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PAST AND PRESENT PLANT UTILIZATION IN NAMALAND
AND THE LOWER KUISEB RIVER VALLEY, SOUTH WEST
AFRICA (NAMIBIA). A PRELIMINARY REPORT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report presents an overview of past and present Nama plant utilization in South West Africa/Namibia. Some 73 plants, used for a variety of purposes, are listed. However, the list is not comprehensive as the severe drought unfortunately made the collection of some plants impossible. Fieldwork was conducted among Nama people in Namaland and along the lower Kuiseb River in the Namib, during April/May 1981.

1.1 METHOD

A *capita selecta* of historical and ethnographic sources on the Nama was studied. Botanically oriented publications were also consulted (see references). From these, an indication of plants utilized was gathered. A short field questionnaire was compiled and subsequently used during fieldwork.

Collected plant specimens were dried in a press and these were identified by the S.W.A. Herbarium in Windhoek. Photographs in both black-and-white and colour were taken of all the specimens collected as well as of the general habitat. Data was recorded on a plant collecting form as is used by the Botanical Research Institute, Pretoria.

1.2 THE STUDY AREA

Namaland, a political demarcated area in the south of South West Africa/Namibia, comprises 2 163 672 hectares. All four geographical areas within Namaland were visited, namely Soromaas, Berseba, Tsēs and Gibeon.

The vegetation of Namaland is classified as Dwarf Shrub Savanna, and is dominated by small shrubs and grasses. *Acacia erioloba*, *A. karroo*, *Tamarix usneoides*, *Euclea pseudebenus* and other arborescent species are limited to rivers. *Rhigozum trichotomum*, *Parkinsonia africana*, *Acacia nebrownii*, *Boscia foetida*, *B. albitrunca*, *Catophractes alexandri* and a number of small bushes, including *Pentzia* spp. and *Eriocephalus* spp., are abundant.

The composition of the vegetation varies slightly in the more sandy eastern and more stony western parts of Namaland. In some areas *Aloe dichotoma* is quite common (Giess 1971 : 12).

Geographically, the lower Kuiseb River Valley is part of the Central Namib. The vegetation along the Kuiseb River forms a Riverine Woodland, consisting mainly of *Acacia albida*, *A. erioloba*, *Salvadora persica*, *Tamarix usneoides*, *Ficus* sp. and *Euclea pseudebenus* (Giess 1971 : 14). For this study, six settlements, three of which were situated upstream, and three downstream of the Namib Research Institute at Gobabeb (23° 34'S; 15° 03'E), constituted a unit of general survey.

Both Namaland and the Kuiseb River Valley fall within the summer rainfall area. The rather erratic annual precipitation of Namaland ranges between 100 mm in the south-west and 200 mm in the northern parts. The area along the lower Kuiseb River receives less than 50 mm of rain per annum. Within this marginal environment, the Kuiseb River, with its underground water supply, forms a lifeline for human and animal existence.

2.0 NAMA PLANT TAXONOMY

Topographical features such as pans (!*khubti*) and plains (#*gan*) are recognized. Plains are named according to soil characteristics, e.g. !*uri #gas*, literally meaning "white plain"; shape, and related historical events. A dune is referred to as /*gowab* and a river is denoted !*āb*.

All grass is referred to as /*gân*. Individual grass species are distinguished by growth characteristics, colour, and whether they are edible or not. For instance, #*habo-/gân* is a soft grass, mostly eaten by small stock, while the much coarser grass favoured by cattle, is !*nabe-/gân* (see also Krönlein 1971 : 78). Plants which are available during and after the rainy season are denoted /*awibi//aib di fūn*, literally meaning, "the rainy season's food". Poisonous plants are classified !*gaxa*. Plants are differentiated sexually, most being female; the male suffix -*b* is mostly used for those with long and large parts that grow upright, while the female -*s* denotes a shrub-like growth form, featuring smaller and thinner parts (see also Le Roux 1971 : 9). The different parts of plants are also distinguished, e.g.

the leaves - #gaen, branches - //noûgu, flowers - //haren, trunk - !gaos, bark (dry) - //ub̄, roots - !nomagu, pods - !khân, and seed - !khom. The diminutive !khomron denotes small seeds. In the case of leaves, a distinction is made between big ones (kai-#gaen) and small ones (#khari-#gaen). Thorny and thornless plants are respectively referred to as //khûxa and //khûo.

2.1 A GENERAL SURVEY OF PLANT UTILIZATION

The subsequent list contains information on the past and present utilization of plants as sources of food and water, and for technical and medicinal purposes. Those plants that are listed last (see page 12) could not be identified, mainly because it was too dry to collect suitable specimens. Some medicinal plants were also difficult to obtain as they seem to grow in relatively inaccessible places.

- Acacia albida* Del. : Along the lower Kuiseb River this is the most important tree used for technical purposes. Dry wood is used for the construction of hut frames, and green wood for the inner framework. Dry strips of bark are used to cover huts (*omti*) on the outside. Huts are usually built or renovated prior to the winter months. Other household structures such as kitchens and wooden platforms used for storage (*//hoati*), are also made from *ana* wood. This wood is also used to construct animal enclosures (*!haran*), garden palisades, chicken pens, and drawing-wells. Wells (*tsaubti*) are lined on the inside with *Acacia albida* logs. This wood is also utilized for making an apparatus consisting of a long, counterbalanced pole running over a fulcrum which is used to extract water out of a well. Large hollow trunks are used as drinking troughs (*!naban*). Dry branches are collected for firewood. In the past, wooden utensils such as mortars and bowls were made from *ana* wood (see also Schultze 1907 : 200). The pulp contained in the pods is sometimes eaten by children. Green bark obtained from the *Acacia albida* is used for the dyeing of skins.
- Acacia erioloba* E. Meyer : In the research area, dry wood from this tree is regarded as excellent firewood because it burns slowly and provides hot coals. Like *A. albida*, *A. erioloba* is used extensively as construction material along the lower Kuiseb River. The pulp
- (*ana*, -s)
- (*//ganab*)

contained in the pods is sometimes eaten by children. Because of its strength and mass, wood from this tree is used to make clubs. These trees also provide an edible gum (*heirab*). A powder-like substance (*!gub*) is collected from rotten tree trunks which is pounded, and after mixing it with hard fat, is used as a cosmetic by women (see also Schultze 1907 : 210). The green bark is used for a dyeing agent in skin-working. Thorns from this tree were traditionally used in a children's game called *//abi* in which adult warriors were imitated (Schultze 1907 : 310; 359). The root bark was utilized for the manufacture of flutes when suitable reeds were not available (see Breyer-Brandwijk 1962).

Acacia karroo Hayne

(*//khub*)

- : In some areas of Namaland the green bark is used to dye skins. The bark is dried in the sun, pounded with a stone and rubbed on the wet skin which gives it a red-brown colour. Bark for this purpose and gum is collected throughout the year. In ground form, gum is stored for lengthy periods of time. In the past, sticks with bent handles and fish-traps were made from the roots of *Acacia karroo*. Throughout Namaland dry wood from this tree is used for firewood. In the Berseba area, the branches are nowadays used for hut frames.

Acacia mellifera (Vahl)
Bentham subsp. *detinens*
(Burch.) Brenan

(*!noes*)

- : A thorny tree used for the construction of animal enclosures, and for firewood in Namaland. According to informants from Tses, the root of this tree was pounded and boiled in water and the extract left to dool down and then taken by young men for the treatment of venereal diseases.

Acanthosicyos horrida
Welw. ex Bentham & Hooker fil

(*!naras*)

- : The *!nara* is one of the indigenous species of *Cucurbitaceae*. Several sources refer to the utilization of this plant by the people residing along the lower Kuiseb River (e.g. Alexander 1838; Baines 1864; Palgrave 1877 (1969); Galton 1889; Gürich 1891; Schinz 1891; Marloth 1893; Dinter 1900; 1912; Schultze 1907; Grinme 1910; Von Gerard 1912; Range 1914; Versfeld and Britten 1916; Serton 1954; Tindall 1959; Giess 1962; 1966; Schapera 1963; Jenkins and Brain 1967; Koehler 1969; Moritz 1970; 1975; Sydow 1973; Budack 1977; Dentlinger 1977; and Pfeifer 1979). *!Nara* melons are picked from the middle of November until the end of April, the most being collected in February and March. According to an informant, the beginning of east winds indicates the

end of the season. This plant is used in a number of ways, depending on the availability of the melons and the time of harvesting. Some of the melons are eaten raw, especially during periods of abundance, usually the fruits are peeled and cooked. In this way, the pips and pulp are extracted for later use. The dried pips are either consumed, sold or ground. The seed-coats are fed to the fowls. In ground form, the pips are prepared as porridge and according to Schultze (1907 : 199-200), the peels were ground with the pips for this purpose. Oil obtained from the pips was traditionally used to moisturize the skin (Moritz 1970 : 7). The pulp is either consumed with other foodstuffs, or dried in the sun on a sloping sand dune to prepare an oval flat cake (*#goa-garibeb*). Such a *!nara* cake remains edible for a long time. In the past, these cakes were sometimes re-boiled to obtain a thick soup (Von Gerard 1912 : 233). Today, they are only eaten raw. Some of the melons are buried in the soft sand to stimulate juice development (Pfeifer 1979 : 159). By pressing a melon, a sweet juice is obtained and this is used as an ingredient for brewing beer. To assist fermentation, portions of the root are added to the juice (Von Gerard 1912 : 233). The pounded root is also boiled in water and the extract taken as an ailment for pains and stomach disorders. Versfeld and Britten (1916 : 234) also mention that the stems are used medicinally. The wearing of perforated *!nara* seeds around the neck is believed to help chest colds (Dentlinger 1977 : 34). Allegedly, the seeds have aphrodisiac powers (Ross 1971 : 175). It is maintained that the odour of a ripe melon is sufficient to congeal milk placed in its vicinity (Von Gerard 1912 : 233). Apart from the economic value of the *!nara*, this plant also had a social function indicated by the existence of special praise songs (*gare-tsanati*) (see Moritz 1975; Budack 1977). Archaeological research in the Namib points to a long tradition of utilizing the *!nara* (Sandelowsky 1977). Sometimes, the other Nama still mockingly refer to the people along the lower Kuiseb River as *!Naranin* because of their traditional dependence on this plant for food.

Albizia anthelmintica
(A. Richard) Brongn.

(arub)

: In Namaland the wood is used for the construction of hut frames. This tree also produces an edible gum.

- Aloe dichotoma* Mass. : In Namaland the porous inner fibre of the trunk was traditionally used for cooling material, while in some cases, the trunk was cut out and the whole plant served as a cooler. The scraped root was also boiled in water and the extract taken as a medicine against asthma.
(//garas)
- Aloe hereroensis* Engler : The bitter juice contained in the leaves is extracted or the leaves are cut up in little squares, and then added to the drinking water of domestic animals. According to informants in Namaland, *augoreb* is an effective medicine against animal parasites. In the past, women with suckling young rubbed their breasts with the juice to shorten the weaning period.
(*augoreb*)
- Aponogeton* cf. *desertorum* : A fresh water hydrophyte that grows in Namaland during the rainy season. When the leaves turn yellow, the bulbs are harvested, peeled, and cooked in water or roasted then mashed with a fork and usually consumed with milk. The bulbs are also stored as an emergency food supply.
Zeyher ex Sprengler
(//gana)
- Apostimum albomarginatum* : The crushed roots of this dwarf shrub are boiled in water or milk and the extract drunk as a medicine against chest complaints, stomach disorders and coughing. In the past, the roots were shredded and used as a spice over food, and burnt with coffee-beans. *!Kuxa* is known throughout Namaland.
Marloth & Engler
(!*kuxa*; -n)
- Asparagus denudatus* : According to informants from the Tsēs area, the green stems of this dwarf shrub were thrown in a fire to stop continuous rain. Along the lower Kuiseb River, this plant is sometimes put onto flesh burns (Dentlinger 1977 : 35).
(Kunth) Baker
(//hoabeb)
- Boscia albitrunca* (Burch.) : The pounded root of this tree was formerly roasted and used as a substitute for coffee. This practice is known throughout Namaland. The berry-like fruits were also used as an ingredient for the brewing of beer. The fruits are left in cold water for some time, and the water is poured over the dough used for baking bread. Allegedly, it gives the bread a pleasant taste.
Gilg & Benedict
(//hunib)
- Boscia foetida* Schinz : In Namaland, the berries are eaten.
(*xaubes*)

- Catophractes alexandri* D. Don. : This shrub is used medicinally in Namaland. The pounded root is boiled in water and the extract taken against stomach disorders.
(!gawab, -s)
- Citrullus lanatus* (Thunb.) Matsumaras & Nakai : Along the lower Kuiseb River, the pounded root of this creeper is boiled in water and after the extract has cooled down, it is given to goat and sheep ewes which experience difficulty in getting rid of the afterbirth. The melons were traditionally eaten by the Nama (Schultze 1907 : 200).
(tsamab, -s; /otsamab)
- Curroria decidua* Planchon ex Hooker fil. & Bentham : This dwarf shrub is utilized throughout Namaland. The pounded root is boiled in water and the extract taken for a laxative. It is believed that pregnant women should not use *giri hai-i*, the name meaning "jackal bush", for this purpose, because it will 'empty' their stomachs.
(giri hai-i)
- Cyperus* spp. : The small bulbs of *!han* are either eaten raw or roasted and believed to be excellent food for pregnant women (Budack 1965 : 110). The roasted and pounded bulbs were formerly used as a substitute for coffee. A well-known plant food in Namaland.
(!han)
- Dicoma capensis* Less : A common medicine in Namaland; the green leaves and roots of this tiny plant are boiled in water and the extract taken against colds and feverishness.
(ḡun-!uru)
- Diospyros lycioides* Desf. subsp. *lycioides* : In the Gibeon area the red seeds were roasted and used as a substitute for coffee. The wood was used to manufacture bridle bits.
(#hari)
- Ecklonia* sp. : In the Berseba area the stems of this seaweed which is obtained from Lüderitz, are dried, pounded, heated, and mixed with fat to prepare an ointment. Schultze (1907 : 213), who undertook his study in a much larger area, including Lüderitz, mentions that a powder obtained from seaweed, was used for the treatment of venereal diseases.
(huri-//hain; //h̄ab)
- Eragrostis spinosa* (L.fil) Thunb. : Along the lower Kuiseb River, dry pieces of this grass are used to kindle fires.
(/games)
- Euclea pseudebenus* E. Meyer ex A. DC. : Along the lower Kuiseb River, the wood is sometimes used for construction purposes. Twigs from this tree are packed between the inner framework of a drawing-well (Von Koenen 1964 : 121). The wood is also employed for whip-sticks and as firewood. Straight sticks were traditionally used in children's games such as
(tsawib)

//*arab* (a game played with sticks). Ripe berries are collected and fed to the fowls which allegedly hardens the egg shells.

- Euphorbia* sp. : In the Gibeon area the stems are tied in a bundle and used for a broom. The pounded stems are also boiled in water and the extract is added to milk which is given to domestic animals, particularly dogs, for the treatment of tick fever and distemper (see also Du Pisani 1976).
(*"melkbos"*)
- Ficus sycomorus* L. : The fruits are eaten raw or dried and grounded. In the latter form, they are consumed with other foodstuffs such as *Inara* pips. Dried figs are burnt and used as a substitute for coffee. This large tree is utilized along the lower Kuiseb River.
(/nomas)
- Fockea angustifolia* K. Schum. : The large tuber is a source of water. Only young tubers are eaten raw (Giess 1966 : 66). In the past, the tuber was used as an ingredient to brew beer. It was also cut up in little squares and put in water to which lime was added and the extract prepared as jam; the lime prevented the boiling from falling apart. The only specimen of this plant was obtained from the Brukkaros mountain in Namaland.
(#hawas)
- Geigeria* sp. : The bark from this poisonous dwarf shrub is said to burn easily, and is used to kindle fires. This information was obtained from the Berseba area.
(!khoe-//hauu; *"vermeerbos"*)
- Gossypium anomalum* Wawra : The pounded root of this shrub is used to curdle milk. Apparently, only Dama people residing along the lower Kuiseb River use this plant for this purpose. *Gossypium anomalum* Wawra is very rare in this area, and only one specimen was observed.
- Grewia flava* DC. : The ripe berries are eaten raw or dried and pounded, and consumed with milk. In the past, the berries were used as an ingredient in brewing beer. Straight sticks from this shrub were used in a children's game called //*arab* (see *Euclea pseudebenus*). *Grewia bicolor* Juss. is utilized in a similar way. Both these plants occur in Namaland.
(#ôus)

- Harpagophytum procumbens* DC. ex Meissner : A well-known medicinal plant in Namaland. The tuber is highly regarded as a medicine by the Nama people. It is first dried, pounded and prepared like tea. This extract is strained before it is taken as a medicine against a number of discomforts and diseases such as indigestion and tuberculosis. The fresh tuber which is made into an ointment is also regarded as an effective treatment for cancer (see Watt and Breyer-Brandwijk 1962 : 830; Von Koenen 1977 : 82-83). *Harpagophytum procumbens* is marketed commercially.
- (//khuribe-//khams;
goma khub)
- Hermannia modesta* (Ehrenb.) Mast. : The whole plant is boiled in water and the extract is either drunk or the body is washed with it. In Namaland it is believed to be effective against colds (see Du Pisani 1976 : 158).
- ("draaibos")
- Hermannia stricta* (E. Meyer ex Turcz.) Harvey : The root is placed in fresh milk to thicken and flavour it. The berries of this dwarf shrub were formerly worn as necklaces by women. They were also pulverised and rubbed on the gums of teething children. *Am tsaran* is well-known in Namaland.
- (am tsaran)
- Hoodia currouri* (Hooker) Decne : After removal of the thorns, the stems are eaten. According to informants from the Soromaas area, they taste the best after the rainy season when the plant flowers. The flowers are sometimes eaten by children. In the Tsés area, pregnant women like to eat the stems for it is believed, that it will prevent the newly-born baby from having a dry mouth. Such a condition is regarded as an indication that the child is ill (Budack 1965 : 110). This plant is utilized throughout Namaland (see also Schultze 1907 : 202; Giess 1966 : 67).
- (!khoba)
- Juncus arabicus* Adamson : Mats used for covering huts, were traditionally made from these rushes (see *Scirpus dioicus*).
- (/harus; -b)
- Lycium oxycarpum* Dunal : In Namaland the pounded root of this shrub is boiled in water and the inner fibre strained and dried and used for snuff.
- (//khai//arib)
- Mentha wissii* Launert : The green leaves are used in tea to give it additional flavour. This plant is cultivated in garden patches in Namaland, and at Rooibank along the lower Kuiseb River.
- ("kruisement")

- Mesembryanthemum* spp. : In the Gibeon area the juicy stems are rubbed on a skin to remove its hair ("springbokslaai") (see Du Pisani 1976).
- Monsonia senegalensis* Guill & Perr. : *Monsonia senegalensis* from the Namib is utilized in a similar way as *M. umbellata* in Namaland (see below). In the southern hemisphere, the main flowering and fruiting periods are from January to June (Venter 1979 : 101).
- (*raba*)
- Monsonia umbellata* Harv. : *Monsonia umbellata* is one of the best known plant foods in Namaland. The seeds are collected either from the plant itself, or from ant-nests. Seeds obtained from the latter source are referred to as //kunib, while the actual gathering is denoted //kunire (Rust 1969 : 255). The seed-coats are removed, because they have a thorn-like projection on the outside. The yellow seeds, without the seed-coats, are called *tsaman*. *Tsaman* can be stored for long periods. In the past, small cakes were baked using mashed *tsaman* and milk as ingredients. These seeds were also employed for the brewing of beer. When slightly heated in a pan, *tsaman* become soft and tasty. Apart from the seeds, the fragrant leaves are prepared as tea. They are also used to flavour milk. The scraped root thickens fresh milk (see Schultze 1907; Giess 1966; Hoff 1981). The main flowering and fruiting periods are in the late summer and autumn, January to May (Venter 1979 : 120).
- (*raba*)
- Nicotiana glauca* R. Grah. : Along the lower Kuiseb River, green branches from this plant are utilized for minor construction work, e.g. to secure hut frames on the inside. Dry wood is collected for firewood. If ordinary tobacco is in short supply, the leaves are dried as a substitute.
- Nymania capensis* (Thunb.) S.O. Lindb. : In Namaland it was found that the root-fibre of this shrub is pounded, after which it is boiled in water and the extract drunk by women for the treatment of breast ailments.
- (!gæbe; -s)
- Ocimum canum* Sims : The green leaves of this dwarf shrub are added to tea leaves to flavour the tea. These leaves are available throughout the year in the Berseba and Tses areas.
- (//gameb; -n)
- Othonna furcata* Druce : Resin (#gûn) produced by this plant was traditionally used for the manufacturing of small beads. For this purpose, the resin was mixed with charcoal, and then shaped into rolls, pieces of which were cut off and formed into beads (see also
- (/nunus; #gûs)

Schultze 1907 : 252). Informants from the Berseba area still relate how this was done. According to them, *Othonna furcata* does not grow in Namaland, but more towards the coast.

- Oxalis purpureascens* Salter : The leaves and small elongated bulbs are eaten raw. The bulbs are also cooked in milk or roasted. According to informants from the Berseba area, these taste like glucose (see also Schultze 1907 : 194; 202; Giess 1966 : 64).
(/gabes; -n)
- Parkinsonia africana* Sonder : In the past, the wood was used for manufacturing pipes. According to informants from the Soromaas area, it is especially suitable for this purpose, because it does not crack when hot. Along the lower Kuiseb River, the leaves are used medicinally. The fruits are prepared as a beverage (Dentlinger 1977 : 35).
(/khãb)
- Scirpus dioicus* (Kunth) Boeck : Mats used to cover huts, were traditionally made from these rushes. Such huts are denoted /haru-omti. These plants were mostly used when their seeds ripened (during the summer months). /Haruti are known throughout the research area, and today only utilized in isolated cases, e.g. in the town of Berseba (see also Schultze 1907; Buettner 1976 (1884)).
(/harus; -b)
- Stipagrostis namaquensis* (Nees) De Winter : In the Berseba area the blades of this strong grass species were used for brooms and in children's games.
(/khabin)
- Stipagrostis sabulicola* (Pilger) De Winter : Along the lower Kuiseb River the dry blades of this grass are used to kindle fires, as well as for thatching material.
(karub)
- Tamarix usneoides* E. Meyer ex Bunge : In Namaland and along the lower Kuiseb River, green wood from this plant is used for fastening hut frames on the inside. In the lower Kuiseb, the wood is also used for whip-sticks, stirrers, picking-sticks (used for picking /nara), and wooden pegs used in skin-dressing. Dry branches are collected for firewood. The pounded root is boiled in water and the extract taken against constipation and other stomach disorders.
(daweb)

- Terfezia* sp. prob. *T. pfeilii* : The tuber of this plant is regarded as
P. Henn excellent food, especially for elderly
people. According to informants in
(//hawas) Namaland, //hawas tastes like meat. This
plant grows in sandy places such as dunes,
and its location is indicated by small
cracks on the surface. The women usually
sing and jump in the immediate vicinity
where these cracks have been observed.
This action is said to result in more
cracks being formed, thus revealing other
plants. //Hawas is generally gathered
after the first frost (late May). The
tuber is either eaten raw or prepared
like potatoes (see also Giess 1966 :
60-61).
- Tetragonia schenkii* Schinz : In Namaland dry wood from this dwarf
(#khoe-hain) shrub is collected for firewood.
- Thammosa africana* Engler : In the Soromaas area, the green stems of
(#gâna) this dwarf shrub are boiled in water and
the extract taken against influenza.
#Gâna is also added to tea or coffee.
- Trichocaulon officinale* N.E. : A well-known source of water in Namaland;
Br. the thorns are removed and the juicy
stems are eaten (see also Schultze 1907;
(/goai-i) Giess 1966).
- Trochomeria macrocarpa* : The root-fibre of this climber is
(Sonder) Hooker fil roasted for food. It is also taken as a
(/hai-i) medicine against diarrhoea after preparing
an extract by boiling it in water. This
plant is utilized in Namaland.
- Ziziphus mucronata* Willd : In Namaland wood from this shrublike tree
(#aros) was traditionally used for the construc-
tion of hut frames due to its strength
and elasticity. The berries are also
eaten.
- Ao//arib : The pounded roots are boiled in water and
the extract taken against children's
diseases, stomach disorders and convul-
sions. Ao//arib is utilized medicinally
throughout Namaland.
- /Ao-#guin : In Namaland the roots of this dwarf shrub
are boiled in water and the extract taken
by women for the treatment of stomach
disorders and women's diseases. The
roots give additional flavour to curdled
milk (Hoff 1981 : 37).
- Dama daweb* : According to informants, this small plant
grows in the Kuiseb River after good
rains. The root is added to fresh milk
to flavour it.

- !Ganeb* : The leaves of this dwarf shrub are boiled in water and the body is washed with this extract. Along the lower Kuiseb River it is believed to be an effective treatment for colds.
- #Gani-i* : In Namaland, the pounded root of this shrub-like tree is boiled in water and the extract taken against stomach disorders.
- !Gān* : In the Berseba area the root of this dwarf shrub is boiled in water or milk and the extract taken against stomach disorders.
- !Hom tsi dei dei* : A thornless succulent. This plant provides a source of water. According to informants from Berseba and Gibeon, it is easily confused with the poisonous species *xai'a xob*.
- #Nui-#koin* : A dwarf shrub. In the Berseba area the pounded root is boiled in water and the extract taken against stomach disorders and women's diseases.
- //Nū-haib* : This dwarf shrub grows on the Namib plains where it is dominant after the rainy season. Along the lower Kuiseb River the pounded root is boiled in water and the extract taken as a remedy for stomach disorders.
- //Oa-sāb* : *//Oa-sāb* denotes powder obtained from the caps of toadstools; and this is mixed with fat. Older women sometimes use it as make-up. In the past, it was rubbed on the septic udders of cows and ewes (Schultze 1907 : 258). The utilization of *//Oa-sāb* is known in Namaland and along the lower Kuiseb River. Compare Schultze (1907 : 208) for particulars on other traditional cosmetic powders.

2.2 SUMMARY

The list given is not comprehensive as the study area did not receive adequate rain. However, it does summarize some of the Nama's ethno-botanical knowledge, and provides a diachronic perspective. Notwithstanding the supplementary and erratic utilization of plants, they are still used for a variety of purposes within the predominantly pastoralist society. In the case of the lower Kuiseb River Valley, where relatively few plant species occur, the incidence of plant utilization is still reasonably high, and data was obtained on 20 plant species.

2.3 ADDENDUM

To supplement the preceding survey, additional data on Nama plant utilization recorded by Schultze (1907), Giess (1966), Dentlinger (1977), and Haacke (1982) is included.

Although it was difficult to substantiate all Schultze's (1907) data on plant utilization, due to the present decrease in such practices and the fact that he worked in a much larger area, his book remains the most comprehensive source on Nama ethnography. In the subsequent list, the botanical and vernacular names are those employed by Schultze (1907):

- Acacia hebeclada* : The seeds are either eaten roasted or ground.
- Anterhicum drepanophyllum* : Used as vegetables.
(/kxorob)
- Aristida* spp. : Seeds from these grasses are collected from ants' nests and usually consumed with milk.
- Ceropegia* sp. : The potato-like tubers are eaten.
- Ectadium virgatum* : The shell is roasted or ground.
- Gazania* spp. : The flowers are eaten raw or consumed with boiling milk to which salt has been added.
(!gobo//nas)
- Grielum humifusum* : The tuber is eaten.
(!kxuib; tsa !xa #gaieb)
- Pelargonium incrassatum* Curt. : This plant provides edible subterranean parts.
(/ami #aib)
- Pelargonium* spp. : The small stems are roasted and eaten.
- Peucedanum* spp. : The tuber is eaten.
- Rhus celastroides* Sond. : This shrub bears edible berries.

Giess (1966) mentions that the small bulbs of *Walleria nutans* Kirk., (/nus) are roasted and eaten by the Nama people. Dentlinger (1977) recorded the utilization of plants along the lower Kuiseb River, as well as from the Mirabib Hill area in the Namib, approximately 40 km distant from the River:

Gomphocarpus fruticosus : Along the lower Kuiseb River the thinner, more pliable bark of this shrub is used as string.

The subsequent list is from the Mirabib Hill area:

Acacia africanus : Both the wood and the gum produced by this tree are used.

Adenolobus pechueli : The roots are taken as a medicine for the treatment of liver complaints.

Commiphora saxicola : The juice from the stem is drunk as a thirst quencher.

Montinia caryophyllacea : The hollow branches are used for pipe stems.

Senecio alliarifolius : This plant is used as a broom.

Tephrosia dregeana : The roots are eaten with milk.

In his recent article on traditional Nama hut-building, Haacke (1982) mentions the use of *Juncus arabicus* (/hómè/härüs) as well as *Cyperus marginatus* (!khówóbès) as raw materials for the construction of mats. The latter is described as the best-suited type available in the Berseba area, as it is thick and reaches a length of up to 1,5 metres, allowing wider mats. For the hut framework, the more flexible wood of *Ziziphus mucronata* (#árós) is preferred to *Tamarix usneoides* (däwéb), which is also utilized.

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