



Landscape, Memory and Music in West Namibia

A multi-media exhibition at
Gallery 44AD, Bath, UK.
12 July – 12 August 2017

Future Pasts

Compiled by
Sian Sullivan with Mike Hannis,
Angela Impey, Chris Low and Rick Rohde

Cover image – Nathan #Ūina Taurob (R), Christophine Daumŭ Tauros (centre) and Michael |Amigu Ganaseb (L) greet and gift their ancestors and anonymous spirits of the dead, looking across the |Giribes plains towards their home area of Purros in west Namibia.
Photo: Sian Sullivan, May 1995, composite by Mike Hannis with aerial photographs from the Directorate of Survey and Mapping, Windhoek.

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Introduction.

A Dama / #Nūkhoen¹ woman walks through the open landscape close to Namibia's highest mountain – the Brandberg or Dâures. Her voluminous dress echoes those worn in the 1800s by European missionaries, signaling the complex and hybrid histories enacted in this arid African land.

South-west of here, repeat photographs of the important Khan River crossing tell of dramatic historical changes. In the early 1900s, Dama women and children pose in the dry riverbed. In the background are buildings associated with the Khan River railway station. Photographed again in 2015, this same scene is recognisable only by the distinct rock formations lining the river. The railway station and the people have been replaced by a modern road bridge, constructed to support access to the new Husab Uranium mine, majority owned by the China General Nuclear Power Group.

Further south again, a collection of *!nara* (*Acanthosicyos horridus*) melons sits in front of a modern rectangular building in the westward reaches of the !Kuiseb River. An ancient food source harvested in the changing circumstances of the contemporary moment, *!nara* remains essential for food, local economy and cultural heritage in the coastal areas of west Namibia.

Back to the north of the striking Brandberg/Dâures massif, two elders return to places they grew-up in. They remember living here, before being removed as part of the remaking of this spectacular landscape as a wilderness area for ecotourism and the conservation of highly-valued species such as desert-adapted black rhino and elephant. Encountering a mountain known locally as ||Khao-as, they break into a traditional healing song or *arus*. The song tells of how ||Khao-as Dama people originated from this place that they can no longer visit.

These moments, depicted in the images above selected as flyers² for *Future Pasts: Landscape Memory and Music in West Namibia*, distil aspects of the *Future Pasts* research project. This is an arts and humanities engagement with how ideas and assumptions about the past – particularly about past relationships between people and the natural world – affect the futures being created now in pursuit of ‘sustainability’.

Funded by the UK’s Arts and Humanities Research Council³, and supported by our Namibian partner organisations – the National Museum of Namibia, Save the Rhino Trust, Gobabeb Research and Training Centre and Mamokobo Video and Research – *Future Pasts* engages with the interplay of resource extraction, conservation and tourism as these unfold in diverse cultural landscapes that are also home to valued (and endangered) animal and plant species. We draw on a range of disciplinary approaches to explore these themes: environmental anthropology (Sian), environmental ethics (Mike), ethnomusicology (Angela), anthropology (Chris) and anthropology and environmental history (Rick).

Future Pasts enables us to build on our own long-term field and archival research in west Namibia, as well as utilising material recorded in the past by other researchers.

Our exhibition journeys through a selection of themes we have explored through our research: “place”, “music”, “healing”, “change”, “landscape”, “memory” and “mining”. We close by making reference to the complex Dama / #Nūkhoen ancestor-hero-trickster character of Haiseb, who reminds us of the mysteriousness and unpredictability, as well as the often unfathomable and funny, natures of existence.

We invite you to experience aspects of west Namibian pasts, presents and futures with us through *Future Pasts: Landscape, Memory and Music in West Namibia*.

The full exhibition can also be explored online at: <https://www.futurepasts.net/exhibition-44ad-july-2017>

West Namibia.

West Namibia, an area that for us comprises the Erongo and southern Kunene Regions of Namibia in the south-western corner of Africa, has long been the focus of overlapping indigenous and global(ising) concerns.

One early account of the area is provided by British explorer and army captain, James Edward Alexander. In the 1830s he journeyed by ox-wagon from Cape Town to Walvis Bay and through the inland areas of the !Kuiseb and Swakop Rivers. He describes the west Namibia of that time as a complex cultural landscape populated by varied peoples who were becoming entwined with global trade networks and interests.⁴ Alexander employs Nama ('Namaqua') peoples of the southern part of what is now Namibia, and is also guided to springs dispersed through the landscape by 'Bushmen' ('Boschmen') encountered there. He finds the area of the !Kuiseb river and Walvis Bay densely populated with Khoe-speaking peoples herding sheep and cattle. Here he eats *Inara* fruit (from the near-endemic melon plant *Acanthosicyos horridus*), noting the husbanding of patches of *Inara* bushes by people living here. He also tells of conflict over inland territory between 'Hill' Damaras (contemporary Dama or #Nūkhoen) and cattle-herding Nama and 'Plains' Damaras (Herero) expanding into the rich pastures of central Namibia.



The landscapes journeyed through by Alexander teemed with rhinoceros, elephant and lion. Like many other early European adventurers to west Namibia, his tales are liberally peppered with stories of hunting these 'majestic beasts', usually in the company of local guides and hunters. In Alexander's day, the nutrient-rich waters of the Atlantic off the shores that became famed as the Skeleton Coast for its shipwrecks, were the focus of whaling by mostly American ships. Coastal islands were soon to be targeted in a guano rush led by Britain that would clear this precious fertiliser from Namibia's coastal islands in under four years. The key natural harbour of Walvis [i.e. 'Whale Fish'] Bay in turn provided a focus for the growing export of natural resources from Namibia's interior – ostrich feathers, ivory and cattle, and now copper and uranium.

European colonists, settlers and adventurers have tended to view the land- and sea-scapes of west Namibia as potential sources of tradable economic value, extracted through the application of labour provided by the territory's African peoples. European incursions into the territory now known as the nation state of Namibia led to German colonial rule (1884-1915) and a devastating genocidal war in the early 1900s. Decades of apartheid administration under South Africa followed, bringing new manipulations of peoples' dwelling practices by establishing 'native reserves' or 'homelands' that encouraged the consolidation of superficially homogenous cultural identities (see timeline below). Each layer of historical change has been accompanied by various forms of resistance and accommodation by local peoples. Independence from South Africa was achieved in 1990 following a long struggle led by the South West Africa People's Organisation, the political party that now leads the country's administration.

Today's Namibia is modern and cosmopolitan, welcoming private sector as well as bi- and multi-lateral investment so as to generate economic growth. In west Namibia proposed economic growth entails major infrastructure projects. These include the redevelopment of the Walvis Bay port and harbour, the consolidation of railway links with other southern African countries, and an expanding mining industry, with a particular focus on the production and export of uranium. Simultaneously, west Namibia is the focus of a thriving international tourism and trophy-hunting industry attracting significant external investment. Visitors come from all over the world to experience the region's dramatic arid land scenery, its spectacular wildlife and unusual endemic species, as well as its indigenous cultural heritage in the form of both ancient rock art and current cultural practices.

The landscapes and peoples of west Namibia today are organised into various designations. Protected areas such as the Dorob, Namib-Naukluft, and Skeleton Coast National Parks conserve wildlife and landscapes. Heritage sites protect rock art at the Twyfelfontein Prehistoric Reserve and the Brandberg Mountain National Monument area, whilst tourism concessions provide investors with rights to income from investments in tourism infrastructure. Alongside these designations, a patchwork of 'communal area conservancies' on communally-held land in the region, now brings local inhabitants into new collective resource management units called 'conservancies'. Conservancies derive income from commercial tourism investments (particularly lodges and associated activities) and from trophy-hunting safaris. These post-independence conservancies intersect with an earlier administrative Ward system of Traditional Authorities, as well as with the post-2013 delimitation of 121 constituencies and the current registration of individual land holdings under the 2002 Communal Land Reform Act.



Map drawn for *Future Pasts* by Jeff Muntifer, 2015.

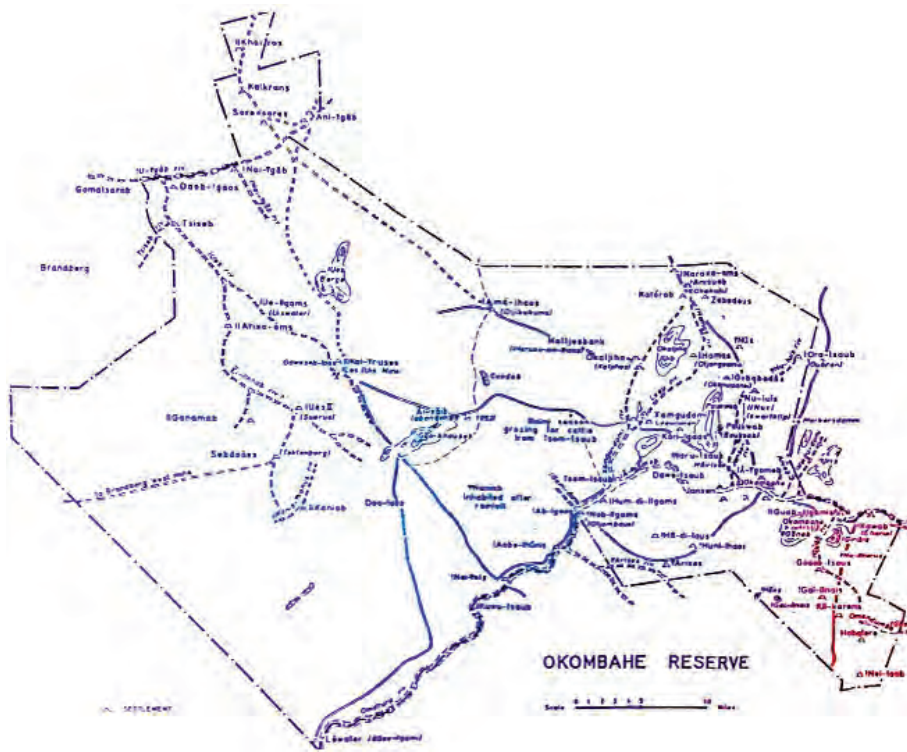
Key historical events for west Namibia, prior to Namibian independence in 1990.

Date	Historical event		
1864	Swartbooi Nama leave Rehoboth in central Namibia and eventually make their way north towards Sesfontein and Fransfontein, via Ameib in the Erongo mountains		
end of 19 th century	Mission stations and churches established at Okombahe, Omaruru, Otjimbingwe, Fransfontein and Sesfontein		
1884	Imposition of German colonial rule		
1885	The Nama captains Cornelius Swartbooi of Fransfontein and Jan Uixamab of Sesfontein sell 'their respective territories' in 'the Kaoko-area' to businessman August Lüderitz, through which Lüderitz acquires 'the right of development and utilization of all mineral resources, while the captains reserved control over their places of residence and their pastures'. These rights are later acquired by the Kaoko Land and Mining Company, a London-based company represented by Georg Hartmann in strategic alliance with the German colonial governor Leutwein ⁵		
1897	Rinderpest dramatically diminishes livestock and threatens both indigenous and settler livestock economies		
1904-07	German colonial / genocidal war		
1905, 1907	Ordinances passed permitting 'confiscation of property of the insurgent groups', contributing to impoverishment of indigenous Namibians Okombahe Reserve allocated to Damara		
1918	'Police Zone' established in southern and central Namibia, effecting substantial control of movement and settlement of Namibians, increasingly marked by a veterinary cordon fence or 'Red Line' ⁶ institution of South African Administration under a League of Nations Mandate		
1923	'First Schedule' 'Native Reserves' established including:		
	Reserve	Linguistic/cultural 'groups'	hectares
	Okombahe	Damara	36,188
	Fransfontein	Damara (Nama, Herero)	172,780
	Sesfontein	Topnaar and Swartbooi Nama, Damara, Herero (Himba, Tjimba))	31,416
1925-1951	'Second Schedule' Reserves established including:		
	Reserve	Linguistic/cultural 'groups'	hectares
1925	Otjohorongo	Herero	330,000
	Otjimbingwe	Damara (Herero)	83,053
	Aukeigas	Damara	10,862

Cont'd...

...Cont'd.

1954	Use of newly surveyed farms in west Outjo District by commercial European settler farmers as additional monthly grazing
1956	Okombahe Reserve enlarged through the purchase of the farm Sorris-Sorris in order to accommodate Damara farmers forcibly moved from the Aukeigas Reserve near Windhoek, following its deproclamation in order to create the Daan Viljoen Game Park
1958	Probationary leases for surveyed farms in west Outjo District made available to white settler farmers
1964	Odendaal 'Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs' takes place to establish recommendations for land redistribution
mid-1960s	Vacation of white settler farms in west Outjo District and their purchase by the Evaluation Committee of the South African administration. Lease of farms as 'emergency grazing' to European farmers from other regions.
early 1970s	223 previously white-owned farms in west Outjo District made available to the Bantu Commission for incorporation into the Damara 'homeland' as delineated by the Odendaal Commission Movement to the 'homeland' by qualifying communal farmers
1976	Opening of Rössing uranium mine, near the Khan River as it approaches the Swakop River, around 60kms inland from Swakopmund on the Atlantic coast
1978	First (largely boycotted) election of the legislative council responsible for administration of the 'homeland'
1981	Election of the Damara Council led by Justus Garoëb, heralding the emergence of a strong 'Damara' power within the region
1990	Independence; new administrative regions delineated, and land reform process initiated. New 'conservancies' become registered in many communal areas to foster Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) through the promotion of tourism and trophy-hunting



Map from Köhler, O. 1959 A study of Omaruru District South West Africa. *Ethnological Publications*. 43. Government Printer, Pretoria. Images of Okombahe village ca. 1950 and 1960 from the National Archives of Namibia, copies held in Rick Rohde collection.

Place.

The historical events and processes outlined above all contribute to the contemporary character of west Namibian places. Places tend to be complex sites of dwelling, memory and activity and the key centres of settlement in west Namibia are no exception. Layers of historical events are compressed in such centres, inscribed on the landscape through built structures and worn down tracks and pathways.

Here we focus in on one location, the small dusty village of Okombahe on the Omaruru River in between the Erongo and Brandberg/Dâures mountains – the centre of the former Okombahe native reserve. Okombahe village became officially established as a Rhenish mission in 1870 but is situated in an area full of former #Nūkhoen dwelling places (as indicated in the map above). Later, in an attempt to escape drought, diseases and territorial restrictions imposed by German settlers, Damara and Nama pastoralists sought refuge at the mission, where they converted to Christianity and began to cultivate gardens on the banks of the Omaruru River. Today, the village of Okombahe is considered a cultural centre for #Nūkhoen (Dama) people and is home to the annual Damara King's Festival.

Within the boundaries of the former Okombahe Reserve, the old #Nūkhoen (Dama) place of Sores-sores – so-called for the heat of the sun ('sores') that bears down on this open plain in the shadow of the Brandberg/Dâures mountain – later became an Afrikaans settler farm. Later still it became the headquarters of a new conservancy called Sorris Sorris. Here Hanna |Awaras proposed to Chris Low a storytelling event with elders and children that could be recorded both as research and for the local community. The idea was to bring people together and hold an enjoyable social event where Dama / #Nūkhoen of all ages could share their stories and wider culture as they pleased. As Hanna said to Chris Low – *We would like people to know about us.*

The programme at Sorris Sorris included storytelling around the fire, singing and dancing, and the preparation and display of traditional foods and drinks. A high point saw the gathering venturing off to find the footsteps of Haiseb – a folk figure / culture hero of the Damara and other 'KhoeSan' peoples – and the circles in which he danced.



Hanna |Awaras, event organiser for a *Future Pasts* storytelling event, telling tales of the ancestor-trickster-hero Haiseb as we trace his footprints over the rocks. Photo: Sylvia Diez, Sorris Sorris, March 2016.

It is revealing of the wider social and cultural currents at work across Namibia that Damara elders are now keen to run cultural groups for themselves and for tourists. In Sorris Sorris in 2016 they were just setting one up, and the *Future Pasts* storytelling event became an opportunity to practice their performance. This took place in and around a new structure visible in the image below, built as a site for tourists to come and stay and enjoy a programme of cultural activities.



The Nama Step dance, Damara style, performed by Toatite Gawanab, Audrey ||Araseb. !Gâi !gtâ !Gaoseb, Hâtago |Hûses, Mû ðan |Hûses, Mandie ||Gases and Tikhoe |Hûses. Photo: Sylvia Diez, Sorris Sorris, March 2016.

In Sesfontein to the north of Okombahe and Sorris Sorris a cultural group, led by Jacobus ||Hoëb known locally as the 'king of the |gais' after a particular type of song, has become established over the last decade or so, keeping songs and dance forms known by previous generations alive in this northern settlement.



Jakobus ||Hoëb (left) leading the Sesfontein cultural group. Photo: Sylvia Diez, Sesfontein, March 2016.

Music.

In April 2014, Sian and Mike drove from |Giribes plains north-west of Sesfontein, southwards towards the Hoanib River, with Christophine Daumû Tauros and Michael |Amigu Ganaseb (see front cover) 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 had once chased a young male oryx down towards Borro. He wanted to kill the oryx for food, but the oryx was running away, and he made a song about that oryx running. As Christophine sang this song, a young male oryx ran past us, as we drove slowly down towards 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.

The act of singing praise songs (|*gais*) and healing songs (*arus*) is indeed described locally as like re-living and re-seeing the events, people and entities of which the song is about. In this way songs and their performance reaffirm identities, values and histories about people and places. With regard to *arus* songs, their performance also supports the skills of healers – those who have the rain-spirit and can see and attend to sicknesses in the people.

Experiences of singing and dancing engender enjoyment and connection. |*Gais* songs are specifically described as sung ‘for happiness and the heart’. Elderly people in Sesfontein remember a long list of |*gaines* – celebrated leaders of |*gais* songs played in dances that lasted through the night. Accompanied by complex clapped rhythms and collective polyphonic vocal arrangements, the songs allow(ed) participants to recursively and affectively (re)experience places and events expressed in the songs.

Place, storytelling, cultural identity: all these elements are poetically entangled and expressed through songs and dances. For elderly people who are no longer able to live in and move to places in the landscape that they remember, it is often the loss of playing their *arus* and |*gais* in these places that they recall on returning to these places.



Hats made of steenbok horns, shown here by Christjan Garamub of Sesfontein, are worn by men to 'add spice' to their head movements as they dance. It is tempting to see continuity here with early European and American encounters with west Namibia. Thomas Bolden Thompson, commander of the HMS *Nautilus* in 1786, observed in a settlement inland from Walvis Bay people who 'wore aprons and sandals, and some of the men affected caps with small antelope horns attached'⁷. Photo: Sian Sullivan, Sesfontein, March 2015.

The changes accompanying modernity in Namibia tend to mean that either these song-dances are no longer enacted, or that they are enacted as performances for audiences in varied contexts. They become altered in the process as well as hybridised through accelerating encounters with different musical forms and genres. The influence of the Christian church has been key in this respect. Since the late 1800s, church music has become a focus for local skills in harmony and arrangement and west Namibia is now home to a diversity of choirs.



The grandmothers who attend the twice-weekly soup kitchen at the Lutheran Church in Okombahe demonstrate a game-song they used to sing as children. Photo: Angela Impey, Okombahe, March 2015.

With permission from those recorded as well as from collections where recordings are archived, we share a range of musical forms associated with west Namibia in the soundtrack accompanying our exhibition. Listen at: <https://soundcloud.com/futurepasts/sets/future-pasts-exhibition-soundtrack-gallery-44ad-bath-12-july-12-august-2017>

FUTURE PASTS EXHIBITION SOUNDTRACK

1. Dawn Chorus I, Gobabeb, Namib Desert. Recorded by Angela Impey, February 2015.
2. Western Youth Choir of Namibia, *The Namibian Repertoire Vol. 2*: ‘Oshikandela’ (Enjoy the refreshing, sweet Oshikandela [dairy drink]), composed by Khwesi Haosemas, 2012.
3. | *Gais* (Damara dance-song, performed at community gatherings). Recorded by Emmanuelle Olivier⁸ in Sesfontein, 1999.
4. | *Gais* song about a bird flying over the mountain at Sesfontein. Recorded by Sian Sullivan in May 1995.
5. Dawn Chorus II, Gobabeb, Namib Desert. Recorded by Angela Impey, February 2015.
6. Western Youth Choir of Namibia, *The Namibian Repertoire Vol. 1*: ‘#Khi #Khisen’ (‘Rejoice in the Lord’), Composer: Clarence Geingob. 2012.
7. *Arus* healing song. Recorded in Sesfontein by Chris Low, March 2016.
8. Ruben Saunaeb Sanib performs *tsē-khom* (greeting/gifting ancestors and anonymous spirits of the dead) before finding the spring Sixori the following day. Recorded by Sian Sullivan, 7 April 2015.
9. | *Gais* women’s dance [“Frauentanz Omaruru”], recorded and introduced by Ernst Damman, Sesfontein 3 February 1954 Archives BASLER_39B7⁹.
10. Aaxu-eb, Damara singer-songwriter from Windhoek/Okombahe: “Invited by Ghosts” recorded by Robin Denselow at Damara King’s Festival. Okombahe, November 2016. The song warns against life’s temptations.
11. Dawn Chorus III, Gobabeb, Namib Desert. Recorded by Angela Impey, February 2015.
12. *Arus* healing song performed by Christophine Opi | Awises with Ruben Saunaeb Sanib about how | | Khao-a Dama people originated at | | Khao-as mountain, north of the !Uniab river (now Palmwag tourism concession). Recorded by Sian Sullivan at | | Khao-as mountain on 8 November 2015.
13. A piece played on a mouth-resonated bow with metal string known as *!khab*. Recorded by Emmanuelle Olivier in Sesfontein, 1999.
14. Nama/Damara flute ensemble - | *ai g!ai piriru* – accompanied by singing and dancing. Flutes are made from papaya stalks. Recorded by Emmanuelle Olivier in Sesfontein, 1999. This genre is currently not performed today.
15. Western Youth Choir of Namibia, *The Namibian Repertoire Vol. 2*. ‘Ti mama’ (Wishing Mum the greatest love and thank you for raising me). A well-known Damara song, arranged by Roger Nauturo, Soloist Letie Nangolo.
16. Story told by Louise | | Areses, Sorris Sorris, recorded by Andy Botelle and Chris Low, March 2016.
17. Solo song about boyfriend, sung by Suro Ganuses, Sesfontein. Recorded by Chris Low, March 2016.
18. Aaxu-eb, Damara sing-songwriter: ‘Song about Perfume’. Recorded at the Damara King’s Festival by Robin Denselow, November 2016. The song concerns the traditional fragrances used by Damara women made from wild herbs and known as *!gari sâi*.
19. | *Gais*. Recorded by Emmanuelle Olivier in Sesfontein, 1999.
20. Western Youth Choir of Namibia, *The Namibian Repertoire Vol. 1*: Heilig Heilig (Afrikaans spiritual, ‘The word of God is holy’). Composed by Simon Beuker and Arr. By Roger Nauturo.
21. Dawn Chorus IV, Gobabeb, Namib Desert, Recorded by Angela Impey, February 2015.
22. Sebulon Gomachab, ‘!Uri Piris’ from the album, *A Hand-ful of Namibians* (P) 2004, College of the Arts Namibia (C) 2004, Nocturne.

The Damara King's Festival.

On music, dance and performance, the Damara King's Festival deserves special mention. Now in its 37th year, the festival marks a significant annual moment when Dama people gather in Okombahe to sing and dance, eat, and receive counsel from their king, Justus |Uruhe ||Garoëb. Lineages (*!haoti*) from all over the country arrive dressed in the emblematic blue, green and white of the Damara nation. Women wear long Victorian dresses and shawls that mimic the attire of influential colonial missionaries whilst men are adorned in matching T-shirts and remnants of WWI military paraphernalia. Others remember their pre-colonial pasts by wearing costumes made of skins of the wild animals that supported their forebears.

The Damara King's Festival is an annual ritual of reflection and regeneration, enabling performers and audience alike to 'think aloud' about their identities, histories and hopes for the future. In 2016 the festival opened with a parade by military and police bands, whose crisp uniforms, shiny brass instruments and precision choreography drew the excited crowd into the central festival space. Here the king – Justus ||Garoëb – who represents both hereditary authority and customary leadership within the context of the modern national state, presided over the day from the vantage of a large white throne overlooking the main festival space.

In 2016 the festival took place at the end of an intense 3-year drought. Calling for rain formed a major focus of the festival which, in a potent moment of relief and gratitude, was blessed by the first showers of the season.

Overall, the festival is not staged for outside consumption. In our exhibition, however, we are privileged to include a film made in association with Andy Botelle (of Namibian film company Mamokobo Video and Research) and the Damara King's Festival Organising Committee that presents highlights from the 2016 Damara King's Festival. The film can be viewed online at <https://vimeo.com/224051477>.

Having been profoundly displaced by German colonialism (1884-1915) and by seven decades of discriminatory South African rule, this film offers an intimate portrait of one community's colourful celebration of itself.



Rare images of the Damara King's Festival in 1995. Photos: Rick Rohde, Okombahe, November 1995.

The day's programme includes speeches by clan elders and local dignitaries about Dama history, culture and local knowledge. These are interspersed with performances by cultural troupes, school groups and women's associations from different lineages or *!haoti*, many of whom draw on traditional songs known as *|gais*.

Midway through the programme, the king leads a second procession to the nearby graves of key Dama / #Nūkhoen ancestors, who are ritually greeted before the procession returns to the dust, noise and spectacle of the festival space.

The day concludes with the collective social act of eating, the menu of zebra, donkey and oryx meat bringing additional nourishment to the festival's symbolic and sensory celebration of people, place and tradition.

The Damara Kings Festival is one of many such regional cultural festivals that take place across Namibia during the year, their role in promoting cultural understanding and reinforcing social cohesion recognised as essential to this still fledgling democratic state.

More information, including a radio programme on the 2016 Damara King's Festival by BBC journalist Robin Denselow, can be found online at: <https://www.futurepasts.net/single-post/2016/12/19/Future-Pasts-ethnomusicologist-works-with-BBC-journalist-to-create-radio-programme-on-the-Damara-Kings-Festival-Impey-Dec2016>



Damara King's Festival, November 2016. Clockwise from top left: Damara indigenous culture performed by Abas || Khoab cultural group; BBC radio journalist Robin Denselow speaks with festival organisers; AO AE SES performers from Sorris Sorris; Mamokobo film-maker Andy Botelle with festival MC Rosa Namises and assistant George Garad (photos: Angela Impey).

Healing.

As mentioned above, a distinctive musical form for Dama / #Nūkhoen in west Namibia is the communal *arus* healing dance. Historical observations and oral history suggest that the *arus* has existed for at least several hundred years, and probably for far longer. Social disruptions associated with historical events and the advent of modernity mean that the dance is no longer common, but oral histories and historical texts indicate that *arus* were a core component of Dama / #Nūkhoen healing repertoires. In the 1970s an *arus* was recorded as far south as Okombahe, but now they are only regularly carried out as real healing dances (as opposed to public performances) in Sesfontein. Elsewhere, cultural groups will re-enact the dance, reconfiguring it in the process. The *arus* holds elements in common with wider African healing dances of the region although its closest relative is the healing dances of the Bushmen.

In addition to dancing, other healing strategies include plant and animal based remedies drunk as infusions and decoctions or rubbed into small cuts in the skin. Extensive massage, manipulation of joints, rubbing on of remedies, sweating out of sicknesses and blood-letting through small cuts are also common. Today, Dama / #Nūkhoen will readily attend biomedical health clinics and hospitals when available and often biomedical treatment is combined with more culturally-traditional treatments.

Dama recognise a range of different causes of sickness. The *arus* is often used when other attempts to cure have failed or a healer has indicated the need for an *arus*. Some believe that sicknesses most suitable for collective healing dances are those attributed to invisible sickness arrows shot into the afflicted by the divinity ||Gâuab (also named ||Gamab), as well as by restless ancestors and spirits of the dead. An *arus* centres around the |*nanu aob* or |*nanu aos* – a man or woman who has the healing gifts (also called |*gais*) of the rain-spirit, |Nanus. The most powerful way for a person to become a |*nanu aob/s* is to have been struck by lightning. Such a strike, if survived, provides the healer with |*gais* or healing gifts that live in their body. In the dance the healer is encouraged to ‘wake up’ these gifts so that they can be put to work for healing.

An *arus* centres around a fire and involves one or more healers, at least three people who sing, clap and beat percussive sticks together, and one or more others who play an *arus* drum and assist more broadly. The drum is small and simple and when combined with the hand-clapping and stick-beating helps to drive the powerful repetitive song cycles.



Led by Jacobus ||Hoëb men in Sesfontein encourage the *arus* drum to 'sing well' so as to support the healing administrations of !Nosa, the current lead */nanu-aos*. Photo: Sian Sullivan, Sesfontein, March 2015.

Those with the rain spirit or rain wind (*!nanu #oab*) will dance with the *!nanu aob/s* to support them in the healing. If the singing is good and the drum sings strongly the healer will also dance well and the *!gais* will wake up. When the *!gais* are fully awake the healer can begin to pull out sickness from the afflicted. This is mostly done by sucking out the sickness and sometimes by snorting, rubbing a part of the healer's body onto the 'patient', or by channelling the sickness out of a person into the healer through a stick or along a line drawn in the sand from the patient to the healer. The *!nanu aob* pulls the sickness into their own body and then expels it either into the fire or by flinging it away.



Supported by Christjan Garamub (right), the *!gais* (healing energies of the rain spirit or *!nanus*) in *!Nosa* (left) begin to awake and 'stand up' as a healing dance or *arus* begins in Sesfontein. Behind them a group of men play the *arus* drum that also supports the healing. Photo: Sylvia Diez, Sesfontein, 2016.



Recursivity in repeat landscape photographs, at the Mirabeb rocky outcrop in Namib-Naukluft Park. The first view (on the clipboard) is a still from the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* for which director Stanley Kubrick used Mirabeb in some of the opening scenes. The film's still photographer, John Jay, took the first shot here in 1965. This is matched in 1995 with a retake by University of Cape Town geomorphologist Frank Eckardt in 1995, followed by a third retake in 2015 by Rick Rohde and Timm Hoffman. Composite image by Rick Rohde.

Change.

Recollections by Rick Rohde, 20 years on

My first trip to Namibia in 1992 occurred just after Independence and during the second year of a severe drought. The harshness and bareness of the landscape was breath-taking: its vast emptiness was awe-inspiring but its sparse human population stressed and impoverished due to both economic marginalisation and several years of severe drought. Food insecurity and the death of livestock were the order of the day. On returning to Namibia in 1995 I was relieved to find the country, even the arid west, green and covered in tall grasses. Livestock herds were recovering or had returned from migrations to better grazing areas. This quintessential natural pattern of change – alternating periods of drought and plenty – is often misunderstood by both outsiders like myself as well as Namibians with short memories of the country's climate dynamics.

For the next two years my research was split between understanding the environmental history of the region and the anthropology of visual representation. These two strands of interest were taken up again as part of the *Future Pasts* project and briefly illustrated in this exhibition through repeat photographs of landscapes and portraits of people who took part in a photography project in 1995.

Environmental history

My approach to understanding the environmental history of west Namibia is to find the exact sites of historical landscape photographs and to re-photograph them and make a careful assessment of plant species, the extent of plant cover and other botanical and ecological observations. The changes observed between the historical and repeat images, especially with regard to long-lived woody species, can be attributed to several inter-related causes such as climate change, land-use change, environmental policy and globalisation. Each set of matched images for a site provides a powerful visual statement of change and/or stability that can assist with understanding present circumstances at specific places. They help us to contextualise projected and predicted environmental futures.

- 1) Maherero's Kraal, 1876 (W.C. Palgrave)
- 2) Okahandja, 2009 (R. Rohde & M.T. Hoffman)

Okahandja, the site of the Paramount Chief Maherero's kraal in 1876: what was once a pastoral scene of grassland savannah with umbrella acacias providing some shade for mud dwellings and livestock, is now a cluster of 21st century German houses built like Bavarian castles on high square stone or concrete plinths, surrounded by electric fences and barbed wire.

The changes are astonishing – where once there was an open wide sandy river bordering the receding flat Namibian plains, now there is hardly an opening in the canopy of thorn-veld. 'Alien' tree species such as *Eucalyptus* (Australian) and *Prosopis* (North American) now obscure the view of the upper reaches of the Swakop River. These social and environmental changes are emblematic of the reshaping of Namibia since colonial times.



At times the repeat landscape images tell us something about settlement patterns and the lasting impact of historical episodes in the past. Given the dramatic events that have shaped the present socio-economic landscape of west Namibia – which over the last 150 years have included the establishment of colonial enterprise, a genocidal colonial war, seven decades of apartheid rule, and the ushering in of broadly neoliberal policies since independence in 1990 – it is not surprising that traces of such impacts are inscribed on the landscape. They create layered landscape ‘palimpsests’ in which past influences can be read and deciphered in the present.

In order to ascertain the extent of climate change in western Namibia my work with *Future Pasts* has extended a dataset of repeat landscape images of more than hundred sites compiled over the past 25 years. Analysis of this dataset shows that changes in land-use associated with colonialism (decimation of mega-herbivores and wildlife browsers, fire suppression and commercial cattle ranching), as well as the effects of atmospheric CO₂ fertilisation (through rise in industrial greenhouse gas emissions), provide the most plausible explanations for observed vegetation change in the wetter semi-arid savanna areas of central Namibia. Increases in thorn-bush densities are positively correlated to rainfall, i.e. central Namibia with higher average annual rainfall is more prone to bush encroachment than the semi-arid western areas.

The vegetation of the arid and hyper-arid areas of the Namib Desert seems to have not been impacted by human development and historical events as much as these wetter parts of Namibia. Here, a more complex pattern of change can be observed related to the cold upwelling Benguela Current and the increased temperature gradient between the Atlantic Ocean and the inland savannas attributed to global warming. Climate change is apparent, but our empirical evidence suggests a different trend to that predicted by recent climate models, with increased moisture rather than desiccation leading to higher recruitment of desert-adapted woody species than might be expected.

For more on the environmental history dimension of *Future Pasts* research see <https://www.futurepasts.net/single-post/2017/07/03/Climate-change-complexity-repeat-landscape-photographs-of-the-Pro-Namib-and-Namib-Desert>

Repeat portraits, Okombahe



Maria (Mate) Pietersen,
parent's house Jansen 1995 (centre above)

Maria at home with four generations of Pietersens,
2016 (below)



The subjects of some of the portraits displayed in this exhibition are of people who participated in a photography project during my stay in Okombahe in the mid-1990s.

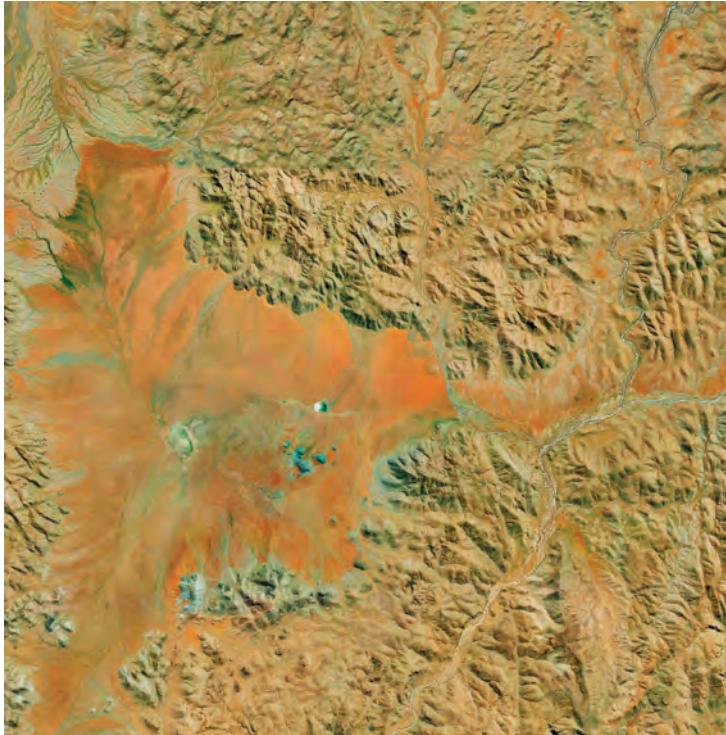
Maria Pietersen was instrumental in helping me to get this project off the ground. She was eighteen years old when I first met her, living with her parents who had generously invited me to camp in the deep shade of some *prosoptis* trees next to the wide dry expanse of the Omaruru River close to their house, a few kilometres outside of Okombahe village. Maria introducing me to her friends and neighbours who took part in a photography project using disposable cameras, many of whom became my close friends.

Some of the portraits displayed in the 44AD Gallery were taken at the opening of an exhibition of their photographs at the Namibian National Gallery of Art in Windhoek in 1996. Although I have kept in touch sporadically with Maria, it was only on my return to Namibia some twenty years later that I was able to contact many of the photographers again, and to hear the stories of their lives in the intervening period. For more on this photography project, see <https://www.futurepasts.net/single-post/2017/02/14/Outsider-photographyinsider-ethnography-writing-ourselves-out-of-the-picture>

In the mid-1990s there was an atmosphere of optimism and good-will attendant on the recent event of Independence. The ensuing twenty years brought change, but also a fatalistic disappointment associated with perhaps unrealistic expectations. HIV/Aids has affected several of my friends; some have moved to the townships of Walvis Bay, Omaruru and Swakopmund; alcohol abuse, domestic violence and social dysfunction foster a pervading sense of insecurity. Earning a living is often hard and several of the individuals portrayed here live from day to day without employment, often with the help of their extended family and the meagre State old-age pension. It is not surprising that Evangelical Christianity has found resonance in this remote part of the globalised world.

In spite of the hardships that all my friends have endured, they remain resilient and hopeful. I am deeply indebted to them for their patience and indulgence!

Landscape.



|Giribes plains, north-west of Sesfontein. Composite image created by Sian Sullivan and Mike Hannis from aerial photographs, Directorate of Survey and Mapping, Windhoek.

To mention the name 'Namibia' is to conjure images of spectacular landscapes – from the dramatic cold Atlantic coastline with its famous shipwrecks, to the dune fields of the southern Namib desert and the flat-topped red basalt mountains of 'Damaraland'.

The landscapes of west Namibia seem to pulse with both silence and presence. When viewed from high above the surface of the land is alive with watercourses snaking through rippling expanses of hills, coloured in vibrant blues, purples and golds. In the image above, the |Giribes plains, named after the Dama / ≠Nūkhoen word for jackal, i.e. |*girib*, glow orange amidst the folds of raised ground whose deep incisions tell of the waters that rush forcefully through this arid landscape in the years when good rains fall.



Green bursts through red in Kunene, especially after rains. Image generated from aerial photographs, Directorate of Survey and Mapping, Windhoek. For a montage of 100 aerial images of west Namibia go to <https://vimeo.com/futurepasts>

Lawrence Green, author of the 1950s *Lords of the Last Frontier* that popularised north-west Namibia for adventurers seeking a remote wilderness, writes that

“of all the deserts I have seen it is the Namib that draws me again and again.
This is a silent world, where men may well talk in whispers;
and only in a few places will you discover human footprints on the sand.”¹⁰

The promise of space, silence and wildness continues to create west Namibia as a sought after tourism destination for visitors from afar. And yet, the wilderness they find here is also manufactured from the homes of generations of diverse peoples who have experienced layers of pressure and change that often has not been of their choosing.

Take the |Giribes plains, pictured above. This open landscape has been home to varying combinations of !Narenin and Purros Dama, as well as Khoë-speaking ||Ukun who once moved between the *!nara* fields of the western reaches of the Hoanib and !Uniab Rivers, and Himba and Herero pastoralists seeking grazing for their cattle. The landscape is populated with named places and the localities of special resources, like the bee hive to the north of the plains that Nathan #Ûina Taurob once led me (Sian) to. For some two decades #Ûina had been returning there to *sam* – to pull – the honey from this hive that was embedded deep in a honey cave in hills north-east of |Giribes.

Nathan #Ûina Taurob, a ‘Purros Dama’ from north-west of Sesfontein, returns to his honey hive north-east of |Giribes plains. He drew honey from this hive every year for around twenty years. Photo: Sian Sullivan, May 1995.



These diverse cultural histories entwined with the landscapes of west Namibia mean that a view such as the one below – of a seemingly ‘pristine’ landscape in the Palmwag tourism concession – can sometimes be misleading.



Wilderness and/or cultural landscape? Palmwag tourism concession. Photo: Sian Sullivan, October 2014.

Memory.

on oral histories in remembered places, by Sian Sullivan

... remembering is not only welcoming, receiving an image of the past,
it is also searching for it, 'doing' something (Paul Ricoeur)¹¹

It was when engaged with field research for my PhD in the mid-1990s that I first learned of local histories embedded in the broader landscape around the settlement of Sesfontein / !Nani|aus, north-west Namibia. This is an area known today for its spectacular landscapes and desert-adapted black rhino and elephant. It is a sought after tourism destination now catered for by luxury eco-lodges linked to locally-run conservancies. I have come to learn, however, that the landscapes described as 'wilderness' in tourism brochures advertising the area are also full of the traces of former dwelling places and the graves of known ancestors. People alive today are amongst those who lived at these places and who remember what they were like in times past.

I started recording oral histories in the area in 1999. The first of these interviews, on 15th April 1999, was with the grandmother of Welhemina Suro Ganuses, a #Nūkhoen woman from Sesfontein who became my companion and translator whilst carrying out ethnographic field research for my PhD in 1994. Suro continues to play a large collaborative role in *Future Pasts* research.

Suro's grandmother, Philippine |Hairo ||Nowaxas, pictured below in 1999 outside her home in Sesfontein, opened her narrative by saying,

I was born at Sixori in Hurubes. We moved around and moved around. My father was really from this place [Sesfontein] and my mother was from Hurubes, really she's from Hurubes; she's | |Khao-a Dama.

|Hairo then began to list various places she knew, saying,

This is Sixori, this is Tsaugugam,
this is Oronguari, this is the
home of Xoms, here is the field
(!garob). I move to and sleep at
the places where the rain falls,
because the food is there.

|Hairo and several other people I worked with in the 1990s have since passed away. In the course of *Future Pasts*, however, Suro and I have been working back in west Namibia with those who remember past places in which they lived, so as to put these places 'on the map', as it were. In doing so, we are recovering and creating a record of place names, lived experiences and genealogies embedded in the landscape that disrupts some of the written archived narratives and maps associated with the area.



The late Philippine |Hairo | |Nowaxas, pictured outside her home in Sesfontein / !Nani|aus. Photo: Sian Sullivan, April 1999.

Returning to the traces of particular dwelling structures as well as of graves at many of these remembered places stimulates memories for those who once lived there. At times returning to these places has been emotional. People are reminded of friends and relatives who have now passed on. And they remember assumed futures altered by broader historical processes that are not of their choosing.

At the permanent clear waters of Kai-as spring in the heart of the Palmwag concession Ruben Saunaib Sanib and Sophia Opi |Awises recalled how people from different areas used to gather at this place to play their healing dances called *arus* and praise songs called |*gais*. These were times when young men and women would meet each other. Times when different foods gathered in different areas were shared between the people, and when much honey beer (*!khari*), made from the potent foods of *sâui* (*Stipagrostis* spp. grass seeds collected from harvester ants nests) and *danib* (honey), was consumed.

On a different journey, we made our way to the flat top mountain said to be the place where ||Khao-a Dama originally came from. Standing behind Ruben Saunaib Sanib and Sophia Opi |Awises in the picture overleaf is this mountain called ||Khao-as. It is also the prominent mountain rising from the aerial photograph image to their right. Today it is far from where people are living, and it has been a long time since Ruben and Sophia were able to see the mountain.

When we travelled there in November 2015 Sophia broke into an *arus* healing song which tells of how the ||Khao-a Dama lineage originated at ||Khao-as mountain. The song that came forth in the moment of returning to the mountain can be listened to at <https://soundcloud.com/futurepasts/arus-about-khao-asmountain-081115>



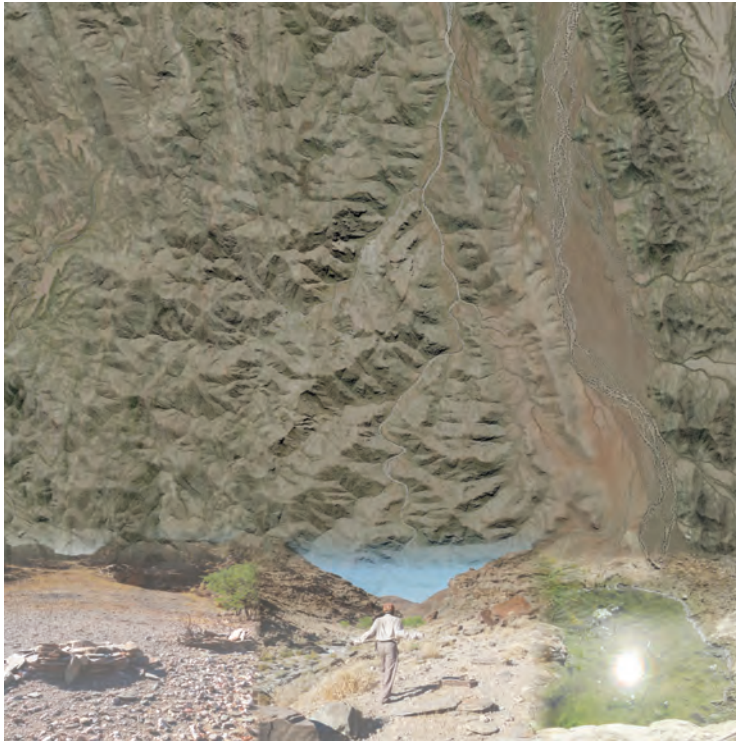
Ruben Saunaeib Sanib and Sophia Opi | Awises with | | Khao-as mountain behind and to the side of them. Photo: Sian Sullivan, November 2015, composite made by Mike Hannis using aerial images from Directorate of Survey and Mapping, Windhoek.

A high point of this on-site oral history documentation has been finding Sixori, the birth-place of Suro's grandmother |Hairo. After several false starts we eventually 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. This 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 Ruben Sanib – who remembered Sixori from past visits – 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 Sanib told us of harvesting honey from a hive in the vicinity of Sixori. He was with Aukhoeb |Awiseb (also called ||Oesĩb after his daughter ||Oemĩ), Seibetomab and Am-Inasib (also known as Kano). Aukhoeb was the brother of |Hairo's mother (Juligen ||Hũri |Awises). He was living at Sixori, and ||Hũri was visiting him when she gave birth to |Hairo, Suro's grandmother. The honey cave was west of Sixori. Sanib and companions travelled there to *sam* (to pull) the honey out from the hive, coming to Sixori afterwards to make *ŝau* beer with that honey. From Sixori they walked back to Sesfontein through the pass that is called #Au-daos. At that time they didn't have a donkey so they carried the honey in big tins on their shoulders.

As we were at the place where her grand-mother was born, Suro commented,

I said in my mind I will go and see where my grandmother is born. And I have to tell also my children, and even the others who are not here and don't know where my grandmother is born. I will tell them that my grandmother was born here and there is water surrounded by *Salvadoras*. So it is very wonderful, and I am very happy to be here because she is the one who taught me a lot of things - she is my hero! I'm very happy to be here.



Finding Sixori. Ruben Saunaeib Sanib leads us past old dwelling structures of the |Awise family towards the clear permanent water of Sixori, a spring located in the folds of the hills just above the centre of the aerial photograph above. Photos: Sian Sullivan, March 2015, composite made by Mike Hannis using aerial images from Directorate of Survey and Mapping, Windhoek.

At times, historical maps and other documents corroborate information arising through oral history research in the landscape of west Namibia. The *General Kaokoveld Report* and accompanying map by Major Charles John Manning in November (the Union of South Africa Resident Commissioner for Owamboland) in 1917, for example, suggests direct connections between families and places encountered by Manning and their elderly descendants in the area today.



Section around Sesfontein (Zessfontein) from the 1917 sketch map of Kaokoveld drawn by Major C.J. Manning, Resident Commissioner for Owamboland, National Archives of Namibia.

Two ||Ukun men, cousins Franz |Haen ||Hoëb and Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb, have thus told me in recorded interviews of living in the past in the westward reaches of the Hoanib River, and of moving southwards from there to Kai-as and the !Uniab River.

In November 2015, we travelled together down the Hoanib River to locations marked on the map sketched by Manning, recording information about a number of former dwelling places and other key sites on the way to Möwe Bay on the coast. Notable are the *!nara (Acanthosicyos horridus)* fields near the waterhole of Auses / !Ui||gams whose fruits were once harvested under careful management and ownership structures.

In the 1950s the coastal dunes were opened for diamond mining, and then in 1971 the lower Hoanib was gazetted as part of the Skeleton Coast National Park. As these areas became opened for industry and conservation, they became closed to habitation by those who once lived there.

For more information on this element of *Future Pasts* research see <https://www.futurepasts.net/single-post/2017/03/19/'Our-hearts-were-happy-here'---recollecting-acts-of-dwelling-and-acts-of-clearance-through-oral-histories-in-west-Namibia>



Cousins Noag Mûgagara Ganaseb and Franz |Haen | |Hoëb revisiting places in the westward reaches of the Hoanib River where they used to live. Here they are close to | |Oeb, now the site of an eco-tourism lodge called Hoanib Camp, located on the south side of the bend in the Hoanib River just to the right of centre in this image. Photo: Sian Sullivan, November 2015, composite made by Mike Hannis using aerial images from Directorate of Survey and Mapping, Windhoek.

Mining.

As Franz and Noag's experience suggests, since colonial times the cultural landscapes of west Namibia have been shaped considerably by industrialised mining. The latest 'rush' for resources in west Namibia is for uranium. In 2010 the Namibian government published its strategy for managing the environmental impacts of a 'Uranium Rush' in the central Namib desert. Optimistically, this aimed to 'position Namibia to capitalise on a 'green' brand of uranium'¹².

Over the last 250 years Namibia has seen many such 'rushes' for the commercial extraction of resources to be sold on distant foreign markets. New England whalers operated off the Namibian coast from the 1770s. In 1796, the British administration of the Cape Colony claimed exclusive rights to catch whales and seals in Namibian waters. These 'rights' were later deployed in an 1840s 'guano rush' on islands along Namibia's coastline that exhausted this resource in around four years.

European arrival inland in the nineteenth century saw widespread hunting with firearms, partly for 'sport' but also to export ivory, skins and ostrich feathers to buoyant European markets. Under German occupation in the late nineteenth century, the extractive focus switched to metals such as tin and copper, mined inland and transported to the coast for export on new railways. Copper is still mined in Namibia today, along with gold, zinc and manganese.

Then came the 'diamond rush' of the early twentieth century. Freelance prospecting by German colonial entrepreneurs before WW1 was consolidated in the 1920s into one South African company. In the 1990s the newly independent Namibian state gained a stake in the industry, which today remains the country's largest industry and primary source of export revenue. Most Namibian diamonds are now mined from the sea bed off the southern coast. Further north, marine mining technology will also soon be controversially employed to mine phosphate nodules.

Namibia is already one of the world's top five producers of uranium, sourced in the west of the country. One mine, Rössing, has produced more uranium than any other mine in the world. The main pit at Rössing, majority owned by Rio Tinto, is 3.5km long and 400m deep. The mine was opened in 1976, while Namibia was under South African control. The apartheid regime's desire to access nuclear power and weaponry while under sanctions led it to exploit a low-grade ore body that might have otherwise been uneconomic.

Namibia Mining Cadastre Portal



Cadastral map showing areas of Namibia covered by active mining licenses and license applications, June 2016. Extracted by Mike Hannis from <http://portals.flexicadastrale.com/Namibia/>

In 2016 Rössing mined 24 million tonnes of rock in order to produce 1850 tonnes of uranium oxide or 'yellowcake' (the basis for nuclear reactor fuel). In so doing it consumed 2.6 million cubic metres of water, as well as two hundred thousand tonnes of sulphuric acid and other chemicals.

There are currently two other active uranium mines in Namibia. Adjacent to Rössing on the other side of the ephemeral Khan river is the new Husab mine, which entered production this year. Husab is majority-owned by a Chinese company and primarily supplies the Chinese market. When complete the Husab complex will include an onsite chemical plant producing 1500 tonnes of sulphuric acid per day. The Langer Heinrich mine opened in 2007 in the Namib Naukluft National Park near Swakopmund. Its struggling Australian owners Paladin are currently expected to sell their majority stake to another Chinese company.

While the anticipated 'uranium rush' was considerably slowed by the slump in uranium demand after the Fukushima disaster in 2011, there are nonetheless at least fifteen further uranium prospecting and mining projects at various stages of development in the Namib desert. A 10-year moratorium on new applications for exploration licences on nuclear fuel minerals was lifted in January 2017. Before the end of that month 14 companies had applied for a total of 18 exploration licenses.

Even very large open pits such as Rössing appear small in the massive landscape when seen from above. Still, they represent significant alterations to the landscape, which will last for an extremely long time. Like the thin layer of radioactive isotopes released by atmospheric weapons testing, they will arguably stand as markers of the so-called Anthropocene. Many minerals are mined in this way. Uranium however is unique in that after a relatively short time on the surface, its derivatives may eventually be reburied. Deep geological disposal is the currently favoured method of handling the world's burgeoning stockpiles of radioactive waste from nuclear power and weapons programmes.

Looking to the future, the next 'rush' in West Namibia will perhaps be for rare earth minerals such as tantalum, used in mobile phones and other electronics. Several viable deposits have already been identified. Offshore oil drilling is also imminent – the Atlantic Ocean off Namibia exhibits similar subsea geology to that of existing productive oilfields off neighbouring Angola.



Satellite image showing two uranium mining and processing complexes. Above the ephemeral Khan river is the well-established Rössing mine and below are the emergent traces of the new Husab mine. Source: DigitalGlobe.



The main pit at Rössing uranium mine, 2014. Photo: Mike Hannis.

Haiseb.

These layers of resource claims become inscribed on the landscape, their imprint on the land often clearly visible on aerial photographs and satellite images. Yet older conceptions of place, landscape and identity live on, remembered through songs and stories and haunting the present with memories of past possibilities.

Reminding us that predictability may be short-lived, that life often brings surprises and that things may not be what they seem, is the character of Haiseb who features in stories and songs remembered throughout west Namibia. Haiseb can be described as a culture hero or trickster figure spoken of by Dama, Nama and Hai||om, who overlaps strongly with wider San / Bushmen trickster figures from across southern Africa.

Since the earliest colonial records of southern Africa, European observers have mentioned how Khoekhoe herders made offerings at cairn-like piles of stones that are found all over southern Africa and particularly in the Northern Cape and up into north-west Namibia. European travellers moving through these areas came to know these mounds as Heitsi Eibeb or, more accurately, Haitsi Aibeb 'graves'.

The name Heitsi Eibeb is less common now. Most Dama and Hai||om, among whom the tradition remains the strongest, use an equivalent name 'Haiseb' that is also of long standing. Colonial accounts describe the Khoekhoe as believing that Haitsi Aibeb was buried in these graves, but because he came to life again his body never remained in any one stone pile. The many piles of stones found across the landscape reflected his many episodes of death and rebirth.¹³

The association of Haiseb with the cyclical essence of life and death ties in strongly with wider Haiseb folklore tales dealing with themes at the heart of creation and the proper order of the world. It is Haiseb who asserts the current order in the world by bringing the first fire from the Ostrich to the people. It is also Haiseb who performs despicable acts, including murder, that in going beyond acceptable behaviour help define and sustain moral order. For more on Haiseb see <https://www.futurepasts.net/single-post/2017/02/05/Tracking-Haiseb-in-west-Namibia>



Future Pasts collaborator Welhemina Suro Ganuses stands next to Haiseb cairn near Sesfontein. Photo: Chris Low, March 2016.

We will leave you with a story about Haiseb told to Sian and Suro at Kai-as in November 2014 by Ruben Sauneib Sanib, a formerly celebrated hunter who lived in Hurubes in the Palmwag concession. Ruben left his audience convulsed in laughter at the combination of absurdity, cleverness and mystery distilled in the tale, which goes like this . . .

Haiseb was a very clever person. One day he went to the house of ≠An-guseb who had a sheep that was so fat that it couldn't walk. Nonetheless, ≠An-guseb refuses to slaughter the sheep for the women.

Now one day Haiseb says, 'if I go to ≠An-guseb he will slaughter that sheep for me'. Haiseb's wife said 'you are lying! ≠An-guseb will not slaughter that sheep for you'. Haiseb says, 'you will see'.

So now Haiseb dressed in a long dress with a scarf on his head like a woman, and he was carrying an egg of the ostrich. He poured water into the egg so that he can pretend that he is carrying a baby that will need to urinate, and he covers that 'baby' and goes to ≠An-guseb's house.

Now, when Haiseb came to the house, ≠An-guseb was not there but his brother was at home. And the brother ran to ≠An-guseb and said, 'A ta ta ta, ≠An-guseb, there is a beautiful woman at home. A *beautiful* woman!' 'From where?' says ≠An-guseb. 'No, let's go and see'. So, 'A ta ta ta, she is *very* beautiful!'

And ≠An-guseb says yes, go and take that fat sheep and slaughter for her. And he slaughtered the sheep and another brother of ≠An-guseb said 'now, what must I cook for you?' And 'she' says 'only the liver'. And he cooked for her the liver. And she ate.

And then it was night-time and ≠An-guseb wished to lie with the beautiful lady. But whenever ≠An-guseb came close to her/him, 'she' said, 'oh, the baby is wet!', and poured out some of the water from the ostrich egg shell - a little bit, just twice. And when ≠An-guseb came closer to him/her then he said again, 'oh the baby is wet!', and poured out some more water.

And in the morning time Haiseb came out from the house and said, 'aaii, where I was coming from things are not good so I have to go and check the people at home, but then I will come back. And the

child is sick, so I have to go and leave the child at home. But when I come back then I will stay with you!’

And he went up onto the hill and then he called ‘ha, ≠An-guseb, I am also a man like you! - I am not a woman!’

Now, ≠An-guseb called the others so that they can go and kill Haiseb. But Haiseb changed again, this time into an old man.

And there was a plains area in the landscape, with many *ûias* plants (edible corms) and holes where the people had been digging for the *ûias*. There was also a lot of ash from a big cooking fire that had been there.

And the man who was helping Haiseb became a tree and the meat of the fat sheep that he was carrying for Haiseb also was changing. And Haiseb took his eyes out, and began to sit there like a very old and blind man.

And when ≠An-guseb and his people arrived at this plain they said to the old man ‘grandfather, did you see anything here?’

‘Aaai, as you can see I cannot see, but I heard the sound of the people running here’.

Now some of the people said, ‘it’s him!’ - pointing to the old man.

But the others said ‘no no no, we cannot kill him because you can see he’s an old man. And can you see the work that he has been busy doing here to dig out and cook all of these *ûias*? - it couldn’t be him that came to ≠An-guseb!’

Now when the others ran by Haiseb and his associate both changed back into men. And then Haiseb returned to his house and he said to his wife - ‘can you see, this is the meat of ≠An-guseb!’

And so, Haiseb is very clever!



In the heat of the day a distant mirage – fluffy white against red land – is spoken of as a flock of Haiseb’s sheep, evoking the elusiveness of both water and wealth in livestock in this arid landscape. Photo: Sian Sullivan, near Hunkab spring, February 2015.

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Notes.

¹ Many of the words in this booklet include the symbols |, ||, ! and ≠. These symbols indicate consonants that sound like clicks and which characterise the languages of Khoe and San peoples who live throughout southern Africa. The sounders these symbols indicate are as follows: | = the 'tutting' sound made by bringing the tongue softly down from behind front teeth (dental click); || = 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 (palatal click); ≠ = a sharp, explosive click made as the tongue is flattened and then pulled back from the palate (alveolar-palatal click). Many of the Namibians we have worked with directly through *Future Pasts* are Khoe-speaking Dama people who tend to refer to themselves as '≠Nūkhoen'. This term literally literally means 'black' or 'real' people who are distinguished from *Nau khoen* or 'other people'.

² See <https://www.futurepasts.net/flyers-44ad-july-2017>

³ See <http://careforthefuture.exeter.ac.uk/2015/02/future-pasts/>

⁴ Alexander, J.E. 2006(1838) *An Expedition of Discovery into the Interior of Africa: Through the Hitherto Undescribed Countries of the Great Namaquas, Boschmans, and Hill Damaras, Vol. 2*. Elibron Classics Series, orig. published by London: Henry Colburn.

⁵ Discussed in detail in Rizzo, L. 2012 *Gender and Colonialism: A History of Kaoko in north-western Namibia*. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien.,pp. 63-64.

⁶ For details on the establishment of the 'red line' see Miescher, G. 2012 *Namibia's Red Line: The History of a Veterinary and Settlement Border* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁷ Kinahan, J. 1991 *Pastoral Nomads of the Central Namib Desert: The People History Forgot*. Windhoek: Namibia Archaeological Trust, p. 99.

⁸ Notable in this regard are the sound recordings made in the late 1990s by French ethnomusicologist Emmanuelle Olivier. Through *Future Pasts* this archive of 176 DAT tapes plus images, video and metadata has been collected by Angela Impey from France and deposited in the British Library Sound Archives. It is now available here as part of the World and Traditional Music - Africa collections (no. C1709), at <http://cadensa.bl.uk/uhtbin/cgiisirsi/?ps=cq1lwOrDBb/WORKS-FILE/318660053/9>. Work is ongoing to find or create an appropriate archive in Namibia for the repatriation of these recordings.

⁹ See catalogue listings in Henrichsen, D. and Schaff, A. 2009 *Ernst and Ruth Damman: Personal Papers and Sound Collection African Literature and Languages in Namibia and Southern Africa 1953 – 1997*. Registratur PA.39, Basle: Basler Afrika Bibliographien.

¹⁰ Green, L. 1952 *Lords of the Last Frontier: The Story of South West Africa and its People of all Races*. London: Stanley Paul and Co. Ltd., p. 17.

¹¹ Ricoeur, P. 2004 *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 56.

¹² See discussion in Sullivan, S. 2013 After the green rush? Biodiversity offsets, uranium power and the 'calculus of casualties' in greening growth. *Human Geography* 6(1): 80-101.

¹³ Schmidt, S. 2014 Some notes on the so-called Heitsi-Eibeb graves in Namibia: ancient heaps of stones at the roadside *BAB Working Paper* 3. Online. www.baslerafrika.ch/wp-content/uploads/WP-2014-3-Schmidt.pdf.

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