

WORKING EXPERIENCE WITH TRADITIONAL PASTORALISTS AND THEIR WAY OF PASTURE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The need for planning and implementing livestock development projects together with, rather than for, communal farmers has become increasingly apparent. The production systems and the chances for sustainable range management of the communal rangeland areas in Namibia differ from the Namibian commercial sector. Consequently, a different approach for sustainable development has to be applied. Management of pasture grounds by communal farmers in Northern Namibia includes the management of water resources, cattle movements and the usage and management of fodder supplies - subject to a range of conditions originating from the traditional and legal framework of the prevailing system. For future improvement and development of communal pasture ground also social implications play an important role. The information provided in this article on the implications of communal range management - without claiming to give a full picture - is based on the working experience made with traditional pastoralists. No quantitative data will be provided.

INTRODUCTION

The following article is based on a lecture given at Neudamm Agricultural College on 31 March 1998 at the 2nd meeting of the Namibian Rangelands Forum. Information given is based on the experience made with traditional pastoralists during a three year PhD study on range ecology in Northern Namibia supported by the Tropical Ecology Support Program of the German Technical Co-operation (TÖB, GTZ). For the general traditional patterns and as examples of grazing management three pilot areas of the Northern Regions Livestock Development Project (NOLIDEP) are briefly characterised. The specific study on the three pilot areas was supported by NOLIDEP.

The grazing practise of traditional pastoralists will be described and reference will also be made to follow up activities closely linked to pasture management, namely:

- the management of water resources
- cattle movements
- the usage and management of fodder supplies.

The usage of land and water in communal areas is subject to a range of traditional and legal framework conditions such as:

- the usage of boundaries
- the application of customary rights
- the impact of institutional linkages
- the status of land tenure rights

the clarification of which plays an important role for a development approach.

For future improvement and development of communal pasture ground social implications as the background of the prevailing system are specifically important for the identification of decision makers. Therefore, special reference is made to the traditional 'gifting and loaning system of livestock' and the performance of resource poor and/or female headed households.

METHODOLOGY

Information was obtained by methods of Participatory Rural Appraisal by mapping with small groups of participants and by informal interviews.

Study Areas: Brief Characterisation of three Owambo communities

1. Oshambelo

- a Kwhaluudhi community and a relatively new settlement, only known as a borehole in other communities of Uukwaluudhi
- direct access to a cattle post area, used by the whole Kingdom of Uukwaluudhi
- since settled only over the last years, large pearl millet (*omahangu*) fields with enlarged extended homestead areas used as a grazing reserves (*ekoves*) have developed
- few permanent brick built or tin buildings exist; homesteads can still be moved according to the traditional practise; few fences occur with modern wire no pipeline; water provision for home consumption and animals is labour intensive, i.e. on average 7 km walk to the main well with drinking water quality
- cattle post area is equipped with boreholes (*embola*) with diesel pumps
- traditional leader is the King of Uukwaludhi with about 20 headmen reporting to him

2. Onaanda

- a grown Uukwambi community with a structured society pattern
- large omahangu fields; large *ekoves* sometimes split into camps; most of the homesteads have at least 1 or 2 brick built permanent buildings; modern wire is used for fencing
- some people sell the surplus of pearl millet (basic staple food)

- water provision for home consumption by a pipeline
- no boreholes in the cattle post area, which is partly covered by the pipeline; hand dug wells in the remaining area
- grazing reserves still available, where access is restricted due to lack of water

3. Omatunda

- small Kwanjama community, densely populated and run through by oshanas considered as the last grazing reserves within the settlements
- no direct access to a related cattle post area
- homesteads are close to each other; no permanent brick built houses; few modern wire fences, sometimes no fence at all
- special feature: some *omahangu* fields are shared and cultivated in collaboration with neighbours
- no sale of *omahangu* surplus
- large variety of exploitable trees

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Management of grazing and water resources

Grazing resources are utilised communally but not managed in a communal way, i.e. in a sense that a control body elected or empowered traditionally would regulate access to defined areas. Virtually anybody can bring cattle and establish a cattle post in those communities where a cattle post area is at disposal, i.e. Onaanda and Oshambelo. If a community has no direct access to a cattle post area, there will not be any objection to bring cattle to the settlement area, i.e. Omatunda. However, there are different preconditions according to the minimum factors of the prevailing production system:

- in Oshambelo you must ask the controller of the borehole whether you can water your animals there (*if not you can still survive for some time on a hand dug well*)
- in Onaanda you must have your own hand dug well
- in Omatunda (densely populated, no grazing area) you must have a house there

Certainly the preconditions mentioned can be replaced by family or friendship relations or by the gifting and loaning system, dealt with later on. However, it is not the headman who is approached for access to grazing, it is usually the neighbours. People in general are aware of different qualities of grass species, their changing nutrition value in the course of a vegetation period and of different pasture patches. The level of knowledge differs between the three communities. The utilisation of this resource, however, is not linked to this knowledge and rather subject to framework conditions like water availability, wealth situation - whether herders can be employed - and distant grazing areas that can be reached.

The management of water resources is in general more ownership featured, especially in the case of boreholes with a diesel pump and drilled by the government as is the case in

the Oshambelo cattle post area. Drilled boreholes with a diesel pump are maintained by the government. Most boreholes are controlled by a nearby cattle post holder. He is registered in Ondangwa at the Department of Water Affairs and is responsible for ordering services and repairs through the government. He is also in charge for the collection of the yearly fee from all users of the borehole (N\$ 2.00 per head of cattle/year) and organises the diesel for the pump, which can be obtained free of charge from the government as long as he can present a receipt for the yearly fee. Trespassers are not charged for water because of lack of control. The controller of the borehole usually has assumed rights over the borehole beyond his original duties. He will only admit a restricted number of herds to this borehole and therefore also controls the surrounding grazing area. To some extent the number of herds admitted to the borehole can vary due to emergency situations like drought and has also been increased lately because of higher animal pressure. Controllers of those boreholes report that it has become increasingly difficult to control access.

For other water resources like hand dug wells (grazing area Onaanda) or the pipeline (where no contribution for water is asked) access is not restricted. In this case a water committee is responsible to address service and maintenance requirements to the Department of Water Affairs and is also responsible for the settling of conflicts. The headman will also refer to the water committee for conflicts. Whether the people can control access to water points in the future and thereby assume a certain control over a defined grazing area, is doubtful. For instance, in Omatunda the installation of water points were paid for by a limited group of people and are today used free of charge by everybody who is in need of water.

2. Cattle movement

Whether cattle is moved or not is dependent on the following individual production factors of the cattle owner:

- size of the herd
- labour capacity
- condition of the pasture
- access to water points
- family and friendship links (as such that a herd can go on the trek with a herd of a relative or friend).

Usually the movement is related to a specific season:

Okwenye (August to December, dry season) - throughout these months cattle are moved to the cattle posts
Othinge (January to March, rainy season) - cattle are moved back to the settlement area
Oshikufuthinge (April to May) - transition period, cattle feed on harvest stover
Okufu (June to August) - transition period.

Valid for this general pattern is that the movement is either towards the cattle posts or back home. Once arrived at the cattle post no further movement was stated within a specific season and the vegetation is obviously not utilised according

to the knowledge of the differing pasture quality and vegetation stages. However, in areas where the pressure on pasture is not extremely high, like in the Onaanda cattle post areas, herders may assume a certain right for the exclusive utilisation of the pasture circle in walking distance around their own hand-dug water point. The procedure of obtaining such a water point through approaching the neighbours gives evidence that the herder can utilise the surrounding grazing area almost undisturbed. He may then apply certain management tools according to his knowledge, i.e. to first graze the fresh pasture close to his water point in order to avoid loss of trampling and to reserve the most unpalatable species for later utilisation.

3. Fodder supplies

In general, little knowledge could be found on the cultivation of fodder. Lucerne production was mentioned by some farmers out of the experience gathered during earlier work on commercial farms. Other farmers required more *Acacias* in order to feed their pods. Supplementary feed is only considered for the time of ploughing, when draught animals are fed with sorghum or pearl millet straw and for drought times as a means of survival. Emergency feed in drought times can consist of palm leaves, branches of the *Marula* tree and grass originally reserved for roof thatching. In Omatunda the grass used for thatching is restricted from grazing (enforced by the headman), since it is a valuable building material, but can be used for emergency feed. However, the motivation to cultivate fodder - either community based or in the individual *ekoves* - is high, although fodder cultivation is not yet perceived as a means to increase livestock production and is rather perceived as a strategy to survive.

The understanding of closely managed fodder supplies is in general related to the most equal distribution of livestock and emphasised by the request for more water points in order to realise this measure. Fodder is, however, reserved in the *ekoves*, and will only be utilised there once the communal pasture is depleted. Whether the removal of animals can be used as regulative factor to improve pasture depends on the commercialisation potential of the specific community, which differs enormously between the mentioned communities. In Omatunda, because of the scarce pasture, people cannot imagine a more productive scenario and big herd owner would never sell their animals for cash, while in Onaanda, with a prevailing semi-commercial production scheme (surplus of *omahangu* is sold), the removal of animals is discussed in order to avoid monetary loss during anticipated drought periods. The improvement of appropriate facilities for the removal of animals is already addressed and initial negotiations with MEATCO are also under way.

4. Handling and acceptance of boundaries

People are usually aware of and can precisely state boundaries between settlement and cattle post areas and boundaries to neighbouring communities and it is assured by the headmen and the villagers, that any further settlement behind a given boundary will be restricted. In reality the boundaries are usually boundary zones where cattle posts occur between settlements.

An exception is given in Oshambelo where a newly set up regulation (originally for environmental reason) fixes the boundary, because traditional authorities who claim to be the initiators of this regulation, have assumed the law-enforcement.

5. Land tenure rights and usage

When asked about enclosures people insist on the statement "*there is no private grazing*". This is rather contradictory, considering eye-catching largely fenced plots in settlement and grazing areas. However, enclosures - no matter how large they are - are not considered as private grazing reserves as long as a house is built or in the process of being erected within them. Whether in the settlement area or in the grazing area, the extent of enlargement depends on the tolerance level of the neighbours. An *ekove* can be extended in low populated areas, where the neighbour is far. In densely populated areas such as Omatunda the people who came to settle first hold the largest *ekoves*.

The biased performance of the headmen in this situation must be seen together with his low income and his current loss of authority. An increasing number of new tasks (projects, community development etc.) are time consuming but do not provide additional income. Land allocation is one of the last profitable privileges he has and under favourable circumstances he resides in the transition zone of a settlement/cattle post area and still has land to allocate at his disposal.

In the rare cases where enclosures are considered as private grazing reserves they are termed differently - *EEKAMBA*. Since everybody must have access to communal grazing land, an *EEKAMBA* cannot be tolerated under customary law. Usually those enclosures are vast and located in remote areas and can only be occupied by wealthy people who have the means for fencing and transport. Apparently the authority of the headman is not strong enough to intervene. Therefore, there are few *EEKAMBA* cases that had been taken to the High Court in Windhoek through the initiative of the community in order to gain back communal grazing land. However, community members state, that the prospect of success is very limited because of the lack of a legal framework.

6. Usage of customary rights and institutional linkages

Usually the headman is still the first person to address problems and to proclaim judgements. However, the extent of acceptance towards the headman range from respect to obedience and differ between the communities. Conflict issues of all kinds are brought to the attention of the headman or the tribal court. However, it was stated that matters take a long time to get settled. It may be for this reason that complaints of overgrazing through intruders or trespassers at a certain cattle post area are not referred to the headmen, since only little support is expected in this regard. In cases of cattle theft, however, clear legal customary procedures are followed. A difference is made between intentional and unintentional theft, the latter referring to cases when a herd is driven through an area and other cattle would join this herd.

7. Livestock gifting and loaning

Since cattle contributes to the status of the family who owns them, non-cattle owners are keen to at least pretend they own some cattle. In this regard a loaning system has developed comparable to the system of depositing money at a bank. A farmer owning many cattle will loan some heads of his cattle to someone who owns few or no cattle. The lender remains the owner and may remove his cattle whenever he so wishes. This system benefits the owner in a way that someone else takes care of his cattle. The offspring, i.e. the increase in value of the cattle (like interest in a bank account), remains the property of the lender. In return the borrower has the benefit of increased status and reputation in his community as well as free use of all the products of the cattle such as milk and manure. Moreover, the community sees the cattle as the possession of the borrower since the possession relations of the rich cattle owner are not exposed in his living environment. The splitting of herds in this manner can also be seen as a decrease in risk for the lender that he may lose less cattle in times of drought. The gifting and loaning system is important for social implications but of minor relevance to cattle movement and removal.

8. Problems of resource poor and/or female headed households

In a commercialisation process the less favourable parties always run the risk of being left out. If, however, there is a functioning traditional network through family and friendship, these parties can profit in the same way as others from innovations and intensified production, unless their social

status and reputation within the community is disturbed. Livestock donations by development projects to single households have reportedly led to competition and envy. In order to improve the living conditions of poor members of a community, they should rather be integrated in the development process of the community by receiving specific training in a field such as basic veterinary services. In this way they will be enabled to offer a payable service to their community.

RECOMMENDATION

Enhanced community based resource management should include the following support:

Needs pointed out by the community and their own approaches for solution should be considered. In order to address those needs a legal framework for land allocation is essential. This in turn would strengthen the control of access to community cattle post areas. Furthermore, capacity building is an important activity in order to initiate commercialisation. Training in grazing management should make use of external influence such as from the commercial sector of Namibia. Any development approach should include the participation of traditional leaders and should primarily focus on the improvement of framework conditions, i.e. factors such as water availability and improved veterinary services and should not interfere at the micro-economical level. Production can only intensify in accordance with the commercialisation level of each individual community.