattle pastoralists described and racialized as dark-skinned and known as Herero (as, for example, in Alexander 2006 [1838]; Galton 1890 [1853]; Tindall 1959 [1839–55]). The terms “Hill Damaras” (“Berg-Dama” / “!hom Dama” / and the derogatory “Klip Kaffir”⁵), and “Plains Damaras” (or “Cattle Damara” / “Gomadama”), were used to distinguish contemporary Damara or ǀNǀkhoe (i.e. “Khoekhoegowab-speaking black-skinned people”) from speakers of the Bantu language Otjiherero.

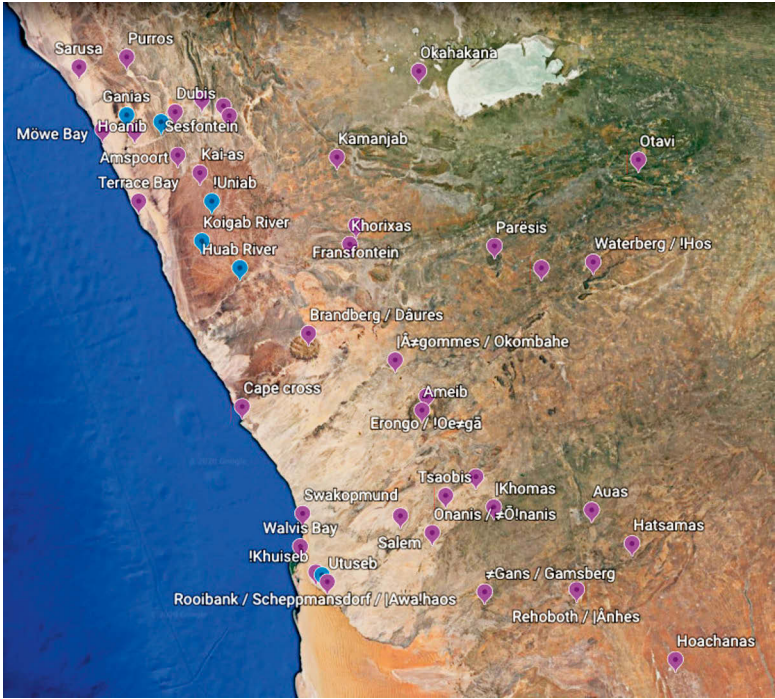
Khoekhoegowab-speaking ǁUbus currently living in Sesfontein and environs are sometimes referred to locally as “Nama” and at other times as “Bushmen”. A mythologized origin tale tells that they split from ǀAonin / “Topnaar Nama” at Utuseb in the !Khuiseb river valley (Figure 2 indicates the location of most of the places mentioned in this section), following a dispute in which a ǀAonin woman refused her sister the creamy milk (ǁham) that the latter desired.⁶ It seems possible that contemporary ǁUbus are descendants of a

5 After consideration we have elected to incorporate such terms that carry derogatory association *only* where their appearance in historical texts conveys information relevant for present understanding, for example, by clarifying the past presence of specific groups of people.

6 As related in multiple interviews and oral histories, for example, with Franz ǁHoëb (near ǀOs), April 6, 2014 and Emma Ganuses (!Nao-dâis), November 12, 2015.

“Topnaar group” called |Namixan, who in the 1800s under a “Chief †Gasoab, lived in the !Khuiseb but came into conflict with ... returning [Topnaar groups] !Gomen and Mu-|in”, causing the |Namixan to retreat northwards from the !Khuiseb (discussed in more detail below).

Figure 2: Map of places (purple markers) and rivers (blue markers) significant for Damara / †Nūkhoe and ||Ukun histories in west Namibia



It is impossible to know exactly the ethnicity or language of those whose activities in the drylands of west Namibia left the material remains surveyed and analyzed by archaeologists today. This situation is also amplified by the often simplifying maps of language and ethnic groups created for the territory under the various (neo)colonial regimes of the past 140 years. As the quotes opening this section suggest, the identity and presence of “Damara” in west Namibia is additionally cast by onlookers in mystery. What is known, however, is that written records by varied predominantly male European interlocutors

of the south-western areas of Africa tell of a diversity of encountered peoples speaking languages characterized by click consonants. From the 1600s, a series of ship's logs thus describe meetings with peoples along the coast whose sustenance was procured through combinations of fishing, *!nara* preparation, storage and consumption, and the herding of small and large stock connected with pastures inland (John Kinahan 2001 [1991]; Jill Kinahan 1990, 2000). Late 1700s texts also tell of encounters with peoples described as 'dark-skinned' who, with Nama, Oorlam Nama⁷ and Hai||om, spoke Khoekhoegowab and were similarly observed as engaging in a diversity of livelihood-procuring practices. In the remainder of this section we trace in some detail historical references to the ancestors of those who prefer to refer to themselves as *ǀNǀukhoen* specifically. Whilst this history of past presence is important in terms of contextualizing our mapping research below we acknowledge that it is also quite dense especially for readers not familiar with Khoekhoegowab terms, who may wish to skip this detail and proceed straight to page 152.

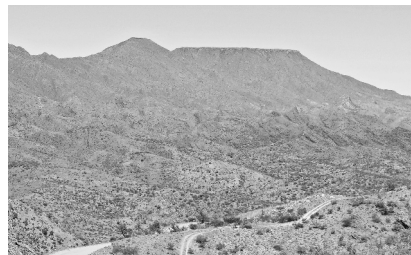
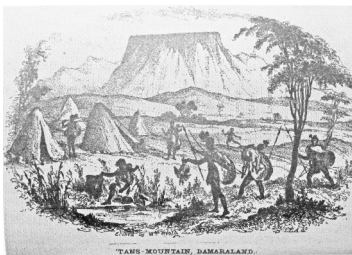
The earliest written mention of those apparently later known as "Berg-Damara" / *ǀNǀukhoen* appears to be in the 1778–79 journal of Hendrik Jacob Wikar, a Gothenberg-born Swede who travelled along the Orange River after deserting from the Dutch East India Company operating from Cape Town, before being pardoned in 1779 (Mossop 1935: 3–4). Wikar learned of different "Dama" groups interacting with Nama, described as "of a darker complexion than the Namacguas". They lived near the coast and in mountainous areas near the Kai||khaun ("Keykoa") / Rooinasie / "Red Nation" 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 favorable terms, acted as "middlemen" in cattle trade between the eastern "Bechuana" and the

7 Oorlam Nama are described as '[b]eing of mixed Khoesan and slave descent, acculturated to the Dutch settler way of life, and having horses, guns, and the Bible' (Jill Kinahan 2017: 303 after Penn 2005: 200, 217; also see especially Lau 1987a). From the mid- to late 1700s, and as the frontier of the Cape Colony expanded northwards, they increasingly moved north across the Orange River (!Gariëb) to become established and entangled with Nama lineages in 'Great Namaqualand'.

Kai||khaun, were apparently feared magicians, and resisted allegiance to the chief of the Kai||khaun (Wikar in Mossop 1935: 29, 75–81).

In 1836–37, travelling north from Nanebis in the south of present-day Namibia to the !Khuiseb river, the British Captain James Edward Alexander encountered so-called “Hill Damara”, stating that they “are a numerous nation, extending [southwards] from the heights south of the Swakop to the Little Koanquip [Konkiep] river ... in small communities under head men” (2006 [1838]: 135–136). At “Tans mountain” (ǀGans, now called “Gamsberg”, located in the upper !Khuiseb), he wrote of “Hill Damara” living apparently autonomously in the foothills (see Figure 3). They carried bows, spears and the spoils of hunting, their dwellings contained conical clay pots “in every hut”, and Alexander noted their dances and healing practices, observing that the men dance “with springbok horns bound on their foreheads” (ibid: 135–138). It is tempting to consider that the peoples Alexander encountered were associated with Headman (*Gaob*) Abraham ||Guruseb (‘Seibeb’ in Hinz/Gairiseb 2013: 186) (preceded by Kai Gaob !Gausib ||Guruseb), understood to have been head of a community at ǀGans from ca. 1812–65, before moving to |Âǀgommes (Okombahe) (Haacke 2010: 23).

Figure 3a: “Hill Damara” village in foothills of the table-topped “Tans [ǀGans] Mountain”, as sketched for the 1830s narrative by British Captain James Edward Alexander; Figure 3b: The commercial, freehold Gamsberg farming area as it is today (Photo: Sian Sullivan, March 8, 2014)



A “Bergdama” is amongst those baptized by Missionary Scheppman at Roobank (Scheppmannsdorf / |Awa-!haos) on the !Khuiseb in 1846 (Köhler 1969: 107), and around this time British mercantile explorer Captain William Messem encounters “a tribe of Berg Damaras” at a “high mountain” inland from Cape Cross, with “water, and plenty of goats, but no cattle” (1855: 211).

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 (ǀŌ!nanis – Lau 1987b: 18) and Tsaobis (Andersson 1861: 89), where in the 1890s German Schutztruppe officer Hugo von François (1896) photographs a “Bergdamara” village and hut (Figures 4a and b), as well as a Schutztruppe target practice (Figure 4c). Galton (1890 [1853]: 30) describes Berg Damara living in mountainous localities such as Erongo (!Oeǃgā), Brandberg (Dâures), Auas, |Khomas, Parësis and Otavi (“cattle Damara”, i.e. Herero, having taken space on the plains). Guided 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 (ibid: 59, 63).

Figure 4: Plates of Tsaobis under German colonial occupation: a. ‘Bergdamara village’; b. ‘Bergdama hut’; c. Schutztruppe military exercise (Source: Von François 1896: 293, 299, 133, out of copyright originals held at British Library and available on Wikimedia)



An 1864 Rhenish Mission Society Chronicle of Otjimbingwe records that “Bergdama” and “Bushmen” were living in the Sesfontein area when the |Uixamab !Gomen (“Topnaar”) and later Swartbooi Oorlam Nama lineages consolidated there from around the 1860s, in part to escape escalating Herero–Nama conflict in central parts of the territory (Köhler 1969: 111).⁸

8 Swartbooi Nama were defeated in these struggles and forced to leave |Ānhes / 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 the Herero leader Kamaherero. This experience sped up their retreat along the !Khuiseb, from where they settled at Salem on the Swakop River; then mov-

The American trader Gerald McKiernan met “Berg-Damara” living at the Waterberg (!Hob, Omuvereoom) in 1875 (Serton 1954: 67), and Missionary Büttner 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” (Büttner 1879: 286). In 1918, Damara Chief Judas Goresib (||Guruseb?) 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] ...” (Union of South Africa 1918: 104). 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 Okahakana (Rudner/Rudner 1974 [1899]) (see Figure 5a). To the right of Figure 5a can be seen oblong wooden bowls used especially for making and sharing *sâu* beer⁹, as recently demonstrated to us by Jacobus ||Hoëb of the Hoanib Cultural Group, Sesfontein¹⁰. These bowls appear identical to a bowl found in the area of Onanis (≠O!nanis) in the Swakop river catchment (see Figure 5b) where “Hill Dama” had been settled at the time of Galton and Andersson’s visit in 1850.

From 1866, under the Chieftainship of Abraham Goresib (? , ||Guruseb – see above), many “Berg-Damara” became consolidated at Okombahe / Âṣgommes. 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”¹¹ of wheat were harvested, “the greater part of which was sold for more than 40 shillings a muid, being also a provident

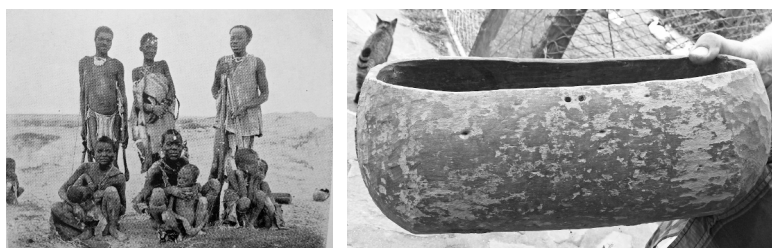
ing towards Fransfontein and Sesfontein where they settled, via Ameib in the Erongo mountains, finding !Oeꞓgā “Bergdama” there, some of whom also subsequently moved north, both with the Swartbooi and independently (see Lau 1987b: 100, 104; Wallace 2011: 61). These treks to the north-west by !Oeꞓgā Dama have also been reconstructed through multiple interviews with Elizabeth Ge !Nabasen Tauros and her daughter Julia Tauros of the ‘Puros Dama’ family now living in Sesfontein. !Oeꞓgā is the Damara / ꞤNǃkhoe name for the Erongo mountains.

9 Made from *Stipagrostis* spp. grass seeds (*sâun*) collected from harvester ants nests and
honey (*danib*) (described fully in Sullivan 1999).

10 At a performance by Sesfontein's Hoanib Cultural Group, Kai-as, May 23, 2019.

11 A *muid* consisted of around three bushels, see <https://dsae.co.za/entry/muid/e05002> (last accessed June 6, 2020).

*Figure 5a: “Bergdama” group encountered in 1896 at Okahakana, 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 (sâun) and honey (danib) (Source: scan from Rudner and Rudner [Möller] 1974 [1899], opp. p. 147); Figure 5b: Wooden bowl bearing close resemblance to those to the right of Fig. 5a, found cached in a rock crevice in the vicinity of Onanis / ǀǀnani (Photo: Sian Sullivan, April 3, 2018)*



people ... fast becoming rich in cattle and goats” (Palgrave 1877 quoted in Union of South Africa 1918: 105-106).

In seeking deposits of guano in association with lucrative British trading interests in this fertilizer, George Elers in 1906 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” (quoted in Jacobson/Noli 1987: 173). On the coast near the Hoanib mouth Elers 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” (ibid.). 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” (ibid.). 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

or also ||Ubu) returning from “Uniab-Mund”.¹² In 1917, the First Resident Commissioner for Ovamboland, Major Charles N. Manning, encountered people he refers to as “Klip Kaffirs” at Kowareb, Sesfontein and north-west of Sesfontein along the Hoanib and Hoarusib rivers.¹³ In 1946, a settler farmer, David Levin, looking for grazing in the area of Twyfelfontein / |Ui-||aes, found a Damara / ǀNūkhoen family living there who regularly moved for grazing between “Gwarab” (Kowareb, south-east of Sesfontein), Grootberg and |Ui-||aes (Levin/Goldbeck 2013: 17).

Of note in these 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” (RMS Berichte 1849, quoted in Lau 1979: 31-32), as well as keeping goats and sheep (Andersson 1861: 300) and sometimes cattle (Lau 1979: 31). 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” (Lau 1979: 50, 211, Appendix 3; also Gürich 1891: 138). Most communities also “grew tobacco, processed it, and traded it with Nama, Herero and Ovambo” (Lau 1979: 13), copper smelting was undertaken in central and southern Namibia (Kinahan 1980), a wide variety of plants and invertebrates were sources of food and medicines (Sullivan 1998 and references therein), and wooden bowls and ceramic containers were made for storing and cooking foods (Du Pisani/Jacobson 1985).¹⁴

Historical encounters and mentions such as those described above are mapped in more detail online at <https://www.futurepasts.net/historical-refe>

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- 12 NAN.A.327 Krause and Kuntz, Kuntz 25/8/1910, report to the Kaoko Land und Minengesellschaft.
 - 13 Manning Report, ADM 156 W 32 National Archives of Namibia, 1917, p. 6 and *Traveller's Map of Kaokoveld*. Manning did not travel south of Sesfontein so his report is unable to provide information about this more southerly area.
 - 14 The making and use of black clay pots called !nomsus have been recalled in several oral histories. Michael |Amigu Ganaseb (Purros), 13 April 2015, described cooking mussels in black pots in his early life in the northern Namib, and a ||Ubu man Franz |Haen ||Hoëb (Sesfontein), 4 April 2019, demonstrated to us how such pots were made in the past.

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 localities of past presence of those identified as Damara / ǀNǀkhoen.

Displacement

Damara / ǀNǀkhoen and ǁUubun now have access to only a small part of these formerly occupied land areas. Displaced in the 1800s as 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, and later as British and German colonial interests increasingly appropriated land in the southern and central parts of the country, Damara / ǀNǀkhoen were squeezed into a handful of ‘native reserve’ areas: mainly around Sesfontein and Fransfontein in the north, and Okombahe and Windhoek in the south (for detail on the multiple historical displacements affecting Damara / ǀNǀkhoen and ǁUubun, see Sullivan 1996; Sullivan/Ganuses 2020). Sesfontein and environs, positioned north of the veterinary cordon or “Red Line” that once marked the extent of colonial control, escaped the fenced alienation of land into surveyed and settled farms (see Figure 1 for the current position of the vet fence), permitting to a greater extent the dynamic sustenance of socialized land relationships and mobility practices into recent decades and remembered pasts. Nonetheless, these and other areas of the north-west forming the focus of this chapter have also been impacted by several layers of land reorganization. Clarification of these experiences can make more visible some of the ‘gaps’ – or perhaps more correctly ‘aporia’ or ‘blindspots’ – in many normalized narratives and cartographic representations regarding Namibia’s north-west (cf. Harley 1992, drawing on concepts developed by Jacques Derrida).

In early decades of the twentieth century, for example, a livestock-free zone north of the “Red Line” veterinary cordon 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 (Miescher 2012)¹⁵. Africans including

15 As also occurred in other parts of the country. In the 1930s, for example, West Caprivi in the north-east of the country was similarly designated a livestock free zone, resulting

“Berg Damara” were repeatedly and forcibly moved out of the western 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 (ibid: 154; SWAA 1930: 14). Some years later, an Agricultural Officer Inspection report for the Kaokoveld 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”.¹⁶ Moments of this clearance process are vividly remembered by elderly informants in the present. At the waterhole of ǀKhabaka in the present-day Palmwag Tourism Concession (see Figure 1), Ruben Sanib thus recalled his experience of being evicted from the formerly large settlement of Gomagorra in Aogubus (see Figure 7), now also in the Palmwag Concession. This eviction 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 ǀAo-daos (see below):

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 Tšabididi [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, see below] 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 |Guigomabi-!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 Tšabididi]. Some of Sabuemib's cattle were killed in this way.¹⁷

in relocation outwards of Bantu language-speaking agropastoralists living in the area at the time (Paksi 2020: 24 after Boden 2014).

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

17 Ruben Sauneib Sanib (ǀKhabaka), November 20, 2014. This process and experience of eviction is similar to the evictions of Khoekhoegowab-speaking Hai||om and their

In the 1950s, relief grazing and farm tenancies were made available in this north-western area to Afrikaans livestock farmers under Namibia's South African administration (Kambatuku 1996), who were thereby able to gain from the prior clearances of local peoples. These newly surveyed farms later comprised relief grazing areas for settler farmers, and overlapped with former Damara / ǀNūkhoen living places (sing. ||an||huib). The settlement of Soaub, for example, formerly under the leadership of a man called !Abudoeb and the place where the ||Khao-a Dama man Aukhoeb |Awiseb (maternal grand-father of Ruben Sanib mentioned above) is buried (see Figure 7 and genealogy in Figure 13 below), is located in what became Farm Rooiplaat 710 (ibid: v).

Figure 7: Ruben Sauneib Sanib sits at Aukhoeb's grave at the former living place of Soaub (Photo: Sian Sullivan, May 15, 2019)



From 1950 onwards, several diamond mines were established in the northern Namib, at Möwe Bay, Terrace Bay, Toscanini and Sarusa (Mansfield 2006), making this territory a “restricted access area”. This is a remembered process

livestock from the then Game Reserve No. 2 (now Etosha National Park) in 1954, carried out by the Native Commissioner of Ovamboland (Mr Eedes) under the direction of P.A. Schoeman, the Chief Native Commissioner based in Windhoek (as documented in Dieckmann 2007: 191).

that displaced especially ||Ubu living and moving in this far-westerly area, as well as offering new employment opportunities in the mines thereby established. 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 south (Tinley 1971) (see Figure 8), briefly conjuring the landscapes between the Hoanib and Ugab rivers as a formally protected conservation area.

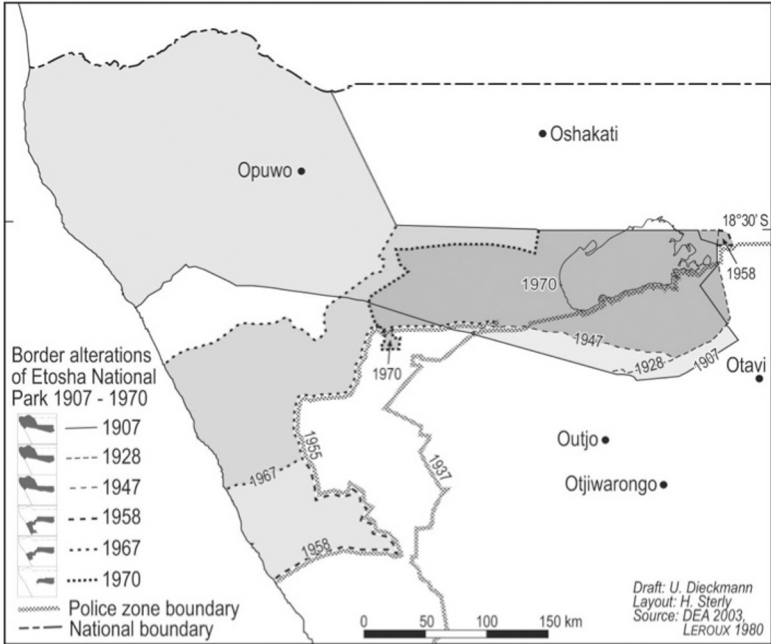
In sum, these overlapping processes particularly affected the land areas (!hūs) known as ǀKhari Hurubes, !Nau Hurubes,¹⁸ Aogubus, and Namib (see below), where a number of Damara / ǀNūkhoe and ||Ubu families recall living in the past at specific places where their family members are buried. ||Khao-a Dama of ǀKhari Hurubes and Aogubu Dama of Aogubus mostly became consolidated in the northern settlements of Sesfontein / !Nani|aus, Anabeb, Warmquelle and Kowareb. Dāure-Dama of the more southerly !Nau Hurubes mostly became concentrated in the vicinity of the Ugab River and the associated former Okombahe Reserve. The broader geographical area that experienced these historical shifts is the focus of research drawn on in the remainder of this chapter, set in an understanding that the close relationships with places and broader landscapes recounted below are likely to have once been relevant for the much wider area of Damara / ǀNūkhoe historical habitation indicated above and in Figure 6.

‘Unmappable’ dimensions of Damara / ǀNūkhoe and ||Ubu relationships with land in west Namibia

The contexts and observations outlined above complexify the category ‘hunter-gatherer’, whilst also affirming the past significance of both ‘hunting’ and ‘gathering’ as Damara / ǀNūkhoe and ||Ubu food-acquiring practices, together with the conceptual and symbolic registers with which these practices might be accompanied and informed. The historical background is also suggestive of past circumstances of relative autonomy that have become progressively constrained and disrupted in the years since. Historical forces

18 Also ‘||Hurubes’ (Hinz/Gairiseb 2013: 186).

Figure 8: The shifting boundaries of Game Reserve No. 2 / ENP, 1907–1970 (Source: Dieckmann 2007: 76, reproduced with permission)



and events privileging epistemologies and ontologies of representation associated with colonial and apartheid statecraft have thus conspired to make certain presences and relationships more-or-less ‘unmappable’ in the present (as considered in more detail in Sullivan/Ganuses 2020; Sullivan in press). What is able to be mapped today are the traces remaining in a history severely constrained by land appropriations serviced and supported by cartographic land-claiming techniques, combined with normalized categories of mapping in the present that are exceeded by many dimensions of experience, meaning and value (see also Pearce, this volume). How, then, might the ‘unmappable’ be mapped in this context? We respond to this question with reference to three interconnected and variously emplaced dimensions: genealogies, ancestral agencies, and song-dances associated with varied registers of healing.

For all these dimensions, their significance has in fact emerged through research practices associated with mapping. Specifically, multiple recorded oral accounts have been gathered during a series of multi-day journeys with elderly Damara / ǀNǀkhoe and ǁUubun individuals currently living in the settlements of Sesfontein / !Nani|aus and Kowareb, see Table 1. These journeys, undertaken in 2014, 2015 and 2019, constituted a process of (re)finding, and recording coordinates and information for, places mentioned in prior interviews as where an array of now elderly people used to live. For the reasons mentioned above, they have focused particularly (but not exclusively) on the area now designated as the Palmwag Tourism Concession (see Figure 1). This method of 'on-site oral history' led by research participants constitutes what anthropologist Anna Tsing (2014: 13) describes as 'historical retracing': 'walking the tracks of the past even in the present' to draw out 'the erasure of earlier histories in assessments of the present [thus] infilling the present with the traces of earlier interactions and events' (also Sullivan 2017a, in press). Such documentation can draw into the open occluded and alternative knowledges, practices and experiences that continue to 'haunt' the present despite their diminution through various historical processes (Bird Rose 1991; Bell 1993[1983]; Basso 1996; Tsing 2005: 81; De Certeau 2010: 24).

Table 1: Journeys forming the basis for on-site oral histories in the broader landscape with elderly Khoekhoegowab-speaking inhabitants of Sesfontein and Anabeb Conser-vancies.

Date	Name	Ethnonym	Focal Places
27-281014 & 20-231114	Ruben Sauneib Sanib, Sophia Opi Awises	Khao-a Dama, Ubun	Kowareb, Mbakondja, Top Barab, Kai-as
17-190215	Ruben Sauneib Sanib	Khao-a Dama	Kowareb, Kai-as, Hunkab, Sesfontein
21-220215	Ruben Sauneib Sanib	Khao-a Dama	West of Tsaqididi, ‡Khari Soso, Aogu gams, Bukuba-‡noahes, Huom
07-100315	Ruben Sauneib Sanib	Khao-a Dama	Sixori, Oruvao/ Guru-Tsaub, Sanibe- gams
07-091115	Ruben Sauneib Sanib, Sophia Opi Awises	Khao-a Dama, Ubun	Kowareb, Khao-as, Soaub (Desert Rhino Camp area)
13-141115	Christophine Daumû Tauros, Michael Amigu Ganaseb	!Narenin Hoanidaman / Ubun	Sesfontein, Purros, Hoanib
20-261115	Franz Hoëb, Noag Ganaseb	Ubun	Sesfontein, Hoanib, coast, Kai-as
05-090519	Franz Hoëb	Ubun	Sesfontein, !Uniab mouth, Hûnkab, Mudorib, Oeb, Hoanib
12-150519	Ruben Sauneib Sanib	Khao-a Dama	Sesfontein, Gomagorras, Nobarab, Khao-as, Soaub
17-200519	Julia Tauros	Purros Dama	Sesfontein - Purros
22-240519	Hoanib Cultural Group, Sesfontein (n = 18, + 7 facilitators)	Multiple	Kai-as

The iteratively updated mapped dataset of named springs, former dwelling places, graves and landscape features recorded through this re-search, combined with stories, memories, genealogies and images is located

online at <https://www.futurepasts.net/cultural-landscapes-mapping> (last accessed August 5, 2020) (see Figure 9). In this dataset, detailed descriptive place names (toponyms) speak of acute observation of biophysical characteristics of the landscape (cf. Basso 1984, 1996). Identification of people and events with particular places, tells of the remembered emplacement of defining moments in local history. Memories of places that have been home, communicate the loss of both pasts and futures that comes from being unexpectedly displaced through historical forces not of one's choosing (Jedlowski 2001; see also Albrecht 2007). This 'counter-mapping' research has formed the basis for reporting to the Namidaman Traditional Authority (TA) (Sullivan et al. 2019) and has been submitted as part of this TA's submission to the Ancestral Land Commission established by the Namibian government in 2019 (Tjitemisa 2019). As reported elsewhere in this volume (for example, in the chapters by Brody, Dieckmann, Vermeylen) there is thus the possibility for legal agency to be performed through such 'counter-mapping' practices, although the full possible scope of such agency has yet to be seen in this case.

These journeys with now elderly people to find remembered places were themselves partly a response to learning (in the 1990s) of a series of named places that tend not to appear on mapped representations of the area. This iterative mapping process has itself generated new understanding regarding a different set of concerns, as we now outline.

1. Genealogies, identity and belonging

Field research in the Sesfontein area of north-west Namibia beyond the "Red Line", where Damara / ǀNūkhoen and ǁUbun have retained some continuity of habitation for at least several generations, has helped clarify relationships of belonging linking familial groups (*!haoti*) with named areas of land (*!hūs*) – termed "local-incorporative units" by anthropologist Alan Barnard (1992: 203). We elaborate this first 'dimension' of experience at some length to illustrate both the different conceptions of land and identity at play here, and the intimate realities of past lived experiences of these areas shared by our interlocutors and their families (see also Sullivan/Ganuses 2020; Sullivan in press).

Some time ago, the late headman of Kowareb, Andreas !Kharuxab, explained to us that 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 !Uṣgab River we refer to that area as |Awan !Huba, i.e. “Red Ground”. *Every area has got its names.*¹⁹

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*).²⁰

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.²¹

!Narenin were living in the western areas of Hoanib and Hoarusib. Where we were just now [i.e. Hūnkab area] was ||Ubun land. ||Ubu people were living in the places close to the ocean like Hūnkab, !Uniab, |Garis, Xūxūes. Those are the areas of *Huri-daman* ||Ubun di !huba [lit. the ‘Sea-Dama (referring to !Narenin, see below) and ||Ubun land’].²²

Dynamic relationship with a lineage-associated land areas (sing. !hūs) is further reflected in the location and orientation of families in larger settlements, and the directions in which people travel when venturing into the !garob to herd livestock, gather foods and other items, and previously to hunt. Figure 10 shows named land areas (sing. !hūs) for a series of !haoti in north-west Namibia who have been associated with these areas for at least several generations such that, despite recent restrictions on access, some claims for con-

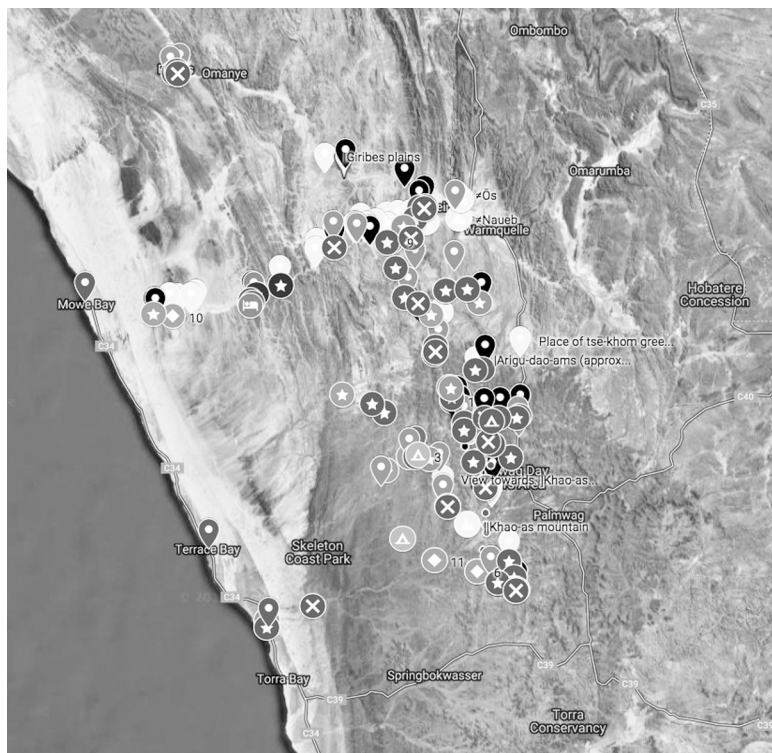
19 Andreas !Kharuxab (Kowareb), May 13, 1999, see also Sullivan 2003, in press.

20 Andreas !Kharuxab (Kowareb), May 13, 1999. (Nb. ‘Dâures’ is the Khoekhoegowab name for the Brandberg massif).

21 Philippine |Hairo ||Nowaxas (Sesfontein), April 15, 1999.

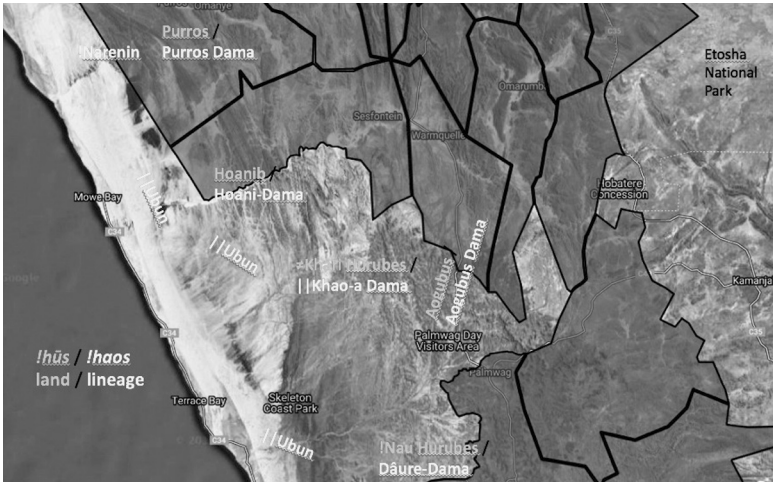
22 Ruben Sauneib Sanib (|Awagu-dao-am), April 19, 2015.

Figure 9: Screenshot of online map indicated former ||an-||huib (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)



tinuous habitation can be made. Oral histories clarify these !haos / !hūs relationships and interactions over the last few generations, as outlined below for !Narenin, ||Ukun and ||Khao-a Dama. In southern Kunene, these different groupings are now categorized under the broader linguistic, lineage, and land-based grouping of *Namidaman* and represented by the Namidaman Traditional Authority (TA).

Figure 10: Named land areas (sing. *!hūs*) as dynamically known in recent generations by Damara / *ǀNūkhoen* and *||Ukun* inhabitants of present-day conservancies in southern Kunene (shaded) (Source: fieldnotes and on-site oral histories)



!Narenin are Damara / *ǀNūkhoen* 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 the flesh and seeds of *!nara*, hence their ethnonym (Sullivan et al. 2021). They harvested *!nara* from the Hoarusib River and from near Dumita (towards the mouth of the Hoarusib), Gantias and Sarusa springs²³:

... my great, great-grandfathers and mothers were there at Sarusa, and I was born here [in Hoanib] at *ǀHoadi* *||gams*.²⁴

... 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.²⁵

23 Reportedly the *ǀAonin* of the *!Khuseb* 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 (Budack 1977: 2).
 24 Christophine Daumū Tauros (Purros), November 13, 2015.
 25 Hildegaard *||Nuas* (Sesfontein), April 6, 2014.

... they would move in between the Hoarusib and Hoanib. In Hoanib in the rain time they came here to collect food, especially *¶ares*²⁶ and *¶namib*²⁷ – 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*].²⁸

The *!Narenin* people were the people living next to the ocean [i.e. “Huri-dama”, see above]. And when the *!naras* is ripe then they go to the ocean side of the *!naras* and then they stay there, and when they are finished with the *!naras* it's now the *xori*-time, and the *xoris*²⁹ 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.³⁰

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*,³¹ like that. So they were moving from place to place because of the *sâu* and *bosû*³² – when it's now the time of the *sâu* and *bosû* they came to *||Gams* [Amspoort], and Dubis and *|Aub* [all are places along the Hoanib

26 i.e. Grass seeds from *Setaria verticillata* collected from underneath especially *Acacia tortilis* trees. Nb. Manning reports so-called “Klip Kaffirs”, i.e. “Berg Damara” harvesting these seeds in the Hoarusib river on his *Traveller's Map of Kaokoveld* compiled from journeys in 1917 and 1919 (National Archives of Namibia).

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

28 Eva *|Habuhe* Ganuses, née *¶Gawuses* (Sesfontein), 1995.

29 Fruits of *Salvadora persica*.

30 Christophine Daumû Tauros and Michael *|Amigu* Ganaseb (Purros), November 13, 2015.

31 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.

32 Seeds of *Monsonia* spp. (usually *M. umbellata*) collected from harvester ants’ nests (see Sullivan 1999).

River] – those are the places where they stayed because of *sâu* and *bosû*. So at the *!nara* time then they go back to *!Ui||gams*.³³

As noted above, *||Ukun* are a Khoekhoegowab-speaking people sometimes referred to locally as “Nama” and at other times as “Bushmen”, who “a long time ago” split from peoples living along the *!Khuiseb*. They are likely to be amongst those coastal peoples associated with the term “Strandloper” in historical texts. As noted above, it seems probable that contemporary *||Ukun* are descendants of a “Topnaar group” called *|Namixan*, who in the 1800s under their “Chief **Gasoab*, lived in the *!Khuiseb*”, coming into conflict with “Topnaar” groups called *!Gomen* and *Mu-||in*, a conflict that continued “between **Gasoab*’s successor, *Chief *Hieb*, and Chief *Khaxab* of the *Mu-||in*” (Vigne 1994: 8, emphasis added³⁴). The *|Namixan* reportedly withdrew “to the sea-coast” from where “Chief **Hieb* and two companions travelled secretly to Rooibank [in the lower *!Khuiseb*] to look for any of his people left there”; being “surprised at a *Mu-||in* werf [settlement] by a commando which attacked from the dunes rather than approaching them along the river, killing Chief

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- 33 Christophine Daumû Tauros and Michael |Amigu Ganaseb (Purros), November 13, 2015.
- 34 Drawing on an archived late 1800s statement by Piet *!Haibeb*, son of *Mu-||in* “Topnaar” leader Frederick *Khaxab*, to an agent of German colonial settler Adolf Lüderitz. Further indicating the fluidity and dynamism of pre-colonial circumstances, the “Topnaar” captain *Khaxab* is described as having migrated from *Kaokoveld* around 1820–30 (or perhaps several decades earlier, according to Köhler 1969: 106) via the *Swakop* mouth, and then to the place “**Kisa-||guwus* commonly known as *Kuwis* or *Sandfontein*, located about three miles from the coast and settled south of what is now *Walvis Bay*” (Köhler 1969: 106). In the 1840s, *Khaxab* enters into an alliance with the *Oorlam* Nama captain *Jonker Afrikaner* “who became overlord of the Topnaar and appointed them his agents to sell cattle for arms”, placing *Jonker* in control of the trade route between *Walvis Bay* and *Lake Ngami* in present-day *Botswana*, from which *Oorlam* Nama levy heavy tolls over the next 30 years (Jill Kinahan 2017: 303 after Vigne 1994: 7). When Missionary Schepmann arrived at *Rooibank* on the *!Khuiseb* in December 1845, “Captain *Frederik Khaxab* was Oberhaupt of Topnaar. He lived in **Kisa-||guwus*, also called *Sandfontein* or *Sand Fountain*, where a spring was present” (Köhler 1969: 108). In 1850, *Fredrick Khaxab* is again mentioned in accounts by *Galton* (British) and *Andersson* (Anglo-Swede) as they prepared for their journey inland from *Walvis Bay*. He and his small community at **Kisa-||guwus* occasionally brought them “some milk and a few goats, as a supply for the larder, in exchange for which they received old soldiers’ coats (worth sixpence a-piece), handkerchiefs, hats, tobacco, and a variety of other trifling articles” (Andersson 1861: 21–23).

‡Hieb and his companions” (Vigne 1994: 8). The |Namixan were again led away from the !Khuseb “*under Chief ‡Hieb’s son*” (ibid., emphasis added).

Given known naming practices in which sons of especially lineage leaders may be named after their fathers, the possibility exists that “Chief ‡Hieb’s son” here is the maternal grand-father ‡Gîeb remembered and described to us by the elderly ||Ubu man Franz ||Hoëb. Franz was born at the !nara fields near Auses / !Ui||gams waterhole in the lower Hoanib river and now lives in Sesfontein / !Nani|aus. ‡Gîeb was his maternal grandfather, alive at a time when Franz’s family were harvesting !nara in the lower Hoanib and moving between !nara fields in the !Uniab and Hoanib via Kai-as (see below). ‡Gîeb’s grave is next to a former dwelling site called Daniro on the banks of the !Uniab, where ‡Gîeb and others first encountered German men, described to Franz as being the first occasion when these ||Ubun had seen white men and encountered food in tins. This encounter was perhaps with the 1896 journey by Ludwig von Estorff which finds “deserted, circular reed huts at the Uniab River mouth” and on return a month later encounters 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/Noli 1987: 174).

In May 2019, Franz led us to the grave of his grand-father ‡Gîeb in the lower !Uniab river, located exactly as he had described in numerous prior interactions, in the present-day Skeleton Coast National Park (see Figure 11).

The story goes that when those who became known as ||Ubun travelled 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 (Sullivan et al. 2020).³⁵ ||Ubun would move between !nara fields in the !Uniab and Hoanib river mouths via Kai-as and Hûnkab springs, now in the Palmwag Tourism Concession.³⁶ ||Ubun also stayed at Dumita where there is a fountain,³⁷ and are considered to be:

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- 35 Hildegart |Nuas (Sesfontein), April 6, 2014; Franz ||Hoëb (near ‡Ôs), April 6, 2014. This story itself iterates a trope in which dogs are a ‘companion species’ (Haraway 2008) considered closely linked with human being, perception and sociality, an attribute also conferred to lions (Hannis/Sullivan 2018: 287; discussed too in Guenther 2020; and for jaguar in Kohn 2013).
- 36 Documented through journeys with Franz ||Hoëb and Noag Ganaseb, November 20–26, 2015, and Franz ||Hoëb, May 5–9, 2019.
- 37 Hildegart |Nuas (Sesfontein), April 6, 2014.

... 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 ||Ubun – my great grandparents were coming from those rock houses.³⁸

... when other people saw them in the Namib with their houses built very close together (i.e. '||ubero') they exclaimed over the way the houses were being made – hence the name ||Ubun'.³⁹

||Ubun 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 Sullivan/Ganuses 2020: 301).

Figure 11: Franz |Haen ||Hoëb stands at the grave of his grandfather †Gîeb in the lower !Uniab river, near to the former dwelling place known as Daniro (Photo: Sian Sullivan, May 7, 2019)



||*Khao-a Dama* are associated with the land area known as Hurubes and are a lineage that in times past was linked with ||Khao-as mountain, a large mountain at the confluence of the †Gâob (Aub) and !Uniab rivers in

38 Franz ||Hoëb (†Os), April 6, 2014.

39 Emma Ganuses (!Nao-dâis), November 12, 2015.

the present-day Palmwag Tourism Concession (see below). A known ancestor of the |Awise ||Khao-a Dama family is buried at the former settlement of Kai-as, and a more recent ancestor (Aukhoeb |Awise), alive at least until the ca. 1930s, is buried at Soaub in !Nau (“fat”) Hurubes (see Figure 7), having also previously herded livestock at Sixori south-west of Sesfontein in †Khari Hurubes (see below).⁴⁰ Three ||Khao-Dama brothers from the |Awise family of several generations back are buried on the edge of the settlement of Sesfontein.

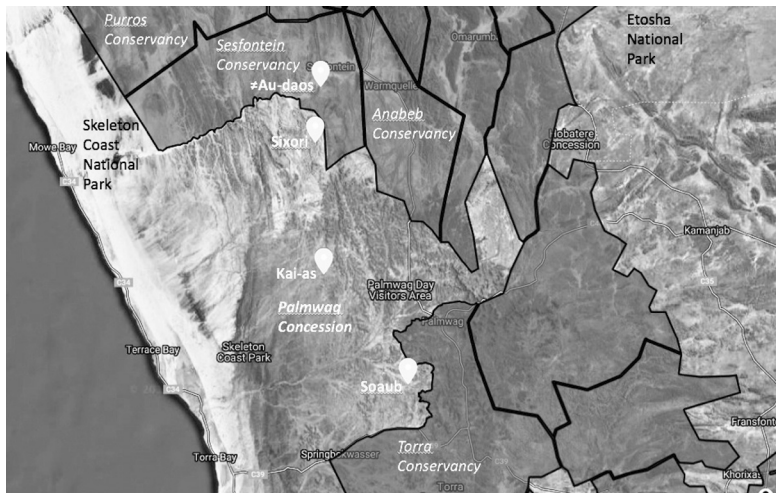
Drawing out the interwoven relationships between places, people, ancestors, and varied beyond-human natures clarifies that none of these are distinct and atomized, but rather are rhizomatically associated and generatively connected. In this dimension then, a rather conventional mapping process consisting of finding and recording coordinates and other information for remembered named and significant places, has itself generated unanticipated complex and multilayered information by allowing dynamic genealogical connections with sites to be specified (cf. Bank 2006; Bollig 2009). By way of further illustration, we invoke below a short series of four sought-out places (see Figure 12) that turned out to be densely connected through past mobilities and genealogies, often in spite of the imposed governmentalities constraining access possibilities over the last few decades (as elaborated in the section above on ‘Displacement’).

Sixori

A high point of our on-site oral history documentation was finding Sixori, the birth-place of Suro’s grandmother |Hairo. This ||gâumais (stock-post) effectively kickstarted our mapping research when |Hairo began the first oral history interview we recorded in 1999 with the words “I was born at Sixori in Hurubes.” Neither of these names appear(ed) on maps of the area. After several failed attempts to (re)locate this ||gâumais, eventually we made it to the spring Sixori that in 1999 started this thread of enquiry. Sixori is named after the *xoris* (*Salvadora persica*) bushes that grow around a permanent spring of clear, sweet water and whose fruit provide a filling dry season food. The spring is located in the deeply incised landscape to the south-west of Sesfontein. Finding it on a brutally hot day in March 2015 required triangulating the orientation skills of the elderly ||Khao-a Dama man Ruben !Nagu Sauneib Sanib – a locally renowned hunter who remembered Sixori from past visits

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

Figure 12: Localities of four remembered places – Sixori, ǀAu-daos, Soaub and Kai-as



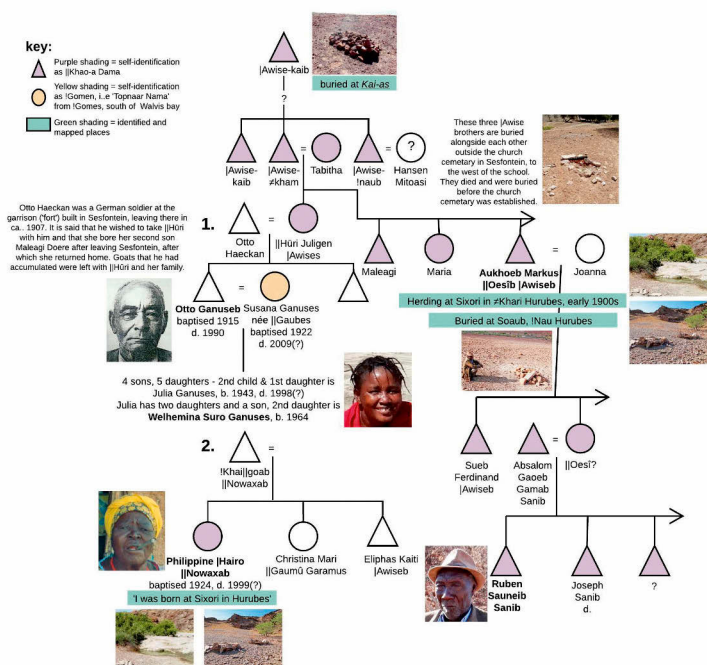
– and Filemon |Nuab – a younger man and well-known rhino tracker, who knew from present patrols in the area the location of the spring, but had not previously known its name of ‘Sixori’.

As we sat in the shade of a rocky overhang close to the spring Ruben Sanib recalled harvesting honey (*danib*) from a hive in the vicinity of Sixori when he was a much younger man. He was with three older men: Aukhoeb |Awiseb (also called ||Oesib after his daughter ||Oemi⁴¹), Seibetomab and Am-!nasib (also known as Kano). Aukhoeb was the brother of |Hairo’s mother (Juligen ||Hūri |Awises). He was living and herding livestock at Sixori, a stock-post (||gāumais) linked with Sesfontein / !Nani|aus. ||Hūri was visiting him when she gave birth to |Hairo, Suro’s grandmother, the year of which we think is *ca.* 1910 (see genealogy in Figure 13). The honey cave was west of Sixori. Sanib and companions travelled there to *sam* (to pull) the honey out from this cave, coming to Sixori afterwards to make *sāu* beer with that honey. From Sixori they walked back to Sesfontein through the pass that is called ǀAu-daos (see below). At that time, they did not have a donkey so they carried the honey in

41 As Hoernlé (1985 [1925]) documents for Khoekhoegowab-speaking Nama, parents may be referred to by the name of their children.

big tins on their shoulders. Aukhoeb was later buried at Soaub (see Figure 7 and detail below), illustrating past connections and mobilities between fairly distant springs and living places in the now cleared tourism concession of Palmwag.

Figure 13: Emplaced genealogy for the ||Kha-a Dama |Awise lineage now residents of Sesfontein (Source: fieldnotes and on-site oral histories)



†Au-daos

‡Au-daos means “the road between two mountains” – “dao” is a mountain pass, and “‡Ao” is the name of the white-flowered plant *Salsola* sp. which grows here and from which soap can be made.⁴² This plant was reportedly gathered

42 Philippine |Hairo ||Nowaxas (Sesfontein), April 15, 1999.

in the past by Damara / ǀNūkhoen who had been recruited from their dwelling places in the wider *!garob* to work for an emerging Nama élite as this became consolidated in Sesfontein / !Nani|aus from the late 1800s. They would make soap from the ashes of the plant, combined with animal fat⁴³. ǀAu-daos (Figure 14) is a potent place, having been the site where the then Nama headman of Sesfontein – Nathaniel Husa |Uixamab – died after being mauled by a lion here in 1941 (also see Van Warmelo 1962 [1951]: 37, 43–44). As related by Ruben Sanib, the story goes that cattle belonging to a Herero herder were bitten by a lion here and Husa, accompanied by his paternal cousin Theophilous ||Hawaxab (and later captain in Sesfontein), Namasamuel and a ǀNūkhoe man GamāGāub, came to shoot that lion. The lion was lying there in a cave nearby and when Husa shot the lion the lion came to Husa and grabbed him, dragging Husa to a *!narab* (*Acacia tortilis*) tree, and attacking Husa after he had shot the lion. As the lion was pinning Husa down, Theophilous ||Hawaxab grabbed hold of its ears to try and pull him off. Meanwhile, GamāGāub shot the lion from far away (even though the others told him to get closer) and, although he managed to hit the lion, he also accidentally shot Husa in the side, which killed him. When GamāGāub shot Husa, Namasamuel came and took the gun and shot the lion in the ear. When Husa was shot he called for his wife De-i, and when she came he talked to her and then he passed away. They then brought Husa over to a big *!narab* tree where, it is said, they made the *!araxab* [stretcher] on which they carried him back to Sesfontein.

43 Interview Ruben Sauneib Sanib (Kowareb), March 9, 2015. Soap-making in this way is described by James Edward Alexander (2006 [1838], vol. 1: 83), at the Nama-influenced reed mat hut of field-cornet Agganbag in the northern Cape, where he finds the “three fresh and strapping daughters [of the field-cornet] boiling soap, prepared with fat and the branches of the soap-bush”. A fictionalized account of such soap-making is also conveyed in the Northern Cape novel *Praying Mantis* by the late André Brink (2006). At ǀAu-daos reportedly so much of the soap-plant was collected that there is little left here now, although the plant grows extensively further downstream in the Hoanib River.

Figure 14a: view north towards ǀAu-daos (Photo: Sian Sullivan, March 9, 2015)



Figure 14b: ǀAu-daos at location where in 1941 the Nama captain of Sesfontein, Husa ǀUixamab, was attacked by a lion (Photo: Sian Sullivan, March 9, 2015)



Soaub

On a later journey we relocated the grave of Aukhoeb, ǀHairo's uncle who had been herding livestock of the Ganuses family at Sixori (see Figure 7). Aukhoeb died and was buried at the ǁan-ǁhuib – the living place – of Soaub. Today Soaub is located in the private Wilderness Safaris tourism concession associated with Desert Rhino Camp in the Palmwag Tourism Concession, these

new names telling of the emphasis on tourism and wildlife conservation saturating the area in recent decades. Clearly a formerly large settlement with multiple dwellings in the past, whose headman was called !Abudoeb when Sanib knew the settlement, Soaub was later linked with allocations of reserve grazing to Afrikaans settler farmers, especially in the 1950s (Kambatuku 1996). Aukhoeb's grave is unmarked but located exactly where Sanib remembered: he led us with little hesitation to this grave. Its location had clearly lived on in his memory of past dwelling places, recalled in the present through the possibility and experience of return.

Kai-as

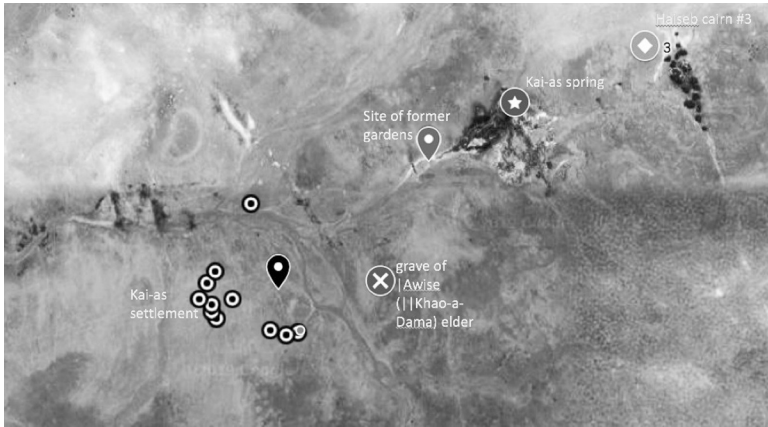
Kai-as, the fourth and final place described here, was once an important focus of past settlement for ||Khao-a Dama and ||Ubun at the site of a large permanent freshwater spring which used to feed a garden (Figure 15). People would congregate at Kai-as after the rains had started, and it was also considered an important place on routes between locations of key resources. ||Ubun, for example, would move between !nara (*Acanthosicyos horridus*) patches in the !Uniab and Hoanib river mouths via Kai-as and Hûnkab springs to the north-west of Kai-as. Ruben Sanib and Sophia Obi |Awises recalled how people from different areas (!hūs) used to gather at this place to play their healing dances called *arudi* and praise songs called *ǀgaidi*. These were times when young men and women would meet each other. Times when different foods gathered in different areas were shared between people, and when much honey beer (!khari), made from the potent foods of *sâui* and *danib*, was consumed (see Sullivan 1999). Being able to be present at these times in such places also enabled ongoing connection with ancestors associated with these places, the significance of which is described next.

2. Ancestral agencies

The relationship between the living and the dead, is no more than the projection, on the screen of religious thought, of real relations between the living. (Levi-Strauss 1987: 199 quoted in Wilcken 2010: 192)

For especially elderly ǀNûkhoen and ||Ubun people who have long associations with the west Namibian landscape, moving through the landscape requires greeting and offering practices that connect people alive today with people now physically dead, who were previously associated in some way

Figure 15 : Kai-as detail (Source : Sullivan et al. 2019 : 10)



with these landscapes. Although attenuated through displacement, acculturation and the variously disruptive effects of modernity, such practices remain current and significant. Ancestors are communicated with through a practice called *tsē-khom*, understood as “speaking with the ancestors in the day-time”⁴⁴ (and thus distinguished from a different practice of communicating with one’s ancestors during night-time healing events in order to understand the causes of sickness).

Tsē-khom usually involves offering and smoking tobacco, through which ancestors or *kai khoen* (literally big or old people) in the realm of the spirits of the dead are also able to enjoy this smoking. Through *tsē-khom*, ancestral agencies are requested to act in the present to open the road so that travelers can see the best way to go. They are asked for guidance regarding the most appropriate ways of doing things, and their support is evidenced through the intuitions people receive in response to queries that may arise as they are travelling. They are also asked to mediate the activities of potentially dangerous animals such as lions, who are understood very much as other ensouled beings who assert their own agencies and intentionality (Sullivan 2016; Hannis/Sullivan 2018). Ancestors thus greeted include recent family members

44 Translated literally as *tsē* = “to separate” and *khom* = “to keep holy” (Krönlein 1889: 325, quoted in Schmidt 2014a: 144).

whose graves are located in places travelled to and through; unidentified dead (or what Schmidt refers to as “the invisible representations of anonymous dead”) (Schmidt 2014a: 135); and sometimes a more broadly referenced ancestor-trickster-hero known as Haiseb. The latter is considered to have been a real person who lived in the distant past, did wonderful and clever things, and with whom large cairns found throughout the dryland environment from the Cape to the Kunene River are associated (see also Schmidt 2011, 2014a and b).

Ontologically, the ancestors are spirits or souls (i.e. *gagas* – see Inskeep 2003: 329) that have left humans whose bodies have died. As these spirit beings they have ontological reality in the present: they are not simply people who lived in the past, nor are they entities that require worship. They are understood more as specific types of entities that through pragmatic relationship practices are called upon to intervene – to assert agency – in the present, so as to influence outcomes (Sullivan 2017a). Sometimes this includes intervention in the agency of other non-human agents, such as lions, a species with which humans in west Namibia continue to live in close contact, as they have done throughout the remembered past. Other nonhuman agency-enacting entities in this context include animals as ensouled beings that both see us and act in relation to this seeing (cf. Kohn 2013), and the personified, supernatural force behind the phenomenon of rain – known as *nanus* – that asserts agency in selecting those humans who become healers (Low 2008; Hannis/Sullivan 2018).

Indeed, the affirmation of agency and intentionality in multiple entities and selves beyond-the-human might be considered as key to ‘KhoeSan’ and other ‘animist’ perspectives on ‘reality’, through which agency, shaped by the diverse form, materiality and perceptual capacities of actors, is considered to be present everywhere, requiring constant attention and attunement in choices by humans (Harvey 2005; Sullivan 2010, 2013, 2019; Brightman et al. 2013; Descola 2013; Kohn 2013; Sullivan/Low 2014; Guenther 2020). Animist perspectives emphasize the ethical values and practices that may arise when people live and act as if diverse other kinds of being can see and in some way represent ‘us’ (Kohn 2013: 1). In structuring understandings of the nature of being, this worldview assumes that all activity by agents who can be animals, components of weather, plants, spirit-beings, ancestors and so on, is simultaneously imbued with a moral, if relative and frequently ambiguous, dimension (Ingold 2000), requiring ongoing awareness, participation and adjustment in relation to the actions of all these acting others (Deleuze/Guattari 1988 [1980]: 258, 266–267). Given, however, that ancestors are linked closely

with places or areas (often those where they are buried), displacement from these areas makes it hard for people to maintain these ancestral connections, and thus to sustain the values associated with and encouraged by the *kai khoen*.

Ruben Sanib reminds us of the simultaneously pragmatic, spiritual and forceful dimensions of *tsē-khom* in this translation:

You [= |Gabikhoeb⁴⁵] who are sitting in the cave where you were eaten by a lion,
when I am coming from the other side I greet you from afar.
Let the dangerous animals go so that they can't frighten me.
Let me sleep.
Let me see Sixori tomorrow morning, so that I can come easily to Sixori.
When I come to Orubao⁴⁶ I come because of you.
I greet you my brother, lying in the cave.
My goat was missing because of you [refers to a past event].
Yes, you agree, yes you agree, yes you agree, yes mmm, yes mmm.⁴⁷

3. Song-dances, place and healing

In April 2014, we drove from |Giribes plains north-west of Sesfontein (see Figure 1), southwards towards the Hoanib River, with Christophine Daumû Tauros and Michael |Amigu Ganaseb who now live in Sesfontein. As we were approaching Borro – a tight rocky ‘gateway’ between the mountains – Christophine began singing a *|gais* song. The song told of how |Amigu's father's brother Bitirijan had once chased a young male oryx down towards Borro. He wanted to kill that oryx for food, but the oryx was running away, and Bitirijan made a song about that oryx running. As Christophine sang this song, a young lone male oryx ran past us, as we drove slowly down towards

45 |Gabikhoeb is a ‡Nūkhoe man who was a friend of Ruben Sanib's and who was killed by a lion in a cave near Sixori when he was out collecting honey. For details see Sullivan 2016.

46 Orubao (also called ||Guru-tsaub) is the name of a distinctive tall mountain to the east of Sixori.

47 Ruben Sanib, *tsē-khom* before trying to find Sixori, 7 March 2015. A recording of this *tsē-khom* greeting from the evening prior to our final attempt to relocate Sixori (see above) can be heard at <https://soundcloud.com/futurepasts/ss-tse-khom-by-sanib-bef-ore> (last accessed August 8, 2020).

Borro. It was as if the song had brought an event from the past into the present as we moved through the place in which the song had arisen.

Table 2: */Gais song sung by Christophine Daumû Tauros as we approached Borro, leading into the Obias River, April 6, 2014.*

Khoekhoegowab	English
<i>Borro di dai gôako gaero mai aise</i>	I am going to Borro and if I go to Borro I am thinking about the oryx
<i>Borro da koro #âib ge gaero mau aise</i>	If you think about the oryx then you have to think about Borros
<i>#Habe di #âiko gûdi ôaba aise</i>	Bitirijan was chasing a young oryx (to hunt it) and the oryx ran away and came through Borros
<i>Borro di gôako gôa da re aise</i>	And he sings about the oryx who ran through Borros

The act of singing praise songs (*/gaidi*) and healing songs (*arudi*) is indeed described as re-living and re-seeing the events, people, places and entities of which the song is about. In this way, songs and their performance reaffirm identities, values and histories about people and places, thereby constituting a form of ‘indigenous mapping’.

Experiences of singing and dancing engender enjoyment, affective intensities and experiences of connection. */Gaidi* are specifically described as sung “for happiness and the heart”. Elderly people in Sesfontein remember a long list of */gaines* – celebrated leaders of */gaidi* played in celebratory dances that lasted through the night. Accompanied by complex clapped rhythms and collective polyphonic vocal arrangements, the songs allow(ed) participants to re-cursively and affectively (re)experience places, events and values expressed in the songs. With regard to *arudi* specifically, their performance also supports the skills of healers – those who have the rain-spirit and can see and attend to sicknesses in the people.

Place, storytelling, cultural identity: all these elements are poetically entangled and expressed through songs and dances. For elderly people returning to places they remember but are now unable to inhabit, it is often the loss of playing their */gaidi* and *arudi* in these places that is recalled most vividly. On returning to Kai-as in November 2014, for example, Ruben Sanib and Sophia

|Awises recalled how when their families congregated here they would dance their *!gaidi* songs of celebration and their *arudi* healing songs. “Our hearts were happy here” (*sida ʒgaogu ge ra !gaia neba*), they said⁴⁸. These recollections prompted through journeying to Kai-as led in May 2019 to an initiative to support a two-day filmed ‘festival’ there of *!gaidi* praise songs and *arudi* healing song-dances by the Hoanib Cultural Group from Sesfontein (see *The Music Returns to Kai-as* at <https://vimeo.com/486865709>, last accessed February 01, 2021).

As described above, sometimes the very act of revisiting a place prompted recall of a song connected with that place, pointing towards the importance for what is often labelled “cultural heritage” of being able to access places with which heritage practices may be entangled (Impey 2018). Sophia |Awises thus burst spontaneously into an *arus* song as we approached ||Khao-as mountain, from where the ||Khao-a Dama *!haos* is said to have acquired its name (as outlined above). We happened to have the voice-recorder on at the time and the moment of Sophia singing forth this place-linked *arus* can be heard online here: <https://soundcloud.com/futurepasts/arus-about-khao-asmountain-081115>, last accessed August 08, 2020).

Figure 16 is one of a series of images (including the image used for the cover of this book) in which we tried to convey this multifaceted intimacy with which people know and experience places in west Namibia, in combination with the stark, ‘wild’ beauty of these same landscapes as captured in high resolution aerial photographs. It shows Ruben Sanib and Sophia |Awises standing in front of ||Khao-as mountain on their first visit there for perhaps some decades. This photograph was made during the journey in which Sophia sang the *arus* mentioned above that told of the merged relationship between ||Khao-a Dama people and ||Khao-as mountain, which is also shown from above. The series of composite images of which Figure 16 is one, were inspired by this simultaneous character of intimacy and wildness shaping how west Namibian landscapes are known, and the loss described as ‘heartbreak’ caused as people became disconnected from the possibility of experiencing this intimacy⁴⁹.

48 Ruben Sauneib Sanib, Sophia Opi |Awises (Kai-as), November 22, 2014. See also Sullivan 2017b.

49 This series of images can be viewed in the online exhibition *Future Pasts: Landscape, Memory and Music in West Namibia*, see especially <https://www.futurepasts.net/memory> (last accessed August 8, 2020).

Figure 16: Ruben Sauneib Sanib and Sophia Opi |Awises with ||Khao-as mountain behind and to the side of them. (Original photo by Sian Sullivan, November 2015. Composite image by Sian Sullivan and Mike Hannis, incorporating aerial images supplied by the Directorate of Survey and Mapping, Windhoek)



Conclusion

... there can be no possibility of an equitable future without due recognition and understanding of the past. (Bird-Rose 1991: xxiii)

The French philosopher George Bachelard (1994 [1964]: 6) writes in *The Poetics of Space* that “[i]t is because our memories of former dwelling-places are relived as daydreams that these dwelling-places of the past remain in us for all time”.

We have been able to variously ‘map’ the above places and their multiplicitous meanings in the present because memories of them have lived on in the day-dreams of people who once lived there. It follows that if people can no longer go to the places of their memories, there is a limit to how long these places can live on as day-dreams. The contemporary moment is infused with structural processes that can seem to enforce forgetting, leading to erasure of the density of cultural meaning with which the landscapes of west Namibia have been known. Nonetheless, the place-entangled histories, values and practices related above continue to haunt the present, conferring complexity, friction and sadness.

The Namibian constitution of 1995 is often celebrated for its clear statement regarding environmental care and protection, with Article 95(l) affirming that,

[t]he State shall actively promote and maintain the welfare of the people by adopting, inter alia, policies aimed at ... maintenance of ecosystems, essential ecological processes and biological diversity of Namibia and utilization of living natural resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of all Namibians, both present and future. (GRN 2014 [1990])

At the same time, the constitution also includes the right to culture (cf. Paksi 2020). Article 19 states that “[e]very person shall be entitled to enjoy, practise, profess, maintain and promote any culture, language, tradition or religion”, although adding that this is “subject to the terms of this Constitution and further subject to the condition that the rights protected by this Article do not impinge upon the rights of others or the national interest” (GRN 2014 [1990]). When the ability to enact and sustain cultural knowledges and practices is linked with access to the places and ‘resources’ with which cultural expression is entangled, there can clearly be tensions between these two dimensions of the constitution.

These tensions arise in particular when a *decoupling* of indigenous and local cultures from nature has been part and parcel of the historical creation of ‘wild’ African landscapes associated with biodiversity conservation and with both tourism and trophy-hunting income (Adams/McShane 1996; Dieckmann 2007). Thus, although great effort has gone into establishing locally-run “conservancies” from which members can benefit from wildlife-related incomes, cultural and historical dimensions of land-use and value remain relatively weakly entangled with conservation concerns. The “densities of meaning” “mapped” in this chapter arguably open up different realms of

value in relation to the conservation landscapes of west Namibia. They beg questions of whether and how “cultural heritage” and an appreciation of peoples’ pasts might be connected more strongly, and with mutual benefit, to conservation activities in the area.

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