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## Settlement patterns of Khoekhoe-speaking Namibians

Alan Barnard and Joy Barnard  
University of Edinburgh

### Introduction

The Khoekhoe-speaking peoples are among Namibia's earliest inhabitants. The ancestors of the present populations may well include those settlement in the Namib and Kalahari many thousands of years ago, as well as arrivals of as recent a date as the early nineteenth century. According to conventional ethnological distinctions, Khoekhoe-speakers include three main groups: the Nama, the Damara, and the Hai//om. However, there is a growing tendency to use linguistic rather than social group or ethnic designations. Hence, in Namibia, people commonly identify themselves as Khoekhoe-speakers, Nama-speakers, Damara-speakers, Nama/Damara-speakers, etc. This new trend is fostered by the Namibian government's wish to avoid the travesty of past ethnic classifications by the South African authorities.

In this paper, we shall use the designation 'Khoekhoe-speakers' to include all who speak Khoekhoe as their first language. However, we shall also refer to specific ethnic groups, where appropriate, by the names which are commonly used to identify them. This is not, of course, to harp back to the South African past, but rather to represent the cultural diversity, and indeed the self-identity, which still characterizes Khoekhoe-speaking groups. It would be incorrect in this context to deny, for example, a specifically Nama (as opposed to Damara) identity to members of tribes such as the Gai-//khaun or the /Kobesin. Likewise, to designate Hai//om simply as 'Khoekhoe-speakers', or indeed as 'Nama-Damara-speakers', would mask the fact that they are, and recognize themselves to be, culturally different from the Nama and Damara. To call them 'Hai//om-speakers' instead would be, at the very least, linguistically problematic.

The Nama tribes are the most recent Namibian arrivals among Khoekhoe-speaking peoples, though they are the best known and the people from which the language (when referred to simply as Nama) and the country (Namibia) derive their names. They include two large, traditional 'divisions': the so-called Great Nama, who have lived in Namibia for several centuries, and the Orlams or Oorlams (sometimes called Little Nama), who crossed the Orange from the south

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around 1800. Both of these divisions, in fact, migrated from the present South Africa, although some ancestral groups closely related to them may also have migrated from Angola or Botswana.

The Damara are a very long-standing Namibian population group. Their place of origin is unknown, and for all practical purposes may be regarded, along with the San or Bushmen, as of original Namibian ancestry. Their ancestors may indeed include the people who long ago executed the splendid rock engravings and paintings at Twyfelfontein, in the heart of the apartheid 'homeland' of Damaraland. Like those called 'Bushmen', the forebears of the present Damara were largely hunter-gatherers. How they and the Nama came to speak the same language is another historical mystery, seemingly unsolvable by either linguistic or archaeological, let alone documentary, work.

The Hai//om are believed to be of mixed !Kung (or !Xü, also known as Ju/'hoan) and Damara descent. Today they speak Khoekhoe and not !Kung, and the specific dialect they use is virtually identical with that of the Damara. Their culture has elements in common with those of the !Kung, the Damara, and the neighbouring Bantu-speaking groups, especially the Ovambo. While 'cultures' are *never* pure and discrete entities, that of the Hai//om is more difficult to classify than most. These people have often been forced by circumstance to adopt the ways of others, and they have developed diverse mechanisms – including a great diversity of patterns of settlement – to adapt to the outside pressures which have long been placed upon them.

Each of these three groups exhibits much variation. Each has been affected by historical changes, including war, drought, the incursion of outsiders on their lands, their own migrations and dispersals, and the changing political situation, including colonial domination by Germany (roughly 1890 to 1915) and South Africa (1915 to 1989). There are also internal political factors, due to the authority and success of individual chiefs and headmen, the influence of resident missionaries and indigenous church leaders, and the success of the people's own efforts at making a living in the harsh environments in which they have lived. In this paper, we will explore that variation, partly historically, but much more with a view to understanding the present circumstances of Khoekhoe-speaking groups in diverse environments from the far north of Namibia to the far south.



## Itinerary and context

This paper is based mainly on two recent field trips we carried out in order to examine aspects of settlement of Khoekhoe-speaking and other populations. The first, in 1991, lasted about four weeks and was concentrated in the northern part of the country. There we met Hai//om, Ju/'hoan (!Kung), Kxoe, Ovambo, Afrikaner, and German Namibians. Of these, the Hai//om are Khoekhoe-speakers, while the Ju/'hoan are culturally related to them,<sup>1</sup> the Kxoe are linguistically related (as members of the Khoe language group), and Ovambo, Afrikaners and Germans are in close contact. Our visit was brief, and intended mainly to gain an overview of Hai//om settlement. This would not have been possible without the help of Thomas and Dagmar Widlok, who were then engaged in intensive fieldwork at Mangetti West and surrounding areas near Tsumeb (see map).

In 1993 we returned to Namibia for six weeks to study settlement in the former Damaraland and the former Namaland, as well as a number of other areas occupied by Damara and Nama groups. Our travels took us over huge areas of the country, though what we gained in breadth we sacrificed in depth. Thus our understanding is largely one of impressions within a comparative framework, rather than of an intimate understanding of the situation in any specific area. The main body of data presented here are derived directly from this short period of research.<sup>2</sup>

Although our periods of field research are short, they are built on a foundation of earlier work by people like Hoernlé (1985 [1913-37]; 1987 [1912-23]), Fourie (1926; 1928), Lebzelter (1934), and Vedder (1923; 1928a; 1928b), as well

<sup>1</sup> There is a common belief that Hai//om were once Ju/'hoan-speakers who, perhaps in the nineteenth century, acquired the Nama-Damara language (see, e.g., Schapera 1930: 34-45). However, Hai//om themselves reject the idea that they belong to the same group as the Ju/'hoan.

<sup>2</sup> Field research in 1991 was sponsored by the Tweedie Exploration Fellowship and the University of Edinburgh (Committee for African Studies, Department of Social Anthropology, Munro Lectureship Committee, and Travel and Research Fund). Field research in 1993 was sponsored by the Nuffield Foundation, the James A. Swan Fund, and the University of Edinburgh (Committee for African Studies and Travel and research Committee). We are grateful to all these bodies, and to the University of Namibia, The University Centre for Studies in Namibia, and the Namibia Scientific Society, for their support. We would also like to acknowledge the help of the many in Namibia who provided us with advice and encouragement, and especially Kuno Budack, Ben and Antasis Fuller, Bennie Ganuseb, Wilfrid and Irmgard Haacke, Marcus Koper, Blythe Loutit, and Dudu Mururoa.

as more recent work such as that of Budack (e.g., 1972; 1986). The early studies were, in some cases, very weak by modern standards, but they nevertheless often provide enough basic information on settlement patterns for a historical context to be understood. There are also numerous secondary sources on Khoekhoe history which touch on aspects of settlement (e.g., Carstens 1969; Elphick 1985; Lau 1987), as well as important sources on relevant archaeological work (e.g., Kinahan 1991).

Just as important, there is a comparative framework developed through the study of settlement patterns of other Khoisan populations. One purpose of our field study was to try to apply the methods of regional comparison used in previous studies of the settlement pattern of hunter-gatherers and former hunter-gatherers (e.g., Barnard 1979; 1980; 1986; 1992a) to the study of herding populations. Another purpose, not unrelated, was to try to understand potential problems in social development through such a comparative framework, and in this effort, to take account of comparisons through time as well as across the terrain. Recent studies, for example those of Fuller (1993) and Rohde (1993) on the old Damaraland, have focused on the details of social life and on in-depth comparisons between just two areas within this former apartheid 'reserve'. We decided instead to survey, albeit very briefly, a much larger area. This paper is intended as an overview of settlement across the areas inhabited by Khoekhoe-speaking people, and thus as a supplement, but not a substitute, for intensive 'pure' and policy-oriented research on social change in modern Namibia.

## Nama settlement in southern Namibia

Settlement in southern Namibia is characterized by an emphasis on traditional arrangements, coupled with extreme pressures on land and forced resettlement under the South Africans. The extent of the traditionalist ethos is difficult to ascertain without more intensive study, but the maintenance of settlement forms very similar to those reproduced in drawings and paintings by William Burchell, Thomas Baines and others, recorded by earlier anthropologists (e.g., Hoernlé 1985 [1925]: 49-50), and found in the archaeological record (see, e.g., Dierks 1992), is apparent in a number of areas. The settlements of today can be classified loosely as either *semi-urban* or *rural*, though great diversity exists within each form.

### Semi-urban settlement

Semi-urban settlement in Nama areas includes: (1) circular or oval arrangements; (2) linear arrangements; (3) grid plans; and (4) extensions to town areas. Let us take each one in turn.

*Circular arrangements* are a form derived from the ancient Nama practice of an entire political unit – either a clan (*/hau/nas*) or a tribe (*/hau/s*) – camping together. Early writers record instances of large Khoekhoe settlements of this kind, with each family or clan placed in hierarchical order around a circle or an oval. Part of the purpose of these arrangements was defence, especially defence of livestock. Livestock were kept in the middle of the encampment, with huts around them. The size varied simply according to the number of people and livestock to be accommodated (see Barnard 1992b: 167-69, 183-86).

One interesting example of this type of settlement in the past is the fortified camp known as //Khauxa<sup>nas</sup> or Kouchanas, 173 kilometres south-east of Keetmanshoop. This camp is of unknown date, but it was certainly occupied by Orlam Nama in the eighteenth century and was used by the //Haboben or //Hawoben (Veldskoendraers) in the 1840s (Dierks 1992). The fortifications provided protection against cattle raiders and, ultimately, from colonial military forces. Indeed //Khauxanlas was the site of a skirmish between the Germans and Nama fighters led by Jakob Marengo in August 1904.

Perhaps surprisingly, circular urban settlements have been retained in at least two major Nama centres: Hoachanas (!Hoaxa<sup>nas</sup>) and Berseba. Other centres, such as Gibeon and Bethanie, no longer have this form of settlement. It has been replaced with either a more European-style, as in the case of Gibeon, or an apartheid-induced style, with separation of areas members of different classes and ethnic groups, as in the case of Bethanie.

Hoachanas is the oldest continually-occupied Nama settlement in Namibia, and deserves special consideration here as an example of a community which has maintained its identity through time. The basic town plan is illustrated in Fig. 1 (top). According to tradition, Hoachanas is at least 400 years old and was larger in the past than it is today (the present population is about 2000). The town lies in a white farming area. It was designated as a white farm by the South Africans, but the people there refused to move or otherwise co-operate with the engineers of apartheid, and no white farmer was ever persuaded to take up the site. As a result, Hoachanas remained a Nama island within in a sea of white farms, and it still retains this character. Because of the relatively large human population living on this equivalent of one farm, there is little room for livestock. Some keep cattle, sheep, and goats, but certainly not on the extent of their neighbours.

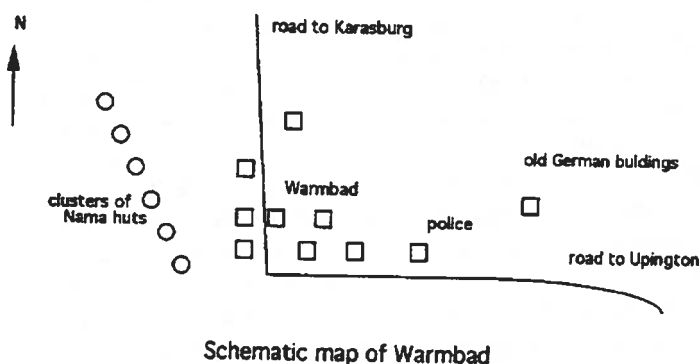
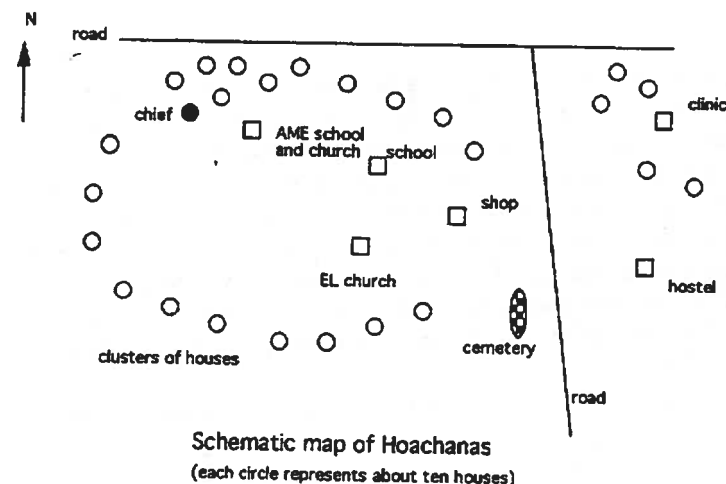


Fig. 1. Examples of Nama settlement

There is a school garden, the produce of which (maize, pumpkins, and tomatoes) is used in school meals. There is a community garden, where individuals produce their own food. There is also a new communal gardening enterprise, sponsored by UNICEF in co-operation with the Ministry of Health and Social Services and the Ministry of Agriculture, which is now being set up. At present there is no kindergarten, but Hoachanas has two schools. One is run by the government and the other, by the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), with some funding from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The schools and the churches occupy prominent places in the community, both socially and physically. The two main churches are the AME and the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and there is also smaller representation by the Roman Catholic Church and by Lutheran and AME breakaway churches. Economically, Hoachanas is having some success in attracting investment from NGOs. However, as in many parts of Namibia, transport is a problem. Since Hoachanas lies in a farming area, off the main route from Windhoek to the south of the country, there is little traffic through the town.

Hoachanas owes its residential structure to a number of factors. The fact that its people refused to co-operate with the South African authorities is only one. Another, key element, is the fact that it is the capital of the Gai-//khaun (Red Nation), a once powerful tribe whose members retain great pride in their community and its history. Indeed it is traditionally regarded as the senior Nama tribe, to which other tribes once paid tribute before its power was crushed by the German forces in the 1904-05 War (see Budack 1970). The historic role of this capital has been fostered by dominant families in the community, including that of the present, elected chief, Peter Simon Moses Koper, whose father Marcus Koper is the AME minister. The people of Hoachanas are presently actively engaged in restoring aspects of the chiefship and council (also elected) and have recently built a new house for the chief, complete with a dancing area and museum-piece traditional hut. The community also has its own day – 1st December – the date in 1905 when Chief Manase !Noreseb was killed fighting the Germans. Both the chiefship and modern political links are important. The town has long been a SWAPO stronghold, and there is every sign that the government will confer upon the community municipality status, bringing with it amenities and personnel directly from government departments.

Finally, Hoachanas retains a traditional style of settlement partly because its site is ideally suited to such a style. It is built on an oval ridge, with dwellings on the crest facing down into the central area. There, instead of the kraals of olden times, are the fountain, the football pitch, the schools, the churches, and the shops of a modern and socially-active community. The chief's home is in the

north-west, with the SWAPO meeting place nearby. The graveyard is opposite, in the south-east. The clans still occupy their places, in a set order, around the great oval which stretches for some 800 metres. At the end of the oval, on the eastern side, there is a clinic and a government hostel. This area, across a farm road which runs through the town, is where outsiders (non-Gai-//khaun) mainly live.

In addition to those present at Hoachanas, there are many who stay in Windhoek, on the farms and elsewhere, who maintain close links with the town and regard it as their home. This no doubt stems from its historic and indeed tribal (in the literal sense of the word) importance.

Few of the other Nama tribal capitals have been able to maintain the pattern of Hoachanas. The only other major example, Berseba, is the home of two chiefly families, each with their own followings – the Isaaks and the Goliaths. Berseba lies in the apartheid-designated Namaland, to the south, and is surrounded by outlying settlements, many along river valleys and on the edge of Brukkaros, an extinct volcano which literally overshadows the town. Berseba occupies an historically strategic position. In the past, the chiefly families have intermarried with those of Bethanie and Gibeon as part of a mechanism for reducing bloodshed between Nama tribes.<sup>3</sup> Today, like Hoachanas, it seems to preserve its independence partly by virtue of the fact that it does lie off the main road and did not have substantial economic domination by the white community during the time of South African control of Namibia.

Berseba is laid out in a long oval, from north to south, with Brukkaros immediately north of the town. Although church, school, and football pitch lie in the centre of the oval, shops and other modern buildings are mainly outside, to the north-east and north-west of the centre. Many in Berseba build their houses in the traditional Nama style, either *in addition* to their main dwellings or as their main dwellings (see, Haacke 1982). The traditional *oms* (home or house) is more common here than in any other part of Namibia. The town seems to be undergoing some revival, and new economic prospects, including horse-racing introduced as a money-making venture, offer some hope for the future as well as adding to the community spirit.

Beyond Berseba, satellite settlements dot the landscape in a way that would be impossible at Hoachanas, with its restricted area within the white farms. Most of those living outside the town have built their homes on the secondary roads,

<sup>3</sup> This information was supplied by the late Josef Isaak, then chief of the Isaaks, during Alan Barnard's first visit to Berseba in 1979.

generally near valleys, where water from branches of the Fish River can be used for their stock and domestic needs.

The *linear style* of settlement occurs frequently in Nama areas, and is more common still among Damara in the north of Namibia. Perhaps the best known cases are among the =Aonin (Topnaars) of the Namib Desert Park near Walvis Bay (see Budack 1977; 1983). Their settlements are laid out along the Kuiseb or !Kuseb River, and the linear arrangement there allows all residents equal access to the water which is collected in wells in the riverbed. These settlements lack the hierarchical arrangement of families which characterize settlements in central Namibia, including those of Berseba and Hoachanas.

A similar linear arrangement is found at Warmbad, where a Nama settlement of over thirty dwellings lies along the side of a ridge above the valley to the west of the town (see Fig. 1, bottom). The people there have grouped over 30 huts in some six more-or-less definable circles, but the overall arrangement is distinctly linear. The line of dwellings is only a hundred metres from the town itself, but marks a clear separation from the old white area, with its planned street formation and stone buildings. For an outsider, the town has a strange feeling, with its deserted colonial dwellings and baths in the east, its bungalows in the largely white town centre, and its distinctly separate Nama area to the west.

While circular and linear arrangements are long-standing traditional arrangements, attested archaeologically and historically, *grid plans* are not (see Fig. 2, top). In contrast to Hoachanas and Berseba, places like Gibeon, and Bethanie have been altered drastically by German and South African oppression, and no doubt by the pressures of modern life.

Gibeon is of historical importance as the seat of the once powerful /Kobesin or /Khowesin, an Orlam nation better known as the Witboois. Kido Witbooi settled there with his people in 1863 and quickly came under the influence of the missionaries Jacob Knauer and Johannes Olpp. His grandson, !Nanseb or Hendrik Witbooi, later moved his people to Hoonkrans, west of Rehoboth, in 1888, but after bitter fighting with Germans, Herero, and with other Nama tribes, the Witbooi were forced to return impoverished to Gibeon a few years later. At Hoonkrans, a large roofless church had occupied the central area of the circular camp. Now back at Gibeon, he found that the Germans had built three beer-halls. German traders exploited the 'population, and their soldiers were spreading venereal diseases among the population. Captain Witbooi's renowned religiosity and sobriety were apparently no match for the decadence of the Schutztruppe and their camp followers (Helbig and Hillebrecht 1992).

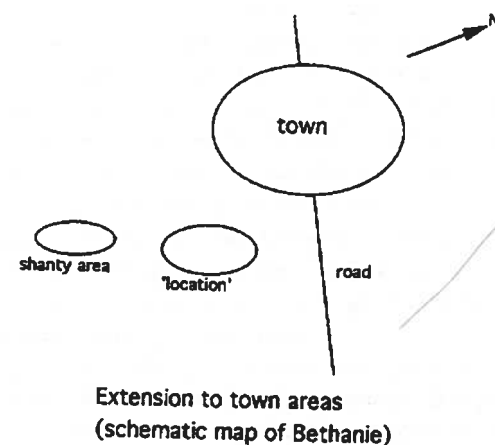
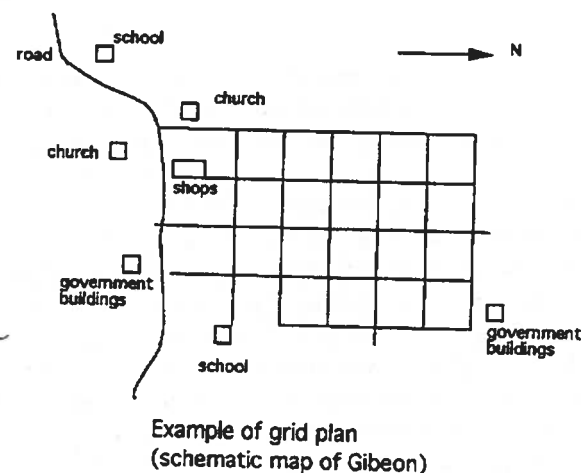


Fig. 2. Further examples of Nama settlement

Like many other Nama settlements, Gibeon is built on a ridge, but the population lives in the valley between the government area (to the north) and shops (to the south). The school sits on the eastern end of the town, and the church on the western end. Thus Gibeon exhibits virtually the opposite configuration of Hoachanas or Berseba. The dwellings are built on a criss-cross of roads in a manner foreign to the Nama life of old. The /Khubesin, like the Gai//khaun, are today strong supporters of SWAPO. Their chief, who is both a minister of religion and Minister of Labour, is a direct descendant and namesake of the great captain whose picture appears on the new Namibian dollar.

Bethanie is different again. Like Gibeon, it was an important mission station in the nineteenth century, but its development has been even more drastically eroded by white domination in more recent times. Bethanie is the home of the !Aman, in Afrikaans known simply as the Bethaniers. It is also the site of the mission station established in 1814 by Heinrich Schmelen, the first missionary among the Nama. His house, which still stands, is now surrounded by a densely-built, mainly white, area near the town centre. The 'location' lies beyond town just off the road to Keetmanshoop, and a shanty town lies beyond that.

The form of settlement where Nama areas are built as *extensions to town areas* is like that found throughout southern Namibia, where a hierarchical arrangement has developed with mostly whites in the centre of the town, permanently resident 'Coloureds' and 'Africans' in 'locations' on the outskirts, and 'squatters' beyond. Maltahohe (west of Mariental), and to some extent the larger towns of Keetmanshoop and Mariental, are examples. Bethanie, although historically different – founded as a new Orlam political entity as much as a mission station (see, e.g., Lau 1987: 22-23) – now resembles this type of settlement. The basic pattern is illustrated in Fig. 2 (bottom).

A variant on the theme of the outlying dwelling area is represented by the Nama settlement six kilometres south-west of Karasburg. This settlement has elements in common with Hoachanas, with Warmbad and Bethanie, and with the rural settlements described below. Like Hoachanas, the Karasburg settlement is deliberately traditional in layout. It is the seat of the chief of the IGami-nûn (Bondelswaarts), who maintains her settlement well away from the direct influence of the town. The settlement contains shops as well as dwellings, and the dwellings are arranged in a circular form on top of a hill within sight of the town. Like Warmbad and Bethanie, Karasburg itself bears the mark of apartheid, with the Nama settlement clearly not part of the urban centre. In another sense, the Nama settlement at Karasburg is almost rural in that it is built so far away

from the town to which it is attached on farm land designated for the use of the Nama by the South Africans.

However, the settlement itself has its own satellites nearby. Thus it represents a centre in its own right, rather in the same sense as does Berseba. The small settlements near Karasburg are dotted across the landscape without, in many cases, any obvious source of water, though the area is well stocked with sheep, as well as donkeys and horses. Whether the Bondelswaart settlement will survive in its present position depends on the desire of its people to integrate their settlement with Karasburg. At present, it would seem that there is little to gain by such a move, though any expansion of Karasburg and or opening of opportunities for presently resident outside may change this.

#### *Rural settlement*

Rural settlement is characterized by either homesteads on farm lands, mainly white-owned, or homesteads on communal lands. These homesteads may be either widely dispersed and independent, or grouped into family or larger units. The density of settlement varies according to the availability of resources, the density of stock, the rights of the occupiers to use land, and the historical circumstances of group occupation. The area around Berseba in the old 'homeland' of Namaland is exceptionally dense compared with other areas of southern Namibia. There are presently attempts to introduce more intensive farming methods in that area to provide the population with alternatives to livestock-rearing.

Among the more common forms of rural settlement, especially on communal lands, is that based on linear encampments along a valley or ridge, often parallel with a road. Within such settlements, family units are grouped. A grouping of huts may be as much as a few hundred kilometres from the next one, or over two kilometres in the case of one settlement area beginning about ten kilometres south of Bethanie. In such settlements, the family groupings may form circular sub-settlements or form linear ones, and each of these forms part of a larger, lineal pattern. Sometimes, all the sub-settlements will share the same source of water.

### Damara and Nama settlement in the former Damaraland

The largest major area of settlement for Khoekhoe-speakers is the former Damaraland. This area was set aside for Damara by successive colonial regimes (German and South African), but has acquired large influxes of other groups, partly by colonial resettlement, in the case of the Riemvasmakers (see, e.g., Zaby 1982), and partly by choice, in the case of a number of Nama and Herero incomers over the last century. The latter often keep large herds of cattle which are seldom sold, and in the view of others, put undue pressure on the harsh environment otherwise utilized by subsistence farmers producing goats and growing vegetables and grain.

Although 'Damaraland' has a distinct consciousness as a place in the minds of both its own inhabitants and other Namibians, its present form really dates only from the Odendaal Commission land 'reforms' proposed in 1963-1964. Before that, much of the present communal area was farmland in the hands of whites. Since then, families have reclaimed the territory and raised mainly small stock (sheep and goats), utilizing resources, including water and grazing, which are much poorer than those in other parts of the country. Northern Damaraland, together with the even more desolate Kaokoland, is now part of the new Kunene administrative region. Some Damara resent the movement of the capital northwards (from Khorixas to Opuwo, in the far north), as indeed they resent the incursion of Herero-speakers with larger herds than they have, upon the communal lands which Damara have occupied for over a generation, if not a great deal longer. Southern Kunene Region (northern Damaraland) is now in a state of some disruption, due to such incursions, consequent overgrazing, and the recent years of drought which led to acute problems of land degradation. Nevertheless, it is an area of successful adaptation, by small farming groups, with small herds. It has long supported gardening, if more in the past than today in some areas, and has new prospects in the growing tourist market.

### *Traditional and modern styles of settlement*

In his recent Occasional Paper in this series, Rick Rohde (1993: 38-41) reports of the lack of correspondence between the micro-level settlement patterns recorded by early writers and those in existence today. Only in the north of Damaraland do Damara still build round, wooden permanent huts; and although camps are often placed near trees, the idea of a Herero-style holy fire which early writers said should lie beneath the tree, has now vanished (cf. Barnard

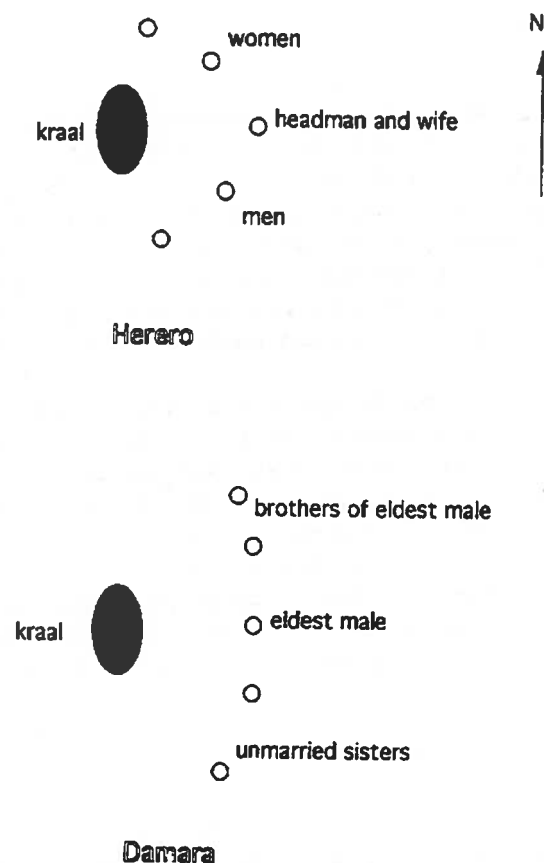


Fig. 3. Typical modern Herero and Damara settlements



1992b: 205-06). Rural settlements in north-western Namibia tend to be smaller than those in southern Namibia, and there is no equivalent in the former case of the large, circular town layout which still appears in the more traditional Nama areas.

In fact, Damara settlements tend to take a linear form. The resemblance between Damara and Herero settlement is still obvious, even in such cases (see Fig. 3). Among both these groups, and more generally among several northern Namibian populations, the home of the senior person is built in the east of the camp, and other residents build theirs in a set order, arcing (or in this case extending in an almost straight line) north and south of this main hut. The classic Herero distinction between northern and southern areas is, at least in some cases, reversed, with the male kin group members to the north and the female kin group members to the south. When the kraal is placed at the camp, it must occupy a position west of the main hut. This custom is maintained, though in practice the idealized model of a complete circle of huts is seldom achieved even among Herero. As most people want to have their homes on the more prestigious east end of the camp, the west is left empty.

On the macro-level, settlements are dispersed. In the former white farms, each borehole is occupied by a family group, and sometimes by more than one family – even of different ethnic groups – often spread along the road. The linear pattern is perhaps even more apparent in some of the communal areas in the far north of the old Damaraland, near Sesfontein, where settlements have grown along the road. Each such settlement consists not of one family group and its kraal, but several (see Fig. 4).

There are also towns, and some, such as Khorixas, retain clear, *de facto*, boundaries between formerly 'white township' and 'location' areas. At Khorixas, both such areas are laid out in a grid pattern, with the wealthier area to the immediate north and the old 'location' to the south of the main road and town centre. In Khorixas, and in other towns, the prominence of political party headquarters is noteworthy. UDF has a large headquarters between the town centre and the 'location', while SWAPO and DTA have their offices in the middle of the town in the main shopping area.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to areas clearly definable as rural and urban, there are in-between settlements which have shops and even restaurants. Tourist camps are

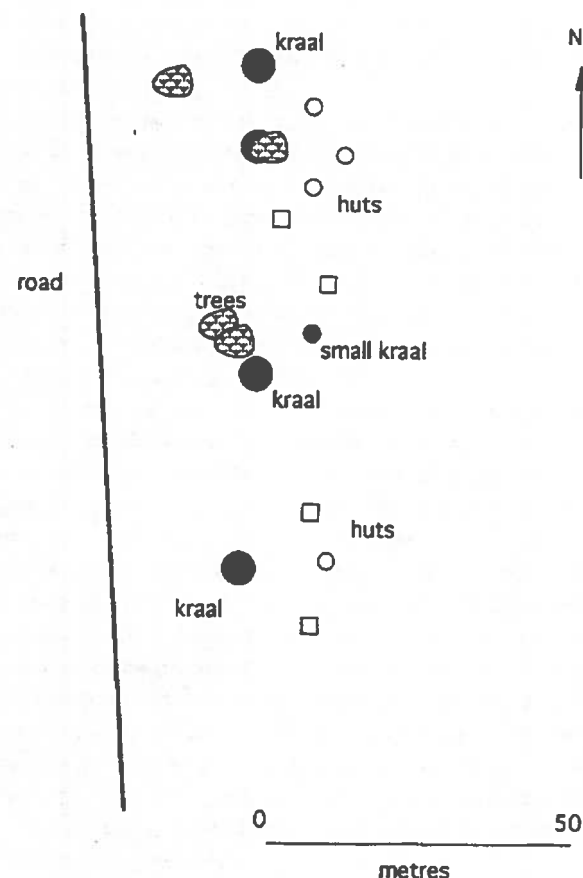


Fig. 4. Linear settlement south of Sesfontein

<sup>4</sup> The United Democratic front (UDF) is a mainly Damara party headed by the King, or Paramount Chief, of the Damara; the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) forms the government, and the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), the national opposition.

found in several parts of the country, and some of these – set up by the Save the Rhino Trust – are run as community (as opposed to government or private) enterprises. These provide alternative employment and act as conservation centres, in the sense that they create a greater awareness among tourists that Damaraland is inhabited by human, as well as animal, populations.

#### *Problems and possible solutions*

Pressure on the land is a cause of much concern, and there is a perceived threat of population increase due to the immigration into the region of families with large herds. Farmers say they need between ten and fifteen kilometres radius from their boreholes for grazing, and this is increased in times of drought. Some farmers expressed the hope that the government might purchase land from foreigners and release it for communal use. There is not enough water available in many areas for irrigation, and keeping livestock is thus, for many, the only option – and, of course, the one which is most desirable.

Another cause of concern is the threat posed by the large number of elephants in areas near the veterinary cordon between Khorixas and Sesfontein. Sixty-five have been counted on one farm alone, and other farms have seen similar numbers. These relatively small Namib elephants have caused much damage to borehole dams and equipment, and a solution has yet to be worked out which satisfies international wildlife organizations, farmers, and the local conservationists who are sympathetic to the goals of both these other groups. All parties locally want to see the survival of both the farms and the elephant populations, though in a recent survey only one third of farmers interviewed expressed a willingness to relocate to avoid areas where the elephants are found (Huab Catchment Area Project, n.d.: 11).

While the residents of the former Damaraland, like other Namibians, are delighted with the nation's independence and prospects, they are not all happy with their current lifestyle. Our informants suggested that the government should buy more land for grazing, repair broken engines, etc. Several of those questioned long for the 'good old days', before pressures from outside groups, when chiefs controlled the destiny of their people, when there was enough land for all, and when sharing and giving of livestock, though the traditional custom known as *magus* or *aogus*, was expected. Even SWAPO supporters expressed the view that the government is not doing enough for the region. For example, one

has been waiting for months for word on a proposed pump which is necessary to get water from a permanent waterhole to a garden a few hundred metres away.

In spite of these regrets, gardening enterprises are on the increase – no doubt spurred on by the relief of the drought. One gardener we questioned had this year lost watermelons, pumpkins, beetroot, beans, and maize; but others, with irrigation, were producing good crops, including these, as well as lemons, figs, and bananas. Tobacco is also very commonly grown and an especially desired crop. The climate allows harvesting of most crops at almost any time of year. The main problem seems to be access to water, even where irrigation has been practised for decades.

For example, at Fransfontein, a town of about 1500 people (including Nama as well as Damara) near Khorixas, there is a long-established garden site where independent producers each utilize their own allotments. Gardeners are free to take as much land as they can use, but are limited by the necessity to irrigate regularly from a communal water supply. There, gardeners each take it in turn to water their respective fields. Some water only once a week on designated days, and disputes about watering are not uncommon (e.g., several residents complained that one man watered three times per week thus taking water that should have been for the use of others). The gardeners dig shallow canals through the gardening area; these are blocked by walls of dirt about 30 centimetres high, and the walls are opened each time the gardener wishes to irrigate. The canals feed off into smaller canals, forming rectangular areas for irrigation. One maize field, for example, consisted of fifteen such rectangles, each measuring one metre by three metres and separated from each other by canals of some 20 centimetres width.

Under the Germans, huge gardens were set up, notably at Sesfontein, though in recent years such areas have suffered not only from drought but from poor infrastructure and neglect, especially under the last twenty years of South African control (see Lau and Stern 1990). Small-scale, labour-intensive production methods (like those practised before the South African takeover in 1915, and also for a brief period in the late 1950s and 1960s) are the obvious solution for most small-scale producers, though larger grain-producing projects, such as that at Warmquelle, south of Sesfontein, may provide employment opportunities for some.

Among other problems, many parts of the former Damaraland are remote. This is especially true in the north. Sesfontein and surrounding areas are cases in point. The population of Sesfontein proper is some 800, with many others living and farming on communal areas nearby. There are government offices, a primary school, a kindergarten, a church, an old German fort, three political

party headquarters, and two shops. The veterinary cordon to the south prevents easy export of their livestock. The town is bypassed by the main roads to the north, and the shops have difficulty getting supplies in, just as the farmers have an almost impossible task of getting goods and livestock out. There is a well-organized clothing manufacture co-operative, which sells clothes within the community, but again has little prospect of exporting them to the south. This project employs 23 women, while a women's garden project now employs the same number. Such projects, organized communally, may well provide the answer, but transport and the establishment of facilities, such as irrigation systems, pumps, and pipes, remain priorities not yet met. The problem of transport even prevents children from going on to secondary school, as what public transport as exists is too expensive for the parents of prospective pupils.

The southern area, now part of Erongo Region, is crossed by a number of good roads. In that region, the land is better for livestock production, and there are many widely-dispersed, fenced homesteads (though generally with no fences around the land utilized). There are also densely-populated towns of both traditional (e.g., Okambahe) and European (e.g., Omaruru) form. The area does have many of the same problems as in the north, but they seem less acute, due mainly to the perception of the area as less remote.

#### Hai//om settlement in Oshikoto Region

The new administrative region of Oshikoto includes the immediate area of Tsumeb and much of the former eastern Ovambo District to the north. Hai//om settlement is concentrated in these areas, and in the nearby white farms of the former Grootfontein district, south-east of Tsumeb. The Hai//om number about 11,000 (Thomas Widlok, pers. comm.). Widlok's forthcoming work will describe Hai//om settlement in great detail. The purpose of this section is merely to state a few basic observations and to explain the Hai//om situation in relation to that of other Khoekhoe-speaking peoples. Further detail will have to await Widlok's thesis.

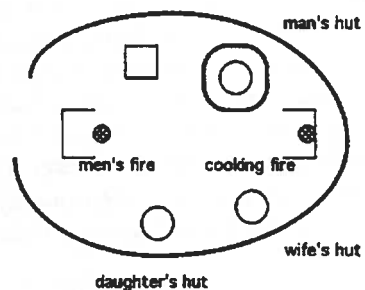
In a recent paper, Widlok and Barnard (1993) compare the settlement pattern of the Hai//om to that of the Nharo of western Botswana.<sup>5</sup> Four Hai//om settlements are described there: (1) a communal area during crop season; (2) a communal area during the dry season; (3) a service centre; and (4) a commercial farm.

The third and fourth cases require but brief mention here. The *service centre* described was set up by the First National Development Corporation in 1979, when over 300 'Bushmen' lived in the area scattered over 15 cattle posts (Barnard and Widlok 1993: 16). It has a population of some 200 today, mainly near the farmhouse settlement. The *commercial farm* described in the paper bears some similarity, in being occupied by Hai//om with little control over the land around them. In such cases, and in urban settlements, Hai//om and others have been forced to adapt to the domination of land owners. At times, their adaptation takes the form of migration to such centres where there may be employment prospects, or away from them when the desire to forage is strong. Permanent occupation of such centres is not a welcome prospect for many, though nomadic opportunism may be an option.

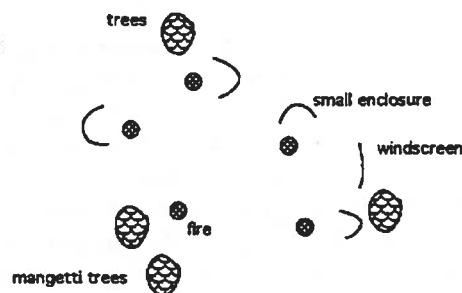
More interesting for our purposes here are cases like the first two mentioned above. While Barnard and Widlok are there concerned with micro-level patterns, in the sense of individual kin relations and daily economic activities, here we are concerned with broad aspects of settlement which might be of use in comparison to those of the Nama and the Damara. The most striking difference is the great seasonality of at least some Hai//om settlements. In both the cases mentioned, foraging strategies are determine settlement style. What is interesting is that in the summer wet season some Hai//om take on the style of settlement of their neighbours, while in the winter dry season they return to a more 'Bushmanlike' existence.

More specifically, the *summer* is characterized by crop production and labour for the Ovambo. At this time of year, Hai//om may even build settlements in Ovambo style, with a hierarchical arrangement -- the senior camp members and the cooking fire in the east, and others in a circle around to the men's fire in the west. The entire camp may be encircled with a wooden stockade, with fields and a grain threshing place nearby. Such forms of settlement imply a conscious adaptation to Ovambo ways. However, they are not recent. The forms of settlement described by early ethnographers (e.g., Fourie 1926: 50-51; 1928: 84-87) are similar. Indeed, Fourie's descriptions imply the necessity of such

<sup>5</sup> The Hai//om data from that paper were collected by Widlok, and the Nharo data by Barnard.



Hai//om wet-season enclosure



Hai//om dry-season camp

Fig. 5. Examples of Hai//om settlement patterns

accoutrements as a holy fire and village tree, as recorded in the past for Damara too, as well as Herero (see Barnard 1992b: 205-06, 214-15). A modern Hai//om village layout of this type is illustrated in Fig. 5 (top).

*Dry season settlement*, in contrast, can mark a return to foraging, with camps maintained much as among other foraging groups. Dry-season dispersal is rare among such groups, the G/wi and G//ana of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve being the best examples (see, e.g., Silberbauer 1981: 191-257). For the Hai//om, such movements can involve dispersal, or indeed, aggregation in units of three, four, or more families. What they share with the dry season dispersal of central Kalahari groups is a reliance on meagre resources away from their primary dwelling areas and a lack of water. Hai//om can travel up to ten kilometres for water when at their dry-season camps. The reason such camps can offer promise at this otherwise poor time of year is the presence of an abundant supply of mangetti nuts. The reason why Hai//om choose to bring water to the mangetti areas rather than mangetti to the waterholes is not entirely clear, though one reason may well be that the waterholes are owned by Ovambo pastoralists whereas the mangetti groves are historically a resource of Hai//om. An illustration of this type of settlement is given in Fig. 5 (bottom).

Whether the pattern of seasonal change described here is typical of past situations is difficult to know. Certainly, the early ethnographers failed to give enough indication of the effects of season on the pattern they describe. It is likely, though, that the Hai//om settlements with formal, east-west oriented layouts, were not typical of all Hai//om settlement even then, and possibly a wet-season variant reflecting a time when Hai//om could live more-or-less like their more agricultural neighbours. The significance of this aspect of Hai//om settlement is that it represents the ultimate in seasonal oscillation – two lifestyles which unobservant ethnographers might at first be inclined to ascribe to different ethnic groups, let alone different branches of a single group. Thomas Widlok's work will no doubt provide much greater opportunities to understand the complexities of Hai//om migrations, seasonal movements, and camp organization, as well as its relation to the lifestyles of surrounding peoples.

## Conclusions

In spite of obvious differences, there are similarities in settlement pattern between the groups discussed here, and all the groups face similar problems. In spite of the adaptational aspects of their diverse forms of settlement, the settlement structure of the Nambian countryside in general presents common

difficulties such as access to non-farm resources – including schools and urban employment.

Consider the similarities in settlement form. At least one form of Nama settlement is based on the idea of a circle of huts enclosing and facing a central area. That of the Hai//om and of the Herero and Ovambo, although based on a notion that settlement units (whether families or larger units) be enclosed by walls, is similar too. In all these cases, public areas are in the centre, and private areas are on the outside of the settlement. Such an arrangement, in whatever size of camp or town, ensures that access to key intra-camp facilities is open to all, and it focuses attention on the central public facilities in a way rather different from that of a European town or village where streets are laid out in a grid. In spite of the hierarchical arrangement of huts in some cases, there is, in the traditional forms, still a sense of egalitarian spirit fostered by the equal access of all to the central facilities and the fact that all housing faces the centre and people can observe the behaviour of others there. Damara settlements, as a rule, no longer follow this circular arrangement, though linear forms in rural areas offer examples of an altered version of the traditional arrangement. The dwelling of the senior person remains in the middle, and kraals still lie to the west of the main dwelling space.

It has been said in Botswana that the building of traditional-style settlements as mining camps has, where practised, been of benefit. This is because it preserves the internal social structure, along with the residential structure, such that external changes only affect things for the better. The stability maintained keeps social ills from endangering the life of the *community*, thus actually aiding that community's process of modernization. The same may hold true in Namibia. The areas which seem most successful are often those where long practised aspects of settlement are most in evidence, e.g., Berseba and Hoachanas. These are also places where the notion of community remains important.

Elsewhere, communities have had adapt in other ways, some successfully and others less so. The absurdities of the South African separation of population groups by 'race' have caused plain divisions within larger settlements, notably the towns of both northern and southern Namibia. These old separations now mark class differences which also need to be overcome. How long can the separation of facilities, not to mention the inequalities they represent, continue? Can they be overcome through people's own initiative, or is planning, say from central government, required? These are questions which need to be examined by future researchers. We believe that it is only in light of a broad understanding of the cultural aspects of settlement among Khoekhoe-speakers

generally (and indeed among other population groups) that practical, workable solutions can be found.

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