

Under the Leadwood Tree

Disputing land, mobility and belonging in post-colonial southern Kaoko

Eldsemi Olwage

Inaugural dissertation to complete the doctorate from the Faculty of
Arts and Humanities of the University of Cologne in the subject,
Social and Cultural Anthropology.

(Submitted and accepted in February 2020)

Acknowledgements

This thesis and the journey it took to complete it were not embarked upon nor taken alone. Many persons, institutions, as well as scholarly works and publications, accompanied, supported, and guided me through this process and inspired me to seek growth and fortitude. I would first of all like to thank the LINGS project (Local Institutions in Globalised Societies) and the German Scientific Foundation (DFG) for having made this PhD research and project a possibility. Thank you, Prof Dr Michael Schnegg, and Prof Dr Michael Bollig, and the rest of the LINGS team, in particular Richard Kiaka and Diego Menestrey Schwieger.

Moreover, I would not have been able to pursue and finalise this PhD without the intellectual support and encouragement from my main supervisor, Michael Bollig. Thank you for your passionate and inspiring engagement with the subject and your patience throughout. I would also like to thank my second supervisor Steven Van Wolputte for our many conversations and his commitment and guidance. It provided me with clarity and direction when it was most needed, and both the thesis and I greatly benefited from this. Lastly, I would like to thank and acknowledge Thomas Widlok for his deeply generative review of this thesis. His comments and suggestions strongly informed the reworking and strengthening of my arguments.

Then and importantly, I would like to thank the people and households from southern Kaoko who, without, this ethnographic research would not have been possible. I especially thank the Otjomatamba and Okarumbu households for having welcomed me into their everyday lives and homes with acceptance and warmth. The generosity with which I was accepted enriched this research and the writing of the thesis in every way. It is impossible to name everyone, but I would especially like to thank Ngavahue Katundu and Mukurukaze Tjizembisa for their friendship, Uemujenga Kazendjou for adopting me as her daughter, Uaranda Kavetu and Ngaizuvarue Herunga for daily visits and chats, Hiyzonguindi Herunga for always being open to sharing stories, and Tobias Hauari Uaroua, Ben Tjituezu and Mutindi Justus Muteze for supporting and legitimising the research in different ways and enduring my questioning. Thank you also to the homesteads from Omao 1 and 2, and Ondera for your patience and willingness to participate in the research. Moreover, I would like to thank Ursula de Villiers and Kakarandua Mutambo for having always made me feel at home in Opuwo. My work also took me to other places across southern Kaoko and my path crossed with many more people and places – without you, this research and thesis would not have been possible, and I say thank you. *Okunene okuhepa.*

Furthermore, this work is highly indebted to the translators and research assistants with whom I shared the demands, challenges, and rewards of ethnographic research and with who I also found friends and family. My deep gratitude goes to Uetuu Upora, Vejandjua Tjiuuma, Verijeta (Karekautua) Kuhanga, and Kapezuva Rutjani. *Okunene okuhepa.* I would also like to thank Carloo Musaso and

Kutukee Iileka who during a period of time assisted in the implementation of questionnaires. And lastly, I would like to thank Lydia and Abisai Muundjua for the transcription work.

And finally, this thesis would not have been possible without my family, friends and colleagues who believed in my capacities and encouraged me to persist. To my friends – you are my strength and inspiration. To my fellow PhD colleagues at the University of Cologne who closely accompanied me on this journey – Innocent Mwaka, Matian van Soest, Gerda Kuiper, Marie Gravesan, Johanna Treidl, Carolin Maevis, Xian Zu, Nora Horisberger, Manon Diederich, Lai Pik Chan (Rita), Yehua Chen, Eric Kioko and Sandro Simon – I am forever grateful for having shared this experience with you. Janie Swanepoel and Sara de Wit, thank you for being my unwavering companions. And last but not least, Diego Menestrey for walking with me all the way, for keeping me strong, and for your love and care.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family for enduring this process with me and for their continued support. Thank you especially to my parents Henk and Betsie for having offered and created a perfect writing environment and for still making their home our home.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my grandfather Hennie Olwage, who planted the PhD-seed a long time ago in the hope that it would grow, yet who did not live to see it.

And to Rina Malahe, who left too early yet whose spirit and laughter remain.

Table of Contents

<i>List of maps</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>List of tables</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>List of images</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>List of abbreviations.....</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Chapter 1 Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
Disputing land, mobility and belonging.....	1
Cultural and mobile-land relations in southern Kaoko	3
Mapping and governing Namibia's communal lands.....	6
Delineating the research 'field' and focus.....	14
The dispute: A situational analysis	17
Situating this study and its contribution.....	20
Analytical framework and key concepts	23
Positionality and research ethics	29
Outline and structure of the thesis.....	33
<i>Chapter 2 Situating Kaoko: Colonialism, mobility, and indirect rule</i>	<i>37</i>
Introduction.....	37
Negotiating German colonial rule in a frontier zone.....	38
Translocal migrations and shifting territories	42
Bigmanship, power and incorporation	44
Navigating indirect rule and chieftaincies.....	45
Mapping the Kaokoland 'native' reserve	50
Apartheid 'homeland' policy and modernisation.....	52
The politics of autochthony and resistance	56
Militarisation, nationalisation, and conservation	60
Conclusion	62
<i>Chapter 3 Contesting and enacting Ozondundu as place and territory.....</i>	<i>65</i>
Introduction.....	65
Navigating my arrival in a divided place	67
Enacting and emplacing a first-comer narrative	71
First-comer claims, authority, and ancestral land-relations.....	77
Becoming 'osoromana': contesting authority and territory	85
Divergent migratory trajectories and place-making.....	89
Changing land-use and shifting boundaries	95
Negotiating colonial tenure and political belonging	98
The genealogy of the Ozondundu boundaries	101
Mapping the conservancy and 'customary' authority	105
Conclusion	108
<i>Chapter 4 Everyday relatedness and (im)mobilities in Ozondundu.....</i>	<i>111</i>
Introduction.....	111
Neolocal household migration and gendered norms	114
Everyday kin-relatedness and dual descent reckoning.....	118
Navigating gendered and unequal pastoral economies	124
Mobile land-use practices and herding strategies	129
Between multilocal and translocal household economies.....	135
Rural-urban oscillatory migration and itinerant travelling	142

Transregional labour migration and flexible belongings	148
Funeral gatherings: Gendered, mobile, and public life	151
Conclusion	156
<i>Chapter 5 Ombongarero: The dispute meeting</i>	158
Introduction.....	158
“If there are no rules, then people do not call it a place”	159
Conclusion	168
<i>Chapter 6 Disputed and social practices of pastoral mobility</i>	173
Introduction.....	173
Living with drought and extended dry seasons	174
Social norms in negotiating access-rights	178
Navigating intersectional belonging and virilocal norms.....	183
Regional migratory drift and relative strangers.....	190
Interpersonal tensions, autonomy, and social mobility	196
Relatedness and the danger of proximity	199
‘Opolotika’ and territorial incorporation.....	206
Ecologies of difference and belonging.....	209
Conclusion	213
<i>Chapter 7 Seeking resolution under the Leadwood Tree</i>	218
Introduction.....	218
Non-presence, delay, and agency	219
Redress and bureaucratic and state power	224
The wait, anticipatory celebrations, and defiance	230
Mobilising wider socio-political networks.....	232
The final meeting and finding resolution	234
The departure and exodus	237
Conclusion	239
<i>Chapter 8 Between ‘customary’ and ‘state’ law and authority</i>	244
Introduction.....	244
Bureaucratic and legal meanderings	245
Socio-legal and rural-urban entanglements.....	248
Assembling normativity, legal efficacy, and authority	251
Between liberal rights, recognition, and conviviality.....	254
The state, ethnicity, and the politics of custom	259
“What kind of land is communal land?”	261
The micro-politics of place and belonging.....	264
Conservancies and the politics of exclusion	270
Conclusion	272
<i>Concluding discussion and summary</i>	275
<i>Bibliography</i>	294

List of maps

Map 1: Former Homeland boundaries transposed onto current administrative boundaries and the Veterinary Cordon Fence.	10
Map 2: The Red Line and the shifting police zone boundary.	56
Map 3: Research places in southern Kaoko	67
Map 4: Sketch Map Otjomatamba.	72
Map 5: Territorial (colonial) and chieftaincy boundaries as noted by Van Warmelo.	87
Map 6: Migration trajectories and patterns of translocality.	162

List of tables

Table 1: Livestock ownership: distribution and range.	125
Table 2: Otjomatamba homestead migration trajectories.	130

List of images

Image 1: Remnants of old 'hunting lodges' situated next to the spring	75
Image 2: Ruins of an ancestral homestead.	76
Image 3: A view of the Otjapitjapi homesteads from its cultivation space.	94
Image 4: Making a house a home: a decorated homestead in Ondera.	117
Image 5: A dry-season livestock camp in Otjomatamba's mountain valleys and temporary shelters.	131
Image 6: Cattle and elephants drink together at Okarumbu's diesel-powered and elephant-proof borehole.	134
Image 7: Ngavahue harvesting roots used in the production of 'omaere'.	137
Image 8: Tjiseua's ancestral homestead.	141
Image 9: An artfully decorated 'ekutu' (ground-covering).	153
Image 10: Enacting political belonging: displaying the SWAPO party's colours through dress.	154
Image 11: After mourning women gather at the ancestral shrine to be cleansed.	155
Image 12: Scattered rain showers are visible in the distance from the main road to Opuwo.	175
Image 13: A herder escorts the cattle to drink at the earth-dams in Otjize.	195
Image 14: The partially burnt kraals of the newcomer homesteads.	254

List of abbreviations

AGM	Annual General Meeting
CAN	Conservation Agriculture Namibia
CBNRM	Community-based natural resource governance
CBPP	Contagious bovine pleuropneumonia
CLRA	Communal Land Reform Act
DTA	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
IRDNC	Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation
MAWF	Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry
MET	Ministry of Environment and Tourism
MLR	Ministry of Land Reform
MME	Ministry of Mining and Energy
MRLGH	Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing
NPF	National Patriotic Front
UNAM	University of Namibia
PDM	People's Democratic Movement
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia
SADF	South African Defence Force
SR	State representative
SWA	South West Africa
SWANLA	South West Africa Native Labour Association
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
TA	Traditional Authorities
VCF	Veterinary Cordon Fence
WPA	Water-point Association
WPC	Water-point Committee

Chapter 1 Introduction

Disputing land, mobility and belonging

It was an early cool morning at the end of March. A blue 4x4 Ford pick-up truck was parked between two homesteads (Sg. *onganda*, Pl. *ozonganda*). Several children and young men were loading packed belongings and kid goats onto the parked truck. Elsewhere, women were chasing and separating the blaring goats, shouting to try and corner the animals. Others were busy gathering their belongings on cloths spread out on the ground. Once tied, these bundles were loaded on the donkey or horseback, together with kitchenware, calabashes, water containers, and large maize meal bags filled with food supplies. Some of the men had strapped on small backpacks with their personal belongings. The cattle were gathered in their respective livestock pens (*otjiuunda*) or *kraals* to be herded with the trek. The atmosphere seemed tense and hurried.

Towards one side and some distance away from the two homesteads, on a rocky pathway, another two pick-up trucks stood. Their doors were open, and several men of differing ages were sitting and standing around the cars, leaning on their wooden canes (*okati*), engaged in conversation. They were observing, and now and again one of the younger men would walk over to assist – bundling blankets together or loading small children into the pick-up truck. Sometimes hurried comments were given to those packing. The men present were ensuring that the two homesteads were indeed leaving and migrating out of the place – as had been agreed to the day before – their presence embodying determined intimidation.

The head of the one homestead eventually jumped on his donkey. He had a canvas bag slung around his chest and his wooden cane in one hand, held high. Gripping the rein with his free hand, he called towards the men who were gathered to one side. Not catching the whole phrase, I only heard him bidding farewell, addressing them as ‘Herero’, and their response, bidding him farewell as ‘Himba’. This seemed to be said in a somewhat wry and ironic manner. He then left, herding, and chasing some of the gathered cattle together with another man. His wife and young children were still busy packing and eventually, it became clear that one of the other pick-up trucks would be transporting them, together with the kid goats. They were said to be moving north.

The head of the other homestead was not present, and this homestead was much larger. It consisted of four houses (Sg. *ondjuwo*, Pl. *ozondjuwo*) – all of them *ozondjuwo ndja rombua*¹ and some newly plastered – enfolding the livestock pen in a crescent-shaped embrace. Two of the houses were

¹ These are dwellings and homes constructed from a mixture of sand, water, and wet cattle-dung. The mixture is plastered onto sturdy frames built with wooden poles which are secured into the ground, stacked, and tied closely together and shaped according to different designs (mostly dome, bee-hive or square/rectangular-shaped).

bee-hive shaped whilst the other two were dome-shaped with an “extended tunnel-like entrance” (*otjipampa*).² This building method was characteristic of Ovahimba-styled³ homesteads related to more settled and ancestral-places (Sg. *onganda onene*, Pl. *ozonganda ozonene*), rather than seasonal and temporary cattle-posts (Sg. *ohambo*, Pl. *ozohambo*).⁴ These dwellings thus suggested a tension between what I was witnessing and what had seemingly been the intention of their inhabitants. The pick-up truck parked close to the homestead belonged to one of the local headmen (Sg. *osoromana*, Pl. *ozosoromana*). He was assisting the household members to transport their belongings and kid goats to a place situated about 15 km south, at the other end of a mountain range. Soon all the trucks departed one by one, packed full of people and belongings. Only two young men remained who were left herding the remaining cattle in a southerly direction, dust clouds being kicked into the air. The others who had kept watch over this departure, slowly began to disperse, including me. The homesteads soon stood empty, completely abandoned and eerily quiet in the late morning sun.

Two weeks later rumours were circulating that somebody had set fire to the *kraals* of the two abandoned homesteads. Early the following morning I walked over and, indeed, the *kraals* had been burned to the ground, with only a white heap of still smouldering ash marking the wide circles where they had stood.



This thesis centres on a land and grazing dispute (*ondjakaha/otjiposa*) which took place within southern Kaoko – a communal and semi-arid area situated in Namibia’s north-western Kunene Region – and in 2014-2016. In doing so, I draw on a situational analysis approach. Such an approach takes a particular event as a “point of entry”, as a “site from which to enter into wider realities” and as a way towards drawing their complexities into focus, fostering, and creating possibilities for interpretation.⁵ My reasons for focusing on this dispute as a diagnostic event were due to an emerging situation of increased land and grazing disputes specifically in southern Kaoko in recent years – with a number of these ending up in the High Court in Windhoek, Namibia’s capital.

In engaging with a particular dispute as a point of entry, this thesis then examines different dimensions of this situation, including the historical contingencies and structural precedents at play, the changing legal, political economic and environmental contexts, and local-level situated practices. More precisely, this thesis critically explores three interrelated and broad thematic threads through the dispute. First, I analyse the local-level (re)fashioning of overlapping culturally-informed, colonial and post-colonial institutions of land governance within a legally plural context. In particular, I focus on contestations over local-level ‘customary’ authority and law in the governing of southern Kaoko’s

² Steven Van Wolputte, *Material Culture in Himbaland, Northern Namibia* (Tervuren: Royal Museum for Central Africa, 2003).

³ In Otjiherero the prefix *ova-* signifies the plural form of person (*omu-*).

⁴ Van Wolputte, *Material*.

⁵ Bruce Kapferer, “Situations, Crisis, and the Anthropology of the Concrete: The Contribution of Max Gluckman,” *Social Analysis* 49, no. 3 (2005): 92.

‘communal’ lands and examine how ‘communal tenure’ was co-produced and disputed from the ground-up, and between localities and the state.

Secondly, this thesis looks at how the social navigation of this legally plural context was changing the patterned modes and practices of pastoral mobility and migration within the region. In doing so, I illustrate how the norms and values governing the sharing of land and land-based resources, specifically pastures, were practiced. Moreover, and importantly, I look at how particular pastoral mobilities were politically and socially contested and entangled with both local and regional contestations over authority, land, and territory.

Thirdly, and linked to this, this thesis critically engages with the politics of belonging generated by the dispute. Specifically, I examine the mobilisation of historically-constituted ethnic idioms and political identities, and divergent pastoral land-use values and relations in the interwoven struggles over identity, belonging and land. Thus, and in short, this thesis’ main focus rests on detailing the dispute at the grass-roots level – and sheds light on how and why such cases are increasingly finding their way into the state courts, and the High Court, while simultaneously examining some of the emerging consequences of this for the crafting of local institutions, regional mobility practices, and intragroup and social relations.

Cultural and mobile-land relations in southern Kaoko

The dispute was set in a place called Otjomatimba and the wider jurisdiction area of which it formed a part – its boundaries now primarily expressed through those of the communal conservancy established in the early 2000s and one whose name engendered the main characteristic of the area – Ozondundu – meaning mountains. The roughly 18 homesteads and a few other temporary cattle-post dwellings were divided and separated by rocky, mopane-covered hills and were situated on both sides of the wide gravel road which connected Kaoko’s main urban centre Opuwo to the smaller town of Sesfontein in the south.

Here the predominantly Otjiherero-speaking households have, during the last century, come to enact their social belonging to a larger pan-Herero society of south and central Namibia and southern Africa.⁶ However, southern Kaoko was also culturally heterogenous and was shaped by complex and multiple histories of migration and settlement. The majority of households in Ozondundu relied on subsistence pastoralism and agriculture, supplemented with cash generated through remittances from family members employed elsewhere and in urban centres, state and old-age pensions and social grants, and marginal engagement with small-scale enterprises and informal business activities. Depending on households, people owned mixed herds of cattle, goats, and sheep as well as donkeys, mules, and horses – with livestock ownership, especially that of cattle, being a defining aspect of local pastoral and cultural

⁶ See, Laura Bleckmann, “Colonial Trajectories and Moving Memories: Performing Past and Identity in Southern Kaoko (Namibia)” (Doctoral dissertation, Social and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute for Anthropological Research in Africa (IARA), Catholic University of Leuven, 2012).

conceptions of personhood, wealth, and status.⁷ People also kept animals for the production of milk products, specifically fermented or curdled milk (*omaere*) – a key staple food source – with the slaughtering of cattle reserved for culturally important ritual events. Some households had rain gardens close to riverbeds or in flood-plains and practiced the seasonal harvesting of edible, medicinal and cosmetic plants, for their own use or to be sold in nearby urban centres.

Given Kunene's dryland ecologies and mountainous topographies, historically mobile land-use practices and semi-nomadic pastoralism have developed as crucial economic and livelihood strategies and valued lifeworlds. Average rainfall patterns vary greatly across the region – in what has been termed a “strong hydro-climatic gradient”⁸ – ranging between 50 mm (towards the west) to 450 mm annually and usually concentrated in the summer months between January and March.⁹ Amongst the Otjiherero-speaking societies of southern Kaoko, the term *ombura* means both rain and year – symbolic of the extent to which the amount and pattern of rainfall shaped and continues to shape local tempo-spatial practices. Land-use and pastoral practices were broadly organised between interrelated settled-places (*ovirongo vyomaturiro*) and adjoining, shifting and seasonal cattle-post-places (*ovirongo vyohambo*). Settled-places usually centred on and were close to permanent water-sources such as the network of natural springs (*oruharui*) situated in the more mountainous parts of the region, as well as the much larger network of hundreds of diesel and solar-powered boreholes (*ombora*) drilled by the South African colonial as well as the post-colonial state during the past seven decades and previously as part of the colonial administration's ‘modernisation’ impetus during the 1960s. Close to and in the vicinity of these permanent water-places different lineage groups and families have, over the decades, established ancestral homesteads (Sg. *onganda onene*, Pl. *ozonganda ozonene*) and more permanent homesteads (Sg. *onganda* Pl. *ozonganda*) and settled-places.

Cattle-posts and livestock camps (Sg. *ohambo* Pl. *ozohambo*) on the other hand were divided between rainy-season cattle-posts (*ohambo yokuroro*), dry-season cattle-posts (*ohambo yokuni*) as well as temporary cattle-posts households sometimes created and made use of during periods of drought (*ohambo yorumbu*). Movement between these was seasonally negotiated – with more or less four seasons locally defined – that of the wet or rainy season between January and March (*okurooro*), the cold-dry season between April and June (*okupepera*), the dry-season from July till September (*okuni*),

⁷ See for instance, Michael Bollig, *Risk Management in a Hazardous Environment: A Comparative Study of Two Pastoral Societies*, Studies in Human Ecology and Adaptation (New York: Springer, 2006), <http://www.springer.com/gb/BLDSS>; M. Bollig and M. Schnegg, “Introduction: Specialisation and Diversification Among African Pastoral Societies,” in Bollig; Schnegg; Wotzka, *Pastoralism in Africa*.

⁸ Jochen Richters, “Biomass Changes in North-Western Namibia: First Results from a Remote Sensing Modelling Approach,” *EARSeL eProceedings* 4, no. 2 (2005): 157.

⁹ See Margaret Jacobsohn, “Negotiating meaning and change in space and material culture: an ethno-archaeological study among semi-nomadic Himba and Herero herders in north-western Namibia” (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1995), 44; Birgit Müller et al., “Learning from Local Knowledge: Modeling the Pastoral-nomadic Range Management of the Himba, Namibia,” *Ecological Applications* 17, no. 7 (2007): 1859.

and the budding season between October and December (*oruteni*).¹⁰ However, these seasonal rhythms also shifted from year to year, depending on longer stretches of cyclical and differential droughts and larger processes of environmental change.

Rainy-season cattle-posts were created around outlying (from settled-places) seasonal and shifting water-sources and the mutual availability of pastures. During the short rainy-season, ephemeral rivers (Sg. *ondondu*, Pl. *ozondondu*) and waters flow after the powerful but usually highly localised and convective downpours, eventually pooling in large pans (Sg. *otjirindi*, Pl. *omarindi*), filling the few earth dams which have been constructed in the last decades as well as rock pools (Sg. *eo*, Pl. *omao*), and flooding riverbanks. Historically, as well as in contemporary Kaoko, these rainy-season water flows and their containment open up access to grazing and cultivation possibilities which otherwise are unavailable during the longer dry-season and periods of droughts. However, these flows and mutually available pastures are also strongly dependent on whether there are good, widespread rains (*erooro*), or small, scattered rain-showers (*okambura*).

Similar to settled-places, dry-season cattle-posts were usually near hand-dug wells (*ondjombo*) in dry river beds or equipped with boreholes, which then would be operated only at a set time of the year and depending on the rainfall and pasture availability in and around settled-places. Whereas rainy-season cattle-post places were often characterised by make-shift and mobile dwellings, with only a few members of the household managing and herding the livestock taken there, dry-season cattle-post places could be characterised by more permanent dwellings, which people also maintained and with most members of the household sometimes residing here for large parts of the year, only moving with the coming of the rains.

During the last century, this region has also experienced several cyclical and prolonged droughts, including a few highly disastrous droughts which led to widespread livestock losses and famine. Socio-spatial mobility and the movement of people, groups and livestock remain crucial strategies for surviving these endemic droughts and extended dry-periods.¹¹ Drought-period cattle-posts are temporary livestock camps created in different, usually distant, areas (relative to one's settled-places), depending on the availability of pastures and the negotiation of temporary access-rights to pastures and water. These temporary livestock camps thus shifted, and sometimes were created in the homesteads of family members and kin in neighbouring settled or cattle-post places until the drought ended, or as the grazing situation changed. As a consequence, many persons, and households (albeit not all) practiced what can be understood or conceptualised as "multispatial livelihoods".¹² In addition,

¹⁰ Silke Tönsjost, "Plants and Pastures. Local knowledge on livestock-environment relationships among OvaHerero pastoralists in north-western Namibia" (Master's dissertation, Institut für Ethnologie, Universität zu Köln, 2007), 21.

¹¹ See Bollig, *Risk*, 157–69, for a description on the drought-periods in northern Kaoko.

¹² Dick Foeken and Samuel O. Owuor, "Multi-Spatial Livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa: Rural Farming by Urban Households—The Case of Nakuru, Town, Kenya," *Mobile Africa: Changing Patterns of Movement in Africa and Beyond*, 2001.

everyday life was organised through oscillatory, seasonal, and drought-related livestock movements between specific interconnected dry and rainy-season cattle-post and settled-places (*okutjinda ohambo/orutjindo*), as well as sometimes household and pastoral migrations (*okutjinda onganda*). However, migration and travelling to urban areas to engage in wage labour also played an important role in the negotiation of regional livelihoods. Many household members were also schooling, living, or temporarily residing elsewhere. As a consequence, place-relations between different and interconnected settled and cattle-post places and between urban and rural areas were maintained and practiced through continuing “translocal social practices” – including travelling, transfer of resources, and cultural and livestock exchanges.¹³

Together with these mobilities, ‘place’ (Sg. *otjirongo*, Pl. *ovirongo*) is a key life-thread organising peoples’ daily mobile and social lives.¹⁴ Thus, here, *otjirongo* did only denote specific and different spaces of past and present inhabitation, geographic locations, or bounded containers of pasture, land, and water. Rather, the ongoing performance, enactment, and remembrance of place and more specifically ancestral land-relations – through, for instance, spoken and performed praise songs, burial practices and “oral knowledge”¹⁵ – were and are integral in the ongoing (re)production of relations between specific settled and cattle-post places, kinship, ancestral lineages, and ones’ forefathers/mothers (*ovakuru*), as well as in the (re)production of territorial belonging.¹⁶ Thus, within this context, ancestral land-relations and the practice of kinship, specifically dual descent kinship, were key culturally-informed institutions governing locally “nested” and bundled rights over land and embedding these both politically and socially.¹⁷ However, these culturally-informed institutions, and the ongoing organisation and negotiation of mobile land-relations and regional migrations had to be and continue to be historically-constituted within overlapping colonial and post-colonial state regimes and changing pastoral and political economies.

Mapping and governing Namibia’s communal lands

Namibia’s ‘communal lands’, including southern Kaoko, are embedded in and entangled with diverse legal, socio-political, environmental, and colonial histories – including histories rooted in more than a century of colonial land dispossession. These histories date back to the early land-grabbing treaties

¹³ Clemens Greiner, “Patterns of Translocality: Migration, Livelihoods and Identities in Northwest Namibia,” *Sociologus*, 2010, 148.

¹⁴ See for instance, Michael Bollig, “Contested Places. Graves and Graveyards in Himba Culture,” *Anthropos*, 1997; Bleckmann, “Colonial”; Michael Bollig, “Kinship, Ritual and Landscape Among the Himba of Northwest Namibia,” in Bollig; Bubenzer, *African Landscapes*.

¹⁵ I use the concept of “oral knowledge” from Lorena Rizzo, *Gender and Colonialism: A History of Kaoko in North-Western Namibia, 1870s-1950s* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2012), 13

¹⁶ For an analysis of this see Bleckmann, “Colonial.”

¹⁷ Carola Lentz, “Land Rights and the Politics of Belonging in Africa: An Introduction,” in *Land and the Politics of Belonging in West Africa*, ed. Richard Kuba and Carola Lentz, African Social Studies Series 9 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006).

between local leaders, European traders, concession companies and colonial officials during the early onset of German colonial rule (1885-1915), and the mass expropriation of land and forced relocations and migrations following the devastating German colonial and genocidal wars (1904-1908) against the Nama and Herero polities of central and southern Namibia.¹⁸ These processes were followed by decades of South African colonial and later apartheid rule (1917-1990) of the then South West Africa (SWA) and the mapping and eventual encapsulation of Africans into so-called 'native reserves' and later ethnic 'homelands' or 'Bantustans'.

Kaoko's contemporary geographic and territorial boundaries are still partially reflective of the former 'Kaokoland' homeland. It is bordered in the north by Angola and the perennial Kunene River, to the west by the Namib Desert and Atlantic coast (forming part of the Skeleton Coast conservation area), and to the east by the Etosha National Park and north-central Omusati region. The southern border is marked by the Veterinary Cordon Fence (VCF) – Namibia's internal and veterinary border which runs east to west, cutting the country as well as the Kunene Region in two. This border strictly controls and limits the movement of livestock through quarantine restrictions which are rationalised as controlling the spread of contagious livestock diseases, specifically foot and mouth disease (FMD) and contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP or lung sickness), from Namibia's northern regions into the commercial and privately-owned cattle ranches, wildlife resorts, national parks and communal farming areas which constitute south and central Namibia. Apart from being a technology for disease-control, this fence – formerly known as the 'Red Line' – is still one of the most palpable, lived, and visible socio-spatial and symbolic legacy of Namibia's colonial and divisive past and the two overlapping colonial and settler regimes that shaped it.¹⁹

As historian Giorgio Miescher²⁰ illustrates, the VCF has its genealogy within the making of a larger colonial "spatial regime" – a regime which took root during German colonial rule with the mapping of the 'Police Zone'. Encompassing south and central Namibia, the 'Police Zone' was meant to delineate the part of the territory reserved for white settlement, with its northern boundary roughly following a dotted network of already existing policed outposts and separating it from the so-called 'northern Native territories'. With the onset of South African rule, the internal border-making process was reified – underpinned by rationalisations for the production and imposition of increased bans on livestock trade, exchange, and movement from the northern regions into the south and central parts and the containment of peoples' movement – often framed as a de-politicised imperative that the "colony had to be kept free of disease".²¹

¹⁸ Wolfgang Werner, "A Brief History of Land Dispossession in Namibia," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19, no. 1 (1993): 137–38.

¹⁹ Giorgio Miescher, *Namibia's Red Line: The History of a Veterinary and Settlement Border* (New York: Springer, 2012).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Michael Bollig, "The Colonial Encapsulation of the North-Western Namibian Pastoral Economy," *Africa* 68, no. 04 (1998): 511.

Despite the exact location of the ‘Red Line’ having continually shifted during the first part of the 20th century with livestock disease outbreaks, the creation of buffer zones, colonial land appropriation, the expansion of the white settler society, as well as ongoing local contestations and resistances, it eventually succeeded, in producing a territorial, settlement, symbolic and veterinary border which still divides contemporary Namibia between a settler-dominated region to the south and an African-dominated region to the north.²² For example, during my research, persons residing in Kaoko and north of the former ‘Red Line’, often spoke about themselves as being from the “inside” and of people like myself – as an Afrikaans-speaking Namibian woman with a settler background – as being from the “outside” (*outua*), or the “land of the whites” (*ehi ra virumbu*).

The historical trajectories of the different ‘native reserves’ and ‘homelands’ were also contingent upon whether these fell within or in the vicinity of the ‘Police Zone’ or rather formed part of the northern ‘Native Territories’ – with different systems of land and colonial administration between these two areas. With regards to the northern ‘Native Territories’, South African colonialism was realised through indirect rule. This eventually led to the co-production of particular political and ‘customary’ institutions and authorities between local actors and colonial administrators and officials, and the institutionalisation of a dual and segregated legal and political system of rule within the territory:²³ that of civil/statutory law and state authority, and, on the other hand, of customary law and authority.²⁴

The colonial mapping of the Kaokoland ‘native’ reserve, later homeland, and the institutionalisation of colonial indirect rule from 1917 onwards within north-western Namibia generated lasting impacts both on mobilities, land-access and use, intragroup relations and the formation of “customary” authorities and institutions.²⁵ In addition, already by the 1940s, and through colonial livestock policies, land appropriation further south, and the imposition of administrative, regional and national borders, the South African colonial administration succeeded in turning Kaoko’s previously diverse and regionally integrated pastoral economy into a subsistence-orientated and isolated one, leading to what Michael Bollig termed the “colonial encapsulation” of Kaoko.²⁶ The birthing of the ‘native reserves’ not only served the purpose of the ongoing appropriation of land for white settlers but was also aimed at severely limiting Africans’ access to arable land, mobility, as well as transhumance engagements with the land – engagements which had been essential to expanding pastoral polities and livestock herds within the semi-arid south and central Namibia. Moreover, the mapping of ‘reserves’

²² Miescher, *Namibia*.

²³ Wolfgang Werner, “Tenure Reform in Namibia’s Communal Areas,” *Journal of Namibian Studies: History Politics Culture* 18 (2015): 70.

²⁴ Mahmood Mamdani, “Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, no. 4 (2001): 654; Also see John T. Friedman, *Imagining the Post-Apartheid State: An Ethnographic Account of Namibia* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 51.

²⁵ Michael Bollig, “Socio-Ecological Change and Institutional Development in a Pastoral Community in North-Western Namibia,” in Bollig; Schnegg; Wotzka, *Pastoralism in Africa*.

²⁶ Bollig, “colonial.”

was meant to relegate and force the majority Africans into a subsistence existence and to produce cheap labour or “labour reserves”.²⁷

After 1968, and based on recommendations made by the Odendaal Commission of 1964, 17 African native reserves were integrated and incorporated into the production of ten ethnic ‘homelands’ (see Map 1 below) with colonial policy towards the former reserves, including the northern reserves, changing drastically.²⁸ The now infamous Odendaal Commission was Namibia’s equivalent to the South African apartheid master policy of ‘separate development’ which took root after the Nationalist Party ascended to power in 1948. This policy aimed at producing racially and ethnically homogenous and segregated spaces of independent ‘ethnic’ polities or Bantustans. In mapping these homelands, ethnicity was often “primordially and geographically defined”²⁹ and further embedded within a racial ideology. The mapping thus further entrenched a highly unequal, segregationist, racialised and ethnicised geography of land-use, ownership, and settlement.

At the same time pressure was mounting on the SWA apartheid administration – generated by local resistance, a changing political and international climate, and the rise of the armed struggle by the South West African Peoples’ Organisation (SWAPO) and their People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) fighters. In response, the colonial administration prioritised and announced an agenda of increased social and economic development and the ‘modernisation’ of the homelands.³⁰ Thus, homelands, in contrast to being ‘labour reserves’ – as they were ideologically and politically conceptualised before – were re-situated within an official discourse of ‘development’, especially in relation to agricultural production and capital accumulation.³¹ Consequently, during the decades of colonial and apartheid rule, former ‘reserves’ and ‘homelands’ were continually incorporated into and co-produced through changing ideologies and colonial state discursive practices and policies.

With the Namibian independence in 1990, former homeland areas were retained and declared ‘communal areas’ – to support poorer households and subsistence agriculture, encourage the development of commercial farmers, and expanding these areas where necessary.³² In 1992, the former Kaokoland homeland became part of the larger Kunene region³³ and was eventually divided into seven constituencies.³⁴ Apart from land reforms, the Namibian state also adopted a partial decentralisation

²⁷ Werner, “brief,” 138.

²⁸ Werner, “brief,” 146; Wolfgang Werner, “Land tenure and governance on communal land in Namibia” (Paper presented for the Second National Land Conference, September 2018), 2.

²⁹ Julie J. Taylor, “Post-Apartheid ‘Tribalism’? Land, Ethnicity and Discourses on San Subversion in West Caprivi, Namibia,” *African Studies* 67, no. 3 (2008): 320–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00020180802504999>.

³⁰ See, for instance, Steven Van Wolputte, “Cattle Works: Livestock Policy, Apartheid and Development in Northwest Namibia, C 1920–1980,” *African Studies* 66, no. 1 (2007); Bollig, “Socio.”

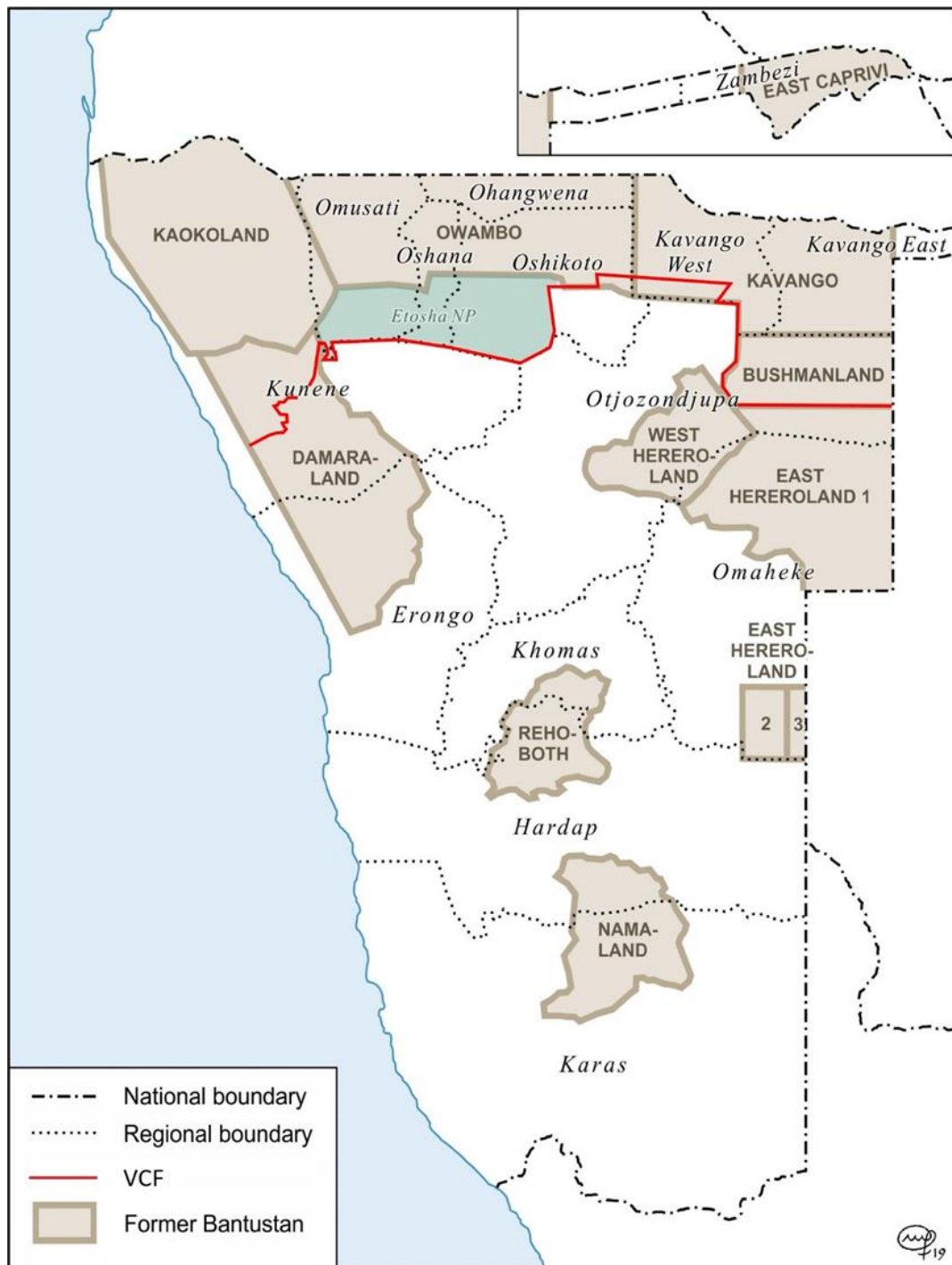
³¹ Werner, “Tenure,” 72.

³² Ibid.

³³ Michael Bollig, “Chieftaincies and Chiefs in Northern Namibia: Intermediaries of Power Between Traditionalism, Modernization, and Democratization,” in *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jost Dülffer and Marc Frey (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

³⁴ The Kunene Region as a whole covers an area of 115 293 km² and is the second-largest administrative region of the 13 regions – with northern Kunene (what Otjiherero-speakers refer to as *Okaoko*) being a bit more than half that size with an estimated population of 53 400.

policy in response to the ecological and socio-political challenges of governing a geographically-vast and sparsely populated territory and integrating a dual and segregated system of rule.³⁵



Map 1: Former Homeland boundaries transposed onto current administrative boundaries and the Veterinary Cordon Fence.³⁶

³⁵ Joshua B. Forrest, "The Drought Policy Bureaucracy, Decentralization, and Policy Networks in Post-Apartheid Namibia," *The American Review of Public Administration* 30, no. 3 (2000).

³⁶ Cartographer: Monika Feinen (Adapted from Friedman, *Imagining*)

Despite initial resistance, especially given the legacies of indirect colonial rule, legislative frameworks for the recognition and empowerment of inherited ‘customary’ authorities were eventually put in place by the late 1990s, with such authorities now organised as Traditional Authorities (TAs).³⁷ However, and through the Traditional Authorities Act,³⁸ TAs, unlike during the period of colonial rule, were excluded from main administrative structures, local authorities and political office, and were rather delegated to a judicial and cultural role, falling under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (MRLGH).³⁹ This process of recognising ‘customary’ authorities was paralleled by the recognition of ‘customary law’ as part of the law of the land and at the same legal level as the common law, i.e. Roman-Dutch law of the country (Art 66 of the Constitution) – with both subject to the principles of the Namibian Constitution.⁴⁰

Within the ongoing challenges of post-independence restructuring, initially, no clear national policy on the allocation of land within communal areas was established – leaving a large degree of ambiguity with regard to the role of former customary authorities.⁴¹ This created a “legal vacuum” which was exploited by many seeking to access land.⁴² Article 21 (h) of the Constitution also stipulates that any Namibian citizen could freely settle anywhere on communal land – provided he/she had followed set local procedures for acquiring access. This increasingly gave rise to intergroup tensions, conflicts and competing claims.⁴³ In response, the Communal Land Reform Act (CLRA) of 2002,⁴⁴ together with the Traditional Authorities Act of 1995/2000, eventually clarified the legal role of customary authorities in the administration and allocation of land-access in communal areas. The CLRA ultimately situates state-recognised TAs as the “supreme power to allocate land or to deny settlement permission according to traditional rules” given that these rules do not conflict with constitutional and statutory law.⁴⁵ Despite this, the post-colonial state was also (re)situated as a central actor in customary land tenure. The state’s role was extended through launching the codification and registration of communal land-rights in 2003 and the formation of regional Land Boards to oversee and ratify such land-right applications. Situated within the Ministry of Land Reform (MLR),⁴⁶ Land Boards comprised representatives from different relevant line ministries, regional councillors, community organisations,

³⁷ Bollig, “Chieftaincies.”

³⁸ Traditional Authorities Act, Republic of Namibia, Windhoek (2000).

³⁹ Taylor, “Post,” 84; Also see Christiaan Keulder, “Traditional Leaders,” in Keulder; Namibia, *State, Society and Democracy*.

⁴⁰ Manfred O. Hinz, “Traditional Governance and African Customary Law: Comparative Observations from a Namibian Perspective,” *Human rights and the rule of law in Namibia*, 2008, 67.

⁴¹ Eduard Gargallo, “Beyond Black and White: Ethnicity and Land Reform in Namibia,” *Politique Africaine* N° 120, no. 4 (2010): 160.

⁴² Werner, “Tenure,” 75.

⁴³ Werner, “Land,” 3.

⁴⁴ Communal Land Reform Act, Republic of Namibia, Windhoek (2002).

⁴⁵ Daniela Behr, Roos Haer, and Daniela Kromrey, “What Is a Chief Without Land? Impact of Land Reforms on Power Structures in Namibia,” *Regional & Federal Studies* 25, no. 5 (2015): 463, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13597566.2015.1114923>.

⁴⁶ Formerly known as the Ministry of Land, Resettlement and Rehabilitation

and the TAs.⁴⁷ Land allocations and applications were thus to be managed through the “creation and maintenance of the registers for the allocation, transfer, and cancellation of customary land rights and rights of leasehold”.⁴⁸ This land-right remains for the period of a person’s natural life and can be passed on to next of kin, given that this is done through the state’s legal and bureaucratic processes.⁴⁹

In 2015, “registering legal entities to apply for long-term leaseholds over commonages” was also in the process of being developed – with leaseholds intended to further the commercial viability of land within communal areas.⁵⁰ As a consequence of these reforms, post-independent Namibia is still characterised by what has been termed a “dualistic land tenure structure”.⁵¹ While more or less 43% of the land area falls under freehold title, 42% constituted so-called ‘communal lands’ or non-freehold – with the remaining land proclaimed state land (keeping in mind that all communal lands are legally in state guardianship).⁵² In contrast to freehold title, rights to land with the communal lands are allocated through ‘customary’ governance and legal systems, overseen by the state.⁵³

Additionally, since the mid-1990s and through the formation and campaigning of a particular “network of like-minded actors” as well as support from international funding agencies, the state has established legislation through which group rights over wildlife and tourism within communal areas could be established.⁵⁴ Thus, the state embraced and established the community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) paradigm as central to the re-structuring of environmental governance within communal lands.⁵⁵ CBNRM aimed to devolve and formalise user rights and decision-making power over wildlife, forests, medicinal and other plant-resources to local-user groups or ‘communities’⁵⁶ through the establishment of a legally recognised ‘conservancy’.⁵⁷

Through the Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996,⁵⁸ local communities and communal farmers could apply to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) for conservancy status and the

⁴⁷ Ideological debates regarding the transformation of customary tenure into private ownership and the future of Namibia’s communal lands are, however, still ongoing and contested. These contestations also take place on the ground through the ongoing fencing of communal grazing areas. See Werner (2015) for a more detailed discussion on these debates.

⁴⁸ Bollig, “Chieftaincies,” 171.

⁴⁹ Uerikambura Tjipepa, Chief Development Planner, Ministry of Lands and Resettlement, Opuwo, 16.03.2015 & 29.03.2016, unrecorded interviews

⁵⁰ Werner, “Tenure,” 79.

⁵¹ Ibid., 67

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Werner, “Land,” 2.

⁵⁴ Brian Jones, “The Evolution of Namibia’s Communal Conservancies,” in *Community Rights, Conservation and Contested Land: The Politics of Natural Resource Governance in Africa*, ed. Fred Nelson (London: Routledge, 2010), 108–10.

⁵⁵ Bollig, “Socio,” 33.

⁵⁶ I place it in inverted commas as a way to problematise its meaning and to point to my own critical engagement with the concept. This term has often been used uncritically within development studies and policy contexts and obscures the politics and practices which characterise the continual negotiation of coming-into-community, as well as local differences, heterogeneity, or inequalities. Sullivan (2002:180) has addressed this as an “essentializing ideology of ‘community’”.

⁵⁷ Also see Sullivan (2002) for the historical development of the concept of ‘conservancy’ within the Namibian context.

⁵⁸ Nature Conservation Amendment Act (Act 5 of 1996), Republic of Namibia, Windhoek (1996).

transfer of user and management rights to registered conservancy members. The application for ‘conservancy’ status was strongly circumscribed by the state which required applicants to articulate and formalise membership, clearly define territorial and resource boundaries, establish democratic decision-making structures (committees), and develop a constitution and management plan, including a land-use zoning plan detailing core conservation areas dedicated to wildlife conservation.⁵⁹ Moreover, conservancy committees are meant to function independently from the TA structures and gender equality was to be fostered. Hence institutional development was at the core of the CBNRM programme, with the conservancy and its related benefits being strongly member-driven.⁶⁰ This emphasis was rooted in the global policy and ideological currents of the time – especially Elinor Ostrom’s principles for successful common property resource management.⁶¹ However, the programme was also rooted in an existing idea of community-based conservation which emerged in north-western Namibia in the 1980s, as well as a national imperative to redress colonial forms of ‘fortress’ conservation.⁶² By 2002 there were 26 conservancies in Namibia.⁶³ By 2017 the number had jumped to 83 gazetted communal conservancies, with 30 in the north-western Kunene region alone. This signalled a significant re-territorialisation – at least cartographically.⁶⁴

Together with the conservancy impetus, the post-independent state also instigated a rural water reform programme aimed at devolving responsibility, rights, and ownership of water-points to local-user groups within communal farming lands. This process once again centred on institutional development and demanded that local user groups establish water-point user associations (WPA) with formalised and clearly articulated membership, a water-point committee and collectively agree on rules, cost-sharing strategies, and sanctions. The ongoing mapping of these intersecting and standardised reforms within historically diverse communal lands has in many instances been marked by a certain degree of ambiguity and fragmentation,⁶⁵ leading to overlapping and different legal conditions for managing different resources and for land allocation. It is thus against the background of these intersecting reforms and histories of colonial indirect rule that this thesis engages with the dispute.

Moreover, Kaoko’s regional political economies were also still marred, in different ways, by its colonial and post-colonial predicament, which have knotted the region within ongoing conditions of structural marginalisation. Both fair and accessible livestock markets were limited and often difficult to

⁵⁹ Bollig, “Socio.”

⁶⁰ Michael Bollig and Diego A. M. Schwieger, “Fragmentation, Cooperation and Power: Institutional Dynamics in Natural Resource Governance in North-Western Namibia,” *Human Ecology* 42, no. 2 (2014).

⁶¹ Ostrom Elinor, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁶² Jones, “evolution.”

⁶³ Sian Sullivan, “How Sustainable Is the Communalizing Discourse of ‘New’ Conservation,” in *Conservation and Mobile Indigenous Peoples: Displacement, Forced Settlement, and Sustainable Development*, ed. Dawn Chatty and Marcus Colchester (Berghahn Books, 2002).

⁶⁴ Bollig, “Socio”; Michael Bollig, “Towards an Arid Eden? Boundary Making, Governance and Benefit Sharing and the Political Ecology of the “New Commons” of Kunene Region, Northern Namibia,” *International Journal of the Commons* 10, no. 2 (2016).

⁶⁵ Bollig and Schwieger, “Fragmentation.”

reach. Infrastructural development and the provision of and access to public services such as health, education and sanitation were strained or completely absent in some areas and were challenged by the geographically large and mountainous topographies, with often substantial distances between places.⁶⁶ These conditions were further hampered by the lack of public transportation – with people relying heavily on hitch-hiking – and by limited technical and communication services, with most parts having no to limited cell phone network and electricity.⁶⁷

Delineating the research 'field' and focus

This thesis is based on ethnographic and multi-sited participatory observation research which entailed residing in southern Kaoko for more or less 14 months, between November 2014 and April 2016. During this time, I drew on a combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Apart from participating in and observing the dispute and in everyday life, much of the research process relied on semi-structured interviews, including oral history interviews, and later the implementation of questionnaires. Together with an Otjiherero-speaking translator and research assistant, we conducted research between and within several places, including the urban centre of Opuwo. In terms of delineating this research 'field', I was confined to a specific geographic area as well as a larger thematic context selected through the LINGS (Local Institutions in Globalized Societies) project framework within which I was employed. However, and at the same time, my early research encounters in southern Kaoko were instrumental in shaping my geographical and thematic focus.

The LINGS project (2010-2019) was a long-term, comparative anthropological research project aimed at analysing emergent, post-independent institutional dynamics engendered by the decentralisation of local and collective resource management, specifically that of water, within north-western Namibia's Kunene region.⁶⁸ Part of my responsibilities was to follow up on research conducted during the first project phase (2010-2014) and to implement a household census⁶⁹ with 48 households and a social network questionnaire in places situated next to and branching into Otwani, the administrative centre of the Opuwo rural constituency. Furthermore, I had to conduct an 'upscaling' questionnaire in 17 places concentrically selected to generate more regional perspectives on collective water-management practices. Consequently, it was evident that I would be doing research in the vicinity of this geographic locus. Yet although initially orientated towards researching collective water management dynamics, my early encounters here significantly redirected my focus and with an understanding that water is emplaced.

⁶⁶ Kunene Regional Development Profile 2015, National Planning Commission of Namibia

⁶⁷ This situation has changed drastically since 2017/18 with the arrival of a new service provider, allowing widespread access to cell-phone coverage.

⁶⁸ This project was based at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Cologne and Hamburg respectively, and in Germany.

⁶⁹ The household census focused primarily on understanding the composition of households and places, local economic practices and exchanges, livestock ownership and water management.

The research ‘field’ should thus be understood as continually and socially-constituted – both through practice and location.⁷⁰ My interest in the dispute stemmed from early encounters in 2014 whilst visiting the Otwani area. Here a project colleague met three Himba women whom he knew from Kaoko’s northern Epupa constituency situated approximately 200 km away. The women were staying alone with some of the households’ livestock, a small makeshift shelter nearby. They explained that it was the drought driving them further south. This encounter made me curious whether these gendered migrations and livestock movements across relatively large distances, were experienced and perceived as something novel, or rather familiar and every day. In other words, were they symptomatic of larger migrations within the region? In addition, I wanted to understand the social practices which animated these migrations and how the women themselves experienced them.

Later, however, in briefly meeting a local headman (*osoromana*), other dynamics related to these migrations began to surface. Expressing his concern, the conversation soon veered towards those migrating:

When we are together, we are together, you treat them well, but still, they will go and without an explanation – like the Bushmen people. They will just move, that is how the Bushmen are. You stay together and then they just disappear, without a trace. That is also how the Himba are. The Himba are not disciplined. They don’t know what they want and are uncivilised. They just go and come back as they want. And they don’t stay in a house like this (pointing to his own house) – they don’t settle down. Just like the Bushmen.⁷¹

Evident in this conversation was a normative valorisation of specific forms of movement, couched within an ethnicised and civilising discourse. Thus, reflected here was a particular age-old colonial sentiment in which a more sedentary lifestyle was equated with being ‘civilised’, whilst nomadism, as embodied by the Othered ‘Bushman’ and in this case also the ‘Himba’, was equated with being uncivilised or ‘undisciplined’.⁷² After this comment, the headman soon changed his tone, leaving me with the impression that he was not fully comfortable with making these assertions, nor fully convinced. It was then explained that the homesteads under discussion were also related to him; they were his maternal great-grandfather’s nephews. This simultaneous situating of people both as Other and kin seemed to signify that there was a tension at work. It also made me wonder to which extent this story and others like it was narrated in relation to me and my presence as a ‘white’ woman and researcher. In other words, could it be rooted in specific past experiences and perceptions of whiteness, power and marginality and broader discourses of modernisation? Thus, I became interested in engaging more concretely with these dynamics and asking which kind of politics of difference and belonging these pastoral mobilities were generating.

⁷⁰ Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, “Discipline and Practice: “The Field” as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology,” *Anthropological locations: Boundaries and grounds of a field science* 100 (1997).

⁷¹ xx.11.2014, unrecorded interview

⁷² See also Giorgio Miescher and Lorena Rizzo, “Popular Pictorial Constructions of Kaoko in the 20th Century,” in Miescher; Henrichsen, *New Notes on Kaoko*, 10.

In November 2014 I returned and ended up visiting and staying for some time in Otjomatamba, at the southern edge of the Opuwo rural constituency. Here too it became evident that recent in-migrations were fuelling collective anxieties and growing discontent. Slowly but surely, and through multiple conversations, I was finally informed that a public meeting (*ombongarero*) was to be held. The local senior men and councillors had spoken to the police and the countdown had begun – on the 9th of December the newcomer homesteads had to leave. An older resident explained to me that it would be a difficult meeting and warned that people should not come with weapons. The meeting would be held to discuss why people did not want to live together, he told me soberly.

I thus decided to ask for permission to remain here for some weeks to follow the meeting proceedings and to try and better understand what was at stake. Yet during this time, another layer to the situation emerged – with the concept of *opolotika* being at the centre of our discussions and meetings with people. In Otjomatamba and in mentioning *opolotika*, the people were doing so primarily in discussing the suspected role of the existence of two local and competing headmen (*ozosoromana*) not only in dividing the place but also in being to blame for the in-migrations and simmering tensions. Friedman⁷³ has argued that the term *opolotika* within Kaoko has come to denote a specific material form and practice and, unlike the concept of politics, does not refer to a “generalised notion of power”. Rather, peoples’ use of the term relates rather to the practices of political parties and political actors in relation to Namibia’s national and post-independent government, with SWAPO as the governing party.⁷⁴ Moreover, he noted that people here also relate *opolotika* to “divisiveness, conflict, violence, death and war” – with it also used as a general “derivative of problems, or as a form of criticism, or as the act of quarrelling”.⁷⁵

Based then on these early encounters it was evident that the situation was multi-layered and complex. Apart from wanting to understand the dynamics of mobility and belonging within the region, I thus became increasingly interested in the role of *opolotika* and contestations over local power and authority in shaping these dynamics. By the time I left southern Kaoko in mid-December 2014 no meeting on the issue of settlement had taken place. When I returned at the beginning of February 2015, I was surprised to hear that the meeting had still not taken place and that tensions seemed to be more acute. Due to the demands of the rainy season (livestock had to be moved and cared for), the arrival of the festive season which heralded the celebration of several weddings, and the challenge of gathering all the concerned people, the meeting was repeatedly postponed. I thus decided to ask permission to remain and live in Otjomatamba for some time to follow the deliberative processes.

Consequently, during the first six months of my research, I spent most of the time-based in Otjomatamba – first of all participating in and observing the dispute, and subsequently visiting and

⁷³ John T. Friedman, “Making Politics, Making History: Chiefship and the Post-Apartheid State in Namibia,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005): 47.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Friedman, *Imagining*, 225.

interviewing persons and homesteads in the various conjoining and neighbouring places – especially those who had been key actors within the dispute. The majority of the interlocutors of this thesis were encountered during this early stage. Throughout my research, we then also camped and stayed for long periods and conducted research about 20km further north in the places of Omao 1, Omao 2 and Ondera, close to Otwani, where we implemented the surveys. Lastly, I conducted interviews with state officials in Opuwo, mainly at the MLR and the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF), and the State Veterinary Practice, as well as with interlocutors, as they stayed and visited Opuwo for longer periods.

The dispute: A situational analysis

As noted in the introduction, in focusing on a particular dispute this thesis draws on a situational analysis approach. Before explaining in more detail what this entailed, I first briefly delineate the land and grazing dispute. The dispute on which this thesis pivot was set in motion in 2012 when several what was considered “newcomer” (Sg. *omuyenda*, Pl. *ovayenda*) Himba households started moving their livestock into Ozondundu during a period of widespread drought, with many establishing homesteads and livestock camps. Referred to by some as a “burning” drought, it was declared a national emergency by the Namibian government in May 2013.⁷⁶ These in-migrations combined with a general increase in drought-related and often unaccompanied livestock movements across southern Kaoko, including into Ozondundu, as shared pastures dwindled. By mid-2014, these pastoral mobilities were becoming a strong bone of contention.

A few weeks into my research at the start of 2015 a significant public meeting (*ombongarero*) was held in Otjomatamba, and the disputed cases were discussed. Several of the newcomer homesteads were subsequently asked to leave and were given 21 days to do so. Despite this request, most newcomers remained, and more people and livestock arrived in the weeks that followed. The dramatic exodus detailed in the introductory vignette of this chapter eventually followed what was in fact a long negotiation process which began in mid-2014, followed by the local-level meeting noted above. Subsequently, and with the newcomers refusing to leave, this generated several follow-up meetings which filled the days from morning until dusk, numerous trips to and legal and bureaucratic meanderings at the government offices and police stations in the urban centres of Opuwo and Sesfontein, clever avoidance and delaying tactics by some, and the ongoing and careful managing of mutuality and relatedness throughout. Eventually, this gave way to a period of more tense deliberations and ultimatums, to the mobilisation of wider socio-political networks, and to the newcomers and their livestock leaving or being forced to leave by mid-2015, and the subsequent and highly symbolic burning of the *kraals*.

⁷⁶ Michael Schnegg and Michael Bollig, “Institutions Put to the Test: Community-Based Water Management in Namibia During a Drought,” *Journal of Arid Environments* 124 (2016): 66.

Yet, despite this negotiation process and the eventual exodus, as the dry winter months began to set in at the start of June 2015, some newcomers and their herds unceremoniously returned to Ozondundu. Local deliberations and even household-level discussions on the issue ceased. Finally, the dispute was said to be at a “higher level” – a legal case was opened with the High Court of Namibia, in the capital Windhoek. At some point, one family was served with an eviction notice by the police yet decided to contest this legally. As my research ended in early 2016, these legal and local contestations over land-access, belonging and mobility continued, worsened by the ongoing lack of widespread rains and a national FMD in neighbouring regions and subsequent restrictions on livestock movements.



The situational analysis approach builds on the ‘extended case-study approach’ first pioneered by the anthropologist Max Gluckman⁷⁷ and the Manchester School during the mid and late 20th century. The school argued for theorising the general “through the dynamic particularity of the case”, a particularity made accessible through a strong focus on ethnographic detail.⁷⁸ Thus, instead of using case material as an example, such material was taken as the starting point of analysis. The focus was particularly on “events [which constituted] concentrated and intense dimensions of the overall crises situation”.⁷⁹ Hence, this method emerged as a distinct approach geared towards theorising larger historical, socio-political, and macro processes through grounded engagement with a particular event and/or case study.

Recent post-structural re-workings of this approach, now generally referred to as situational analysis, have argued for recognising the primacy it places on questions of social change and conflict, processual analysis, and its implicit preoccupations with the logic of dialectics.⁸⁰ Evens and Handelman⁸¹ for instance have argued that it was and is essentially an approach in which the social is understood as “pre-eminently a matter of *practice*”. Thus, in taking ethnographic engagement with situations and events as the “first step in analysis” one inadvertently engages the “Hegelo-Marxian dialectical conundrum of theory and practice”, or the co-constitutive relationship between theory and practice, expressed in the concept of praxis.⁸² In other words, the “very practice of situational analysis produces, procedurally, a theory of practice, one that, given its situationalism, comprehends praxis (including ethnographic praxis) as an ongoing, open-ended dialectic, rather than a completed synthesis”.⁸³

Kapferer⁸⁴ also foregrounds events as “moments of social life in the very process of formation”, continually opening up towards “a knowing [which] is not already apparent” and thus as crucial in the

⁷⁷ An Analysis of a Social Situation (1940)

⁷⁸ Theodore M. S. Evens and Don Handelman, “The Ethnographic Praxis of the Theory of Practice,” *Social Analysis* 49, no. 3 (2005): 1.

⁷⁹ Kapferer, “Situations,” 89.

⁸⁰ Evens and Handelman, “ethnographic,” 3; Kapferer, “Situations.”

⁸¹ Evens and Handelman, “ethnographic,” 3.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 4

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 5

⁸⁴ Kapferer, “Situations,” 92.

co-constitution of the “problematic to be investigated”. He thus approaches the event as a “generative moment” – not only in terms of the ongoing formation of social and political life but also in its shaping of the forms of knowing which become engendered by the ethnographic research and writing itself.⁸⁵ This thesis then engages with the dispute as a situated and critical event, analysing both the particular historical and cultural contingencies, legacies and structural dynamics which shaped and continue to shape it, as well as the emergent practices and performances through which both the potential and inherited social, material, and normative realities and relations were being (re)imagined, (re)negotiated, contested and co-constructed.

My reasons for drawing on such an approach are two-fold: Firstly, this dispute was marked by a distinct spatio-temporal constellation. Thus, within the first two months of my research, there were a series of happenings which signified a “punctuation of the temporal flow”⁸⁶ of everyday life. Moreover, these happenings also took form in and through the production and enactment of space and place and were mostly practiced beneath a consciously chosen Leadwood Tree (*Omumborombonga*) and in other interconnected localities and spaces. Secondly, and importantly, my experience of and participation in the dispute were critical in shaping the emergent research and lines of inquiry, including sketching the larger situation in which this dispute could be seen as a diagnostic event. Nevertheless, as Jackson⁸⁷ reminds us, no account of an event “can be disentangled from one’s experience of it, or from one’s retrospective descriptions and redescriptions” [nor] “can any one person’s account of an event be considered apart from the account of others”. In other words, the connections we make as researchers are strongly shaped by our implications in them.⁸⁸ Here it is thus crucial to acknowledge my framing of the event as an analytical tool. Hence, the dispute was simultaneously embedded within other spaces, precedents, and contingencies, and was generating ongoing (and unexpected) actions, effects, and consequences.

Nevertheless, throughout my experience of the dispute key research questions took form. These questions guided the research process and are the questions that this thesis attempts to answer. First, what politics of belonging and social practices of inclusion and exclusion were at stake within this dispute? Hence, how were the boundaries between persons and households considered settled (Sg. *omuture*, Pl. *ovature*) and those designated as newcomers (*ovayenda*) constructed, negotiated, contested, and performed? Furthermore, how were the area/chieftaincy boundaries (*orukondua*) performed, imagined, and contested? What role did both the communal conservancy play in contestations over land-access and belonging? In which ways were these negotiations shaped by

⁸⁵ Kapferer, “Situations,” 103.

⁸⁶ Mary H. Moran, “Social Thought and Commentary: Time and Place in the Anthropology of Events: A Diaspora Perspective on the Liberian Transition,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (2005).

⁸⁷ Michael Jackson, *Existential Anthropology: Events, Exigencies and Effects* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 3.

⁸⁸ Kirsten Hastrup, “Getting It Right: Knowledge and Evidence in Anthropology,” *Anthropological Theory* 4, no. 4 (2004): 456, 466.

intersecting forms of social belonging, including gender, kinship, and the mobilisation of being ‘Himba’ and/or ‘Herero’?

Additionally, I asked which pastoral mobilities were disputed and within which patterns of migration and livestock movements were these mobilities embedded? How do people and households negotiate pastoral mobilities and territorial belonging and in which ways was this process gendered and shaped by gendered and contested relations of power and authority? Along with experiences of drought, what were the other aspirations and pursuits that animated peoples’ and households’ decisions and desires to migrate, to seek alternative and/or additional pastures, or places? Were patterns of migration and land-use in the region changing? And lastly, I asked how the allocation of land-access and pastoral mobilities were governed between “customary” and “state” law and authority and within the context of post-colonial southern Kaoko?

Situating this study and its contribution

Several studies in Namibia have shown how, during the first decades following independence, communal lands were contested, with disputes complicated by the country’s complex, unequal and segregated colonial histories of land distribution and access.⁸⁹ Conflicts arose, for example concerning the restitution of ancestral lands, illegal fencings and enclosures of communal rangelands,⁹⁰ women’s rights to land, and struggles for land-rights by minority and marginalised groups.⁹¹ Moreover, due to the problematic ways in which ethnicity had been mobilised in the past and by the colonial administration, the post-independent state was reluctant to allocate land based on ancestral land-claims or ethnic identity.⁹² Some studies have thus analysed how this drove and continues to drive struggles over recognition and rights, including through the establishment of competing TAs, with such struggles increasingly and somewhat contradictory becoming “a forum for the mobilisation of ethnicity among several different groups in Namibia”.⁹³

Studies have also explored how conservancies have not been exclusively motivated by conservation. Sullivan⁹⁴ for instance has shown how in the political climate in the decade after independence and with the “lack of an overriding legal procedural basis for establishing tenure rights

⁸⁹ Gargallo, “Beyond.”

⁹⁰ Wolfgang Werner, *From Communal Pastures to Enclosures: The Development of Land Tenure in Herero Reserves* 60 (Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit, 1997).

⁹¹ Legal Assistance Centre, *“Our Land They Took”: San Land Rights Under Threat in Namibia* (Windhoek: Land, Environment and Development (LEAD) project, Legal Assistance Centres (LAC), 2006), <http://www.lac.org.na/projects/lead/Pdf/landtheytook.pdf>; Taylor, “Post”; Robert K. Hitchcock, “Refugees, Resettlement, and Land and Resource Conflicts: The Politics of Identity Among !Xun and Khwe San in Northeastern Namibia,” *African Study Monographs* 33, no. 2 (2012): 13 ; Werner, “Tenure,” 75.

⁹² Gargallo, “Beyond,” 155.

⁹³ Julie J. Taylor, “Naming the land: identity, authority and environment in Namibia’s West Caprivi” (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Oxford, 2008), 106 Also see, Julie J. Taylor, *Naming the Land: San Identity and Community Conservation in Namibia’s West Caprivi* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2012).

⁹⁴ Sullivan, “How,” 165–66.

to land in communal areas,” the conservancy option was seen by many in north-western Namibia as the only way to secure land-access. Thus, the criteria for gazetting conservancies were interpreted rather as defining rights to land and pastures – despite conservancies not being legally binding and nor tied to tenure rights. Her work also examined the mapping of community conservation as it relates to new processes of territorialisation, and contestations over representation and access within areas historically characterised by overlapping claims.⁹⁵ In other parts of Namibia, it has been shown how the gazetting of conservancies was driven by a multitude of interests, including grassroots attempts by groups or actors to “create new social spaces, establish new ethnic groups, reaffirm loyalties with traditional authorities, and better position themselves to pursue and control specific economic development strategies.”⁹⁶

The recognition of former “customary” authorities and law has also not been without complications and complexities. For one, implicitly embedded within the Traditional Authorities’ Act is the idea that recognition hinges on the “possession by a group of a ‘separate identity’ based on common ancestry, language, cultural heritage, customs and traditions, a common traditional authority, and the inhabitation of a common communal area”.⁹⁷ These criteria have been critiqued as inadvertently working against attempts to undo the ‘homeland’ legacy of apartheid and instead as reifying “the territorial salience of the Bantustans”.⁹⁸ Thus, similar to what has been noted in post-apartheid South Africa, the idea of a ‘traditional community’ and the “rubric of custom organises space as a territorial patchwork of separate jurisdictions, each of them corresponding to a traditional community that consists of native subjects bound together by their ethno-cultural traits”.⁹⁹

In terms of studying land and grazing disputes within communal lands, Harring and Odendaal¹⁰⁰ addressed the fragmented and overlapping legal orders post-independent reforms have created and how these are delimiting capacities for solving local land disputes within the Salambala conservancy in north-eastern Namibia. The case they address involved the attempted removal and eviction of households settled within the so-called ‘core conservation’ areas. This case, apart from foregrounding the legal complexities, also emphasised the rising tensions between conservancies and other forms of land-use.¹⁰¹ Other studies on disputes, and as noted above, primarily concentrated land-grabbing and

⁹⁵ Sullivan, “How”; Sian Sullivan, “Gender, Ethnographic Myths & Community-Based Conservation in a Former Namibian ‘Homeland’,” in Hodgson, *Rethinking Pastoralism in Africa*; Sian Sullivan, “Maps and Memory, Rights and Relationships: Articulations of Global Modernity and Local Dwelling in Delineating Land for a Communal-Area Conservancy in North-West Namibia,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2005.

⁹⁶ Alfons Mosimane and Julie A. Silva, “Boundary Making in Conservancies: The Namibian Experience,” in *Cartographies of Nature: How Nature Conservation Animates Borders*, ed. Maano Ramutsindela (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 105.

⁹⁷ Taylor, “Naming,” 85.

⁹⁸ Hylton White, “Custom, Normativity and Authority in South Africa,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41, no. 5 (2015): 5.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Sidney L. Harring and Willem Odendaal, *“God Stopped Making Land!”: Land Rights, Conflict and Law in Namibia’s Caprivi Region* (Legal Assistance Center, 2012).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 40

the enclosure or fencing-off of communal lands,¹⁰² minority land-rights, and contestations between the state and politically marginalised and oppositional political factions.¹⁰³ Moreover, studies have focused on the land-rights of groups settled and living within the boundaries of national parks – with these parks also intimately entangled with colonial histories of settlement and land appropriation.¹⁰⁴ Grazing land disputes, triggered by pastoral migrations and mobility, have received lesser attention.¹⁰⁵

Mushimba¹⁰⁶ specifically explores how such disputes become articulated in north-eastern Namibia around contrasting views of land-use, expansion of territories, and the question of authority and legality in a context where grazing rights had, in the past, primarily been allocated through verbal agreements. Werner¹⁰⁷ has also noted that this historical reliance on verbal agreements and the lack of written records of land-rights often constituted the core problem from which many post-independent land disputes arose and also fuelled the current drive by the state to formalise customary land rights. Moreover, Mudva¹⁰⁸ analyses the legal implications and historical and political precedents of a grazing dispute within the western Kavango region.

Broadly speaking, this study then aims to contribute to the literature on land and grazing disputes within Namibia's 'communal' lands and within plural post-colonial legal orders. More specifically, given its focus on a situational and ethnographic analysis approach, this study contributes to understanding the agency of local actors in navigating, weaving, (de)legitimising and co-constituting these plural legal orders, while simultaneously examining who yields the power and authority in circumscribing this process. In addition, this study contributes to exploring how struggles over post-colonial plural legal orders are both shaping and being shaped by changing patterns of pastoral mobility and migration. And lastly, this study develops a nuanced and historically-informed understanding of the mobilisation of ethnicity and the politics of belonging within struggles over land and resources,

¹⁰² Willem Odendaal, *Elite Land Grabbing in Namibian Communal Areas and Its Impact on Subsistence Farmers' Livelihoods* (2011); Wolfgang Werner, *'What Has Happened Has Happened': The Complexity of Fencing in Namibia's Communal Areas* (Windhoek: Land, Environment and Development Project, Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), 2011).

¹⁰³ P. Claasen, "Reconciling Violent Resource Conflicts in the Kavango Region of Namibia," in *The Long Aftermath of War: Reconciliation and Transition in Namibia*, ed. André Du Pisani, Reinhart Kössler and William A. Lindeke, *Freiburger Beiträge zu Entwicklung und Politik* 37 (Freiburg, Br., Germany: Arnold Bergstraesser Institut, 2010); Gargallo, "Beyond."

¹⁰⁴ Ute Dieckmann, "'The Vast White Place': A History of the Etosh National Park in Namibia and the Hai//om," *Nomadic Peoples*, 2001; Ute Dieckmann, *Hai//om in the Etosha Region: A History of Colonial Settlement, Ethnicity and Nature Conservation* (Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2007); Taylor, "Post."

¹⁰⁵ Martin K. Shapi, "Grazing land dispute between vaKwangali and Ovakwanyama and Ovandonga speaking people in Mpungu constituency in the Kavango Region" (University of Namibia, 2005); Julia Mushimba, *The Land Dispute Between the Owambo Cattle Farmers and the Ukwangali Traditional Authority* (Windhoek: University of Namibia, 2006); J. Mushimba, "Disputed Land: Owambo Cattle Farmers in Ukwangali," in *Biodiversity and the Ancestors: Challenges to Customary and Environmental Law: Case Studies from Namibia*, ed. Manfred O. Hinz and Olivier C. Ruppel (2008); Theodor K. Muduva, "Grazing rights in communal areas of a post-independent Namibia: a case study of a grazing dispute in western Kavango region" (University of the Western Cape, 2014).

¹⁰⁶ Mushimba, "Disputed."

¹⁰⁷ Werner, "Land," 10.

¹⁰⁸ Muduva, "Grazing."

especially in relation to the state, and within contexts characterised by mobile-land relations and pastoralism.

Analytical framework and key concepts

Post-colonial legal pluralism

As detailed, this thesis concerns the governing of land-access within the domain of ‘customary’ authority and law, and within a post-colonial and legally pluralistic context. The concept of “legal pluralism” is often mobilised to refer to the existence of interacting, simultaneous and competing normative frameworks co-existing within the same social order, or society.¹⁰⁹ However, following von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann, I approach this concept not as an explanatory theory but rather only as a “sensitising concept” and one which enables one to critically engage with the interrelationships, interactions and power relations between formal, codified state law and policy and local living norms.¹¹⁰

Additionally, in focusing on so-called ‘living’ customary law I regard “custom” as “a dynamic domain of African jurisprudence, evolving in tune with vernacular usage and context, and not as a static repertoire of rules established definitively in the past”.¹¹¹ Such understanding foregrounds the “processual nature of local law” instead of understanding ‘customary’ law as the straightforward application of rules.¹¹² However, it also foregrounds that “neither custom nor sources of custom are singular”¹¹³ and that this domain is open for contestation. Moreover, this thesis delineates the historical and changing socio-legal entanglements between ‘state’ and ‘customary’ institutions and authority within this context. Drawing on Friedman’s seminal work, it thus aims to illustrate some of the complex ways in which this now “single legal complex”¹¹⁴ is re-configured through the dispute.¹¹⁵

Furthermore, this thesis engages with the gendered dynamics of “custom” and the contemporary and historical (re)production of a “patriarchal political order” within southern Kaoko.¹¹⁶ Patriarchy can be defined as societies “where men dominate women politically and economically”.¹¹⁷ However, as Hodgson reminds us, “such control is relational, never thorough, often contradictory and

¹⁰⁹ Franz von Benda-Beckmann and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann, “The Dynamics of Change and Continuity in Plural Legal Orders,” *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law* 38, 53-54 (2006): 14.

¹¹⁰ Wim M. J. Van Binsbergen, “Introduction: The Dynamics of Power and the Rule of Law in Africa and Beyond: Theoretical Perspectives on Chiefs, the State, Agency, Customary Law, and Violence,” in *The Dynamics of Power and the Rule of Law: Essays on Africa and Beyond; in Honour of Emile Adriaan B. Van Rouveroy Van Nieuwaal*, ed. Wim M. J. Van Binsbergen, Riekje Pelgrim and Emile A. B. van Rouveroy Nieuwaal (Leiden: LIT Verlag, 2003), 39.

¹¹¹ White, “Custom,” 4.

¹¹² Van Binsbergen, “Introduction,” 39.

¹¹³ Mamdani, “Beyond,” 662.

¹¹⁴ Friedman, *Imagining*, 112–22.

¹¹⁵ Friedman, *Imagining*; Also see Van Wolputte, “Cattle.”

¹¹⁶ Friedman, *Imagining*.

¹¹⁷ Dorothy L. Hodgson, “Pastoralism, Patriarchy and History: Changing Gender Relations Among Maasai in Tanganyika, 1890–1940,” *The Journal of African History* 40, no. 1 (1999): 43.

inconsistent, and maintained through extended negotiations and struggles.” This thesis then situates ‘custom’ and authority within a wider normative field in an attempt to address the agency of women in self-directing and influencing the political and normative spheres, and in navigating pastoral mobilities and land-access.

In using the concept “postcolonial” I do not understand it as a “representation of history as linear progress”¹¹⁸ with a set periodisation of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial. Rather, postcolonial here is meant to refer to this open, contested, fragmented and contingent nature of past legacies and inheritances, and their indeterminate entanglements with the present. Thus, people are not “passive receivers of a past” but are rather continually engaged in act of refashioning colonial legacies.¹¹⁹ Thus, as de L’Estoile has pointed out, legacies “handed down to us from the past comes without a ‘will’ or guidelines as to how to deal with it” – rather they are made tangible through constant contestation, reinvention, reinterpretation, or are forgotten or denied by different actors in different situations and times. In other words, legacies are marked by both “an indeterminate and open character” – they are always in a state of being reconfigured.¹²⁰ In particular, this thesis engages with contemporary reworkings of colonial inheritances in “a genealogical [and patriarchal] continuity in institutions”¹²¹, with hegemonic ideologies in land policies and imaginaries rooted in a “metaphysics of sedentarism”,¹²² and with the lived refashioning of the remnants of colonial administrative, socio-spatial, territorial and ethnic boundaries. In doing so, this thesis aims to interrogate the interrelation between the normative, social, and historical dimensions of institutions.¹²³

Land, place and belonging

As noted at the start of this chapter, land-relations within southern Kaoko are enfolded in and practiced through particular culturally-inflected institutions, including specific intertwined notions of place, mobility, and belonging. In taking local notions of place (*otjirongo*) as a starting point, this thesis draws on anti-essentialist and post-structuralist theorisations of ‘place’. Thus, rather than taking ‘place’ and ‘locality’ as a given, or as the context, I am interested in how place in itself becomes the ground for struggles over power, authority, belonging and identity, and how this in turn (re)produces localities.

¹¹⁸ See Heike Becker, “A Concise History of Gender, ‘Tradition’ and the State in Namibia,” in Keulder; Namibia, *State, Society and Democracy*, 176.

¹¹⁹ Benoît de L’Estoile, “The Past as It Lives Now: An Anthropology of Colonial Legacies 1,” *Social Anthropology* 16, no. 3 (2008): 268.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 270, 277

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 271

¹²² Noel B. Salazar, “Towards an Anthropology of Cultural Mobilities,” *Crossings: Journal of Migration & Culture* 1, no. 1 (2010): 60.

¹²³ White, “Custom,” 8.

Studies on ‘place’ have predominantly approached it either from a political economy and ecology, social constructivist or phenomenological perspective or through an integration of these.¹²⁴ These conceptual engagements, to differing degrees, have brought to the fore questions of scale, meaning, materiality, networks and movement.¹²⁵ Social constructivist approaches have foregrounded place as something which is not fixed nor bounded, but rather as socially (re)produced within differential relations of power.¹²⁶ With this focus questions of scale and power are at the forefront – with scholars concerned with the interplay between local agency and larger structural, historical, political and economic forces. The phenomenological perspectives¹²⁷, in turn, foregrounds the “primacy of embodied perception”¹²⁸ in theorising the society-environment nexus and have argued for a renewed engagement with what has been termed *emplacement*. Ingold¹²⁹ especially has been at the forefront of espousing the “dwelling” perspective, arguing for engaging with the situated, embodied, and emplaced dynamics of all knowledge production. Here place is the “domain of everyday, immediate practical activity” and not only reducible to larger discourses and structural forces, but subject dynamic intersubjective and intercorporeal becomings.¹³⁰

This thesis builds on these two perspectives, however, I focus primarily on how place and place-relations were being made and re-made through “reiterative social practice” and particular (im)mobilities, as well as constituted as something which was struggled over – which was politicised and territorialised.¹³¹ Moreover, in following Massey, I understand place *as* process.¹³² In other words, place in this context is relationally understood and constructed – with the “porosity of boundaries” being key in understanding the dynamics of place-politics.¹³³ Thus, rather than being geographically bounded spaces, places are best understood as “temporary constellations” and sites where both the ‘global’, ‘national’ and ‘local’ can be simultaneously articulated, as well as overlapping pre-, colonial and post-colonial temporalities.¹³⁴

Furthermore, within the context of ‘communal’ lands, “rights to land are intimately tied to membership in specific communities, be it the nuclear or extended family, the larger descent group

¹²⁴ Law John, “Actor Network Theory and Material Semiotics,” in *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

¹²⁵ Arturo Escobar, “Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization,” *Political geography* 20, no. 2 (2001): 153.

¹²⁶ Charles W. J. Withers, “Place and the Spatial Turn” in Geography and in History,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70, no. 4 (2009): 641.

¹²⁷ For a deeper engagement with these arguments see Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (University of California Press, 2013).

¹²⁸ Escobar, “Culture.”

¹²⁹ Tim Ingold, “Against Space: Place, Movement, Knowledge,” in *Boundless Worlds: An Anthropological Approach to Movement*, ed. Peter W. Kirby (Berghahn Books, 2008).

¹³⁰ Escobar, “Culture,” 150.

¹³¹ Withers, “Place,” 642 Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction* (John Wiley & Sons, 2014).

¹³² D. Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, Ltd, 2005).

¹³³ Escobar, “Culture,” 144.

¹³⁴ Massey, *For*.

(clan), the ethnic group, or as is the case in modern property regimes, the nation state”.¹³⁵ However, as Lentz¹³⁶ points out, and as numerous studies have shown, membership in these groups is not ‘a given’ and often overlaps. In this thesis, and in examining the politics of belonging generated by the dispute, I approach kinship, not as an *a priori* ‘biological’ pre-given. Rather, I address it as relationships and relations which are practiced, performed, and transformed in the everyday, in specific contexts and interactions, and rituals. Following Carsten, I thus draw on the concept of “relatedness” as a way to engage with kinship as a social and daily practice, as a continuous process of becoming socially and/or genealogically connected to, disconnected from and/or related to others.¹³⁷ Thus, peoples’ kin and social belonging had to be negotiated.

This thesis furthermore follows Yuval-Davis in drawing on an intersectional approach to analysing questions of belonging. Belonging can be understood as one’s emotional and affective attachments and affinities, a sense of being in-relation, and/or identifying with a larger collective and/or state of being – which, in the context of the dispute, is primarily addressed as a discourse on place, of belonging to and within a place(s) and concerning land-access.¹³⁸ Yet, Yuval-Davis has argued that people are however always situated simultaneously within multiple and shifting belongings which take form at the intersection of locally-specific and historically-constituted political categories and signifiers through which one has to – or desires to – perform, negotiate and identify the social self.¹³⁹

In other words, and as noted above, belonging is likewise a matter of ongoing negotiation – it is a process and activity which is never complete, but rather has to be established and re-established in relation to others.¹⁴⁰ Such an approach is sensitive to the role of peoples’ differential “social and economic locations, which, at each historical moment, have particular implications vis-à-vis the grids of power relations in society.”¹⁴¹ In drawing on Yuval-Davis, I thus also examine how, within the context of the dispute, people’s social positioning was “constructed along multiple axes of difference” – including gender and ethnicity – and how these axes and discourses of difference were constituting each other.¹⁴²

In addition, this thesis analyses the *politics* of belonging that were generated through the dispute. The *politics of belonging* can be understood as political projects, discourses, or regimes through

¹³⁵ Lentz, “Land,” 1.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Janet Carsten, ed., *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship* (Cambridge University Press, 2000); Janet Carsten, *After Kinship* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹³⁸ Nira Yuval-Davis, “Belonging and the Politics of Belonging,” *Patterns of prejudice* 40, no. 3 (2006), Eva Youkhana, “A Conceptual Shift in Studies of Belonging and the Politics of Belonging,” *Social Inclusion* 3, no. 4 (2015).

¹³⁹ Yuval-Davis, “Belonging,” Also see Youkhana, “conceptual”, and Vikki Bell, “Performativity and Belonging: An Introduction,” *Theory, culture & society* 16, no. 2 (1999).

¹⁴⁰ Francis B. Nyamnjoh, “Blinded by Sight: Divining the Future of Anthropology in Africa,” *Africa Spectrum*, 2012, 78.

¹⁴¹ Yuval-Davis, “Belonging,” 199.

¹⁴² Ibid., 200, Nira Yuval-Davis, *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations* (London: Sage, 2011), 5.

which particular collectivities and their social and/or spatial boundaries of difference become imagined and constructed, whilst simultaneously, these collectivities themselves become constituted and shaped *through* the emergent process of the particular project and event.¹⁴³

Social navigation and kinetics

Within this thesis mobility – including pastoral mobility – is approached as an embodied and social practice which is both situated, emplaced and emplacing, and which has to be relationally negotiated.¹⁴⁴ Thus, place and mobility are therefore not antithetical to each other – but rather understood as co-constitutive.¹⁴⁵ As Ingold also expressed it: “lives are led not inside places but through, around, to and from them, from and to places elsewhere” – with places as well as people’s socio-spatial trajectories being formed and taking form through these “entangled pathways” and the various encounters generated.¹⁴⁶

Moreover, one’s capacity for different forms of movement and emplacement – both socio-spatial, corporeal and geographical – have to be negotiated in relation to social relations of power, changing material realities, and multiple “spatial, infrastructural and institutional moorings”¹⁴⁷ which govern, delimit and enable certain kinds of (privileged) movements and emplacements, whilst negating others. Also, socio-spatial movements and different forms of (im)mobility (including pastoral mobility) are differentially valued and interpreted, and become embedded within hegemonic ideologies, discourses, and regimes of what constitutes valued forms of movement and/or land-use – and importantly – belonging(s). The concept of (im)mobility here thus emphasises the intractable interrelationship between relative states and experiences of mobility and immobility, movement and stasis, motion, and fixity, and how this interrelationship is always a question of power and relations of power.¹⁴⁸

To engage with the dynamic interaction between movement and emplacement, as well as how persons negotiated pastoral mobilities and residency within a post-colonial and legally plural context, I draw on Vigh’s concept of “social navigation”.¹⁴⁹ Social navigation is defined as a “modality of movement” which is characterised by the “tactical practice of navigating social forces and events” within lifeworlds which are not necessarily stable but rather shifting, fluid and marked by uncertainty and change.¹⁵⁰ The concept of social navigation refers thus both to the immediacies, and experiential

¹⁴³ Yuval-Davis, “Belonging,” 197.

¹⁴⁴ Francis B. Nyamnjoh, “Fiction and Reality of Mobility in Africa,” *Citizenship Studies* 17, 6-7 (2013): 654.

¹⁴⁵ See Cresswell, *Place*, p. 65, Tim Ingold, “Against,” 34

¹⁴⁶ Tim Ingold, “Against.”

¹⁴⁷ Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller, and John Urry, “Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings,” *Mobilities* 1, no. 1 (2006): 3.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Henrik Vigh, “Motion Squared: A Second Look at the Concept of Social Navigation,” *Anthropological Theory* 9, no. 4 (2009).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 424-25

and embodied dimensions related to movement – to the act of sometimes having to just feel our way through uncertainties – whilst simultaneously foregrounding ongoing efforts by people to try to gain an overview of situations to plot possible future trajectories.¹⁵¹

Practices of social navigation are thus dynamic and characterised by the ongoing relation “between the environment people move in and how the environment itself moves them, before, after and during an act.”¹⁵² Hence, our capacities of and for movement – whether socio-spatial or corporeal – are thus both situationally and relationally defined and people deploy a range of creative tactics and strategies to socially navigate the various relations, pulls, imperatives, desires and blockages as well as sudden and incremental changes in their lives. Moreover, such a perspective is attentive to the crucial role of one’s shifting social and economic position concerning wider configurations of power and how this produces different but also unequal forms of social and political agency.¹⁵³

Building on the understanding of mobility detailed above, this thesis begins to build a theory of mobility rooted in the concept of ‘kinetics’, and one that moves beyond rational choice models of pastoral mobility.¹⁵⁴ In using the concept of kinetics, I explore how social and pastoral mobilities are co-constitutive, and how in turn these mobilities are simultaneously animated by culturally and historically-constituted dynamics, and larger structural changes, including environmental pressures, as well as relational, personal, affective, and emotive dimensions. Thus, and through the dispute, I try to delineate some of the different kinetics which, in this context, shape and animate people’s decisions to move, including to move or move with livestock.

And lastly, in analysing the dispute, I draw on the concept of translocality. I do so, in particular, to draw attention to the “situatedness of mobile actors”¹⁵⁵ – in other words, people are emplaced even when they move, and they dynamically move with and within their social, political, and institutional embeddedness. Moreover, the concept of translocality is concerned with how social, material, and symbolic exchanges, mobilities and relations across locales continually produce and connect different places, as well as how the different localities and places involved dynamically shape and co-constitute these relations.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 429-431

¹⁵² Ibid., 425

¹⁵³ Ibid., 433

¹⁵⁴ Thomas Widlok, “The Decision to Move: Being Mobile and Being Rational in Comparative Anthropological Perspective,” in *Knowledge and Action*, ed. Peter Meusburger, Benno Werlen and Laura Suarsana, Knowledge and Space, 1877-9220 9 (Cham: Springer Open, 2017).

¹⁵⁵ Clemens Greiner and Patrick Sakdapolrak, “Translocality: Concepts, Applications and Emerging Research Perspectives,” *Geography Compass* 7, no. 5 (2013): 374.

¹⁵⁶ Katherine Brickell and Ayona Datta, “Introduction: Translocal Geographies,” in *Translocal Geographies* (Routledge, 2016).

Positionality and research ethics

It is important to briefly reflect on my positionality and the ethical concerns that animated this research. These reflections, although summarised here, informed, and shaped the research and writing process. Ethnographic knowledge and praxis are by definition an intersubjective, dialogical and dialectical process – shaped through self-reflexive exchanges, encounters and interactions between the researcher, translators and research participants.¹⁵⁷ As Bourke et al.¹⁵⁸ have noted, this involves forging and negotiating relationships across shifting social boundaries and along multiple axes of difference, including, for example, language, citizenship, gender, race, education, class and divergent cultural registers. This demands careful reflection as these differences allow for or delimit the co-production of knowledge.¹⁵⁹

First, although some people could speak English, as well as some older people who could understand and speak Afrikaans (my mother tongue), the majority of people with whom we worked were mainly Otjiherero-speaking. While having attempted to learn the language, due to time and institutional constraints, I rather strongly relied on translators and research assistants. Working across a language barrier has important consequences for the knowledge production and translation process, one's capacity to foster interpersonal relationships and rapport, as well as what becomes and is possible in terms of research topics in defining the 'field'. Moreover, translators – who also essentially work as research assistants and key collaborators – also have their motivations, ways of relating to others, and skills, which simultaneously influence the research encounters and interviews.

Throughout my ethnographic praxis and the writing of this thesis, I tried to remain vigilant about the limits of my knowing. First, considering the challenge of recording and interpreting public meetings and events across and through a language barrier, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations in my analysis of the dispute. To co-construct the narrative, an ongoing attempt was made to corroborate and explore some of the more subtle tensions, underlying dynamics and situated practices I observed and experienced during the dispute through in-depth interviews and informal conversations with key actors afterwards and during the dispute. These perspectives thus also work their way into my re-telling and framing of the event. In other words, in dealing with my situational analysis of the dispute it is important to bear in mind that this is not a transcribed account of the proceedings and the voices raised, but rather my re-telling of them.

¹⁵⁷ Nyamnjoh, "Blinded"; Geert de Neve, "Hidden Reflexivity: Assistants, Informants and the Creation of Anthropological Knowledge," in *Critical Journeys: The Making of Anthropologists*, ed. Geert de Neve and Maya Unnithan-Kumar (London: Routledge, 2016), 84.

¹⁵⁸ Lynsey Bourke et al., "Fieldwork Stories: Negotiating Positionality, Power and Purpose," *Feminist Africa 13 Body Politics and Citizenship*, 2009.

¹⁵⁹ Nyamnjoh, "Blinded," 65; René Devisch, "The Shared Borderspace: A Rejoinder," in *The Postcolonial Turn: Re-Imagining Anthropology and Africa*, ed. Rene Devisch and Francis B. Nyamnjoh (Cameroon, Leiden: Langaa Publishing and Common Initiative Group and African Studies Centre, 2011).

Moreover, although having recorded and transcribed several interviews, numerous other interviews and informal conversations were conducted without being recorded and transcribed – only recorded in field notes. To distinguish between these different interview forms in this thesis, transcribed interviews are given in double quotation marks, whereas those taken from my field notes are not, and should be read as having been translated in the context of the interaction. I also make use of peoples’ biographies and case studies to support my arguments. Many of these biographies were also re-constructed through multiple, repetitive encounters with interlocutors and the long-term building of relationships. Given the language barrier, the “locus of interaction”¹⁶⁰ rather took place within the interlocutor-translator relation, with the researcher being marginalised. However, with time this was also an important lesson in making oneself as a researcher more vulnerable and accepting of the position of dependency and not-knowing. It foregrounded how all research is an ongoing and unfolding process fraught with partiality, heightened my reliance on non-verbal forms of communication,¹⁶¹ and demanded methodologies which involved cross-checking findings on a regular and repeated basis, and ongoing feedback sessions.¹⁶²

This dynamic process was furthermore also gendered and generational, largely as a result of the specificity of local gender and hierarchical relations. In this context men, senior men (although not exclusively), were often understood, performed, and referred to me as the main research interlocutors and purveyors of knowledge concerning history, politics, and questions regarding the dispute. These encounters tended to be more formal and initiated by prior arrangements. By contrast, my relations and encounters with women were often more informal. Apart from interview set-ups, an important part of the research dynamic was the act of visiting (*okurihanga*). However, homesteads were some distances apart. Stopping to greet and taking the time to inquire about the well-being of persons and homesteads often thus occupied large parts of the day and were crucial for the ongoing negotiation of rapport, reciprocity, and sociality.

The importance of this was also evident whilst implementing a household census in places where I had not established prior and extensive rapport. Although having first introduced the research, several households and persons were still reluctant to engage with us. On the one hand, this was due to questionnaires still being strongly associated with colonial technologies of governance, an association further reified through my embodied “white” and “settler” identity. On the other hand, this was also due to peoples’ difficulty in understanding what – if any – kind of reciprocal relations could be established through their participation. Consequently, the implementation of these questionnaires also required regular visitations in which the research and its intentions could be properly communicated, discussed, and commented upon.

¹⁶⁰ Axel Borchgrevink, “Silencing Language: Of Anthropologists and Interpreters,” *Ethnography* 4, no. 1 (2003): 110.

¹⁶¹ Kirsten Hastrup, “Anthropological Knowledge Incorporated,” in *Social Experience and Anthropological Knowledge*, ed. Kirsten Hastrup and Peter Hervik (London: Routledge, 2003), 170;

¹⁶² See Borchgrevink, “Silencing”, for a more detailed discussion on the role of language learning and working with interpreters.

As noted above and in reflecting on my positionality, I do so first as a “citizen anthropologist”.¹⁶³ In using this concept, Becker et al. have argued that it is rather in “shared historical-political spaces, instead of in a ‘shared culture’, that we need to locate the ethics and politics of our fieldwork”.¹⁶⁴ My social biography is embedded within Namibia’s complex settler-colonial histories – a biography which invariable both influenced my motivations, as well as my ongoing positioning during the research. For one, when I started my research there was a sense of familiarity. However, despite such feelings of familiarity, my identity as a Namibian, and thus to some extent a ‘local’ was rarely recognised or accepted. I had to repeatedly defend and re-affirm this identity. In most cases, such affirmations were met with stern disbelief.

Rather, I was, first of all, an *otjirumbu* – a ‘white’ person – and thus by definition an outsider – a perception rooted in regional and colonial histories of settlement. Yet, after some time I came to know that the ‘whiteness’ I enacted also did not always conform to the stereotypes of the ‘Boer’ or ‘Afrikaner’ identity which circulated locally. Rather, the whiteness I enacted resembled more that of a ‘non-local’ or foreign ‘white’. Apart from certain behaviours, it was the research and its accompanying set of technologies and institutional relations which shaped such perceptions. Such perceptions cut to the core of my anxieties about my positionality – especially concerning the rehashing of a problematic (and colonial) script in which the anthropologist is usually white and middle class whilst the subject of the anthropological gaze is the black underclass, either in urban peripheries and townships or in the so-called rural ‘backwaters’.¹⁶⁵

Moreover, positioning me in relation to a German University also generated specific research dynamics. At this time, reparation talks and debates regarding the Herero-Nama Genocide of 1904-1908 by the Imperial German state were reaching a tipping point. Already an integral part of Herero collective memorialisation and identity, this violent history was once again at the forefront of political and cultural consciousness. Sitting in a circle at a small public meeting at the start of my research I explained my research interest – but also emphasised that I also wanted to engage with local custom and/or tradition (*ombazu*). To this one local headman responded critically, asking what a German university wanted to do with knowledge of *OvaHerero ombazu*.¹⁶⁶ After some challenging explanations from my side, the same headman instructed me to include in my publication the following: “That you will find no Herero, not even one living far in the mountains, or underneath a stone, who have forgotten what the Germans did to them.”

In attempts to disassociate from my institutional affiliation, I soon realised that when introducing myself the first thing I did was to emphasise where I was from – that I was from *Epako* (Gobabis) and that I was an *omukwetera* (a citizen). I had convinced myself somehow that this part of

¹⁶³ Heike Becker, Emile Boonzaier, and Joy Owen, “Fieldwork in Shared Spaces: Positionality, Power and Ethics of Citizen Anthropologists in Southern Africa,” *Anthropology Southern Africa* 28, 3-4 (2005): 124.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Nyamnjoh, “Blinded,” 70.

¹⁶⁶ *Ombazu* roughly translates as tradition/custom.

my identity would negate some of the unsettled feelings that the research invoked and the problematic power relations and legacies it entailed. Apart from my Afrikaans name, I was also again and for the first time since childhood, able to introduce myself with my Otjiherero name, which had been given to me at birth. Thus, throughout my research period, I was rather Kaundjirue.¹⁶⁷ Yet upon reflection, it was evident that in introducing myself as such I was continually trying to re-negotiate by non-belonging and trying to reach beyond my over-determined identity as an *otjirumbu* (and thus an outsider).

However, despite the desire to be recognised as a local Namibian when, with time, I was recognised by some as such it was also hard to come to terms with what this entailed. Histories of segregation are often most ardently felt within everyday intimacies. Visiting one of the eldest residents in the area, a woman in her 90s who was born in central Namibia, she offered my translator and myself water. As she handed us one cup, we shared the water. The woman responded with much surprise telling me that she has never seen a 'Boer' share a cup with a 'black' person. Similar experiences marked other encounters where people offered me food, looked at me sceptically and asked whether a 'Boer' like myself would eat it or share the plate. Certain reactions and behaviours in set situations were also too easily then interpreted as affirming my local identity as a 'Boer' – who were stereotypically known for example to be impatient.

During my research period, the area around Otjomatamba's borehole was turned into a permanent campsite for a road construction company, managed by two older Afrikaans-speaking men, and manned mostly by Oshiwambo-speaking labourers from the neighbouring Omusati region. This company had won a tender from the government to lower an infamous mountain over which the main gravel road stretched. The camp was set up here because the company was renting the borehole for the duration of the project. This meant that they provided the required daily diesel needed for the pump, covered the operational costs, and paid a monthly fee directly to the community, specifically to the WPA. The presence of the construction company managers sometimes also complicated my positionality, with them having discovered that I was Afrikaans-speaking, assumed an immediate kinship and invited me over for a 'braai' (barbeque) at their caravans – which included a full kitchen and satellite television. This inevitably created barriers between me and some interlocutors, who (rightly) perceived this relationship as a practice of racialised kinship, given that others were not invited.

Thus, throughout my research, I was confronted with the complex ways in which certain power vectors, the politics of race and historical legacies, although shifting, found expression within my embodiments and presence.¹⁶⁸ This foregrounded the importance of the researcher's identities in delimiting her/his agency in the negotiation of positionality and ethnography as first of all an "embodied practice".¹⁶⁹ However, inherited and intersecting racial and ethnic identities are constructed and

¹⁶⁷ Kaundjirue means 'unexpected' and refers to me having been born prematurely and arrived unexpectedly.

¹⁶⁸ For further discussions on such 'body politics' within the research process see Bourke et al., "Fieldwork."

¹⁶⁹ Dwight Conquergood, "Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics," in *Turning Points in Qualitative Research: Tying Knots in a Handkerchief*, ed. Yvonna S. Lincoln and Norman K. Denzin (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003), 352.

negotiated, above all else, within the terrain of the intersubjective – it’s a process that takes place within everyday encounters. Moreover, these identities also intersected with that of my gendered identity as a woman. For example, my own gendered and class socialisation in particular “ethnocultural” and gendered bodily comportments and notions of propriety¹⁷⁰ also, to some degree, translated into this context, creating a sense of mutuality and of knowing. These embodied experiences were rather felt than cognitively understood and also once again foregrounded the “body as a site of knowing”.¹⁷¹ This included, for example, practices of dominant femininity ranging from the “micro-level” – such as how to sit, avoiding eye contact and ways of self-stylisation – to larger structural dynamics of women “withdrawing from public spaces”.¹⁷² In addition, and importantly, the negotiation of my shifting positionality was inseparable from the negotiations which were simultaneously demanded from my translators and interpreters.

During the first eight months, I worked with Vejandjua Tjiuma, a woman in her early twenties from the eastern part of southern Kaoko. She facilitated the establishment of relationships and provided crucial guidance in understanding local idioms and sociality. Although having facilitated access, working with a young woman resulted in some more senior men being reluctant to delve deeper into particular topics or seeing us as ‘children’. Later, in working with Verijeta (Kareekautua) Kuhanga, a male assistant in his early thirties, dynamics again shifted towards easier rapport with senior men. Verijeta and I also shared a mutual sense of ‘outsiderdom’, as he was also from *Outua*. Nevertheless, people were still able to situate him according to a shared Herero and clan belonging. Working with different translators thus made evident how their divergent social biographies animated the dynamic negotiation of our simultaneous (non)belonging(s).

Finally, a short note on style: throughout this book and when writing and analysing the research findings, I prefer to and often make use of the subject pronoun ‘we’. I do this to emphasise that in the majority of cases, these experiences and encounters I shared with my translator, and were mediated through her/him and their co-presence.

Outline and structure of the thesis

Although this thesis is structured around the dispute, the second chapter, first of all, delves into Kaoko’s complex colonial, political and frontier histories. Chapter Three then analyses the embeddedness of the dispute within past and present contestations over local authority, place, and territory. Chapter Four describes the ethnographic context within which the dispute took place in more detail. The final four chapters in turn concern the dispute more directly – describing the deliberative, situated, and political

¹⁷⁰ Christi van der Westhuizen, *Sitting Pretty: White Afrikaans Women in Postapartheid South Africa* (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2017), 10.

¹⁷¹ Conquergood, “Rethinking,” 352.

¹⁷² van der Westhuizen, *Sitting*, 126.

practices, outlining the different cases and the legal particularities, and analysing the embeddedness of the dispute within larger historically-constituted and interwoven struggles between different groups over authority, land, and belonging, including vis-à-vis the colonial and post-colonial state.

Chapter Two thus first of all situates Kaoko within the histories of colonial territorialisation and re-territorialisation of north-western Namibia. It looks at how local relations of power and territories were contested, established, and re-established from the late 19th century onwards against the backdrop of the incorporation of the region, first into a cattle-raiding economy, and subsequently into two overlapping colonial regimes, ongoing translocal migrations, and Kaoko's ecological and geographic specificity. Furthermore, this chapter details the colonial border-making histories which lead to the eventual "encapsulation"¹⁷³ of the Kaokoland 'native' reserve, later 'homeland', and the institutionalisation of colonial indirect rule which underpinned the process. In doing so, I foreground how the colonial encounter was locally negotiated whilst simultaneously illustrating how this encounter co-produced 'customary' institutions – including chieftaincies – and re-scripted local group and territorial boundaries, especially according to essentialised and hierarchically imagined ethnonyms. As I show, this in turn fostered intragroup antagonism and division and lead to growing political fragmentation. This chapter concludes with a final section on the militarisation of the region, and its incorporation into the liberation struggle and national political arena, as well as global conservation ideas and models.

Chapter Three has a more ethnographic focus and engages with the different enactments and contestations of Ozondundu as a place and territory. In particular, I address Otjomatemba's contested place-identity and genealogy, and its entanglement with the practice of *opolotika* and local contestations over authority and territorial integration. In doing so, I examine the different normative frameworks and knowledge practices mobilised to assert, legitimise, and contest the authority vested in the institution of local headman (*osoromana*). In addition, I detail the genealogy of the Ozondundu boundaries at the intersection of changing mobilities, land-use practices, pastoral economies and ecologies, and political and national belonging, as well as histories of indirect rule and the later mapping of conservancies. Through this, Chapter Three then critically engages with the overlapping institutions governing land-access and pastoral mobility within this context, including looking at how these institutions were struggled over.

Chapter Four continues to introduce the ethnographic and normative context within which the dispute took place. This chapter details how residency patterns, household compositions and place-belonging were negotiated relative to neolocal and virilocal settlement norms and the everyday making and reckoning of kin-relatedness and dual descent. I illustrate how this shaped homestead-based economies and fostered translocal forms of belonging and place-relations. Additionally, Chapter Four discusses the local and regional pastoral economies, including patterns of livestock ownership and

¹⁷³ Bollig, "colonial."

practices of exchange, loans, inheritance, and acquisition. Building on this, I describe the heterogeneity of mobile land-use practices, and the household constellations and economies which characterised Ozondundu. In addition, I delineate the patterns and practices of transregional labour migration, and oscillatory rural-urban migrations within this context. In so doing, this chapter then extricates the interrelationship between different socio-spatial and pastoral (im)mobilities and traces some of the social power relations and gendered norms within which these were and had to be negotiated and navigated.

Chapter Five describes the first of several dispute meetings (*ombongarero*) which took place in Otjomatamba. In doing so, this chapter sets the scene and introduces the newcomers (*ovayenda*) and the disputed cases. Moreover, I show how, through the dispute meeting, the boundaries between residents and newcomers, and between different groups of newcomers, were discussed, performed, and negotiated. This chapter also introduces the norms governing the negotiation of access-rights to pastures and places and demonstrates how these norms were articulated and deliberated during the dispute. Building on Chapter Five, Chapter Six then digs deeper into the legal particularities which were at stake in this meeting.

In doing so, Chapter Six delineates the different cases and examine how and why the cases were differentiated – with only some newcomers asked to leave and given 21 days to do so. I trace their embeddedness in different but also patterned regional and household migrations and livestock movements. Moreover, I look at the social norms governing the negotiation of access-rights and how persons had to navigate pastoral mobilities socially and relationally within larger institutional and environmental constraints. Furthermore, this chapter explores the different kinetics that animated people and households’ desires and/or needs to seek out additional or alternative pastures and residencies. And lastly, it analyses the intersectional politics of belonging which characterised the dispute and shows how different pastoral mobilities were also commented upon and embedded in circulating and situated normative discourses, knowledge practices, and ideologies.

Chapter Seven follows the proceedings and happenings after the 21 days had passed and the said newcomers did not leave the place nor the larger Ozondundu area. It ethnographically describes the multiple local-level meetings which followed more or less one month after the first dispute meeting and over the course of a two-week period. In doing so, it critically explores how both residents and newcomers were navigating between ‘customary’ and ‘state’ law and authority to garner agency, authority, and legitimacy. Chapter Seven thus engages the diverse socio-legal, knowledge and performative practices which characterised these deliberations, including culturally-informed institutions of dispute resolution and the bureaucratic logics of the state. Lastly, this chapter follows the proceedings which eventually led to the forced exodus as detailed in the opening vignette of Chapter One.

Chapter Eight follows what happened after these situated and local-level dispute meetings and deliberations – in particular looking at the unceremonious return of some of the newcomers several

weeks later and how the dispute reverberated into the wider southern Kaoko region. This chapter then examines how the dispute found expression within larger historically-constituted and interwoven struggles over land, authority, and belonging between competing TAs, and between the post-colonial state (including the TAs) and local headmen and residents. Moreover, this chapter details the formation of a particular networked political group and the bureaucratic and legal meanderings which followed as this group tried to assemble both legal efficacy and authority in sanctioning what was perceived as ‘illegal’ or forceful land-grabbing. I furthermore discuss the opening of a legal case, while simultaneously engaging with the ongoing micro-politics of place and belonging. This chapter then shows how post-colonial ‘customary’ tenure was being co-produced through this dispute, from the ground-up, and between localities and the state. The thesis closes with a concluding summary and discussion.

Chapter 2 Situating Kaoko: Colonialism, mobility, and indirect rule

Introduction

Kaoko's historicity has been strongly shaped by its borderland, frontier and marginal locatedness, and the colonial histories that (re) produced and imagined this locatedness.¹⁷⁴ During the last century, Kaoko became synonymous with images and ideas of the "last wilderness" and "the ultimate frontier".¹⁷⁵ Within this imaginary, Kaoko was portrayed as a distant, semi-arid and vast region with plentiful wildlife, the promise of mineral exploitation, and populated predominately by "traditional", "tribal" and nomadic Himba pastoralists, exoticised and essentialised as embodying the last vestiges of a shared primordial African past – timeless, remote and beyond the reaches of modernity.¹⁷⁶ As scholars have illustrated, the emergence of this "Kaoko myth"¹⁷⁷ – portraying the region as culturally homogenous, temporally removed and static – initially took root during early colonial encounters in the late 19th century and was subsequently (re)produced during the decades of South African indirect rule and their policies of encapsulation – policies that essentially forced Kaoko's nomadic agro-pastoral, hunting and trading societies into subsistence-orientated economies and which isolated the region from wider currents of exchange, including access to viable livestock markets and alternative developmental trajectories.¹⁷⁸

The focus of this chapter then is on the material-symbolic and political and economic histories of colonial re-territorialisation and the eventual creation of the Kaokoland 'native reserve', later 'homeland'. Historical processes of colonial territorialisation and re-territorialisation which characterised north-western Namibia were deeply rooted in attempts to fabricate and map both external borders, as well as internal ethnic and administrative boundaries towards producing "stable territories"¹⁷⁹ and later, more sedentary societies (despite a simultaneous romanticisation of the 'traditional' Himba nomad). The mapping of these borders and boundaries was realised through various

¹⁷⁴ Rizzo, *Gender*, 2; Bollig, "colonial"; Giorgio Miescher and Dag Henrichsen, eds., *New Notes on Kaoko: The Northern Kunene Region (Namibia) In Texts and Photographs* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2000); Michael Bollig and Heike Heinemann, "Nomadic Savages, Ochre People and Heroic Herders: Visual Presentations of the Himba of Namibia's Kaokoland," *Visual Anthropology* 15, 3-4 (2002), <https://doi.org/10.1080/08949460213911>; Friedman, *Imagining*; Steven Van Wolputte, ed., *Borderlands and Frontiers in Africa* (LIT Verlag Münster, 2013).

¹⁷⁵ See for instance, Namibia National Planning Commission, "Kunene Regional Development Profile 2015: The Ultimate Frontier" (2015).

¹⁷⁶ Miescher and Henrichsen, *New*; Michael Bollig, "Framing Kaokoland," in *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History*, ed. W. Hartmann, J. Silvester and P. Hayes (Cape Town, South Africa: University of Cape Town Press, 1999); Bollig and Heinemann, "Nomadic"

¹⁷⁷ Miescher and Henrichsen, *New*.

¹⁷⁸ Bollig, "colonial."

¹⁷⁹ See, Friedman, "Making"; Rizzo, *Gender*, 3,6.

attempts by the colonial state to delimit and control the interrelated movements of people, livestock, trade, commodity flows and, importantly, mobile livestock epidemics, as well as through the concurrent and ongoing (re)production of particular cartographic narratives, colonial imaginaries, and ideologies. Moreover, this border-making process was also established through the institutionalisation of South African colonial indirect rule from 1917 onwards.

In this historical chapter, I aim to illustrate how these processes were negotiated and re-configured within shifting power relations and in a context of complex regional histories of mobility, contestation, and incorporation. Hence, as I show, colonial border-making had to be negotiated between two overlapping colonial regimes, the fragile making of the colonial state within a borderland and internal frontier region, Kaoko's ecological and geographic specificity, and local contestations over resources in a context of successive wars, translocal and transhumance migrations, and cultural and social heterogeneity. Nevertheless, this chapter also shows how the institutionalisation of colonial indirect rule within Kaoko still co-produced particular political, patriarchal, and 'customary' institutions and socio-spatial boundaries. Additionally, I demonstrate how the colonial administration's mobilisation of a "tribal ideology"¹⁸⁰ and its favouring of particular leaders and groups, led to the rise of opposing "politico-ethnic formations"¹⁸¹ and to the politicisation of ethnicity within the region.

And finally, this chapter briefly discusses how these colonial histories historically and politically positioned the region during the onset of the wider armed and liberation struggle, which, together with a devastating drought, contributed to the further economic isolation and marginalisation of "Kaokolanders"¹⁸² post-independence, and the production of divergent forms of national political belonging.

Negotiating German colonial rule in a frontier zone

Even though German colonial rule, in terms of an administrative and military presence, was limited as Kaoko along with other northern regions was not "formally colonised" or administered during this time¹⁸³ – this period still shaped the making of Kaoko in important and lasting ways. In the mid to late 19th century, those few traders and explorers who documented their travels to north-western Namibia, referred to the "the barren Kaoko",¹⁸⁴ imagined this geographically remote region (in terms of colonial centres of power) in highly romanticised and ineffable terms. These imaginaries foregrounded isolation,

¹⁸⁰ Archie Mafeje, "The Ideology of 'Tribalism'," *The journal of modern African studies* 9, no. 2 (1971).

¹⁸¹ Friedman, "Making," 24.

¹⁸² Friedman (2011:13) uses the term 'Kaokolanders' for people who live in the region as well as those residing elsewhere, yet who are connected to the place. Given the cultural and linguistic heterogeneity of the region, I found using this term useful.

¹⁸³ Jeremy Silvester, Marion Wallace, and Patricia Hayes, "'Trees Never Meet'. Mobility and Containment: An Overview 1915-1946," in Hayes, *Namibia Under South African Rule: Mobility & Containment, 1915-46*, 3.

¹⁸⁴ Francis Galton, "Recent Expedition into the Interior of South-Western Africa," *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 22 (1852).

uninhabited landscapes and the promise of mineral and resource abundance: it was imagined as a frontier territory.¹⁸⁵ Yet, as Friedman¹⁸⁶ has pointed out, Kaoko was seen as “the frontier of the frontier”, with south and central parts of Namibia (then South West Africa (SWA)) already imagined, represented and produced as a frontier zone within the German and South African colonial optic, the far north-western corner of the territory took on an even stronger mythic character. One transaction during the late 19th century specifically has been noted as having generated a lasting cartographic imagining of the ‘Kaokofeld’ – as it became known in the archived repertoire of early colonial discourse.

During the mid-1880s two prominent and recently-established Nama-Oorlam leaders¹⁸⁷ – respectively based at the two southern settlements of Fransfontein and Sesfontein – sold what they claimed to be their territories to a German man called August Lüderitz.¹⁸⁸ In the last decades of the 19th century, Oorlam-Nama commando groups had succeeded – after initial “resistance and bloody battles”¹⁸⁹ – in establishing and integrating large parts of north-western Namibia into a cattle-raiding economy. These Swartboois and Topnaar leaders and their well-armed commando groups,¹⁹⁰ who travelled on horseback, had originally migrated from the Cape Colony some decades before along with other mixed Oorlam groups.¹⁹¹ After having established their political and economic dominance further south, some of these commando groups migrated and extended their exploits into north-western Namibia.¹⁹² Many of the mainly Otjiherero-speaking pastoral groups occupying this area, who did not have such generous access to horses and arms, were forced to flee into the mountainous areas but also south towards the coast or east towards the Etosha pan, where people relied on hunting and gathering for survival.¹⁹³ Those who were able crossed the Kunene River in the north and fled into southern Portuguese Angola with what herds they could salvage, or joined the Swartboois and Topnaar commando groups.¹⁹⁴ This historical juncture is widely remembered and memorialised within local oral historical accounts as the *Ovakuena War*.¹⁹⁵

As Rizzo¹⁹⁶ explains, the subsequent land transaction by the two Nama-Oorlam leaders transferred rights for the use and extraction of mineral resources, whilst the local leaders reserved the

¹⁸⁵ Miescher and Henrichsen, *New*, 238.

¹⁸⁶ Friedman, *Imagining*, 34.

¹⁸⁷ Named Cornelius Swartbooi and Jan Uixamab

¹⁸⁸ Rizzo, *Gender*, 63.

¹⁸⁹ Bollig, *Risk*, 157.

¹⁹⁰ According to Friedman (2011:32) these commando groups consisted of a “mixed batch of people – including runaway slaves and Khoi servants – some of whom were baptised and spoke low Dutch through their relations with Cape settlers” and most of whom had migrated north from the Cape colony.

¹⁹¹ Michael Bollig, “Power and Trade in Precolonial and Early Colonial Northern Kaokoland 1860s-1940s,” in Hayes, *Namibia Under South African Rule: Mobility & Containment, 1915-46* ; Rizzo, *Gender*;

¹⁹² Also see Marion Wallace, *A History of Namibia: From the Beginning Until 1990*, with the assistance of with John Kinahan (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2011).

¹⁹³ Rizzo, *Gender*, 84.

¹⁹⁴ Bollig, “Power,” 176; Bollig, *Risk*, 41.

¹⁹⁵ See for instances Michael Bollig, *“When War Came the Cattle Slept...”: Himba Oral Traditions* (Köln: R. Koppe, 1997); Bollig, *Risk*, 157; Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 93, 104.

¹⁹⁶ Rizzo, *Gender*, 64.

right to govern these territories and control grazing and water sources. In 1893 the German Colonial Society¹⁹⁷ had acquired the rights from Lüderitz and transferred them to a prospecting enterprise, Hirsch and Co., later known as the Kaoko Land and Mining Company, based in London and Berlin.¹⁹⁸ For Bollig,¹⁹⁹ this transaction never amounted to resource exploitation or occupation *per se* (apart from speculation), but it did, however, as Rizzo²⁰⁰ points out, initiate the colonial appropriation of land in the southern parts of the region as the company began to sell farms to German and Boer settlers from 1898 onwards, whilst also cartographically performing German claims to the SWA.

It also, importantly, contributed to the production of specific forms of spatial knowledge of the region – such as the location of strategic water-points – and contributed to the production of a cartographic narrative in “which space and ethnic identity [were] deeply ingrained with each other”.²⁰¹ Thus, different (and separate) parts of the ‘Kaokofeld’ were mapped as being synonymous with ‘Tjimba’, ‘Herero’, ‘Himba’ or ‘Nama-Oorlam’ pastoralists.²⁰² This socio-spatial knowledge also partly facilitated colonial territorialisation processes, such as the construction of a network of police outposts during the establishment of the Rinderpest Cordon by the German colonial authorities in the late 1890s and during the outbreak of the epidemic across southern Africa.

The cordon or ‘defence line’ consisted of a series of scattered military outposts mainly erected next to key water-points, running west to east. It was intended to separate and regulate animal traffic from the densely populated agro-pastoral societies of northern Namibia and southern Angola, into central and southern Namibia to (unsuccessfully) curb the epidemic.²⁰³ The movement of both people and livestock within Namibia’s dominantly dryland and savannah ecologies depended heavily on the scattered and seasonal network of water-points – mostly in the form of fountains, and hand-dug wells in dry river-beds, seasonal pans and ephemeral rivers. Consequently, both “knowledge of and control over water holes were key to controlling mobility” – which, in turn, were central to colonial attempts to control Rinderpest.²⁰⁴ Thus, as Friedman has argued, space and the gathering and use of spatial knowledge, specifically the topographies of water became an important political and colonial technology, not only “to control and discipline its subjects” but also “to tame the perceived dangers of the frontier”.²⁰⁵ Despite the failure of the cordon to prevent the spread of the epidemic, many of these outposts were subsequently converted to permanent police outposts and came to serve as strategic points to control African mobilities, livestock movements and trade between northern regions and south-

¹⁹⁷ Formed in 1887 and based in Berlin, this Society was meant to further and coordinate the German colonial project.

¹⁹⁸ Rizzo, *Gender*, 3, 63.

¹⁹⁹ Bollig, “Power.”

²⁰⁰ Rizzo, *Gender*, 63–64.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 4, 63

²⁰² Friedman, *Imagining*, 36.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 19

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 19

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 34–35

central Namibia, and came to embody, over time, the northern boundary of German military control and influence and the 'Police Zone'.²⁰⁶

During this time, the German colonial encounter in north-western Namibia was mainly enacted at Kaoko's shifting southern border and was mostly concerned with land appropriation for settlers and controlling the circulation of arms and the illegal and commercial hunting economies of Boer and Portuguese traders which had taken form from the 1870s onwards, driven by the growing global demand for ivory and ostrich feathers.²⁰⁷ Some years later, the German authorities thus also engaged in the mapping of 'game reserves' across the territory. In 1907, a large part of Kaoko – excluding the southern regions, which were under consideration for white settlement – was proclaimed part of an extended game reserve by the colonial administration. Known as Game Reserve 2, it centred on the Etosha Pan in the east and declared all wildlife as being owned by the state.

The proclamation of Game Reserve 2 reflected an attempt by the colonial state to extend its control within a region where it was severely limited as well as its ongoing attempts to create so-called 'buffer zones' between the north and southern Angola, and central parts of the territory. This proclamation also entailed an effort to criminalise hunting and was an expression of colonial anxieties to gain control over the lucrative regional commodity and resource flows into southern Angola, which not only benefited European and Boer traders and hunters, but also fostered, to some extent, the development of African pastoral economies and the local circulation of arms.²⁰⁸

Yet, despite the establishment of the German military presence in southern Kaoko, German colonial rule remained limited in this part of the territory. This was both due to the specific borderland geographies, the weakness of the colonial state, as well as the variety of economic options available to people, which meant that local engagement with the German colonial economy could be selective.²⁰⁹ However, these ongoing processes of colonial border-making, territorialisation and land appropriation were facilitated by the German colonial wars and genocide of 1904-1907/8,²¹⁰ which again generated large-scale, ongoing migrations into and throughout north-western Namibia. Apart from the traumatic outcomes of these successive colonial wars, these upheavals also re-configured Kaoko as a "historically constituted territory".²¹¹

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 34, 199

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 25, 35

²⁰⁸ See Dieckmann, "Vast"; Rizzo, *Gender*, 88–89.

²⁰⁹ Rizzo, *Gender*, 97; Bleckmann, "Colonial," 122.

²¹⁰ For more discussion on this traumatic and complex history see Jan-Bart Gewald, "Colonization, Genocide and Resurgence: The Herero of Namibia 1890-1933," *History*, 2000; Jan-Bart Gewald, "Herero Genocide in the Twentieth Century: Politics and Memory," *African dynamics*, 2003; Jan-Bart Gewald, "Imperial Germany and the Herero of Southern Africa: Genocide and the Quest for Recompense," *Genocide, war crimes & the west: History and complicity*, 2004.

²¹¹ Rizzo, *Gender*, 2.

Translocal migrations and shifting territories

The migrations fuelled by the Nama-Oorlam cattle raids went hand in hand with changing local economic stratifications, which, in turn, influenced the (re)making of the group and territorial boundaries and divergent socio-economic and cultural identities. These processes were strongly fuelled by the unequal spreading of “new technologies of power” – that of arms, ammunition and horses – and led to major livestock losses and re-distribution, as well as the re-organisation of regional political economies.²¹² Many of those who fled into southern Angola ended up participating in the Portuguese colonial economy by working as mercenaries or with commercial Boer²¹³ and Portuguese hunters and traders – both as a means of re-building their herds and to regain socio-political status.²¹⁴

Bollig also recounts that in northern Kaoko during the cattle raids, specific socio-economic stratifications were generated which strongly impacted the way people came to define themselves “as members of larger, non-kinship-bound social groups” – with ‘Himba’ becoming synonymous with those who fled into southern Angola, whilst, ‘Tjimba’ referred to those who remained south of the Kunene River and survived mostly from hunting, gathering and, later, trading, and who lost most of their cattle.²¹⁵ Both Bollig and Rizzo have also pointed out that the label ‘Tjimba’ was in circulation long before and often used to describe “impoverished pastoralists”.²¹⁶

The historical and genealogical locatedness of these categories within different past experiences of translocal migration and economic stratifications was also reflected during my research, as one interlocutor²¹⁷ who self-identified as Herero expressed it:

Actually, we are all the same people. In the past, a few groups were moving into Angola to ask for millet and *omahangu*. They were called Ovahimba. They were given that name – meaning to ask for something. Only two homesteads went there, Kapika and Tjambiru. Now everyone is calling themselves Ovahimba. The difference is only in people if you become rich then you don’t like poor people. Just look at Ovahimba and Ovatwa: some people are called Ovatwa – yet all people were the same people, the difference is just that some found livestock quickly and others lived in the mountains and were just gathering and hunting until now.²¹⁸

Although the *Ovakuena* War was central to the re-making of group boundaries and regional economies, other major historical events such as the devastating Rinderpest epidemic soon after, cyclical droughts,

²¹² Ibid., 71

²¹³ In 1881 an Afrikaans-speaking or Boer group known as the ‘Dorslandtrekkers’ (Thirstland trekkers) established themselves in Humpata in southern Angola, surviving through a mixed economy of hunting, trading and agriculture. They had initially migrated from South Africa some years before in search for autonomy from British rule and territory. See for instance, Nicol Stassen, *The Thirstland Trek, 1874-1881*, First edition (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2016).

²¹⁴ E. L.P. Stals and Antje Otto-Reiner, *Oorlog En Vrede Aan Die Kunene: Die Verhaal Van Kaptein Vita ("Oorlog") Tom, of Harunga 1863-1937* (Windhoek: Capital Press, 1999); Bollig, “Power,” 176–78; Bollig, “Chieftaincies.”

²¹⁵ Bollig, “Power,” 178–81 Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 108.

²¹⁶ Ibid., and Rizzo, *Gender*, 90;

²¹⁷ 13.02.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba

²¹⁸ Also see Johan S. Malan, *Peoples of Namibia* (Johannesburg: Rhino Publishers, 1995), 88; However, alternative historical strands with regard to the genealogy of these categories abound, as well as multiple interpretations of their meanings.

as well as the eventual incorporation of the region first into the German and later the South African colonial regimes also fuelled further historical migrations, high group mobility, and the re-making of territorial and group boundaries. The onset of the Rinderpest epidemic around 1897 in particular led to major, widespread livestock losses within Kaoko and signalled the decline of Oorlam hegemony.²¹⁹ This resulted in the re-immigration of many back into Kaoko from southern Angola and shifted the local and regional pastoral economy once more, further aided by the subsequent severe drought as well as the establishment of German military presence in and around Sesfontein, in southern Kaoko in 1901.²²⁰

During this time, people and groups developed diverse economic strategies to (re) constitute livelihoods, such as small-scale and regional trade – with the neighbouring Ovambo polities and Portuguese traders in the north; working with/for European and Boer hunters and traders; expanding small-stock farming; as well as hunting and the gathering of veld foods for subsistence.²²¹ However, in the following decade, the German genocidal colonial wars of 1904-1907/8 which took place in the south and central parts of Namibia, drove many Otjiherero-speaking pastoralists and groups to flee and migrate north, into Kaoko, seeking refuge in this more mountainous and marginal borderland region – before, during and after the war. These migrations “generated unprecedented new contacts between peoples” living within this region and once again transformed relations between the different groups,²²² including giving rise to new relations and configurations of power.

Evident in the histories detailed above were the making of Kaoko also through “internal” or “interstitial” frontier dynamics, in what Kopytoff²²³ referred to as “the internal African frontier”, and in a wider region inhabited by varied and shifting agro-pastoral societies. As shown, during the late 1800s, Kaoko as a territory, was simultaneously claimed and contested as the dominant Nama/Oorlam polities forcefully incorporated the groups and settlements and expanded their northern reach, while others sought refuge in the more mountainous parts. Moreover, during this time and the decades following, this region was in a constant state of flux, as relations of domination weakened and waned, and other groups migrated into Kaoko. As discussed, and further detailed below, this created a dynamic of encounters, historically shaping the political and cultural histories of the region, including through political practices of incorporation. Thus, as Kopytoff reminds us, the idea of an internal “frontier” is a political fact and politically defined as “open to legitimate intrusion and settlement” even if these are areas which are already occupied.²²⁴

²¹⁹ Bollig, “Power” ; Bollig, *Risk*, 159.

²²⁰ Rizzo, *Gender*, 66–69.

²²¹ Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 103.

²²² Friedman, *Imagining*, 33.

²²³ Igor Kopytoff, “The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture,” in *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, ed. Igor Kopytoff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 11

Bigmanship, power and incorporation

During the late 19th and early 20th century, no chieftaincies²²⁵ existed within Kaoko and “continuing movements of people and stock showed that issues of territoriality and dominion were still contested and unresolved”.²²⁶ Within this context and with the ongoing migrations, the more permanent water-places such as springs and wells emerged as a key “social and political resource”²²⁷ in the claiming of territories and resources; in contesting local relations of power; and, as hubs for agricultural production and hunting.²²⁸ These water-points and places were claimed through the ownership of arms which had, due to the raiding and hunting economy, emerged as important technologies towards securing (male) power and wealth.²²⁹

Bollig²³⁰ has shown that from 1910 onwards an “extremely complex set of relations were developing” between the different autonomous groups occupying the areas from Sesfontein up north until the Kunene River – a situation given further impetus by the return of powerful, wealthy ‘warlords’ and their followers from southern Angola – many of whom had initially fled there during the *Ovakuena* cattle-raids and colonial wars. These re-migrations increased markedly after 1910 when Angola’s administration changed from military to civil rule and as German colonial rule in Namibia came to an end by 1915.²³¹ One group, under the leader Harunga Vita (‘Oorlog’)²³² Thom, who had their main settlement at Otjiyandjasemo and a place with very good spring water, in particular, were emerging as a politically powerful minority group after 1910.²³³ Thom, who was born in Otjimbingwe and also matrilineally related to the Omaruru (central Namibia)²³⁴ chiefly line, had initially migrated with his father to southern Angola during the Nama/Oorlam conflicts in the 1860s.²³⁵ Here he successfully established himself as a mercenary and, over the years, amassed a steady following of people and families from diverse migration backgrounds – including Herero who had fled north and north-west during the German colonial wars and from the Omaruru (Omatjete) area. However, both he and his supporters were forced to flee from southern Angola as refugees due to the change in Portuguese colonial rule, which signalled the end of the support for his exploits and led to his prosecution.²³⁶

²²⁵ Unlike central and southern Namibia where royal kingdoms came into being during the 19th century amongst Otjiherero-speaking pastoral groups and communities, Kaoko’s political histories took a different route.

²²⁶ Rizzo, *Gender*, 81.

²²⁷ Steven Van Wolputte, “The Political Ecology of Water in Northwest Namibia, 1915-1980,” *Bulletin des séances= Mededelingen der zittingen* 52, no. 4 (2006).

²²⁸ Rizzo, *Gender*, 33.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 53

²³⁰ Bollig, “Power.”

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 182; Bollig, “Chieftaincies”; Jan-Bart Gewald, “On Becoming a Chief in the Kaokoveld, Colonial Namibia, 1916–25,” *The Journal of African History* 52, no. 1 (2011)

²³² For more on this historical figure see Stals and Otto-Reiner, *Oorlog*, also see Bollig, “Power”; Gewald, “On”; and Rizzo, *Gender*, 54.

²³³ Bollig, “Power,” 187; Bollig, “Framing,” 42; Gewald, “On,” 24; Rizzo, *Gender*, 80.

²³⁴ In present day Namibia, the town of Omaruru is about 500km south of Sesfontein (one of the main towns situated in southern Kaoko)

²³⁵ For more background on Thom see also Rizzo, *Gender*, 54.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

Upon returning to Kaoko, Thom proceeded to compete for wealth, power and resources within a context of already established powerful leaders – such as another former mercenary and recent returnee from southern Angola, Muhona Katiti, and another known as Kakurukouje, who was based in western Kaoko at Ombepera and who had also negotiated his position through strategic alliances with the Oorlam leaders.²³⁷ As Rizzo²³⁸ has shown, some who remained in southern Kaoko during the *Ovakuena* raids and Rinderpest epidemic managed to re-build their herds from 1906 onwards – mainly through participating in agricultural, hunting and trading economies and through reliance on small-stock, although this process, like that in southern Angola, was also marked by unevenness and often limited to influential men, such as Kakurukouje.

Despite the rise of competing and powerful leaders and their followers, Kaoko – being a vast geographic territory – remained characterised by decentralised, autonomous, and highly mobile groups – mainly kin-based – who did not necessarily associate with any particular leader or ‘big men’ (Sg. *omuhona*, Pl. *ovahona*). These groups used a diversity of economic strategies, including hunting, and also attempted to (re)build their livestock herds through patron-client relations and by engaging in translocal exchange and trade.²³⁹ Nevertheless, the return of powerful leaders such as Muhona Katiti and Vita Thom and their followers, facilitated through specific social and kin affiliations and obligations as well as ancestral claims made in terms of belonging and territory, strongly influenced the re-making of local group boundaries and emergent socio-political dynamics. Their return, with many being viewed as immigrants, produced rivalries and conflicts, and fuelled widespread cattle thefts and raids, which led once again to heightened instability and insecurity.²⁴⁰

At the centre of these struggles over territory were competing for bids to gain control over the topographies of more productive springs and hand-dug wells and to steadily incorporate more followers and groups as a means to expand one’s territorial reach. However, apart from these strategies, these leaders also engaged with and negotiated the colonial encounter during the following decades towards cementing their power, wealth, and influence and securing their territorial claims.

Navigating indirect rule and chieftaincies

With the onset of South African rule in 1917, the new colonial power similarly viewed north-western Namibia both as “borderland” and “frontier” – at the edge of the colonial reach – and was eager to gain control over this region.²⁴¹ Two military expeditions were organised by the newly arriving colonial power, first in 1917 and again in 1919, partly initiated due to “rumours about conflicts among local leaders in Kaoko” – rumours set in motion by the leaders themselves who had filed complaints against

²³⁷ Bollig, “Framing”; Bollig, “Power”; See Rizzo, *Gender*, 33,49.

²³⁸ Rizzo, *Gender*, 85–88.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 99

²⁴¹ Miescher and Henrichsen, *New*.

each other regarding cattle theft and murder.²⁴² On the one hand, the expeditions were organised to disarm the local population and end the local trade in arms as well as pacify any potential local resistance. However, they also aimed to gather information about the region and people; assess the extent of the local ivory trade; and, importantly, identify local leaders and structures of power through whom relations could be brokered and indirect rule established.²⁴³

According to Rizzo,²⁴⁴ this expedition involved an extensive “pseudo-cartographic narrative” in which Major Manning, who led the expedition, mapped, named and described the region, specifically the key water-points and pastures, as well as ‘tribal boundaries’. These early attempts by South Africa to map the region and categorise the people and groups were strongly informed by a then already existing historical discourse – co-constituted during the German colonial period, by merchants, travellers as well as ethnographers, such as the missionary Heinrich Vedder who had, in his report in 1914 to the German colonial administration, divided the population into different groups: that of Ovahimba, Ovatjimba, Ovaherero, and the Topnaar (Oorlam/Nama) communities around Sesfontein and in southern Kaoko.²⁴⁵ Major Manning’s subsequent ‘mapping of Kaoko’ further led to the “‘invention’ of an ethnic constellation [and hierarchy] in Kaoko”.²⁴⁶ However, this colonial “ideology of tribalism”²⁴⁷ was also strategically negotiated by powerful local leaders in an attempt to cement their power and claims to territories within this highly contested environment.

As Friedman²⁴⁸ and Gewald²⁴⁹ have eloquently illustrated, it was precisely the specificity of the interpersonal dynamics that characterised Manning and Vita Thom’s relationship which ultimately lead to, on the one hand, Thom being recognised and empowered by the colonial administration as Kaoko’s ‘paramount chief’ and the labelling and favouring of his followers as ‘Herero’, and on the other, the institutionalisation of colonial “structures of control” within north-western Namibia.²⁵⁰ Having been in close contact with European hunters and Boer settlers in southern Angola for most of his life, Thom deployed and embodied a particular ‘symbolic power’ or cultural capital – expressed through his comportment, multilingual capacities and stylistic choices – a power which enabled him to negotiate his position in relation to prevalent racist colonial worldviews of what it meant to be ‘civilised’ as opposed to ‘savage’.²⁵¹

Furthermore, there were also certain shared patriarchal world-views, “registers of political authority” and enactments of masculinity between Manning and Thom which worked to secure the rise

²⁴² Rizzo, *Gender*, 80.

²⁴³ Lorena Rizzo, “NJ Van Warmelo: Anthropology and the Making of a Reserve,” in Miescher; Henrichsen, *New Notes on Kaoko*; Rizzo, *Gender*, 74.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 79

²⁴⁵ See Rizzo, *Gender*, 31.

²⁴⁶ Rizzo, *Gender*, 6,74; Friedman, “Making,” 28.

²⁴⁷ Mafeje, “ideology.”

²⁴⁸ Friedman, “Making,” 28.

²⁴⁹ Gewald, “On,” 24.

²⁵⁰ Also see Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 123.

²⁵¹ Gewald, “On,” 33; Rizzo, *Gender*, 81.

to power of Thom and his followers and the institutionalisation of a patriarchal political system built on the idea of the powerful male leader.²⁵² This co-production of male authority also has to be situated within a historical context of masculine power which had emerged through regional cattle-raiding and the Portuguese colonial economies.²⁵³ Thus, local understandings and valorisations of ‘bigmanship’ were “used to institute chieftaincies” – a process which was skillfully negotiated by powerful local leaders to establish dominance and accrue political and economic power.²⁵⁴ Similar to the situation described by Dorothy Hodgson²⁵⁵ in the establishment of patriarchal political authority amongst Masaai pastoral societies in former Tanganyika, this had been at least “partly a consequence of the gendered nature of colonial administration itself” as well as how some “gender domains overlapped significantly with those of the colonizers”.²⁵⁶

In addition, within Manning’s reports and subsequent colonial engagements with the region, the ‘Herero’ were increasingly construed as more civilised than the ‘Tjimba’ and ‘Himba’ leaders and groups. Consequently, histories of heterogeneity, migration and translocality were erased within colonial discourse and practice in favour of a tribal ideology, couched within a civilising and highly gendered discourse.²⁵⁷ This re-making of local categories of belonging and difference was also simultaneously being generated by wider relations of exchange and processes of transformation. Some of those groups who had migrated into the region before, during and after the German colonial wars, many of whom maintained close ties to Herero Royal Houses in central Namibia and adopted particular Christian beliefs, styles and traditions, over the years, also came to self-identify with the wider movement of (re) constructing a (pan) ‘Herero’ nation. This process gained considerable traction during the 1920s as many who were heavily affected during the genocidal war, engaged in “processes of cultural and symbolic reconstruction”.²⁵⁸ Despite the increased presence of ‘Hereroisation’ within the region, there was also further fragmentation – with these groups and those who migrated back into Kaoko from southern Angola later referred to as the Ndamuranda Herero.²⁵⁹

Together with the paramount status of Thom, eventually, three local leaders were appointed as ‘chiefs’ (Sg. *ombara*, Pl. *ozombara*) by the colonial administration – Vita Thom, Muhona Katiti and Kakurukouye (Kasupi) – each perceived to be representative of the different ‘ethnic’ groups in Kaoko. Moreover, in 1923 the administration attempted to gazette three ‘native reserves’ in the northern parts of Kaoko – according to the set ethnic categories, each set to be ruled by the three state-selected ‘Himba’, ‘Herero’ and ‘Tjimba’ chiefs.²⁶⁰ However, the mapping of these reserves and attempts to

²⁵² Gewald, “On,” 26.

²⁵³ Rizzo, *Gender*, 45.

²⁵⁴ Bollig, *Risk*, 350.

²⁵⁵ Hodgson, “Pastoralism,” 56.

²⁵⁶ Also see Becker, “concise.”

²⁵⁷ See for example Friedman, “Making”; Bollig, “Chieftaincies”; Gewald, “On”; Bleckmann, “Colonial.”

²⁵⁸ Silvester, Wallace and Hayes, “Trees,” 4.

²⁵⁹ Bollig, “Power,” 185.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

create “coherent tribal areas” took place more so on paper than in actuality.²⁶¹ Nevertheless, in the following decades, the colonial administration worked to appoint and establish several local headmen – called *osoromana* (Pl. *ozosoromana*²⁶²) – through whom indirect rule could be established, together with the three chiefs. These appointments took place within the broader and shifting constellation of power of the three powerful leaders and their followers. For instance, in the 1930s, Thom accompanied the colonial police, visiting places and appointing local headmen of his choosing.²⁶³ Such practices increasingly led to Thom and his followers becoming “the ruling elite of the Kaoko” during the first decades of South African rule.²⁶⁴ The favouring of Thom and his followers and the designation of this group as ‘Herero’ by the colonial administration fuelled already existing rivalries and competition– socio-political fission which, over the years, became more ethnicised and set the stage for future political rifts, divisiveness and struggles over power, territory and resources.²⁶⁵

In addition, as Bleckmann²⁶⁶ has shown, amongst the ‘Herero’ (and Ndamuranda) section and those groups who had migrated into Kaoko during and after the colonial wars, there was also further political fragmentation, with not everyone recognising Thom as the paramount chief. These political splits were also rooted in affiliation to different chiefly lines and chiefdoms in central and central-west Namibia. Thus, whereas Thom affiliated and legitimised his authority to a chiefly line tracing back to Omaruru and Chief Zeraeua who ruled here during the German colonial period, other groups rather began to display and perform their affiliation to the chiefly line of Maherero, “whose family reigned over the area of Okahandja in 19th century Namibia”.²⁶⁷

This division found particular expression in the rise of the practice and performance of *otutrupa* within Kaoko in the 1920s. The *otutrupa*, a long-standing Herero political and social institution which originated in central Namibia during the first decades of the 20th century, is a commemorative and memory performance primarily related to (re)enacting shared but also divergent war memories (*omazemburukira wovita*), specifically histories of bravery, colonial resistance and of autonomy, as well as a shared, distinct pan-Herero identity.²⁶⁸ In contemporary Kaoko, this is expressed through a ‘troop’ formation and organisation with three units divided according to “descent, place, political and kin affiliation” and into the *Otjiserandu* (‘the red one’), the *Otjiyaapa* (‘the white one’) and the

²⁶¹ Rizzo, *Gender*, 124, 138.

²⁶² From the Afrikaans “Voorman”, or English “Foreman”.

²⁶³ Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 125.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ Friedman, “Making”; Friedman, *Imagining*; Bleckmann, “Colonial”, 138

²⁶⁶ Bleckmann, “Colonial”, 154

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 156

²⁶⁸ For an in-depth engagement with this institution and its emergence in southern Kaoko see Bleckmann, “Colonial.”, 146-148. For literature on and different analysis of the *otutrupa* also see Jan-Bart Gewald, “Herero annual parades: commemorating to create,” in *Afrikaner schreiben zurück: Texte und Bilder afrikanischer Ethnographen*, ed. Heike Behrend and Thomas Geider (Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 1998); Jan-Bart Gewald, “Flags, Funerals and Fanfares: Herero and Missionary Contestations of the Acceptable, 1900-1940,” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 15, no. 1 (2002); Jekura Kavari, Dag Henrichsen, and Larissa Förster, “Die Otutrupa,” *Ethnologica* 24 (2004); Larissa Förster, *Postkoloniale Erinnerungslandschaften: Wie Deutsche Und Herero in Namibia Des Kriegs Von 1904 Gedenken* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2010).

Otjingirine ('the green one')".²⁶⁹ During funerals and other public events, groups of men dressed in uniforms copied from German colonial *Schutztruppe* and other military styles, drill and parade, with differentiated ranks, colours and flags indicating belonging to different troop units. This 'play of the flags' (*enyando romarapi*) also involves the women who wear Victorian styled dresses (Sg. *ohorokweva*, Pl. *ozohorokweva*) according to the different colours and complemented with *otutrupa* jackets and who would also march, drill and parade.

As Bleckmann²⁷⁰ has argued, during the 1920s and 30s the *otutrupa* emerged in Kaoko as a means of expressing belonging to a larger movement of (re)constructing a Herero nation (post-genocide) and a shared identity with those in other parts of the territory – symbolised, for example, through a growing uptake of Christian beliefs, specific clothing and dress, and memories of the Herero-German war. This established an important means for people and groups to network with Herero societies in the south and central Namibia. Furthermore, the incorporation of the *otutrupa* within Kaoko was a way for the "Herero elite to display status and authority" within a contested political environment, whilst those who had "been promoted with military ranks in the mercenary army in Angola" – like Thom – could also re-enact their "military status and power" and thus their authority.²⁷¹

However, the *otutrupa* also emerged as a means to express and perform divergent socio-political affiliations. The political fragmentation within the 'Herero' section was thus increasingly performed through differential affiliation to different troop regiments and flags (*omarapi*) which eventually crystallised into two regiments – that of the *Otjiyaapa/Otjizemba* (the Zeraeua chiefly line and recognising Thom's chieftainship and based at Otjiyandjasemo) and the *Otjiserandu* (the Maherero chiefly line) – with the *Otjingirine* troop unit only having been established in Kaoko much later in the 1980s.²⁷² Thus, the incorporation and invigoration of the *otutrupa* institution in southern Kaoko played a key role in the ongoing "social and political restructuring of society in Kaoko".²⁷³



With the return of powerful leaders, the rise of 'big men', and the institutionalisation of South African colonial indirect rule, both power and authority as well as place and group boundaries and relations were re-made and transformed. Moreover, and according to Bollig²⁷⁴ it was also in the 1920s that the pastoral mode of production was re-established following the Rinderpest epidemic, subsequent cyclic droughts, and conflicts – with access-rights to places, livestock and pastures increasingly negotiated through the establishment of patron-client relations with these big and powerful men, relations which were dependent on continually enlarging a patron's client base through livestock loans and exchange.

²⁶⁹ Bleckmann, "Colonial," 146–47.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 166

²⁷¹ Ibid., 159, 166

²⁷² Ibid., 157

²⁷³ Ibid., 165–167

²⁷⁴ Bollig, "Power."

However, parallel to the institutionalisation of indirect rule and chieftaincies, the first decades of South African rule were marked by the establishment of Kaoko – or by then ‘Kaokoland’ – as a delineated and bounded territory, isolated and differentiated.²⁷⁵ This process, which culminated in the declaration of the Kaokoland ‘native reserve’ in 1939 with Ohopoho (Opuwo) as its administrative centre, was an outcome of a long process that stretched over decades and was driven by the ongoing mapping of the ‘Police Zone’ and its northern border.²⁷⁶

Mapping the Kaokoland ‘native’ reserve

Within north-western Namibia, the colonial administration increasingly mapped and tried to control peoples’, groups and livestock movements and migrations as well as relations of exchange and trade. This was done through restrictive livestock policies, the colonial appropriation of land further south and the creation of buffer zones, and attempts by the colonial state to, on the one hand, control mobilities, whilst on the other hand, to induce (male) labour migrations to the south and central parts. During the first few years of South African rule, the movement of people and livestock was prohibited across the Kunene River into southern Angola, to and from Ovamboland in the east and to and from the Police Zone – and included the restriction of translocal trade between north-western Namibia and Portuguese or Ovambo traders.²⁷⁷ This was facilitated by building a police post on the border between Namibia and Angola, and trade, especially livestock trade, across the border was criminalised and sometimes punished through mass culling of herds. This closing of the borders and the ongoing production of ‘Kaoko’ as a ‘native reserve’ “divided groups who had interacted economically and socially within one economic and political system” and severely limited the potential for local pastoralists to engage with lucrative markets and regional migrations.²⁷⁸

Despite the strong official discourse of animal epidemics which underpinned the making of reserves and the ongoing mapping of the Police Zone, as Miescher²⁷⁹ asserts: “the ongoing closure of the border between Kaoko and Owambo could not be justified as a disease-preventing measure alone.” In other words, at stake was not only animal health, but also importantly, attempts to divide groups and delimit the development of African pastoral political economies.²⁸⁰ Moreover, with the outbreak of livestock epidemics in the region, such as the FMD outbreak in 1934, and the highly contagious Lung Sickness (CBPP) at the end of the 1930s, measures for controlling both external and internal livestock movements were intensified – with stronger bans on translocal and cross-border livestock trade.²⁸¹ From the early 1930s onwards, permits and permission from the colonial administration were also required

²⁷⁵ Bollig, “colonial.”

²⁷⁶ Bollig, “colonial,” 508 ; Rizzo, “NJ,” 194; Miescher, *Namibia*, 160.

²⁷⁷ Bollig, “colonial,” 508.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 513

²⁷⁹ Miescher, *Namibia*, 121.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 98

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 118-120

for internal migration and movement of livestock herds²⁸², forms of control which were also eagerly implemented by local headmen to exercise control over and access to land and water resources.²⁸³

Underpinning these processes were the further appropriation of farming land further south, the forced relocations of more than 1000 people from southern into central Kaoko in 1929, and attempts to create a buffer and livestock-free zones.²⁸⁴ In 1938, the colonial administration attempted its first large-scale inoculation campaign in the region, receiving local resistance due to the demands for cattle to be branded – a practice viewed by many as an attempt by the state to claim local livestock property.²⁸⁵ Such suspicions were not misplaced – as Miescher has pointed out – as these veterinary campaigns also served as a state census of livestock ownership to facilitate the enforcement of taxation – a state practice geared towards forcing men from the northern ‘native’ territories into wage labour.²⁸⁶ As a consequence of these ongoing processes, by the 1940s the South African colonial administration succeeded in turning Kaoko’s previously diverse and regionally integrated economy into a subsistence-orientated and isolated one, leading to what Bollig termed the “colonial encapsulation” of Kaoko.²⁸⁷

Nevertheless, the marginal and borderland position of north-western Namibia, the hard to navigate mountainous landscapes as well as the mobility practices and strategies deployed by people in the area, made it also difficult to police and administer.²⁸⁸ Thus, people continued to harbour and nurture social relations beyond the Red Line, with kin and friends within the ‘reserves’ and Police Zone, and cultural, political and even livestock exchange continued between groups in southern Kaoko and those in central and eastern Namibia, despite colonial state regulations.²⁸⁹ Consequently, and as was the case in most parts of the territory, containment was difficult to put into practice and there was often a large disjuncture between official colonial state discourse and practice.²⁹⁰

Furthermore, and despite the establishment of a SWANLA²⁹¹ office in Opuwo in 1954, labour migration and recruitment in this region remained relatively low in comparison to the other northern regions – eventually leading to the closing of the office. Yet, labour mobilities also differed drastically between the northern and southern parts of Kaoko, with more men from southern Kaoko having participated selectively in labour migration and contract work.²⁹² SWANLA was established in 1943 as the central recruiting organisation and provided transport for labourers from recruiting centres to the region and place of employment. This system was strongly driven by ongoing attempts by the colonial

²⁸² Bollig, *Risk*, 161.

²⁸³ Rizzo, *Gender*, 115.

²⁸⁴ Steven Van Wolputte, “Subject Disobedience: The Colonial Narrative and Native Counterworks in Northwestern Namibia, C. 1920–1975,” *History and anthropology* 15, no. 2 (2004); Bollig, *Risk*, 161.

²⁸⁵ Miescher, *Namibia*, 119.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 98

²⁸⁷ Bollig, “colonial.”

²⁸⁸ Rizzo, *Gender*.

²⁸⁹ Bollig, “Chieftaincies”; Also see Van Wolputte, “Subject.”

²⁹⁰ Patricia Hayes, ed., *Namibia Under South African Rule: Mobility & Containment, 1915-46* (Oxford: James Currey Publishers, 1998).

²⁹¹ South-West Africa Native Labour Association

²⁹² Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 175.

administration to “integrate male labour from the north into the larger economy”²⁹³ and centred for instance on the diamond mines in the south, underground and base-metal mines, for example in Tsumeb, the Rössing uranium mines close to the coastal town of Swakopmund, the fishing factories in Walvis Bay, and on finding labourers for settler-owned farms in the ‘Police Zone’ – with different groups being assigned to different parts of the territory.²⁹⁴ Once there, labourers had to follow strict regulations and often deal with inhumane conditions, such as being confined to the employer’s property, not being able to receive visitors, and being at the mercy of “whatever punishment an employer thought appropriate for any suspected offences”.²⁹⁵

Apartheid ‘homeland’ policy and modernisation

Whereas colonial rule had taken on “a conservative ideology of tribalism” during the first decades of rule in which it idealised maintaining and building on what was perceived as ‘local authority structures’, from the 1950s onwards and driven by politico-scientific impetus, the state actively sought, not only to create external territorial control and boundaries but also to re-structure local modes of pastoral production, tenure and land-use systems.²⁹⁶ This change corresponded to the declaration of the Kaokoland as an ‘independent’ reserve in 1957, under the direct authority of the Chief Native Affairs Commissioner in Windhoek and the onset of Apartheid and segregationist rule in Namibia.²⁹⁷ Moreover, it was also strongly influenced by several scientific publications on the region from the 1950s onwards, and international pressure on the South African colonial administration to justify its ongoing colonisation of the territory.²⁹⁸

Rizzo²⁹⁹ has argued that Van Warmelo’s ethnological publication,³⁰⁰ based on research conducted at the end of the 1940s and the first ‘scientific’ publication on the region, played an important part in providing the needed scientific (ideological) justification for ongoing indirect and paternal rule of Kaoko and its ‘tribal’ societies. Van Warmelo mapped the “spatial distribution and political demarcations”³⁰¹ of the different groups he encountered according to three main ethnic boundaries of ‘Himba’, ‘Herero’ and ‘Tjimba’, without reference to the role of the colonial encounter and powerful local actors in the on-going production and politicisation of these categories. Furthermore, during this

²⁹³ Silvester, Wallace and Hayes, “Trees,” 31–33.

²⁹⁴ Allan D. Cooper, “The Institutionalization of Contract Labour in Namibia,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25, no. 1 (1999): 122

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 122, 138. Cooper foregrounds the inhumane conditions embodied by this contract-labour system (as well as the exchange of ideas and social networks it enabled) strongly contributed to the formation of SWAPO in the 1950s and the onset of the liberation struggle.

²⁹⁶ Bollig, “Socio,” 321.

²⁹⁷ Bollig, “Chieftaincies.”

²⁹⁸ Bollig, “Socio,” 322.

²⁹⁹ Rizzo, “NJ.”

³⁰⁰ Nicolaas Jacobus van Warmelo, *Notes on the Kaokoveld (South West Africa) And Its People* 26 (Pretoria: Union of South Africa: Department of Native Affairs, 1951).

³⁰¹ Rizzo, “NJ.”

time emerging scientific discourse was animated by growing concerns over environmental degradation within the ‘native’ reserves, presented as being driven by over-grazing and the limited carrying capacity of the areas.³⁰² As a result, several of them, including Kaokoland, were targeted by the state for ‘modernisation’ to negate these processes – with once again little reflection on the role of colonial land appropriation and encapsulation in having produced these circumstances. Underlying the administration’s modernisation policy towards the ‘native’ reserves during this time was thus a drive for *both* “material” and “administrative” development – with the administrative side involving the further institutionalisation of structures and institutions of indirect rule and with more power being vested in the traditional authorities – regarded as central partners in this process.³⁰³

During the 1930s, and after the passing of Vita Thom in 1937, to try and curb growing rivalries between the different factions the Native Commissioner, C.H.L Hahn, established a Kaokoland Tribal Council – encompassing chiefs, their headmen and councillors (Sg. *orata*, Pl. *ozorata*).³⁰⁴ This council was still tellingly referred to as the ‘Herero’ council³⁰⁵ and, according to Friedman³⁰⁶, between 1939 and 1948 the colonial administration considered the ‘Herero section’ as ‘appointed rulers’ over the region (despite ongoing political fragmentation and contestation). Thus, during this time colonial indirect rule was predominantly negotiated through the Kaokoland Tribal Council, and its select chiefs as well as an expanding network of appointed headmen and councillors.³⁰⁷ With the onset of the Apartheid administration in 1948, the Council began to play a central role and a local trust fund (*stamfonds*) was also established to which each head of household had to contribute regularly.³⁰⁸

In 1963 the Odendaal Commission went to Kaoko and held a series of consultations and meetings with local leaders about local development. The leaders listed especially the lack of education and access to livestock markets as restricting their development as well as criticised the government for taking land away from pastoral communities.³⁰⁹ Nevertheless, according to Bollig,³¹⁰ with the release of the subsequent report, it was a major borehole drilling project which was flaunted as the main solution to develop the region. The borehole programme, already partially launched in the mid-1950s, was framed as being key to opening up more areas for grazing and settlement and thus ‘modernise’ mobile pastoralism in the region. Moreover, it aimed to address what was perceived by the administration and scientific community as conditions of over-grazing and over-stocking in the, by then, Kaokoland ‘native’ reserve.³¹¹ Initially, there was local resistance towards the programme within the Council, with

³⁰² Bollig, “Socio,” 322–23.

³⁰³ Van Wolputte, “Cattle,” 103, 121; Van Wolputte, “Subject”; Bollig, “Chieftaincies.”

³⁰⁴ Rizzo, *Gender*, 195.

³⁰⁵ Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 126.

³⁰⁶ Friedman, *Imagining*, 188.

³⁰⁷ Friedman, “Making” Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 159–60.

³⁰⁸ Bollig, “Chieftaincies.”

³⁰⁹ Van Wolputte, “Subject,” 164; Bollig, “Chieftaincies,” 165.

³¹⁰ Bollig, “Chieftaincies,” 166.

³¹¹ Bollig, “Chieftaincies”; Bollig, “Socio.”

many suspicious of the intentions of the colonial state.³¹² According to both Bollig³¹³ and Van Wolputte,³¹⁴ these suspicions were not unfounded as this programme was not only meant to modernise local livestock husbandry, but also to win local support within a larger context of growing dissent and organised resistance against colonial rule.

1966 signalled the onset of the armed liberation struggle in SWA, with southern Angola and northern Namibia becoming the focus of mobilisation. In 1967 the first PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia) fighters were seen in Kaoko, leading to the increased militarisation of the region by the South African administration and the South African Defence Force (SADF). This militarisation included the distribution of arms by the colonial administration to members of the Kaokoland Tribal Council and the establishment of a SADF military base in Opuwo in 1979.³¹⁵ It was within this political climate that the borehole drilling programme and its accompanying material developments and technologies were negotiated. Despite initial resistance, ambitious (male) leaders and headmen soon realised that it could be used to their advantage and, specifically, to expand their territorial boundaries, power, and access to resources.³¹⁶ Local chiefs had to apply to the Department of Water Affairs for a borehole to be developed in their areas, after which, colonial administrators in conjunction with technicians would negotiate its "optimal placement".³¹⁷

The borehole drilling programme, which continued for the next four decades – with more than 400 boreholes drilled – increasingly opened up previously inaccessible grazing grounds. It also became an important arena for the ongoing construction of male political authority, territories and the (gendered) apartheid state. This programme not only drastically transformed local land-use practices and land-relations, but also led to the acceleration of pastoral specialisation within the region.³¹⁸ The administration began to implement administrative reforms along with the material developments.³¹⁹ In conjunction with the drilling of boreholes from the end of the 1940s and early 1950s onwards, the administration began to divide Kaokoland into separate neighbourhoods, eventually creating 36 so-called 'wards' (*otjiwyke*). These wards were to be administered by 36 state-salaried 'Himba', 'Herero' and 'Tjimba' headmen and chiefs.³²⁰ This mapping of wards and internal administrative and chieftaincy boundaries was facilitated both by the borehole drilling programme and the parallel construction of a large network of roads.³²¹

'Material' developments were thus deployed by the colonial administration both to try and divide and segregate the different and, by then, highly mobile groups in the region, as well as to produce

³¹² Ibid., 164. Also see Van Wolputte, "political."

³¹³ Bollig, "Socio," 323.

³¹⁴ Van Wolputte, "political," 471–72.

³¹⁵ Van Wolputte, "Cattle," 107.

³¹⁶ Van Wolputte, "political," 473.

³¹⁷ Bollig, "Socio," 323.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Bollig, "Chieftaincies."

³²⁰ Van Wolputte, "Subject."

³²¹ Van Wolputte, "Cattle"; Van Wolputte, "political."

more sedentary (read: controllable) societies.³²² Thus, according to Van Wolputte³²³ “whereas roads, for instance, were forcibly constructed to facilitate control over homesteads, people and animals (and hence to limit rather than enhance mobility), water holes were used as a strategy to separate the different groups inhabiting the northern Kunene region” – with the envisioned socio-spatial constellation of “Ovahimbas in the north, Hereroes in the south and Ovatjimbas in the north-west”.³²⁴ This attempt to produce more contained forms of land-use and the institutionalisation of colonial forms of tenure was strongly driven by colonial livestock policy (of which the borehole programme formed part) – which, at its core, was continually seeking ways to curtail and control livestock movements and markets. For one, despite the colonial state’s ‘modernisation’ agendas for Kaoko, in the early 1960s, and in response to a severe outbreak of FMD in 1961 and 1962, a Veterinary Cordon Fence and thus a physical barrier was constructed for “thousands of kilometres”, running across the territory, east to west, roughly following the dotted border of outposts and water-points of the former Red Line and the northern border of the Police Zone.³²⁵

Up until the 1960s, the Red Line had been communicated and enforced mostly through attempting to control access and movement along rivers and key water-holes, and through a few lone police outposts. This meant that it was fairly permeable, uncertain, and subject to ongoing local negotiation and resistance. With the construction of the fence, much stricter control was achieved, and the border was afforded the “legal and symbolic force of an international border”, with both official permits, ‘passports’ and police control – leading to the further territorial encapsulation and economic isolation of the Kaokoland homeland.³²⁶ Consequently, no livestock markets were developed in Kaoko, due to restrictions, and during times of extreme and cyclical droughts, people had to rely on barter, or selling livestock to Portuguese traders, who during some periods, were allowed into Namibia.³²⁷

Thus, within the space of ongoing negotiation of the colonial encounter within north-western Namibia and “for South African policy-makers, cattle served as a target and an alibi to sedentarise the (semi-) nomadic population, isolate the region from the rest of the world, and to force the region’s inhabitants into a subsistence economy and thus into contract labour”.³²⁸ Moreover, with the eventual construction of the VCF during the 1960s, the image of Kaoko as “a deserted region, static in terms of economic and political development”³²⁹ was re-produced, and increasingly represented as a consequence of internal cultural dynamics rather than colonial state practices of encapsulation and historical processes. Thus, apart from a physical barrier, over the following decades several socio-

³²² Van Wolputte, “political,” 464, 472.

³²³ Van Wolputte, “Cattle,” 109.

³²⁴ Van Wolputte, “political,” 464.

³²⁵ Miescher, *Namibia*, 1, 168.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9, 109.

³²⁷ Bollig, *Risk*, 166.

³²⁸ Van Wolputte, “Cattle,” 104.

³²⁹ Rizzo, *Gender*, 83.

headmen and in the mapping of ward boundaries, as well as by local actors themselves in negotiations with the colonial state, were, over time, generating tensions and conflicts between the different groups, eventually culminating in factional splits and the formation of new forms of political belonging.³³² Friedman³³³ argues that during the 1940s the administration cultivated a large degree of ambiguity when it came to the ‘Himba’ and ‘Tjimba’ leaders and their positions within the Kaokoland Tribal Council as opposed to the clear position of the ‘Herero’ leaders. Such colonial state discursive practices were increasingly leading to the production of specific political subjectivities and identities and which, in turn, gave rise to the formation of strongly opposing “politico-ethnic formations”.³³⁴ For one, the ambiguity cultivated by the administration produced a lot of uncertainty as to who was considered ‘chiefs’, ‘headmen’ or ‘councillors’ – a strong indication of the shifting parameters of the emerging institutions of indirect rule.

By the 1950s, the ‘Himba’ leaders began occupying clearer positions as ‘councillor headmen’ and, importantly, a ‘Tjimba’ political section within the Council began to mobilise, leading to the appointment of several ‘Tjimba’ headmen.³³⁵ Thus, “what had previously been considered a disparaging ethnic classification” – with ‘Tjimba’ referring to herders who lost most of their livestock – were, in turn, to “become the foundation for a new form of political consciousness”.³³⁶ By the mid-1960s the Tjimba-grouping formed and self-organised within the Tribal Council and were accusing the Herero leaders of stealing their land and wanting to subordinate them. This grouping thus made autochthony and indigeneity claims – as ‘Kaoko’s original inhabitants’ – and as opposed to the ‘Herero’ who were perceived as “outsiders” and “intruders”.³³⁷

Within this political struggle, there was also further fragmentation, with the Tjimba-grouping and some Himba leaders mobilising the *otrutrupa* institution and aligning and affiliating with the *Otjiserandu* flag (the Okahandja section). Thus, what had primarily been an institution associated with pan-Herero identity was being used to express political dissent and contestations – with association with the *Otjiserandu* flag specifically aimed at opposing the growing power of the Ndamuranda, who belonged to and affiliated with the Omaruru section and with the legacy of Vita Thom.³³⁸ Moreover, many Tjimba and Himba leaders affiliated with the “heroic leader Mureti” who was from Kaoko yet associated with the Maherero chiefly line.³³⁹ Thus the Otjiserandu troop regiment allowed these groups

³³² Ibid., 31, also see Van Wolputte, “Cattle,” 110.

³³³ Friedman, “Making”; John T. Friedman, “Cultivating Ambiguity in (Post-) Colonial Namibia: Reflections on ‘History’ and Conflict in Kaokoland,” *Cambridge Anthropology*, 2007.

³³⁴ Friedman, “Making,” 24.

³³⁵ Ibid., 30

³³⁶ Ibid., 32

³³⁷ Ibid., 32-33, also see Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 133.

³³⁸ Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 164.

³³⁹ Ibid., 164-165. As Bleckmann also points out, the Otjiyaapa/Otjizemba regiment was not only comprised of Herero but also Himba and Tjimba who associated with and were followers of Thom.

and leaders to also perform this identity and to further incorporate the *otutrupa* institution into Kaoko's situated political histories and larger Otjiherero-speaking societies.³⁴⁰

These ongoing divisions and contestations between different groups and leaders were magnified and strongly polarised through the implementation of a vaccination and livestock-disease control programme by the colonial authorities during the late 1960s. This programme – which required the construction of several *manga* or cattle enclosures across the region with the intention to both brand and inoculate the cattle – led to some leaders eventually agreeing (after initial resistance) to cooperate with the colonial authorities and administration, and others resisting and being highly suspicious of the intentions of the programme. As a consequence, “historical tensions”³⁴¹ between the different groups and sections within Kaoko's society began to give rise to the formation of two strongly opposing factions: those perceived to be in close collaboration with the colonial administration – referred to as the ‘small or minority group’ (*Okambumba*) and who constituted mostly Herero leaders, and those in opposition to who became known as the ‘large group’ (*Otjimbumba*) – the majority group which constituted the Himba/Tjimba grouping.³⁴²

By the early, to mid-1970s the tensions between the two opposing factions within Kaoko spiralled out of control and a violent regional conflict broke out in 1974.³⁴³ This conflict was not only about collaboration with the colonial government – but also “about power, in which contested rights over leadership, pastures, or poaching territories, and later, the socioeconomic supremacy over the trade monopoly (by the ‘Herero’ section) in Kaoko played an important role.”³⁴⁴ The conflict signalled a key “turning point for intra-group antagonisms”³⁴⁵ and importantly, transformed the local politics of difference and belonging, giving rise to collective identities rooted in particular “politico-ethnic formations” and in a nativist politics of autochthony.

These resistances to colonial ‘material’ developments and rule also generated specific colonial imaginaries of Kaoko and Kaokolanders as “tribal”, “static”³⁴⁶ and “conservative”. Yet as Van Wolputte³⁴⁷ has illustrated, within Kaoko, indirect rule, apartheid and homeland policy were most “intimately felt, experienced but also resisted at the level of livestock policy”. This played out through the administration's policies of economic isolation of the region from broader livestock markets, the

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Steven Van Wolputte, Els Hoorelbeke, and Laura Bleckmann, “Fenced Frontiers and Murky Boundaries: Two Cases from Kaoko, Northern Namibia,” in *Borderlands and Frontiers in Africa*, ed. Steven Van Wolputte (LIT Verlag Münster, 2013), 156.

³⁴² See Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 127; Friedman, “Making,” 33. Importantly, Kaokolanders also identified with and related their identities to multiple and diverse sets of groups including the Zemba, Nkumbi, Mbundu, Hakaona and Ovambo. It's important to note the strong politicisation of ethnicity during this particular historical conjecture.

³⁴³ This year was also known as ‘*ombura yondjembo yaKaningena*’ – the year of the gun of Kaningena (See Bleckmann 2012:142).

³⁴⁴ Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 142.

³⁴⁵ Friedman, “Making,” 33.

³⁴⁶ Rizzo, *Gender*.

³⁴⁷ Van Wolputte, “Subject,” 164; Van Wolputte, “Cattle.”

appropriation of land and pastures in southern and eastern Kaoko, the various inoculation campaigns, some of which were unsuccessful, the previous mass culling of herds, as well as the increased control over internal livestock movements through a permit system administered by the local headmen. As a consequence, and understandably, with the implementation of a large-scale vaccination campaign in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many were highly suspicious of the “administration’s cattle politics”.³⁴⁸

Furthermore, these state practices were also “veiled by a technical discourse on roads and water holes, schools, hospitals and labour recruitment schemes, but especially cattle free zones, vaccination and branding campaigns, quarantine camps, breeding programmes, bush auctions and so on.”³⁴⁹ In framing these interventions and homeland policies within a technical ‘developmentalist’ discourse they also succeeded in working as an ‘anti-politics machine’ – “an apparatus to reinforce and expand bureaucratic state power while depoliticizing both poverty and the state”³⁵⁰ and thus circumscribing spaces for political dissent and resistance. However, as Van Wolputte³⁵¹ has argued, for the local population these interventions became part and parcel of “a politics of identity engaged in by indirect rule, and, later, apartheid”.

In other words, it was exactly these ‘development’ interventions which became the focus of “popular resistance against colonial rule”, resistance which was not necessarily always overtly expressed but found expression in, for example, purposefully delaying the implementation of programmes.³⁵² This ‘resistance’ towards ‘development’ – including the initial resistance towards the borehole and inoculation programme – the colonial administration blamed on the inherent “conservativeness of the locals”, a portrayal of the region’s inhabitants which took its cue from earlier colonial discourses.³⁵³ However, this discourse failed to acknowledge that indirect and apartheid rule was a matter of ongoing and continual negotiation, and local actors exercised their agency and resistance in a multitude of ways.³⁵⁴ During the following years, however, the factional split which took root during this regional conflict deepened and solidified as Kaoko was increasingly drawn into the national political terrain and party politics and came to occupy a particular position during the liberation struggle.³⁵⁵ These political struggles took place against a background of ongoing economic isolation and structural marginalisation.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Van Wolputte, “Cattle,” 121.

³⁵⁰ Van Wolputte, “political,” 464.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 461

³⁵² Steven Van Wolputte, “Vicious Vets and Lazy Locals: Experimentation, Politics and CBPP in North-West Namibia, 1925-1980,” *Journal of Namibian Studies* 13 (2013).

³⁵³ Van Wolputte, “Cattle,” 122 ; Also see Van Wolputte, “Vicious.”

³⁵⁴ Ibid., also see Bollig, “Chieftaincies.”

³⁵⁵ Friedman, “Making.”

Militarisation, nationalisation, and conservation

Kaokoland was never completely transformed into an ‘independent’ homeland as had been the state’s intention. This was primarily due to the onset of war and the extension of the armed liberation struggle into north-western Namibia – yet both of which indirectly furthered Kaoko’s economic isolation and political marginalisation.³⁵⁶ The declaration of Kaoko as a ‘military territory’ in 1976 led to the further tightening of its borders, the establishment of three military bases in Kaoko, and the placing of increased pressure on local pastoral societies. Furthermore between 1978 and 1981/82 a severe and devastating drought hit the region, leading to up to 90 per cent livestock losses and conditions of famine.³⁵⁷ Political instability was further exacerbated by the onset of the independence struggle and civil war in former Portuguese Angola.³⁵⁸ This complex chain of events and the structural marginalisation of Kaoko – including the economic and political pressure brought on by the South African government’s propaganda – led many men within Kaoko to join the South African army and police in the 1980s – essentially fighting the “Independence War on the side of the South African Empire”.³⁵⁹ Many were also recruited to the SADF’s paramilitary (Koevoet) unit.³⁶⁰ With many being recruited into the SADF and thus implicitly embracing the colonial regime’s political order, local chieftaincy, and factional and territorial disputes increasingly became entangled with national party politics.³⁶¹

Following the Turnhalle Constitutional Conference in 1975, the South African administration introduced so-called ‘second-tier authorities’ in 1980 meant to be ‘self-governing’ ethnic administrations of the homeland areas.³⁶² Driven by the Bantustan ideology, these authorities were based on ‘ethnic constituencies’ rather than geographically located and meant, for example, that all of Namibia’s Otjiherero societies – including those in Kaoko – were subsumed under one governing body of the ‘Herero Representative Authority’.³⁶³ With the establishment of second-tier authorities, members, and delegates of both the ‘small’ and ‘big’ group in Kaoko were appointed to serve on the executive committee. Soon, however, members of both groups were using the power of the new governing body “to appoint their own group’s headmen through Kaokoland” – polarising villages in an attempt to claim territories and power.³⁶⁴

³⁵⁶ Bollig, *Risk*, 42.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 167, 276

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ See Laura Bleckmann, “Counter-Memories of the Namibian Independence War from Kaoko” (Basler Afrika Bibliographien: The South African Empire: Researching South Africa's Legacies of Colonialism and Hegemony in 20th century Southern Africa, 2011), https://limo.libis.be/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=LIRIAS1796697&context=L&vid=Lirias&search_scope=Lirias&tab=default_tab&lang=en_US, 1.

³⁶⁰ Bollig, *Risk*, 168.

³⁶¹ Friedman, “Making,” 33.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 34

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

During this time the Herero Representative Authority was dominated by the DTA (Demographic Turnhalle Alliance) – a coalition party formed after the Turnhalle Conference which was backed by the South African administration. Although at this point delegates from both factions belonged to the DTA, with more and more local headmen being appointed by them, fostering political fragmentation, the DTA eventually had to choose sides. In the end, they supported the large group or Otjimbumba-faction and, as a consequence, the Okambumba-faction or small-group leaders opted for the National Patriotic Front (NPF).³⁶⁵ During the early 1980s, the main factional split within Kaoko eventually came to be organised around two traditional authorities: the Otjikaoko Traditional Authority members – who claimed to be descendants of Kaoko’s original inhabitants, and mainly belonged to the ‘big’ group, and the Vita Thom Royal House members who comprised descents of Otjiherero-speaking people who migrated or were forced to migrate (due to the colonial wars and land appropriation) into the region during the first three decades of the twentieth century and rather affiliated with the ‘small’ group.³⁶⁶ Hence, the previous Kaokoland Tribal Council was divided, and two different authorities took form.

Apart from local factional disputes becoming entangled with national political struggles and the ongoing war, Kaoko was also increasingly drawn into changing international networks of knowledge, capital, and power. From the 1970s and 80s, Kaoko was increasingly animated by anxieties concerning the depletion of its wildlife populations. As Rizzo³⁶⁷ has argued, hunting has always been a crucial aspect of both subsistence and commercial economies and was, along with cultivation, trading, and pastoralism, central to the diversification of the regional economies, especially during periods of extensive livestock losses. Yet, with the spread of arms within the region, specifically new technologies and types of automatic arms, as well as cars, wildlife numbers experienced a sharp decrease. However, with local hunting practices outlawed by the colonial administration and framed as ‘poaching’, hunting also became rather the “privilege of colonial officials and police” and the political elite.³⁶⁸ Thus, during this time, hunting economies were mostly driven by the trophy and leisure hunting practices of SADF personnel, colonial administrators and the South African political elite and continually produced and re-produced frontier imaginaries of Kaoko as the “last wilderness”.³⁶⁹ As a consequence, population numbers experienced a sharp decline – especially that of the charismatic large mammals such as elephants and rhinos. In response, local conservation activist and government extension worker, Garth Owen Smith, began campaigning for a community-driven, grassroots approach to conservation, eventually spearheading the establishment, together with local headmen, of community game guards to

³⁶⁵ Friedman, “Making,” 34–35.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 24

³⁶⁷ Rizzo, *Gender*, 184.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Michael Bollig and Elsemi Olwage, “The Political Ecology of Hunting in Namibia’s Kaokoveld: From Dorsland Trekkers’ Elephant Hunts to Trophy-Hunting in Contemporary Conservancies,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 34, no. 1 (2016).

patrol areas.³⁷⁰ From the late 1970s and during the 1980s the colonial administration's 'developmentalist' and 'modernisation' trend with a strong focus on livestock policy intersected with increased local interest and international support for implementing wildlife conservation.

This drew Kaoko into larger, international networks, especially through its eventually successful development of grassroots, participatory forms of conservation, which later and on a global scale found traction with models and institutions of community-based natural resource governance. As a consequence of these parallel processes, Kaoko was both further economically isolated and structurally marginalised, whilst simultaneously its political structures and 'customary' institutions were becoming more and more entangled with national party politics and the changing state apparatus, as well as wider international discourses on development and conservation.

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to delineate some of the complex ways in which the formation of local political institutions, territories and social belonging was negotiated within the political and cultural ecology of the frontier, through processes of colonial territorialisation and re-territorialisation, and exchange with larger societies, especially a pan-Herero society, beyond Kaoko, and relative to north-western Namibia's geographical and hydro-ecological specificities. Moreover, it focused on some of the material and symbolic practices of colonial border-making within north-western Namibia and the subsequent and parallel institutionalisation of South African colonial indirect rule. In doing so I have attempted to foreground how colonial discursive practices were marked by ambiguities and uncertainties as well as by fragmented political and administrative landscapes.³⁷¹ These dynamics opened up numerous spaces for the expression and enactment of local agency which re-configured the colonial encounter in specific and important ways. In other words, "colonial power was neither omnipresent nor omnipotent" but rather a matter of constant negotiation.³⁷²

Nevertheless, with the institutionalisation of South African colonial indirect rule within Kaoko, colonial administrators assumed "traditional" authorities to be men, especially powerful and wealthy war-lords, who then, in turn, were targeted as "intermediaries" within this negotiation process.³⁷³ Consequently, and throughout the period of colonial rule, colonial state discursive practices increasingly fostered a "gendered conception of the political and legal spheres"³⁷⁴ – conceptions which greatly restricted the agency of women and "female possibilities of speech and action" in relation to the state and administration, whilst creating conditions for the enhancing of "male political authority".³⁷⁵ This

³⁷⁰ See Garth L. Owen-Smith, *An Arid Eden: A Personal Account of Conservation in the Kaokoveld* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2010). Jones, "evolution"

³⁷¹ Van Wolputte, "Subject"; Friedman, "Cultivating"; Rizzo, *Gender*, 11.

³⁷² Van Wolputte, "Cattle," 120.

³⁷³ Hodgson, "Pastoralism"; Bollig, "Chieftaincies."

³⁷⁴ Hodgson, "Pastoralism," 43.

³⁷⁵ Rizzo, *Gender*, 201.

eventually led to the establishment of a “patriarchal political order”³⁷⁶ which also came to be underwritten by a paternal mode of state governing and state-making.

Yet as Friedman³⁷⁷ has pointed out, just as the “administration deployed paternalism as a way to incorporate Kaokolanders into its realm of colonial power, so too did many Kaokolanders use paternalism as a means to insert themselves into the fabric of the colonial state, especially the local ruling elite”. Consequently, and through histories of colonial indirect rule, both local ‘customary’ and politico-legal institutions, as well as the (post)colonial state were continually and dynamically co-produced and co-produced each other within shifting relations of power – with Kaoko’s traditional authorities also becoming part and parcel of the state apparatus.³⁷⁸ Furthermore, with this institutionalisation of indirect rule, ‘Harunga’s legacy’, as well as the deployment of a tribal ideology strongly contributed to political and social fragmentation and antagonism between different chieftaincies and groups within Kaoko.³⁷⁹ This shaped the emerging regimes of belonging – increasingly giving rise to “autochthonous discourses of belonging” rooted in indigeneity claims, as well as divergent “politico-ethnic formations” and the politicisation of ethnicity in dealings with the state and the politics of difference between different groups.³⁸⁰

Within contemporary Kaoko, histories of colonial encapsulation and the symbolic and ideological imaginaries and discursive practices which underpinned these processes, continue to generate specific policies and interventions amongst different state, political and external agents wanting either “to develop or protect the landscape and its inhabitants”.³⁸¹ Hence, post-independent Kaoko – now the northern Kunene region – emerged as a space represented as both “burdened by the lack of progress” and in need of development interventions, as well as a space to “preserve and protect” – both culturally and ecologically.³⁸² Many of these development and conservation interventions have been shown to be shaped by and to continue to (re)produce colonial imaginaries of and on Kaoko and Kaokolanders as ‘underdeveloped’, ‘naturally conservative’, ‘traditional’ nomads, and ‘tribal’ – with this identity situated concerning inherent cultural and socio-political dynamics, rather than complex historical processes, almost a century of colonialism, and ongoing structural marginalisation.³⁸³ In invoking such imaginaries and especially through the tourism industry’s visual repertoires, Kaoko has come to be equated with the ‘Himba’ who, in turn, also play a key role in signifying the trope of Kaoko as Namibia’s “arid Eden”.³⁸⁴ Additionally, despite having resisted and contested colonial rule and the

³⁷⁶ Friedman, *Imagining*, 220.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 245

³⁷⁸ Ibid. 246

³⁷⁹ Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 115, 128 ;Friedman, *Imagining*, 183.

³⁸⁰ Friedman, “Making,” 24.

³⁸¹ Van Wolputte, “Subject,” 153.

³⁸² Friedman, *Imagining*, 38–39.

³⁸³ Van Wolputte, “Subject,” 153.

³⁸⁴ Miescher and Rizzo, “Popular,” 33 Bollig and Heinemann, “Nomadic”. The Kunene Region forms part of Namibia’s “Arid Eden route”, with the “Himba cultural experience” being a key component of differentiating this tourist route from others. See for example:

apartheid regime on different fronts, many continue to perceive Kaokoland as having “collaborated with the apartheid regime”.³⁸⁵ These perceptions and the legacies of the region’s complex political histories and ongoing economic isolation also lead this part of the country to emerge as an oppositional strong-hold, and as a site of political struggle and marginality post-independence.³⁸⁶

http://www.namibiatourism.com.na/pdf/routes/emag/arid_edden/index.html#p=32. This route takes its name from Owen-Smith’s biographical account of conservation in north-western Namibia. See Owen-Smith, *arid*.

³⁸⁵ Van Wolputte, “Subject,” 153.

³⁸⁶ Friedman, *Imagining*.

Chapter 3 Contesting and enacting Ozondundu as place and territory

Introduction

During my research, the dominant narrative regarding Otjomatempa was that it had emerged as a place when homesteads from the neighbouring Otjapitjapi started visiting the area with their livestock during the dry-season months (June-November) to create cattle-posts. In other words, it was seen as having been a cattle-post place belonging to Otjapitjapi, which had become settled in recent years. “Otjapitjapi and Otjomatempa are just the same place” – I heard from many people during the first weeks of research. Within this narrative, Otjapitjapi was construed as being the *ombazu* (traditional) place, the older, longer-established place characterised by *ozonganda ozonene* (main ancestral homesteads) from which Otjomatempa emerged as more people acquired livestock and needed to establish their homestead. Otjapitjapi was barely 15 km east of Otjomatempa, yet the two places were separated by rocky hills and mountain crests which meant reaching it was difficult.³⁸⁷

Tying in with the place-genealogy of Otjapitjapi and Otjomatempa being one place was the assertion that the settled places of Otjapitjapi, Okakuyu, Otjomaoru, Otjomatempa, and cattle-posts Okomuhana, Okarumbu and Otjize were one area (*orukondua*), that they were interconnected – with the shared boundaries expressed through that of the Ozondundu communal conservancy (see Map 3 below). As one resident asserted, “everybody was born here, and this is Muteze’s area”. Thus, crucial to this narrative was the legitimisation of Otjomatempa and these interconnected settled and cattle-post places as falling within the jurisdiction of *osoromana* Muteze. Soon, however, it became evident there was a strong counter-narrative to this place-genealogy. Within this counter-narrative, Otjomatempa was construed as being an “old place” – a settled-place – rather than a cattle-post place, characterised from the start by ancestral homesteads.

This chapter then is concerned with delineating Otjomatempa’s contested and divergent place-genealogy. In doing so, I examine how this contested place-genealogy was entangled with local contestations over authority and with *opolotika*. Moreover, this chapter engages with the different and intersecting normative frameworks which were mobilised to legitimise or delegitimise the authority vested in the local institution of *osoromana* (headman), and in contesting Ozondundu as a place and territory. Through this, I thus illustrate the inherited and overlapping institutions which were practiced within this context and in the governing of land-access and pastoral mobility. Furthermore, I show how the institution of *osoromana* and local ‘custom’ (*ombazu*) were characterised by dynamism and being re-configured and struggled over within changing political-economic, legal, and socio-ecological

³⁸⁷ During the course of my research a gravel road was constructed connecting Otjomatempa and Otjapitjapi, reducing the travel time by car from one hour to barely ten minutes.

environments.³⁸⁸ And lastly, and in doing so, this chapter traces the historical genealogy of the Ozondundu boundaries and the parallel re-making of relations of authority and regimes of belonging.

This chapter is broadly divided into two sections. The first section opens with a reflection on the dynamics of my arrival within Otjomatempa and how this foregrounded key questions on the role of *opolotika* in the dispute and the close interrelation between place-based politics and authority. This is followed by an engagement with a particular “first-comer narrative”³⁸⁹ which was enacted and performed in relation to Otjomatempa’s social histories of place-formation. Through this, I show how such narratives were politically and symbolically significant for establishing and re-establishing ancestral land-relations, as well as for articulating membership and belonging to specific places, lineages and groups within a context historically characterised by the high mobility and overlapping claims to land.³⁹⁰ Moreover, I also show how such first-comer narratives were critical in conferring and contesting authority and entangled with particular inherited institutions tying together male-authority, place and water, and the practice of kinship, specifically patrilineal belonging. In delineating such first-comer narratives, however, it is important to keep in mind that they have to be read first of all as narratives and should be understood as being open to the possibility of being refashioned, dismissed, disputed and/or politically mobilised.³⁹¹

The second section deals with how Otjomatempa and Otjapitjapi have come to be relationally imagined and constructed as a shared place and territory. Here I then trace the genealogy of the Ozondundu boundaries in different yet overlapping understandings of local authority and territory rooted in the making of the colonial (and post-colonial) state and a hereditary and patriarchal chieftaincy model.³⁹² Moreover, this part of the chapter looks at the historical making of the Ozondundu place-boundaries and identity through the lens of divergent migration histories, and changing state regimes, mobilities and land-use, pastoral economies, and intersecting social and political belongings. I first discuss Otjapitjapi’s place-formation and the establishment of local headmen concerning the forced relocation of people and groups between 1928 and 1931 by the South African colonial administration. Moreover, I trace some of the changing land-use and itinerant practices in relation to the mapping of colonial tenure policies, the onset of the regional conflict in the late 1960s and 1970s, the subsequent drought in the early 1980s, and the liberation war and militarisation of the region during this time.

Subsequently, and in the final part of this chapter, I analyse how the rise of the practice of *opolotika* during the late 1970s/1980s opened up spaces for the articulation of political autonomy and territorial claims by specific interrelated places and chieftaincies – claims which were carried through

³⁸⁸ See Becker, “concise,” 48; Francis B. Nyamnjoh, “Chieftaincy and the Negotiation of Might and Right in Botswana Democracy,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 21, no. 2 (2003).

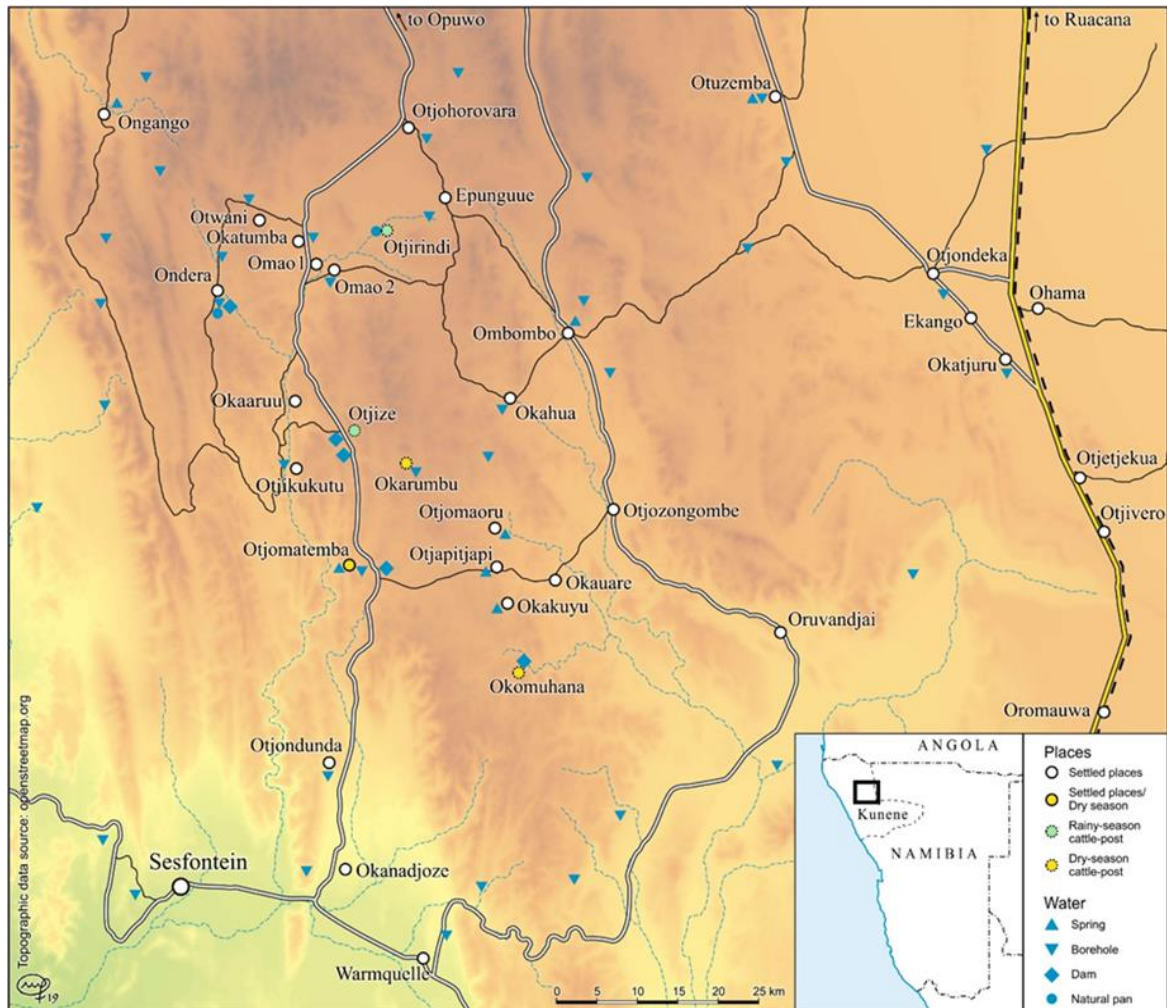
³⁸⁹ Carola Lentz, *Land, Mobility, and Belonging in West Africa: Natives and Strangers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 11

³⁹² Bollog, “Socio,” 330.

into the post-independent era and consequently found expression, in some instances, in the formation of communal conservancies, and new forms of factional and political belonging.



*Map 3: Research places in southern Kaoko*³⁹³

Navigating my arrival in a divided place

Arriving at Otjomatemba in November 2014 we followed the path to the borehole – which normally, like other water-points, was a key gathering space. As strangers, it was critical to respect local norms governing arrival. This usually entailed approaching one of the local councillors (Sg. *orata*, Pl. *ozorata*) (to the headmen) or older residents within a place, who we were hoping to find at the borehole. The borehole and its adjoining infrastructure was situated on a dry river bank. The trees stood taller and larger than elsewhere, creating a cool, welcoming atmosphere. Towards one side stood two large *Omumborombonga* (Leadwood) trees, their limbs a chalky-white and between them, an arching wooden

³⁹³ Cartographer: Monika Feinen

stump, broken and fallen away. It was here, on the stump, that we found several men, some sitting, others leaning back on their wooden, carved walking canes (*okati*).

Some were seated on chairs to one side, playing a popular local game called *onyune* – stones being shuffled between several rows of small, neat holes dug in the ground. It was an atmosphere of sociality and conviviality – yet also clearly an atmosphere and space of male sociality. We approached one senior man who was seated whilst another carefully shaved his head with a sharpened knife, the concentration palpable. He was known as Tobias (Hauari) Uaroua and, and was known to Kapezuva, the research assistant which accompanied me on this day. After some time, Tobias agreed for us to spend the night in the place. In hearing that my research interest partially concerned water (*omeva*), he insisted that we visit a natural spring (*oruharui*) first thing in the morning. Early the next morning we took off and many joined us for the excursion. As we drove west into the mountain range, it was explained to me that Tobias had made this road painstakingly over many months. After about an hour we arrived at a strikingly beautiful, green oasis situated in a closed valley. As I had my camera those who had joined the excursion proceeded to joyfully pose for photographs. I was informed that this spring was known as *Otjitaime*.

These early encounters and the politics of my arrival were an important instruction in how water-points were entangled with the historical making, performance and negotiation of place-formation, public life, authority, and its gendered dynamics. However, my arrival also eventually formed part of my introduction to the highly politicised nature of everyday life within southern Kaoko. As noted above, my initial introductions to Otjomatamba were mainly through Tobias. As a senior *orata*, he proceeded to introduce us to the local headman – *osoromana* Herunga – who in turn welcomed us. Being ignorant of the context, I was sure that we had properly respected the local hierarchies and protocols. However, a few days later, it became clear that this was not the case.

One afternoon we met with one of the few residents conversant in English, a person in his early 20s, and we started talking about the upcoming meeting regarding the newcomers. Sitting together in the shade of a tree he started by explaining that the problem was that the Himba just show up and stay at a place without asking. And they have a lot of cattle, he emphasised. In the end, there was nothing that the people could do to remove them and their cattle. “The Himba are a problem,” he reiterated, laughing, and shaking his head. The way “they” worked, he asserted, was that one person would ask, but he would bring a lot of cattle including cattle belonging to his family and soon you would realise that they had created another homestead and another. He explained that the newcomers mainly came because of experiences of drought, but another important driver, in his opinion, was *okuroua* (lit. to witch, or witchcraft). Once people accumulated large cattle herds, they more easily became the target of the jealousy of others and witchcraft, and, in general, Himba was associated with witchcraft because they lived closer to Angola.³⁹⁴ At this point, I asked whether he thought there was some degree of

³⁹⁴ Also see Kavari (2001) on the role of Angola in local understandings of witchcraft.

prejudice at work. He replied that the prejudice was only there because of the large number of livestock that homesteads owned. However, after a short lull in the conversation, he changed his tone, leaned over, and addressed me and my translator quietly. Actually, he said, there were two headmen (*ozosoromana*) in the area, and it was *this* that was causing the problems. He explained:

The problem came because Herunga wanted to establish a clinic, and Muteze resisted. Herunga use to be Muteze's senior councillor. Now they are fighting.... 'where is your father's grave?' It is just *opolotika*.³⁹⁵

He then proceeded to explain: Muteze and his supporters belonged to the Vita Thom Royal House, which was known to support the ruling national SWAPO party, whilst Herunga subscribed to the competing Otjikaoko Traditional Authority which support the DTA. Whereas Muteze was officially recognised by the state, Herunga was not. The recently appointed Herunga had a homestead in Otjomatimba, yet his permanent place of residence where most of his livestock was kept, was south of the VCF, about 150 km away. Muteze, on the other hand, had his ancestral homestead in Otjapitjapi, yet he resided for large parts of the year in Okarumbu, a dry-season cattle-post 15 km north of Otjomatimba (see Map 3).

The next day, in speaking to another and differently aligned senior councillor he also leaned over, engaging us quietly with a warning. He wanted to be honest, he declared, and perhaps we had not been informed, but there were two *ozosoromana*. He advised us to be careful as some would want us to choose sides. When we visited another homestead soon after, the head of the homestead – a woman in her late 50s – also commented on the situation explaining that a lot had changed in the place. In 2011 the “clouds fell on the mountain”: it had rained hard. But since then, there had been a drought. Now, there were a lot of newcomers and problems. At first, the newcomers were said to have arrived with ‘style’ – with many excuses and only a few cattle and they were accepted. The next day the cattle started to increase and when they confronted them, they would respond, “No it is just some cattle I left nearby”. Then the next day the cattle increased once more. And then the people at the homesteads started increasing. Now the people wanted them to go back to “where they came from” but they had refused. As our conversation deepened, she explained to us, like others before, that we had to understand that there were two *ozosoromana* in the area – and this was complicating the situation. Yet in her opinion, the fault did not lie with having two *ozosoromana*, but rather with the people themselves, who were divided, and with *opolotika*.

Realising the existence then of another *osoromana*, we waited for an opportunity to introduce ourselves. It was only several days into our stay that we then met the second headman, *osoromana* Muteze. On this day the Ozondundu communal conservancy was set to have its annual general meeting. The meeting took place underneath the same tree that we were unknowingly to sit beneath two months later to discuss the dispute. However, on this occasion the atmosphere was one of celebration – it was

³⁹⁵ xx.11.2014, unrecorded interview

December, the children were home from school and these yearly meetings were usually marked by the collective cooking and a shared meal consisting mostly of meat. Communal conservancies each receive an own-use hunting quota – either for own consumption or to use as they see fit, for example, during public meetings or funerals. The men on this day had returned with an oryx and kudu to be prepared and cooked for the almost 76 people present, all of whom had travelled from the various settled and cattle-post places situated within Ozondundu. What was also noticeable was that most of the newcomer homesteads – some of whom I had gotten to know by then – was absent from this gathering. This, to me, seemed to be strongly symbolic of the extent to which those homesteads were not as yet accepted, or seen to belong – a non-belonging which was also expressed through the socio-spatial layout of the place, with most of the newcomers' homesteads at the northern and outer edge and reach of the place.



Upon my return to Otjomatamba in 2015 I needed to negotiate a place to reside. This process then once again was a critical instruction on the divisiveness in the place and how local divisions were also socio-spatially enacted. After some discussion about setting up a camp, people present shared their concerns for the safety of our belongings and eventually the idea of constructing a small house was raised. One person suggested that I take a look at *osoromana* Muteze's old cattle-post which still had an old unused house. Once there I realised that this would also be a good place to make our temporary camp. We proceeded to one of the stores to try and find Muteze. Finding him here, he agreed and seemed enthusiastic about my idea to re-build the house. From there we proceeded to pick up Kasengo, an Otjizemba-speaking man and construction worker.

Once we arrived at the cattle-post, we inspected the house: it was leaning dangerously to one side, there was no roof and half of the cow-dung mixture was cracked and had fallen in large heaps to different sides. Kasengo concluded that we would need to construct a completely new house. After much discussion, everyone present ensured me that it would be a speedy and not too expensive process. Apart from the construction of the outer structure, the plastering (*okuromba*) would be done by me and Ngavahue, Muteze's second wife, who agreed to assist me. Muteze also offered to transport the materials from Opuwo with his 4x4 truck. In a hurry to get settled, we left for Opuwo the same day to purchase the needed materials.

Once back in Opuwo however, doubt and the hastiness of my decision began to sink in. I had not wanted to differentiate myself unnecessarily from the everyday material conditions of many. Moreover, I was building a house for one of the wealthier homesteads and this signalled to me the inevitable inserting of myself within a specific constellation of power, reified even more by my relative, inherited 'white' power. And lastly, I had not discussed this decision with many of the homesteads in the place, especially those with whom I had become familiar. However, having already committed, reconsidering seemed to me to be a sure way to sour relations. I thus proceeded to buy the materials and left them to be picked up and transported by Muteze. A day later we returned to Otjomatamba to set up our camp whilst the building of the outer structure proceeded.

Soon after, I visited Tobias' homestead. He shared his homestead with Uakoka Tjizembisa. Uakoka's wife was Tobias' aunt and he had invited them and their six adult children and grandchildren to stay within his homestead and to occupy some of their unused houses when they had moved to Otjomatamba a couple of years prior. With time I came to know that their homestead was one of the 'newcomer' homesteads whose settlement was under discussion. It did not matter if you had family within the place, Veumbakeho, Uakoka's wife, had explained, that people could still 'chase' (*okuramba*) you. Having heard about my return and plans to construct the house, Uakoka, who sat close by, informed me that, according to custom (*ombazu*), it was not good practice to build one's homestead where you found an old one. It would not bring good things. Later he and others explained a bit more: when babies or very young children pass away it was customary to bury them by the *kraal*.³⁹⁶ People also sometimes buried 'things' (*omuti*) in the ground – as a form of protection against witchcraft. When you find an old homestead, there was no way for you to know whether this was the case, and then you are building your homestead on a grave.

Uakoka continued to warn us about the theft of our belongings – at least if we had built our camp at their homestead, they could have kept an eye on it. During this discussion, I picked up that it was understood that 'that side' was where Muteze's supporters and close kin stayed and that there was a strong differentiation in terms of how the homesteads were clustered socially and spatially. Choosing to build the house on 'that side' was thus interpreted as a choice in terms of affiliation. In not wanting to directly confront my decision, Uakoka had done so indirectly, communicating his disapproval. My settlement thus left me with an unsettled feeling and an acute awareness of having to re-negotiate relations continually and carefully. Moreover, and with time I also came to realise that my choice to rebuild Muteze's cattle-post had to be situated in relation to Otjomatamba's contested place-genealogy, its embeddedness within the practice of *opolotika*, and how this was increasingly finding expression through the different newcomers (*ovayenda*) within the place, including myself.

Enacting and emplacing a first-comer narrative

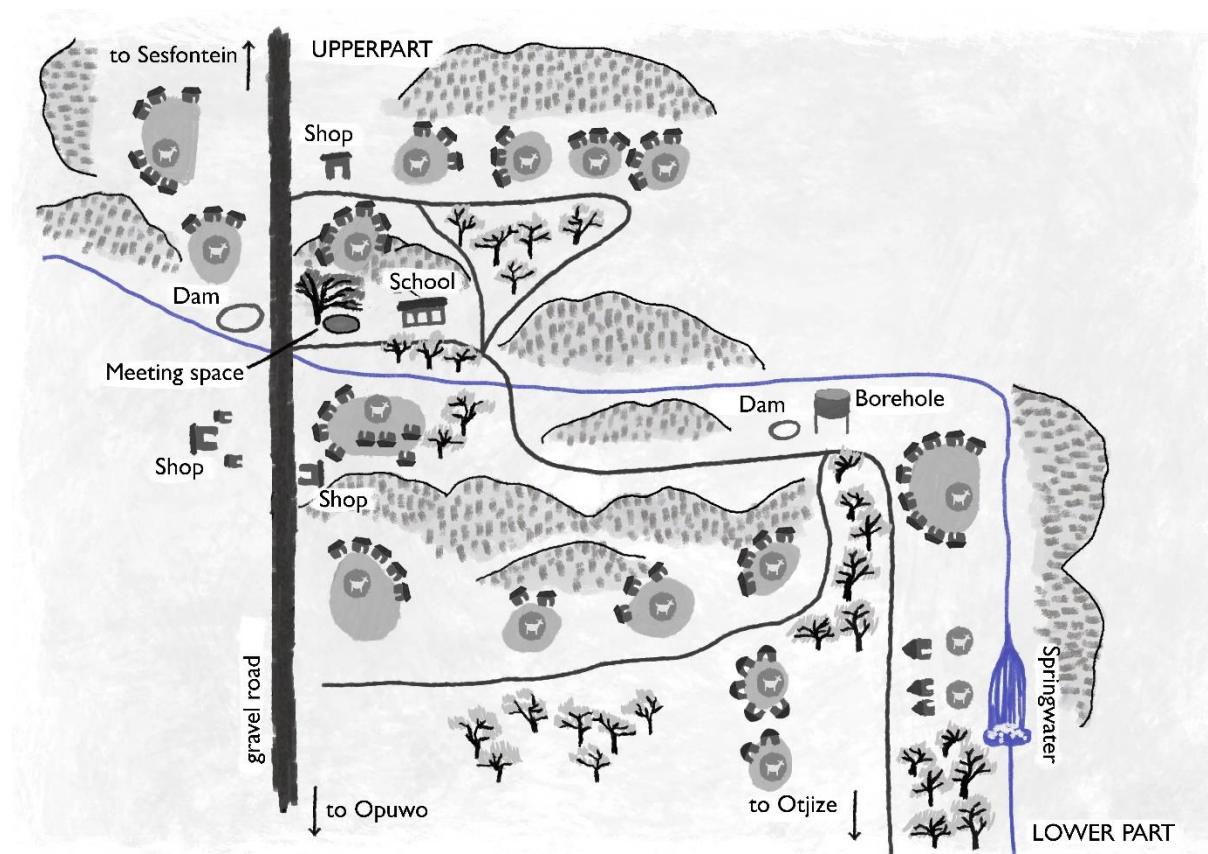
After having been in Otjomatamba a few weeks I approached Tobias to ask about the histories of water within the place and how they were intertwined with the place and its history – specifically going from being a cattle-post to a settled place, as the dominant narrative echoed. During our first encounter, Tobias had struck me not only as a knowledgeable person but also as a teacher – somebody who was willing to impart knowledge. However, I was also hoping to re-affirm our relationship and to try to bridge the divides within the place. Tobias explained to me that yes, he was the right person to ask but that for me to know the history, I must be shown, and we have to take a walk. This was the best way to teach a person, he emphasised. We drove to Tobias' homestead at the agreed time after which we

³⁹⁶Also see Bollig, "Contested," 24.

returned to where we had pitched our tents. From there we started walking, with Tobias walking briskly, his walking stick swinging back and forth, and talking while walking – and us scurrying to translate and make notes. We headed towards the lower part of the place, where a natural spring pooled around a lush green outgrowth and moss-covered boulders.



In southern Kaoko's arid, dryland ecologies, the flow of water becomes intimately embodied and known, as it importantly connects and opens up grazing grounds, cultivation spots and thus, by extension, settlement, and movement possibilities. This intimate knowing was reflected in the way in which spatialities were locally mapped. Both settled and cattle-post places were divided into *kehi* (lower parts) and *kombanda* (upper parts) – defined not in relation to topography, but rather the direction of water flow, up and downstream.



Map 4: Sketch Map Otjomatamba.³⁹⁷

In Otjomatamba a small, ephemeral river flowed from east to the west with the main wide gravel road cutting through from north to south. Crescent-shaped, unfenced, and embracing the livestock pen in the centres, nine homesteads were scattered here on both sides of the road and against differently sloped

³⁹⁷ Creator: Diana Menestrey Schwieger

hillsides or on top of the small hills, some distances apart. This part of the place around the main gravel road was known as *kombanda* (the upper part). Next to the road in the narrow part of the valley, a large mud dam or catchment area had been created a few years back with the assistance of a road-construction company. The dam, which was next to one of the three stores in the place, stored water – albeit muddy and brown – from the runoff of the river for up to five or six months of the year, depending on the rainfall. Turning off the main gravel road towards the west and following the meandering of the dry-river bed, the small road at some point curved, leading to the borehole (*omboro*), and eventually past it. Here, on the opposite hillside, several other crescent-shaped homesteads, as well as a few cattle-posts, were situated some distances apart, the river cutting a narrow valley parallel below them and eventually pooling around a small natural spring (*oruharui*). This part of the place was known as *kehi* (the lower part).

As we walked towards this lower part, Tobias started explaining that Otjomatempa was known by multiple names. The flat, open space in the upper part where meetings often took place was called *Omumborombonga*, after the large Leadwood trees which grew here. The area around the borehole was named *Opezema*, after a specific kind of finer tree that was known to signal the presence of underground water and was also sometimes used to clean one's teeth. The lower part of the place was called *Opotjongwa*, which referred to the fact that people here never had to buy salt, due to the very salty soil once found here. The place where Tobias had his homestead was known as *Ouzorowe* after the black volcanic rocks which littered the hillside, and another area close by with a round-shaped mountain was called *Oruhungu*.

We followed the river as it snaked along the foot of a mountain, reaching a point, not far from the homesteads, where it came to life in a small natural spring. This part of the place was called *Otjomatempa* and it was from here that the settlement acquired its now official name, which has only come to be used in the last two decades. The common interpretation of this name referred to the wooden animal drinking trough (*etempa*) which was, in the past, placed close to the spring. Around the spring, and over the years, several hand-dug wells (*ozondjombo*) were made, especially during the dry-season, and an *etempa* was then filled with water for the livestock. The different names that Tobias had narrated were given as people moved through this area and settled different parts of it as different homesteads arrived at different times. Evident in the multiple names was a particular understanding and knowing of place-boundaries as rhizomatic, lived and emerging rather than contained, fixed, and bounded. These names also served as local map-making technologies, in which known routes, water-points and cattle-posts could be communicated and navigated and imparted in social knowledge.

Tobias had brought us to the spring (Otjomatempa) to show us the old hand-dug wells. He pointed out two which were no longer in use – deep holes dug and situated on the riverbeds some distance from the ravine, with some water still at their base. According to Tobias, these two old wells, the first ones in the place, were dug by his maternal grandfather (Kaveniisa Herunga). Both Tobias' maternal grandfather and his great grandparents originally came from central Namibia, from the

Omatjete area, an area surrounding the town of Omaruru about 700 km south. They formed part of different groups of people who fled the area and migrated north into the more mountainous Kaoko both during and in the years after the German colonial and genocidal wars of 1904-1907/8.³⁹⁸

In Kaoko, Tobias' matrilineal side of the family moved from place to place, settling first for some time at Otuzemba – where Tobias' maternal great-grandfather passed away – and subsequently moving west to Ombombo, another old place with spring-water (see Map 3). From Ombombo they moved to Okapiona, a place which formed part of Otjapitjapi. Later his grandfather often stayed and visited with *osoromana* Herunga's family at Otjikukutu, a place close to and north of Otjomatimba (See Map 3). Tobias' maternal grandfather was a (classificatory) father of *osoromana* Herunga. In other words, Herunga's biological father and Tobias' grandfathers were brothers which, due to practices of extended kinship, made Tobias' grandfather Herunga's father as well. This also meant that Tobias' mother and *osoromana* Herunga were brother and sister, resulting in *osoromana* Herunga being Tobias' maternal uncle (*ongundue*).³⁹⁹

After marrying his first wife, Tobias' grandfather migrated from Okapiona to establish his homestead in Otjomatimba and was the first to settle there more than 60 years ago, at first living a small distance away from the Otjomatimba spring. “When he came here, no one was living here,” Tobias explained, and “other people only came for temporary grazing from the surrounding settled-places of Otjapitjapi and Otjomaoru”. When doing so, people approached and asked his grandfather if they could settle or stay in the place – saying, “Tomorrow I will come to live with you”. “It was because he came first, was said to have made fires here first and dug the wells himself,” Tobias continued.

As we talked and continued to walk downstream, Tobias pointed out where his grandfather had his hunting lodges (*orutatua*). They consisted of stacked stones forming a small, round shelter on both sides of the spring, their remnants still clearly visible despite having been last used when Tobias, in his own words, “barely had the power to look after cattle”.⁴⁰⁰ From here his grandfather and other men waited for zebra, oryx and lions which came to drink during the night and early morning hours, to hunt them. Such hunting practices were no longer used – mainly due to Otjomatimba falling within a gazetted communal conservancy. We continued walking out of the river brook and away from the mountain. We soon reached a flat plateau area peppered with expansive mopane trees. Remnants of habitation were still visible: the area was visibly cleared of rocks, some still stacked in circular and squared forms indicating old hearths and homes, and large tree stumps were dug into the ground as a basis of a *kraal*. This area then was known as *Okanduu*, meaning shady place. Right next to it was a

³⁹⁸ On this history see, for instance, Jan-Bart Gewald, *Herero Heroes: A Socio-Political History of the Herero of Namibia, 1890-1923* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999); Gewald, “Colonization.”

³⁹⁹ Due to the workings of kin-relatedness within this context, *osoromana* Herunga could be considered both a maternal uncle *as well* as a classificatory father to Tobias. See Chapter Five for a more detailed discussion on kin-relatedness and the role of successive generations of sibling-relations in extending kin-relations. Also see Gordon D. Gibson, “Double Descent and Its Correlates Among the Herero of Ngamiland,” *American Anthropologist* 58, no. 1 (1956).

⁴⁰⁰ Usually boys look after small-stock before being given responsibility to herd cattle.

small, lush brook with a deep well, also dug by Tobias' grandfather. After having his homestead at the spring, his grandfather moved it to this shady area around 1979. By the time Tobias' grandfather passed away in his 80s he had moved and built a new homestead approximately six times in Otjomatamba – each time for different reasons – either to be closer to new grazing, to a newly dug well, or due to practices related to *ombazu* (tradition/custom).



Image 1: Remnants of old 'hunting lodges' situated next to the spring⁴⁰¹

For example, a few years after having built a homestead at *Okanduu*, his grandfathers' homestead once again moved – a stone throw away to the other side of the small brook. Tobias pointed out the still stacked stones and remnants of the foundation of the house. This move and re-building of the homestead on the other side of the brook happened as Tobias' maternal grandfather inherited the ancestral shrine – the *okuruwo* – after his older brother passed away in Ombombo. As he did not want to move to Ombombo Tobias' grandfather re-build the ancestral shrine in Otjomatamba. However, according to *ombazu*, the *okuruwo* could not be moved to an existing homestead. Thus, his grandfather had to construct a new homestead – this time an ancestral homestead (*onganda onene*). “This place is old, this place is older than my mother,” Tobias emphasised. “If you were told that this was a cattle-post-place then it is not the truth, because a place would not be a cattle-post if there were old wells and ruins of ancestral homesteads,” he said, pointing to the area around him and the ruins.

Otjomatamba, Tobias argued, was not considered to be a cattle-post-place by his grandfather. Rather he came to Otjomatamba to establish himself permanently, to build a homestead. Later in the afternoon, and waiting for the scorching midday heat to subside, we started walking again, this time heading north along a small rocky path. This path was the one people used for travelling to the rainy season cattle-post Otjize, either walking the 15 kilometres or using a donkey-cart. At one point we

⁴⁰¹ Photograph taken by Elsemi Olwage

stopped close to the foot of a mountain. From there we could see the graves in the distance and the marble headstones and iron fence surrounding them. There were three belonging to *osoromana* Herunga's father, grandfather, and mother.



*Image 2: Ruins of an ancestral homestead.*⁴⁰²

In 1992, Tobias explained, people came from the neighbouring places of Otjaptjapi, Otjomaoru, Okakuyu and Okapiona and told everyone to move back to these places and to use Otjomatempa as a dry-season cattle-post. But Tobias and his family refused, arguing that they came to the place a long time ago and that his grandfather and *osoromana* Herunga's father and grandfather had lived and died and were buried here. "This place is older than my mother," he reiterated. "Soon after the borehole in Otjomatempa was drilled and in the years following many other homesteads settled permanently or created homesteads in the place."

Tobias, who turned 60 the year of my research, was born in 1955 in Otuzemba, his mother's home-place (*koyetu*). However, he grew up and lived most of his life in Otjomatempa where he resided with his maternal grandfather and in the neighbouring settled place of Otjomaoru, which was where his father had his ancestral homestead. Tobias was married to Marukiruapi Herunga⁴⁰³ who had also grown up in the neighbouring Otjomaoru. They had nine children, some of whom were still at school, either in Otjapitjapi or Opuwo. One of their eldest daughters was working in Opuwo, and another two were married. Also living with them was Tobias' divorced mother, Kupandani Herunga.

⁴⁰² Photograph taken by Elsemi Olwage

⁴⁰³ They were cross-cousins.

First-comer claims, authority, and ancestral land-relations

Through the topographies of old wells, springs, ruins, old, cleared paths, hunting lodges and graves, and through an intimate place-knowing, Tobias was enacting his maternal grandfather as having been the first to settle the place; he was enacting Otjomatempa as a settled-place. In doing so, he was performing a particular “first-comer narrative”,⁴⁰⁴ actively constructing a historical link and connection between the place and specific ancestral lineages. To understand the significance of first-comer narratives and their embodied performance, I first situate Tobias’ first-comer narrative in relation to the practice of kinship and dual descent and its role in the ongoing production of place, relatedness, belonging and authority. And secondly, I situate this narrative in relation to local memory and knowledge practices, as well as the political mobilisation and performance of the past. Lastly, I discuss the relevance of this narrative for disputed authority relations.

Patrilineality and ancestral homesteads

Otjiherero-speaking societies in Kaoko practice a system of double descent – a form of kinship in which both matrilineal (Sg. *eanda*, Pl. *omaanda*) as well as patrilineal (Sg. *oruzo*, Pl. *otuzo*) relatedness and belonging are pivotal in the constitution of self and personhood, and the making of socio-material, political and economic relations. However, in terms of historical tenure, patrilineal kinship, in particular, played and continues to play a pivotal role. Within Kaoko there were several different patrilineal clans (*otuzo*),⁴⁰⁵ with each of these further divided into different lineages expressed through the different ancestral homesteads and shrines (*okuruwo*). Thus, one’s *oruzo* determined one’s belonging to a specific ancestral homestead and ancestral place(s).

The transmission of the *oruzo* and your patrilineal belonging depended on whether a person was born inside or outside of wedlock. In the case of being born outside of wedlock, one’s patrilineal belonging depended on whether you were claimed by your father or your father’s family – a process which involved particular practices of negotiation, ritual enactments, and livestock exchange between the families involved. On the other hand, if you were not claimed by your father or until such claims were made, a person inherited the *oruzo* from their mother’s father and belonged to his patrilineal clan.⁴⁰⁶ Moreover, with marriage, women changed to the *oruzo* of their husbands and moved to their husband’s home-places and ancestral homesteads. Residence within Kaoko was thus governed by (part-) virilocal norms.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁴ Lentz, *Land*, 4.

⁴⁰⁵ The patrilineal clans included: Ongweyuva, Ondanga, Ongwatjiya, Ongwendjandje, Ohorongo, Ombongora, Omuhinaruzo, Ohambanderwa, Omurekwa, Omakoti and Omangarangwa.

⁴⁰⁶ Also see Steven Van Wolputte, “Sex in Troubled Times: Moral Panic, Polyamory and Freedom in North-West Namibia,” *Anthropology Southern Africa* 39, no. 1 (2016): 9.

⁴⁰⁷ Steven Van Wolputte, “In Between House and Cattle Pen: Moving Spaces in Himbaland,” in *People, Cattle and Land: Transformations of a Pastoral Society in Southwestern Africa*, ed. M. Bollig and J. B. Gewald (R.

The ancestral homestead housed the *okuruwo* – the ancestral shrine. This is described as a “complex structure [consisting] of the sacred hearth, a sacred fire, the priest’s seat, stones, branches, a stone for the branches, and a place for women”.⁴⁰⁸ During my research the *okuruwo* was situated between the cattle and livestock pen of ancestral homesteads, the half-moon shaped row of houses embracing it, facing the east. The main house (*ondjuwo onene*), which was usually round as opposed to the predominantly square-shaped styles which characterised much of southern Kaoko, was intertwined with the *okuruwo* in its use and symbolism and aligned with the *okuruwo*, dividing the homestead into two invisible parts. The area between the main house and the ancestral shrine was known as the *omuvanda* – a sacred space which should, as a sign of respect, not be directly crossed.⁴⁰⁹

The *okuruwo* was taken care of by the owner of the homestead (*omuini wonganda*), usually the most senior man within a specific patrilineage, a position inherited by the next senior man in line, either a brother or son. The *omuini wonganda* also served as the priest, the mediator (*omupwee*), the payer of homage (*omurangere*), and the purifier and cleanser (*ombunguhe*) – the one who mediated interaction between the members of the homestead and the ancestors (*ovakuru*), with the ancestors, in turn, perceived as acting as mediators in communicating and addressing Ndjambi Karunga, the creator, or God, and the “father of all Ovakuru”.⁴¹⁰ In the past, the senior wife played a key role in worshipping at the ancestral shrine – a role which was, in contemporary Kaoko, not always foregrounded.⁴¹¹ Moreover, in some rare instances, the ancestral shrine could also be inherited through the matriline. One person I met inherited the position from his maternal grandfather as his mother was the only child. However, a taboo remained against women inheriting this position. Even though this person was raised by his fathers’ family, his maternal grandfather asked for him and as result, he re-claimed the *oruzo* of his matriline, whilst also maintaining the *oruzo* of his father.

Most religious, spiritual, and ritual practices as well as family gatherings took place at the ancestral homestead – specifically funerals, marriages, the naming of children as well as certain practices of healing. This demanded regular travel, extended stays, and visits. Hence, attachments to ones’ one’s ancestral homesteads, remained crucial as “centre(s) of gravity”.⁴¹² Each event or institution was governed by specific socio-spatial practices within the ancestral homestead, with the *okuruwo* at its centre. Local forms of knowing and valuing different forms of travelling, movement, and emplacement, as well as local spatialities and place-making were thus intimately linked to and embedded within the ancestral homestead.⁴¹³

Köppe, 2000) Jekura U. Kavari, “Social Organisation, Religion and Cosmos of the Ovaherero,” *Journal of Religion and Theology in Namibia* 3, no. 1 (2001).

⁴⁰⁸ Kavari, “Social,” 125.

⁴⁰⁹ See *ibid.*, 126

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 138

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹² Greiner, “Patterns,” 146.

⁴¹³ For an in-depth analysis see Van Wolputte, “In.”

One's patrilineal belonging thus aligned and connected people and families through the "common worship of a group of forefathers (*ovakuru*) and through dwelling on their forefather's land".⁴¹⁴ Thus, the practice of patrilineal kinship continually bound together specific places, with specific lineages, persons and forefathers, and rooted ancestral relations within the landscape.⁴¹⁵ As a consequence, patrilineal relatedness was crucial in the constitution of historical tenure institutions. Nevertheless, matrilineal kinship played an equally important role in defining the norms, avenues and pathways for migration, co-residency and belonging between different settled and cattle-post places, in the fostering and creating of, especially, translocal place-relations.

Matrilineality, access and one's home place(s)

Unlike the *oruzo* which children only inherited when claimed by their father's family when born outside of marriage, children born of one mother all shared matrilineal kinship – which organised inherited belonging according to different matriclans (*eanda*), sub-matriclans, and matrilineages and which eventually traces "one common ancestral mother" from whom all stemmed.⁴¹⁶ There are seven *omaanda* within Kaoko (and also extending beyond Kaoko),⁴¹⁷ with each of these matriclans having different lineages and houses (*ozondjuwo*) below them. The house (*ondjuwo*) and, by extension, homestead were understood to be under the control of women and seen as a women-centred space.⁴¹⁸

As several scholars have foregrounded⁴¹⁹ and as was also clear during my research, a person's *eanda* and one's mothers and maternal relatives were highly valued. This was evident in that upon encountering strangers, the *eanda* was one of the first things that people inquired about each other: "*Omukwaye keanda?*" (From which *eanda* are you?). In contrast, during my research, I rarely observed strangers asking each other's *oruzo*. Instead of asking after patrilineal belonging, people would ask the *eanda* of peoples' fathers and paternal grandfathers. As was explained to me, each person has three *omaanda*: their *eanda*, the *eanda* of their fathers, and the *eanda* of their paternal grandfathers.⁴²⁰ Thus, also the matrilineal relatives of a person's fathers and grandfathers were important in situating the person socially and relationally, extending one's maternal belonging on both the mother's and father's side.

There were strong reasons for the valorisation and importance of one's *eanda* and matrilineage. Unlike patrilans, shared matrilineal ancestries overlapped with other societies living further north in Namibia and southern Angola, including the Ngambwe, Zemba and Hakaona societies – which

⁴¹⁴ Bleckmann, "Colonial," 60.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 75

⁴¹⁶ Kavari, "Social," 118; Bleckmann, "Colonial," 62.

⁴¹⁷ The different matriclans include Omukweyuva, Omukwatjivi, Omukwendjandje, Omukwauti, Omukwendata, Omukwenambura and Omukwenatja.

⁴¹⁸ Van Wolputte, "In."

⁴¹⁹ Gibson, "Double"; Bleckmann, "Colonial."

⁴²⁰ Also see Gibson, "Double," 134; Kavari, "Social," 117.

explained its importance in negotiating encounters between strangers.⁴²¹ Moreover, matrilineal belonging was intertwined with shared understandings of reciprocity and social and emotional obligations towards each other – specifically in terms of mutual material and other assistance and care-related (*ourizirira*) responsibilities.⁴²² Consequently, matrilineal belonging was central in co-determining (along with patrilineal belonging) avenues of movement between places and in negotiating seasonal and emergency access-rights to water and grazing, as well as livestock lending. Moreover, one's matrilineal belonging co-determined where a person was raised and by whom, and thus also played a role in defining one home place or places of residence (*koyetu*).

Importantly, the inheritance of part of the main cattle herd, both past and present, was mediated through matrilineal descent, and, within my research areas, it was common practice for nephews and nieces (Sg. *omusiya*, Pl. *ovasiya*) to live together in the homestead of their maternal *ongundue* – an arrangement which relied on negotiating relations of mutual assistance and emerging inheritance regimes. After the death of the most senior man of a homestead, his herd would be inherited by his brother (of the same mother, and thus of shared *eanda*) and only in the absence of such brothers, by his nephews (sisters' sons).⁴²³ The *eanda* thus bound people together in “one blood” (*ombindu imwe*) and thus, both materially and symbolically, stressed common descent which translated into strong familial idioms and obligations.⁴²⁴

Yet practicing a system of double descent meant that people were related on different levels. Thus, belonging both in terms of kinship and place was characterised by and negotiated through multiple, cross-cutting threads – sometimes intertwining, sometimes diverging – which, as Bleckmann has argued, resembled a rhizomatic or tangled skein structure.⁴²⁵ Moreover, the practice of kinship was crucial for place-relations “as a daily practice which [continually integrated] matrilineal and patrilineal relations, place, the living and the dead”⁴²⁶ and different interrelated and translocal settled and cattle-post places. As was evident with Tobias, he grew up with his maternal grandfather and uncle (*ongundue*) and stayed most of his life within Otjomatamba, eventually creating a permanent home there, despite belonging to the ancestral homestead and place of his father (Otjomaoru). Similarly, in mapping the old ruins, wells and paths, Tobias was not only tracing the topographies of movement and settlement of his maternal grandfather within Otjomatamba but also those pathways his great grandparents and especially his matri-kin. This social history, in turn, wove Otjomatamba's genealogy together with a set of other place-genealogies and, by extension, lineages and forefathers: once again affirming the rhizomatic knowing of place-relations as relational.

⁴²¹ Bollig, *Risk*, 52.

⁴²² Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 64.

⁴²³ Also see Bollig, *Risk*, 52.

⁴²⁴ Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 60.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 61

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 55

As mentioned by Tobias, many of the homesteads which constituted both Otjomatamba, Otjapitjapi and surrounding places, traced back the burial sites of their great grandparents and forefathers/mothers to the Omatjete area, areas surrounding and north of the town of Omaruru in central Namibia. From here many fled north into Kaoko, as well as into north-central Namibia and from there some continued into southern Angola. Yet, as many people during my research reiterated: there were different groups or clusters of homesteads that moved into Kaoko during different times – some came during, and more, in the years and decade following the colonial war, joining other family members over time. Moreover, within this geographically hard to navigate as well as vast and arid region, homesteads often created temporary settlements along the way, at different places and along water-ways, moving by foot, donkey or horse-back from place to place, negotiating access through groups already occupying the scattered network of permanent water-points, mostly through kin relatedness.⁴²⁷

As Bleckmann,⁴²⁸ and Kavari and Bleckmann⁴²⁹ have illustrated, local oral knowledge and memory practices amongst Kaoko's Otjiherero societies were deeply rooted in the social histories of these past migrations (*ekuruhungi rwomatjindiro*) and the weaving together of “trajectories of places” and routes along which different groups moved, scripted, inhabited and settled the region. Local historiography usually departs from the mythical place of origin and centrality of all Otjiherero societies – Okarundu KaMbeti – located in what is now southern Angola, neighbouring Kaoko and north-western Namibia.⁴³⁰ It was here that most Otjiherero-speaking societies were said to have first lived before separating – it was the first place of separation (*omahanikiro*) – with some groups migrating into central and eastern parts of Namibia and other into parts of southern Africa, whilst some remained within Kaoko, living both as pastoralists as well as strongly relying on hunting and the gathering of veld-foods.⁴³¹ Within southern Kaoko specifically, and after the separation of groups at Okarundu KaMbeti, two subsequent wars were memorialised as having further fuelled significant large-scale and, importantly, divergent migration histories.

The *ovita vyOvaKuena* (war of the *Ovakuena*) or the Nama-Oorlam cattle-raids of the late 19th century, and the subsequent *Ovita vyOvaherero nOvandoitji* (the Herero-German genocidal war) of

⁴²⁷ Also see Bleckmann, “Colonial.”

⁴²⁸ Laura Bleckmann, “Poetry, Landscape and the Spatialisation of Collective Memory in Otjiherero Praise Poems,” in *Atlas of Cultural and Environmental Change in Arid Africa*, ed. Olaf Bubenzer, Andreas Bolten and Frank Darius, Africa praehistorica 21 (Köln: Heinrich-Barth-Institut, 2007); Laura Bleckmann, “From Remembering to Re-membering and Resistance: A performative memory practice of the Herero of Kaokoland” (European Doctoral Seminar on Anthropology of Social Dynamics and Development, ULB Brussels, 2009), https://limo.libis.be/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=LIRIAS1796759&context=L&vid=Lirias&search_scope=Lirias&tab=default_tab&lang=en_US; Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 20, 87, 93, 103.

⁴²⁹ J. U. Kavari and Laura E. Bleckmann, “Otjiherero Praises of Places,” in Bollig; Bubenzer, *African Landscapes*, 4.

⁴³⁰ Bollig, *When*; Kavari, “Social”; Bollig, *Risk*, 40; Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 101.

⁴³¹ Bollig, *Risk*, 40; Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 101.

1904-1907/8 were memorialised as having led to the division of families and groups.⁴³² The ongoing re-remembering and performance of these migration histories and the divergent pathways which characterised them were crucial in the formation of shared as well as differentiated political and cultural identities within and across Kaoko.⁴³³ Additionally, Bleckmann⁴³⁴ has illustrated that these memory practices were embedded within a particular relational ontology: one in which the “trajectories of place (Sg. *otjirongo*, Pl. *ovirongo*), kinship (*eanda* and *oruzo*) and the forefathers (*ovakuru*)” were inseparable. Such a form and practice of history and the past should be understood in relation to “the close interconnection of the forefathers with place and landscape”.⁴³⁵ Consequently, local acts of mapping, knowing, remembering, and performing place (*otjirongo*) were thus inseparable from recalling past historical migrations, invoking ancestral lineages and relations, and clan and kin-belonging. Furthermore, as was made evident in Tobias’s narration, these social histories were not only orally performed but were also embedded within landscapes.⁴³⁶

Bollig⁴³⁷ and Friedman⁴³⁸ have also shown how, in this context of ongoing and overlapping migrations, tenure was founded upon a historicised relationship “between one’s ancestors and a given tract of land”. Within this form of tenure, the ability to locate, either physically or through oral knowledge, one’s ancestral graves was one of the main things that legitimised such relationships and reified claims of specific patrilineal clans to places and resources such as water and grazing.⁴³⁹ Thus, the form of tenure which dominated large parts of Kaoko before the 1950s hinged upon the managing of pastures by a small number of kin-related homesteads and households.⁴⁴⁰ These “households held tenure rights in specific places that had permanent water” and pastoral movements centred on the oscillation between these settled-places and rainy-season grazing areas where households established temporary livestock camps or cattle-posts.⁴⁴¹ Members of households would thus move together with their livestock to the rainy-season cattle-posts, which were shared commonage, until the water dried up, at which point they returned the livestock to places with more permanent water, with the lack of water in large parts of the region strongly limiting and co-determining the movement of both people and livestock.⁴⁴²

Within this form of tenure, particular senior men were considered the guardians of the earth/land (*oveni vehi*) – a position which was ritually established rather than necessarily coinciding with pastoral wealth and related to histories and genealogies of first-settlement. Most of the people who

⁴³² Bleckmann, “Colonial”; Rizzo, *Gender*, 75.

⁴³³ Ibid., John T. Friedman, “Making Politics, Making History: Chiefship and the Post-Apartheid State in Namibia,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005), <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070500035620>

⁴³⁴ Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 53 Also see Bollig, “Contested”; Bollig, “Kinship”

⁴³⁵ Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 55.

⁴³⁶ Also see Bollig, “Contested.”

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Friedman, “Making,” 39.

⁴³⁹ Van Wolputte, “political,” 470 Also see Bollig, “Socio.”

⁴⁴⁰ Bollig, “Socio,” 319.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 317

⁴⁴² Ibid.

settled around the *oveni vehi* were both his patrilineal and matrilineal relatives.⁴⁴³ Any newcomer usually needed the permission of this senior man to settle, either permanently or temporarily for grazing – although such requests were rarely denied. Such institutions were strongly reflective of pan-African internal frontier dynamics and institutions in which the “principle of precedence” is “intimately intertwined with the legitimacy of authority” and with those longer in residence acquiring more local rights over land and resources, with such rights subsequently ritually expressed and institutionalised, for instance through the idiom of kinship.⁴⁴⁴

Hence, the “supremely legitimizing meaning of firstcomer status”⁴⁴⁵ was strongly shaped by institutions of kinship, and how local cosmology, patrilineal relatedness, male authority and spatialities were intertwined.⁴⁴⁶ Moreover, within the context of historical migrations and mobile land-relations, first-comer narratives and their mobilisation and performance also work as a kind of “oral land registry”⁴⁴⁷ – a registry, which was embedded and continually being re-embedded within the landscape itself. Within such understanding, persons held individual rights over land and land-based resources “only by being a member of a specific community”⁴⁴⁸ – which, in this case, entailed belonging to specific patri- and matriclans and their claims to being or becoming ‘first-comers’.

In showing us the social histories of water and settlement within Otjomatimba, Tobias was mobilising a locally-rooted manner of knowing and performing the past and land-relations. In doing so he was enacting his maternal grandfather as having been the first to settle the place and was mobilising inherited institutions. However, Tobias was not only asserting his own and his family’s place-belonging, but more importantly legitimising the authority of *osoromana* Herunga, as the son of his maternal grandfather and a direct patrilineal descendent. He was thus rooting the patrilineage (*ongwatjiya*)⁴⁴⁹ of his maternal grandfather within the place and, in doing so, historically legitimising Herunga’s ritual authority position. The continuing invoking of paternal graves and assertions such as “where is your father’s grave” within Otjomatimba concerning the two *ozosoromana* were likewise strongly illustrative of how these institutions were still being mobilised and practiced to both legitimise as well as contest differential claims to authority and place.

Authority and the politics of custom and place

Some weeks after our walk with Tobias, we discussed the settlement histories with another senior man, who was a councillor (*orata*) to *osoromana* Muteze. He complained that when people informed me

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 319

⁴⁴⁴ Kopytoff, “Internal,” 53.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 56

⁴⁴⁶ Also see Bollig, “Contested”; Van Wolputte, “In”; Kavari, “Social.”

⁴⁴⁷ Lentz, *Land*, 4.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Kandii Herunga (Patrilineage: Ongwatjiya, Matrilineage: Omukweyuva)

about the past, they should not include *opolotika* – explaining that the way that Tobias was talking was like it was his grandfather’s area – even though he knew that all this area was for *osoromana* Muteze.⁴⁵⁰ According to Friedman,⁴⁵¹ in using the term *opolotika* Kaokolanders made a distinction between “tradition” or “custom” (*ombazu*) and “politics” (*opolotika*) – with *opolotika* having emerged after independence and always changing, whilst *ombazu* was “a permanent thing” and relating to the inherited “patriarchal political order” of “recognised” headmen (*ozosoromana*) and their councillors (*ozorata*). As one woman emphasised when I inquired about the two leaders: “Herunga just *opolotika* – Muteze is connected to *ombazu*”. Friedman⁴⁵² has argued that in making a distinction between *ombazu* and *opolotika*, *ombazu* or ‘tradition’ or ‘custom’ has come to work as a kind of “anti-politics machine”, mobilised to deflect the political challenging, undermining, or questioning of inherited political structures of power and authority.

However, as was evident through Tobias’ narration and enactment of the social histories of settlement in Otjomatempa, *ombazu* was also simultaneously mobilised to contest such distinctions and to legitimise the authority of newly-appointed or competing *osoromana*. Apart from the location of graves and graveyards and old ruins, contestations regarding both place and authority were also intimately entangled with specific water technologies and their importance in place-making and rooting land-relations. Wells (*ondjombo*) especially seemed to carry specific symbolic power and material significance in memorialising and embedding the memory of a person and specific patrilineal clans within the landscape; constructing divergent place-formation histories; and, contesting relations of authority.

Since the drilling of the borehole in Otjomatempa by the post-independent state during the early 1990s and the digging of the ground dam or catchment area, the hand-dug wells within Otjomatempa were not that necessary anymore. However, when, some days before our walk with Tobias, I had visited the Otjomatempa spring I saw that there was a large cement block some distance away and, in the river, -bed, a broad iron pipe sticking out of the riverbed where potentially a hand-pump could be installed. On the top, somebody had written ‘Kamutjiha Tjiseua’ followed by the date of completion, which was fairly recent. One of the first homesteads, together with Tobias’s grandfather, to be established in Otjomatempa was that of Kamutjiha (Kasembi) Tjiseua, who, during my research, was in his late 80s. Kamutjiha had moved from Otjapitjapi to Otjomatempa during the mid-1950s to establish his own homestead with his wife, Uemujenga Kazendjou, who was also from Otjapitjapi. Between 2009 and 2010 Kamutjiha dug a well close to his homestead in the small river brook. It was a dry year, and the cattle were polluting the spring water, he thus wanted to ensure that there was always clean drinking water in the place. In 2013, he filed a request with the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Affairs and Forestry (MAWF) to provide a well-covering. This request was forwarded to the Red Cross which had a contract with the Ministry and eventually came to complete it. Later, in asking people about the well,

⁴⁵⁰ Johannes Kazendjou, 01.02.2015, unrecorded interview

⁴⁵¹ Friedman, “Making,” 47.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

I heard some quiet complaints. Some felt that he was claiming ownership and exclusive use and denying other residents use of the water. Kamutjiha, in naming the recently covered well, aimed to root his relationship and that of his patrilineage (*omakoti*) within the place, to embed the memory within the landscape of him as having been part of the place-formation, of the first settlers and as occupying a position of ritual authority.

The making of boreholes within this context was subsumed into similar cultural and political institutions as that of well-digging and wells. This was further evident in the conflicting stories that surrounded Otjomatamba's borehole – which was drilled and fitted with a diesel-powered engine only post-independence in 1998/1999. Initially, there had been a hand-dug well on the riverbank where the borehole was situated. According to some, this well had been dug by Muteze, whilst, according to others, it had been Tobias' maternal grandfather. At the beginning of the 1990s, Muteze and his *orata* Johannes Kazendjou were said to have travelled to Opuwo to ask the state for a borehole to be drilled in this location and fitted with a hand-pump. During this time, the spring water was sparse due to an extended dry season.

However, Tobias' grandfather and Kamutjiha Tjiseua, the two first-comer homesteads, soon caught wind of this and rode their horses to Opuwo to try to put a stop to this request. They feared that making a borehole in Otjomatamba the place would attract too many settlers, especially as it was situated next to the main gravel road constructed during the 1970s. According to Tjiseua, they wanted the borehole to be drilled elsewhere. Despite their resistance, the borehole was drilled, and a few years later the hand pump was replaced with a diesel engine. After this, the households within Otjomatamba began to increase. Thus, similar to well-digging, boreholes and the control over the process and labour of their construction, were mobilised as tools for claiming places and pastures through rooting one's patrilineage. Moreover, what was at stake in these contestations was the question of who had the political and ritual authority to control the processes of place-formation (including the settlement of newcomers).

Becoming 'osoromana': contesting authority and territory

Soon after I arrived in Otjomatamba at the start of 2015, we met with Johannes Kazendjou – a tall, lanky man in his 80s who was born and raised in Otjapitjapi. He had moved to Otjomatamba with his wife, Uapatanua, some 25 years before and was one of Muteze's senior *orata*, and an *ongundue* (maternal uncle) to him. At this point, the set meeting with regards to the newcomers had still not taken place and thus I had wanted to inquire about the newcomers' perceived transgressions concerning existing rules. Kazendjou proceeded to explain to me:

There are rules for movement and settlement – these rules came from us, but also not from us exactly, it was from the government (*ohoromende*). In the past, the South African government (*ohoromende wa Suid-Afrika*) was deciding to give power to the *osoromana*. While they were doing that, they were also giving each *osoromana* a place to settle, with people supporting them.

It was working like that. First, it was the government, but now it is natural. But now things are changing. There were only a few *osoromana* in the past. Now, some are forcing themselves to become *osoromana*, so that they can also get paid by the government. Here, there was only one *osoromana*, he was living in Otjapitjapi and was buried in Otjapitjapi. He was replaced by his son and this son also died, and then Muteze was appointed. It is the *osoromana* deciding if there are too many people in one place. Nowadays they are forcing themselves to be *osoromana*, those who are not established. And the established ones are having trouble.

There is a law. We set up the meeting. Last year we were having the meeting. The reason that we are having so many meetings, is because of the *ozosoromana*, the two *ozosoromana*. The people are divided (*okuhanika*). With that, some people are going behind and telling the Himba not to leave. And then the Himba homesteads are talking as if they are deciding for themselves – not like they heard it or were told by someone.⁴⁵³

Evident in this conversation was a different narrative from that which emerged from Tobias – one in which the institution of *osoromana* and authority was intimately entangled with the colonial state and the making of South African indirect rule. In other words, there was a strong historical consciousness concerning the ‘invented’ character of the institution. However, also foregrounded here was its subsequent naturalisation during the following decades with the institutionalisation of a particular hereditary and patriarchal chieftaincy model – legitimised and translated within existing institutions of ancestral land-relations and patrilineal kinship. As Kazendjou emphasised: “he was living in Otjapitjapi and buried at Otjapitjapi”.

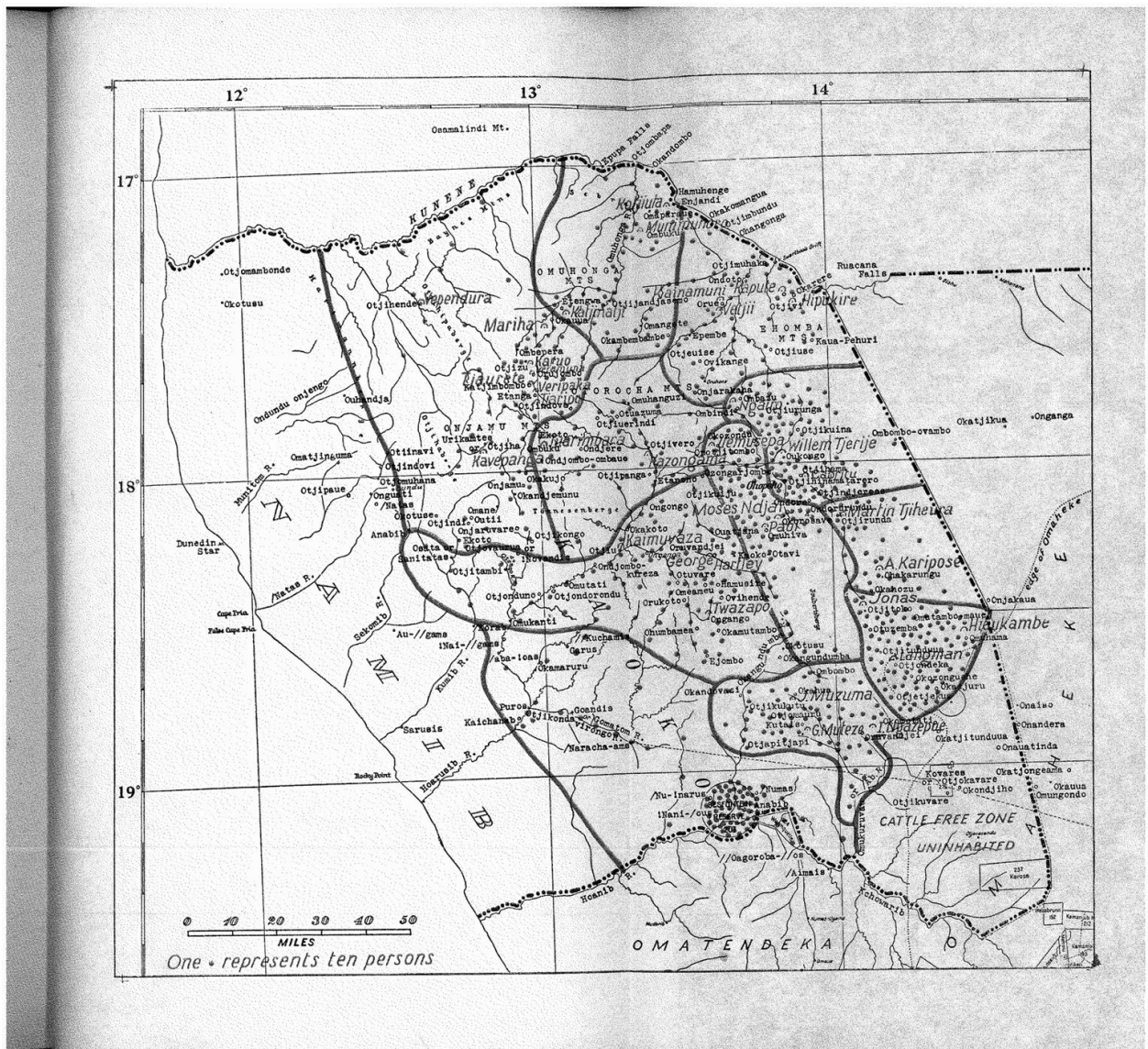
Thus, over time, the institution of *osoromana* was subsumed and translated into existing institutions, with Muteze’s patriclan becoming rooted in place through creating “symbolic ties”⁴⁵⁴ to the land through, for instance, burial practices. Nevertheless, within this form of tenure, it was the state-recognised and appointed *osoromana* who was “controlling the area”, “deciding if there are too many people at one place”, rather than those associated exclusively with institutions of ritual authority and first-comer claims. This narrative was strongly contesting competing claims and interpretations of local authority – a practice framed in this context as others “forcing themselves to be *osoromana*” or as some were pointing out, as *opolotika*. At the centre of these competing claims to local authority were Otjomatamba’s different place-genealogies and the question of territorial boundaries and integration: Whether Otjomatamba was a settled or cattle-post place, whether it shared jurisdiction with Otjapitjapi or not.

A few months into my research, whilst visiting Muteze’s rainy-season cattle-post at Otjize for an interview, he took out a file and handed me a photocopied map. This happened after I had inquired about the situation with the two *ozosoromana*. The map, which he guessed was dated from the late 1940s, illustrated chieftaincy boundaries as they had been cartographically drawn and imagined during this period of colonial indirect rule.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵³ 01.02.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba

⁴⁵⁴ Bollig, “Socio,” 322.

⁴⁵⁵ In a later interview, I was informed that Muteze had travelled to a ‘museum’ (it was unclear which one) to find the settlement history of the area – which was where he had acquired the map. This once again affirmed the power that these technologies were perceived to have in relation to the state.



Map 5: Territorial (colonial) and chieftaincy boundaries as noted by Van Warmelo.⁴⁵⁶

This map, which was copied from Van Warmelo's (1951 (1962)) *Notes on the Kaokoveld*,⁴⁵⁷ illustrated more or less 11 jurisdiction or chieftaincy areas (with the further division into 36 wards at this point not yet realised). Gideon Muteze – Muteze's grandfather – was indicated at Otjapitjapi and as falling within a shared jurisdiction together with Ombombo and Okahua further north-west. Accompanying this map was a table⁴⁵⁸ (which Muteze had also photocopied) listing the different headmen and 'sub-headmen' of the 'Kaokoveld', including their places of residence, 'tribal' identity, and the number of 'Herero',

⁴⁵⁶ van Warmelo, *Notes Otjapitjapi* with G. Muteze noted as a local authority situated just above and to the left of the indicated 'Cattle Free Zone'.

⁴⁵⁷ van Warmelo, *Notes* Also see Chapter Two on the historical significance of this publication in the making of the Kaokoland 'native' reserve.

⁴⁵⁸ See van Warmelo, *Notes*, 38.

‘Tjimba’, and ‘Himba’ residing in each of these places – with Gideon Muteze listed as a ‘sub-headmen’ under Johannes Muzuma (Ombombo). Muteze’s possession of a photocopied version of the map and his showing of it to me illustrated how these resources have become powerful symbolic tools to validate competing hereditary and authority claims within contemporary Namibia, in relation to the state and within a context of post-colonial uncertainties.⁴⁵⁹ Likewise, and as was evident in the efficacy and potency which Van Warmelo’s map continued to generate – past legacies of how the “ethnographic enterprise” were incorporated into the colonial state apparatus and as key sources of “state knowledge” continue to reverberate into the present making of knowledge and power.⁴⁶⁰

As Bleckmann⁴⁶¹ has also noted, in the last century, two different understandings of history and the past had emerged in Kaoko: *omakuruhungi* – which is referred mainly to *omitandu* (Pl. *Omutandu*, Sg. *Omitandu*), the local form of praise poetry and oral history (as was enacted through Tobias’ narrations), such as genealogies and tales, and, secondly, *ohistori* – which related rather to ‘western’ conceptions of history as written and formalised, and sometimes also to those related to the colonial past. The last understanding and conception of the past, according to Bleckmann,⁴⁶² was valorised and “inscribed in the people’s minds during the penetration of colonial rule in Kaoko” and took root when the administration conducted questionnaires and presented archival documents and written reports as “sources of power”. This form of history and the past were also valorised in contestations regarding chieftaincies, land claims and political struggles and in relation to the post-independent state, which, through, for example, the Traditional Authorities Act, relied on specific forms of historical legitimisation (often from a positivistic reading of history) in recognising the hereditary rights of leaders/headmen.⁴⁶³

Yet as Friedman⁴⁶⁴ has pointed out, the practice of seeking official recognition and status was not only taking root within the post-independent state, but it was also sometimes taking root in researchers – with our notebooks and voice recorders we become useful instruments for the production of competing versions of *ohistori* and become (often unknowingly) drawn into larger struggles over authority, meaning and power. Similarly, as experienced by Friedman, my research was also pulled and pushed along the strongly polarised and politicised currents. Nevertheless, and despite this, this experience became highly instructive in foregrounding the intersecting and inherited institutions and knowledges which were at work in the governing of land-access, belonging and mobility within southern Kaoko.

Thus, it became evident that on the one hand, the institution of *osoromana* and claims to authority were embedded and being re-embedded within institutions of patrilineal relatedness, first-

⁴⁵⁹ Friedman, “Making.”

⁴⁶⁰ Also see Friedman, *Imagining*, 36-37, 226.

⁴⁶¹ Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 98.

⁴⁶² Ibid. Also see Friedman, *Imagining*, 37.

⁴⁶³ See Friedman, “Making,” 34.

⁴⁶⁴ Friedman, “Making.”

comer claims, and ritual authority. Such claims to authority were contested through the practice of ancestral land and place-relations expressed through, for example, the socio-political histories of wells and boreholes, the location of graveyards, and past migrations. These claims to authority were also notably entangled with a relational and translocal understanding of place and with specific regimes of belonging continually (re)established through the practice of kin-relatedness. And lastly, these claims were and continue to be shaped by understandings of territory as shaped through incorporation.

On the other hand, and simultaneously, the institution of *osoromana* and the authority vested in it were understood as being rooted in a particular hereditary chieftaincy and territorial model. Here again, boundaries were rather expressed as fixed and reflected a different relation to place, space, and land. This representation of place and boundaries were rather “2-dimensional depictions” – they were lines on a map – and privileged bounded, flattened and more rigid and cartographic representations of place-boundaries⁴⁶⁵ and understandings of territory based on mutual exclusion. Moreover, this understanding of the institution was intertwined with different regimes of belonging, notably with ethnic labelling and constellation, and with a colonial cartographic narrative in which these categories were mapped as corresponding to particular places/chieftaincies. However, and importantly, despite the different meanings of authority and territory play, these different claims and (re)fashioning of the institution of *osoromana* were not mutually exclusive, but rather co-constitutive, intersecting and struggled over.



To flesh out in more detail these overlapping institutions and their evolution, the second part of this chapter delineate the parallel and historical transformations of territory and authority relations within the research context. In doing so, I, first of all, take a closer look at the role of the colonial administration in histories and processes of place-making. As Kazendjou also pointed out, the state was “giving each *osoromana* a place to settle, with people supporting them”. And secondly, I look at how changing practices of mobility and the politics of belonging re-configured place-relations and how this, in turn, gave rise to new territorial politics.

Divergent migratory trajectories and place-making

Early one morning we met with the oldest resident living in Otjapitjapi, Rongeree Muharukua Twesee, also known as Lydia. Her house stood perched against a hillside, and she was often found sitting in her doorway, as she no longer walked well, her fragile frame silhouetted against the dark and cool interior of her home. She was born in 1921 in the central coastal town of Walvis Bay and grew up in the Omatjete area, north of the town of Omaruru, in central Namibia. As we sat together in her house she showed us her baptism certificate from the Rhenish Mission Society,⁴⁶⁶ still carefully preserved. She

⁴⁶⁵ Sullivan, “Maps.”

⁴⁶⁶ See Rizzo, *Gender*, 68 for the historical role of the Rhenish Mission Society in southern Kaoko.

had moved into Kaoko when she was a small child with her paternal grandmother sometime during the early 1920s. At that point, both her father and paternal grandfather were already living in Kaoko due to having fled from the Omatjete area during the *Ovita vyOvaherero nOvandoitji* (the Herero-German war). Her grandfather had at first fled into north-central parts of Namibia, and only later returned to Ombombo in southern Kaoko, and then moved to Okahua, where he died and was buried, she slowly explained.

She and her grandmother did not come straight to Otjapitjapi. These migration histories were too long to explain, she asserted. However, they had been living further south in Kaoko close to Otjokavare for some time when they were forced by the South African colonial government to relocate. According to Lydia, they were ‘chased’ by a white man called ‘Tjongora’ (Native Commissioner Hugo C.L Hahn), because of government law and were forcibly relocated from Otjomurungu and Otjomitjira, which is how they ended up staying at Otjapitjapi. She and her grandmother came to live with her maternal uncle, Erastus Katjimbari, who was remembered as one of the first to have made a cattle-post and kraal in Otjapitjapi. They came with other people and homesteads, including *osoromana*’s Muteze’s grandfather. But at this point, the place was already known. According to Lydia’s knowledge, Otjapitjapi was an old place. People were living here close to the spring and in the mountains, especially during the *Ovakuena* raids of the late 19th century.



As became evident, some homesteads that settled in Otjapitjapi, including *osoromana* Muteze’s grandfather, had been forcibly relocated by the South African colonial government from further south in Kaoko between 1929 and 1931. According to Bollig,⁴⁶⁷ this was one of the major forced removals during Namibia’s South African colonial history, with 393 men, 448 women, 360 children, 7289 cattle and 22 176 sheep and goats being forcibly relocated from places in southern Kaoko such as Omatendeka, Kaross and Otjokavare. The homesteads and their livestock were resettled in places such as Otuzemba, Ombombo and Kaoko-Otavi – and, as illustrated, also in Otjapitjapi.⁴⁶⁸ This process, as Lydia explained, was overseen by Native Commissioner Hugo ‘Cocky’ Hahn, who, until 1941, served as the Native Commissioner both for north-western Namibia as well as the neighbouring ‘Ovamboland Native Reserve’ which was created a few years before. He was locally remembered as ‘Tjongora’ (‘the one/thing of the whip’), due to his use of corporeal punishment such as floggings, as well as the mass culling of livestock in the case of ‘illegal’ movements of livestock.⁴⁶⁹

Miescher has described how from 1928 onwards the then SWA colonial state embarked on a full-fledged attempt to establish both a veterinary and settlement border along the ‘Red Line’, a process which spanned many years and involved extensive negotiation and contestation as most people, groups

⁴⁶⁷ Bollig, “colonial,” 511; Also see Miescher, *Namibia*, 103.

⁴⁶⁸ Also see Rizzo, *Gender*, 125–28. Rizzo, in turn, notes that more than 1200 people and their herds were forcibly relocated – and mainly amongst the “main eastern route from Kamanjab northwards to Ombombo”.

⁴⁶⁹ Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 124.

and their livestock continued to be highly mobile and to migrate between multiple localities and extended familial networks. This period signalled the beginning of the cartographic articulation of the ‘Red Line’ in a “written and legally binding form”.⁴⁷⁰ The forced relocation was rationalised by the colonial government as required to create what would be a buffer zone or livestock-free zone (represented as the ‘cattle-free zone’ on the Van Warmelo’s map – See Map 5). This was meant to curb the spread of livestock epidemics, specifically the feared Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Lung Sickness, from the northern and north-western regions, into the by-then settler-dominated central and southern regions of Namibia.⁴⁷¹

However, as Bollig⁴⁷² and Rizzo⁴⁷³ have shown, this relocation was also driven by ongoing processes of colonial land appropriation within Namibia and attempts to free-up areas for ‘white’ settlement and farms within southern Kaoko. In other words, these forced removals were part of a larger process of colonial re-territorialisation and border-making. As became evident in talking to Lydia, many of the families forcibly relocated during this time, had already migrated, and fled from central Namibia during and after the Herero-German colonial wars. In an interview with *osoromana* Muteze⁴⁷⁴ about the settlement of Otjapitjapi and how his paternal grandfather became an *osoromana*, he also began his explanation by tracing multiple historical pathways and migrations which characterised his family history:

“When Ovaherero people came from Okarundu ka Mbeti, it all started there and started spreading around, some settled here in Kaoko, and others to Okahandja, Omaruru and so on. Now *Okarundu ka Mbeti* is found in Angola at the sea,⁴⁷⁵ it is where it is situated. So, people started settling all over some and along the way to Okahandja as they were penetrating inland. That’s how the people settled, and some went farther while others stayed. So those homesteads like ours, me the one who is talking, they returned later from that side of Omaruru and so on. So, before Kamanjab there is a place where they came from but first, they came from Omaruru and moved through Epupa (Kalkfeld) and from Epupa to Otjitambi. So, my grandfather left the homesteads there at Otjitambi and came here to these places like Otjapitjapi just to come and explore since there were his relatives settled – here as well as in Otjikukutu. He went back because even this time those who were here, they came just to settle temporarily at Otjapitjapi and then they went back. So, the last time if I am not mistaken, they say it was the year 1924, 1925, 1926⁴⁷⁶ - that is when the people started to be chased away in the area of Otjitambi, Otjovazandu to come here but my homestead settled here in Otjapitjapi, it came from Otjitambi. My father was a leader, an *osoromana* by then and so they were chased away from Otjitambi and Otjovazandu but when have been chased away, there was an option given for you to choose where to go stay.”

Uemujenga Kazendjou, Johannes Kazendjou’s sister (*omuṭena*) who had also grown up in Otjapitjapi and had been living in Otjomatimba with her husband, Kamutjija Tjiseua, for more than 60 years, explained to me: “The South African government was saying, within your group, we want a ‘big man’

⁴⁷⁰ Miescher, *Namibia*, 97–98.

⁴⁷¹ Bollig, “colonial,” 512.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Rizzo, *Gender*, 126.

⁴⁷⁴ 20.04.2016, recorded interview, Otjize

⁴⁷⁵ During my research many referred to the Kunene River as the ‘sea’.

⁴⁷⁶ Also known as the year of *Ondjembo yatjongora* (the gun/rifle of Tjongora).

(Sg. *omuhona*, Pl. *ovahona*), to control the group as you are migrating. People were looking towards the *ovahona* and suggested the paternal grandfather of Muteze”.⁴⁷⁷ According to another older resident,⁴⁷⁸ at first Muteze’s grandfather (Gideon Muteze) was given Oruvandjai, because there was spring water. At this point, many of the homesteads only had goats and sheep, and few had any cattle – although with others already settled there and with a strong drought grazing and water were few.⁴⁷⁹

Muteze’s grandfather had known Otjapitjapi, having visited and travelled to the area before and had relatives there. He thus proceeded to travel to Outjo and asked for Otjapitjapi from the Native Commissioner, who was visiting the town at the time, and he was given Otjapitjapi. Some, however, preferred to continue and establish homesteads at Otjikukutu,⁴⁸⁰ whilst others remained at Otjapitjapi and began digging wells close to the spring.⁴⁸¹ Although only two homesteads came together and settled at Otjapitjapi from those who were forcibly relocated, members of these homesteads later travelled back towards southern Kaoko and the area surrounding the towns of Outjo and Kamanjab to fetch other family members.⁴⁸²

Moreover, from 1925 onwards, more households and groups migrated into the region from the areas further south around Outjo and Kamanjab after being displaced and forcibly relocated as the land was dispossessed by the South African colonial government for ‘white’ settlement, especially for the re-settlement of the Angola Boers. When Muteze’s grandfather⁴⁸³ and his relatives – mostly matrilineal – were re-settled in Otjapitjapi, there were already other homesteads there and at the neighbouring springs. For example, Lydia’s uncle, Erastus Katjimbari, who, over the years, built up a significant herd of cattle, mainly in the area between Otjomatamba and Otjapitjapi and fostered patron-client relations with other homesteads that arrived over time, including those who came with the forced relocations.⁴⁸⁴ Muteze⁴⁸⁵ also explained that there were other households – yet they (his grandfather) did not receive any resistance when arriving as newcomers:

M: Yes, Ngairo. They have found Ngairo here settled already. His surname Kozohura, they found another man here I don't know his surname, Tjipume but Tjipume stayed at Okakuyu while this other one I have talked about stayed in Otjapitjapi, the one with the surname of Kozohura and some others whose name I am not very well keen of,⁴⁸⁶ they were there, here and there. Plus, other homesteads that came to settle that side of Omatendeka from being chased. That's how we started settling in Otjapitjapi we started that way, and it was a big place because it had spring water. That's why there were a lot of homesteads because at that time it was small

⁴⁷⁷ 02.04.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba; Also see Rizzo, *Gender*, 129. According to Rizzo two headmen were identified by the administration, namely Langman Tjihura and Ludwig Tjibambo. However, these forced removals possibly also provided opportunities for other local leaders or men to re-negotiate positions of power and to be eventually established as local headmen.

⁴⁷⁸ Murumubua, 19.04.2016, unrecorded interview, Otjapitjapi

⁴⁷⁹ Mutindi Muteze, 20.04.2016, recorded interview, Otjize

⁴⁸⁰ See Map 3

⁴⁸¹ 19.04.2016, unrecorded interview, Otjapitjapi

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Patriclan: Ombongora

⁴⁸⁴ Jautua Jaunda, 21.04.2016, unrecorded interview, Otjapitjapi

⁴⁸⁵ 20.04.2016, recorded interview, Otjize

⁴⁸⁶ Here he is referring to those homesteads who belong to the opposing socio-political faction within the area.

livestock and few cattle they had for a living, nothing else, and because of the spring, we started growing tobacco and wheat also to make a living out of it.

E: And when you came here to the area of Otjapitjapi you didn't receive resistance from people already staying here?

M: Never, there was not anything like that. People were not difficult at all. Nothing. We were all united. For the Herero never had an opportunity to settle. We were living a nomadic life like when they killed an animal here, then move there or there, this time they killed an oryx, another time a zebra and so on. That's what determined their stay, they were not stable.

E: And they were moving around a lot?

M: Yes, they moved around.

As Muteze pointed out, during this time (the early decades of the 20th century) the movement of people and groups was frequent. This was co-determined by peoples' engagement with a diversity of economic practices, the concentration of pastoral wealth in the hands of few, the specificity of local ecologies, colonial forced relocations, as well as the translocal dispersal of extended kin across many parts of north-western and central Namibia due to historical migrations and the colonial war.⁴⁸⁷ However, simultaneously people and groups were creating ancestral homesteads and settled places close to more permanent water-sources within those still limited interstitial and internal frontier areas (subjectively perceived) such as in southern Kaoko and often through what can be understood as "frontiersmen", who carried with them the rootedness of their social and political institutions.⁴⁸⁸

Both Otjapitjapi and the neighbouring places of Otjomaoru and Okakuyu – all with spring water – were considered to have been already known during the late 19th and early 20th centuries long before the arrival of those homesteads who were forcibly relocated. Moreover, many who eventually settled the area had known it before – having visited or travelled through it, before first settling further east and south and along the permanent water-places such as Ombombo and Otuzemba – as was the case with Tobias' maternal grandfather as well as the Okakuyu homesteads (neighbouring Otjapitjapi). According to another resident, people started settling at Otjapitjapi not only because it had water, but also because of the "the beauty of the place itself"⁴⁸⁹ – because of a certain place-attachment, with the place name being an onomatopoeic word referring to the sound the moving and flowing water makes when you step into it.⁴⁹⁰

During my research, Otjomaoru (Tobias's father's home-place) had four ancestral homesteads belonging to the Uaroua, Herunga,⁴⁹¹ Mombura and Kenhama families respectively, as well as some other main homesteads (Kavari and Kavetu). On the other hand, Otjapitjapi had two ancestral homesteads that of the Muteze⁴⁹² and Murumbua families (who came together during the forced

⁴⁸⁷ See Rizzo, *Gender*.

⁴⁸⁸ Kopytoff, "Internal," 19.

⁴⁸⁹ Hiyazonguindi Herunga, 30.03.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatimba

⁴⁹⁰ Abraham Uaroua, 25.02.2016, unrecorded interview, Otjomatimba

⁴⁹¹ Patrilineage: Ongwatjiya

⁴⁹² Patrilineage: Ombongora

relocations), whilst the other (Katjimbari) did not have an ancestral shrine due to their ascription to particular Christian beliefs. Okakuyu had two ancestral homesteads located on top of a hill, one large and encompassing (Kozohura), consisting of multiple individual households, whilst the other one (Jaunda) was much smaller and situated close by on the hill-side. As already indicated, in Otjomatempa two of the first ancestral homesteads were that of Tobias' maternal grandfather (Herunga) and Kamutjiha Tjiseua. The majority of homesteads that arrived after the drilling of the borehole, including other ancestral homesteads in Otjomatempa, stemmed in one way or another from these families and places, either in terms of shared patrilineal (in the case of ancestral homesteads) and/or matrilineal belonging.



Image 3: A view of the Otjapitjapi homesteads from its cultivation space.⁴⁹³

However, the different historical migrations which characterised the different households also meant that although many of the homesteads within this area were closely related and traced back the graves of their forefathers to the Omatjete and Omaruru areas in central Namibia, there were also very divergent pathways taken by different groups and homesteads afterwards, pathways which were crucial in the ongoing co-constitution of degrees of relatedness, in terms of kinship, ancestries, and socio-political affiliation.⁴⁹⁴ According to one resident, the homesteads of Muteze, Herunga, Hungua, Uaroua, Muzuma, Kangombe, Tjandondo (surnames) were remembered as having migrated/fled together from areas surrounding Omaruru (central Namibia) during and after the German colonial wars and north into Kaoko. Along the way some remained further south (from where they were later relocated), and others continued north along other pathways, including into southern Angola, and re-migrating back into

⁴⁹³ Photograph taken by Elsemi Olwage

⁴⁹⁴ Friedman, "Making"; Bleckmann, "Colonial."

Kaoko at a later stage. Furthermore, it was with the arrival of the relocated homesteads that Gideon Muteze (Muteze's grandfather) was appointed by the colonial administration as a headman.

Processes of colonial territorial border-making and the encapsulation of the Kaokoland 'native' reserve led to one of colonial Namibia's largest forced removals. Although leaders could, to some degree, negotiate this process and choose places to be re-settled – as was the case with Muteze's grandfather – subsequent experiences of drought, overstocking and the lack of grazing affected many of those who were relocated.⁴⁹⁵ Rizzo has shown that many households, due to conditions of drought and famine, proceeded to move back south to their prior places of residence, especially from 1930 onwards (this was not the case with the Otjapitjapi households). However, an outbreak of Lungsickness soon after led to a second forced removal from what was imagined to be a 'neutral zone' between the 'native' reserves to the north and expanding settler societies to the south. After this forced removal, any livestock found in this zone was to be shot without compensation – a violent intervention that eventually "changed the patterns of mobility that people chose as they faced an enforced cleared zone".⁴⁹⁶ Apart from the ongoing colonial border-making in southern Kaoko, households also had to continually negotiate ancestral place-making and land-use in relation to shifting pastoral economies and ecologies.

Changing land-use and shifting boundaries

In a conversation with Tobias' mother, Kupandani Herunga,⁴⁹⁷ a woman in her 80s, I raised the question about how people used to move in the past and when she was a young adult. She looked at me for a long time and then replied that I would be unable to count the number of times she had moved. She was not walking a lot, she was *always* walking. And when she was walking it was always with the *ondjupa* (calabash) with *omaere* (curdled milk) on her head as well as other belongings, with the baby tied to her back and, of course, carrying some water – because "how will you walk with thirst," she asked? This walking was because of grazing for their livestock, but also because of cultivation, she explained – with many having rain-gardens in and around Otjize, a rainy-season cattle-post about 15 km north of Otjomatamba.

According to Kupandani, their household and other households from Otjapitjapi and Otjomaoro walked to Otjize. From there, depending on the rains, they continued further north and west to Okaruu where there was spring water and where they would stay a bit longer during the dry-season (See Map 3). Everyone moved together and only went to these places to create temporary cattle-posts – following the rainwater and grazing when deciding where to create these temporary cattle and livestock camps. It was only the elders who remained at the main homesteads at Otjapitjapi and Otjomaoru. Moving from Okaruu, most of the people created rainy-season cattle-posts in the large savannah plain and plateau

⁴⁹⁵ See for example Rizzo, *Gender*, 125–35.

⁴⁹⁶ Rizzo, *Gender*, 134

⁴⁹⁷ 14.04.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba

known as Okangundumba, northeast from Otjize, and in the surroundings of what was now known as Omao.

The Okangundumba area was characterised by several pans (*omarindi*) which formed during the rainy season as the river flowed and water pooled across the open plateau and plains. It was one of the oldest known and praised places within Kaoko and was both historically and culturally significant – a significance, which was continually re-established both through praise songs, as well as the practice of *ovizerika*.⁴⁹⁸ *Ovizerika* can be understood as particular taboos and rules governing a place and one's ways of moving and travelling through the place. For example, during my research and as I worked in Omao (which fell in the larger Okangundumba area), I was often reminded by people not to quarrel or to disagree with others whilst moving in this area as this would result in us losing our way. Such rules, as Bleckmann⁴⁹⁹ has also foregrounded, were a practice of “remembering and honoring the forefathers” and first settlers who had most likely established these rules to protect people.

According to Kupandani, it was usually the elders who decided to move and take the livestock elsewhere and create cattle-posts. Men would first travel there without livestock to observe the grazing and water situation. Then upon return, the livestock would be moved, together with other persons belonging to the household, with the *kraal* being the first to be constructed. For Kupandani, nowadays people were no longer moving so much or not at all as patterns of pastoral mobility have transformed. She had also not seen people migrating from northern to southern Kaoko and settling with their animals when she was younger (referring to the newcomers). Although different people were passing through the area, it was mainly traders from Angola selling sewing machines and people from ‘Ovamboland’ coming to buy and sell tobacco who left after having completed their business.⁵⁰⁰

Other older residents, similarly explained transformations of mobile land-use practices and herding strategies. Hijazonguindi Herunga, a person in his mid-60s who resided in Otjomatempa, was one of my key interlocutors and a kind person, historian, healer and avid story-teller. Their homestead was one of the poorer ones in the place, with barely ten head of cattle owned by everyone. Hijazonguindi had lost a large part of his herd during a drought and was struggling to re-build it. During one interview he confessed that this economic situation had, at some point, made him feel suicidal, but that eventually, he had realised that many others had been similarly affected and lost large numbers of livestock. This encouraged him to remain strong and to continue trying to re-build his herd despite the harsh difficulties. Nevertheless, negotiating day-to-day livelihoods was not easy and remained highly insecure. Hijazonguindi recounted that their economic situation was different in the past and that when he was growing up, his father used to chase and herd cattle to Portuguese Angola to sell them at the livestock markets there. Moreover, when he was a young man, Okangundumba was used as a cattle-post-place

⁴⁹⁸ See Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 80–85, for a detailed discussion and description of the praise songs about Okangundumba and various taboos and rules.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., 79

⁵⁰⁰ Also see Rizzo, *Gender*.

by several homesteads in southern Kaoko and he and other young men often herded and moved livestock between the shifting cattle-posts and their homestead:

“...it was during rainy seasons and the time of drought when there was not enough grass that we went and stayed at cattle-post in the veld till the rainy season starts and the natural pools got enough water – then we moved back to Okangundumba. During rainy season we took back those cows with young calves so that our wives’ milk and shake their calabash till wintertime.”⁵⁰¹

A river divided the area and co-created historical grazing and land-use boundaries within Okangundumba. According to Hijazonguindi:

“First, when we started inhabiting – you know the river of Omao – when we started inhabiting the area, the people of this side from Ongango, Okaaru, Ojikukutu, Epunguue, they resided this side (towards the west) and then Otjapitjapi, Otjomaoru, Okakuyu, Okapiona, Okahua, Ombombo we resided that side of the river (to the east). We were divided by the river, one side us and the other side the other people.”

Yet apart from the waterways separating and dividing the pastures and establishing land-use boundaries, there were also practices of place-attachment and notions of place-belonging, which Hijazonguindi explained to us:

“The Ovaherero people, we don't know their manners or in the history – they never slept where they normally don't sleep. If you see a person going to overnight that side, it is because of a girlfriend but not permanently living there. It was maybe something made in them that a certain place belongs to them, and another place is for other people. As a young person if you decide to go stay in the other area on your own without the permission of your father, if he one day comes to visit you, to see whether you are sick or not and how the cattle are, he will ask you why you are staying that side and you will answer “I came to stay here” he will ask you “what brought you here?” You will answer that you came to stay, and he will ask “all the way from the area where you belong, you come to stay here?” He will then instruct you to go back and take the cattle back to the other side.”

Talking to Hijazonguindi and Kupandani, made it clear that livestock movements depended on the decision making of the elders. Moreover, and despite the dominance of transhumance ways of life, families and groups also continually fostered connections and attachments to particular places, routes, and landscapes *through* the seasonal and everyday itinerant rhythms of navigating the making of interrelated settled and cattle-post places.

However, during the next couple of decades, the colonial administration not only embarked on ongoing attempts to establish Kaoko's territorial boundaries and buffer zones towards its southern border but also to control and close the borders between northern, eastern and central Namibia, as well as southern Angola. This closing of the borders was soon followed by the imposition of strict regulations and the enforcement of quarantines and prohibitions concerning livestock and other forms of translocal trade flows as well as the promulgation of Pass Laws – setting into motion the production of particular colonial “spatial regimes”⁵⁰² and the eventual economic isolation of Kaoko.⁵⁰³ Moreover, as Van

⁵⁰¹ 04.04.2016, recorded interview, Opuwo

⁵⁰² Miescher, *Namibia*.

⁵⁰³ See Bollig, “colonial”; Miescher, *Namibia*.

Wolputte has illustrated, during the 1920s/30s movement permits for livestock were required within the region as well as when travelling outside – permits which had to be administrated through state-recognised chiefs and the handful of local *ozosoromana* who were being appointed by the colonial state parallel to the production of the Kaokoland ‘native’ reserve.⁵⁰⁴ Thus, and increasingly, the colonial state was becoming concerned with controlling local land-use and pastoral practices.

Negotiating colonial tenure and political belonging

From the late 1940s and early 1950s onwards, practices of mobile pastoralism and emerging place-relations began to transform, fuelled by the colonial state’s modernisation and ‘homeland’ impetus and the multitude of administrative and material ‘developments’ this entailed, including the mapping of ward (*otjiwyke*) boundaries and land-use rules (*oveta*), ‘scientific’ research in the region, the drilling of multiple boreholes, and the building of a network of roads.⁵⁰⁵ Significantly, the drilling of boreholes and proliferation of water-points converted many dry-season cattle-post places to settled-places, opening previously inaccessible grazing grounds, and reduced the need for pastoral and transhumance migrations, leading to an almost complete “reversal of mobility patterns” and in some instances to overgrazing.⁵⁰⁶

Due to the mountainous Ozondundu being endowed with several natural springs, the only borehole made here during colonial rule was the one in the dry-season cattle-post of Okarumbu (meaning ‘small drought’). Drilled in the late 1970s and on request from Muteze’s father, this borehole opened up access to dry-season grazing and allowed for less moving further north and north-west to Okangundumba and Ondera. Moreover, with the mapping of eventually 36 wards from 1947 onwards, *ozosoromana* and chiefs “were co-opted by the colonial government and became salaried administrators” with understandings of authority relying less on pastoral wealth, military dominance and/or ritual authority, than on recognition by the colonial administration and cartographically-articulated territorial boundaries.⁵⁰⁷ Thus, the state-recognised *ozosoromana* were increasingly empowered by the colonial administration to exercise control over access-rights to land, water and grazing within these boundaries, including the issuing of livestock permits.

Within set boundaries *ozosoromana* also acted as representatives in mediating between the state and people in terms of veterinary campaigns, attempted control of livestock and population numbers and movements, the location of boreholes, and other colonial state concerns.⁵⁰⁸ Some of these *ozosoromana* were designated rather as *ozorata* (councillors) or *sub-osoromana* in that they were part

⁵⁰⁴ Van Wolputte, “Subject.”

⁵⁰⁵ See chapter 2; also see Van Wolputte, “Subject” Van Wolputte, “political” Van Wolputte, “Cattle.”

⁵⁰⁶ Bollig, “Socio,” 206.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 330

⁵⁰⁸ Uerikambura Tjipepa, Chief Development Planner, Ministry of Lands and Resettlement, 29.03.2016, unrecorded interview, Opuwo; Also see Van Wolputte, “Cattle” Van Wolputte, “Vicious.”

of a hierarchy in which particular *ozosoromana* acted as the chiefs or political and traditional leaders, whilst the majority acted largely in their capacity as local administrators. However, these different ranks of authority, status and power were also marked by high levels of ambiguity and ambivalence and were contingent on shifting local and state levels of recognition and on the negotiation of boundary-making over several years.⁵⁰⁹

During this time Otjapitjapi, Okakuyu, Otjomaoru, Otjomatempa and many of the places on the eastern side of the Omao River and south up until Ojtondunda, fell within the chieftaincy boundaries of Ombombo – a settled place north-east of Otjomatempa (see Map 3) – and under the local chief Kephaz Muzuma (who took over after Johannes Muzuma).⁵¹⁰ All of the *ozosoromana* and *ozorata* in this area were under his leadership and he was the main contact between local communities and the colonial administration. Thus, as Tobias had explained: “Anything, including the drilling of boreholes or putting up water pump engines, anything that has to do with the government – you approached Kephaz. He was the one who could take it up with the government to request and it was under his facilitation.”⁵¹¹

As addressed in Chapter Two, during the late 1960s and 1970s ongoing negotiations of colonial livestock policy and rule between the state, chiefs and local headmen erupted in a regional conflict, sparked by the launching of a state livestock vaccination campaign.⁵¹² This led to the upsurge of already simmering tensions between different groups which took shape over the years with the institutionalisation of indirect rule and contestations regarding pastures and territorial control. Thus, when inquiring about the arrival of colonial tenure rules (*oveta*) and ward boundaries, Tobias was also quick to assert: “When this law (*oveta*) was implemented, there was *opolotika*.”⁵¹³



In southern Kaoko, the regional and violent conflict which broke out in the early 1970s between the ‘small group’ (*Okambumba*) and ‘big group’ (*Otjimbumba*) and the political antagonisms produced re-configured mobile land-use practices and people’s social and relational movements between different places and along specific routes, as well as the emergent politics of belonging. In a later interview with Tobias⁵¹⁴ he explained, from his perspective, how this conflict played out in relation to the Ombombo chieftaincy:

“There was a man at Ombombo named Kephaz Muzuma. There were my fathers, there was a man, Fritz Uaroua. When there was the South African regime, these Ombombo people, one part was affiliated with Kephaz. This man (Kephaz) asked for a manga⁵¹⁵ to be built in different places. One at Ombombo, one at Okahua, and one at Otjapitjapi. So, while these people were like this, there were two groups called *Okambumba* (small group) and *Otjimbumba* (large group). This group that was called *Okambumba* was on the side of the South African regime,

⁵⁰⁹ See Friedman, “Making”; Friedman, “Cultivating”;

⁵¹⁰ Tobias Uaroua, 23.04.2016, recorded interview, Otjomaoru; Tumbee Tjirora, 08.10.2015, unrecorded interview, Opuwo

⁵¹¹ 23.04.2016, recorded interview, Otjomaoru

⁵¹² Friedman, “Making.”

⁵¹³ 13.02.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatempa

⁵¹⁴ 23.04.2016, recorded interview, Otjomaoru

⁵¹⁵ A manga is a metal construction and livestock pen which works as a vaccination facility

the *Otjimbumba* was the community (*otjiwana*). So, these people (*Otjimbumba*) rejected the manga brought by Kephass and start demolishing the manga of Okahua with axes. So, violence broke out between the groups. So, these groups started fighting at that time which I cannot tell exactly what date, month, and year when these people fought against, these people (*Okambumba*) against the people of Okarivizu, of the household of Hungua of Kaumanuka Hungua. Ombombo had said that, if you know that road of Okarivizu in Ombombo – because Hungua family belonged to *Otjimbumba* – they must not come through Ombombo when they are passing to Opuwo. They came through Ombombo and that is how it started and from there, people coming from here could not go to stay in Ombombo and Ombombo people could not come to stay here, Okarivizu could not come to stay in Ombombo, Ongango people could not go to stay in Ombombo or Ombombo to Ongango because of this, there in between the *ozosoromana* now there were frictions. So, everyone was limited to where they had to stay. So, this brought the *ozosoromana* not to share areas anymore, it started there.”

Thus, the regional conflict and the breakdown of cooperation between different chiefs and local *ozosoromana*, as well as their followers, in turn, re-configured reciprocal relations between historically related places. As a result, negotiating access-rights and pastoral mobility were increasingly influenced by this divisionary politics and the fear of conflict. Tobias⁵¹⁶ explained:

“Otjapitjapi and Ombombo were led by one person, and it was Kephass but the followers were the ones that split. The people went away from Kephass, and they were no more under his leadership because they said he joined the Boers.⁵¹⁷ Even the people that followed him were only a few households, e.g., in Otjapitjapi it was the Muteze household, the household of Kozohura that followed Kephass, those were mostly the people that sided with Kephass. So, the Otjomaoru community departed from Kephass because they reasoned that he gave their things to the white government. Okay, that was the main thing that could not allow people to take your cattle from here to Ombombo or from here to Omao. When initially...when you could say because I have found rainwater at Omao and I will take my cattle and simple to go and stay, this was no longer the case.”

As illustrated, the factional dispute which took form during the conflict meant that persons could no longer rely on previously shared seasonal grazing grounds, or on negotiating temporary access-rights through kin-networks. In other words, relatedness was increasingly defined and negotiated through shared belonging to either the *Otjimbumba* or the *Okambumba* factions as well as to the different patrilineal clans associated with the leaders and *ozosoromana* of the different factions. The violence which eventually broke out was fuelled by the perception that Kephass had given “their things to the white government”. These suspicions were strongly fuelled by the administration’s intention to brand the cattle herds in Kaoko during their vaccination campaign – with all having the “government brand mark number three”. Tobias described:

“...that’s why the Ovaherero community said Kephass you have given our cattle to the South African government – the South African government will take our cattle away from us. In a real sense, you are the enemy. Take all your *mangas* away, remove them. That’s why the manga at Okahua was beaten with axes and people started leaving Kephass alone. So, from these fights at Ombombo, Kephass moved away from Ombombo.”

In cooperating with the colonial administration, Kephass was eventually forced to leave Ombombo and give up his territorial control to the larger group and opposing faction. Most of those belonging to

⁵¹⁶ 23.04.2016, recorded interview, Otjomaoru

⁵¹⁷ The Afrikaner-dominated colonial administration, with *Boers* referring to the Afrikaans-speaking settlers.

Otjomaoru sided with the Otjimbumba-grouping (the big group), whilst some others in Otjapitjapi, including Muteze's father (with the Muteze and Muzuma family also being closely related), were said to have sided with the Okambumba-grouping (the small group). These socio-political splits thus changed relations of cooperation within shared land-use and kin-based communities – with many households in Otjapitjapi, Okakuyu and Otjomaoru being closely related through shared matriclan belonging, yet, in the end, split in terms of socio-political affiliation and historical factional belonging. These splits also co-determined the ongoing establishment and mapping of ward boundaries as territories began to split and places and people appointed their own leaders. Nevertheless, and until the early 1980s, Otjapitjapi continued to fall under the Ombombo chieftaincy, which eventually appointed a new chief. However, local resistance to colonial livestock policy and developmental initiatives as well as this factional split were progressively becoming linked to “oppositional activities at the national level” and to national political and social movements.⁵¹⁸ This, together with wider political and economic transformations and ecological shifts, eventually also opened up new political arenas for the production of locality.

The genealogy of the Ozondundu boundaries

The onset of the armed struggle and liberation war further fuelled the transformation of peoples' mobilities and exchanges between places. In speaking to Hiyazonguindi⁵¹⁹ about the historical changes in mobile land-use practices, he explained:

“To change, Okangundumba have changed during the time of war, when the war had started because people didn't have time and people were afraid to stay in the veld because people were kidnapped at that time, so many people moved back to their places because they were afraid to be kidnapped.”

According to Friedman,⁵²⁰ the increased PLAN (military wing of the SWAPO⁵²¹ liberation movement) operations in northern Kaokoland from the 1970s onwards created “a sense of terror”, fuelled by a “vigorous South African propaganda campaign” which labelled the PLAN fighters – and thus the SWAPO movement – as ‘terrorists’ (*ozoteri*). The reaching of the armed struggle into this region was one reason households and people in southern Kaoko began to curtail the making of cattle-posts far away from the ancestral and main homesteads and the separation of households. As Bollig⁵²² notes, “from 1978 to about 1985 mobility was frequently conditioned more by considerations for personal safety than by the needs of grazing”. For example, many homesteads from Ombepera – a place north-west of Otjomatamba – migrated to Ondera during this time for safety reasons and to be closer to the

⁵¹⁸ Bollig, “Chieftaincies.”

⁵¹⁹ 04.04.2016, recorded interview, Opuwo

⁵²⁰ Friedman, “Making,” 33.

⁵²¹ South West African Peoples' Organization

⁵²² Bollig, *Risk*, 168.

recently built road connecting Opuwo and Sesfontein. Whereas previously Ondera was a shared rainy-season cattle-post place due to the seasonal pans (*omarindi*) forming here, this resulted in Ondera becoming a settled-place and in the eventual drilling of a borehole.

The onset of the conflict and war further reified a shift towards more contained and bounded mobile land-use practices, thus re-making territorial boundaries. Importantly though, and in addition to the collective ‘sense of terror’ curtailing the making cattle-posts, these mobile land-use practices were also brought to a halt by a fierce drought which devastated and decimated almost 90 per cent of the region’s livestock herds during 1978-1982. When I inquired whether people and their livestock resumed specific land-use practices, for example going to Okangundumba (the large savannah plains) after the war came to an end, Hijazonguindi⁵²³ replied:

“After the war, we didn't go back to cattle-post. People from Ombombo remained in Ombombo and those of Okahua remained in Okahua, those of Otjomaoru remained in Otjomaoru, and those of Otjapitjapi remained in Otjapitjapi as well as those of Otjomatimba because the cattle that had driven us to go that far to cattle-post became few, everyone was left with one, two or five and so, by the time we went there it was because of the herds of cattle we had, that's why we stopped going to cattle-posts.”

Thus, although some men joined the SADF during the 1970s to protect themselves from what were believed to be “terrorists”,⁵²⁴ this devastating drought forced many others to be recruited into the SADF. Many saw this as a strategy to re-build their livestock herds and livelihoods – a vulnerability which was exploited by the SADF. Whilst some were employed to protect local chiefs and *ozosoromana* and thus remained in and around their home-places, most were deployed elsewhere, leaving the women, elders, and young boys at the homesteads. It was after the regional conflict with many being employed in the SADF, and with the local factional dispute becoming more and more entangled with national party politics (see Chapter Two), that Otjapitjapi and the neighbouring places of Okakuyu, Otjomaoru and Otjomatimba began to mobilise and assert claims for political autonomy and an independent chieftaincy. As mentioned, during the 1970s and part of the 1980s, Otjapitjapi fell under the Ombombo chieftaincy, with Muteze’s father serving as a councillor (*orata*) and later a sub-headman to the Ombombo chief.⁵²⁵ Following the departure of Kephass, a new leader was appointed in Ombombo named Tjesindi (David) Mbuu.⁵²⁶ The rest of southern Kaoko, Otjondeka, Otuzemba and Ongango had separate chieftaincies, which were eventually governed and administrated through several different wards headed by *ozosoromana* or *ozorata*.⁵²⁷

⁵²³ 04.04.2016, recorded interview, Opuwo

⁵²⁴ Van Wolputte, Hoorelbeke and Bleckmann, “Fenced,” 165.

⁵²⁵ Tumbee Tjirora, 08.10.2015, unrecorded interview, Opuwo

⁵²⁶ Kephass did not succeed his father, but rather Ludwig Tjaveondja – who is buried in Otjapitjapi. Ludwig had a son by the name of David. When Ludwig died this son was very young and the chieftaincy was given to Kephass Muzuma until the son could succeed his father. (Tobias Uaroua, 23.04.2016, recorded interview, Otjomaoru)

⁵²⁷ Tumbee Tjirora, 08.10.2015, unrecorded interview, Opuwo

In our interview with Tobias⁵²⁸, he had detailed the genealogy of the Ozondundu boundaries as they were expressed during the period of my research and as having emerged from a break-away chieftaincy and with the ongoing mapping of wards:

T: Each *osoromana* was told to stand up to show the *otjiwyke* (wards). These *otjiwyke* I have mentioned, look I ended at DeWet, Otjondunda – that was where the *osoromana* of Ombombo ended. Those were the boundaries of the South African regime boundaries. This man called Tjesindi (David) Mbuu – when he died, I can't exactly remember the year he passed on – he died and another *osoromana* was appointed at Ombombo in his place. A person from Okauoru was appointed under the name Kepi Kavari and in the place of Tjesindi, the one who died in Ombombo. He became an *osoromana* and was no longer an *orata* which he was before in Okauoru. Now he became an *osoromana*. After the appointment of this *osoromana* the political party spirit was high so we who were in this mountain areas of Otjapitjapi here, we appointed another *osoromana*.

K: After the appointment of this new one?

T: To that new one we said we are not going to fall under the *osoromana* of Ombombo every time. We will appoint our own in the mountain areas. We appointed ours who was Goliath Muteze (Muteze's father).

E: And this was like in the eighties or?

T: That one was in eighty-one, the year 1981.

E: During the bad drought?

T: That years of the drought was heavy (burning) and that is the year that I came to marry this wife of mine. So, when we appointed this *osoromana* is when we left. The area of mountains, Otjize, all those places of Otjomaoru, is when we took them away from Ombombo and it will start falling under the *osoromana* that we appointed, Otjize, Okarumbu, those places of Okakuyu the nearby one, Okomuhana, Otjomatamba, those places down there Oviuiju and so on.

According to Tobias, during this time most of the people from “the area of mountains” (*Ozondundu*) belonged rather to the SWANU party which later allied with the NPF. As he pointed out, due to the “political party spirit” being “high” during this time, places and people were mobilising and appointing their own *osoromana*, legitimised through national party politics and belonging. As was also explained to me by another interlocutor and a key political figure and leader,⁵²⁹ Otjapitjapi had been struggling for a long time for their own *osoromana* to be promoted to the level of an independent ward. With the passing away of the Ombombo chief, there was a quarrel: Kephaz Muzuma, who had moved to Otjokavare, was supporting Goliath Muteze to become the new Ombombo chief. In 1984 a meeting was held but Kepi Kavare was elected, recognised by the then recently formed Vita Thom Traditional Authority. It was at this point that the ‘area of the mountains’ decided to establish their own local headman.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁸ 23.04.2016, recorded interview, Otjomaoru

⁵²⁹ Tumbee Tjirora, 8.10.2015, unrecorded interview, Opuwo

⁵³⁰ Kephaz Muzuma and Goliath Muteze were also cousins (*ovaramue*).

Some of the newly emerging *ozosoromana* during this time, as was the case in Otjapitjapi, had been former councillors to other *ozosoromana*, within the formal and official political structure. Thus, with the ongoing mapping of ward boundaries, political actors during this time were continually manoeuvring between official and local recognition, between being and becoming *orata* and/or *sub-osoromana* and eventually *osoromana*. In talking to *osoromana* Muteze,⁵³¹ the ongoing negotiations and ambiguities concerning local authority during this time were also made evident:

“So later they (*ozorata*) were also promoted to become *osoromana* same as the others. So, then the report, instead of talking to their *osoromana*, was now then done with their respective communities and then straight to the government offices. So, then they were called twice, headman (*osoromana*) and sub-headman (*sub-osoromana*). So, they were promoted from *ozorata* to *sub-osoromana*.”

He had explained that his grandfather was a leader when the forced removals took place (1928/9). After he passed away and with the ongoing making of ward boundaries by the “Odendaal government”,⁵³² his father, Goliath Muteze, then became what they called a *sub-osoromana* within the official structure – and an *osoromana* on a local level.⁵³³ As illustrated, the entanglement of the institution of *osoromana* with national party politics had important consequences for place-politics and the production of locality. Despite Ozondundu having been split during this time and in terms of socio-political affiliation and factional belonging, to assert claims to political autonomy and appoint their headman, Muteze’s father.

As illustrated above and in Chapter Two, the institutionalisation of colonial indirect rule and the making of authority relations was continually negotiated. In this process, the institution of *osoromana* was frequently refashioned in relation to different hierarchies of authority within larger chieftaincies. This process generated and opened up spaces for gendered social mobilities and the expression of male agency.⁵³⁴ Moreover, as Bleckmann has illustrated, the regional conflict also became rooted both in place and kinship. With the different chieftaincies claims to authority in turn tied up with their patrilineal kinship and factional affiliation, as well as their ‘ethnic’ belonging to the socio-spatial registers of the colonial state. Whereas matrilineal kinship continued to work as a “strong binding feature”, patrilineal relatedness was the basis for division and fragmentation and became key in co-determining one’s socio-political belonging to one or another faction, and either the ‘small’ or ‘big’ group.⁵³⁵

On a regional scale, the factional split would, in turn, and in becoming territorialised and producing new regimes of belonging, also “later give rise to the opposition between northern (Himba and Tjimba) and southern Kaoko (Herero), and between the two main traditional authorities in

⁵³¹ 20.04.2016, recorded interview, Otjize

⁵³² In reference to the notorious Odendaal Plan, Namibia’s equivalent of the Apartheid regime’s master policy of ‘separate development’.

⁵³³ 20.04.2016, recorded interview, Otjize

⁵³⁴ See for instance Friedman, “Cultivating”; Steven Van Wolputte, “‘The Natives Are Clever Enough’: Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia and the Politics of Ambiguity in North-West Namibia,” *Social Dynamics* 41, no. 1 (2015); Friedman, *Imagining*, 254.

⁵³⁵ Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 142.

Kaoko”⁵³⁶ – a socio-spatial and territorial imaginary which, as Van Wolputte et al.⁵³⁷ has shown, was also supported by ethnological publications such as that of Van Warmelo. Additionally, and for Friedman, the eventual “conflation of local ‘traditional’ chiefship with national party politics, or rather the cross-fertilisation that transpired between the two spheres of political power” during the 1980s was also “to spur the development of a [future] symbiotic relationship between state and Kaokoland chiefship in an independent Namibia”.⁵³⁸

Mapping the conservancy and ‘customary’ authority

After the passing of his father Goliath Muteze, Mutindi Muteze⁵³⁹ was officially recognised as a headman within the post-independent dispensation. This official recognition process and the reification of the breakaway territory were realised through the Traditional Authorities Act of 1995/2000 and the parallel mapping of communal conservancy boundaries at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. To be formally gazetted as a conservancy, set conditions had to be met: these included the mapping and formalisation of spatial and group boundaries and the establishment of a management committee and land-use zoning plan.⁵⁴⁰

In the first decade after independence, both the ward boundaries and the 36 state-salaried authority positions created by the colonial administration were no longer legally recognised. Rather, local leaders had to rely on competing claims to authority and leadership, and struggle for state recognition within new set legislative bounds. As mentioned earlier, this state-recognition process relied heavily on re-constructing leadership or hereditary genealogies and demanded particular forms of historical legitimisation – often in the way of written sources.⁵⁴¹ In post-independent Namibia, both the inherited gendered and political institutions, and the split which culminated into two polarised factions, shaped the subsequent recognition of Traditional Authorities in this region. Both the Vita Thom Royal House Traditional Authority and the Otjikaoko Traditional Authority were officially recognised by the state in 1998, with a third one, the Kakurukouje Traditional Authority, later recognised. The establishment of TAs within Kaoko had to follow state blueprint legislation, with the new structural dispensation requiring each of the state-recognised TAs to be represented by a chief and 12 councillors. With the state recognition and the eventual appointment of three chiefs and their councillors, local relations of authority were once again re-made. Although the councillors were councillors in the official

⁵³⁶ Van Wolputte, Hoorelbeke and Bleckmann, “Fenced.”

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ After the sudden death of his brother (born inside the marriage) in a motor vehicle accident, Mutindi Muteze inherited the chieftaincy from his father. This process was not without contestation, as Mutindi was a child born outside of his father’s marriage.

⁵⁴⁰ Sian Sullivan, “Maps and Memory, Rights and Relationships: Articulations of Global Modernity and Local Dwelling in Delineating Land for a Communal-Area Conservancy in North-West Namibia,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2005; Sullivan, “How.”

⁵⁴¹ Friedman, “Making,” 34.

structure, many, due to the legacies of colonial indirect rule, were, in fact, on a local level, ‘established’, recognised *ozosoromana*. Some existing *ozosoromana* were not recognised by the state and had to rely on a ‘gentleman’s agreement’ with those who were to administer access-rights to land and grazing or livestock movement permits.⁵⁴² Additionally, the mapping of the TA Act within Kaoko was greatly compounded by the problem of set territorial jurisdiction.⁵⁴³ Many areas and places were historically divided in terms of socio-political affiliation and clearly delineated jurisdiction boundaries between the three TAs could not be drawn. Moreover, from the 2000s onwards, it became a common phenomenon for villages and places to split and divide even further, with competing groups electing and establishing new local headmen and chiefs aligned to opposing TAs and political parties, including TAs such as the OvaHerero TA, state-recognised in central Namibia only.⁵⁴⁴ This practice – with the newly-appointed *ozosoromana* seeking state as well as political recognition through oppositional politics and TAs and ongoing political fragmentation – was referred to as *opolotika*.

In the first decade after independence many local leaders also still associated with and belonged to the main oppositional party, the DTA, as opposed to the rest of the northern regions where the governing SWAPO party dominated.⁵⁴⁵ Kaoko was thus also embroiled in a protracted power struggle between different political parties, whilst at the same time, local political actors were mobilising competing political belonging as a way toward claiming territory, resources, and power. These struggles eventually fed into the mapping of communal conservancies and their border-making negotiations. By 2017 there were 30 gazetted communal conservancies in the Kunene region alone. This rapid increase from the early 2000s onwards, as both Sullivan⁵⁴⁶ and Bollig⁵⁴⁷ have argued, was partly due to the local interpretations of it as a land and territorial, rather than exclusively wildlife management issue. More specifically, Bollig⁵⁴⁸ has shown that many conservancies were mapped onto former ward (*otjiwyke*) boundaries – strongly illustrative of the fact that despite some local *ozosoromana* and chiefs not being recognised by the state, at a local level their power “was not broken” and “they still allocated land and grazing rights according to previous legislation” and according to previous boundaries.⁵⁴⁹

Communal conservancies required the approval and support of TAs before being gazetted as they essentially involved the governing of the ‘commonage’ as stipulated in the Communal Land Reform Act of 2002.⁵⁵⁰ Many *ozosoromana* thus mobilised the boundary-making processes and negotiations towards re-asserting chieftaincy and territorial claims – especially in the face of ongoing political fragmentation. In some instances, as was the case with the Ozondundu conservancy, this

⁵⁴² Uerikambura Tjipepa, Chief Development Planner, Ministry of Lands and Resettlement, Opuwo, 16.03.2015, 29.03.2016, unrecorded interview.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Friedman, “Making.”

⁵⁴⁵ Bollig, “Chieftaincies.”

⁵⁴⁶ Sullivan, “How.”

⁵⁴⁷ Bollig, “Socio”; Bollig, “Towards.”

⁵⁴⁸ Bollig, “Socio.”

⁵⁴⁹ Bollig, “Chieftaincies.”

⁵⁵⁰ Norman Tjombe, lawyer, 12.10.2015, unrecorded interview, Windhoek

process enabled certain communities to formalise their ongoing assertions for political autonomy and legitimise them vis-a-vis the Namibian state and through new mapping technologies.



Tumbee Tjirora,⁵⁵¹ a local political leader, and one of the founders of the Okangundumba conservancy which neighboured Ozondundu explained that during the border negotiations they realised that if they would not allow the Ozondundu area to create their own *osoromana*, they would block the negotiations. It was then that the Vita Thom Royal House accepted Mutindi Muteze as a local *osoromana*, and a state-salaried senior councillor within the official structure, as well as Ozondundu's demands for autonomy. In our interview with Tobias,⁵⁵² who was one of two who mediated the boundary negotiations on behalf of the Ozondundu conservancy, it also became clear that it had been a land and territorial, rather than exclusively wildlife issue:

E: So, they (the government) mainly started by visiting places where there were *ozosoromana*?

T: They visited places where you can say there are *ozosoromana*. To bring together the *osoromana* and its community under a tree and to tell them about the benefits of having the conservancies and mainly the need of having the conservancies and their function. For example, how you make a living out of it... and until they informed the community to set up a committee. That was how we came up with a committee. When this committee was first established, as a knowledgeable person, I was one of those who could cut the lines (borders). I was there and I have cut the border between Ombombo, I have cut the border between Ongango, I have cut the border between Ombepera, until I cut the border between Sesfontein and Ozondundu. On the other side starting at Okauore to that side it was for Kakume Kozohura. We were the only two who could cut lines (the borders). When it was done then we were given this committee. Kakuume was given this committee from Okauore: you are the one to talk to the committee of Okarivizu from here to Warmquelle and up to Otjondunda. You Uaroua from Okauore, behind all these Ozondundu (mountains) to talk to all the people at Ombombo and Otjozongombe all these areas of Ongango, Ombepera until Ohamuheke to where you will meet Kakume, is you Uaroua. This area we were given by the community that if you make an error and you take the land over to the other side, the community will hold you accountable. If you draw it correctly you would have done something good on behalf of the community. So, the community fully permitted us to act on their behalf.

Alfons Mukuaruze,⁵⁵³ the first chairman (*otjermana*) of Ozondundu conservancy, who described himself as the “father of the conservancy”, had explained that they first received the information to set up the conservancy in 1997 but it was only gazetted in 2002. The information came from the government and was communicated to the TAs, who then passed it on. It was communicated to local communities that the boundaries were to be determined by the membership to a conservancy, not according to TAs. However, the *ozosoromana* nominated representatives to head this process and negotiations. Moreover, according to Alfons, these border-making negotiations brought a lot of fighting amongst the *ozosoromana*, and many did not want the “Ozondundu conservancy to stand up”.

Alfons explained that, in the end, the first thing they considered in drawing the borders, was membership. Yet, they realised from the start that people had to understand what a conservancy was

⁵⁵¹ 08.10.2015, unrecorded interview, Opuwo

⁵⁵² 23.04.2016, recorded interview, Otjomaoru

⁵⁵³ 28.02.2016, unrecorded interview, Otjize

and there was substantial campaigning. Moreover, some people did not want to talk to them, and they tried to explain that if they did not decide on a border then people would not benefit – they had to be gazetted. It was like a political campaign, and they had to promise benefits. In the end, people were campaigning that if the conservancy was to be gazetted, their area will look like the farms in *Outua* (on the other side of the VCF). In the case of the Ozondundu conservancy, its boundaries were also co-determined by early attempts by the ‘area of the mountains’ to assert its political autonomy during the 1980s. In this process, conservancy boundaries thus became synonymous and locally translated as jurisdiction boundaries of local *ozosoromana*.

With this making of communal conservancies, collective rights, and responsibilities with regard to resources were now “referred to people in relation to these bounded territories”⁵⁵⁴ rather than explicitly concerning persons’ belonging to a specific matriclan and patriclan. Moreover, in establishing committees’ new public arenas for deliberation beyond existing registers of authority were established, even though the *ozosoromana* often played a key role in suggesting members for the committees.⁵⁵⁵ Simultaneously though local *ozosoromana* were still proliferating – each making competing claims to authority, legitimised through their supporters, different TAs, and national party politics. As a result, and increasingly, many communal conservancies and their boundaries were governed by two or more *ozosoromana* – some state-recognised whilst others were struggling for recognition. Eventually, within the Ozondundu conservancy – which historically had already been divided in terms of socio-political affiliation – one of Muteze’s senior *orata*, Kanduu Herunga, campaigned and was elected by a set group of followers belonging to the competing Otjikaoko TA as a second *osoromana*.

Conclusion

This chapter detailed Otjomatemba’s contested place-genealogy and its entanglement with local contestations over authority, territory and belonging. In doing so, I illustrated the different and intersecting normative frameworks which were mobilised to both assert and contest the authority vested in the institution of *osoromana* and the territorial integration of Otjomatemba. Moreover, this chapter detailed the genealogy of the Ozondundu boundaries, and at the intersection of overlapping migration histories, the navigation of colonial indirect rule and forced relocations, changing land-use practices and pastoral economies, the rise of new forms of political and factional belonging, and the later mapping of wards and communal conservancies. In doing so, I showed how, despite the mapping of chieftaincy, ward and conservancy boundaries, these processes were and still have to be negotiated, translated, and legitimised within culturally-informed tenure and political institutions. Hence, the ongoing struggles over the meaning and legitimacy vested in the institution of *osoromana* were illustrative of how the inherited hereditary chieftaincy and territorial model was and continue to be open to contestation. This

⁵⁵⁴ Sullivan, “Maps,” 3.

⁵⁵⁵ Alfons Mukuaruze, 28.02.2016, unrecorded interview, Otjize

was also evident in the ongoing political fragmentation and politically divisiveness which characterised local land-use communities, leading to the existence of multiple *ozosoromana* within inherited wards and conservancies.⁵⁵⁶ These contestations, as illustrated in this chapter, were rooted both in a place-based politics and in vernacular and long-standing conceptions of territory based on incorporation, rather than mutual exclusivity.

As illustrated in Chapter Two, “customary” institutions, and territories in southern Kaoko took form as north-western Namibia was scripted as a frontier region and through processes of colonial re-territorialisation and rule. Chapter Three then looked at these histories through a more local lens, illustrating how overlapping migrations, smaller local movements, and changing mobile land-use practices continually co-configured the making of territory and place within this context. With time, areas which were perceived as more “politically open” and as local “frontiers” were steadily incorporated through the practice and idiom of kinship and homestead-based economies⁵⁵⁷ – culturally-informed institutions and resources which were re-institutionalised within this context and widely shared by most of Kaoko’s societies. Additionally, the historical making of patriarchal authority within this context was also partially rooted, not only in ‘bigmanship’ but also in long-standing institutions rooted in the intertwining of patrilineal kinship, seniority and first-come claims and in the ritually established position of being the guardian or owner of the earth/land (*oveni vehi*).

Yet, with the institutionalisation of colonial indirect rule and the economic encapsulation of the region, certain socio-political forms were amplified, including the power vested in patriarchal and male authority, a ‘customary’ tenure model rooted in bounded territories and chiefs and headmen, and growing factionalism and intragroup competition for land, resources, and authority. As a consequence, local authority and local rights over land and land-based resources had to be established and re-established both through negotiating one’s patrilineal and matrilineal kin-relatedness and social belonging, as well as through enacting political belonging to larger chieftaincies and emerging politico-ethnic formations. Locally, this involved drawing on legitimising themes and values shared by the colonial administration, such as delineated and fixed boundaries and ethnic belonging, and fostering intersecting affiliations to royal houses, chiefly lines, and political parties, including beyond Kaoko.⁵⁵⁸ These processes continued and had to be re-configured in the post-independent context and within changing political climates and state reforms.

Thus, what was at stake in these competing claims to authority was the question of who had the authority to govern land-access, and hence to settle newcomers, and control processes of place-formation, including place-identity and belonging. At the same time, what was at stake was the territorial integration of Otjomatamba by oppositional TAs and divergent chiefly lines, with this, in turn, shaping the intersecting political and social belonging through which both land-access and pastoral

⁵⁵⁶ Friedman, *Imagining*.

⁵⁵⁷ Kopytoff, “Internal,” 7–9.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

mobilities could be legitimately negotiated. As shown, fuelling these contestations were historically-constituted divisions within shared land-use communities rooted in histories of conflict and colonial resistance and long-standing struggles over succession and regional chieftaincy claims. Yet, at the same time, these divisions were finding new avenues for expression in a post-independent context and relation to the state and party politics – with the institution of *osoromana* (re)interpreted and refashioned at the intersection of political and ritual authority as a local-level and direct link to the state, and thus to the TAs, and hence critical for fostering representation and access in the making of demands, including for rural development and assistance.

Nevertheless, and as shown, the registers of authority within which the institution of *osoromana* could or should be translated were still being circumscribed, and struggled over, with specific jurisdiction boundaries and authority claims continually reified and affirmed. With Muteze showing me the map, it was clear that written sources and cartographic representations – and, in this case, old ethnological publications and maps – together with creating symbolic and ancestral ties to the land and (re)enacting and (re)remembering shared social histories of migration and settlement – were powerful technologies and narratives in (re)asserting authority, especially in a context of contestation. Moreover, competing claims to authority were thwarted as *opolotika* and in doing so invoked a politics of custom,⁵⁵⁹ with *opolotika* situated in opposition to *ombazu*. In making this opposition, some relations of authority were thus delegated to the realm of tradition and custom (*ombazu*), which occupies a normative field of stability and of “community, unity, peace and harmony”, whilst other relations of authority and in opposition were categorised and addressed as *opolotika* and thus relegated rather to a normative field characterised by divisiveness and conflict.⁵⁶⁰

Furthermore, and as I will examine in subsequent chapters, these struggles over authority were also finding expression in the different newcomers, and were both shaping and being shaped by changing regional patterns of pastoral and household migrations, and a general increase in livestock and socio-spatial mobilities fuelled by an extended drought period, starting in 2012.

⁵⁵⁹ Friedman, *Imagining*.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 225

Chapter 4 Everyday relatedness and (im)mobilities in Ozondundu

Introduction

On one of the many occasions, we drove from Opuwo back to Otjomatamba, we stopped to greet a friend, Ngavahue Katundu, *osoromana* Muteze's second wife, at Otjize – the rainy-season cattle-post. Turning off the main road we drove into their cattle-post, consisting of four small houses facing towards the road, spread out some distance apart in a half-moon shape and enfolding the kraal in front – a few small, lone acacia trees providing shade. We found Ngavahue sitting in front of her house, her self-made signature patchwork and Victorian-styled long-dress (Sg. *ohorokweva*, Pl. *ozohorokweva*)⁵⁶¹ billowing over and concealing the chair she was sitting on.

A light purple shawl (*otjikeriwa*) was draped over her shoulders, and she was wearing one of her headdresses (*otjikaiva*). The *ohorokweva* and its layers of underskirts were practically tied (*okuhuta*) around her waist with a piece of fabric to not drag in the sand and to allow her to move easier whilst working – escorting the cattle to the earth dams, fetching water for household use, or the various other daily tasks required to manage the cattle-post. When guests arrived, she discretely loosens this bind, allowing the dress to reach its full length. However, on this day and as it was only us and female friends, she remained seated, waiting for us to disembark. Usually someone with ready warmth, sharp humour, and keen awareness, on this day she seemed despondent and depressed. She was sitting alone with *tjikuu* (grandmother) – Muteze's mother. The other houses were closed and locked. After greetings she explained to us what was bothering her: “*Mba staka*” (I am stuck), she asserted, sighing.

She had wanted to travel to Opuwo during the past week. Her sister was living and working there, selling grilled meat (*kapana*), and was in the latter stages of her pregnancy. News had reached her that her time was getting close. She wanted to assist and care for her after the birth. She did not go because her husband had asked her to remain to manage the cattle-post and care for *tjikuu* whilst he was away. The day before she had walked into the mountain valley and climbed one of the many interlocking hills which surrounded their cattle-post to access the limited cell phone network. From here she called her mother to inform her about the situation.

Two days later however we visited Otjize again in the late afternoon and found Ngavahue at her house – this time she was her usual spirited self, standing ready with two large, packed suitcases, waiting for us. She had reached an agreement with her husband to travel to Opuwo and to remain there

⁵⁶¹For an ethnographic and historical engagement with the Victorian-styled ‘long dress’ see Hildi Hendrickson, “The ‘Long’ Dress and the Construction of Herero Identities in Southern Africa,” *African Studies* 53, no. 2 (1994); and also, Hildi Hendrickson, “Bodies and Flags: The Representation of Herero Identity in Colonial Namibia,” in *Clothing and Difference: Embodied Identities in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa*, ed. Hildi Hendrickson, Body, commodity, text (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996).

for an extended visit. Not wanting to keep her belongings at the cattle-post, she planned to store them at the house in Otjomatamba. From there she was planning to hitchhike to town with her teenage daughter. We quickly loaded their belongings into my car. The day was drawing to a close and we still needed to go to the network location in Otjomatamba to inform her family of her travel plans.

Arriving, we parked under the usual tree which marked the beginning of the pathway at the foot of a mountain. We soon reached the steeper climb and slowly ascended, our breaths catching in our throats. Once almost at the top, we scattered and found a place to sit and make our calls away from the others – our voices carrying across the valleys. As we finished and started descending with the last light of the day, Ngavahue shared with us that her sister had given birth and that all was well. We then left Ngavahue and her daughter at one of the three stores in Otjomatamba, greeting her warmly, knowing that she would be away for some time, caring for her sister and the newly arrived family member.



Everyday life in southern Kaoko is characterised by the regular comings and goings of people – shaped by the practice of translocal and multilocal households, the seasonal movements of livestock and people to and between cattle-posts (*okutjinda ohambo*), rural-rural household migrations (*okutjinda onganda*), as well as oscillatory labour migration to urban and rural elsewhere. Moreover, culturally, and socially significant events such as funerals, the search for health care, as well as obligations towards extended kin and family, generated regular travelling (*okuyenda*) between places and towns. People's coming and going were also coloured by desires for being *less* mobile – for coming to rest (*okusuva*) or articulated through experiences of being stuck (*okustaka*), of being immobile, or of having to navigate travelling and movement in relation to others (human and nonhuman), and situated norms, technologies, infrastructures, and ecologies.

This chapter introduces and sketches the wider ethnographic and normative context within which the dispute was embedded and took place. In particular, it focuses on delineating some of the norms and vernacular rhythms and patterns of “dwelling and travelling”⁵⁶² which characterised everyday life. In doing so, I trace the interrelations between social and spatial (im)mobilities and how everyday reiterative social, itinerant, and economic practices and livestock movements and exchange worked in integrating different localities and (re)producing relatedness and belonging – specifically “situated and changing everyday belongingness” and translocal place-relations, households and livelihoods.⁵⁶³ Furthermore, this chapter tries to elucidate the social power relations within which belonging and mobility were practiced and (re)produced in the everyday.

The chapter's first part describes the Ozondundu place-relations from the perspective of recent patterns of neolocal household migration. In doing so, I engage with and describe some of the gendered and social norms governing residency patterns and settlement. The subsequent section details the

⁵⁶² Salazar, “Towards,” 55.

⁵⁶³ Youkhana, “conceptual,” 11.

everyday practice of kin-relatedness and dual descent reckoning, with a focus on mobile childhood biographies, paternal child claims and social parenting. The aim here is to illustrate the fluidity in household compositions, the centrality of kin-relatedness as a social practice, and the everyday and intersectional dynamics animating the creation and imagining of place-belonging(s), especially translocal place-belonging. This is followed by an overview of the regional, unequal, and gendered pastoral economies and how this shapes the dynamics of exchange and mobility.

In the next section, and through examples from Otjomatamba and Okarumbu, I describe the differential household economies and the heterogeneity of land-use and economic practices within this context, including the prevalence of both multilocal and translocal households and livelihoods. “Residential multi-locality” can be understood as “multilocal practices when one or several persons concurrently maintain two or several residencies in different places, use them alternately and are physically present for a specific period of time.”⁵⁶⁴ On the other hand, “translocality” can be understood as a “system of social relations evolving between the everyday activities of the actors concerned and the inhabitants of diverse places”, whilst the “physical presence of the interaction partners at the places involved is not required.”⁵⁶⁵ In delineating some of these translocal households, I also show how they were co-constituted through “translocal social practices”,⁵⁶⁶ including gendered (im)mobilities and matrifocality.

This chapter furthermore discusses past and present patterns of oscillatory labour migration and how these shaped patterns of translocality. In contemporary Kaoko many continue to partake in oscillatory labour migration which in turn creates a demand for pastoral labour. Through ethnographic examples, emerging patterns of rural-rural and transnational labour migration are thus also explored. In this regard, I illustrate how relative strangers were incorporated into places and households and the flexible belongings which were at work within such situations. This is followed by a final section on funeral events (*ondiro*). Perhaps more than any other social kinetics, funerals were the main reason for the regular coming and going of people between places and extended stays and visits elsewhere. These gatherings not only drew close kin but also wider social networks and were thus key arenas for the negotiation and enactment of shared and intersecting forms of social and political belonging. Funeral gatherings are intricate and complex events, and thus I only touch on some elements to sketch their importance in enacting public and collective life and sociality within Kaoko, including “translocal social fields”.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁴ Peter Weichhart, “Multi-Local Living Arrangements—terminology Issues,” *Mobil und doppelt sesshaft. Studien zur residenziellen Multilokalität. Institut für Geographie und Regionalforschung der Universität Wien, Vienna*, 2015, 65.

⁵⁶⁵ Weichhart, “Multi,” 64.

⁵⁶⁶ Greiner, “Patterns.”

⁵⁶⁷ Greiner and Sakdapolrak, “Translocality,” 375.

Neolocal household migration and gendered norms

The majority of the more or less 18 homesteads constituting Otjomatempa were established as persons moved from their home and ancestral places of Okakuyu, Otjapitjapi and Otjomaoru either to establish their own homestead or a second homestead and/or cattle-posts. Within southern Kaoko's Otjiherero-speaking societies, and as a person matures and with marriage, it was often expected to establish an independent homestead and start building up your livestock herds. Marriage (*orukupo*) as an institution was thus central in signifying a shift into adulthood (especially for men)⁵⁶⁸ and in the negotiation of residency patterns, kinship, and livestock exchanges.

Customary marriage ceremonies⁵⁶⁹ were usually clustered together during the holiday month of December to allow people working elsewhere – in Opuwo or other urban centres – to partake in the celebrations. It was here that the cattle fat (*omaze*) was applied, signifying the changing of the woman's patriclan to that of her husband. A sheep was slaughtered, with the couple eating the meat together (*okurya motjoto*) which consecrated the marriage. In belonging now to her husband's patriclan and according to (part) virilocal settlement norms, married women were expected to migrate to the husband's home-place/area, first residing for some time – more or less one year – at his ancestral homestead, before moving to other cattle-post places, or establishing autonomous homesteads. Yet these socio-spatial practices were also dependent on different marriage arrangements – whether it was a monogamous or polygynous marriage – and the kin-relation between marriage partners.

Despite part-virilocal norms, marriage arrangements, especially amongst older generations, were often between cross-cousins (*ovaramwe*), with at least five married women in Otjomatempa being from the neighbouring Otjomaoru and many of the married men being either from Otjapitjapi or Otjomaoru. This wove together the different households according to multiple levels of shared kin-relatedness and meant that not all women migrated far from their home-places and remained within the historically shared land-use communities of their natal kin. Moreover, within my area of research, monogamous marriages were the majority, with polygynous marriages being rare and confined to wealthy stock-owners and households. In terms of polygynous marriages, living arrangements varied, with some making use of translocal households, with the senior wife managing the ancestral homestead, and the second and/or third wives managing their homesteads at respective cattle-posts (junior homesteads) or other settled-places. In other instances, co-wives lived together at the main homestead, or senior wives managed cattle-posts whilst recently married co-wives remained at the ancestral homestead during the first year/months of marriage. In cases where wedding ceremonies were delayed, married couples also lived together many years before being married. It was also not uncommon for persons to marry much later in life.

⁵⁶⁸ See Van Wolputte, "Sex."

⁵⁶⁹ Apart from customary marriages, some also married through civil law, or through both.

Bridal livestock exchanges amongst Kaoko's Herero/Himba and Otjiherero-speaking societies varied to some extent, but, in most cases, the man and his family were expected to pay a bridal exchange of three cattle – one big ox and two calves – one medium-sized male and one female calf – or three sheep, to the women's family/parents. In case of divorce, the female calf/cow could be claimed back, whilst the big ox was usually, although not always, slaughtered at the ceremony. With these bridal exchanges not being excessive, it was easier for women to initiate divorce (*okupakura*) and to separate when desired. Despite the importance of marriage, there was little to no stigma attached to divorce – a reality which gave women considerable agency in negotiating marital arrangements and relationships and if so desired, in establishing their autonomous homesteads.⁵⁷⁰

However, in initiating a divorce, the woman was usually expected to migrate from her marital residence and place, and to return to her parents'/maternal uncle/brothers' homestead. Similarly, on becoming widowed, a woman's place-belonging and land-access were re-configured, and ownership of the house was transferred. The inheritance regimes at work during my research dictated that widows and the homestead of the deceased, together with the majority of the herd, be taken over by the younger brother (matrilineally related). Widowed women could, however, refuse such marriage arrangement in which case she would move away from her marital home and back to her natal kin. However, the forced out-migration of widows and divorced women also strongly depended on the "wishes of her affinal and consanguineal kin, the number and gender of her children, and her own health and wealth status"⁵⁷¹ as well as local residency patterns. Thus, although land and tenure rights were configured according to particular gendered norms, this was negotiated in practice. This was illustrated in the example of one of the woman-headed households in Otjomatamba:

I regularly found Jariombonge Jaunda – a 50-year-old woman – seated on the cool cement floor of her house. Here, during the hot mid-afternoons when most people retreated into their homes, she would work on her sewing machine, creating new or patching-up old *ozohorokweva*. Jariombonge, who lived with her adult son and other adult children who came and went in between stints of employment elsewhere, was from the neighbouring settled-place of Okakuyu (see Map 3). She divorced in 2005 after having married a man from Otjapitjapi in 1987. In 2010 she decided to start her homestead after having returned to Okakuyu and finding Otjomatamba to be a good choice.

Jariombonge had eight children. Of these, a number were based elsewhere, in towns and urban centres. For example, during the year of my research, one of her daughters worked for the Namibian Defence Force (NDF) in the urban centre of Grootfontein and another had her own business selling *otjikeriva* (shawls) and a nail salon in Opuwo – with both occasionally sending remittances to their mother in the form of food or money. One of her sons also worked for some time elsewhere. Apart from remittances, Jariombonge survived through livestock ownership. In total, her homestead had 20 head of cattle and 20 goats. Six of these cattle her *inyangu* (her father's younger brother) loaned to her, while eight belonged to her daughter, four to herself, and another two to other children. Twelve of the goats were owned by Jariombonge, while the rest belonged to two of her sons.

⁵⁷⁰Also see Brooke A. Scelza, "Female Mobility and Postmarital Kin Access in a Patrilocal Society," *Human Nature* 22, no. 4 (2011) and Van Wolputte, "Sex."

⁵⁷¹ Scelza, "Female," 390.

As illustrated, the establishment of matrifocal households after divorce or becoming widowed was not stigmatised – an autonomy fostered through the support networks produced through male patronage and livestock loans, adult children working elsewhere, who maintained close emotional and material investment in the rural homes, and co-habitation with adult children or other kin who assisted in taking care of the livestock. Jariombonge⁵⁷² also shared with us that she did not have an interest in getting married again: it was easier to be a woman alone – you had freedom, explaining that when she divorced, she had thought about it for a long time: she was always alone at the homestead, whilst her husband stayed in Opuwo. In other words, married women were often expected to remain and head rural homesteads, while married men were freer to negotiate their time and days between the rural homes, cattle-posts, and towns. Thus, marriage and more importantly, matrifocality, were important in local conceptions of the homestead and the establishment of autonomous and homestead-centred economies.

In general, the house (*ondjuwo*) was understood as a female-centred space, and it was not uncommon during my research to be told that “a homestead is only a homestead when there is a woman” or “a woman is the homestead” (*omukazendu onganda*). This expression was reflective both of hegemonic constructions of femininity in which women were associated with the hearth, with domesticity, and seen as the main household labourers (including pastoral labour), as well as with the deeper symbolic and moral importance associated with ancestral mothers. Thus, it was through the matrilineage (*eanda*) that all the children born in the household became tethered to a shared and intimate kin-belonging. However, as noted above, for women (and in this research context), marriage meant not only a re-configuration of her place and kin-belonging but also an enfolding into different norms governing her corporeal and socio-spatial mobility. To give another short example:

Ngaizuvarue, a married woman in her later 30s, in many ways, embodied the dominant ideals of Herero female propriety and femininity expected of married women (of a certain generation).⁵⁷³ She could mostly be found at her homestead, which was kept meticulously organised and clean, and always dressed in a signature patchwork and house *ohorokweva*. She explained to us that even when she had, in the past, walked to their cattle-post in the mountains, she would wear the *ohorokweva* – despite it being difficult (*ouzeu*). Moreover, when she was in her house without her *otjikaiva* (the headdress) and she just needed to stir the pot, she would first put on her *otjikaiva* before heading outside.⁵⁷⁴ In other words: she would never be seen moving in the homestead and the place without it. We often found her usually busy either with household or pastoral work, milking, looking after the young ones she was raising, or sewing. If she left the homestead, Ngaizuvarue could be recognised from afar by her signature walk – distinctly slow, rhythmic, and graceful in its movement, her one hand catching the fold of her dress.

Within this context, gendered norms governing understandings of femininity, propriety, and the attendant bodily practices were strongly, albeit not exclusively, tied up with the *ohorokweva onde*

⁵⁷² 05.06.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba

⁵⁷³ In multiple informal conversations it was clear that these dominant ideals were changing and continually challenged by the younger generation, and especially by younger women whose aspirations leaned rather towards seeking education and employment elsewhere.

⁵⁷⁴ *Onduru* – or to be without an *otjikaiva* or a headdress of one or another kind was generally a taboo for married women, especially at the homestead and ancestral homestead.

(literally, ‘the long dress’)⁵⁷⁵ – which most married women were expected to wear within the village setting. Moreover, apart from one’s corporeal embodiment, in being and becoming a married ‘Herero’ woman, visiting a lot (*okurihanga*) and regularly being on-the-move – between homesteads and places – was negatively judged and stigmatised. Hence, married Herero women’s “public mobility”⁵⁷⁶ was often scrutinised. However, the entwinement of women and the house also reflected the matrifocality of residency patterns within southern Kaoko.

While matrifocal homesteads – headed by divorced, widowed or unmarried women – were fairly common, unmarried men often co-habited with (female) siblings (*omuṭena*) or with married brothers (*erumbi/omuangu*) or uncles (*ongundue*). Moreover, unmarried men also risked being stigmatised – depending on their life trajectories. For example, within Otjomatamba, there were two unmarried men in their 60s who lived with their older brothers and often came and went. Both of them jokingly self-identified as *osondoro*. This term had different meanings but usually referred to a person who did not like being with others or to be home – a wanderer – or in a more negative sense, as someone who was stealing or taking the livestock of others. It was also used to describe a person roaming around, yet never bringing something home, or building up his/her herd and establishing a homestead of his/her own (which were still predominantly associated with marriage, and with having a woman managing the household and co-managing the livestock).



Image 4: Making a house a home: a decorated homestead in Odera.⁵⁷⁷

Apart from Otjomatamba, the rhizomatic expansion and neo-local household migration within the mountainous area of Ozondundu also extended to Okarumbu – the dry-season cattle-post situated about

⁵⁷⁵See Hendrickson, “long.”

⁵⁷⁶ Dorothy L. Hodgson, “Gender, Culture & the Myth of the Patriarchal Pastoralist,” in Hodgson, *Rethinking Pastoralism in Africa*, 8.

⁵⁷⁷ Photograph taken by Elsemi Olwage

15-20 km to the north in a wide valley (*omupoko*). Here there were more or less eight to ten homesteads, including the homestead of *osoromana* Muteze, with the majority being from the ancestral homesteads at Okakuyu, Otjapitjapi, or Otjomaoru (See Map 3). For example, two of Muteze's married nephews (*ovasia*) – both from Otjomaoru – had their homesteads in Okarumbu with their wives, who were also from Otjomaoru and were sisters. They had decided to move to Okarumbu to establish their homesteads after marriage. Koumbere (35) and Yasionapara Uaroua (30), the two sisters, explained that in Otjomaoru it was difficult to live together in a shared homestead. One woman would escort (*okurisa*) the calves and ask, "Why me again?" Gossip was also a problem and therefore they thought it better to establish autonomous households. However, the biggest reason was to access grazing and to build up their herds. Thus, although being a cattle-post place initially, many had, over the years, established more permanent homesteads (*ozonganda*) in Okarumbu – illustrative of the dynamics of place-formation within southern Kaoko. As one person explained:

"Okarumbu was initially a cattle-post to Otjomatamba, but due to lack of rain we have stayed for a long time in Okarumbu and it turned to be our homestead (*onganda*) while Otjize is now regarded as a cattle-post to Okarumbu."⁵⁷⁸

Everyday kin-relatedness and dual descent reckoning

Household compositions and intra-household relations within southern Kaoko were however also characterised by fluidity, with shifts in residencies potentially taking place several times during a person's life and life trajectories shaped by mobile childhood biographies. Such relational movements thus also co-produced a person's place-belonging(s), social networks and potential future access to resources and settlement (*okutura*) and scripted particular translocal place-relations and belonging. To illustrate my point, in the next section, I discuss distributed practices of care, paternal child claims and polyamorous relationships. Before doing so, a short note on terminology and how people practiced kin-relatedness here.

Amongst Otjiherero-speaking societies and as a woman, all your sisters' children were considered your children (Sg. *omuatje* Pl. *ovanatje*) as well. On the other hand, your brothers' children were your nephews and nieces (Sg. *omusia*, Pl. *ovasia*). Thus, whereas your father's brothers and mother's sister's children (your parallel cousins) were your siblings, your father's sisters' and mother's brothers' children were your cross-cousins (Sg. *omuramue*, Pl. *ovaramue*). Moreover, your mother's sisters were your mothers as well – with her younger sisters being your *mama ngero*, and her older sisters your *mama tjiveri*. Again, your father's brothers were also your fathers, with your father's younger brother being your *inyangu* and older brother being your *tate munene*. On the other hand, your mother's brothers were your uncles (*ongundue*), and your father's sisters, were your aunts (*hongaze*). Additionally, understandings and notions of parenthood and sisterhood/brotherhood/cousinage as well as who constituted your uncle and aunts were shaped by successive generations of sibling relations.

⁵⁷⁸ Katjetjua Mukuaruze, 31.03.2015, recorded interview, Otjize

Thus, a crucial aspect of local practices of kinship was the “recurrence of the sibling relationship through successive generations in parallel lines of descent”⁵⁷⁹ – a relation determined by the relation between one’s parents. During interviews or day-to-day conversations, such relations were often visually illustrated by drawing three parallel lines with a stick on the ground, or on one’s arm, tracing back current relations to the relations between one’s grandparents or great-grandparents and depending on a person’s social knowledge. Hence (classificatory) sister/brotherhood/cousinage could be based on whether one’s grandmothers or great-grandmothers were sisters, or whether your grandparents were brother and sister (hence the recurrence of the sibling relationship referred to above). Practices of extended kin-relatedness thus coloured flexible mobilisations of ‘cousinage’ and understandings of who constituted a desired marriage partner, whilst simultaneously extending one’s networks of close kin and who could be made close kin and family.

Moreover, this also meant that understandings of parenthood were multiple, extended, flexible and more encompassing than those embedded in “Euro-American ideals of nuclear family life and biological parenthood.”⁵⁸⁰ Rather than being rooted in understandings of biological determinism and exclusivity, parenthood was relationally negotiated, and the practices and care involved in raising a person (*okukurisa*) played an important part in fostering intimate kin and familial relatedness. As a consequence, one’s home-place (*koyetu*) and residency patterns were not exclusively constituted through clan relatedness and according to fixed kinship categories, but also negotiated through everyday social and care practices. Children were regularly raised (*okukurisa*) and cared for by women/households other than their birth mother and/or father and natal-kin – most commonly by the paternal or maternal (great) grandmothers (*mukurukaze*), aunts (*hongaze*, father’s sister), or one of the sisters of one’s (grand)mother – in which case by your *mama tjiveri* or *mama ngero*. These distributed networks of care meant that children frequently moved between multiple residences during their early and school-going years, which, in turn, shaped their socio-spatial trajectories and place-belonging(s) in their adult lives. These practices were also shaped by paternal child claims as well as informal fostering and adoption – with an important determinant of where a person was raised and by whom is whether he/she was born inside or outside of wedlock.

Despite the importance of marriage, household compositions and the (re)production of kin-relatedness have to be simultaneously situated relative to the prevalence of polyamorous relationships. In other words, marriage was not understood as being about exclusivity. During the Herero marriage ceremonies, women were usually addressed at the ancestral shrine and given advice (*omaronga*) as to how to behave as married women. One married woman explained to me that, you were encouraged not to command your husband, and not to “tie-up the husband”.⁵⁸¹ In other words, he should be free to

⁵⁷⁹ Gibson, “Double,” 128.

⁵⁸⁰ Caroline Archambault, “Fixing Families of Mobile Children: Recreating Kinship and Belonging Among Maasai Adoptees in Kenya,” *Childhood* 17, no. 2 (2010): 232.

⁵⁸¹ Kavangerue Uaroua, 21.05.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba

move, and “hunt” for other women, another person explained. As has been noted by Van Wolputte,⁵⁸² “kinship (hence social life, politics, the lifeworld) in north-western Namibia cannot be understood without reference to polyamorous sexuality.” Married men and women often had lasting relationships outside of marriage – with these relations being a kind of a “public secret” and loverhood working as a form of “shadow institution” which, together with marriage, was valued both for personal and social well-being.⁵⁸³ However, as a “shadow institution” these extramarital, polyamorous relationships were also governed by highly situated, often strict, gendered and changing sets of unspoken rules and norms. As explained to me, women were expected to keep their lovers secret and arrange to meet them away from their homesteads and home-places, hidden from public view and knowledge, and especially from their husbands,⁵⁸⁴ whereas married men, were usually expected to inform their wives of the relationship and the person involved, especially when it led to pregnancy and children.

Thus, as one married woman explained: “If he is going somewhere, it is because the wife is also allowing it”. Once the wife is informed and has accepted the situation, this extra-marital relationship can be made public knowledge and the man was free to move between his homestead and that of his other relationship(s) – dividing his nights spent between different places/homesteads. In some cases, these relationships also developed into a polygynous marriage or led to children. Still, it was notable that married men had more freedom to move between their marital home and those of their girlfriend(s) – depending on the arrangements with their wives. Moreover, getting pregnant with your lover’s child was generally not as acceptable as with men and, if this happened, the child would come to belong to your husband and his patrilineage. Nevertheless, a married woman exercised quite a large degree of agency in negotiating marital relationships and arrangements – especially as she could initiate divorce and was understood to form the (matrifocal) centre of a household’s socio-material and moral well-being. With women owning their livestock – albeit few – this also provided some autonomy and economic power within households. Unmarried women in this context also had a large degree of autonomy in pursuing independent lives and exercised a degree of agency in negotiating their sexuality, reproductive histories, and life trajectories – with both men and women often having children before marriage – a practice which was not stigmatised but rather encouraged.

Still, within southern Kaoko, cultural norms dictated that for children born outside of wedlock, the father and father’s family had the first right to claim the child – to be raised on the father-side, either by himself, his/her paternal grandmothers, paternal aunts or by other care-givers. Paternal child claims were usually negotiated between the elders and required material forms of support even during the pregnancy. This involved the gifting of a goat or sheep during the pregnancy and at the birth – as well as the gifting of one head of cattle (a small weaner) to the women’s family if the child was claimed.

⁵⁸² Van Wolputte, “Sex,” 5.

⁵⁸³ Ibid., 6-8

⁵⁸⁴ This seemed to be different in other parts of Kaoko and as described by Van Wolputte, with women’s extramarital relations being more openly accepted.

When the child is claimed, cow-fat is applied to her/his forehead at the father's ancestral shrine – signifying the changing of her/his patriclan from that of the birth mother's father to that of *his* father. Although unmarried and divorced mothers had some agency in negotiating these paternal claims, from my various conversations it seemed that paternal belonging was highly valued and desired.

This paternal claiming could take place at any point in a person's life, and it was not uncommon for a child to still be raised by his mother and mother's family (especially where other caregivers were lacking) despite having been claimed and to only move to the homestead of his father later, or to reside and move between the mother's and father's home-place(s). Many fathers also did not claim their children. This seemed to be quite a common practice during my research and meant that, increasingly, patrilineal belonging was established through one's mother's father. To extricate some of these intersectional dynamics that animate one's translocal place-belonging within this context, the following section delineates fragments of Ngavahue Katundu's biography and life trajectory. Unlike some of the other married women in Otjomatamba, she was a relative outsider and did not come from Otjomaoru or the neighbouring places:

Ngavahue was born in 1977 and grew up in Okorosave, a place more or less 15 km south of Opuwo. She was raised by her maternal great-grandmother. She was her mother's first born and her great-grandmother took her to be raised from an early age. Ngavahue loved her great-grandmother, and they had a close relationship. Her mother married at Okavare, not to her father, but to another man, migrating there soon after and leaving Ngavahue to be raised in Okorosave. Her biological father passed away when she was young. The father's family came to ask for her when she was already at school. She then changed her surname and patriclan (*oruzo*) to her father's side. The ancestral shrine of her father-side was at Otuvero. In being claimed, her great-grandmother was given five goats and blankets which had belonged to her father – part inheritance, part exchange.

While she belonged to the patriclan of her father-side, she was informed that her father also had fathers who had not asked for him but were now asking for her. She wondered: "Now they are claiming me, but they did not claim their son?" They came to claim her through her maternal grandfather who told them that "It is not us who can make the decision, just go to Otuvero and ask there". Now she belongs to the Mbinge homestead at Otjitoko. If her husband had a problem, he would have to go to Otjitoko. But if she wanted to divorce, she would go to Otuvero.⁵⁸⁵

Although Ngavahue was raised in Okorosave and considered this to be her home-place, paternal claims, first by her father's matrilineal family, and later by her paternal grandfathers, produced and extended her kin-relatedness and place-belongings. Since her father was never claimed, she was first taken to belong to his maternal grandfather's patriclan, based at Otuvero. However, eventually, her paternal grandfather claimed her and after negotiations between the (male) elders, she was taken to belong to the paternal grandfather's ancestral shrine and patriclan at Otjitoko. This foregrounded the importance placed on establishing one's paternal and patrilineal belonging within this context: One's connections to one's fathers (*ovataate*). Ngavahue had met *osoromana* Muteze whilst working in Opuwo. He 'proposed' to her, but it had been her *mama ngero* (the younger sister of her great grandmother) who

⁵⁸⁵ 06.01.2016, unrecorded interview, Otjize

advised her, saying “Maybe that one will be the right one for you”. After that, she and Muteze stayed together for some time, and they talked about marriage. Ngavahue thus migrated to Okarumbu in 2010 and subsequently belonged to Muteze’s patriline and ancestral homestead at Otjapitjapi. Thus, despite the gendered norms and patriarchal structures governing tenure within this context, women’s access to land and resources likewise has to be situated with the ongoing practice of dual descent reckoning and as simultaneously shaped by their roles as daughters/sisters/mothers/nieces/grandmothers.⁵⁸⁶

Mobile childhood biographies were also scripted by the common practice of asking for a child (*okuhungire/ndji pao omuatje*) or ‘taking’ a child (*okukambura omuatje*) – with the time and whether it involved fostering or adoption depending on the persons and situation involved. These practices usually involved another woman/household offering help to distribute the work of care – in cases where the mother was struggling, for instance, where children were born in close succession, or a household lacked economic means⁵⁸⁷ – or otherwise involved children being asked for by others where their own were lacking, where the child needed to reside closer to schooling opportunities, and/or where personal attachment and love inspired such asking (to name some circumstantial dynamics). In these cases, children would normally be given/asked for at an early age.

In a conversation with Uatara Uaroua,⁵⁸⁸ a married woman in her forties, she explained that when children were asked for, they were usually given. However, children “are not just given like a goat”. First, there are discussions: The person would have to explain to the elders why he/she was asking for the child and the person’s background and economic situation had to be known. Yet according to Uatara, if you were married, “it [was] just for the woman to give birth” – with the husband deciding on such cases. If he refused, an asked child would not be given. For her, she would accept giving to her siblings and (grand) mothers – but even to a good friend who was not an ‘*omuherero*’ if she knew the person’s situation – saying “take the child” (*kambura omuatje*). Ngaizuvarue Herunga,⁵⁸⁹ another married woman in her late 30s also explained:

If you ask a child (*ndjipao omuatje*), the child’s mother will inform you to whom you must go to speak. You will not come with all of your family. You will just go and speak to the appropriate person. Sometimes as a mother, you could feel the pressure to give, perhaps you will miss the child, but when you decide, you will accept it.

Nevertheless, he/she will know you to be the mother or know the mother-side family: “Your child remains your child and will come to your funeral.” However, in the case of adoption full disclosure of the birth mother or natal kin was not always practiced, and many persons testified to only finding out who their birth mothers were much later in life. These moments of disclosure were not always

⁵⁸⁶ Also see Hodgson, “Gender,” 8.

⁵⁸⁷ Also see, for example, Silke Tönsjost, *Umverteilung Und Egalität: Kapital Und Konsummuster Bei Ovaherero-Pastoralisten in Namibia* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2013), 64.

⁵⁸⁸ 12.06.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba

⁵⁸⁹ 15.07.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba

considered significant, especially in cases where children had loving relations with the adoptive family/mothers. Yet although non-exclusivity and acceptance were the norms governing “social parenting”⁵⁹⁰ practices, attachments and relations have to be understood as emotional, affective, and idiosyncratic and, after being raised elsewhere, many children chose to return to their natal-kin or could be called/fetched by other siblings or kin to live together. For example, another young married woman explained that one of her sons was asked for by her grandmother and consequently taken to be raised by her. However, she had at some point taken him back, saying: “You have taken my son away from me”.

Still, and to give an indication of the prevalence of social parenting, of the 48 homesteads with whom we conducted a household census, 136 children were noted as *not* having been raised by their birth mothers – with the majority being raised by either their maternal or paternal grandmothers, great-grandmothers, their mother’s sisters, or their father. Other caregivers included aunts, nieces, and cousins of their birth mother. Children often also moved between different caregivers and households at different periods of their lives, depending, for example, on schooling opportunities. This is illustrated in a final example below:

One evening I heard a baby crying at Ngaizuvarue’s homestead, which neighboured ours. This was unusual and I assumed they had visitors. The next morning when we stopped to greet, Ngaizuvarue looked tired. When I inquired about the visitors, she informed us that her husband’s sister brought her daughter of under a year to be raised by them. She explained that she had also helped raise another daughter of hers, who stayed with them until she started school, after which her mother fetched her to go and live in Opuwo, where she was employed. Ngaizuvarue noted that this had happened without any prior consultation with her – despite being the primary caregiver. The agreements were made between her husband and his sister. She was only told – “Now, this daughter will stay here with you.” But she just kept quiet. When the other daughter was taken away, she had also kept quiet. Ngaizuvarue said this without a trace of self-pity in her voice and with her signature confidence.

At this point, Ngaizuvarue was also already raising and caring for Katjiko, who was around four years of age. Katjiko’s mother had struggled to care for her due to being employed in Opuwo. She had approached Tobias’ wife, Teresia, Katjiko’s paternal aunt (*hongaze*), to raise her. Katjiko’s father proceeded to give a cow to the mother’s side so that she could be given to the father’s family (in Otjomatamba) to be raised. It was Teresia who had in the end approached Ngaizuvarue to raise Katjiko and she had accepted.

Ngaizuvarue herself was raised by a woman other than her birth-mother. She had been asked (*okuhungire*) by this person who saw that her mother was struggling and needed help. Although having accepted her extended care responsibilities, the pride Ngaizuvarue took in her work and role as care-taker and foster mother seemed to carry a strong sense of social power and moral authority – which was also recognised by others.

With the work of care primarily falling to the women, this produced strongly gendered labour relations. However, this “informal kinship-based fostering”⁵⁹¹ also created an ever-extending women-centred network through which care was distributed and shared, and where kin-relatedness, belonging and

⁵⁹⁰ Archambault, “Fixing,” 232.

⁵⁹¹ Jessaca Leinaweaver, “Informal Kinship-based Fostering Around the World: Anthropological Findings,” *Child development perspectives* 8, no. 3 (2014).

place-relations were actively and creatively produced, expanded, and extended through everyday social practices. In many instances, it also enabled the social and spatial mobility of younger or unmarried women, who then pursued formal and informal employment and education elsewhere, or travelled between places – caring for elders, pursuing the seasonal cultivation of rain gardens elsewhere, or engaging in small-scale enterprises.

Navigating gendered and unequal pastoral economies

In Kaoko, people continued to struggle to access fair and viable livestock markets due to colonial legacies of past “restrictive policy on livestock marketing”⁵⁹² as well as lack of transport opportunities. Moreover, slaughtering one’s livestock for subsistence constituted a potential risk in terms of losing the means to negotiate future circumstances and uncertainties, such as being able to sell a goat for money to travel to urban centres for needed health care, or to gift and slaughter livestock for key cultural, ritual, and funeral events. Consequently, most households negotiated their livelihoods through a diversity of economic strategies: Practicing rain-fed agriculture, producing and sharing milk products, the seasonal harvesting of veld foods and plants, reliance on state social grants and remittances, and engaging in oscillatory or permanent wage labour elsewhere. People’s comings and goings were thus closely entangled with these heterogeneous economic and livelihood practices. However, apart from the ongoing movements of people between residencies and houses, livestock exchanges, gifting, and loans also continually worked materially and symbolically to produce, reproduce, and express local kin, socio-political, ritual and translocal place relations.

Across Kaoko, livestock ownership, and especially cattle ownership, was still one of the central measurements of wealth, well-being, and cultural and social belonging.⁵⁹³ Yet Kaoko’s regional pastoral economies were also marked by inequalities, with these playing an important part in shaping different land-use practices and patterns of mobility and settlement, as well as gendered and generational conceptions of power and authority. To illustrate the extent of livestock wealth inequalities within the larger regional context, Table 2 gives the numbers collected in the household census conducted in 2015 with the 48 homesteads in the settled places of Omao 1 and 2, and Ondera, all three in the neighbouring conservancies of Okangundumba and Otjambangu.⁵⁹⁴ Of the 48, only two were cattle-posts – with the rest being permanent homesteads.

⁵⁹² Bollig, *Risk*, 166.

⁵⁹³ See, for instance, Bollig, *Risk*; and Tönsjost, *Umverteilung*.

⁵⁹⁴ This household census was conducted between July and November 2015 as part of the LINGS project.

Table 1: Livestock ownership: distribution and range

Cattle number categories	Number of households	Small-stock number categories (goats and sheep)	Number of households
0 – 20	15	0 – 20	9
20 – 70	25	20 – 70	20
70 -150	3	70 -150	14
150 -200	2	150-200	1
200 -300	3	200-300	3
More than 300	0	More than 300	1

These numbers should be contextualised concerning the 2012-2014 drought period which affected these places severely. During the census, 12 homesteads reported a loss of between 20 to 70 head of cattle during this time, whilst two of the wealthier stock owners lost over 100 and 150 cattle respectively by the end of 2015. And secondly, even though the majority of households were permanent, some of the wealthier stock owners frequently kept part of their herds elsewhere – in other settled or cattle-post places – with close kin and through established patron-client relations. Nevertheless, what was evident was that the majority of homesteads had 70 or fewer head of cattle, with only three owning between 200 and 300 head of cattle. Moreover, quite a substantial number – 15 homesteads – had less than 20 head of cattle. Small-stock ownership was similar, although there were a larger number of homesteads that owned larger herds of small-stock, only four homesteads had more than 200 small-stock. High stocking rates were thus concentrated in the upper two to three per cent of homesteads. In Otjomatamba and Okarumbu, the distribution of livestock wealth was similar. In Otjomatamba we recorded only two households owning 100 head of cattle, whilst two households owned less than 10 head of cattle. However, before the drought set in, Muteze reportedly had 400 head of cattle,⁵⁹⁵ separated between different localities. Yet, at the time of my research, the majority of households had between 20 and 70 head of cattle.

There were also larger regional livestock inequalities at play. Wealthy stock owners in northern Kaoko (Epupa constituency) were shown to own between 400 and 600 head of cattle.⁵⁹⁶ In general, stocking rates here have been noted to be higher than those in southern and central Kaoko, which has also, in recent decades, led to the depletion of reserve pastures used during periods of drought and to ongoing regional migrations further south into the wider Kunene region.⁵⁹⁷ These livestock and wealth inequalities have to be contextualised in relation to broader patterns of ownership, economies of exchange and inheritance regimes. As Bollig⁵⁹⁸ has shown, although “property rights in cattle [were] held by the head of the homestead,” within the majority of homesteads in northern Kaoko, user-rights

⁵⁹⁵ Muteze had lost between 60 and 90 cattle in November 2015 alone. Many of the stock-owners at Okarumbu suffered similar losses.

⁵⁹⁶ Bollig, *Risk*, 53

⁵⁹⁷ Schnegg and Bollig, “Institutions,” 68.

⁵⁹⁸ Bollig, *Risk*, 276.

in livestock, in turn, were continually and frequently transferred via livestock loans, especially via the establishment of extensive patron-client relations. As a consequence, younger stock owners relied almost completely on the loaned stock as a means to build their herds and secure their subsistence and were simultaneously buffered against conditions of poverty and hunger.

Moreover, patron-client relations meant the distribution of livestock belonging to one patron between multiple, different households and localities – a situation which distributed wealth to some degree, whilst ensuring the survival of a large herd within a semi-arid dryland context.⁵⁹⁹ The specific matrilineal inheritance regimes in northern Kaoko guaranteed that most (male) herders only acquired property rights to extensive herds – in the range of 400 to 600 – when they were relatively aged and senior. This meant that this wealth did not stay concentrated for long, before being passed on to the next heir – usually the next brother in line (from the same mother) or the nephews (sisters' sons).⁶⁰⁰

Within southern Kaoko, although extensive patron-client relations were less pervasive, property rights over livestock were also predominantly held by the heads of the homestead – which were in the majority of cases, although not exclusively, male – with user-rights widely distributed. For example, Muteze kept some head of cattle in Otjomatamba, looked after by and in the homestead of his nephew (*omusia*) (with Muteze's mother and his grandfather was brother and sister). People here, including women, were usually gifted one or more animals at birth by their mothers/fathers, grandparents, or uncles/aunts, used to build up a small herd of their own. Often a person would receive a goat from his/her mother (depending on who raised them), and a female calf from their grandfather, father, or uncle. Other livestock bestowals by close kin were not uncommon as a form of social and economic support, especially during and after periods of drought or where persons suffered severe losses.

Matrilineal inheritance regimes in the area of my research similarly centred on the division of the main herd of the deceased between his younger brother(s) (through shared matrilineal relatedness), the children of the deceased, his nephews, as well as the nephews of the nephews. The maternal great grandfathers and/or paternal grandfathers usually also inherited some livestock. The first bull, for instance, would be given to the father/priest taking care of the ancestral shrine to which the deceased belonged.⁶⁰¹ Yet this meant that the livestock inheritance was often unequally distributed and highly disputed. As a consequence, livestock inheritance distribution could take up to one year after the funeral. Although widows were said not to inherit any livestock, often one cow and calf would be given to her and her children, respectively – depending on the heirs. Nevertheless, most other household members, including women, owned some livestock, and could manage, exchange, and sell these independently of the heads of household, or their brothers/husbands/fathers/uncles. According to the household census, the majority of adult women owned 20 or fewer cattle and goats, although there were notable exceptions

⁵⁹⁹ Bollig, *Risk*, 276.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 279 -283, See Bollig for a more in-depth description of inheritance transfers.

⁶⁰¹ Hiyazonguindi Herunga, 13.01.2016, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba

with one owning 30, another 60, and another 90 head of cattle. In two of these cases, the women were considered senior, above the age of 65, and were the widowed mothers of the homestead heads.

Maintaining one's social networks and interpersonal relationships was central to ensuring future means to navigate livestock loss and the re-building of one's herds.⁶⁰² Yet despite the working of inheritance regimes, patron-client relations, gifting and loans, southern Kaoko and Kaoko as a whole was marked by strong inequalities in livestock ownership, inequalities which were structured along with gender and generational lines – with the majority of livestock wealth concentrated in the hands of a few senior men. Wealth inequalities were usually interpreted in situated and culturally-specific ways. Jariombonge⁶⁰³ explained:

Yes, here there are quite big differences between the poor and rich households. Yet it is not affecting peoples' relationships. Jealousy is always there, does not matter from which side. The poor and rich were made by God: the poor person, he or she can ask for a female goat, but if God said that you will be poor, the goat would give birth and it will die – either you eat it, or it dies in the veld. The wealthy person, if you are farming together, the one whose calf gets eaten by the jackal and dies is the other person, the person made to be poor, having an *oura ouvi* (bad intestine). From your sweat, you will eat bread. Some poor people are trying their best. Some can try until God helps them to move forward. They can also ask for help from the *Otjimbanda* (healer, ritual specialist). You can find a fine intestine through God, although the traditional healer is also there – people visit them to get rich. If you feel like it is not fair, then you are also jealous – thinking, why God, is it not my cattle?

Here wealth inequalities were naturalised and interpreted within a moral framing. A term I often heard repeated was *oura ouvi* (bad intestine). It was used to refer to an inherent and embodied form of bad luck which stifled a person's attempts to build up one's herd and wealth. Such experiences often left people despondent and were sometimes entangled with suspicions of witchcraft (*okuroua*). In discussing his lifelong attempts to build his herds Johannes Kazendjou⁶⁰⁴ (Muteze's maternal uncle), then in his 70s, had explained his 'lack' of a fine intestine:

As a young person, he was given some cattle, goats, and sheep, by his father and uncle. Yet this livestock never increased despite him taking care of them. Perhaps the problem is with God, he had wondered, and it has been his lifelong struggle – he was always thinking about this, he explained. If he reached 20 head of cattle, they would decrease to 10, if the goats multiplied to reach 50, soon after he would be left with 10, then five. All his life, he had wondered what he had done wrong. As he expressed it: "This situation and thoughts have been disturbing me since I was a boy and growing up – the thought that I was not surviving well."

He had explained that some do feel jealous when they find themselves in such situations, which in some instances drove people to consult ritual specialists and healers (Sg. *onganga*, Pl. *ozonganga* (also *otjimbanda*)). There were much younger men who had up to 400 head of cattle and owned cars, and this had led Kazendjou to speculate how this had happened and what role the 'killing' of others (witchcraft, *okuroua*)⁶⁰⁵ had played in the accumulation of such wealth at their age. However, he was also quick to point out that things have changed in the last decades due to education, labour migration and salaries. By the end of the month, some people could

⁶⁰² Tönsjost, *Umverteilung*, 58, 148.

⁶⁰³ 05.06.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatimba

⁶⁰⁴ 29.04.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatimba

⁶⁰⁵ I will return to the interrelation between wealth and witchcraft in Chapter Seven.

afford to buy 10 cattle and even, at some point, a car with the money they were generating elsewhere.

Thus, apart from an inheritance, kinship and patron-client relations, strategies for building-up livestock herds varied. Both past and present labour migration played an important part in negotiating livelihoods and pastoral futures within this context. To illustrate some of these diverse strategies. I detail below how Katjetjua Mukuaruze, who was in his mid-60s during my research, build-up his herd:

When Katjetjua Mukuaruze was young, his mother married at Okapiona (close to Otjapitjapi) but divorced later and returned to Okakuyu – a homestead headed by Katjetjua’s maternal uncle. While he was still young, his maternal grandfather gave him a female calf, and later his *mama tjiveri* (his mother’s older sister) and the one who raised him – did the same. His maternal grandfather proceeded to teach him how to practice livestock husbandry: He was given a cattle-post to manage in Okomuhana, where he stayed alone taking care of the livestock.

The first cattle he acquired he bought with money that he inherited from his older brother (*erumbi*) who had passed away. With that money, he went to Kamanjab (southern Kaoko, south of the VCF) and bought ten cattle. He then returned and stayed at Okarumbu, taking care of the livestock. He stayed for a long time, struggling to buy livestock medicine, and during the times when the borehole was broken. In 1980 he decided to go work as a police officer for the South West African Police (SWAPOL). He left his then-senior wife, Uvatera, at the homestead. He worked as a police officer in different locations, including Windhoek and Katima Mulilo – the far north-eastern region. He explained that when he worked in Katima Mulilo it was a difficult time. He was struggling to send money back to his wife and children. Eventually, he decided to leave and return to Okarumbu. He went “Like I was coming to a funeral” – without resigning. After three months he called the office and was recruited again. During his employment period, he bought one head of cattle in Otjondeka, and soon after was given one cattle from a friend who passed away. He bought another three from the same person at different times and in exchange for alcohol. After his retirement, he bought two bulls in Kamanjab and brought them to Okarumbu. This was how he had built up his herd.⁶⁰⁶

As illustrated some men – mostly those who were age-mates and who, during my period of research, were in their 60s – build up their herds through participating in migrant labour and working for the SADF or SWAPOL. During this time SWAPOL provided ‘home guards’ to look after the *ozosoromana* – with some men having been employed as such. Other strategies to build up herds during this time included buying horses and donkeys in Kamanjab and exchanging them for goats and cattle in northern Kaoko or exchanging one cattle for goats within one’s home-places, then selling the goats in Oshakati and using the money to buy cattle.⁶⁰⁷ Others, such as Muteze, found work at Rössing Mine in Arandis in 1976 (the year the mine became operational) and worked there – as a machinery operator and senior driver – for 19 years until 1991, returning home only one month a year. Muteze had initially been a driver for his father, who was one of the few who had acquired a car in the late 1960s. He had heard there was good work elsewhere and although initially trying to conceal his intention to leave from his father, his father eventually found out and accepted, and blessed his departure at the ancestral shrine. Apart from having heard about the work, Muteze had explained that at the end of the 1960s Tuapuka Kazendjou (his age-mate) was already working in Walvis Bay and was visiting Otjapitjapi. Seeing him

⁶⁰⁶ 22.04.2016, unrecorded interview, Otjize

⁶⁰⁷ Johannes Kazendjou, 29.04.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba

in his nice clothes motivated others to go and look for work: “... so when we were looking at our friend, this Tuapuka, the way he was dressed up and how neat he was that time – he was coming from the Bay – then I said, Ae!”.⁶⁰⁸ Engaging in migrant labour also enabled Muteze to build-up his herd over the years:

With his first salary, Muteze bought a young female cow. By that time, he already had a goat, which had been given to him by his uncle (*ongundue*) (who resided in Okahandja) and a few other cattle from the one female calf which had been gifted to him by his aunt (*hongaze*). In 1979 he bought a further ten cattle and gave them to an elder brother (*erumbi*) to be taken to and kept in Okakarara – which fell in the former Hereroland West homeland in central Namibia, south of the VCF. This proved to be a good move as three years later and with the severe drought, some of the livestock kept here survived. During the next years, he also bought a car, which he exchanged again for some cattle, and gave the same brother money to buy cattle from the surrounding farms. In 1992 his elder brother passed away and he went to fetch what cattle were left in Okakarara. He then also brought the 30 cattle which he left with his younger brother (*omuangu*) (same father), before retiring from the Rössing job.

In having participated in wage labour, Muteze was able to also secure his economic position during these years which bolstered his political and social status. Due to how the colonial system of contract labour was institutionalised, past labour migrations to some degree contributed to the unequal and gendered patterns of livestock ownership and further enabled the production of male political and economic authority. However, others also followed radically different strategies and did not participate in labour-migration patterns as delineated above. For example, Hiyzonguindi Herunga – who was of similar age – at some point harvested and sold bags full of dried mopane worms (*omiŋgo*) – a delicacy which was in high demand in many parts of northern Namibia. Later in his life, he harvested *ohandua*, a peppercorn like plant which is highly valued for its medicinal qualities and sold it in Otjiwarongo – an urban centre in central Namibia – and used this money to purchase livestock.⁶⁰⁹ In the next section, I briefly describe some of the household economies in Ozondundu, including the patterns of mobile land-use practices which characterised these households. This is followed by a further exploration of rural-urban oscillatory migration in this context.

Mobile land-use practices and herding strategies

Ozondundu was characterised by diverse land-use practices and household economies, including translocal and multilocal households. Table 1 below gives details of the 18 more permanent homesteads I found in Otjomatamba during the first months of my research in 2015 (including some of the newcomers who were still under discussion), their respective migration trajectories before having moved to or having established a cattle-post in Otjomatamba, and the homestead type.

⁶⁰⁸ 20.04.2016, recorded interview, Otjize

⁶⁰⁹ 25.02.2016, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba

Table 2: Otjomatamba homestead migration trajectories.

No.	Head of the homestead	Age	Sex	Married M: monogamous P: polygynous D: divorced	Homestead type: - Ancestral - Main - Second/Third - cattle-post	Migrated from	Year
1	Tuapuka Kazendjou	65	male	Yes (m)	Ancestral	Otjapitjapi	2007
2	Abraham Uaroua	70s	male	Yes (m)	Main	Otjomaoru	ni
3	Hiyazonguindi Herunga	65	male	Yes (m)	Main	Otjomaoru	2005
4	Jariombonge Jaunda	50	female	No (d)	Main	Okakuyu	2010
5	Kakume Kozuhura	50s	male	Yes (p)	Second	Okakuyu	Mid 1990s
6	Uamaavi Nguutuka	56	female	No	Main	Otjomaoru	2006
7	Seun Murumbua	21	male	No	Main	Otjapitjapi	2000
8	Sydney Tjizeu	71	male	No	Ancestral	Otjapitjapi	2001
9	Kasembi Tjiseua	86	male	Yes (m)	Ancestral	Otjapitjapi	Late 1950s
10	Johannes Kazendjou	78	male	Yes (m)	Ancestral	Otjapitjapi	1990s
11	Kanduu Herunga	55	male	Yes (m)	Second	Otjapitjapi	ni
12	Tobia Uaroua	60	male	Yes (m)	Main	Otjomaoru	1980
13	Kanakae Mumbura	70s	female	No	Main	Otjondunda	2012
14	Piriko Kaporisa	50s	male	Yes (p)	Main	Etanga	2010
15	Uakoka Tjizembisa	65	male	Yes (m)	Second	Okauare	2010
16	Uazeika Mutambo (Karire)	Late 40s	male	Yes (p)	Third/cattle-post	Oruhona/Otjondunda	2012/13
17	Unaro Tjipurua	40s	male	Yes (m)	Main/cattle-post	Omuhonga/Warmque lle	2013
18	Tjimaka Tjavara	40s/50s	male	Yes (p)	Third/cattle-post	Orotjitombo	2011

As noted above, the majority of Otjomatamba's homesteads were characterised as 'main' (*onganda*) and 'ancestral' (*onganda onene*) and remained year-round in the place. Some homesteads in Otjomatamba did, however, practice more multilocal residencies and translocal households. Those homesteads noted in Table 1 as being 'second' or 'third' (junior homesteads) had their main or ancestral homesteads (understood as senior homesteads) elsewhere, usually headed, and co-managed by senior wives or other family members. Due to the newcomers' (the final three of listed homesteads below) disputed settlement status, it was not clear to what extent some of these homesteads were main

homesteads (*ozonganda*), second or third (junior) homesteads, or seasonal cattle-posts (*ozohambo*) – a fuzzy and fluid differentiation which shifted and changed depending on individual perspective, changing household compositions, land-use practices and/or political struggles over belonging and access.

Still, the majority kept small houses within ancestral homesteads⁶¹⁰ in Otjapitjapi, Otjomaoru and Okakuyu, which could be used for events such as funerals, weddings, and naming ceremonies, extended visits, and/or to pursue cultivation. Few of Otjomatamba's homesteads had permanent shelters or houses in Okarumbu, or in Otjize, the rainy season cattle-post close to Okarumbu. Rather, most homesteads grazed their herds mainly in the surrounding pastures and only created temporary livestock camps and cattle-posts in the outlying pastures during the dry-season. These cattle-posts were usually managed by younger boys or men who slept there in makeshift shelters or tents. However, during years when grazing in Otjomatamba's outlying pastures dwindled, some created temporary livestock camps in Okarumbu or Otjize, managed once again predominantly by men or boys.



Image 5: A dry-season livestock camp in Otjomatamba's mountain valleys and temporary shelters.⁶¹¹

Rain-fed agriculture was also rarely practiced in Otjomatamba and those who did pursue it – usually women – kept plots elsewhere, in Otjize, Otjapitjapi or even further away. Whereas before some gardens had been maintained, due to the migration of elephant herds into Ozondondu during the last decades many had given up on cultivating. This situation was further hampered by prolonged drought and Otjomatamba's mountainous topographies. Thus, although some of the homesteads in Otjomatamba engaged in more translocal livelihood practices, most remained year-round in the place, especially those

⁶¹⁰ Most of the houses/homesteads within this context were *ozondjuwo ndja rombua* (plastered houses made from a mixture of sand, cow-dung and water, with wooden poles as outside frames and usually with corrugated iron roofs), with only some having constructed brick houses.

⁶¹¹ Photograph taken by Elsemi Olwage, 2015

households with smaller livestock herds. Different mobile land-use practices were prevalent amongst the homesteads that constituted Okarumbu. Many of the Okarumbu households had their ancestral and, sometimes, main homesteads in Otjapitjapi, Okakuyu or Otjomaoru, where some kept livestock or had cattle-posts and homesteads situated in neighbouring chieftaincies. Some of these households also kept livestock in Otjomatamba and maintained small permanent (plastered) houses here used during years where grazing elsewhere was strained. Moreover, the homesteads based at Okarumbu, although established as main homesteads, only lived here during the dry-season and for some months of the year, making use of the outlying pastures. With the arrival of the rains (usually between December and March) and depending on the rainfall, all of these homesteads then proceeded to move in a coordinated manner with their livestock to Otjize, to the rainy-season cattle-post, situated about 15km to the north-west, where they would remain anything between three to six months of the year. During this time, Okarumbu's borehole engine was removed and taken along to prevent anybody from settling here and to allow the pastures to rest and recover, with the houses and belongings locked up. These homesteads mostly had permanent cattle-posts and houses at Otjize, where they remained until the water from the two earth dams⁶¹² situated here had dried up or became too muddy.

Otjize – which was situated on the far southern edge of the historical Okangundumba area – was shared seasonal grazing and households from the neighbouring Okandungumba area to the north also moved livestock here during the rainy season. Furthermore, other neighbouring areas to the north also regularly negotiated temporary access-rights in Otjize and established seasonal cattle-posts when necessary. It was thus a meeting place which brought together overlapping territories, including homesteads from Omao 2. Otjize, like other places, was divided between lower and upper parts – with the more than 20 cattle-posts created here during the research period. In reflecting on the large number of cattle-posts, one person joked that if there was a borehole it would become a town. Moreover, in being situated next to the holy Otjize Mountain, named after its ochre mine, it was also regularly visited, especially by Himba women, to harvest the fine red ochre rocks used in local cosmetics and small-scale enterprises.⁶¹³

The houses at Otjize were built in a more economical way than those which constituted the main or ancestral homesteads – they were smaller and more compact, and hard black plastic coverings were used as roofs, tied securely to the sides, and fastened around boulders on the ground. For many, it did not make sense to buy and install corrugated iron sheet roofs, steel or iron doors as people only lived there for a few months each year – depending on the rainfall. The rest of the time the houses were deserted and being visible from the road, was an easy target for theft. The plastic covers could be easily

⁶¹² These earth dams were dug with the assistance of road construction companies during the 1990s.

⁶¹³ The harvesting of ochre rocks at the Otjize Mountain was governed by specific rules related to ancestral land relations. To harvest here persons had to ask and inform the forefathers and usually place other small gifts or money there as a sign of respect. It was also taboo to argue with others when visiting the mountain (Interview, 01.02.2015, fieldnotes).

removed and taken along back to the homesteads. Some homesteads simply used shop-bought plastic and/or canvas tents at Otjize to ensure further flexibility and mobility.

Otjize also had several rain-fed gardens situated in the flood plains where households cultivated primarily maize, but also pumpkins, sugar cane and other produce. Some people – primarily women – would thus move to Otjize to cultivate and harvest. However, similar to Otjomatamba, elephant herds had been visiting the place in recent years. Tales of unexpected encounters and fear dominated everyday conversations – with those sleeping in barely hip-high tents recounting how herds passed dangerously close in the night, despite strategies such as the burning of old tyres to repel them. This puts stress on cultivation practices, with the elephants destroying the garden fences allowing the livestock to eat the produce or destroying the produce themselves. My visits to Otjize were also often accompanied by demands to bring along containers with borehole water from Otjomatamba. As livestock, wildlife and households relied on the earth dams for their water needs, many complained about the lack of clean drinking water and access to water purification tablets.⁶¹⁴

In terms of herding strategies across these settled and cattle-post places, every or every second-day people escorted (*okurisa*) their cattle herds during the early morning hours to the outlying pastures in a set direction – with households in the lower and upper part usually fanning out in different directions. This was done after separating the cows from the calves and after the women finished the milking in the mornings. Depending on the season and rains received, the milk was used by women mainly in the production of curdled milk (*omaere*), but also other milk products such as butter (*omaze*) and whey (*omaṭuka*). After having escorted the cattle, the herds grazed unaccompanied in the outlying pastures, habitually returning to known water-points every evening or second day or directly to their *kraal* – with their movements contingent on the pooling of water in the veld during the rainy seasons. When the cattle slept in the veld and only returned the next morning to the homestead, they would first be escorted to the water-point to drink. At the water-point – a space of encounters and sociality – stock owners and those caring for the livestock could count their cattle, check on their well-being, see if any were missing, and then escort them back to the *kraal* and homestead. In the dry-season herds often slept in the veld for two days. Yet cattle often also went missing, with persons, predominantly men, spending days and weeks on end looking for them – travelling to neighbouring water-points to inquire if anyone had seen them.

Similarly, goats and sheep were separated in the mornings, keeping the kid goats and lambs at the homesteads in separate pens as they were more vulnerable to predators. This pastoral labour was predominantly done by adult women, depending on the hired labour available. The small stock then roamed freely and grazed in the pastures around homesteads. However, in the dry-season small stock herds were usually herded and looked after either by hired labourers, boys or also sometimes women

⁶¹⁴ Water-purification tablets were usually distributed by the Namibian Red Cross Association.

as they had to be taken further away to outlying pastures and were more likely to get lost or be caught by predators – with households separating small-stock and cattle-herds in different livestock camps. Livestock was inspected at the water-point to assess the state of outlying pastures. When they drank and their stomachs did not fill-up the grazing in the immediate surroundings was not sufficient and it was necessary to move elsewhere. Towards the end of the rainy/dry-season stock owners would assess the grazing situation to decide whether to move the livestock or part of the herd to seasonal cattle-post places, to temporary livestock camps elsewhere, or whether to negotiate access-rights in neighbouring or other chieftaincies. However, these practices varied and were dependent, for instance, on differential livestock wealth and ownership, as well as household compositions and economies. Thus, depending on the household, land-use and pastoral practices were negotiated between more sedentary and mobile everyday and seasonal rhythms, with some households characterised rather by multilocal constellations and translocal household economies.

Moreover, these local rhythms of land-use and pastoral mobilities, as shown, were also strongly co-determined by the dryland ecologies and water-flows and the mobility of non-human others. As the water from Otjize's two earth dams eventually became too muddy or dried up by the end of the rainy season, everybody here packed up their belongings and moved back to their respective homesteads, or to dry-season cattle-posts, which again allowed the pastures at Otjize to recover and rest until the following year. In Okarumbu, the elephants mirrored these patterns, visiting Okarumbu and Otjomatamba in the dry-season, with the numbers and frequency of visits in Okarumbu being much higher and often leading to damage to the borehole infrastructure. It also meant that people (mainly women) had to plan their water-fetching schedules following the elephants' daily visits and movements.



Image 6: Cattle and elephants drink together at Okarumbu's diesel-powered and elephant-proof borehole.⁶¹⁵

⁶¹⁵ Photograph taken by Elsemi Olwage (During 2015 this borehole was equipped with solar panels by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism to lessen the burden on residents for the water-pumping costs).

To give an example of a permanent and ancestral homestead within Otjomatemba, I delineate the household composition and economy of the Tjizeu homestead. A tall and bespectacled person in his 60s, Ben Tjizeu was a senior councillor to *osoromana* Muteze, a senior game guard, and similar to some other senior men (such as Tobias) he had also taken on the position of an assistant Bishop (*omupriesteri*) for Church Betel (Zionist church) in recent years.⁶¹⁶ Ben was thus a key public figure and authority – especially as he was usually present in the place. Apart from creating a cattle-post in the outlying pastures from August until the return of the rains (see Image 5), their homestead for the most of the year remained in the place. The pick-up truck that the conservancy had purchased some years back was also parked here and used for hunting or other community-centred demands. Ben's household was situated in the ancestral homestead of his older, unmarried brother, Sydney.

Their homestead had moved from Otjapitjapi to Otjomatemba in 2001 to access better pastures. In total there were about 25 people, including children, with five of the children at school in Otjapitjapi. Ben lived with his wife, Karijandjua, and five of their seven children (from within the marriage), most of whom were adults, as well as some grandchildren. Three of their older sons, all in their 20s and unmarried, lived with them and assisted in herding the livestock. Similar to many other younger persons, they had dropped out of school and expressed their interest in livestock farming rather than leaving for the urban centres in search of employment. All three were in the process of trying to build up their herds within their father's homestead. Some livestock was also kept in Otjozomgombe, at the homestead of their maternal uncle and in their mother's home-place. During my research, only one of Ben's younger daughters was working away in Opuwo, as a shop assistant in a Chinese-owned clothing store.

Also living with Ben were another two of his siblings, his eldest, unmarried brother, Kazeurike, and his unmarried sister Kapwena. Their widowed mother, who passed away a few months into my research, also lived with them. Kazeurike was in his mid-60s and although he lived in Otjomatemba during my research, he was known to be always travelling around between different places, working in piece-meal jobs as a mechanic, or searching for opportunities.

By contrast, we regularly found Kapwena, Ben's 62-year-old sister sitting beneath the shade structure in front of her house, surrounded by and caring for the four grandchildren she was raising. Four of her seven children, lived with her, whilst the others had married elsewhere or were working in Opuwo. Kapwena also had two daughters with Tobias Uaroua, with whom she had had an extramarital relationship. Kapwena's house was neighboured by the house of her eldest daughter, Uatondomuinyo, who had been fathered by Muteze, was in her 30s and had three children. Kapwena's oldest son Tjako, who was in his late 20s, also lived here and was an active member of the conservancy committee. Ben therefore also shared his homestead with his three siblings, his nephews, and nieces (*ovasia*) and several of his *okasia okasiona* (the children of his nephews and nieces).

Their household had around 86 head of cattle and 65 small stock. Ownership was shared between Ben and his siblings, nephews, and nieces. However, Ben's wife, Karijandjua owned the most, with 25 cattle being hers. All 18 sheep belonged to Ben, but the 45 goats were shared between 13 owners – including grandchildren. Two cows were also borrowed from Ben's cousin. Apart from livestock ownership, the household relied on state grants for their livelihoods – with Ben and his siblings receiving old-age pensions.

⁶¹⁶ For a discussion on syncretic and non-syncretic Christian churches and church-belonging in Kaoko see Bleckmann, "Colonial"

As noted above, homesteads and especially ancestral homesteads were often expansive, with extended families co-residing and sometimes fencing their own individual houses within the larger mostly unfenced homesteads which cupped the *kraals*. Unmarried women and men especially often chose to reside and remain in the homesteads of their fathers, married siblings or with their maternal uncles and family. However, co-residency patterns were diverse and as noted above, depended for instance on whether it was a main or secondary homestead, the coming and goings of the different household members, their marital status, and the ongoing pooling and sharing of resources and labour in a context where securing a livelihood and pastoral wealth was challenging.

Otjomatamba also had two women-headed homesteads, with these household economies again differently organised and as illustrated in one example below:

Uamaavi Nguutuka was a 56-year-old woman who had never married and had nine children, all of whom she raised herself. Three of them had the same father, another three the same, and the last three each had different fathers. Most of the fathers did not claim the children. One of the men who had fathered three of Uamaavi's children had, at some point, taking them to his home-place. Yet, the children, already being familiar with their mother's homestead and ways, soon returned. Uamaavi was raised by her maternal grandmother, who, in turn, had been adopted from Omaheke area (Kaoko's eastern sandveld area) and been brought to Otjomaoru. She had moved to Otjomatamba with her grandmother when she was very young. This became her home-place and where she decided to establish her homestead.

Uamaavi's homestead totalled around 20 persons – however, as was the case with many other homesteads – it was rare for all of these persons to be present all at once. Uamaavi lived with seven of her children – with three or four coming and going between employment stints elsewhere, and two of the younger ones still at school in Opuwo and Otjapitjapi respectively. Also living with her were her sister's unmarried, adult daughter and her five children, and several of her grandchildren (with some also at school in Otjatjapi) who she helped to raise.

Apart from sporadic remittances from children working elsewhere, Uamaavi received a small monthly social government grant and survived from her livestock, as well as engaging now and again in small-scale enterprises, trade, and cultivation. Her homestead had about 22 head of cattle, with only two belonging to her – and the rest divided between her younger sister and her married daughter Uatara. The homestead also had 33 goats and 18 sheep, with most of the 20 members, including the children, having been bestowed with at least one goat. Ben Tjituezu, whose homestead was situated on the opposite hillside, owned 14 of the sheep. Ben was in an extramarital relationship with Uamaavi, which, during my period of research, was public knowledge and was discussed as potentially leading to marriage and Uamaavi becoming Ben's second wife.

Uamaavi also regularly harvested plants in the surrounding hills – such as *ohandua* – which were sold in large quantities (50 kg) to be used as a medicine for livestock and people, as well as in the artisanal making of women's perfumes (*otjizumba*). These were usually transported and sold in the nearby urban centres of Sesfontein and Opuwo.

Uamaavi's homestead provided a much-valued rural base for her unmarried adult children as they were 'roaming' (*ryanga, sangauka*) around – a common expression relating to ongoing travelling between different places and between rural-urban lifeworlds in search of employment, livelihoods, and adventure. However, Uamaavi was also extensively engaged in care-related work, including raising her grandchildren, and with the work of finding ways to support and raise them. Like many other women in Otjomatamba, Uamaavi's livelihood and social practices were interwoven with specifically female-

dominated material and knowledge ecologies⁶¹⁷, including the seasonal land-use practices of harvesting, circulation, exchange, and production of plant products for medicinal, healing, and cosmetic use and engagement in small-scale enterprises.

Many women engaged in harvesting activities from April/May onwards as the trees began to yellow – with especially *ozombwe*, the popular berries which were dried and sold months after harvest – being collected in large 50 kg bags. As one woman expressed it: “It is what makes us sleep in the veld”. Such harvesting was normally done in pairs or groups, with the persons leaving early in the morning and returning at sunset, or sometimes then sleeping in the veld. One woman already in her eighties expressed that when she saw others going to harvest, her heart would jump and she would follow, despite her age and her knees giving her problems. In other words, there was a deep affective and emotional attachment to such land-use practices. These practices also supported the household materially. Apart from harvesting activities to support their economic autonomy, women were usually also responsible for harvesting the roots used in the production of curdled and fermented milk (*omaere*).⁶¹⁸



Image 7: Ngavahue harvesting roots used in the production of ‘omaere’.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁷ Also see Sullivan, “Gender.”

⁶¹⁸ Both the roots from the *omutendereti* and *omusaona* are used in the production of *omaere*.

⁶¹⁹ Photograph taken by Elsemi Olwage

Moreover, the patronage of Ben, who kept some sheep in Uamaavi's *kraal*, also supported her homestead materially. In addition, her household's economy, like many others in place, was closely entangled with others. Apart from Ben, Uamaavi's homestead neighboured her married daughter's homestead, with them continually supporting each other – both in terms of care-related work, herding and material well-being. Her daughter's homestead was the second homestead of Kakume Kozohura:

A stern, reserved person, and ambitious farmer, Kakume was a senior councillor to *osoromana* Herunga, a senior game guard for the conservancy, and was known for his rich environmental knowledge. He was the owner and head of an expansive ancestral homestead situated in the neighbouring settled-place of Okakuyu. It was here that his senior wife, Karinamuze, had her household, and where their livestock herds (mostly cattle) were kept. Close to Okakuyu, was Okomuhana, the dry-season cattle-post – with the livestock moved to and kept here from August onwards until the rains return (see Map 3).

Kakume had a second homestead in the upper part of Otjomatamba headed and co-managed by his second wife, Uatara Uaroua. Uatara was in her early 40s and was from Otjomaoru. She was Tobias' sister (their fathers were brothers) and the eldest daughter of Uamaavi Nguutuka. Uatara lived with five of her seven children, with three of them at school in Otjapitjapi, Opuwo and Ombombo – and the other two toddlers. In our visits to the homestead, we often only met with Uatara – a discerning and kind person. By contrast, her husband was habitually on the move – seen driving his white, single-cab *bakkie*, travelling between the different places, including Opuwo town, and dividing his time between the two main households in Okakuyu and Otjomatamba, and the two cattle-posts.

Kakume also had another cattle-post in the neighbouring jurisdiction area to the south and in a place called Okanandjoze – in his mother's home-place. Here they kept more livestock and, due to the spring situated here, cultivated a large, rain-fed garden. However, in recent years, Kakume had handed over the cattle-post to one of his adult sons, who was employed in Opuwo.

The division of livestock herds between different cattle-post and settled places often formed a crucial strategy deployed by the wealthier stock-owners to minimise the risks of living in highly variable dryland ecologies and to access grazing. The institution of polygyny especially facilitated such translocal constellations – particularly given that ancestral homesteads were closely entangled with land-relations and place-making and thus not easily shifted/migrated elsewhere. Not all the members of a household and homestead participated in the seasonal livestock movements in the same way or during the same time, nor were all the livestock always moved or herded together. Rather, this depended on the labour and transport available, the size of the herds and households, and the distribution of available pastures, with a few lactating cows, their calves and goats usually kept at settled-places throughout the year to ensure a supply of milk for those who remained, mostly women, elders and younger children.⁶²⁰

The practice of such translocal households and livelihoods produced particular gendered and intersectional (im)mobilities: Senior male stock owners tended to organise their time and mobility between multiple localities and households – often substantial distances apart given the mountainous topographies – while the socio-spatial movements of others were delimited and hinged on the decision making and rhythms of travelling of these male heads of homesteads. In such cases “matrifocal

⁶²⁰ Also see Michael Bollig, “Risk and Risk Minimisation Among Himba Pastoralists in Northwestern Namibia,” *Nomadic Peoples*, 1997, 67.

nodes”⁶²¹ were crucial in co-managing these dispersed households. Thus, “the mobility of men and herds which is central to successful pastoralist production in areas of extreme ecological and climatic variance and uncertainty is (also) premised on the capacity of women to stay in one place for long periods and fend for themselves”⁶²² – which, depending on the household, was also achieved through hired labour, through women engaging in various independent economic activities and co-residing with their maternal kin.

For example, Uatara had shared that she had chosen to manage her autonomous household and thus be established in Otjomatamba. Hence, notwithstanding virilocal settlement norms, Uatara had orchestrated a situation where she could live next to her mother, with her livestock kept here and looked after by her eldest son (from before her marriage) who lived with his grandmother. Here then extended “matrifocal nodes” facilitated not only the coming and goings of others but also women-centred shared economies of exchange. Uatara also immensely valued cultivation and apart from their gardens in Okanadjoze (her husband’s cattle-post), she sometimes cultivated in Outjowe – a settled place more or less 40 km north-west of Otjomatamba – and her mother’s sister’s place of residence. She would travel there alone during the start of the rainy season to prepare the fields, and again later to harvest the produce, both times remaining and living there for some time.

Nevertheless, the separation of livestock herds between main and second/third homesteads and several cattle-posts required that each herd be managed separately and to continually adjust the mobility needs of the herds, for instance, for the oxen and lactating cows,⁶²³ and to mobilise the needed and trusted labour and relations as well as resources (i.e., motorised transport) through which this could be realised. Hence, married women’s autonomy in self-directing her movements and economic practices, including those demanded for cultivation and harvesting, had to be relationally negotiated. Furthermore, as noted in the example above, Kakume had a cattle-post beyond the Ozondundu jurisdiction, and Uvatara, his wife, also kept and owned cultivation fields in distant locations. In other words, kinship, rather than the inherited administrative or jurisdiction boundaries, was still the key institution governing possibilities for access to land and pastures and mobility, with the everyday negotiation of kin-relatedness and relationships, including through livestock exchange and loans, continually weaving together, and integrating different and sometimes distant places and pastures. Mobile childhood biographies, as discussed in the prior section, especially as it relates to the everyday reckoning of dual descent, also played a key role in fostering such translocality.

Kamutjiha Tjiseua, the head of one of the first-comer homesteads in Otjomatamba and a person in his 80s, also had a second homestead in Warmquelle (also known as Otjiwarongo, see Map 3), a large settled-place about 30 km to the south, on the leeward side of a mountain range and in the neighbouring

⁶²¹ Dorothy L. Hodgson, ed., *Rethinking Pastoralism in Africa* (James Currey Ltd, 2000), 13.

⁶²² Hodgson, *Rethinking*, 13.

⁶²³ Schnegg and Bolig, “Institutions.”

jurisdiction area. Here he kept some livestock and regularly travelled there in his *bakkie*,⁶²⁴ driven by one of his nephews. When Kamutjiha was in Otjomatamba, he could regularly be seen with his leather hat skewed on his head, walking slowly from his homestead to the borehole with his foldable, striped canvas chair hooked over his shoulder. He would sit here in the shade of the tree with a concentrated look on his face, playing the *onyune* game with several other men who came and went or who were waiting for livestock, sometimes for whole days on end. His wife, Uemujenga, who was from Otjapitjapi, was in her late 70s but, despite her age and failing eye sight, had a strong, enterprising spirit and I often found her busy working – from making home-brewed beer to sell to the road construction workers, to collecting bags full of the zesty *omumbara okakuyu* in the mountains which was used in the making of artisanal female perfumes (*otjizumba*) or collecting berries (*ozombe*) to be sold in Opuwo and Sesfontein. She also tended a small rain garden behind her house. When she was young, Uemujenga had been taken by her aunt (*hongaze*) to live in Ombombo where she grew up. Not being able to have children herself, Uemujenga had raised some of her younger sister's (*mama ngero*) children and grandchildren as her own.

Living with Kamutjiha and his wife in Otjomatamba were three of Kamutjiha's nephews (*ovasia*), as well as two of his older and elderly sisters (from the same mother) and unmarried brother. When asked how Kamutjiha ended up establishing a homestead in Otjomatamba and Warmquelle, he traced several past place trajectories and their entanglement with his own biography:

Kamutjiha was born in Omayuru, but grew-up in Otjiteue, which was close to Warmquelle. When he was young his father passed away. His father's elder brother (*tate munene*) inherited the *okuruwo* and raised him. Later his maternal uncle (*ongundue*) fetched him to go and live with him in Otjikukutu (close to and north-west of Otjomatamba) and to assist in looking after livestock. From there they moved around a lot, creating different cattle-posts – from Otjikukutu to Otjomaoru, and soon after again back further south. From there they moved again back northeast to Otjozongombe and then again to a cattle-post further northwest called Otjipoko. Eventually, they settled in Otjapitjapi. From here Kamutjiha got married and moved and established an autonomous homestead in Otjomatamba with his wife.

As noted above, Kamutjiha's main connection to Warmquelle was through his fathers, however, in being raised and residing with his maternal uncle, he eventually settled in the Ozondundu area. Van Wolputte has also noted how cattle-posts in Kaoko were often found in regions claimed by members of a shared matriclan and through one's maternal uncle (*ongundue*).⁶²⁵ Settling and co-residing with one's maternal uncle was also common practice, given the inheritance regimes in place. For example, in 1983/84 Kamutjiha's married nephew (*omusia*), Uaranda Kavetu, joined the homestead of his maternal uncle, establishing his household to one side. Uaranda was in his mid-50s with a sturdy and stout built, and most of the time could be seen wearing a cotton 'bucket-hat' and driving his old model, white Datsun pick-up *bakkie*. He lived with his wife Ngaizuvarue Herunga. Similar to many other households,

⁶²⁴ *Bakkie* is an Afrikaans-word for a pick-up truck and is commonly used across Namibia.

⁶²⁵ Van Wolputte, "political," 470.

Uaranda was from Otjapitjapi (with part of his family also based at Otjikukutu) and Ngaizuvarue's home-place was the neighbouring Otjomaoru.



Image 8: Tjiseua's ancestral homestead.⁶²⁶

To illustrate and provide an example of the translocal local households which characterised the Okarumbu's homesteads, I detail an example of one of the wealthier and more senior stock owners:

Katjetjua Mukuaruze, a person in his 60s, was a retired policeman from Okakuyu. He was a polygynous marriage with three women, with each co-managing autonomous households in three different places. Katjetjua had married his third wife, Tobias' daughter, during my research. As was expected, his newlywed wife was based in Okakuyu, at the ancestral homestead, headed by Kakume Kozohura (see section above). Katjetjua also had a homestead in Okahua – a large, settled place north-east of Otjomatempa, headed and co-managed by his second wife. And lastly, Katjetjua had the main homestead in Okarumbu, co-managed by the senior wife, Uvatera, who was also Mutueze's sister (*omuṭena*) and the household with which we primarily had contact. Here they shared the homestead with their married son (who was the conservancy chairman) and his wife and children, their unmarried, adult son and daughter, and grandchildren. They also had hired labourers living with them who assisted with livestock husbandry and the seasonal and yearly migration to the rainy-season cattle-post place, Otjize.

Katjetjua was therefore regularly on the move and owned a fairly new 4x4, single-cab *bakkie*. He divided his time between Okarumbu/Otjize, Okahua, Okakuyu, Okomuhana as well as Opuwo – where he owned a brick house and where he and his family stayed during extended visits. At Okarumbu and during the 2014/15 drought period, Katjetjua kept an estimated 90 cattle and 50 goats – this included livestock belonging to his senior wife and children. He had also lent six cattle to his younger brother, who lived in Okapiona, close to Otjapitjapi. In total, he was rumoured to have around 380 head of cattle – yet this can be exaggerated.⁶²⁷

Differences in land-use were also often closely tied-up with livestock wealth. As Rirera (41), another local resident, explained, the making of *ozohambo* (cattle-posts) “was their game” and “if others were

⁶²⁶ Photograph taken by Elsemi Olwage

⁶²⁷ Livestock numbers were often hard to get hold of (especially in cases of herds being separated between different localities), and many preferred not to share the exact numbers of their herds.

playing with livestock like that, and you were just eating and sleeping, then you will be jealous”. In other words, engaging with more mobile herding strategies and ideally managed across translocal households was considered a crucial pastoral practice to build up and increase your herds within this context. Thus, Rirera was also quick to add that these days they no longer could follow the rainwater and pastures but instead you “just have to turn around (*okutanauka*) in your *otjiwyke* (ward)”. However, and as shown, some of the translocal household constellations in Ozondundu stretched beyond inherited administrative boundaries into the neighbouring territories. Similar to Kamutjiha, Katjetjua’s land-access and belonging in Ozondundu were rooted in his matrilineage, with him having established his main homestead within his maternal uncle’s ancestral homestead in Okakuyu. On the other hand, land-access in the neighbouring Okahua and jurisdiction area was rooted in his patrilineal belonging and the location of his fathers’ ancestral homestead.

Rural-urban oscillatory migration and iterant travelling

As noted throughout this chapter and apart from seasonal and everyday pastoral mobilities, persons were engaged in migration and movement between rural and urban lifeworlds – to pursue wage labour, establish translocal residencies, access livestock markets, and participate in larger political and social worlds. Both past and present migration patterns between rural and urban lifeworlds are best understood as circular and, in migrating to urban localities, many continue to maintain rural homes and homesteads, through their spouses, extended kin-relations and elder-kin, or through hiring workers, with relations of exchange and resource transfers as well as travelling between urban and rural lifeworlds negotiated.⁶²⁸ The oscillatory dynamic of rural-urban migrations here has a long history going back to the participation of some men in the colonial migrant labour system.

During our day-long interview with Tobias in which he showed us the ruins, he had shared some of his memories of having worked, first as a contract-labourer from the early 1970s until 1980, and then as a soldier in the SADF. His trajectory was, however, not unique. As noted earlier in the chapter and apart from the urgency of building up and re-building their herds, many cited prospects of accessing desirable urban commodities such as clothes, shoes, hats, and blankets as having been the main motivating factor in seeking out contracts and wage labour.⁶²⁹ Bleckmann⁶³⁰ also notes that engaging in contract labour became a form of “male initiation” associated with ideas of adventure, and manhood and as a way to gain special status and prestige. I briefly narrate and re-tell Tobias’ trajectory to map some of the geographic and socio-spatial mobilities and stories that characterised contract-work.⁶³¹

⁶²⁸ Greiner, “Patterns,” 135–37.

⁶²⁹ Also see Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 202.

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

⁶³¹ For the different trajectories which people followed and experiences and memories of contract-labour migration in southern Kaoko see Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 212–42.

In the early 1970s, Tobias and some of his age-mates walked from Otjomatimba to Opuwo. Here they received their pass and travelled to Okakarara in central Namibia (where there was a recruitment office). There work permits were distributed and people were divided, with some being sent to Windhoek and others to Walvis Bay. During this time SWANLA was looking for workers to build the central hospital in Windhoek and the group ended up going to Windhoek, living together in the compound ('single court'). By that time Tobias was accustomed to village life and when he was hungry, he would just leave, without asking permission, to go and buy some food. This got him into trouble and finally, the manager told him, "It is fine, you don't like the job, just go". He was sent to pick up his money. However, this person told him that he needed workers to build a 'bottle store'. So, all of them (who went together in a group) then worked for this man for six months. From there they went back to Otuzemba in Kaoko. They then got another pass and went back to Okakarara.

NORED (the electricity supplier in northern Namibia) was looking for people through SWANLA. Tobias proceeded to work for NORED in a charcoal-processing plant for one and a half years. In 1976 he worked for a German man, building a post office in Okakarara. He also had other contracts, building clinics and houses. In 1978 he moved to Walvis Bay where he worked on a *skuit* (Afrikaans for a small boat). They were six men catching the "sea spider" (crabs) – "because the 'whites' ate them." It was tough work. He worked there for one year. In the end, he ended up quitting the contract. Their boat had got lost at sea and some point, had tipped over, filling with water. When they reached the shore, he walked for almost six months trying to get home, barely surviving. From 1981 to 1990 he worked as a soldier for the SADF, patrolling camps at Okahazu and Ehomba (northern Kaoko).⁶³²

As illustrated, the contract-work took Tobias to several different places and for several months or years at a time during most of the 1970s and entailed a range of different work and working conditions, while being imbued with some powerful memories and experiences. During the 1980s and after he had married, he was once again away from home, working as a soldier – leaving the women and elders to manage the households and livestock. Muteze, together with his maternal uncle Hiamuhuva (Johannes) Kazendjou, and others, also travelled to Opuwo to apply for a pass during the late 1960s. Initially, they travelled directly to Walvis Bay and started working with Tuapuka. However, soon after they were instructed to go to Omatjete (close to Omaruru) to get a working permit as people from different 'homelands' were given contracts in different locations. In narrating this process, Muteze⁶³³ foregrounded the different ways in which persons continually attempted to subvert and challenge colonial regulations, control, and segregation while also bringing forth the shared memories and experiences of adventure:

M: We went back to Omatjete by train – at that time people only used the train, there were no cars to Omaruru and caught some lifts to Omatjete. There, there was another challenge because you have to get a person who knows you very well and who is from Omatjete who can say that this child is mine. If you say that you are from Opuwo, no you won't get it (the permit). So, we looked for the people there and we got them, and we got our permits. There was one among us who made a mistake and he said he came from one man father Pius who's from Okotjoto (*recording not so clear*). So, he was asked to mention some of his father's children. The commissioner was Herero speaking and he knew the people well in the area but by then we were issued our permits and he wanted to test us. So, upon this – us the others, we were outside – because this one failed the test it was said that we must bring the permits back, that we have been found out that we were from Opuwo.

⁶³² 13.02.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatimba

⁶³³ Ibid.

K: Were you all issued with permits, was it only this other person who was still inside?

M: Yes, we were having ours already it was only him, but it was even signed he was waiting to be issued that was when he was tested. So, then we were on the way to the car then we were called back, and the commissioner called us in. Now we said to the driver 'look we have paid you already (*Not so clear*) – what we are to do is, see we have paid now, we will run like this, and you must come after and load us there ahead.' We told him you don't go back (the one who got caught out). We ran to the other side to the way of Omaruru and then he found us there. So, the police had to come from Uis as there were no police there in Omatjete. While they were trying to call the police, we ran, and the car also drove. The police followed us until Omaruru. Now the police were there at the train waiting for us when we have to get on the train. (*Not so clear*) there at the place where you have to pay at the station...So we heard that the commissioner called the police and told him that there are people with these names who stole papers at the office in Omatjete. We have been informed that the station master at Walvis Bay was also a Herero. Now we thought that things are no more in our favour. That's why I stopped going to look for a job at Walvis Bay and rather went to look for the job at Arandis (at the mine). (*Not so clear*) When we came to Arandis we were tested for the job. I passed the test and Hiamuhuva (his uncle) failed it. They came back and they were three who failed, and they came to work at (Grobelaar) that side of Uis and I remain there in the mine until I came back here in 1991.

E: It is a long time. And during that were you already married?

M: Yes, I was married to my first wife in 1980, with whom I have my six children. My father gave me the wife as she was my father's cousin, my niece.

Once again, and similar to Tobias, despite getting married in 1980, Muteze's wife remained mainly at Otjapitjapi, managing the homestead and children, while he worked in Arandis at the Rössing mine for another 12 years. His retirement was motivated by his father's death in 1985. Nine months after his death, he was appointed *osoromana*, and although he went back to work for another seven years, he eventually returned after independence and as local authority positions within the new dispensation had to be re-negotiated. During the contract-labour system, many younger men brought back commodities, symbolic capital and new ideas, fashions, and beliefs, such as syncretic Christianity, into southern Kaoko.⁶³⁴ Thus, these oscillatory migration patterns produced particular imaginaries of the "new world" (*ouye oupe*) or *Outua*, whilst simultaneously allowing for various forms of exchange with societies beyond the VCF, including different cattle breeds.⁶³⁵ This, as Bleckmann has shown, resulted, for instance, in the rise of new forms of identity within southern Kaoko and, in particular, a pan-Herero identity, with membership to the Oruano (unity) Church,⁶³⁶ literacy, and specific fashions, including the long Victorian-styled dresses (*ozohorokweva*) and suits (*ozosuita*), becoming key signifiers of being

⁶³⁴ See Bleckmann, "Colonial," 175,337.

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 199

⁶³⁶ The Oruano (unity) Church was the first African Independent Church to be established in 1955 by Herero members of the Rhenish Mission Church (RMC). It was also known as the 'Herero church' due to the ways in which it incorporated aspects of Herero cultural and ancestral practices, identity and history. Bleckmann (2012:311) also notes that belonging to the Oruano Church was part and parcel of 'being Herero' and deeply rooted in a shared Herero identity. For more on the history of this church see, for example, Gerhard L. Buys and Shekutaamba V. V. Nambala, *History of the Church in Namibia, 1805-1990: An Introduction* (Gamsberg Macmillan, 2003). Also see Bleckmann, "Colonial," 315

and becoming ‘Herero’ and of economic differentiation.⁶³⁷ Moreover, many returned and continued to re-invest in their rural homesteads.

In contemporary southern Kaoko, the gendered nature of these rural-urban oscillatory migrations has slightly shifted, as has the larger political economy within which persons seek out wage labour. Nevertheless, these patterns of oscillatory migration and itinerant travelling – including desires for autonomy – and as already hinted at in the previous sections, had to be likewise and continuously negotiated relative to maintaining and fostering relatedness, including through ongoing participation in and connection to specific rural, cultural, and pastoral lifeworlds. Thus, although many women now also exercised a degree of agency and autonomy in pursuing their aspirations and mobility, this had to be relationally negotiated to their changing life trajectories. This was also evidenced in Ngavahue’s biography:

Until Ngavahue got married, she was based in Okorosave. At first, she went to school in Okorosave and later went to Orumana and Ombombo for secondary schooling. In Grade 9 she quit school – it was also during this time that she had her first child. She gave birth to her firstborn in 1993, a boy, who was also raised by her great-grandmother. In 1999 she had her daughter. The two had different fathers and the first born was claimed – but the father’s side was yet to bring the cattle to her family (which in this case would go to her family in Otuvero). After she quit school, she went back to Okorosave and lived there, assisting mainly with cultivation. They cultivated a range of different crops, including maize, tomatoes, onions, pumpkins, and sugar cane. When she went somewhere, it was only to her father’s side for visiting.

In 2005/2006 she started working in a shop in Opuwo. She left the work soon after and started selling *okupana* (grilled meat) until she got married in 2010. It was her idea to start working – motivated by the prospect of being economically independent and being able to pay her children’s school fees. Whilst she was working in Opuwo, she went to her daughter’s father in the urban centre of Grootfontein. Here she met a woman sewing who needed assistance. She improved her sewing skills and learned how to make *otutrupa*⁶³⁸ jackets. When she returned to Opuwo a friend advised her to quit selling *okupana* and start her own tailoring business. But she did not do so because she could not afford to purchase sewing machines. For this reason, she was also sad to leave Opuwo when she got married.⁶³⁹

This small window into Ngavahue’s life trajectory is indicative of people’s rural-urban movement and the circular migration to Opuwo and other urban centres. Moreover, as illustrated, it was also not uncommon nor stigmatised for women to follow other pursuits and to have children, either without getting married or getting married at a later stage in their lives. However, after marriage, Ngavahue was more confined to the rural homestead and the labour it required, with extended visits to Opuwo being limited and with her mobility being tied up with her husband’s decision making. Thus, there were still specific gendered norms governing modes and rhythms of travelling between places and especially between the town and rural lifeworlds.

As Muteze was more mobile, it was not uncommon to find Ngavahue alone with the workers at the cattle-post, and Muteze’s elder mother (*tjikuu*) and niece (*omusia*) with whom she shared the

⁶³⁷ Ibid., 201

⁶³⁸ See Chapter 2 for a short description of the *otutrupa*.

⁶³⁹ 06.01.2016, unrecorded interview, Otjize

household. Yet despite Ngavahue's mobility being delimited, her husband had to simultaneously manage these demands in relation to women-centred networks of care and the travelling this required (as illustrated in the opening vignette at the start of this chapter). As was custom across Kaoko, married women usually returned to their home-places and homesteads during the last months of pregnancy and the months after giving birth – a practice which allowed them to be cared for by their close kin. Whilst some also gave birth in their home-places, giving birth often took place at the hospital in Opuwo – with women then either remaining with kin in town or returning to their home-places.

Thus, whereas practices of care and childrearing required being relatively more fixed to particular places and the rural homestead, it also generated much travel and visits. For instance, Scelza,⁶⁴⁰ in her study on married Himba women's practices of maintaining relations with natal-kin post-marriage within northern Kaoko and within a context of (part)virilocal settlement norms, has also illustrated that married women travelled more often and engaged in longer extended visits than unmarried women. The reasons for their travels mostly included "pregnancy and birth, spending time with family, ritual or ceremony attendance, funerals, seeking medical care and other (trips to town, etc.)". In general, peoples' everyday travelling was closely entangled with and co-determined by the negotiation of social relatedness. Yet, regular travelling and rural-urban oscillatory migration were also strongly contingent upon the capacity to hire and employ labourers to ensure the survival of your herds and to care for the rural homesteads and cattle-posts. Hence, being-on-the-move or experiencing being 'stuck' (*okustaka*) was a relational matter of ongoing negotiation, as well as of gender, wealth, age, and marital status – as illustrated in another two examples below.

One afternoon whilst visiting Tobias' homestead we found his first-born daughter, Mariru, seated in its doorway. She told us that she was visiting, but after some short exchanges she admitted that she had come to stay for longer: She was planning to divorce her husband of more or less 10 years. Looking at us, she said seriously, "If you hear the word marriage, you should know, it is only trouble". At this point, she was only waiting for her belongings to be brought to her by her husband's family. One of the reasons she shared that she wanted a divorce was because she was always taking care of the livestock while he was in Opuwo and he would send buyers to come and fetch the sold livestock without informing her. From the next month onwards, she informed us, she would start coming with us to Opuwo. If she went now, her husband's family would say she left him just so that she could "move like she wanted" – "up and down like that." She wanted to go to Opuwo, she explained, because here she would "die from untidiness" (she said as she powdered her face). But she also wanted to go to sell one of her dresses to purchase cosmetics. Mariru associated the rural home with "untidiness" and expressed her yearning for town-life – a desire which potentially formed part of her reasons for threatening to initiate the divorce. Thus, in being in her early 30s and with two small children, she had different associations with rural futures and wanted to escape the bind of everyday pastoral labour and marital

⁶⁴⁰ Scelza, "Female," 384.

life. For many during my research, Opuwo was a place of sociality and potential encounters between lovers, friends and family, and a place invoking yearnings for town-life and what this brings. Hence, movement between town and the rural homes was regular and desired, including eventually establishing a more permanent home or house here.

Additionally, and as addressed throughout this chapter, remittances from adult children and/or other family members employed elsewhere played a key role in constituting livelihoods in Ozondundu – especially as many of the households were headed and consisted of older, more senior persons. Thus, there were wealth differences within Otjomatempa not exclusively related to livestock wealth, but also formal education, employment, and labour migration. As an example, I discuss the ancestral homestead, headed by Tuapuka Kazendjou – another senior councillor of *osoromana* Muteze:

Tuapuka was a 60-year-old animated and boisterous person. His homestead stood perched on a hill in the upper part of the place. He lived with his wife, Kavangerue Uaroua, and one of their grandchildren, whom Kavangerue cared for, as well as Kazengo, the otjizemba-speaking worker who had, over time, also become part of their homestead. Tuapuka was raised and grew up in Otjapitjapi, and Kavangerue in Otjomaoru (where the Uaroua ancestral homestead was based). Tuapuka and Kavangerue had also moved from Otjapitjapi to Otjomatempa to settle and establish an ancestral homestead in 2007. Kavangerue's older brother was Tobias' father and headed the neighbouring homestead. She was also the sister (*erumbi nomuangu*) of Veumbakeho Uaroua, who was married to Uakoka Tjizembisa. Tuapuka was a brother to both Johannes and Uemujenga Kazendjou (their fathers were brothers), who resided in the lower part of the place. Thus, like most homesteads in Otjomatempa, their biographies were closely interwoven with the other homesteads and often along immediate and close kin-relatedness.

Most of their grown children were working and employed elsewhere – in Windhoek, Ross Pinah or Karibib, with two being in military service, two being teachers, another a mine worker and another in the process of completing his vocational training to be a police officer. Despite working elsewhere, many of them kept livestock in Otjomatempa, with some of their daughters as well as Kavangerue's son from outside the marriage, having constructed houses in the homestead. Thus, even though there were a total of 13 people belonging to this homestead, including grandchildren, most were employed or at school elsewhere. Between the members of the homestead, there were said to be around 46 head of cattle. Yet apart from livestock wealth, remittances, in the form of food and money, were a crucial part of their livelihoods.

In this homestead, two of the daughters had finished secondary schooling in Opuwo, with one having completed a teacher's diploma and further studies at the University of Namibia campus in Ongwediva, north-central Namibia. Another had finished her Grade 10 certificate, attended a vocational training centre and qualified for national military service. In most of these cases, people employed elsewhere continued to keep livestock, send back remittances and, as in this case, keep houses at the rural homesteads of kin or parents. However, not all were actively engaged in re-investing in pastoral livelihoods or rural homes, and many of the younger persons were rather perceived by others to be rather 'just roaming' around.

In contemporary southern Kaoko, as more persons leave for the urban centres and engage in wage labour, pastoral labour is needed to look after herds and livestock. In the following section, I delineate some of the patterns of labour migration into the research area. In doing so, I show that in

many cases of in-migration flexible notions of belongings were at work and relative strangers were easily incorporated into the local social fabric and even made kin.

Transregional labour migration and flexible belongings

Although there were not many hired workers in Otjomatempa, elsewhere in Okarumbu and Otjize as well as the neighbouring settled places of Omao 1 and 2, and Ondera, I had met several workers (Sg. *omuungure*, Pl. *ovaungure*) staying at different homesteads – ranging from married couples to single men, and children who had been incorporated into households. The majority of workers were not or did not self-identify as Herero/Himba but were predominantly Zemba and/or Hakaona and had migrated from southern Angola and areas surrounding Ruacana, a border-town in the neighbouring Omusati Region. Nevertheless, both Zemba and Hakaona shared matrilineal (*eanda*) ancestries with other Otjiherero societies and although speaking different languages, there were linguistic interrelations.

The majority of workers explained their migration as having been due to a strong drought in southern Angola. Having come from agro-pastoral societies themselves and suffered large livestock losses, migrating into Kaoko was seen as a way to rebuild herds and socio-economic well-being. Before looking more closely at the biographies of two workers, I first delineate how persons went about finding and hiring workers and how relations of trust were established between the workers and their host families/employers. In Omao 1, a person in his 30s managed his maternal uncle's homestead – who were employed and living in Opuwo. In an interview,⁶⁴¹ he explained that normally they met the workers in Opuwo at the open-air Epupa market: Mainly men, some still young boys and sometimes married couples. First, you negotiated the salary and, upon agreeing, stayed together for one to two months to see if the relationship worked well. Usually, the workers then constructed their own houses within the homestead or shared their houses – depending on the person's age/sex. Only after having lived together for some time would, you leave the worker(s) alone at your homestead. However, he emphasised that many workers came and went, preferring to work for a shorter time before returning to their homes. Their longest employee remained with them for three years and was “like a child at home” and only left because of health issues. At the time of the interview, their current workers – a married couple – had been with them for eight months.

In another interview⁶⁴², an ambitious yet fairly young stock owner from Omao 1 who resided in his father's homestead with his wife and children, explained that after hiring a worker you would go to a funeral, leaving him/her with instructions. When you returned you would assess how these instructions had been followed and then you begin to trust. He had had two workers before, one has been a young boy and another an older married man, both from southern Angola. With the first worker, he had travelled to the border with transport, then borrowed a horse and rode into southern Angola.

⁶⁴¹ 22.02.2016, unrecorded interview, Omao 1

⁶⁴² 23.02.2016, unrecorded interview, Omao 1

There he had met with the boy's parents. In the end, they had worked together for four to five years (he mainly looked after the goats) and then he left as he wanted to return home. He emphasised when you stayed together so long you became family, and he was like their son (*omuatjewe*). His father also had a boy of 10/12 years old looking after goats, and he was the nephew of another worker at a neighbouring homestead – which foregrounded how kin networks were mobilised in negotiating work. The second worker he had hired in Opuwo.

Usually, the workers themselves suggested a salary and then there would follow a period of negotiation – with payment ranging between N\$350 to N\$500 per month, plus food. Moreover, he explained that he and many others preferred to find workers with whom they were not related and who did not come from the area. They were perceived to be difficult and as “just wanting to have a good time – drinking and partying”. But people from Angola, by contrast, were perceived as coming “to feel happy here and most of the time did not want to go back”. During my research residents were informed over the radio that employment of foreign nationals without a Namibian ID was illegal and risked a large fine – an announcement which generated substantial debate especially given the historical and cultural relations of exchange and close relations between societies in Kaoko and southern Angola. To give an idea of the socio-spatial trajectories, aspirations and attachments that animated this trans-border labour migration, I discuss the migration story of Katjipu,⁶⁴³ a 40-year-old Otjizemba-speaking man who was born and raised in Okongua, in southern Angola:

Katjipu lost a lot of cattle during a harsh drought – to such an extent that he and his family were experiencing hunger. He decided to come to Namibia to look for work and at least to have something to eat. He had heard from other people that in Namibia you live well: “Your children can drink milk and the good life is in Namibia”. He first travelled to Opuwo, with his wife and children. Whilst having a glass of wine at the Epupa market he met with men looking for workers. He agreed to work for a stock-owner from Omao 2.

From there he travelled to Omaseratundu – a cattle-post close to Omao where this stock-owner kept part of his herd and where Katjipu then constructed a temporary house for his family. At the time of our meeting, he had been working there for four years – moving the livestock mainly between Omaseratundu and Otjikoti – a rainy season cattle-post. At this point, he had acquired five goats. When he left home, he had only seven cattle left which he gave to his brother to take care of. However, he heard that his brother “ate” (sold/did not take care) the cattle. This motivated him to remain in Kaoko. He was mainly responsible for looking after the cattle and doing the milking – work which he did not find hard, or challenging. The only challenge was when the livestock got lost and one had to spend days in the veld and mountain valleys looking for them.

His employer, who himself was employed in Opuwo working for the regional government, only came twice a month over the weekends to check up on things. He had three other cattle-posts where he kept livestock, including one south of VCF. If he did not come, he would send food to Katjipu. The stock-owner had had other workers before, who had either left or been asked to leave. The first-night Katjipu arrived, his employer overnighted with him and then left the next morning. After one week he came back and stayed for a few days. Then he decided to trust him and left him with the cattle. However, for the first months, he was not paid and his employer observed how he was working – but then he got paid in full what was owed to him.

⁶⁴³ Xx.01.2016, unrecorded interview, Otjize

Katjipu had in the beginning informed his employer that he was not sure how long he would remain and that he would first see if he adapted to the place. The reason for this was that he wanted to see the attitude of his boss (*omuhona*) – as some were bad-tempered and liked “to throw bad words”. Katjipu at first struggled to adapt to the place and was only at home or the borehole. Eventually, however, he met someone else who spoke his language and it became easier. He befriended people and eventually felt settled. With time another member of Katjipu’s family – his father’s nephew – migrated here and was employed. Katjipu explained that in some cases people took children as workers – asking for them to be raised in their homestead and to help look after the goats. Eventually, this child matured had his own livestock and perhaps even started his homestead in that place. When his parents come to ask for him, he would say “No I am settled”. His teenage son, from his second wife, was working in Epungue (neighbouring Omao). He was employed before Katjipu some days after their arrival in Opuwo. Katjipu had gone a few times to check on him.

As illustrated, with many stock owners engaging in wage labour elsewhere, especially in regional urban centres such as Opuwo, this created a demand for pastoral labour, a demand which was mostly filled by migrants from southern Angola, as well as through the incorporation of younger or teenage boys into the households to assist with small-stock herding. Additionally, in pursuing translocal land-use practices, labour was needed to manage the separation of herds, as was the case with the example above – with the stock owner having his main homestead in Omao 2, yet multiple cattle-posts elsewhere including one beyond the VCF. Thus, the ownership of cars and the ability to hire labourers was a distinct advantage in being able to manage the separation of livestock and the demands of such land-use practices.

Amongst the 48 homesteads included in the household census, we recorded 17 workers, with one being there with his wife and children. All were male and predominantly in their late teenage years or 20s, and all were either Zemba or Hakaona-speaking. Three were still children, between the ages of 12 and 14, and shared everyday household and livestock chores with the rest of the household members and were considered part of the families and kin. As mentioned by Katjipu, parents sometimes encouraged their children to be raised elsewhere and to integrate into these households as a way to support their social mobility and pastoral futures. Although many preferred to stay for short periods and to return – to partake in more oscillatory migration – others eventually established their homesteads within their place of work, becoming settled and considered residents (*ovature*). However, not all labour migration is centred on pastoral labour. I give a second example of rural-rural labour migration and once again address the flexible belongings which were at work in dealing with newcomers and workers who come without livestock, or large herds.

Kasengo⁶⁴⁴ was born in Ovinyange in 1981 and grew-up in Okangwati (northern Kaoko). He was raised by his mother’s cousin (*omuramue*), with his father having passed away before he was born. The reason he ended up in Otjomatamba was that he was struggling to survive where he grew up. He did not go to school and looked after the goats of wealthier stock owners. When he matured, he realised that he had to secure his livelihood. He decided to construct houses and *kraals* to make his life easier and started travelling to different places, where there was work. At some point, he thought: “I have moved around so much – now I need a place to stay”. When he came to Otjomatamba he fell in love (*okusuvera*) with the place and decided that he wanted to rest (*okusuva*). He ended up in Tuapuka Kazendjou’s homestead after having constructed a

⁶⁴⁴ 14.07.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba

kraal for them. Kazendjou loves people, and with his adult children working elsewhere, he said: “Now we will be staying together”. He had stayed in Otjomatamba for two years. Nevertheless, he still kept some livestock in his uncle’s homestead in Okapara (northern Kaoko). He could always return to his uncle’s homestead, but he was happy in Otjomatamba. If he heard about work, he would just go and work and then return to Otjomatamba. Kazendjou and his wife were a father (*tate*) and mother (*mama, ina*) to him.

As demonstrated, strangers were easily incorporated into a shared cultural belonging and intimacy by translating relatedness through kin idioms – which pointed to the flexible belongings at work in this context. This was also evident with one stock owner in Okarumbu – an Otjiwambo-speaker who had initially migrated into the area from the neighbouring Omusati region to pursue his business of buying livestock to be sold in Oshakati and to open shops (*ostora*). He eventually established his homestead in Okarumbu where he kept livestock, primarily looked after by workers, and by the time of my research, he was considered an *omutire* – a resident.



The final part of this chapter concludes with a brief description of funeral events and gatherings (*ondi*ro). As highly valued ritual and religious events and social gatherings, these events, above all else, shaped people’s regular coming, going and travelling, including extended visits and stays. Funerals (Sg. *ombakero* Pl. *ozombakero*) were however characterised by complex relational and material-symbolic negotiations, exchanges, performances, and practices. As it is beyond the scope of this book to fully bring to life the intricacies of such events, I briefly foreground the gendered and the gendering of public space, how funerals were arenas for performing custom (*ombazu*) and intersecting forms of social and political belonging and the different forms of travelling (*okuyenda*) they generated.⁶⁴⁵

Funeral gatherings: Gendered, mobile, and public life

Driving in front of us was a single-cab Toyota *bakkie*, three senior men sitting snug in front with only their *otomia*⁶⁴⁶ hats visible, bouncing over the rocky narrow road. The open back of the *bakkie* was expertly packed, a small silver metal box sitting hugged between multiple other belongings including neatly rolled tents, foldable chairs, large, chequered bags containing bedding and more formal attire, and maize meal bags. The box, which was locked, was a common sighting amongst those heading to a funeral, containing one’s valuables and basic foodstuff – including utensils, and the essential black tea and sugar. Arriving together at the place around dusk we found many small and medium-sized canvas and colourful plastic tents already pitched – fanning out behind and around an ancestral homestead, with people seated in front of their tents, at the homestead, or walking around. After struggling to find Ngavahue’s tent and pitching ours close to hers, we dressed for the event and the cooling night, and slowly made our way to the homestead.

Funerals were large and not only drew close and immediate kin, but also wider socio-political, religious, and kin-based networks, with people camping at and staying at the ancestral homestead where the funeral gathering (*ondi*ro) took place – usually throughout a weekend and for several days. Normally funerals and burials took place at the ancestral homestead connected to the patriclan (*oruzo*) to which

⁶⁴⁵ For a rich description, analysis and engagement with funerals in southern Kaoko, see Bleckmann, “Colonial”

⁶⁴⁶ These hats (*omakori*) are usually worn by married men.

the deceased belonged. For close kin the period of the funeral extended as they begin to gather as soon as the news becomes known and remained some days after the burial with the belongings of the deceased (apart from livestock) being distributed, further ritual practices being performed and to participate in smaller family meetings/negotiations. Moreover, after the funeral, a small delegation of immediate kin and related elders proceed to travel to the homesteads of important matrilineal and patrilineal relatives of the deceased (especially the senior (grand) fathers and uncles, as well as others) and his/her affinal kin, camping and staying at these homesteads and places for some days, with such travels sometimes taking up to one month.

Soon after receiving the news, the main round house (*ondjuwo onene*) was ‘opened’ and women – especially close female kin – start to gather there to start the process and work of mourning. If the deceased left a widow(s), she would remain in the house, her head and face covered (her *otjikaiva* (headdress) also removed), and supported by close kin and other widows, for the rest of the funeral proceedings, never leaving the house unescorted. The coffin would be placed inside the main house the night before the burial – or sometimes next to the main house. Other people begin to gather and travel to the place days before the burial and in earnest, the day/night before the burial as the formal programme and wake begin – with the night interspersed by singing, praising, praying, speeches, mourning and sometimes dancing. People usually dressed in their more formal attire – the Herero men in a range of differently styled and coloured suits (*ozosuita*) and hats (*omakori*), and Herero women in their more formal *ozohorokweva* – with a range of different and idiosyncratic styles and fashions being on display, including different Himba styles and/or formal Damara and Nama dresses – with people switching between different styles and cultural repertoires depending on the context and situation (i.e., for example, their relationship to the deceased).

Although close female kin and widows remained and slept in the main house, other women arriving came straight to the main house to greet and show their respect. Afterwards, the women moved between being inside the main house (mourning) and sitting outside and mostly on self-made ground-coverings (*ekutu*) – usually made from re-used maize bags (hessian bags) which were skilfully decorated. Some women would be seated on low or normal chairs next to or behind the main house – with the space inside and around the main round house thus primarily being a female space – with only some men (especially close kin and age-mates) entering the house. Regular and loud wailing, rhythmic dirges and crying punctuated the air, with the wooden and sweet smells of traditional perfumes (*otjizumba*) and the abundant fabrics of the women’s large and billowing *ozohorokweva* and more formal chequered shawls (*otjikeriwa*) enfolding and filling the space with colour, warmth, and intimacy.



Image 9: An artfully decorated 'ekutu' (ground-covering).⁶⁴⁷

By contrast, the space inside the homestead, and close to the ancestral shrine – as the place of ancestral prayer (*okuruwo okumbiru*)⁶⁴⁸ – as an exclusively male space, with men, especially the more senior men, sitting in small groups on their foldable chairs (Sg. *otjihavero*, Pl. *ovihavero*) – talking, discussing, and supervising the slaughtering of cattle. The cooking space was separated and here women and men mixed, with especially younger persons and close and immediate kin assisting with the slaughtering of livestock (the men), and the preparation and distribution of food (the women). During the wake mostly tea or something small to eat was distributed, with the cooked and main meal and meat (*onyama*) only shared after the burial and the next day. In front of the main house tables were set up for the more formal programme – for example, one for the pastors and priests, and another for male relatives ((grand) fathers, uncles) of the deceased. Depending on the funeral, both on the night before the burial and the following day, there was the singing of Christian and religious hymns and a short service with different pastors (*ovahonge*) and bishops (*ovapriesteri*) from, for example, Zionist, Evangelical and/or other African Independent Churches,⁶⁴⁹ such as the longer-established Oruano (unity) church, also known as the ‘Herero church’. Thus, funerals were events where often “a mix of Christian fashion, beliefs, rites and histories, blended with ancestral beliefs and practices” and a space where belonging to different syncretic and non-syncretic churches⁶⁵⁰ and as well as to wider society and collective

⁶⁴⁷ Photograph taken by Elsemi Olwage

⁶⁴⁸ Most of the prayer and practices at the shrine centred on the use of sand (*ehi*), water (*omeva*), ash, and the branch of the Mopane (*omutati*) tree.

⁶⁴⁹ The African Independent Churches with both Zionist and Apostolic elements have, especially in recent years, proliferated in Opuwo and in southern Kaoko. For example, Church Betel (Betel Community Healing Church) to which many in Otjomatamba belonged, was only established in Opuwo in 2008. These churches have strong prophetic and spiritual healing traditions and have spread from other parts of Namibia, Botswana and South Africa. However, unlike the Oruano Church (see below), ancestral beliefs were not that present in these churches. For further discussion of Kaoko’s syncretic and succession churches as well as a detailed description of funerals see Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 12, 315–322.

⁶⁵⁰ These included Zionist-Apostolic, Evangelical, Catholic, Methodist and Pentecostalist churches

identity could be performed and enacted. This was especially the case given that many of these churches and their genealogies, for example, (re)produced “important transnational networks that connect communities in Kaoko with other Herero communities” in Botswana and *Outua*.⁶⁵¹



Image 10: Enacting political belonging: displaying the SWAPO party's colours through dress.⁶⁵²

Moreover, on the morning of the burial, several oxen were slaughtered – with the number depending on the political and social status of the deceased. On this day the main service was held, followed by the procession to the graveyard and the burial. Upon returning from the graveyard, people pass through the ancestral shrine to be cleansed and purified (*okupunguha*) by the *omurangere* from bad things and spirits (*ovihuha*).⁶⁵³ Afterwards, the food and especially the meat (*onyama*)⁶⁵⁴ is distributed and people congregate at their tents or the homestead – still in mostly gendered groups, or according to places and place-belonging. Thus, simultaneously, funerals were social events where people could meet and socialise together and where different and multiple forms of relatedness could be articulated, performed, and enacted.

Apart from national political belonging some funeral procession and events were spaces where *omarapi* or the ‘flags’ and associated belonging were enacted, and where *oturupa* (Pl. *ozotrupa*) was performed (see Chapter Two). As Bleckmann⁶⁵⁵ has argued, the performance of the *oturupa* within Kaoko, apart from being a commemorative practice, was also still strongly considered an important part

⁶⁵¹ See Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 311.

⁶⁵² Photograph taken by Verijeta Kuhanga

⁶⁵³ In the case of your father still being alive, the *omurangere* only touches the forehead with some water. If your father has passed, he takes some water in his mouth and spits it on the ground. On the other hand, those who arrive at the funeral place after the burial ‘eat’ some sand at the ancestral shrine in order to interact with others.

⁶⁵⁴ The meat was also distributed according to gender, with men and women receiving/allowed to eat different parts. Taboos also regulated which parts could be eaten by different patrilineals.

⁶⁵⁵ Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 152.

of performing “Herero tradition” or custom (*ombazu yOvaHerero*) and “Herero identity” (*okurira Omuherero*) – of (re)enacting belonging to wider pan-Herero belonging and social history and one which was distinct from other Otjiherero-speaking Kaokolanders. However, these performances were, simultaneously, giving voice to divergent socio-political affiliations and factional belonging.⁶⁵⁶ One funeral I attended made several references to the Herero/German colonial war and made appeals to people to keep on performing *oturupa* as a way to preserve *ombazu* (custom). Moreover, and as part of the performance of the *otutrupa*, groups of younger men perform *ombimbi* – a war-like dance and performance – with these performances being part and parcel of the ongoing and dialectical construction of masculinities and femininities and local gender relations.⁶⁵⁷

After eating and the performances discussed, many return to their home-places. However, many – especially close kin – remain and participate in the rituals and meetings which follow in the days after the burial. For example, the women only ‘leave’ the main house on Monday or Tuesday – one or two days after the burial – with this ‘coming out’ of the house punctuated by specific ritual practices and the slaughtering of more cattle.



Image 11: After mourning women gather at the ancestral shrine to be cleansed.⁶⁵⁸

In the case of a widow being left behind, her situation is not addressed before the women leave the house, with a specific and cooked part of the cattle – the *evango* (the pelvis) – being taken to her in the main house. If she eats the meat, it signifies her acceptance of marriage to the brother of the deceased, whereas if she sends the meat back untouched, it signifies her refusal. However, and as was the case

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid. 156-158

⁶⁵⁷ See Ibid. 14-15

⁶⁵⁸ Photograph taken by Verijeta Kuhanga

during one funeral I attended, even though she sends back the meat untouched, her situation could then still be discussed afterwards, and negotiations remained flexible despite this ritual.

After the women leave the house, and in procession, everyone eventually moves to the ancestral shrine to be cleansed and to signify the end of crying. Only after this was done were the material belongings and inheritance (excluding livestock) brought and placed in a big bundle close to the main house – including his/he clothes, bedding, and mattress. From here the belongings were distributed or, depending on the funeral, people proceeded to travel to the homestead where the belongings of the deceased are distributed. In most cases, it was the eldest classificatory ‘father’ (*omuyanwa*) in the maternal line who is in charge of these duties.⁶⁵⁹ Afterwards, the small delegation of kin then proceeds to travel for up to a month – moving from place to place and sharing the details of the situation with others.⁶⁶⁰

Conclusion

This chapter has foregrounded the ongoing importance of dual descent reckoning and kinship in socially and politically embedding the “bundles of rights” or the “multiple layers of rights” to resources and land within this context, including across territories and jurisdiction boundaries.⁶⁶¹ Yet at the same time, this chapter has shown how kin-relatedness does not exist a priori nor according to fixed categories, but had to be negotiated in the everyday and through social practices. In addition, although kin-relatedness was an integral institution in mediating both permanent and temporary access-rights to land, pastures and fields, kinship intersected with other key social categories, including and importantly, gender and seniority, and economic status, particularly livestock wealth and ownership, as well as political belonging (as illustrated in Chapter Three).

Furthermore, navigating norms rooted in social institutions such as marriage, divorce, loverhood, social parenting, and paternal belonging, not only resulted in household fluidities but also scripted a person’s place-belonging(s) and differential access to resources and land often in highly idiosyncratic and intersectional ways. Social parenting and mobile childhood biographies also played a role in fostering personal and affective place-attachment and senses of belonging. Moreover, the everyday negotiation of relatedness, but also relationships and interpersonal relations, were crucial for expanding and affirming one’s social and political networks and thus both for facilitating livestock exchanges, loans and/or acquisitions, and for accessing additional pastures and places through which to establish translocal households, multilocal residencies, and/or temporary cattle-posts during times of need. This was critical for ensuring the survival and building-up of livestock herds in a dryland context and securing both livelihoods and pastoral wealth. Gatherings such as funerals were especially crucial

⁶⁵⁹See Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 16.

⁶⁶⁰ Abraham Uarua, 10.01.2016, unrecorded interview, Otjomatempa

⁶⁶¹ Lentz, “Land.”

in negotiating one's relatedness beyond close kin, fostering and building alliances, and enacting one's intersecting social and political belongings.

However, depending on differential and unequally distributed livestock wealth, labour availability, age, gender, polygynous marital arrangements, and the ownership of cars, homesteads and different households practiced more sedentary or mobile, multilocal or translocal livelihoods and households. Additionally, some translocal households were simultaneously negotiated and established through oscillatory labour migration to urban elsewhere, with usually employed and wealthy stock owners hiring labour to take care of livestock distributed between places, and some of those employed re-investing back into the rural homestead, either through remittances and/or purchasing livestock. Nevertheless, strong wealth and livestock inequalities constituted the shared land-use community in Ozondundu as well as the wider region, with intra-household exchanges, livestock loans and reciprocal demands (often rooted in idioms of kinship) placed on others being important practices in fostering mutual support and relatedness.

Furthermore, as illustrated in this chapter, the everyday (re)production of translocal households and homestead-based economies were also underscored by gendered social practices – generated by the unequal and generational patterns of livestock and car ownership, gendered labour relations, the importance of matrifocality in moral conceptions of the homestead, and the dynamic cultural norms governing (married) women's public mobility and itinerant travels. These gendered (im)mobilities however have to be read through an intersectional lens – with female agency likewise co-constituted through the practice of kinship, seniority, and socio-economic differentiation, such as having hired labour, owning livestock or being the senior wife. In addition, in discussing transregional labour migration into southern Kaoko, this chapter also illustrated how newcomers and strangers were often incorporated into the social fabric through kinship idioms, with flexible belongings at work.

To conclude, this chapter then detailed the social power relations that animated the everyday negotiation of one's capacity for being and/or becoming (im)mobile, and the negotiation of social belonging. In doing so, I hoped to elucidate some of the interrelationships between social, spatial, and pastoral mobilities and the differential agency in navigating between these.

Chapter 5 *Ombongarero*: The dispute meeting

Introduction

The abundant shade of a large *Omumborombonga* (Leadwood) tree created the meeting space. The day was bright, the skies clear blue and, typical for February, it was already hot at barely ten in the morning. A large number of people – all men – had begun to gather in the shade of the tree sitting in a loosely-shaped circle, facing each other, engaged in conversation. Most had brought foldable canvas or other chairs (*ovihavero*), and each had a signature carved wooden cane (*okati*), casually held, or leaning against their chairs. Some of the younger men were seated on a log close by.

Almost everyone was dressed for the occasion: most were wearing hats (*omakori*) in different and fashionable styles and the outfits, especially those of the senior men, had an aura of formality and occasion with many dressed in freshly ironed, printed, and collared shirts, suits (*ozosuita*), waistcoats and leather shoes. Both *ozosoromana* – Muteze and Herunga – were present – sitting apart, close to their respective councillors, all of whom were senior men. More men kept arriving – their folded chairs tucked under their arms or hooked over their shoulders – with many coming from the neighbouring places of Otjapitjapi, Okakuyu, Otjomaoru and seasonal cattle-posts of Okarumbu, Otjize and Okomuhana. Their cars and *bakkies* stood parked across the gravel road, close to and around the meeting space. We had arrived by car, parking some distance away, and had briefly watched this gathering of the men. With us was Uakurupa, a married woman from Otjomaoru, who had spent the previous night at our neighbour's homestead. After briefly observing, we approached the circle of men. Keeping pace with the other two, I walked slowly and deliberately. Upon arrival, we stopped and waited for the men closest to us to initiate the greeting process. Although I had come to know Uakurupa as a boisterous, confident person who was unafraid to voice her opinion, even she, in this context, appeared subdued and took a seat towards the outside of the circle, cross-legged on her ground-covering (*ekutu*). We followed and unfolded our canvas chairs next to her.

The atmosphere beneath the tree was charged with expectation and now and again some of the men complained that the meeting should begin. Those closest to us opened the circle and gestured for us to move forward. Sitting at the outer edge of the circle and either on their hunches or a wooden log was a group of three variously aged men, dressed differently from the other men in Himba styles. The three wore the signature, currently fashionable skirts made from patterned cloth (*erapi*), longer at the back, and short and folded in front, both tucked into belts (*ozohini*), with leather sandals (*ozongaku*), T-shirts (*ozombanda*) and, in the case of the older man, a khaki waist-coat. Seated on their hunches, they were using their wooden canes and sticks to lean on as they observed the gathering. I recognised two of them as being from the newcomer homesteads. After some time, the three men stood and left the circle, wandering across the road to the shop where a few other residents, mostly men, still lingered.

Eventually, more women arrived. Dressed in their more formal *ozohorokweva* – each woman embodied highly individualised stylistic choices in terms of fashion, colour, fabric, and jewellery as well as the characteristic shawl (*otjikeriva*) and the self-made and styled head-dress (*otjikaiva*). The sweet, layered smell of perfumes (*otjizumba*) and the sound of *ozohorokweva* sweeping over the dry ground, further enlivened the already powerful presence that the long dresses invoked. The women moved differently from the men, walking at a much slower, deliberate pace, passing quietly behind the set chairs to find their seats. Most of the women who arrived took a seat cross-legged on their *ekutu* close to or next to those women already present whom they knew on the outskirts of the circle of men.

However, two women, including Ngavahue, had brought small, foldable rectangular chairs and took a seat inside the circle. These chairs were still notably lower than those used by the men and with far fewer women present and those present all seated towards one side, this produced a particular spatial ordering which was highly gendered. As we gathered, a few men began to shuffle in their chairs, some cleared their throats, and some called for people to quiet down. I counted about 30 people. As the silence slowly grew, it seemed that the meeting was set to start. One man stood up to speak, removing his hat.



I had arrived at this meeting with quite some anticipation. The meeting was supposed to happen two months before in December 2014 during my initial two-week stay in Otjomatamba. Within the first weeks of being back in Otjomatamba in February 2015, the planned meeting was finally able to take place. This chapter thus concerns the first of many public meetings (*ombongarero*) I attended during the dispute – detailing some of the deliberations, situated practices and negotiations. In doing so, I also introduce some of the actors involved, both residents (*ovature*), and those considered to be newcomers (*ovayenda*). And finally, this chapter engages with the politics of belonging and place which were at play and performed within the context of the meeting.

“If there are no rules, then people do not call it a place”

Uandero (Ben) Tjituezu, a person in his 60s and an *orata* to *osoromana* Muteze was the first to address the crowd. As he stood, removing his cap, he stated that they were taking too long, that the meeting needed to start and that they needed to appoint a chairman (*otjermana*). Before proceeding, he said, they needed to decide – the people who are under discussion – should they talk, will they take part, or will they just be quiet? Nobody responded. Some suggested that an *otjermana* was needed and then he would make the decision. As Ben sat back down, Tuapuka Kazendjou, another senior man in his 60s, stood up to talk. Unlike Ben, who often talked in a restrained manner, Tuapuka spoke his mind. Due to his age, his relative position of wealth, and being a senior councillor to Muteze, he, like Ben, was also afforded a certain degree of authority.

Tuapuka talked confidently: *It was us, the people of the place who decided to have the meeting and therefore the ‘people migrating’ (Sg. omuyenda Pl. ovayenda) need to leave. Somebody needs to*

go and tell them: they should not leave or go home, but sit somewhere, close-by but away from the meeting. A younger man stood up and went to and addressed the three men in the distance. When he came back, the three of them walked and took a seat across the road in the shade of a tree. The discussion continued. Some thought that this meeting needed to exclude another homestead – the head of which was present, sitting quietly and looking sombre: It was Uakoka Tjizembisa. Tensions seemed palpable. A few more people raised their concerns, but no clear consensus was reached, and some seemed opposed to confronting him. Uakoka thus remained seated, and the deliberation shifted to the next topic – my presence. I was asked to introduce myself again. An *otjermana* was then selected.

The *otjermana* began the meeting by emphasising that everyone should treat each other with respect. Muteze signalled that he wished to add something: He asked that the meeting programme be explained. *People came from different places and not everyone was informed about the situation*, he asserted. One man at this point suggested that those controlling the place needed to open the meeting and they should also sit together. The seating changed accordingly so that the two *ozosoromana* now sat next to each other. The *otjermana* read the points for discussion from a piece of paper:

This meeting will be about people living here, people settled here and people that came here without permission and the way that people that live here without permission asked others to come and live with them. Right now, even yesterday new people came to the place. Okomuhana used to be a cattle-post and now people were creating homesteads. The goal of the meeting is then to look at who is supposed to give permission to settle in this area, is there a committee? And to mention those names, of those who came here because of drought, those who came here to settle permanently and those who settled forcefully. This is the aim of the meeting.

Uaranda Kavetu then stood up. Uaranda was the chairman of the water-point committee, as well as part of the conservancy committee and thus also active in public life. He reminded everyone that there were also those for whom they had already had a meeting who had accepted the outcome and left the place. *People need to differentiate*, he asserted. Another discussion started. The *otjermana* was requested to give a chance to the people from Otjapitjapi to speak first. *Were there also people who came there because of the drought?* No, others interceded, the meeting should start with Okomuhana, a cattle-post place belonging to Okakuyu (See Map 3). Another man commented that no new people came to Otjomaoru (to which one woman loudly responded, “Dankie tog!” in Afrikaans, meaning “Thank goodness”!).

A man from Okomuhana spoke: *I was aware of one person who came, he had asked to settle for drought reasons and permission was granted to him.* Another person stood and interrupted: *first we should start with the people who had a written paper (permit) and those who were already gone, and then secondly with people who came because of drought again –to look at whether they have permission or not. There were different ways in which people came into Otjomatamba.*

Muteze emphasised that people should accept the main points before proceeding. Most agreed and accepted, although it was evident that there was some confusion. Eventually, a consensus was reached for the meeting to proceed. Tuapuka stood up again to talk: *those newcomers that were in the*

place, he asserted, *I do not know them. Kanduka was permitted on paper – but now he was back again without permission. I knew about him and there was also a woman from Okanadjoze, she wanted to remain here.* He sat back down in his chair.



Kakeke Kanduka was well-known in Otjomatempa and also had close kin-relations with some of the homesteads. He worked as a police officer in Sesfontein and had his homestead in Warmquelle, close to Sesfontein (See Map 6 below). A few times in the past years he had moved his livestock into the Otjomatempa due to experiences of drought and left again once the rains returned. He was one of the initial seven who had permission. Yet this year he had returned with his livestock and, according to Tuapuka, without permission. Some months later he had also married a woman from Otjomatempa and having met him later he had jokingly told me: “If you fall in love with a place (*okusuvera*), you fall in love with everything about the place”.

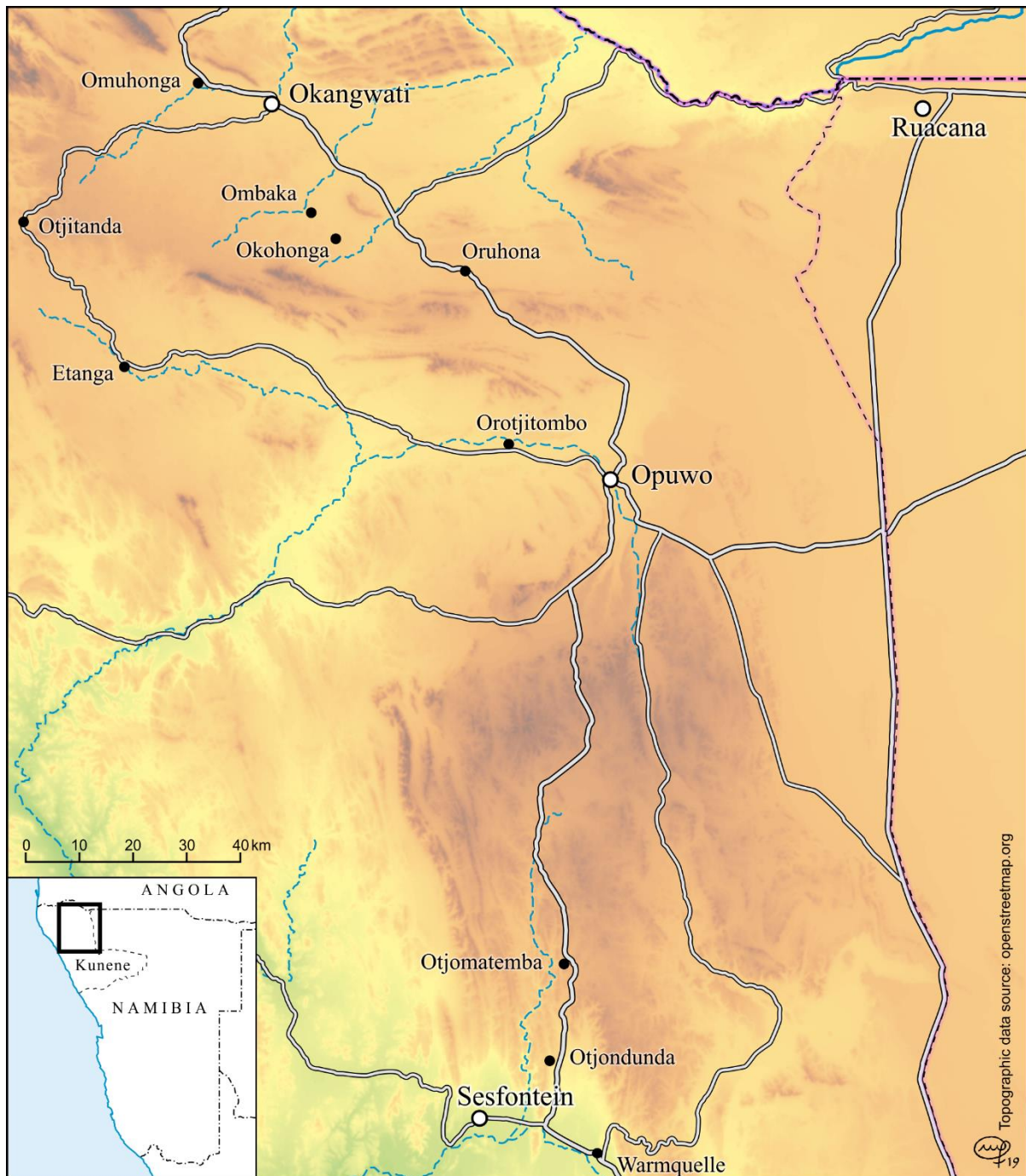
The woman from Okanadjoze which Tuapuka had mentioned was named Rinongue. A primary school teacher, Rinongue had recently decided to accept a teaching post in Otjapitjapi and to move back to her home-place, whilst her husband, who is originally from Etanga in northern Kaoko, was employed in South Africa.



After Tuapuka sat back down, another man rose slowly, leaning on his walking cane. It was Kamutjiha Tjiseua, one of the oldest, first-comer homesteads. Similar to Tuapuka, Kamutjiha related what he knew about the newcomers: *Everyone knows Otjomatempa differently because everyone knows people that came here and left*, he slowly asserted. *There were some whom he did not know whether they came for drought or to settle: these included the homesteads of Kondoro, Ngeyama and Tjimaka. And then there were other ones he knew about, such Kanduka (the policeman) – the one that came back again.* He sat slowly back down.



Kondoro Mbandja and Ngeyama Kena Kutjinda (mentioned above) were both men in their 30s or 40s who belonged to a homestead headed by Uazeika Mutambo (Harire) – one of the newcomer homesteads that initially migrated from northern Kaoko. Uazeika had his ancestral homestead in Oruhona, a village more than 250 km further north in Kaoko and was rarely seen in Otjomatempa. About seven years ago, in 2007/8, Uazeika had established a cattle-post in Otjondunda, a settled-place 25 km south of Otjomatempa on the other side of a mountain range and in a neighbouring area falling under the jurisdiction of different *ozosoromana* (See Map 6 below). His adult children and nephews and nieces lived here and took care of the livestock. The two men that Kamutjiha mentioned were related to Uazeika: Ngeyama was the son of Uazeika’s *ongundue* (uncle), whilst Kondoro was a Uazeika’s *omuramue* (cross-cousin), related to the mother-side (matrilineally).



Map 6: Migration trajectories and patterns of translocality.⁶⁶²

Both were responsible for taking care of the livestock belonging to and kept within Otjomatamba. Kondoro was also married with children, and his family lived with him in a homestead they established in Otjomatamba. However, at this meeting only Rahenga Tjiuju, another of Uazeika's *omusia* (nephews), a young man in his early 20s was present. Rahenga could always be seen with his signature 'tail' hairstyle (*ondato*) which, according to Himba cultural practices, signified his bachelor status.⁶⁶³

⁶⁶² Cartographer: Monika Feinen

⁶⁶³ See Van Wolputte, *Material*

Just before ‘entering’ Otjomatempa from the north there was another large homestead next to the road barely visible through the foliage of Mopane trees at the edge of the place. This was where Tjimaka Tjavara lived, the other person mentioned by Kamutjiha. Tjimaka had a large homestead and was in a polygynous marriage with four women, with some living and managing cattle-posts elsewhere in southern Kaoko, particularly in Okanandjira. He also resided with his married brother Ueitiminua and his family. Tjimaka had created a cattle-post at Otjomatempa four to five years before, with Ueitiminua joining him, in the last year. Both Ueitiminua and Tjimaka came from and had their ancestral homestead at Orotjitombo, 30 km north-west of Opuwo and thus about 130 km north of Otjomatempa (See Map 6). They moved into the southern parts of the region in search of better grazing for their livestock.



As the meeting progressed another young man stood up and tried to clarify: *The first seven homesteads were given permission, but they brought others that don’t have permission. And now those that had permission left already whilst those that don’t remain.*

People must be clear, another man from Okakuyu asserted, also standing up, *if you know the person just come straight forward and name the person.* Tuapuka followed on this request: *Tjiheiu had asked for settlement because his cattle were being stolen around Opuwo. He asked from osoromana Herunga who said yes. We were taking too long to decide that was why he came and settled.*



Tjiheiu was said to be an *osoromana* from Otjihama, a place close to Opuwo. As Tjiheiu’s cattle were being stolen in large numbers due to their proximity to Opuwo, he had moved some to Otjomatempa. The livestock he kept in Otjomatempa, however, were being cared for by another Himba homestead, headed by Piriko Kaporisa, who lived with his two wives and children. Tjiheiu’s son also lived together with them and helped to care for the livestock, with Tjiheiu himself rarely seen in the place. Although this case was brought up during the meeting, it seemed that Piriko Kaporisa and his homestead had been accepted within the place as residents (*ovature*). Whereas others had been requested to leave the meeting, Kaporisa formed part of the circle of men present and was active in the discussion and deliberation.



Herunga’s son, a young man, stood and commented that the men were just talking about the ‘Himba’ but that there were also those that settled that were not ‘Himba’. *We are just moving around it and not saying it,* he asserted. Ignoring this comment, Kamutjiha interjected: *Everyone is new here and each person must say from their heart where they came from.* Foregrounded here by Kamutjiha were the particular settlement histories of Otjomatempa – with homesteads having arrived during different times but the majority having settled during the previous 15 years. Herunga continued: *People without permission must stay to attend the pre-school. Where people come from there is no pre-school.* Here and there small bursts of exasperation could be heard. Another man stood and responded that there were, in fact, pre-schools in the places the people came from. He continued: *The year before both*

ozosoromana had signed that the people must leave the place. They took the paper to the police as proof. And the police suggested that there must be a date which should be communicated to the people. Meanwhile, Muteze was trying to organise the meeting, but Herunga was never in the place. And in the end, both of them were taking too long.

Herunga dutifully responded: *Everyone here has given permission unlawfully – I will take responsibility, but everyone must take responsibility.* Another voice – once again male: *There is no need to talk about what already happened. What needs to happen now is to find a solution. Let us start with Rinongue and Uakoka – do they have permission to settle?* Herunga responded that yes, he had given them permission to settle. People once again started discussing the position of Uakoka. *He is not on a side*, one man asserted, continuing: *If he is afraid to answer in the meeting, just call the person who gave permission and let him answer straightforward.* Tuapuka responded: *No one is allowed to give permission to settle if the community is not there. But first, let us complete all the areas – to name the people.*

There are still the cattle-posts of Otjize and Okarumbu, another man quipped. *But there were two groups of people who came to these places. Some are from Ombombo. We will not discuss this now. First, we have to finish with Okomuhana.* Tuapuka again: *Are all of these places not falling under one? Okakuyu and Okomuhana, Otjize, Okarumbu, Otjapitjapi and Otjomaoru? Were all the people consulted if permission was given?* Another person disagreed with this assertion: *No, it is not working like that. If someone wants to settle in one of the places, no need to ask full permission from all the places. At Okomuhana there was a conflict concerning one man. When they had a meeting, the decision was taken by a few, and no one was complaining. Now after this meeting you are coming up with the story that no one is allowed to give permission.*

Evident in this exchange was that there was some confusion as to the distribution of authority in terms of governing temporary access-rights and settlement. However, some were quick to denounce such conflicting perspectives and to assert particular place and shared jurisdiction boundaries. Thus, another voice responded: *That meeting is already done. Now we are saying that no one is allowed to do that again. You need permission from the ozosoromana – that is all.* Tuapuka stood once again – his animated voice and lively presence directing deliberations: *The purpose of this meeting is to solve problems. It is not to have conflict. Otjomaeru, Otjomatamba and all other places, are the cattle-posts of Otjapitjapi. We are just here to find the problems of these places. If some people did not understand: the main purpose is to mention those people who came to settle without permission.*

At this point, all the men picked up their chairs and the women their ground-coverings and lower seats and moved to adjust to the shifting shade of the tree. The midday sun started to climb high, with the heat deepening the quiet of village life, punctuated by everyday sounds such as the few cars which sped by along the gravel road, the sporadic braying of donkeys, and bird calls. The meeting had already been in progress for a few hours, and I had barely seen anyone having food or drink. Rather a feeling of determination punctuated the atmosphere and that of careful and patient deliberation. A

consensus had to be reached. A man in a blue shirt finally stood up: *With regards to the Himba, Herunga will answer that. With regards to Uakoka and others, Otjomatamba's people will answer. With regards to Tjimaka – he was using the 'Meatco manga'⁶⁶⁴ and somebody was helping him. Afterwards, he spoke to Herunga who accepted him. The woman, Rinongue, came with a paper from the osoromana.*

Herunga rose to speak: *The Himba came to us. We took their complaints to the community. Their children wanted to attend the pre-school. It is not only my problem but a problem for all of us.* Here Tuapuka interrupted somewhat angrily: *Maybe you are hearing what he is saying because I did not hear anything. You are not a good osoromana at all. You are not.* Herunga continued, ignoring this comment: *If somebody came to me, I always said it was fine. But from here onwards, I will not give anybody permission anymore.* Another man spoke: *I think that what people want is for that person who gave permission to the Himba to say: Is it the one who left, or is it this one, and are they together or not?* Tuapuka, getting excited: *I am asking the same thing!*

Evident from these discussions was that the *ovayenda* and those homesteads under discussion had diverse biographies and genealogies of arrival. Moreover, many were not sure to whom the livestock and cattle herds belonged, or which homesteads had permission or not. Some were perceived as rather having entered through previous homesteads which were initially granted temporary access-rights. Ben then stood up. He agreed that he was the one who permitted Hiniimue. Muteze confronted him: *How can you give permission?* Ben responded: *He left again already. When I was giving permission, I was having no right. The whole community was supposed to meet.*

◇

Hiniimue had in the past two to three years moved livestock into Otjomatamba. Although I never knew much about him, from conversations it seemed he was a wealthy stock owner and patron. Moreover, as it became clear, he had facilitated the entry of others. He also seemed to have a cattle-post in Otjondunda, south of Otjomatamba, where Uazeika had established his cattle-post several years before.

◇

Uakoka then spoke for the first time: *Now people must come up with a solution. Are we allowed or not?* Another voice, directed at both *ozosoromana*: *Are you doing something good, bringing something good? Otherwise, you will no longer control this area.* Herunga stood and then admitted, yes it was him, who permitted all of the people. Muteze then stood up for the first time to talk: *Until now, the way that people have been giving permission is wrong. While I am the only one that has the right to give permission. It is against the government law (oveta).* Another man spoke up and directed his comment to Muteze: *There are the goats of Aser at Okarumbu. Are they there for settlement or drought?* Here the first woman commented during the meeting: *There is no spring water at Okarumbu – so where are the goats drinking?* Muteze replied, explaining that money was given for diesel. It was also mentioned

⁶⁶⁴A vaccination and auction structure situated close to the meeting space which was constructed by Meatco – Namibia's largest meat processing and marketing entity.

that there was another woman who had brought goats to Okarumbu and who was Aser Kapi's classificatory daughter.



Aser Kapi was originally from Otjapitjapi and closely related to Muteze, with them also being age-mates (*omakura*). His mother was from Ombombo and Muteze's father, who was his maternal uncle, fetched him to be raised in Otjapitjapi. Around 2004 Aser started working for the government and by the time we met, a year after the meeting, he was still employed by the Opuwo Town Council and thus had a house in Opuwo where he and his wife lived for large parts of the year. In 2006 he had moved with most of his livestock to a plot south of the VCF and in the communal farming areas close to Kamanjab, about 120 km south (Kamdesa). He had gained access through the son of the elder brother of his mother's husband. Although he had moved there, some of his livestock remained in Otjapitjapi. This was done in case livestock were needed for a funeral or any other exchange purposes and to avoid having to go through the quarantines required when crossing the veterinary border.

When his mother passed away a few years before, he had decided to move some of this livestock from Otjapitjapi further south-east to Otjokavare, his mother's home-place and closer to Kamdesa (and thus more manageable). Despite this, he kept between five and ten cattle in Otjapitjapi, which he left with his sister. However, as the drought began to strongly affect areas further south in Kamdesa and Otjokavare in the previous three years, Aser had eventually decided to start moving some of his livestock back to Otjapitjapi, or rather Okarumbu, with these herds being cared for by an employed worker. It was these livestock movements that were generating concern from people during the meeting – especially as Aser was also one of the wealthier stock owners.



With the attention now being on Okarumbu, Muteze took the opportunity to raise another concern: the conservancy did not give money to buy diesel at Okarumbu, despite the elephants drinking there regularly. Somebody suggested that this point did not fit with the current discussion and that a separate meeting should be organised. This was followed by a short lull. The heat, hunger and thirst were starting to catch up. After some deliberation, some men now addressed the two *ozosoromana*: *For what you have done wrong, what will you do?* Herunga seemed then to take on a different strategy: *If the people come up with a solution 'to chase' (okuramba) the Himba, I will not accept it. Then the people who came and opened the shops (ostora) should also leave.* Some people suggested that the two *ozosoromana*, as well as their *ozorata*, must come up with a solution whilst the people have a break. It was now close to 4 pm. The endurance and patience of everyone present were admirable – the meeting had lasted the whole day, yet nobody had stood up and left or complained. Yet as the day stretched on it was also evident that people were growing tired and hungry and desperate for an agreement. The *ozosoromana* and their *ozorata* – the group of senior men – proceeded to move away from the circle towards another tree to discuss the situation. Some of the women who sat close to us told us that if the *ozosoromana* decided that all the homesteads under discussion must stay they would 'march' (*omartja*)

in protest or go to the police. While we waited for the outcome, people walked to the shop, some finding money to buy a cool drink or two to share, while others lingered in the shade of the tree, discussing in smaller circles. The three men across the road were still waiting yet had now moved to the shop to socialise with others.

One hour later the *ozosoromana* and *ozorata* returned. Once again, the circle adjusted to the shadows of the late afternoon sun. Once everyone was quiet, they announced the solution: Everyone who came here without permission must leave the place. Those who migrated into the place together with livestock as well the shops – which will be discussed later as the owners were not present. Herunga stood up: *The shops must close until we have a meeting until the owners justify their right to come here and where they got permission.* People did not seem to listen or pay much attention to this remark. A man wearing glasses spoke up: *Thank you for a good solution. A solution that the people wanted. Now think of a solution on how to call the Himba at the store. Before calling them, we have to decide on a time. When do they have before they have to leave?*

People took some time to discuss and deliberate. One man argued that if they gave too much time more and more people and livestock would arrive. Rakatoka, an unmarried man from Otjapitjapi who was also on the conservancy committee and acting as the secretary for the meeting – stood to address the men: *The Namibian government law says that people are supposed to be given 21 days. Traditionally it was after seven days. Now we will just work with customary law.* Herunga challenged him, invoking notions of reciprocity: *Traditional and national laws are different, but somewhere they match. Traditionally if you chase people from your areas then later you want to go and marry at their tradition, what then?* People responded in an agitated way – they wanted him to set a date. One of the women spoke again – the second since the start of the meeting: *By deciding for 21 days, it might take one month. But meanwhile, people will still be coming in and out. We must decide for 7 days.*

Eventually, people voted and settled for a longer period: after 21 days the newcomer homesteads had to leave. It was also decided that there would be another meeting to discuss the situation at the cattle-posts and places of Okarumbu, Otjize and Okomuhana. Before closing the meeting, it was decided to appoint a committee to control the migration and to set a date for the next meeting. Herunga stood again to talk: *I went to ask the police for assistance. And they said no if you want the police to be there you should train your own community police to control movement and migration.* One person, responding to this comment and about the work of the game guards, stood and said that the conservancy was broken and asked whether people were willing to discuss this now: *How will they pay the people working for the conservancy?* Muteze responded: *You must organise yourselves – you the conservancy committee.*

Before any other public concerns could be raised, somebody called the three men who had been waiting all day. They came one by one. Sitting down on their hunches at the back of the circle, their walking canes used for balance. They were waiting for Tjimaka – another newcomer – who had just

arrived in a *bakkie* and had parked at the store. He was walking slowly towards the circle, carrying his chair, hooked over his shoulder. Once he took a seat, Rakotoka stood and read from his notes:

The meeting was for this whole area. Those who came here without permission or not. We wanted to make sure what they have done from last year and whether it was fine for everyone. We came up with the following. Every person that came without permission must leave the place in 21 days. This includes the people who had migrated here because of drought. Because first, they came for drought and now, they were living here like everyone else. They also have 21 days. And now we will give a chance for the people to say something.

One younger man spoke: *He was here because of Hiniimue, but he would try and find him. He left his cattle here to be looked after.* Next, the eldest of the three men present spoke. His name was Unaro Tjipurua. First, he came for drought, but now he was requesting settlement, he explained. Finally, Rahenga, the youngest of the three, addressed the people: he would like to ask for a few more days, while he was looking for a new place. He was asking for an extension on the 21 days.

People did not support any of the requests and they were refused. Finally, Tjimaka spoke: *It is not good to talk about Hiniimue. It is just good to leave. I am not here for one osoromana, but two. And they have decided we must leave.* (He turned to address the other three men). *There is no need to ask for an extension. You do not have permission. You must talk to Hiniimue to find a place.* Herunga stood up once more: *If you like it or not, I was appointed to control this area. The one giving permission should not feel bad. They have all been punished. Everywhere you are going, you should know that there are rules (oveta). Asking for settlement is a serious issue. People will not allow you before considering certain things. Such as grazing and whether the water is enough or not.* Muteze stood for the final word: *If you are living in a place and there are no rules (oveta) then people do not call it a place. Because there are no rules.*

Everyone stood to close the meeting with prayer. It had been decided. In 21 days, those who had been informed had to migrate out of the area. The day was now stretching into dusk and people slowly began to return home to their respective homesteads, with those visiting travelling back to neighbouring places

Conclusion

The heterogeneity of the various livestock movements and migrations into Ozondundu meant that this meeting tried to disentangle their various genealogies of arrival and to situate the newcomers socially. During the meeting, the contested group of newcomers were eventually differentiated with seven homesteads who had, in the past, requested drought-related temporary access-rights and who had left again. However, it seemed that further newcomer homesteads had negotiated their arrival and access through these prior seven homesteads – to the extent of having moved livestock into the *kraals*. As it was expressed: *those who had permission, brought others who did not have permission.* This created ample confusion as to which homestead the different livestock herds and people belonged to. Moreover,

in April the previous year, a meeting was held that stipulated that all of those who had been granted temporary access-rights due to drought elsewhere had to return to where they had come from with their livestock. This request was not adhered to by several of the newcomers under discussion. Such practices were perceived to be a violation of the existing norms, specifically those animating mutual, long-standing understandings of reciprocity.

Some of the newcomers who were given 21 days were also perceived as having settled forcefully (*ovature wokomasa*), or with arrogance (*ovature ovana manjengu*) – in other words, having first arrived due to drought and through having “asked for drought” (*omuningire wourumbu*, literally “to talk about drought”) and in the end refusing to leave. Moreover, it was noted again and again in the meeting that no single person had the authority to grant settlement rights – an assertion which was motivated it seems by some having been suspected of allocating settlement rights on their own. Such norms were thus sanctioned during this meeting, emphasising that legally and according to government rules (*oveta*) only the *ozosoromana* had the right to grant access-rights – both temporary and drought-related access-rights to pastures and land. It was also asserted that according to customary norms, decisions to grant settlement should be taken collectively. Yet who the ‘collective’ was or how it was to be defined seemed to be still somewhat and perhaps intentionally unclear.

In addition, as Caplan⁶⁶⁵ has argued, disputes often work in both grouping people together, whilst at the same time generating dynamics through which differences become articulated, relationally constructed, and heightened. At the onset of the meeting, it was clear that this dispute had generated a particular grouping of a set of places, families, and people, who defined their commonality as residents (*ovature*) against those of the newcomers. However, distinctions and boundaries between residents (*ovature*) and newcomers or travellers (*ovayenda*) were also riddled with ambiguity and had to be negotiated and enacted within the context of the meeting. There were several other cases raised and discussed which involved livestock movements and household migration into the area by persons not designated as newcomers – yet who at the same time was also not yet considered residents (*ovature*) but were rather former residents, married women who returned to their home area, or others who had a longer-established and reciprocal relationship with the area and who regularly moved livestock or settled here during times of drought or extended dry-season (Sometimes referred to as herders, Sg. *omurise*, Pl. *ovarise*). By the end of this meeting, it was not entirely clear whether their cases were still to be discussed. This separation and the differential and contested belonging embodied by the different newcomers was enacted not only discursively, but also socially and spatially, with some of those included in the newcomers’ group being part of and participating in the meeting, whilst others were asked to sit some distance from the meeting space.

The three men who had been asked to sit elsewhere during the meeting and the homesteads of Uazeika and Tjimaka were all grouped as being related to specific genealogies of arrival and perceived

⁶⁶⁵ Patricia Caplan, *Understanding Disputes: The Politics of Argument* (Berg Oxford, 1995), 3.

transgressions. Throughout the meeting, the arrival of these homesteads was also linked to *osoromana* Herunga, who eventually took responsibility for having granted settlement rights to some without consultation. Moreover, the continual grouping and referral of these newcomers as ‘Himba’ signified a particular politics of difference underlying these migrations and livestock movements. In the case of these homesteads, it was both their place-belonging (i.e., their settlement) as well as their pastoral mobilities which were being called into question and contested. However, to enact fairness, and in the end, it was decided that all of those who had entered the area without permission from both *ozosoromana* and everyone who had moved their livestock into Ozondundu for drought-related reasons, had 21 days to leave. Both customary and Namibian state law and authority were invoked in deciding on this social action.

The meeting was also characterised by other situated and socio-spatial practices. Social knowledge regarding the genealogies of arrival of the different newcomers was mostly articulated by a handful of senior men and councillors (*ozorata*). The administration of settlement and land was thus, within the context of this meeting, enacted and re-enacted as the domain of men, specifically senior men, who occupied positions of public, political and ritual authority. Yet, at the same time, the organisational practices around which the meeting was organised included elements of ‘global’ institutional cultures – with a chairman (*otjermana*) and secretary being central persona in mediating deliberations, apart from the senior male figures. Nevertheless, this meeting and the voices raised were strongly gendered – and cross-cut with specific generational as well as wealth hierarchies. This gendering and hierarchical enactment of public space was embodied both by the seating arrangements, the demographic present, and how particular movements and ways of moving within this space were sanctioned and negotiated. The dispute meeting was however simultaneously negotiated through situated socio-legal practices of collective deliberation, formality, co-presence, mutuality, and conviviality. Dispute resolution is thus centred based on consensus-seeking, with the authority and power of the *ozosoromana* and *ozorata* being checked and challenged by those present who demanded a particular solution and decision from them.

Nevertheless, in conversations in the weeks before and after the meeting, it became clear that the dispute meeting in Otjomatimba, although not exceptional within a context of mobile pastoralism and cyclical droughts, was indeed exceptional and could be seen as a diagnostic event concerning the larger issue at hand, i.e., perceived forceful settlement by specific homesteads, most of whom were referred to as ‘Himba’. When we met with Tobias a few days after the meeting, he speculated that the *ovayenda* who had been asked to leave would not leave. “If the person leaves, but the cattle stays, did that person actually leave?” he asked us, shaking his head. On that day he had returned from Opuwo and had noted three more homesteads arriving. “Himba are just moving”, he asserted, “and livestock from Otjondunda are just coming and moving into the Otjomatimba area”. He explained that in Kaoko nobody had the power to force people and households to leave, not even the state police. He then

narrated a situation which had recently played out in Okanamuva – the cattle-post close to Otjondunda, in a neighbouring jurisdiction area:

There was a conflict in Okanamuva. The police arrived and there one was saying, ‘this is my family’, and the other one was saying, ‘yes I got permission from this person’. From there the police just left the situation. After three days the livestock from the Himba homesteads was refused water. People were saying, ‘don’t give their cattle water’. The Himba homesteads proceeded to climb the mountain to find cell phone network and called their family. The next day three cars from Opuwo arrived and they helped them to break the padlock that kept the borehole engine locked. Then their cattle could drink. This resulted in conflict – even in shooting and fighting. The police were not there. Some people were treated in the hospital Sesfontein, others in Opuwo. But their cattle were still drinking there. So, you will chase (*okuramba*) the Himba, but their cattle will still be there. If you touch their cattle, the government will punish you. You don’t have that right. The land is for the government. You can’t play with the rules (*oveta*).⁶⁶⁶

Tobias foregrounded a lack of authority in refusing newcomers and their livestock specifically within the context of postcolonial tenure and concerning current national frameworks of rights and legality. Tobias continued to explain: “If you say that, ‘no, that person will not live here and is not allowed, that you don’t want that then the government will say that everyone has a right to the land – even if that person is hurting you. Because of equal rights, it is like gender equality.” These comments were a critique of post-independent rights discourses, specifically Article 21(h) of the Constitution, which dictates that any citizen could move and freely settle on “state land” or “public land” – provided that they followed and respected “customary” norms and rules governing access.⁶⁶⁷ This led Tobias to speculate that many of those who had yet again been asked to leave, would, in fact, not do so. His retelling of the conflict also threw into relief some of the strategies deployed by people in attempts to control access to pastures and land: In this case, the locking of boreholes and the refusal of water – often thought to be a strong cultural taboo in a context of dry-land ecologies. Yet is also clearly reflected in this story was the wider reach of such disputes across southern Kaoko, and especially towards the south in the neighbouring Anabeb and Sesfontein conservancies, and the potential of this for generating conflict.

Some weeks after the meeting, Tuapuka Kazendjou also reflected that “there were no rules – that was why people were just moving into the area”. “People were fighting, there was not enough grazing, and the government was just making their own power”, he asserted. We were seated beneath a shade structure situated in the middle of his homestead which served as a kind of patio. In the distance, the hillsides looked dry and fading. Tuapuka seemed frustrated with the situation. Part of his frustration was directed toward the post-independent state. Hence, foregrounded in the meeting as well as in these conversations was an understanding that the norms governing land-access had to be re-articulated – especially in the face of the demands of the drought, lack of productive land and grazing and in-migrations, the proliferation of local headmen, and post-independent legal reforms. Moreover, evident

⁶⁶⁶ 13.02.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba.

⁶⁶⁷ Harring and Odendaal, *God*, 16.

here was that there was a critical understanding of the distribution of political and legal power in controlling territories and in the governing of the commonage. This was perceived as the “government making their own power”.

Chapter 6 Disputed and social practices of pastoral mobility

Introduction

Decisions to move livestock herds elsewhere or to orchestrate pastoral mobility “take place within larger systems of territorial governance, which open and close options and situate the placement of homesteads within a configuration of social affiliations and networks.”⁶⁶⁸ As shown in Chapter Three, emergent “systems of territoriality”⁶⁶⁹ and ‘communal’ tenure within southern Kaoko were being contested and negotiated at the intersection of ancestral land relations and the practice of kinship, colonial and post-colonial tenure boundaries and rules (*oveta*), and territorial struggles between the different Traditional Authorities and political factions.⁶⁷⁰ Against this background, this chapter delineates some of the disputed pastoral mobilities which were discussed during the meeting. I engage both with the cases mentioned during the meeting yet relegated to be addressed at a later stage, as well as those who were asked to leave in 21 days.

In doing so, I trace how these disputed mobilities were embedded within different but also patterned seasonal and drought-related livestock movements and household and regional migrations. Moreover, I illustrate how these mobilities were enfolded within divergent social and gendered norms and socio-cultural values and changing and dynamic notions of place-belonging. Hence, this chapter critically explores how persons and households had to navigate pastoral mobilities socially and relationally and how norms governing land-access and the sharing of pastures were practiced. Through this, I unpack the socio-legal particularities which were at stake in the dispute meeting – including the contested genealogies of the arrival of the different newcomers. Additionally, this chapter explores the diverse kinetics – together with experiences of differential and cyclical droughts – that animated the newcomers’ migration and/or the movement of livestock into Ozondundu. And lastly, in discussing the different cases, this chapter analyses the politics of belonging,⁶⁷¹ including the shifting boundaries between the newcomers (*ovayenda*) and the residents (*ovature*), and the ethnicised discourses which characterised the dispute.

The first part of this chapter discusses the interrelation between living with droughts, pastoral mobility, and inherited cultural and social values. Moreover, by discussing a particular case which concerned neo-local settlement norms and grazing-related migration, I delineate the social norms governing the negotiation of access-rights and take a closer look at how the newcomer/resident nexus had to be negotiated and reckoned with. Furthermore, and through this case, I analyse how these norms

⁶⁶⁸ John G. Galaty, “The Indigenisation of Pastoral Modernity: Territoriality, Mobility, and Poverty in Dryland Africa,” *Pastoralism in Africa: past, present, and future*. New York: Berghahn, 2013, 478.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁰ See Friedman, “Making.”

⁶⁷¹ Youkhana, “conceptual,” 11; Nira Yuval-Davis, “Power, Intersectionality and the Politics of Belonging,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Gender and Development* (Springer, 2016).

were being re-made and bureaucratised within contested territories and the mapping of communal conservancies and other state reforms. Following this, I discuss two additional cases mentioned during the meeting which concerned the movement of livestock by married women back to their home areas and places. In discussing these, I analyse the intersectional dynamics at work, both in socially navigating access-rights as well as in the ongoing negotiation of one's place-belonging and residency. This part of the chapter then also critically explores cases which involved Himba homesteads in Otjomatempa who were not asked to leave in 21 days, examining what differentiated their belonging and residency.

The next section of the chapter concerns the pastoral mobility, migration and translocal land-use patterns which categorised the newcomers (*ovayenda*) who had been asked to leave in 21 days. In doing so, and through the lens of another case, I try to elucidate the diverse kinetics that animated these mobilities. In discussing these kinetics, this section briefly touches upon the workings of plural authority sources in the governing and mediating of mobility and settlement, and in solving disputes. Additionally, I illustrate how movement – including pastoral mobility – had to be relationally navigated, including in relation to the unseen and ancestral realms. And lastly, I examine the role of *opolotika* in the newcomers' genealogies of arrival and their non-belonging. In this regard, I show how different pastoral mobilities were also being differentially valued, embedded within larger circulating ideologies, and becoming the grounds not only for struggles over belonging and identity but also over emergent normative orders.

Living with drought and extended dry seasons

By 2015, the drought which had begun in 2012 was stretching into its third year in some places. Whereas average rainfall for the overall Kunene region between 1998 and 2011 was estimated at around 377.2 mm per year – during the drought years of 2012-2014 a reduction of 45.8 per cent was observed.⁶⁷² Although access to borehole drinking water and, to some degree, springs are not that heavy or not at all affected by these drought periods, pastures became depleted, especially those centred on and around water-points, whilst seasonal water-sources dry up or don't flow at all.

As a consequence, widespread cattle losses were noted, brought on primarily by starvation, i.e., the lack of grazing, but also due to the increased probability of predator attacks due to their weakened state as well as their increased susceptibility to diseases. In some more heavily affected places across Kunene, an estimated one-third of the original herd was lost.⁶⁷³ Nevertheless, this drought was less severe than more disastrous past ones.⁶⁷⁴ During such drought periods and recurrent poor rainy seasons, the socio-spatial movements of both people and livestock become an important survival strategy to access alternative, shifting and changing pastures – with households usually moving their livestock to

⁶⁷² See Schnegg and Bollig, "Institutions," 66.

⁶⁷³ Schnegg and Bollig, "Institutions," 67.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.

pastures further away from their permanent homesteads and settled-places. Thus, spatial mobility has been noted as a “key pastoral strategy to cope with drought”.⁶⁷⁵



Image 12: Scattered rain showers are visible in the distance from the main road to Opuwo.⁶⁷⁶

Moreover, due to drought or lack of grazing, cattle might stray elsewhere, in search of pastures and water, with an increased “uncontrolled mobility” of livestock during these times – with livestock crossing chieftaincy and tenure boundaries between neighbouring areas.⁶⁷⁷ The drought and extended dry seasons differentially impacted different places during different times across Kaoko’s geographically large and mountainous region and its numerous micro-habitats – an ecological, socio-material and temporal dynamic which continually co-scripted people’s and livestock movements, the negotiation of socio-spatial mobility during times of crises, as well as the historical and contemporary formation of cultural and political institutions governing the collective use and sharing of pastures.⁶⁷⁸ In talking to one newcomer about the severity of the drought further south and elsewhere in comparison to Otjomatamba during 2015, he said:

“Very severe (the drought), you don’t need to talk about it. Do you see that *Omuhamu* tree? It has at least branches or leaves, if you go to some areas the *Omuhamu* tree is totally dry. If it happens that you are been chased away from here, you will not feel good and you will not even be in your full memory. You will rather prefer to take your own life because you know the situation there. If you must take cattle from here to other places that have *Omuhamu* trees, like Okatumba and Ozongarangombe, your heart will not feel good. Instead, you will feel like it is better for a person to kill you. The life of that cattle that are coming out of a *kraal* and your life – if you say you are keeping them for the whole day at the drinking place (water point) without

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁶ Photograph taken by Elsemi Olwage

⁶⁷⁷ Schnegg and Bollig, “Institutions,” 68.

⁶⁷⁸ Bollig, *Risk*, 38.

water – you will kill me. I am swearing, which means I cannot tie up my cattle and keep them on top of this mountain for them to die, know I can't do that.”⁶⁷⁹

The experience and anticipation of livestock loss, especially cattle, were often verbalised by interlocutors as something which provoked suicidal thoughts and, as this person expressed it, even memory loss. This pointed to the strong affective, emotional, and embodied impact such loss and anticipated loss had on people in a context where one's precarious livelihood strongly depended on one's animals, and where both one's sense of personhood and well-being were closely tied-up with that of their animals, and with livestock ownership. Both the life of the person and the cattle were connected to the *kraal* (*otjiuunda*). As mentioned, it would be better for a person to be killed than to force him/her to migrate and move his livestock into a drought-stricken area with no grazing or to refuse livestock water at the water-point. This interviewee also touched on the perceived, strong taboo against 'chasing' (*okuramba*) people and livestock who have settled temporarily and for drought reasons when, in fact, the rains had not returned in their home-area, or in the places to and through which they would need to travel. This was often equated with the killing of that person. This strong life bond between people and their animals within this context was thus a central cultural kinetic mobilising people and homesteads to move elsewhere. Moreover, it also fostered a strong, mutual sense of reciprocity and dependency between people and households.

In addition, one of the key strategies deployed by stock-owners within Kaoko was the separation of their livestock herds – both the separation of small stock from cattle, as well as separation of their cattle herds – across different settled and cattle-post places, or in different livestock camps. This lowered risk during times of drought and made the herds more manageable (depending on the available labour).⁶⁸⁰ In some instances, it also worked as an important strategy of concealment – of moving or building-up one's wealth beyond the watchful eyes of immediate kin and neighbours and thus deflecting possible feelings of jealousy and envy. Consequently, in comparison, wealthy herders and households especially had a “specific concern for free movement and [were] most interested in maintaining the conditions for mobility.”⁶⁸¹ Yet, larger livestock herds could also be more difficult to manage during the dry season and times of drought and required different mobility strategies, than smaller herds.⁶⁸²

Hence, despite pastoral ambitions and wealth, managing larger herds within a context of increasing population and livestock numbers, lack of grazing and drought, was also difficult and fraught with risk. As explained in numerous interviews, the impact of the 2012-2015 drought on different homesteads depended on several factors: Whether one was able to buy and transport feed from Opuwo; how you moved your animals and where to; the size of your herd; the labour and transport available; as well as your ability to negotiate temporary access-rights elsewhere and to mobilise your social

⁶⁷⁹ 29.04.2015, recorded interview, Otjomatimba

⁶⁸⁰ Bollig, *Risk*.

⁶⁸¹ Schnegg and Bollig, “Institutions,” 68.

⁶⁸² Ibid.

networks. Moreover, despite having the capacity to orchestrate livestock moves, such moves might not be welcomed, nor supported, as pastures dwindle, and neighbouring areas feel the pressure of in-migrations and roaming livestock. Pastoral movements to new, unknown places were also risky and often portrayed as highly – and cosmologically – uncertain. It was common practice to worship at an ancestral shrine (usually with kin, or at first-comer homesteads) upon arrival in an unknown place, and to take water in one's mouth and spray it onto the soil as a form of ancestral reverence. This ritual was meant to inform the ancestors and to prevent something bad from happening to you and/or your livestock.⁶⁸³ Moreover, one could suffer livestock losses not only due to lack of grazing and drought but also through simply moving livestock elsewhere. While visiting a homestead in the settled place of Omao 1, we overheard the following stories being exchanged between men:

One day a man from southern Kaoko travelled north and beyond Opuwo where he found a place where no one was living with grass. He informed his brother, and they moved some cattle there. The cattle stayed one month and became fat and stayed another month - and then suddenly they just started dying. The one brother was experiencing stress and was trying to figure out what to do. The other one advised him to sleep on it. Nonetheless, the next morning they decided to bring the cattle back. Still to this day they did not know why the cattle started dying. And why would there be a place with grass that no one was using?

Another wealthy stock owner from Omao was said to have taken over 50 cattle to Omaheke, the eastern part of the region and Kaoko's sandveld. Now there were only ten of these 50 cattle left. That place was difficult if cattle were not used to it because of the formation of pans and the wet clay after the rains. You would be walking and looking for your cattle and then you see them: You feel very relieved. But as you come closer you realise, they were just standing like that, stuck in the clay and dead.

As people repeatedly reminded me: Every place in Kaoko was different and was 'made different'. Moreover, cattle developed spatial and embodied memories of the location of water-points and also become adapted to either rocky, sandy, or mountainous areas which could be a burden to them in adapting to new landscapes, and to different distances between water-points. One of the wealthier stock owners from Omao 1,⁶⁸⁴ explained that he had tried to find strategies to either buy feed for his livestock or to move the cattle elsewhere. Eventually, he moved part of his herd to Orumana, northeast of Omao. He explained, however, that after this move 20 to 30 of his cattle died, speculating that it was due to the distance between the borehole and the grazing area which his cattle had not been accustomed to. But, at the same time, he was well aware that many people did not want his cattle in the place (hinting toward possible witchcraft practices). Before taking his livestock to Orumana, he had tried to "ask for drought" (*omuningire wourumbu*), but people refused because the drought had also affected their area. From there he decided to "use power and force", and just took his livestock to the place. From his perspective he had no choice – the drought was very difficult. As noted above, apart from mobility, other strategies for coping with drought and hardship included selling livestock; buying livestock feed and salt-licks at

⁶⁸³ Hiyazonguindi Herunga, 13.01.2016, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba

⁶⁸⁴ Uahana Katjiri, 18.12.2015, unrecorded interview, Omao 1

Agra⁶⁸⁵ in Opuwo; slaughtering livestock; labour migration to urban centres and other parts of the country; and reliance on sporadic drought-relief assistance and monthly state social grants. Yet, it was not only cyclical and differential droughts and bad luck that households and persons had to continually find ways to deal with and navigate, the sudden arrival of rains could also, in some instances, lead to large livestock losses. During my research in December 2015, some parts of southern Kaoko finally received a strong, overnight downpour. However, the lack of rainfall during the last years had left the land dry and barren, with the downpour creating flash floods. That night several households lost numerous small stock, which either drowned or died from the cold – with one household reportedly having lost 50 goats. Other challenges such as livestock diseases; the widespread presence of predators such as cheetahs, leopards, hyenas, and lions; as well as roaming elephant herds also continually co-determined the different herding and farming strategies and ingenuity needed to navigate pastoral economies within this context.

The 2012/2015 drought, however, did not affect the Ozondundu area as severely as its neighbouring areas and other places across the region. Consequently, since 2012, this place experienced a series of in-migrations, as well as the movement of livestock into the area from neighbouring places. In the next section, I will discuss the inherited social norms which were at work in negotiating pastoral mobility both within and across chieftaincy boundaries and between places. I will draw on a specific case concerning neo-local household and pastoral migration. Moreover, by tracing their genealogy of arrival, I hope to illustrate how people had to negotiate livestock movements and access-rights in relation to intersectional dynamics and overlapping territorial systems.

Social norms in negotiating access-rights

Seven years before, Uakoka Tjizembisa, with his wife, Veumbakeho Uaroua, and their adult (unmarried) children, had moved from Okauare, a place fairly close to and neighbouring Otjapitjapi, to Otjomatamba where they had established their homestead together with Tobias Uaroua. Uakoka was one of the people grouped with the settlement cases still to be discussed. In trying to understand what distinguished this group from the other newcomers who were asked to leave in 21 days, as well as why their cases were simultaneously marked by ambiguity, we met with Uakoka⁶⁸⁶ to discuss his migration story:

E: Seven years ago, when you came here – what was the reason that you decided to make the move?

U: The places were not created the same, they differ. You see here when you are going to Otjapitjapi there is a river, if you turn that side going to Otjomaoru there are also rivers – now

⁶⁸⁵ Agra is a nationwide public and business enterprise focusing on agricultural development and livestock auctions, and the retail and wholesale of a range of farming, agricultural and industrial goods, equipment and implements, including, for example, water-pumps, salt-licks and fertilizers.

⁶⁸⁶ 31.03.2015, recorded interview, Otjomatamba

Otjozongombe's livestock is just mixing with Okauare's because of grazing, Otjapitjapi's livestock also mixes with Okauare, so the grazing area is very limited or difficult in Okauare. When I came here the people did not have cattle, there were very few cattle, that's why I thought it to be ideal for keeping my cattle here because the grazing was everywhere you want to chase the cattle. That's the reason that made me stay here. Otjozongombe's cattle are drinking in Okauare so later our cattle were following them when they are going back.

E: In Okauare is there also a spring?

U: Yes

V: You mean there is water that just comes out of the ground?

U: Yes, there is. Before this 'chasing' (*okuramba*) issue started, I had a plan to prepare that area for my children where they can stay with a few cattle, and I can take my wife and some kids back to Okauare. So that I can just visit them from time to time.

E: But now?

U: I am now just waiting for them, if they chase me away, I will go back to Okauare with all my belongings.

As Tjizembisa explained, their migration into Otjomatamba was largely motivated by grazing conditions and the fact that there was not much livestock in the place at this point. Furthermore, he wanted to prepare the area for his adult children, to create a cattle-post where his children could start their autonomous homesteads and, over time, secure their belonging to the place. Afterwards, he and his wife would return to Okauare where the ancestral homestead still stood, with his older brother taking care of the ancestral shrine.⁶⁸⁷ Tjizembisa proceeded to describe in detail the particular social practices that characterised his arrival and the eventual migration of their household – elucidating the forms of travel, visitation, and as well as the social norms governing pastoral mobility and migration within this context.

“Before I moved, I told the people while I was still at Okauare that I would like to come to stay there. Then this person told me that he will first go and tell the other people because they are three that are settling newcomers. So, he said he will go and tell the community and hear what they are going to say. He later came back, and we met at Otjomaoru where he told me that the people agreed upon it. Depends now on you when you are going to move in. I moved in here with my livestock. This time around he came back to me telling me that when a person has been accepted here you divide yours into two, whether you have come here to stay permanently or only for a drought period. I told them now I have become a permanent resident. He told me that I have to pay a certain amount [amount was not mentioned] for membership so I started to pay the money to him. After three days I met the *osoromana* of Okarumbu (Muteze) at the shop, he was with his brother who is the owner of the shop and another man. The brother asked me that apparently, I settled without permission. I replied no, it is not true I cannot settle without permission. In fact, I am having reference of who settled me and yesterday I was just busy the whole day with giving water to the calves, but I was planning to come and tell you that I have settled here permanently. I planned to go there to Okarumbu and tell you if you needed me to come. There was another man from Otjomaoru who then asked them why the residents of Otjapitjapi were treating everyone the same – even old residents who left and came back – you would want them to ask as the newcomers?”

⁶⁸⁷ During the latter part of my research his brother passed away and the ancestral shrine was then taken over and inherited by Uakoka.

Meantime while the shop owner was talking, the *osoromana* clarified by saying that they don't mean that I must ask like a newcomer but just to acknowledge each other so that if I kill livestock of others or if his livestock has been killed by others, we will be able to testify that I am one of the local people. The *osoromana* himself is a junior brother (*inyangu*) of my father and I started to wonder why these people were asking me why I came here without reporting to anyone. Now I thought that these people might have told some of the people and now I must make sure that everyone is becoming aware. I came here through some and I thought that everyone was aware – now *osoromana* please be informed that I have come to stay here. 'No problem this is your area, we just wanted to know that you are now here,' said the *osoromana*, my *inyangu*.

That ended there but still, I thought of moving on by telling other senior residents who might not have been told and expecting me to do the same way as these people. Finally, I went to Hija Uapeuejova's (Johannes Kazendjou) house and told them the same thing – that I came here but I didn't come to stay first. Before this, I consulted and only then I came with my livestock that's why I would like to inform you as my relatives that I am now around. Hija Uapeuejova said it is fine you came back into your area. I have moved on to the rest and their response was the same, no one had a negative response. I continued again to Seun's late uncle's house there where you see a blue Ford, I proceeded to Hauari's (Tobias) father's house which is somewhere there, with that I went to all the elder's households and again all responded the same as others by saying that they don't have any problem with me as I am not a newcomer and that I can continue with my business of constructing my *kraals* and everything. Kazondjou was the only person I delayed informing as I went to him after five or six days. That was the end of my journey, I thought I went through all procedures but to my surprise, I was discussed as a newcomer. I don't know what they have looked at that made them put me aside and discussed, but I am still waiting to hear from them what they have looked at. The current *osoromana* (Herunga) was not an *osoromana* at the time when I was applying for settlement, he was just a councillor to Muteze, so he and the other two Tobias (Hauari) and (Ben) Tjituezu were the first people I started talking to as they were the people who were settling people at that time."

As was eventually explained to me by several (elder male) interlocutors, access-rights, pastoral mobility, and the allocation of land were verbally negotiated and according to a set of social norms (*okuningira ousemba*, literally 'to talk words'). First, the head of the homestead or most senior male member of the household would visit the place he or she wants to move to *without* bringing any livestock. Upon arrival, the person would approach close or extended kin (if there were any) who would then refer them to the senior councillors (*ozorata*) who were usually in charge of giving access-rights. As was the case with Tjizembisa, he met some of the councillors in Okauare and later in the neighbouring Otjomaoru and thus had not needed to travel to Otjomatamba to negotiate access.

Once you have spoken to one of the councillors, they would then proceed to take the message back to the *ozosoromana* and some nodal first-comer homesteads within the place. The *ozosoromana* would then discuss it with the councillors and elders, specifically elders belonging to patrilines connected to first-comer homesteads. It was also seen as good practice for the newcomer to pay a personal visit to those first-comer homesteads and elders and to introduce themselves and announce their intentions. Initially, Tjizembisa had not thought this necessary since he did not perceive himself as a newcomer. However, once he realised that there might be misunderstandings, he proceeded to all the homesteads, informing them of his arrival and that he had negotiated prior access without livestock. Thus, negotiations were mostly done verbally and the act of first visiting the place *without* livestock was highly valued as an important gesture in enacting mutual respect and future cooperation. The

negotiation process and procedures depended on whether a person requested permanent settlement or temporary access-rights during times of droughts or extended dry seasons. With regards to requesting permanent settlement (*okuningira omaturiro*), the negotiation process would normally take longer and involve a public meeting where consensus had to be reached and where the availability of pastures and water were assessed. Temporary access-rights for livestock were negotiated in a more *ad hoc* manner and rarely refused as they relied on long-standing social institutions of reciprocity – understandings that once rains returned, those homesteads would return to their area, and that in the future both areas and/or homesteads (often from adjacent areas) could rely on each other for the mutual sharing of pastures.

Together with these verbal negotiations and social norms, negotiation of access rights was also bureaucratised, and a livestock-moving permit system was institutionalised during South African colonial rule and continued post-independence. Initially, these permission papers were issued only by a handful of chiefs appointed by the colonial administration. With the establishment of ward boundaries and 36 wards (*otjiwyke*) each administered by one *osoromana*, livestock movement permits then had to be issued according to these boundaries. When people wished to move their livestock beyond the jurisdiction of a certain *osoromana*, a permission paper was required from the *osoromana* in the area from which you were moving as well as from the *osoromana* in the area into which you were planning to move. The *osoromana* in the area you were moving from thus had the authority to attest to whether a person had livestock or not, a tool perceived to restrict possible livestock theft.

Post-independence, these official permission papers had to be issued by state-recognised TAs and their senior councillors – who then also acted as local *ozosoromana* on the ground. However, with the dissolution of ward boundaries, this system had to be re-negotiated along known but also shifting chieftaincy boundaries and in a context of struggles for state recognition. For example, although the Ovaherero TA (recognised in central Namibia) was not state-recognised in Kaoko, in 2012 this TA was eventually also verified through the Governor's office as being able to issue permission papers – as some locally recognized *ozosoromana* belonged to this TA and required the authority to govern access-rights in their areas.⁶⁸⁸ Once the head of the homestead had the two permission papers, they were expected to take their livestock to the nearest veterinary clinic for inspection, after which a movement permit would be issued. This system aimed to curb the spread of mobile livestock epidemics regionally and to track movements via registration according to ear-tag identifications.⁶⁸⁹ Despite this system, as illustrated above, access-rights and the issuing of permission papers still had to be verbally negotiated, according to set social norms and by travelling between multiple localities, homesteads, and hierarchies. In this regard, the practice of kinship continued to play a crucial role in mediating one's access and arrival. Moreover, in the case of temporary and permanent access-rights between neighbouring areas,

⁶⁸⁸ Dr A.K. Mungunda, Chief Veterinary Officer, 16.03.2016, unrecorded interview, State Veterinary Offices, Opuwo

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid.

livestock movement permits were not always required or adhered to, with cattle herds also grazing and moving across these boundaries unaccompanied and with pastures overlapping.

Tjizembisa presented his case as having been different due to him not being a newcomer *per se* but being from a shared land-use area and closely related to Otjomatamba's homesteads. Throughout his narrative he continually invoked close kin-relatedness – with Muteze, for instance, being his *inyangu* – and with others recognising that he had simply returned to his home-area. In his case, it seemed that what was important was only, as Muteze expressed it, that people “acknowledge each other” and that the hierarchies of (male) seniority and authority be respected. Nevertheless, evident in the genealogy of arrival was uncertainty as to how pastoral mobilities and neo-local settlement norms were to be managed and negotiated in relation to the influx of *other* newcomers; concerning recently expressed Ozondundu boundaries; as well as growing factional splits and power struggles between different *ozosoromana* and *ozorata*.

During the communal conservancies' border negotiations, the few homesteads constituting Okauare opted to claim membership in the neighbouring conservancy, with the Ozondundu border thus mapped to exclude Okauare and with them consequently perceived to be falling within a different jurisdiction area. The mapping of these boundaries seemed to have shifted understandings of who constituted newcomers and according to which boundaries belonging was defined and access-rights negotiated. Moreover, the WPA membership seemed also to increasingly play an emerging role in formalising local citizenship and belonging – with membership fees redefined as a kind of settlement fee and the names of permanent residents recorded by the WPA chairman. As shared by Tjizembisa:

“...I am quiet because when I came (Ben) Tjituezu is the one who has registered me and put me on the water-point. I was paying the money to him, and he misused the money. Later when we had a dispute about the money he denied me, saying that he does not know me and that I am not a member of the water-point. He was saying this in front of the government officials who came from the water supply who came here for a meeting. The government officials asked Tjituezu whether he got the money from me, and he admitted that he got it. They asked him whether the money was for membership of the water-point, and he said yes, it was. They asked him in which book he registered me when I was settled, he said in a small book which he left at home. The government officials said they don't understand what was going on and what he was trying to explain because Tjituezu admitted that I was settled but he does not want to register me in the book, but I was paying the settlement fee. *Osoromana* Muteze stood up and said that they are talking nonsense everybody here should be registered as all are members. So, everybody was then registered, and the meeting came to an end. I don't know now where I stand exactly or any other plans that they might have with me or what they will decide again as everything ended there. I am just waiting to hear from them if there is anything else.”

In other words, evident here was the mobilisation not only of conservancy boundaries but also of the WPA as a settlement register and a technology for managing and contesting peoples' inclusion and exclusion. When accusations arose with regards to the misuse of funds, Tjizembisa was denied as a permanent resident. Consequently, there seemed to be continued ambiguity with regards to his belonging – an ambiguity potentially linked to his genealogy of arrival, as well as local power struggles. Tjizembisa was also one of the relative wealthier stock-owners in the place – which could have played a role in producing a certain reluctance in fully accepting the settlement of their household.

Nevertheless, his story foregrounded that “being an insider or an outsider is always work in progress, is permanently subject to renegotiation and is best understood as relational and situational” with sociality and relationships being key in how “being and belonging are translated from abstract claims into everyday practice”.⁶⁹⁰ Despite the ambiguity that surrounded Tjizembisa’s household’s settlement, they were not asked to leave like the other newcomers: an outcome primarily shaped by different degrees of kin-relatedness, historical relations of cooperation and shared land-use boundaries.

In the following section, I will discuss two more cases raised during the dispute meeting. These two were similarly *not* asked to leave after 21 days. In discussing these cases, I analyse why these cases were mentioned during the meeting and were being disputed. In other words, which social norms were perceived as having been transgressed and why were their settlement and/or land-use practices being called into question or put up for discussion? In doing so, I hope to examine how kin-relatedness and the boundaries of belonging were co-constituted at the intersection of gender, seniority, and economic status.

Navigating intersectional belonging and virilocal norms

Of those settlement cases mentioned in the meeting that was still to be discussed and similarly grouped with Uakoka Tjizembisa was that of Rinongue Ngumbi. Rinongue was from Okakuyu and was the sister (*omuṭena*) of Kakume Kozohura who headed Okakuyu’s large ancestral homestead. Rinongue had married a man from Etanga, situated in north-western Kaoko. Sometime before the dispute meeting, she had moved back to her home-area where she was employed as a primary school teacher in Otjapitjapi. She had brought along livestock, mainly goats, belonging to her, her husband, and her husband’s family and thus to her affinal kin. In disputing the different livestock movements and migrations into the place, virilocal settlement norms – or what has also been termed “patrilocal postmarital residence”⁶⁹¹ – were thus also thrown into relief and questioned, especially whether these norms were negotiable when involving livestock movements back to a married woman’s home-place. Moreover, it was her husband’s family – specifically his younger, married brother who was taking care of the livestock and living in Otjomatamba

Rinongue’s husband had been employed in South Africa since the early 1990s and only travelled home occasionally. His livestock was taken care of by his younger brother, Uetjimuna, and his wife, Uatatuvari. Thus, the livestock movements mentioned during the meeting also involved household migration into Otjomatamba, with Rinongue’s affinal kin having created a temporary home and cattle-post within the second (junior) homestead of Rinongue’s brother, Kakume Kozohura. On one side they had constructed a temporary dome-shaped structure consisting of wooden poles, heavy industrial black plastic, an old tent, and a mosquito net – symbolic of the extent to which they were still

⁶⁹⁰ Nyamnjoh, “Fiction,” 670.

⁶⁹¹ Scelza, “Female.”

unsure about their settled status and regarded as visitors and travellers (*ovayenda*) rather than residents (*ovature*).

Uetjimuna was 29 years old. His senior brother – their brotherhood premised on their mothers having been sisters – had approached him to assist in taking care of his livestock as the person who had initially been looking after them was suspected of ‘eating’ (stealing) the cattle. With his older brother (Rinongue’s husband) calling on him he was drawing on their relationship and his seniority as *erumbi nomuangu* (older-younger brotherhood). Living with them in Otjomatamba and assisting in looking after the goats were a nephew of the head of the homestead’s father, and another younger brother, with their brotherhood, once again premised on their mothers’ having been sisters and on matrilineal relatedness. Uetjimuna and his wife had initially moved from his home-place Otjitanda, about 180 km north-west of Opuwo and further north of Etanga, to Okuhungumure, a place close to Opuwo (See Map 6). However, at some point, they returned to Otjitanda due to misunderstandings between them and the workers.

Uetjimuna’s older brother travelled from South Africa to deal with the problem and convinced them to move the livestock into southern Kaoko as the extended drought period limited grazing in north-western Kaoko. Rinongue, who had recently migrated back to her home-place, had informed them that the grazing was better there. At first, the goats and some cattle were moved to Otjinongua – a mid-way place in central Kaoko. The cattle were left there after access-rights were negotiated and only the goats were brought to Otjomatamba (initially to proceed south to Rinongue’s brother’s cattle-post, Okanandjoze). When I met with Uatara,⁶⁹² Kozohura’s second wife, who manages the homestead in Otjomatamba, she explained that they had arrived in 2012 and had migrated from Otjitanda because of drought. It was the first time that she had seen goats so thin, she remembered. Her husband, Kozohura, realising the severity of their situation, decided that they should remain in Otjomatamba, telling them that now “we will live together”. Uatara explained that despite having initially come for drought, at this point Rinongue’s affinal kin were “in love” (*okusuvera*) with the place and were asking for permanent settlement rights.

Evident in this example was the case in which families and households migrated elsewhere *through* livestock movements orchestrated by senior male-heads of households – who were employed elsewhere, in this case, South Africa, and engaged in transnational labour migration. These livestock movements and migrations were also negotiated through affinal kin and Rinongue’s place-belonging and social knowledge, as well as her matronage as a salaried teacher. Apart from his older brother’s livestock, Uetjimuna also brought some of his livestock which he had built up over the years, starting with those he was gifted as a child. Moreover, in taking care of his brothers’ livestock, Uetjimuna was, in a sense, taking care of his potential inheritance whilst at the same time securing a livelihood for himself and his family. Thus, moving their livestock to his brother’s wife’s home-place opened-up

⁶⁹² 02.04.2015, unrecorded interview

possibilities and avenues for navigating drought and theft, as well as for their own socio-economic mobility. However, Uetjimuna heavily relied on his older brother, as the head of the homestead and the more senior person, for any decision regarding livestock movements and the negotiation of their belonging and settlement in Otjomatamba.

Unlike some of the other Himba homesteads, their homestead had not been asked to leave in 21 days – with their newcomer status being coloured by their close kin-relatedness as well as their intimate spatial and social folding into Otjomatamba's communal and relational lifeworld. Moreover, it was said that Rinongue had followed set procedures and as mentioned during the meeting, had arrived with a permission paper from the *ozosoromana*. Thus, despite the politics of belonging and difference generated through the dispute often expressed along the lines of Himba/Herero – there were Himba newcomers who had arrived during the drought period whose settlement status was rather still ambiguous and who were not asked to leave during the meeting. Yet in talking with Uetjimuna he also reflected on some of the challenges of integrating into a new place and how being settled was more than just official acceptance. He explained that when he came into the place, it was like there was “a dark thing in his eyes” – he was not visiting people and not knowing anyone. Soon after he arrived, he only thought of returning to Otjitanda. But now that was in the past and he considered himself settled: He was visiting (*okurihanga*) people.



To further elaborate on how kin-relatedness had to be negotiated at the intersection of gender and economic status; I will discuss another case mentioned during the meeting. Similar to the case above, this involved the movement of livestock by a married woman back to her home-place and area. However, as I will illustrate, these livestock movements and their contestations were fuelled by more complex, relational subtleties in which her citizenship was tied up with that of her fathers and their out-migration. Moreover, the politics of inclusion and exclusion were simultaneously tied-up with her differential livestock wealth and with the in-migration of multiple others. Through this case, I hope to further illustrate how married women, within this context, tactically navigated virilocal settlement norms in accessing resources during times of drought, creating multilocal residencies, and fostering economic autonomy. Furthermore, I foreground the often subtle yet crucial workings of female agency in shaping the norms governing pastoral mobilities and what it meant to be or to become a resident (*omuture*).



Although raised in Otjapitjapi, Uanjanderua had married a man from Kaoko Otavi – north of Otjomatamba and had migrated to his home-place after marriage. Some months before the meeting, however, she, together with her father's (classificatory) brother Aser Kapi, had moved some goats to Okarumbu. We had met with Uanjanderua at Otjize, the rainy-season cattle-post some months after the first dispute meeting and with her case still to be discussed. Her cattle-post was situated between others from Okarumbu and consisted only of two small tents and a *kraal*. We found her seated on a plastic

crate in front of one of the tents – wearing a loose T-shirt, long skirt, and tennis shoes. The other small tent belonged to an Otjizemba-speaking worker and his wife, employed by Uanjanderua, who were seated some distance away. After initial greetings, she narrated her biography and story. Close by in her tent was her five-month-old granddaughter whom she was raising – with the father (her son) being in the national capital, Windhoek.

Uanjanderua's mother, who was originally from Otuvero, married a man from Otjapitjapi in 1966. Three years later in 1969, Uanjanderua was born. When her mother was pregnant and started to feel the first pains, her father put her on a horse and rode to Otuvero. The moment he took her from the horse, Uanjanderua was born. One of Uanjanderua's sisters was born in Orumana in 1973, which, at that time, as she expressed it, was their "town". When her mother returned to Otjapitjapi after the birth, her father started drinking and left to go to his uncle in the area around Omaruru in central Namibia. She and her sister remained with their paternal grandmother in Otjapitjapi, who was *osoromana* Muteze's father's sister. When she grew older, she started schooling but she also "started working around" in Opuwo and thus eventually dropped out of school. She had two children, both of whom were raised by her paternal grandmother in Otjapitjapi. In 1994, her father passed away, which had implications for their Otjapitjapi homestead. As she explained:

"My father was the only child of my grandmother, when he passed away, we were left with my father's brother Aser Kapi and my grandmother. Aser was not a biological brother; their grandmothers were sisters. My grandmother passed away in 2011, and we were left with Aser only."⁶⁹³

After the death of her father and paternal grandmother, the homestead was inherited by her father's sister's son, his nephew (*omusia*). At this point, Uanjanderua was married and had left Otjapitjapi. In 1999 she married a man from Kaoko Otavi and moved to Otjohorovara, previously a cattle-post for Kaoko Otavi but which, in recent years, had become a large, settled-place more or less 40 kilometres north of Otjomatamba. She was the second wife, and by the time of our interview, the polygynous marriage had expanded to include a third wife. From the age of 23/24 Uanjanderua had pursued her economic activities and had started speculating with goats and, to some degree, cattle, buying and selling first in Otjapitjapi and later mainly within northern Kaoko, eventually building up a substantial herd and business of her own:

"I am illiterate because I dropped out of school very early. My mother started working at a school in 1979. Whenever I asked for money from my mother, she always said that she sent me to school why did I leave school? I thought to myself what best I can do to have money... So I went to my grandmother and told her that I want to start selling things but I don't have money and she told me to sell one of my cows. So, I sold my cow and started going to Ovahimba side... but now my mother is asking money from me."

⁶⁹³ 14.05.2015, recorded interview, Otjize

As she explained, she started selling livestock to gain cash and economic autonomy – this eventually sparked her interest in starting her own business and speculating with livestock. When I asked if she saw herself as a businesswoman, she replied:

“Yes definitely, even in Opuwo my husband has his own house and I have built my house separately because I thought I have children that are not of my husband. I have applied for a plot, and it was approved so I built a two-bedroom house with toilet, kitchen and after finishing everything I want to add a sitting room as well.”

Uanjanderua had over the years amassed her own wealth enough to finance the buying of a plot and the building of a brick house in Opuwo. She also had a substantial degree of autonomy, despite being married. Furthermore, Uanjanderua had saved enough to purchase a car and had a driving licence – which meant she could move more freely. She often made the trips to northern Kaoko herself, where she would go and buy goats and sell them again in Opuwo. For the more difficult, mountainous roads she relied on a driver. Her substantial autonomy as a married woman as well as the demands of juggling care-work and marriage with that of livestock farming and business was reflected in her story of how her case came to be mentioned in the meeting. In 2013 her first-born son contracted a serious illness which resulted in her spending eight months in Windhoek, 800 km away, with her son. In 2014 they returned to Kaoko, but he soon fell ill again, and they spent another five months in Windhoek. Meanwhile, during her absence, Aser and her sister informed her that they were planning to migrate from Otjapitjapi to a place beyond the VCF. They asked whether they should take along with her livestock which was still in Otjapitjapi. She replied that “when you leave then this is not going to be a homestead so I will come back home” and thus had asked them to leave her livestock in Otjapitjapi. She explained:

“I told them that I and my sister Theopo have a lot of children, they are nine in total excluding the ones I got in marriage. So, I asked them “If someone died here, does it mean we will come with a cow in a car from there coming to the homestead in Otjapitjapi?” I told them I will not go there because even if something happens and a cow has to be brought – money to bring the cow will be needed and I cannot afford that.”

As she explained, her and her sister’s children born outside of marriage or those not claimed by their fathers’ families, still needed a homestead in their maternal grandfather’s home-place. In leaving her livestock in Otjapitjapi she had meant for her sister and herself to maintain a presence there. Moreover, she wanted to keep livestock there for funeral and ritual purposes and did not want to have to pay to transport the livestock from beyond the VCF. However, after returning from Windhoek her livestock kept in Otjohorovara went missing and soon she started searching for avenues to access alternative places and pastures for her stock:

U: When I came back from Windhoek to Otjohorovara at my husband's place I did not find any of my male goats and big goats – I found only the young ones. My husband is a policeman in Okanguati so I went to the headman in (Kaoko) Otavi and I told him that I will bring my goats here. So, I brought them in Otavi and he told me to take them to my husband's place where he is staying... [not clear]. I replied no, all of these goats are mine, none of them is my husband's so I will not go to their homestead. I gave them to my mother's first born ... [not clear]

E: Her mother's first born, her brother?

V: Yes

U: My brother said my goats are a lot I should take them to our uncle to a place called Omareze near (Kaoko) Otavi – I talked to my uncle, and he took the goats.

Eventually sometime later in 2014 Uajanderua brought some of her goats to Okarumbu, later moving them to Otjize during the rainy season. She explained, however, that she did not migrate or plan to migrate back to her home-place and home-area. Rather she only intended to bring back some of her livestock, to re-build the homestead at Otjapitjapi, and then find a worker to take care of the livestock until one of her children decided to return:

“I am still a wife to my husband, and I am still with him, but I have children that are not of my husband. They must have their homestead with their livestock. I just need someone to take care of the livestock so that I can go back to my husband's homestead. The other thing is the husband's homestead is now overcrowded. My husband has three wives and their children, so I have mine and my sister's children now when my husband bought, for example, a 50-kilogram maize meal then the other wives complain that my husband is supporting other people's children referring to my sister's children. I am the second wife, and the third wife has only one child since she just got married recently. That's why I thought I will just put pressure on the family as I am the one with a lot of children. So, I thought it will be good to take my livestock back home so that they can benefit my children who are out of the marriage which means my children will just go straight to Otjapitjapi from Windhoek – so that I can only remain with the children born in marriage.”

Uajanderua returned to her home-place to establish her homestead, which, in turn, could belong to her children and her sister's children. She thus foregrounded the problem of virilocal settlement norms concerning children born outside of the marriage and not claimed by their father's family. She had at this point already negotiated with her other sisters to construct houses and a homestead in Otjapitjapi and for this homestead to become known as her “father's children's homestead”. Evidenced here was the importance of both one's matrilineal and patrilineal belonging in tying together places and people and in establishing households.

Moreover, Uajanderua rationalised establishing a homestead for her children as a way to lessen possible tensions between herself and the other two co-wives with whom she shared a marriage and a household. Thus, despite being married, Uajanderua was navigating gendered norms of (im)mobility – establishing multilocal residencies and cattle-posts, including a house in Opuwo and an envisioned future homestead in Otjapitjapi. Yet although arguing for securing a home-place for her children and her sister's children born outside of marriage, the movement of her goats to Okarumbu/Otjize was also motivated by the need for grazing and resource access beyond the control of her affinal-kin and during a period of drought, as well as by her entrepreneurial ambitions. At the time of our interview, Uajanderua roughly owned 240 heads of small stock. As our interview came to an end, she explained that she had already found a female labourer who would be looking after her goats. In the coming months, she would be “moving up and down” – trying to find a worker to look after the cattle, buying and selling in northern Kaoko, and constructing a house in Otjapitjapi. But her real

ambition was to open a butchery in Opuwo. She was tired and growing old and did not want to travel as much anymore – she wanted to rest (*okusuva*). She had recently applied for a loan from the SME⁶⁹⁴ Bank in Windhoek and was waiting to hear from them. The name of the business would draw from Otjapitjapi's *omiṭandu* – or place and praise poem – symbolically also re-asserting her claims to belonging to her father's home-place.

With regards to her return being contested, she explained that it was neither unheard of nor against the rules for a married woman to move back to her home-place, or to move livestock into her home-area. Rather the issue at play, in her opinion, was simply *opolotika*. She was told that if she brought back her livestock “then they will also allow Ovahimba from other regions to settle” – for example, from the Epupa region. Yet she refused to remove her livestock, arguing that she was born in the area, that she was a citizen and questioned why she should be compared to the other settlement cases.



As should already be clear from the previous chapters, married women's experiences of and responses concerning the gendered norms governing their spatial and social mobility varied considerably. Evidenced here was the operation of kinship and economic locatedness in the constitution of gender⁶⁹⁵ and female agency, and in the differential capacity of negotiating access and pastoral mobility. Thus, in tactically navigating their (trans)local place-belonging women continually negotiated their multiple, simultaneous identities as daughters/sisters/nieces/(grand)mothers/wives.⁶⁹⁶ This was evident in that despite changing their *oruzo* (patriclan) to that of their husband's after marriage, married women continue to belong to their father's or mother's father's *oruzo* in terms of ancestral place-belongings, and with regards to observing certain food taboos. Moreover, and as illustrated in the two cases discussed, women's pastoral migrations and travelling practices were also key in integrating one locality into another, and in co-configuring patterns of translocality and the circulations and transfers between them – and thus in opening up spaces to negotiate access.⁶⁹⁷

The next part of this chapter is concerned with analysing how the cases discussed were differentiated from the newcomers who had been asked to leave in 21 days. In doing so, this section looks at how their cases and contested settlement took form at the intersection of particular genealogies of arrival, patterns of land-use, livestock wealth, and differing degrees of kin relatedness. Moreover, I analyse how their cases were simultaneously differentiated by the kinetics which was perceived as having fuelled their migration and livestock movements.

⁶⁹⁴ Small to Medium Enterprises Bank, which falls under the Bank of Namibia.

⁶⁹⁵ Linda Stone, *Kinship and Gender: An Introduction* (Westview Press, 2010).

⁶⁹⁶ Also see Hodgson, “Gender.”

⁶⁹⁷ Greiner and Sakdapolrak, “Translocality.”

Regional migratory drift and relative strangers

In the days after the meeting, we visited the homesteads of the newcomers who had been directed to leave the place in 21 days. Uazeika Mutambo (Karire), the head of the homestead, was not present and we sat down to talk with Rahenga, his *omusia*, and Rahenga's mother, Uakarera. Uakarera was sitting in the shade provided by a blanket thrown over a small Mopane tree. She was busy sorting through and removing the skins of wild olives (*omobeke*) she had collected in the surrounding veld. These were not edible but were ground and mixed with ochre (*otjize*) to create a paste that the women applied to their bodies. Rahenga was sitting beneath a different tree, staring at his cell phone and later played a video for us showing women dancing at a recent commemoration event. We found some seats and after the greetings, Uakarera offered us curdled milk (*omaere*) to drink. At a point, another young man joined the interview. Their household had initially migrated from Oruhona in northern Kaoko to Otjondunda seven years before and had only moved to Otjomatamba in the last three years (See Map 7). The move from Oruhona to Otjondunda went as follows: First, the head of the homestead came, looked, and visited the place and area. Afterwards, he went back to fetch the cattle from Oruhona (around 250 km away). It took them eight days to move all the animals, by foot and donkey. The women, children and goats travelled by car. What drove them to migrate was the availability of grazing and the bad state of their livestock.

In commenting on the meeting, Rahenga told us that they were planning to leave and return to Oruhona, although they did not want to leave the area. Initially, they had moved to Otjomatamba because of drought but had intended to ask for permanent settlement. However, now they were just waiting for their cattle to return from the veld and then they would prepare to move, he explained. Perhaps even to southern Angola where they had extended family and relatives: their fathers were there, so even if they did not want to move there, there would be someone taking care of the livestock. However, it was difficult to cross the border with livestock. Uakarera added that due to the rains having been so little such a long-distance move would be very difficult. The cattle could die along the way.

Considering how the meeting had played out, I proceeded to ask whether there were some areas perceived to belong to 'Herero' and others to 'Himba'. Rahenga replied that yes, but, in his opinion, it was in people's imaginations and rather related to the forefathers and how they settled. This area was meant to be the 'Herero' side, and the north the 'Himba' side, he explained, but to move one's cattle and the question of how people took care of their livestock depended on the individual homesteads and persons. If you saw that your cattle were dying, you would have to discuss moving and migrating elsewhere, Rahenga explained. They (their homestead) didn't care about themselves, even if it meant going to stay between the mountains where there was no one else, they would do this to access grazing.

However, at the same time, Rahenga explained that they had grown attached to this place and area during the last years. If the rains returned perhaps, they would move their cattle south, back to Otjondunda. They had been granted permanent settlement there. After our short conversation, we

walked over to the neighbouring homestead which belonged to Unaro Tjipurua, another of the newcomers who was not explicitly discussed during the meeting, but who had been one of the three men present and had been asked to leave in 21 days.



Two recently built dome-shaped houses stood close together and another one was being constructed. We found Unaro and his wife, Muazaike, sitting outside. Muazaike was busy making decorative wear – rolling thin ropes from the strands loosened out of a used maize bag. Eventually, several strands were combined to weave a string which, I assumed, could then be used in the making of necklaces and belts. They agreed to talk briefly with us. After introductions and greetings, Unaro instructed us to start with the questions. He sat facing us with a glint of sharp perceptiveness in his eyes and seemed to be open to our conversation.

Unaro and his family had initially moved from Omuhonga, where he was born and raised, a place close to Okangwati in northern Kaoko, about 250 km north along the main gravel roads and even further north than Oruhona where the neighbouring homestead had migrated from (see Map 7). His mothers, elders, as well as the ancestral homestead to which he belonged were in Omuhonga. He had migrated first to Warmquelle, south of Otjomatempa, a few years before. Some of his elders were settled at Warmquelle and had been there for seven years. Similarly, to what the other homestead had explained, he had first travelled to the area on foot to assess the state of the grazing. Afterwards, he had brought his cattle. Eventually, the drought had affected Warmquelle quite severely, so he decided to separate his herd and bring some cattle to Otjomatempa where the grazing was a bit better. He and his family had been in Otjomatempa for two years and had planned to request permanent settlement from the *ozosoromana*. But right now, they did not have an option, he explained, perhaps just to move away and then return at a later stage to ask again.

Unaro explained that the grazing in Omuhonga was very little, mainly due to there being too many livestock in that area which had damaged the seeds and the grass. The grass was no longer growing, he asserted. However, he continued by explaining that sometimes people and homesteads also migrate for other reasons: Due to others slaughtering their cattle without permission, or fears and accusations of witchcraft (*okuroua*, literally to witch). For example, somebody might bewitch all of your goats and they died. This was normally because of jealousy (*erambu*) and/or envy (*eruru*) because others might be envious of your livestock wealth or be jealous over other issues. If you suspect that this was why your livestock was dying you would visit a traditional healer (Sg. *onganga* (*yombazu*), Pl. *ozonganga*) or ritual specialist (*otjimbanda*) and might also consider moving to another area and place, he explained.

Unaro did not know anyone in Otjomatempa when they had arrived initially two years before. Normally one would approach close kin or somebody you knew – yet he did not know anybody. He only “fell in love” (*okusuvera*) with the place, he explained. When this happened, you would then approach the *osoromana*. When he moved here, he had heard that there were two *ozosoromana*.

However, he had only approached one. In Unaro's perspective, people were refusing to allow them to remain in the place not only because of the lack of grazing but also because there were two *ozosoromana* and people were not cooperating well. However, in our conversation, it seemed that he also believed that they had been asked to leave because they were Himba.

It was difficult because if you refused access and a person was forced to migrate and his or her livestock died, the other person could be accused of killing their livestock, Unaro explained. This assertion could be seen as a form of sanctioning against non-reciprocal behaviour and as a strong critique of their expulsion. After a short lull, Unaro took the lead in the conversation. He told us that he had heard that the country would be cut up into hectares, meaning where there were cattle-posts people might settle permanently, which was not a good thing. Unaro was referring to a recent move by the state to push for the registration of communal land rights within Namibia. The registration of customary land rights was initiated in 2003, to register both existing and new land-right applications. The procedure dictated that applicants needed a consent letter from the local TAs (according to a set format) and signed by one of the state-recognised TAs. Based on blue-print tenure arrangements, the registration of communal land rights limited people to the registration of a farming or residential unit, its size negotiated relative to others within a set region or village and relative to land-use patterns, yet not exceeding 20 hectares – with larger areas pending the approval of the Ministry.⁶⁹⁸ Moreover, this did not include “customary resource rights” – such as rights related to shared commonage and those areas designated as commonage.⁶⁹⁹

The Land Board, situated within the Ministry of Land Reform, then processes the application, with the Ministry sending a team to map the plots via modern mapping technologies, i.e., GPS coordinates, to be registered and entered into a database. Once the plots are mapped, the Land Board publishes them publicly for at least seven days, after which the land right could be ratified.⁷⁰⁰ This registration process relied on the registration of a set number of hectares which encompassed one's homestead and immediate surroundings and was meant to secure tenure and land rights within the communal farming areas. It had, however, to a large extent, not been taken up in Kaoko – mostly due to its conflict with local mobile land-use practices and land-relations and remained under discussion.⁷⁰¹

The conversation soon veered towards land tenure and ownership in the rest of the country. Unaro wanted to know how I would go about accessing land. After further contemplation, he also asked whether we knew if there was such a thing as communal or ‘open’ lands in America. After discussing issues of land and as we stood to leave at the end of the interview, I couldn't help but wonder two things: Firstly, how desperate the grazing the situation had become, and secondly, how far people were willing to migrate to pursue particular ways of being and pastoral futures.

⁶⁹⁸ Werner, “Tenure,” 78.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., 84

⁷⁰⁰ Uerikambura Tjipepa, Chief Development Planner, Ministry of Lands and Resettlement, Opuwo, 16.03.2015 & 29.03.2016, unrecorded interview

⁷⁰¹ Ibid.

With regards to the newcomers who had been given 21 days to leave Otjomatamba, their pastoral mobility and genealogies of arrival shared similar patterns and practices. The homesteads had initially migrated from northern Kaoko and the Epupa and Opuwo constituencies respectively – between 100 and 300 km away, with these distances taking some time to cross given the mountainous and hilly terrains and difficulties in moving livestock herds. Some of the homesteads (Unaro and Uazeika) had initially migrated from northern Kaoko to Otjondunda and Warmquelle – both south of Otjomatamba and places which fell within the neighbouring Anabeb conservancy. Here some had, it was said, over the years gained permanent settlement rights and were considered settled (*ovature*).

In Otjontunda about 10 or more homesteads, all close to each other and aligned, sat parallel to the main gravel road. These were visibly Himba homesteads, the building techniques and shape differed from the dominant style in southern Kaoko, with the houses dome-shaped, and the homesteads fenced in with the livestock pens in the middle. Most of them had been here for up to eight years. With the onset of the drought in 2012, these places, situated on the leeward-side of a mountain range, experienced a much stronger drought than that Ozondundu. This had resulted in these homesteads moving some or all of their livestock north again into Otjomatamba. These newcomers were now requesting permanent settlement rights – citing place-love and attachment as one of the reasons for wanting to remain in the Ozondundu area. This was shaped by different subjective, relational, and poetic parameters, but it was also evidently rooted in perceptions of the pastures and grazing possibilities – in a pastoral sensibility. As Rahenga had expressed it: Even if it meant living in the mountains, in isolation from others, they would do that if it meant that their cattle could graze and could access good pastures.

Bollig⁷⁰² noted that already during the mid-2000s there was a large out-migration of several households from the wider Epupa areas and northern Kaoko towards areas south of Opuwo, as well as north into southern Angola. These migrations were fuelled by a search for better pastures due to high livestock and cattle numbers as well as conditions of over-grazing and ecological degradation which had led to several disputes and crises concerning pasture management. These disputes centred on, for example, the permanent settlement of former dry-season cattle-posts, and difficulties in sanctioning responsible livestock owners due to the heads of homesteads or owners often being far away, with cattle-posts managed by herders or other family members.⁷⁰³ The legal and political transformations post-independence also enabled more regional pastoral migrations to take place, with less restrictive policies, state control and the liberalisation of the country.

What was evident from these regional pastoral migrations was that they were not *only* seasonal migrations in search of pastures or attempts to establish drought-period cattle-posts, but they were also

⁷⁰² Bollig, “Socio.”

⁷⁰³ Ibid.

aimed at permanent settlement (*omaturiro*). Following Diallo,⁷⁰⁴ these north-south regional migrations can thus be seen or characterised as “migratory drift” in which particular patrilines, over the long-term, gain or try to gain new or additional territory and land. In doing so, some also eventually have to negotiate temporary access-rights in the areas neighbouring those where they gain settlement – as cyclical droughts differentially affect the mountainous region. An important aspect of these north-south migrations was that people’s ancestral homesteads and, in some instances, main homesteads and other cattle-posts remained in northern Kaoko – with livestock and herds belonging to one homestead being separated between these multiple and distantly-located places, between northern and southern Kaoko, and managed either by the (male) head of the homestead’s wives, nephews, children, siblings and/or workers.

For example, Uazeika, similar to Tjimaka, was in a polygynous marriage with four women. During our acquaintance with Uazeika’s homestead in Otjomatamba, we mostly met with his third wife, Yatondua, as well as his *ovaramue* (cousins) and *ovasia* (nephews and nieces) who stayed at and took care of the livestock in Otjomatamba and Otjondunda. Later, I learned that the senior wife headed and managed the ancestral homestead in Oruhona in northern Kaoko, the second and third moved and managed households and livestock between Otjomatamba, Otjondunda and Opuwo, and the fourth mostly managed another cattle-post in northern Kaoko, at a place called Okorue (see Map 6). Thus, although these north-south and regional migrations were permanent for some, they were temporary for others and involved and enabled different kinds of pastoral mobilities and generated particular translocal-place constellations.

Moreover, livestock and herds had to be managed and moved between these different localities – for economic, subsistence and ritual purposes – with ongoing geographical and socio-spatial mobilities between distant cattle-posts and settled-places differentially enabled through the ownership of cars and the availability of transport and labour. Those residing in southern Kaoko had to regularly travel north to attend funerals, marriages, naming rituals and commemoration festivals, as well as for family visits. In other words, the regional pastoral migrations generated not only translocal land-use practices but also translocal social practices – with people’s place-belonging and relatedness in northern Kaoko continuously negotiated and re-negotiated. Yet, as already pointed out, these translocal relations of movement and exchange were also marked by intersectional dynamics related to gender, seniority, and livestock wealth.

Those newcomers referred to as ‘Himba’ during the dispute meeting and in discourses surrounding the dispute in many cases thus formed part of these larger, ongoing regional north-south pastoral mobilities and household migrations. Thus, in referring to some newcomers as ‘Himba’ it was these regional dynamics that were at play: Homesteads that had come from afar rather than neighbouring

⁷⁰⁴ Youssouf Diallo, “Processes and Types of Pastoral Migration in Northern Côte D’Ivoire,” *Mobile Africa: Changing Patterns of Movement in Africa and Beyond*, 2001.

areas and places, and which, in many instances, did not share close kin relations with households in the Otjomatamba area and surrounding places, and who, in a sense, were relative strangers. Yet, as I have illustrated with the case of Rinongue and her affinal kin, this was not exclusively the case and practices of intermarriage regularly produced and reproduced close kin-relatedness between households and groups in northern and southern Kaoko.



Image 13: A herder escorts the cattle to drink at the earth-dams in Otjize.⁷⁰⁵

Furthermore, apart from the households discussed above being ‘relative strangers’ there were also perceived wealth differences at stake – with the newcomer Himba homesteads often imagined and portrayed as wealthy stock owners. Unaro owned more or less 200 head of cattle (including those on loan).⁷⁰⁶ However, most, according to him, were kept in Okangwati and Oruhona, with his nephew looking after them. Uazeika’s household, on the other hand, had his livestock separated between multiple localities, with more or less 35 cattle and 50 goats kept in Otjomatamba at the time of the meeting. Yet, livestock numbers were difficult to attain as many were suspicious of my positionality and role during the dispute – suspicions which were understandable given the divisiveness of the issue and my progressive embeddedness within Otjomatamba and its social fabric.

The above mentioned “migratory drift” was also perceived by some as trying to transgress inherited colonial boundaries to claim land – boundaries which, due to their long and contested (colonial) histories of ambiguity and negotiation, were also shrouded in speculation. Thus, for instance,

⁷⁰⁵ Photograph taken by Elsemi Olwage

⁷⁰⁶ He shared this information with me one year later when we met again.

Uakoka Tjizembisa thought that households migrated from northern to southern Kaoko in the hope of settling closer to or beyond the VCF:

“I don't know why they're mushrooming but, if you know Otjondeka, I don't recall which year but there were rumours that the Red Line will be brought in, and the cattle will be vaccinated to become the same as the ones inside the Red Line and cattle-posts will be issued to them with road infrastructure in place. I think that's the reason why the Ovahimba are mushrooming because they want to be found already inside the line by then, that's what I think. I don't know whether it is true or due to overgrazing created by themselves by moving from one place to another. Today you will find them at Otjapitjapi, tomorrow they are up on that hill which causes overgrazing but when they reach here it's like they are surprised by the grass among the people and that seems to attract them. I am not sure, but I consider the above mentioned to be the reason why they move in from the other side, e.g. people moving from another side of Opuwo to the inside of the red line.”⁷⁰⁷

This, together with our discussion with Unaro, illustrated the ongoing uncertainty surrounding post-independent land reforms and collective anxieties for land and market-access, within historical conditions of structural marginalisation. Thus, there was the perception that those migrating south from northern Kaoko were potentially driven by the promise of land-access beyond the VCF, deploying such mobility practices as border-crossing strategies as subversive ways of moving *against* inherited colonial cartographies. Yet also portrayed in this quote was a normative valorisation of the mobile land-use practices which underpinned these regional pastoral migrations: one in which the ‘moving from one place to another’ was linked to overgrazing and seemingly differentiated from the forms of land-use practiced by ‘Herero’ households in southern Kaoko.

Lastly, although drought and the search for pastures and land were central dynamics and co-determinants in regional and north-south pastoral migrations, these mobilities were simultaneously characterised by other intersectional, economic, and socio-emotional kinetics. Through the migration story of another newcomer homestead, I address some of the idiosyncratic reasons for seeking out alternative place-belonging(s) and pastures. In doing so I further delineate the different patterns of pastoral mobility and household migration that characterised the above discussed north-south migrations. Moreover, I show how relative strangers and different ‘Himba’ homesteads were differentiated within Otjomatamba.

Interpersonal tensions, autonomy, and social mobility

Piriko Kaporisa was a man in his 50s who had initially migrated from Etanga, about 200 km from Otjomatamba in northwest Kaoko (See Map 6). He had migrated with his wife and children and, by the time we met, he and his family had been living in Otjomatamba for five years. During this time, he had also married his second wife, who had migrated from northern Kaoko and joined the household in Otjomatamba. Despite their household being one of the few Himba homesteads in the place and a relative newcomer, their case was separated from those who had been asked to leave and was grouped

⁷⁰⁷ 31.03.2015, recorded interview, Otjomatamba

with others such as Uakoka Tjizembisa. I met with Kaporisa⁷⁰⁸ shortly after the meeting to discuss his story and to try to understand how his case was different. After short introductions, he explained in more detail why, in his opinion, regional migrations between northern and southern Kaoko were taking place:

K: Why we, the Ovahimbas, have started mushrooming in this area is because we are experiencing problems in our area. Let's say you are staying at a certain place; you are born three and one is the firstborn. This first-born does not want you to stay in that place, so he always troubles you by creating conflict among you. Because you don't want to have a conflict with him you prefer to go to stay at another place – so that you can only come to visit him for a short time or when there is a family-related problem like a death. When you are leaving you ask like 10 calves to go with you, but you do not tell him the truth: That you are going because of the conflict that he is creating among you, but you rather say you met people from a certain place and asked for grazing and you have been approved. When you have come to the place you ask for permission to stay, and they first will want to know why you have moved from your place. You will tell them the story of why you want to live there. For instance, you would start telling someone that it is your relative that you have a problem with, your elder brother, and you want to start a new homestead so that you can stay alone. They will listen to you and accept you... [not clear] then you will be settled. So, you now go and visit him just to see their wellbeing. Some people will just move in because they have been attracted by the area by just driving through or by foot to come and visit here from Etanga. Do you know where Etanga is?

V: Yes.

K: By just passing through by car they are attracted by the beauty of the place and decide to come and stay without asking permission from the local people. After the people have realised his stay, they will ask how he came in and he will say he has asked for permission to stay but then in reality is not the truth. The said person is the one referred to as an illegal resident and he must be prosecuted. That is the situation right here why people are being chased away. Some people came in with permission and some are just sneaking in.

As explained by Kaporisa, in his opinion people migrated to other areas and places to avoid or lessen conflict and disagreements between siblings and relatives by opting to live together no longer and to start an autonomous homestead. What was clear in his explanation was the centrality of avoiding conflict and the possible damaging of relationships – with migration being a way to negotiate interpersonal tensions and frictions between relatives and to maintain the relationships over the long term. This avoidance of conflict was also expressed by emphasising that you would not explicitly communicate the actual reason fuelling your desire to move away. As the first-born, and according to neolocal settlement norms, he/she occupies a position of seniority and thus is considered the head of the homestead and has first claim to it – with junior persons migrating. Once you have found a potential place you explain your situation for the people to consider and sympathise with your case. This formed part of the process of negotiating belonging and acceptance in a new place.

By contrast, others migrated due to being “attracted by the beauty of the place” – referring here primarily (albeit not exclusively) to it being a good place in terms of the pastoral sensibility as discussed above and as having pastures, adequate water, or situated on the right side of the mountain range. However, where this was done without consulting the residents and through “sneaking in” this was

⁷⁰⁸ 29.04.2015, recorded interview, Otjomatamba

considered “illegal residence” and had to be, in his opinion, prosecuted. Kaporisa pointed out that several of the newcomers were perceived as having arrived in Otjomatamba in this manner and did not adhere to the social norms governing the negotiation of access – genealogies of arrival which thus differentiated their case and underpinned the social and legal action taken during the dispute meeting.

Although having at first given us the matter of interpersonal friction merely as an example, later in the interview it emerged as having been the main driver which fuelled his desire to seek out a different place and living situation:

K: I came originally from Etanga. The problem why I ran away from my area is, that we were born four men and one woman who followed me – the last born – and one of my brothers passed away. We were only from the same mother but different fathers. Our elder brother said that me and my other brother, the middle one, are getting along well and do not obey him when he says something or when he sends me to do something, that I refused. He always said I am refusing if he sends me, but I wouldn't have refused if it was someone else [message or meaning not clear]. I did not come with someone from Etanga, I came alone with my wife and children including the one who is at school at Otjapitjapi. That is the end of my story. You can ask questions.

E: So, you decided to leave your area because of the conflicts between you and your brothers and accusations?

K: Yes, it was because of the cooperation which we did not have, our elder brother was disturbing us. That is the reason that made me go. We thought one can stay with him and the other two can go live somewhere else before more conflicts arise so that we can just visit him if needed.

In leaving Etanga, Kaporisa approached *osoromana* Tjiheue from Otjihama – who was his wife's brother. Tjiheue proceeded to loan him some cattle and goats to look after and to assist in the building-up of his herd: Characteristic of the patron-client relations which structure a large part of the local livestock economies, and which enable particular forms of (male) social and economic mobility. This was thus one way towards negotiating their geographical as well as social mobility and autonomy, with Kaporisa and his family migrating to Otjihama soon after, a place situated close to Opuwo.

However, with *osoromana* Tjiheue's livestock being stolen in Otjihama and due to its proximity to Opuwo, Tjiheue had negotiated access-rights in Otjomatamba through his shared matrilineage with Muteze. Consequently, Kaporisa migrated to Otjomatamba with his family. His migration had thus been facilitated through the livestock movements of *osoromana* Tjiheue and relations of patronage. Foregrounded here again were how, despite migration and settlement being governed by virilocal norms, married men also negotiated access-rights, their migration and social mobility through their wives' social and familial networks. Moreover, patron-client relations were sometimes characterised by household migration for the 'clients' as 'wealthy patrons' negotiated access and orchestrated livestock movements.

In other words, as demonstrated throughout this chapter, one's agency for establishing alternative and additional place-belongings and regional and pastoral migration took place at the intersection of the practice of kinship, seniority, gender, wealth, and economic status. Although this

also meant that he and his family were relative strangers in the place, by the time of our meeting, Kaporisa was settled:

E: Is it not a lonely experience to live here or are you not missing your place and your family?

K: We are missing them, but you know when you have started to stay for a longer period in another area you start to change, when you go back you feel the difference according to the standard of living for yourself and the livestock as well, e.g., you feel that you are now living better or even the livestock have changed.

Hence, a better standard of living in the new place was also a key aspiration which drove persons and households to seek out alternative place-belongings and to migrate regionally. Moreover, despite Kaporisa's household having migrated from northwestern Kaoko and self-identified as Himba, their belonging and settlement were not disputed, and they had been accepted as residents (*ovature*). This was predominantly due to their genealogies of arrival – of having negotiated access according to 'set' social norms and the matrilineal kin-relation between Muteze and *osoromana* Tjiheie. However, it was also *osoromana* Tjiheie's economic position as a patron and his political power that facilitated the negotiation of access. The raising of their case during the meeting seemed to have rather been a matter of protocol and the need to list and discuss all those persons and homesteads considered newcomers.

Apart from interpersonal tensions, Kaporisa explained that people migrated not always to avoid conflict and to facilitate social mobility, independence, and economic autonomy, but also, in some instances, due to conflict, especially conflict generated by and through the practice of *okuroua* and/or witchcraft accusations. This kinetic was also mentioned by Unaro and several other interlocutors during my stay. In the following section, I briefly discuss the role of *okuroua* in shaping livestock movements and household and pastoral migration. In doing so I point to the workings of plural sources of authority – beyond that of the *ozorata* and *ozosoromana* – in the governing of mobility and settlement and the normative realm.

Relatedness and the danger of proximity

During the dispute, several people speculated that perhaps the *ovayenda* were migrating because people were witching (*okuroua*) them in their home-places and that they needed some "fresh air", as one person put it. 'Witchcraft' within this context first of all has to be understood as a "precarious translation"⁷⁰⁹ for *okuroua* as well as the variety and different forms and discourses which characterised local spiritual and occult ecologies and economies. My aim here is not to analyse the full varieties of witchcraft discourses and practices and their social power and interpretations, but rather to begin to point to their

⁷⁰⁹ Peter Geschiere, "Witchcraft and Modernity: Perspectives from Africa and Beyond," *Sorcery in the black Atlantic*, 2011, 233.

importance in scripting people's migratory trajectories, in the negotiation of social and kin-relatedness, and in the making of valued and plural forms of authority.⁷¹⁰

In recent decades anthropologists have argued for recognising the kaleidoscopic, dynamic, flexible and highly ambiguous attributes of witchcraft discourses and practices across different global and African localities.⁷¹¹ These studies have foregrounded both the pervasiveness of such discourses; their intimate entanglements with situated experiences of modernity; as well as their highly contingent and context-specific nature.⁷¹² Thus, far from being 'backward', as metanarratives of development and modernity might suggest, these discursive-practices were shown to have been continually re-invented in ways acutely attuned to emerging post-colonial, socio-material and contemporary realities. Moreover, in some contexts witchcraft discourses have also been interpreted as powerful "local lexicon(s)" on transforming moral economies and specifically as a critical, subversive and popular discourse on "modernity's latent and blatant immoralities".⁷¹³ This has led some scholars to argue for and foreground "the modernity of witchcraft".⁷¹⁴ Sanders and others have, however, cautioned against situating all witchcraft discourses as being necessarily *about* modernity, despite being part and parcel of emerging modernities.⁷¹⁵

Nevertheless, a general trend has been not to focus on questioning and interrogating the inherent truth basis of witchcraft *per se*, but rather to try to engage with locally specific notions, discourses, and practices of witchcraft and their "polysemic"⁷¹⁶ folds. As highly situated discursive-practices, studies have also argued for how they potentially provide insight into local epistemologies and different understandings of power. Despite this, witchcraft's 'reality' remains an underlying tension, and Geschiere⁷¹⁷ points out that:

"...such academic answers have their limits, notable in the field when the anthropologist is confronted with the terrible consequences of these representations. Insisting that, as an anthropologist, one just studies 'discursive practices' may become somewhat futile when the power of these words have very violent effects (lynching of supposed witches, their condemnation by state courts, etc.). Rather than declaring the reality question a nonissue, it might be better to admit that this is a dilemma difficult to solve, not only for the people directly involved but also for academics."

⁷¹⁰ White, "Custom."

⁷¹¹ Ibid.,

⁷¹² Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997); Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, "Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony," *American Ethnologist* 26, no. 2 (1999) Also see, Todd Sanders, "Reconsidering Witchcraft: Postcolonial Africa and Analytic (Un) Certainties," *American Anthropologist* 105, no. 2 (2003): 339.

⁷¹³ Sanders, "Reconsidering," 339, Also see Henrietta L. Moore and Todd Sanders, *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities: Modernity, Witchcraft and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (London: Routledge, 2003).

⁷¹⁴ Geschiere, *Modernity*.

⁷¹⁵ See Sanders, "Reconsidering," 340 for an alternative reading of these practices within the context of Tanzania.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., 340

⁷¹⁷ Geschiere, "Witchcraft," 247.

Nevertheless, what was clear from my research encounters was that the social navigation of witchcraft played an important part in co-determining peoples' socio-spatial and migratory trajectories and livestock movements, and generated regular travels, including cross-border travels, between places, to urban centres, as well as far-flung regions. In our interview with Kaporisa about interpersonal tensions, he explained that being the suspected recipient of malicious forces or aggression drove people and/or households to migrate elsewhere or to consider starting their own homestead in another place:

“But generally, as a person – when you are born where there is livestock and where there are elder people who are very rich who have witchcraft and are using witchcraft and you are just starting to farm and you only have five livestock, your things will not be progressing well. That is why you decide to go live far away from people who know you. Sometimes if you are bewitched by your own uncle, with us, the Himbas, you often feel that he does not like you, then you decide to go far away from your relative because it is better to be killed by strangers rather than your own uncle.”⁷¹⁸

People thus often decide to migrate because of suspicions that others – usually kin-others – were preventing them from building up their own herds or causing them to lose livestock. This serves as a motivation to go and “live far away from people who know you”. In Kaporisa's narrative witchcraft was inseparable from everyday negotiation of sociality, as well as experiences and interpretations of inequalities and social power. Moreover, what was evident in his narrations was the close entanglement of *okuroua* with processes of wealth and livestock accumulation, seniority, power, kin, co-presence, and intimate relationships.

During my research, this understanding and association were reflected in other conversations, with *witching* regularly attributed to wealthier (often senior) stock owners and being more prevalent in places characterised by a large number of wealthier households, with witchcraft forming part of the speculation of how this wealth and livestock was accumulated. Apart from wealthier and senior stock owners (which in this context were predominantly, although not exclusively, men), the maternal uncle was also often the object of witchcraft accusations – which once again pointed to the close entanglement of the practice of *okuroua* and wealth – as the inheritance of the main herd as well as livestock loans were predominantly negotiated through matrilineal kinship.

Geschiere,⁷¹⁹ in exploring the close interrelation between intimacy, trust, and witchcraft, has noted that “almost everywhere they (those accused of witching) are believed to strike from close by” – with witchcraft often understood as a form of aggression or nefarious forces which “comes from inside” and thus frequently implicating family, neighbours and kin-others. Implicit here is the role of proximity, co-presence and intimacy – with witchcraft emerging as a form of betrayal of kinship and sociality, or the “dark side of kinship”.⁷²⁰ Such understandings reveal a more ambivalent view of ‘community’ and the politics of communal life – a view that it is not always inherently characterised by trust, solidarity and

⁷¹⁸ 29.04.2015, recorded interview, Otjomatamba

⁷¹⁹ Peter Geschiere, *Witchcraft, Intimacy, and Trust: Africa in Comparison* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), xviii, xxii.

⁷²⁰ Ibid.

reciprocity, but also by tensions, ambiguities and mistrust.⁷²¹ Thus, relatedness can both take on benevolent and destructive forms.⁷²²

Furthermore, it seemed that creating geographical and spatial distance between oneself and the suspected person, and between oneself and close or immediate kin or neighbours (*ovararanganda*), were important in navigating the potential consequences and effects of the practice of *okuroua* and the form of power it held and exercised. Consequently, kin-relatedness did not only script peoples' trajectories in terms of negotiating access, but it also, in some circumstances, formed part of the reasons for a person to leave to migrate elsewhere to create distance between oneself and close kin and rather co-habit with strangers. On the other hand, accused people could also opt to migrate elsewhere to avoid potential conflict. Kaporisa explained:

“... people would go to Angola and get some witchcraft, upon returning from Angola, children around the place at different households will get sick and die. If they go to a wise man, they will be told it is that man who is killing the people. People will start fighting him and he will run away to any other place because he is afraid to be beaten. When he is settled in a certain place, he will take a short break from the witchcraft but witchcraft is something you don't get rid of once you have started, so after a year or so his witchcraft will start moving around the homesteads from one kraal to another and you will see that people and cattle around the place are starting to die again.”

Within Kaoko there seemed to be a widely shared social knowledge that the more powerful witchcraft stemmed from southern Angola – a perspective which also often shaped people's ideas about Himba homesteads as having more powerful witchcraft knowledge due to their proximity to these geographies.⁷²³ Furthermore, the kind of nefarious and harmful witchcraft which Kaporisa referred to was associated with the seeking of wealth, specifically livestock but also monetary wealth, which drove people to travel to consult with traditional doctors and ritual specialists. When a person was accused or suspected of practicing witchcraft out of fear of retribution, he/she would move to another place. Kaporisa's explanation also touched upon an understanding of social realities in which people's agency and capacities were perceived to be curtailed and delimited by unseen, mobile and often nefarious forces. Forces which, once you have chosen to engage with, were difficult to detach from – and almost took on an agency of their own. Thus, according to Kaporisa “witchcraft is something you don't get rid of once you have started” and sometimes after having settled in a new place “his witchcraft” once again “will start moving around the homesteads from one *kraal* to another.” When I inquired why this was the case, Kaporisa explained:

“Modern witchcraft intermingles with everyone around – the household's members, playing, protecting if it has to, and at the same time killing if it has to kill. When they are going to the witchdoctors, they will be told that it is that man with witchcraft that you know, that is how this modern witchcraft operates. So, when going to find out from the witchdoctors they will be told that is that neighbour. The killer's family will now decide to take him to the witchdoctors to be sure that he is really killing people. It might come that the witch doctor will say that this man

⁷²¹ Ibid., 29, Also see Carsten, *After*, 9.

⁷²² Carsten, *After*, 9.

⁷²³ Also see Kavari, “Social.”

is not having witchcraft but, for example, his neighbour, Hauari, is the one who has done it and send it to him to look as if this man who did it. How this happens is, that when this Hauari goes to the witch doctor he would pretend that he is Kaporisa while he is Hauari and whatever he will do like the medicines he is given is now attached to Kaporisa because it is the name that he gave to the witchdoctor. So, if people find out later then what will happen next is they both will have to take the goats to the witchdoctor, the goats will be killed to check into the intestine, and that is how the doctor will see how Hauari is using the other person's name and pretending to be Kaporisa...”

The particular mobile character of *okuroua* within this context was characterised as “modern witchcraft” – indicating a change from past practices and understood to intermingle with everyone around, to be ambiguous—being able to both protect and kill, and characterised by concealment, cunning misdirection, and deviousness. However, also evident was the mistrust it could potentially generate between neighbours and between kin, and the role of the traditional healer (*onganga yombazu*) and ritual specialists (*otjimbanda*) as important authorities in mediating and interpreting these emotional tensions, mistrust, and accusations (for example, via reading/seeing the intestines (*okutara oura*)).

Normally, traditional healers and ritual specialists had to be a stranger to all parties involved, for them to accurately engage with “seeing the intestines”⁷²⁴ and determine who was guilty. In other words, it was better to travel far – to Opuwo, or even southern Angola. Moreover, Kaporisa explained that when people start consulting with and involving the traditional healers/doctors and speculation becomes rife, the suspected person would be “afraid to lose his livestock as they will start dying” and “he will decide to go and stay far from the others.” However, at the same time, far livestock movements and people’s travels were also seen as marked by heightened vulnerability to nefarious forces and the practice of witchcraft – with pastoral migrations mediated through prior prayer at the ancestral shrine and informing the ancestors of one’s intentions, both before leaving as well as upon arrival at the destination.⁷²⁵

The practice of *okuroua* foregrounds the ways movement, including livestock movements, are, above all else, relational. In other words, “people’s movements in their social environments are constantly attuned and adjusted to the unfolding of the environment itself and the effect this had on possible positions and trajectories”.⁷²⁶ Yet at the same time, one’s agency for attuning and adjusting to different situations and for negotiating one’s corporeal and socio-spatial mobility or livestock movements elsewhere was also contingent upon people’s differential and embodied social and economic locatedness. These processes were mediated both through the *ovarangere* (the senior men taking care of the ancestral shrine) as well as ritual specialists (*otjimbanda*) and healers (*ozonganga*) who were crucial authority figures in interpreting, engaging and mediating moral realms and the ever-

⁷²⁴ This was a common divining practice within local religious and healing practices. For more detail on this practice and its embeddedness within local spatio-temporal ways of knowing see Bleckmann, “Colonial,” 22–25.

⁷²⁵ Also see Tönsjost, *Umverteilung*, 57.

⁷²⁶ Vigh, “Motion,” 425.

changing and dynamic “normative force of custom”.⁷²⁷ The mobile character of the practice of *okuroua* and how ritual specialists co-scripted people’s socio-spatial trajectories were evident in another short ethnographic example – and one which involved the movement of a homestead within Otjomatemba, from the lower to the upper part of the place.



When I had first arrived in Otjomatemba, Rikondjerua, a 60-year-old, divorced woman, was in the process of constructing a small, dome-shaped house, next to the homestead of her maternal uncle (the brother of her grandmother). Apart from a worker employed by Rikondjerua to assist in taking care of the livestock, she lived alone. One day whilst passing we found her busy clearing large, heavy stones from a patch against the rocky hillside to construct a new *kraal*. It was hard work and as we stopped to help, I thought that this was a sure sign of her creating a more permanent homestead or dwelling. Yet barely two weeks later she had abandoned the newly built house and *kraal* and moved into a house in the upper side of the place, in the homestead headed by her younger sister.

Curious to understand why Rikondjerua had made this sudden move we met with her early one morning. Rikondjerua had grown up in Otjapitjapi, living with her mother as the only child in the homestead of her maternal uncle (*ongundue*). She stayed there until she fell pregnant with her first child then she moved with her uncle to Otjomatemba. Rikondjerua was briefly married in Omao. However, she experienced her husband to be too “naughty” and thus divorced him soon after and returned to Otjapitjapi – to her home-place – to start her own homestead. With grazing being better in Okarumbu, she eventually established her homestead there, moving between Okarumbu and Otjize. Rikondjerua had moved to Otjomatemba from Okarumbu after the borehole had broken down and remained unfixed for some days. At the same time, her son, who worked in Otjiwarongo and usually provided the money for diesel costs for the borehole, lost his job. She thus decided to move for the time being, with her livestock, to Otjomatemba where she was sure that she and her livestock could make use of the spring water.

She then proceeded to explained that she had moved away from the lower part of Otjomatemba due to the death of three of her calves in close succession. Considering the very few livestock she had, she felt like committing suicide, she shared sombrely. In searching for an explanation for the sudden death of her calves she had travelled south to Warmquelle. There she paid N\$100 for a traditional healer (*onganga*) to advise her. This doctor was trained by his father, who, in turn, had been trained by his brother, and was considered a respected and well-known healer and specialist. After some consideration, he suggested she move away from her neighbours and maternal uncle. The reason given was that her uncle’s homestead was said to be using something to protect themselves and to ‘close’ (*okuripata*) their homestead. Consequently, anything bad or malicious aimed at them simply passed on to her homestead instead. Furthermore, whilst she was living there, she took fire from their homestead

⁷²⁷ White, “Custom,” 2.

to start hers. But she was informed that there was a strong taboo against doing this at a protected or ‘closed’ homestead. Her uncle forgot to inform her, and this was perhaps what had brought her such bad luck. There were no bad feelings between her and her uncle, she explained. She had even consulted her uncle and his wife on the situation and was planning everything along with them. Her uncle’s wife lent her the money for the specialist and also confirmed that “yes, it is true, our homestead is closed”. Thus, it was not that she was bewitched, Rikondjerua explained, rather there was protective magic at work at the neighbouring homestead. Despite this situation, Rikondjerua also explained that she had *oura ouvi* – or ‘bad intestine’ – which meant that her livestock was always struggling to reproduce properly, and she often suffered livestock loss.



As was evident in Rikondjerua’s story, her migratory and socio-spatial trajectory between Otjapitjapi, Otjomatamba, Okarumbu and Omao were shaped by a diverse set of interlinking, intersectional dynamics. However, within Otjomatamba she had moved again to create distance between herself and her uncle’s homestead. Here, once again, was the centrality of proximity and distance, of movement and closure – in navigating these unseen forces – with particular mobility practices being key to deflecting possible harm. Moreover, also reflected in Rikondjerua’s story was the important role of travelling to see and consult with traditional healers and specialists, as key interpreters, and mediators not only with regards to seeking wealth but also in dealing with misfortune, loss, and death, and navigating one’s dwelling and socio-spatial movements.

These authorities, together with religious figures, formed part of the “parallel and competing authorities” at work in the everyday “application of norms”, and in solving disputes – especially those between and within households and concerning the workings of the unseen, including the forces of the ancestral realm (as has been discussed in previous chapters).⁷²⁸ Consequently, even though household migration and livestock movements (pastoral mobility) were governed through the inherited systems of colonial tenure and ritual authority (i.e. the headmen and councillors, and livestock permits), other plural forms of authorities were simultaneously important in meditating the pathways which people took and the movement of livestock elsewhere.



This chapter has tried to elucidate the different livestock movements and pastoral mobilities that characterised the dispute meeting and their intertwinement with different patterns of household and pastoral migration. In doing so, I have demonstrated some of the different kinetics – apart from drought – and the intersectional dynamics which generated and characterised these mobilities and the politics of belonging and access. What seemed to distinguish the different cases were their genealogies of arrival, their reasons for migrating, and how their access was negotiated. In the final section of this chapter, I will further analyse what differentiated the newcomer cases who had been asked to leave in

⁷²⁸ White, “Custom,” 2–5.

21 days – specifically looking at how their genealogies of arrival were entangled with the practice of *opolotika* and the question of forced settlement. To conclude I will take a closer look at the particular normative discourses and the politics of difference and belonging that surrounded these cases and how the dispute not only concerned grazing but as already pointed out, contested land-access and territory.

‘Opolotika’ and territorial incorporation

During the weeks after the meeting, several people explained that the Himba homesteads at Otjondunda were rumoured to have come with large herds of cattle and were said to have been permitted by only one *osoromana* from Warmquelle who had resettled in Otjondunda (Otjondunda’s place genealogy was connected to Warmquelle and there were also multiple *ozosoromana*). However, after some years the situation got out of control and the *osoromana* left. Thus, there were recurrent discussions with regards to the belonging of the Himba homesteads at Otjondunda – both by the other *ozosoromana* as well as people of the area – despite most of them having lived there for more than eight years and claiming to have gained permanent settlement rights.⁷²⁹

Their disputed belongings seemed to be linked to the genealogies of arrival and how households negotiated access – whether temporary or permanent. Sometime after the meeting, we spoke with Katjetjua Mukuaruze,⁷³⁰ one of the stock owners from Okakuyu/Okarumbu, who reflected on these genealogies of arrival and settlement practices and the social norms governing one’s negotiation of access:

K: The settling of people, procedurally starts like for, e.g., some people came to ask and then the surrounding areas will discuss the matter to settle the applicant temporally who would go back after drought. These people are settled for a while until rain starts, now they have to go back. If the place from which a person came from didn’t get enough rain then the place where a person is settled temporally, his period of stay can be extended. So, whatever is to be agreed upon should be done in consultation with all the people in the area. That was a manner in which things were done when we grew up. Nowadays, things are strange, people from other areas just come to Otjomatamba without any consultation or permission and chase their cattle in a kraal they have just found in a place and start separating the calves from the cows.

V: Which kraal?

K: Is an old kraal but it does not belong to them.

E: Meaning that all who came in Otjomatamba do not ask for permission?

K: Seven people asked for settlement and were accepted, after they have received rain, they went back. The current ones never had permission.

K: There is one person (Piriko Kaporisa), his boss is at Opuwo that one has got permission that’s why they didn’t chase him away.

⁷²⁹ Titus Rukondo, 17.04. 2016, unrecorded interview, Warmquelle

⁷³⁰ 31.03.2015, recorded interview, Otjize

E: Why does he think this problem is starting now, why is happening now? [Addressing translator]

K: The problem is with the Ovahimba people, and the reason is unknown it is them who do not consult but start building kraals everywhere they like because the Ovahimba people are not consulting anyone.

V: Why do they want to be settled everywhere?

E: Does it perhaps work differently to settle in their areas where they are coming from?

K: We found out from people coming from that side that they have also done the same way at the places they came from, and it has created a dispute among them. We don't talk to each other.

K: At Otjondunda all those people that you find there are illegal, no one is born there. They settled by force and others continued to settle all over without permission. I heard that some people went to report the case to the police.

Such practices of arriving with livestock without prior consultation were deemed highly transgressive and as not following the 'procedure', with this issue increasingly becoming embedded within an ethnicised discourse and fuelling mistrust and division. As Katjetjua expressed it: "the Ovahimba people are not consulting anyone". Nevertheless, at the same time, it was understood as linked to the existence of multiple *ozosoromana* and the practice of *opolotika*. In our interview with Kaporisa⁷³¹ he also noted that the practice of *opolotika* and political fragmentation played an important role:

K: In our area, the Ovahimba area, the reason you always hear that people are been chased away is that we don't settle in a good way. If it was in our Ovahimba area you would have looked at the homesteads they settle in a disorganised order that damages the grazing area that's why the cattle are dying because they are overgrazing. If you talk to someone about it, then it's a big fight so people are just settling the way they want.

E: Has it changed from how people use to settle in the past and now, especially where you came from?

K: It has changed totally because nowadays you cannot tell someone to change the direction of grazing so that you can conserve the grass for calves for later then you end up quarrelling or fighting.

E: Why do you think it has changed now?

K: Why it has changed is because previously the *osoromana* was only one in the area and now the political parties also become more, e.g., DTA, SWAPO, UDF, NPF, etc. so every *osoromana* is on his own with his followers and everyone does not mix with the people falling under the leadership of the ones who are settling there. The above-mentioned leaders from the different parties are competing against each other and are jealous of each other because everyone wants to have more followers, e.g., each one needs 50 followers, and all those 50 people will come from Etanga and Owambo land so their family will also want to come and live in the area and they will not refuse because they need to increase the number of their people in their party.

Thus, the disputes in northern Kaoko were not only driven by the lack of adequate pastures, but also by the practice of *opolotika* – by the existence of multiple, competing *ozosoromana*. This in turn was

⁷³¹29.04.2015, recorded interview, Otjomatamba

related to the competing TAs within the region, each trying to expand their territorial reach and claims by appointing their own local headmen and expanding their followers, in other words through incorporation. Different TAs thus vied for territorial expansion in a context of overlapping jurisdictions and divisive party politics – with territorial expansion understood as translating into greater chances for securing state recognition and thus the legal power to administer and control land-rights.

Hence, on the one hand, the lack of grazing, living with conditions of drought and uncertainty, pastoral ambitions, and desire for establishing autonomous households – just to name a few of the kinetics – mobilised households and persons to seek out alternative places and pastures to establish homesteads and cattle-posts. However, simultaneously, the practice of *opolotika* was opening-up avenues for the tactical negotiation of livestock movements and pastoral migration and specifically for the gaining of land-access in a context where land and pastures were increasingly in demand. According to Kaporisa, when the newcomers arrived in Otjomatempa some had claimed Herunga as their *osoromana* as a way of legitimising their claims to permanent settlement:

“All of the Ovahimbab, but when they came to settle, Herunga did not know about them, but it was claimed that they were settled by Herunga because they are in his area, but he said, “How can I settle people while I was in Marine⁷³² or did I settle them while I was there?” He said if people are claimed to be settled by him then they must remain there because he will accept them as they are given to him, so is it how the people became Herungas.”

As a newly established *osoromana*, Herunga accepted the newcomers as “given to him” to expand his follower base and his patronage, and to reify his precarious authority position within Otjomatempa. Some newcomers thus tactically navigated the local power and authority struggles and fragmentation to claim permanent settlement rights, and to remain in Otjomatempa despite having been asked to leave with the return of the rains. Although Kaporisa relegated this dynamic to the Himba and the ‘Ovahimba area’ it was not limited to northern Kaoko, nor a specific group. Talking with another person in Otjomatempa, he also explained how the rise of *opolotika* was influencing shared land-use and pastoral practices in southern Kaoko:

In the olden days, people were cooperating. Now they brought in *opolotika* and this is dividing (*okuhanika*) people into two. One will settle people here and if you are deciding to leave to let areas recover then others will remain. In the past, people had a small meeting and decided collectively that now they must leave a certain area to allow it to recover. This is no longer the case, if you move now, you move by yourself. Things have changed. People are not valuing moving as they use to do in the past – not even considering it as important. These days much settlement is motivated by *opolotika*. It is changing stuff. *Opolotika* is like an illness: It starts small, but then it increases – until now everybody has party politics. It is like HIV/AIDS – taking you up to AIDS. Some people feel like they are not being treated fairly and then say, now we will appoint our own *osoromana*. In the past it was different. You won’t know, this is this person’s cattle-post. But nowadays, if you want to make a cattle-post, you might be chased.⁷³³

⁷³² Marine is the place south of the VCF where *osoromana* Herunga kept most of his livestock and had another homestead.

⁷³³ ‘Baby’ Uaroua, 15.04.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatempa

The ongoing appointment of multiple *ozosoromana* foregrounded how the institution and its rootedness in a specific hereditary and patriarchal chieftaincy and territorial model was being challenged, questioned, and refashioned. This crisis of legitimacy, together with the legal power vested in state-recognised TAs to administer and allocate land-rights, were opening up possibilities to negotiate access-rights along oppositional political belonging and affiliation – with competing TAs suspecting each other of wanting to “win over the land”. This was thus reflective of long-standing inherited and culturally-informed institutions in which territory was made and re-made through incorporation and thus also through pastoral mobility. Nevertheless, in having become embedded in national party politics and the post-independent state, these practices were perceived by many as harming the management of shared pastures and resources.

As I have touched upon throughout this chapter, the grazing and settlement dispute in Otjomatamba and the contested settlement of newcomers generated and was animated by a particular ethnicised discourse concerning ‘Himba’ pastoral mobility and land-use practices. In the final part of this chapter, I will take a closer look at these discursive practices.

Ecologies of difference and belonging

Throughout my research, the politics of difference concerning the group of newcomers referred to as ‘Himba’ were expressed through particular normative discourses. These were entangled with valorisations of divergent pastoral land-use and settlement practices. In my conversation with Johannes Kazondjou about the rules and norms governing movement and settlement before the meeting, he explained:

We (referring to the residents of the area) and Himba, our attitudes, our ways in the home are not the same. While we are here, the Himba...they will move where the grazing is. They just follow the grass. When it is rainy season, they are just moving around, creating several cattle-posts. Himba is like this, if they come for drought and came to settle at a place if the rain happens to arrive, and you request them to leave, they will only refuse. And just imagine, the cattle are a lot. We will not migrate as far as the Himba migrate, looking for grazing. Some Himba – they are at Omatjete side – did not ask permission to cross the border (Veterinary Cordon Fence). From Omatjete to Omaruru and Kamanjab – at Kamanjab is where they were being chased away. At Otjondunda – they are also being chased away...

...we will not allow them. We will have a meeting soon and ask them to leave the place. At Otjomatamba we are working with the conservancy and the ways that the Himba migrate, they will just settle anywhere, and this will chase the wild animals away. Behind the mountains, close to Otjitaime (the spring), we have zoned the area for the wild animals – but some of the homesteads are going that side and making a cattle-post. People in Otjomatamba want to make a rest camp there, for tourists – but now because of the cattle being there, the tourists won’t enjoy it so much, because they want to see wild animals.

People’s concern is also for their children, when the children are adults and then they start to make their homestead – where will there be space? The Himba think that they will be staying permanently and then they will give livestock to their children, who will make a cattle-post, and in the end, it will be us having to leave the place. With the Himba homesteads, some cattle are in Otjondunda, some are in Otjiwarongo (Warmquelle), some in Sesfontein, in Okavare, in Etendeka.... where rhinos are. After Christmas, seven rhinos were killed in Etendeka. That is

why people are ‘chasing them’. And in one homestead there are three homesteads. That is why we don’t like Himba being here.

If they decide not to leave, we have been given the law by the government. We will call the police. For Herero to ‘move up and down’ – it will only happen as a child decides to leave the homestead of his parents. He will go somewhere and see first if the place is fine, and then he will be given a paper from the *osoromana* where he is staying, to go and give to the *osoromana* at the place where he intends to move. It will be a permission paper.⁷³⁴

Tobias Uaroua, echoed similar sentiments, normative registers and an ethnicised discourse concerning the newcomer Himba homesteads:

Himba is cleverer than all of us. They are taking cattle beyond the Red Line (VCF). Even all the way to Outjo and Kamanjab. They separate their cattle. Many people are speaking to them and perhaps think that they are stupid – but you don’t know what is in their heads. Herero has a different movement. Normally you have your ancestral homestead somewhere, with the *okuruwo* you belong to, but often there is no livestock. Rather you would have another established homestead. For example, my ancestral homestead is in Otjomaoru. And I am permanently settled in Otjomatempa. I would only go to Otjomaoru when there are funerals, weddings, or for the naming of children – for this reason, it is helpful to maintain a small house there.

Himba grazes only for the animals, not for the veld. They finish the grazing everywhere. They will stay here in Otjomatempa and surrounding areas just for now, and then they would leave, without being chased away by the people. They will only stay until the grazing finishes. They overgraze until the seeds are gone. Herero and Zemba are different in that they care for both cattle and the veld. They divide the grazing. Only goats to this side and cattle to that side. And they look at the maximum number of cattle and control the grazing according to dry and rainy season cycles. Himba doesn’t care about water, just about the grass and grazing. If they settle behind the mountain, the cattle will walk and finish all the grass until the water-point and until the cattle have nothing left to eat...

Actually, the Himba are only coming here (Otjomatempa) because they want to go to Outjo (beyond the VCF). They want to go to ‘that side’ (meaning beyond the VCF). All the people that are here, not one is without cattle ‘that side’. They just came here to find a way to go there. When you are with Himba you are with a disease called Ebola. Just like that. It uses a clever way, it works like this: First, it starts small, but then suddenly it’s on top of you. The Himba are just winning us.⁷³⁵

Within the above normative narrations, ‘Himba’ pastoral mobility was synonymous with moving too much, over too large distances and the separation of livestock across multiple, widely spread cattle-posts. Such land-use practices were negatively valued (*omundu wonduriro ombwii*) and understood as just “following where the grass is” and “wasting both the animals and the grass.”⁷³⁶ Moreover, ‘Himba’ pastoral mobility was construed as not caring about being and staying close to water and water-points. Rather cattle-posts were created some distance away from water-points, with cattle grazing towards the water-points. Such a perspective was also reflected in our interview with Katjetjua:

K: Yes, they are different. If we reside here, we will wait until there is no more grazing, but Ovahimba's will move overnight to where livestock is grazing. When we have to move from place to another you consult with co-inhabitants or the headman then they will advise you by

⁷³⁴ 01.02.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatempa

⁷³⁵ 13.02.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatempa

⁷³⁶ 30.03.2015, unrecorded interview

telling you that, that place might cause damage to the area go there. Ovahimba people will just move without proper consultation.

E: So, they are moving much larger distances?

K: Yes, and they like to come and fetch water because they are staying far from water points.⁷³⁷

Thus, within these narrations, ‘Himba’ pastoral practices were construed as privileging mobility over sedentariness.⁷³⁸ Such mobility practices were perceived as threatening future possibilities for local livelihoods – both in terms of developing communal conservancies and implementing land-use zoning, as well as accessing resources and securing inheritances such as land for future generations. Thus, these narrations were laden with anxiety and fear regarding particular settlement practices – ones directed towards the taking over or claiming of territories, over some time and through clever means. Moreover, within these narrations, such mobility and settlement practices were construed as being entangled with illegalities – such as illegal hunting or ‘poaching’ and the moving of livestock south across the VCF. Thus, ‘Himba’ pastoral mobilities were framed as something transgressive, deviant, and harmful – as destructive in both an ecological and social sense. Furthermore, pastoral movements and territoriality here were seen as being animated by long-distance transhumance migrations, and the ongoing establishment of translocal place-relations which were different from those practiced in Ozondundu and by ‘Herero’ households.

In contrast, local spatial practices were presented as being intertwined with a different kind of territoriality. ‘Herero’ mobility was said to be limited only to one area, their cattle-posts remaining close to their homestead, or ancestral homestead, and was presented as more sedentary. It was presented as contained, rational and bureaucratised, and as being organised in proximity to water and in relation to the conservation of grazing. Increasingly, however, this model of territoriality was seen to be under threat due to the practice of *opolotika*, and how this was opening avenues for subverting and circumventing inherited tenure institutions.

Central to these discourses were two different forms of pastoral mobility, animated by different spatial and land-use strategies and with their constructions intertwined with different forms of environmental relatedness, specifically with distances between water-points, livestock camps and one’s homestead. In other words, animating these discourses were different valorisations. However, and importantly, despite these discourses solidifying boundaries between ‘Himba’ and ‘Herero’ pastoral practices, in talking to Tobias, these differences were historicised rather than being portrayed as *essentially* Himba or Herero:

First, we were moving like Himba. By the time I was a young man we used to take the livestock to Okangundumba and also Ondera. In the past, this was where we were meeting with Himba homesteads, at Okangundumba. Although the conflict between the Herero and the Himba has been there for a very long time, we stopped working together around 1968/9. Soon we were given grazing rules (*oveta*). Some people came together and decided that people were “wasting

⁷³⁷ 31.03.2015, recorded interview, Otjize

⁷³⁸ Lentz, *Land*, 30.

the area” at Okangundumba and that people were allowed to go there only during the rainy season, but then they should migrate back to their areas during the dry-season. Around 1969, there came *oveta*, and people from Otjomatempa and surrounding areas stop going to Okangundumba.⁷³⁹

As Tobias pointed out: “first [they] were moving like Himba”. These land-use changes were related both to changes in the topographies of water – the making of the earth dams at specific places and the drilling of boreholes – as well as the arrival of specific rules (*oveta*) which took form and were implemented through the mapping of ward boundaries. Moreover, as shown in Chapters Two and Three, these changes were related to the escalation of non-cooperation between the different socio-political factions from the late 1960s onwards – non-cooperation which eventually led to the outbreak of regional conflict. Yet evident in these normative discourses underpinning constructions of ‘Himba’ patterns of pastoral mobility was that these historical transformations and the colonial encounter were co-produced through and produced particular ideologies of mobility and sedentariness, and land-use practices.

Thus, the mapping of colonial tenure and livestock policies produced specific “acts of mapping”, which, as Sullivan⁷⁴⁰ has pointed out, have the power not only to manipulate the landscape but also people’s relationship to it. In other words, pastoral mobilities and mobile land-use practices within southern Kaoko were also co-constituted through “historically laden imaginaries” and culturally embedded ideologies.⁷⁴¹ These valorisations were at least partly rooted in early colonial civilising discourses in which “black mobility” and “black nomads” were constructed as the antithesis and *Other* to settled “white” civilised (and Christian) farmer.⁷⁴²

Here then divergent forms of mobile pastoralism and land-use were becoming an “arena of contestation”⁷⁴³ and grounds for expressing shared belonging and competing forms of territoriality. Rather than this being inherently about the assertion of ethnic belonging, it was rooted in attempts to normatively sanction the forceful claiming of territories and to re-assert particular norms governing the shared access to and use of pastures, water, and land. Yet the ongoing and dialectical construction of these normative valorisations and discourses on ‘Himba’ pastoral mobility were not locally negotiated. I encountered similar perceptions during my interviews with government officials in Opuwo.

For example, in an interview with a government official, we discussed the situation and the dispute, specifically concerning water-point rules. Initially, these rules, having been developed in conjunction with the communities, stipulate that any newcomer needs to contribute a higher amount than permanent members. The rules, however, were rarely implemented, especially as they were difficult to enforce. This was exacerbated due to drought and households moving further away from water-points in search of grazing, with the cattle grazing unaccompanied to the water-points. In our interview, ‘Himba’ herders were understood and portrayed to be ‘nomadic’ more so than other groups

⁷³⁹ 13.02.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatempa

⁷⁴⁰ Sullivan, “Maps,” 9.

⁷⁴¹ Salazar, “Towards,” 55, 64.

⁷⁴² See Silvester, Wallace and Hayes, “Trees.”

⁷⁴³ Yuval-Davis, *politics*, 18.

– making it even more difficult to implement rules regarding the use of water-points. The official explained that they were not managing land, but rather their animals and were “just following the grazing, not water”. According to him, they would create a temporary cattle-post far from the water-point, and graze the outlying pastures, and only every second day the cattle would be herded to the water-points. Once this grazing was finished, the cattle-posts would move once again. In contrast ‘Herero’ pastoral practices were said to be characterised by coordinated movement between cattle-posts and settled places, to be managed outwards from water points and more sedentary. This model of territoriality was represented as more governable and as being better for designing state policies for land and water management.

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this chapter, pastoral mobility was more than just an appropriate and “rational management strategy”⁷⁴⁴ to cope with drought, to ensure the survival of livestock herds within arid and highly variable environments, and/or to mitigate risk through separating herds – especially larger herds – between “different agro-ecological zones”.⁷⁴⁵ Rather, pastoral mobilities were embedded within and practiced through heterogenous but also patterned livestock movements and households and pastoral migrations, with people’s motivations for seeking additional/alternative pastures and land-access animated by a range of overlapping, shifting and different needs, desires, experiences, hopes, fears, and ambitions. Moreover, pastoral, and social mobilities were co-constitutive, with each shaping the other in its movement, were differentially and culturally valued and valorised, and enfolded in situated normative discourses, knowledge practices, and ideologies.

In detailing the disputed livestock movements and household and pastoral migrations into Ozondundu, this chapter thus explored some of the various and interrelated kinetics animating pastoral mobility, including, for instance, 1) the strongly affective and emotive interrelation between people’s sense of personhood and the lives of their livestock, especially cattle, 2) the desire and/or need to establish autonomous homesteads, 3) the desire/need by married women to establish autonomous households and multilocal residencies, and for independence, 4) as an avenue for realising social and economic mobility, 5) to establish geographical and spatial distance between oneself and close kin due to fears/suspensions regarding witchcraft or malicious forces, 6) to mitigate lived and interpersonal tensions and avoid conflict, and lastly, 7) due to affective place-attachment and love. Moreover, as discussed in this chapter, the uncertainties generated through post-independent tenure reforms – especially anxieties regarding the move “of translating the bundles of owners and bundles of rights over tracts of land that are often circumscribed by rather vague boundaries into clear-cut written titles”⁷⁴⁶ –

⁷⁴⁴ Hanne K. Adriansen, “Pastoral Mobility: A Review,” *Nomadic Peoples* 9, 1/2 (2005): 212.

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 208

⁷⁴⁶ Carola Lentz, “Land and the Politics of Belonging in Africa,” in *African Alternatives* (Brill, 2007), 52.

and ongoing public debates regarding the shifting of the VCF and land-access beyond the VCF were speculated as generating regional pastoral and household migrations. Thus, some households and persons were perceived to be migrating to claim additional access to land, and productive land specifically, in anticipation of such titling processes, and with a future perspective. These rumours and practices also have to be situated in relation to Kaoko's colonial histories of encapsulation and the growing demand for land and specifically pastures, in a region where population and livestock numbers were increasing. This then was linked to another key dimension animating pastoral mobility within this context: to claim land and territory, and/or re-assert claims to land and land-based resources through reiterative practices, including livestock movements, exchange and loans, and specific mobile land-use practices.

Yet, this chapter has also illustrated how pastoral mobilities had to be first of all relationally and socially navigated, with kin-relatedness still being the key social institution in building long-term claims to residency, access and belonging. Moreover, kin-relatedness, as a matter of negotiation, intersected with and was co-constituted by gender, seniority, livestock wealth, and political belonging in enabling or delimiting one's options for livestock movements, household migration, and settlement. Hence, axes of difference were "constituting each other"⁷⁴⁷, producing highly situated identifications and differential social agency, depending on the situation. For one, the decision to move was predominantly vested in the senior heads of homesteads, who were often, yet not exclusively, men, while the differential agency for mobility was co-constituted by one's livestock wealth, patterns of livestock ownership, and social and political locatedness. Larger herds meant separating these across localities and were linked to both fears and suspicions of witchcraft, which, together with demands for pastures, placed stress on livestock owners to find and create opportunities for both mobility and concealment.

On the other hand, livestock wealth enabled social and pastoral mobilities through fostering patron-client relations and through relations of exchange and loans, especially in places where households were poorer and where livestock numbers were low, and through drawing on institutions such as older-younger (classificatory) brotherhood, matrilineal relatedness and patronage – but also recently, matronage. Such livestock movements often involved the household migrations of others, who in turn tactically navigated such relations to realise their desires and/or needs for social and spatial mobility, independence, autonomy, and/or survival. In this regard, married women were dependent on these orchestrated mobilities and often had to migrate to distant and far places, and/or to head and co-manage satellite cattle-posts. However, as shown, these relations still had to be negotiated, and there were regional cultural and institutional differences. In southern Kaoko, married women themselves orchestrated or co-orchestrated livestock movements, including to their home-places and despite virilocal norms, with this opening up avenues for north to south pastoral and household migrations.

⁷⁴⁷ Yuval-Davis, "Belonging," 200.

Moreover, some women owned significant small-stock and cattle herds, speculated with goats as an economic strategy, and self-directed these livestock movements, including through establishing multilocal residencies and hiring labourers.

These different patterned modes of mobility played a key role in the local politics of exclusion and inclusion and the processes of situated adjudication which characterised the dispute meeting. Those who were asked to leave in 21 days were relative strangers and had initially migrated from afar rather than surrounding neighbouring areas with whom the Ozondundu households shared historical and mutual relations of cooperation. Moreover, they had negotiated access primarily through claiming political affiliation to *osoromana* Herunga who was not yet state recognised, and whose authority as an *osoromana* was still precarious. In contrast, some newcomer Himba homesteads who had likewise migrated from afar were not asked to leave. Their cases were socially legitimised through their relative kin-relatedness, established for instance through affinal kin networks, and as having negotiated access through what was locally construed and established as legitimate affiliations or networks.

Additionally, the newcomers whose settlement was contested were construed as not respecting the local social norms governing the negotiation of access-rights, including drought-related access-rights. Moreover, many of these newcomers formed part of a larger regional ‘migratory drift’ which were said to be driven, not by experiences of drought alone, but also by pastoral sensibilities of ‘falling in-love’ (*okusuvera*) with particular places and desires to establish long-term claims to land and settlement. A key strategy identified in doing so was negotiating temporary access-rights during times of drought (*omuningire wourumbu*), and with the return of the rains, subsequently refusing to leave and settling forcefully (*okupanda kotjomasa*). Such mobility and settlement practices were furthermore normatively and discursively entangled with *opolotika*, which was understood as different actors navigating “opaque power configurations”⁷⁴⁸ in accessing land and pastures, but also in claiming territories.

Within this context, and as shown in Chapter Three, authority and belonging were intimately tied-up with divergent and overlapping social histories of migration, dual descent reckoning and first-comer claims by specific and related kin-based groups and their embedding within larger political figurations and chiefly lines. Such claims and histories were however open to contestation, especially within the context of (colonial) histories of mistrust, conflict, and political division and fragmentation. Hence, during the last decades, local actors – mainly senior men – were contesting histories of integration between various first and latecomer homesteads as a way to question who should be and were the legitimate ‘owners’ of the land, as well as the distribution of ritual and political authority within and between shared land-use communities and overlapping territories. Within such a context, competing claims to ritual authority could be strengthened and enacted through settling newcomers and expanding one’s follower base, with this simultaneously strengthening one’s political power and hence

⁷⁴⁸ Vigh, “Motion,” 431.

the likelihood of being and becoming an *osoromana* and recognised by the TAs (often through claiming oppositional affiliation) and the state. However, mobile actors are always situated, and move with their political and social embeddedness. Hence, the ongoing in-migration and expansion of the newcomer homesteads across southern Kaoko were potentially shifting future understandings and definitions firstcomer/latecomer relations, especially concerning how these homesteads were or were not being integrated, by which kin-groups and patrilines, and with of these households fostering translocal place-relations between northern and southern Kaoko. In other words, as first of all politically and socially constructed narratives, first-comer claims, ancestral land-relations and the authority relations woven through such claims and relations, including their territorial and social reach, were also struggled over through particular mobility practices and livestock movements – with persons and households tactically navigating these avenues to realise their own desires/needs for mobility, and for pastures.⁷⁴⁹

Due to the heterogeneity of pastoral mobilities and the fuzzy boundaries between residents and newcomers within this context, and as shown in Chapter Five, cases were and had to be considered and judged individually through grass-roots level and situated forms of adjudication. As Sullivan⁷⁵⁰ has also pointed out, the highly variable rainfall and Kaoko's shifting ecologies require "mobility and flexibility in order to take advantage of productivity that is spatially and temporally dispersed." As a consequence, a "nomadic micropolitics of the use of this space endures in this landscape, regardless of tenurial and macropolitical regimes."⁷⁵¹ However, these "nomadic micropolitics" were also generating mobilities which were politically contested and particular valorisations – as was evident in the enfolding of particular pastoral mobilities within the discourse of *opolotika*. Furthermore, and as shown, competing pastoral land-use values and land-relations were being fashioned into "political arenas related to different notions of belonging".⁷⁵²

Thus, "the boundaries of the political community of belonging"⁷⁵³ were expressed through different and opposing land-use values, environmental relatedness, and tenurial models, with such differences couched within an ethnic idiom and situated as culturally-constituted. Here especially 'Himba' mobility was negatively valorised as deviant, too nomadic, environmentally, and socially destructive, and characterised by trickery and coercion. Broadly speaking, these politics of belonging have to be situated in relation to the question of regional livestock wealth and inequalities – with many 'Himba' stock owners perceived to be wealthy and thus associated with more translocal and mobile land-use practices – as well as the then extended drought period. However, and as noted above, it should also be situated in relation to growing fears concerning land-grabbing and loss of territorial control, and especially against the background of histories of political division between a small and minority group,

⁷⁴⁹ Lentz, "Land"; Lentz, *Land*.

⁷⁵⁰ Sullivan, "Maps," 7.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.

⁷⁵² Yuval-Davis, "Belonging," 204.

⁷⁵³ Nira Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics," *European journal of women's studies* 13, no. 3 (2006).

and a larger group (see Chapter Two and Three). These fears then were once again fuelling the re-making of intragroup boundaries and relations within post-colonial Kaoko, and with a weaving of a shared Herero and pan-Herero identity as a means to cut across other political divisions and fragmentation. Lastly, and as further explored in subsequent chapters, these politics of belonging were part of several situated discourses, commentaries and practices aimed at both socially and politically (de)legitimising the settlement and land claims of particular newcomers, including in the eyes of outsiders and the state.

Chapter 7 Seeking resolution under the Leadwood Tree

Introduction

The 21 days passed and none of the newcomers who had been asked to leave left. At first, it seemed that no action would be taken – there were no more meetings, nor could we discern explicit discussions. One week after the due date, I had to travel to Windhoek. On returning a week later, we visited the neighbouring homestead. After the greetings, we were informed that another meeting had been held during the past weekend and that people had gathered the day before to discuss the situation. Before the meeting, some younger men were sent to the newcomers to ask them whether they remembered the date given to them to leave. It was said that they responded that they remembered but would not leave. The Sesfontein police were consequently summoned as witnesses, but also to ensure that there would be no violence and conflict.

During this meeting, Tjimaka was said to have acted as if he was the *osoromana* of the *ovayenda* group (newcomers, ‘those who are migrating’). He instructed others not to speak and indicated that he would be representing them and negotiating the situation. Some at this point had asked him if he had not listened to the radio: They had announced that if you had migrated somewhere due to drought, and it was raining where you came from but not raining where you had asked, then you must return to where you came from without causing any trouble. Countering, Tjimaka and others demanded that *osoromana* Herunga be present (he was not at this meeting and had, in fact, not been seen in the place for a while). Based on this request some men travelled to Opuwo to look for him. Whilst having this conversation two younger Himba men passed by and stopped to greet us. I had not seen them in the place before and they seemed to be new arrivals. The one man stood staring down at his feet respectfully. They inquired about our neighbour’s *eanda* and then also shared theirs. However, soon the conversation ran silent and there was tension in the air, although no direct confrontations or remarks were made. We returned to our house and waited to hear what would happen next. Early the following morning we were informed that another meeting would be held: More than a month after the one in early February.



This chapter follows a two-week-long public deliberation and dispute (*otjiposa*) which took place in Otjomatamba after the *ovayenda* had been asked to leave – and, on two separate occasions, had refused to do so. These deliberations were mostly enacted beneath the same *Omumborombonga* tree as the previous meeting and were characterised by distinctive social, spatial, and political practices, and performative and communicative registers. I address the dispute as a “social drama”⁷⁵⁴ – an event initiated when every day and “regular, norms-governed social life is interrupted by the breach of a rule

⁷⁵⁴ Victor Turner, “Dramatic Ritual/ritual Drama: Performative and Reflexive Anthropology,” *The Kenyon Review* 1, no. 3 (1979): 83.

controlling one of its salient relationships.” In this case, it involved the breaching of specific notions of reciprocity and solidarity which underlie verbal agreements and allowances made during times of drought, extended dry spells, and the governing of temporary access-rights. This “breach of a rule” eventually led to a state of crisis and, in this context, demanded that specific redressive actions be taken.⁷⁵⁵ The final stage in a social drama usually involves the reintegration of the “disturbed social group” or a “social recognition and legitimation of irreparable schism.”⁷⁵⁶ Although partially drawing on the idea of a social drama, in delineating this dispute I am also attentive to its (ongoing) emergent qualities and thus use these stages loosely as reference points to analyse its processual and dynamic qualities. In approaching these deliberative processes as a “social drama” I am interested in analysing how inherited norms and values were thrown into relief, discussed, reiterated and re-imagined.

Moreover, this chapter aims to foreground the different material and corporeal embodiments, repetitive performances, and knowledge practices that characterised the dispute and were mobilised both to sanction specific behaviours and practices, but also to evade, delay, contest and subvert this sanctioning. In doing so, I demonstrate how, within this context, settlement and grazing dispute resolution were being negotiated between ‘customary’ and ‘state’ law and authority, and between the mobilisation of bureaucratic technologies, performative ways of knowing and inherited social values. And lastly, by detailing these deliberations, this chapter continues to engage with particular politics of belonging and place generated through this dispute.

Non-presence, delay, and agency

On a late Tuesday morning in mid-March, we made our way to the meeting space. Most people were gathered at the store across the road, where several pick-up and 4x4 trucks were parked, mostly belonging to men from the neighbouring places. Eventually, people started moving across the road towards the shade of the tree. At first, the men formed a rough circle including the few women present, but soon they moved to the other side of the tree and engaged in a seemingly animated and heated discussion – mostly led by senior men. At one point people were instructed that no one should sit behind another person and the circle expanded to include the women. We took a seat next to Ngavahue. On her lap, she held an illustrated book, titled: *Land – our pride, our heritage – conserve it*. It was written in Otjiherero and, Ngavahue explained, had been given to them at a workshop organised in 2013 through the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement (MLR), which she had attended with Muteze. At the workshop they had received certificates, certifying them to manage settlement and land administration. In the book, people dressed in typical markers of ‘Herero’, ‘Himba’ and ‘Oshiwambo’ identities, acted out scenarios in a comic strip – mostly to do with land inheritance. The book detailed how land should be managed customarily yet in line with constitutional rights.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., 5

Most of the heads of homesteads in Otjomatamba were present at the meeting as well as senior men from Otjapitjapi, Okarumbu, Otjomaoru and Okakuyu. Some who were employed in Opuwo had travelled to Otjomatamba to partake in the deliberations, such as Muteze's brother Katopianda, and his wife, and Aser Kapi, whose livestock had been discussed at the first meeting in February and who farmed south of the VCF. Similarly, to the previous meeting, most people were dressed in more formal attire than what was usually donned in the everyday. The majority of the senior men wore a hat (*ekori*) – in different 'fedora' or 'trilby' styles, with black leather sandals and long trousers. Ben Tjituezu, *osoromana* Muteze's orata, wore a black, felt hat with a feather and a waistcoat. Muteze was also formal in a West African-styled patterned shirt, while Ngavahue was dressed in a bright lime-green and high-shouldered *ohorokweva* with silver linings and a large bow-tie at the back – her presence strongly felt and embodied through the elaborate dress. Ngavahue, however, was not the only woman dressed in strong colours and formal *ozohorokweva*: There was also royal purple and bright orange on display, and each dress and the different ways it was embodied communicated a range of aesthetics and styles.⁷⁵⁷

As people readied for the meeting there was a strong charge in the air. Tuapuka Kazendjou especially seemed ready for action; at the side of his chair was a wooden club. At the previous meeting – which we had missed – some of the *ovayenda* had reportedly shown up with their machetes, an action which provoked Tuapuka to arrive with his wooden club. This meeting followed a similar procedure to the first one we had attended. First, an *otjermana* was selected. Kamutjija, who headed one of the first-comer homesteads, then stood to welcome everyone, followed by Tuapuka, who stood to recount the situation:

On the 3rd of February, we had a meeting. People were given 21 days to go back where they came from. All those days passed. People were reminded and they ignored the reminder and remained quiet. Last Monday we discussed having another meeting. We were told that we have no right to talk in the absence of *osoromana* Herunga. Joseph Kozohura and I were sent to go and look for Herunga in Opuwo. On Monday he said he will go and fetch his pension fund. He sent us to wait for him at a certain point in Opuwo so that we could meet at 3 pm. He had already given us his chair. At 3 pm both Tobias and Herunga arrived. Some of the people from the homesteads under consideration were sitting there. Herunga sent a boy to fetch his chair again. We asked if they were no longer coming, and Tobias informed us that they will be coming today (Tuesday).

Those who had been asked to leave had explicitly requested the presence of *osoromana* Herunga. Such acts of consciously delaying proceedings and of mobilising the non-presence of public authorities (and patrons) could be seen as a tacit tactic through which their sanctioning and out-migration were deflected – at least for a time. Complying with this request, two persons proceeded to travel to Opuwo. Although

⁷⁵⁷ As I came to know during these meetings, each of the *ozohorokweva* were also known by different expressive names, depending on the style or fabric, as well as changing fashions. For example, some of the dresses were called *okaretjartja* – after the word 'recharge' due to the fabric being as affordable and cheap (per metre) as buying the N\$5 or N\$10 recharge vouchers used for mobile phones. Another, which was in fashion during this time, made use of a monotone fabric printed with framed sketches of lions, buffaloes and was known as the 'big five' dress.

initially having given them his chair – a highly symbolic act given the close interrelation between the chair (*otjihavero*) and patriarchal and masculine power and mobility within this context – he eventually sends others to fetch it again, an act which defied their attempt to bring him to the place. Thus, despite having been called, neither Tobias nor Herunga were present at the meeting.

However, some discussed whether their presence at this point mattered before any decisions could be made. Katjetjua Mukuaruze stood to speak: *He (Herunga) said that he will be coming today. If he is not here tomorrow, we must act. Now we will be marching (omartja). We don't want Himba settling in our area.* Katjetjua called for popular protest, for marching and action. The energy at this meeting seemed one of determined commitment to act against the *ovayenda*, who were also interchangeably referred to as the “homesteads at the back”, “Himba”, and “Tjimaka’s group” or “Herunga’s group”. Thus, at this meeting, there was a clear shift from a wide-casting of the newcomer net, to an explicit and narrower focus on a specific set of homesteads. Some of those who were from the area yet whose land-use practices and livestock movements were questioned as potentially transgressive during the first meeting were present and part of the deliberations against the other newcomers. These cases had thus been sidelined to sanction the non-leaving of the homesteads. As one person expressed it: *We want to kill the fire at the back* – a highly symbolic expression referring to putting out the almost always lit hearth and cooking fire in any homestead where people were present.

Kapi, who farmed south of the VCF, then stood to speak. He wanted to tell the people at Otjomatamba that he had seen “Herunga’s group” entering the MLR office in Opuwo. The significance of this was discussed. Katopianda (Muteze’s brother) stood to talk, advising the community to go to Opuwo and to bring someone from the Ministry to witness the situation. This was followed by another long discussion. Finally, one man asserted that everyone present should go and confront those who had been asked to leave and tell them that tomorrow they must leave. Kapi rejected this idea and rather suggested consulting the Sesfontein police who had the power “to chase” (*okuramba*) the people and to travel to the police station to make a statement on the situation which would then be taken to the newcomers and discussed.

Another man from Otjomaoru stood to speak and asserted that they must go to the Sesfontein police and request them to come to Otjomatamba to record what was happening. Continuing, he suggested that afterwards the newcomers should be taken to the ministerial offices in Opuwo for a discussion. Once the people go to Opuwo then they could meet with Herunga and confront him: *You said you are our osoromana, do you want to kill us?* One man who was not at the previous meeting interjected: *When you were having the meeting and gave 21 days – did each ozosoromana sign? What if Herunga says he was not discussing that? From now on all agreements must be recorded and all the ozosoromana must sign.* This was followed by further discussion. Finally, Muteze stood up:

The main point is that we are not going to take the meeting down, just higher, and further. We must not stop, just proceed. We want to go and talk to the government but there is a pyramid. Even to kill an elephant, there is a pyramid. The ones who had been asked to leave are still making fire. That is why we must go to any office. Namibia has independence. We will be

supporting this. Anyone will go and report this because, with these people and their livestock, we will not drink water nor eat or have grazing.

Another man stood to talk: *The meeting must stop now. Only the osoromana and his ozorata must go to Sesfontein to fetch the police for them to record what is happening. Then tomorrow a few groups should go to Opuwo.* Finally, an agreement was reached: They would drive to Sesfontein to fetch the police. This was followed by deliberations regarding whose vehicle should be used and how the fuel costs should be covered to travel the roughly 40 km to Sesfontein. The women present were asked to volunteer to accompany them as it was perceived that their presence would strengthen the case in the eyes of the state – reflecting a by now keen awareness of wider normative currents, specifically that of gender equality.

Evident here was a search for agency and power, but also procedure, in sanctioning what were perceived to be unlawful ways of settling and transgressive livestock movements. Thus, people wanted to demand from the police which “office” – meaning which governmental agency – had the power to force the newcomers to leave with their livestock. Muteze had argued that “there is a pyramid” – referring to the bureaucratisation of decision-making power through the Communal Land Reform Act and amongst different state departments, and between traditional authorities and regional government. At some point during the meeting, Muteze had called Ngavahue over to bring him the book. It was passed around to others as a reference point to the state law and was discussed. Moreover, despite the collective determination displayed, there was a conscious and clear avoidance of confrontation. This seemed to be, a definite strategy to deflect possible conflict and violence. Fears regarding conflict and violence were not unfounded – as made evident in circulating stories which carried an implicit warning. Tuapuka showing up with his wooden club also communicated a particular sentiment – that this could be a matter of conflict unless negotiated carefully. Nevertheless, this avoidance of direct confrontation and discussions with regards to the careful recording and writing down of the process, with the state as witnesses (via the police), pointed to an awareness of the production of legitimisation through observing state and constitutional law. This production of legitimisation also has to be situated as concerning the local contestations over the meaning and authority vested in the institution of *osoromana*.

During the early morning hours, some men had hunted a Springbok and whilst we waited for those who had left for Sesfontein cooked meat was distributed and shared, with people sitting, talking, and eating in gendered, age-related groups. Several hours later in the late afternoon, those who had left returned to report what had happened. The meeting was resumed, and people formed a circle. Muteze explained that the police were now informed that Herunga had not shown up and about the current proceedings. Aser then got up to provide more details:

The police will come and give a card to the people. They instructed us to write our own cards, stipulating that the newcomers must leave and when. We should not touch the people or confront them. Tomorrow the police will give the cards to them. We have told the police to talk on our behalf. We will not be in Opuwo. They told us if we have any problems, we must call

them (the police). We said, no with this problem we will not phone you, we will just drive there so that you can see how we are feeling. To see you face to face.

A person from Otjomaoru, who was employed in Opuwo, then stood up:

On Monday next week, a group from here will go to Opuwo to the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement and tell them: We are hungry because of the settlement of these people. And this area (beneath the Leadwood tree) if you are at home, every day you must come here to this meeting place and take turns to sleep here until the people leave the place. When we were in Sesfontein the police asked for a date and we told them this Friday (in three days). The community will write this on the card and take it to the Police, who in turn will take this to the homesteads at the back.

The power and emotive force of visceral and affective co-presence were continually emphasised in acting, building empathy and personalising the relation to the state and to state actors – a power which had to be mobilised through travelling to and from, between urban and rural settings and spaces, as well as in continually performing and spatialising the dispute – beneath the Leadwood tree and visible next to the main gravel road. The differential capacities to undertake such journeys co-determined participation politics and the agency to influence the deliberative process. Moreover, these movements between places were also part-and-parcel of the ongoing production of knowledge surrounding the dispute and the refashioning of *oveta* – social knowledge, which due to the gendering of the rural governance and traditional authorities, was also gendered and skewed towards the few senior, wealthy male actors who could afford and perform such mobilities – materially and symbolically. Aser, in being employed by the regional government, also volunteered to drive to Opuwo to inform the ministry about the situation and advised others that when the cards were given over that the *ovayenda* should sign. This again was strongly illustrative of the search for procedure and legitimisation.

One man stood to ask a question: *Maybe there are two or more homesteads in one or sometimes the livestock is here but not the people – what then?* There was a long discussion. According to existing norms, negotiations regarding settlement and livestock movements had to be done through the heads of homesteads – which in the majority of cases were still predominantly senior men.⁷⁵⁸ However, with their ongoing absence and with some livestock in Otjomatamba being taken care of by clients or nephews of patrons and stock-owners, existing social norms were challenged, and sanctions were difficult to enforce. Yet, as mentioned before, this non-presence also worked as an important tactic in delaying legal action.

Leaving the issue unresolved, the *otjermana* declared the end of the meeting. This was followed by discussions about food provision – as people planned to remain beneath the tree, food had to be prepared. The communal preparation and consumption of food, specifically meat, was of vital importance to the gathering together of people, to the setting of the mood and energy, and thus for the continuation of the deliberations. Yet the provision of meat especially was not only a matter of necessity but a way to foster spirited solidarity and to enact the space of the public meeting (*ombongarero*) and

⁷⁵⁸ Friedman, *Imagining*, 103.

dispute (*otjiposa*) as a masculine space, one defined and enacted through patriarchal authority and *ombazu*.

Two sources of public monies were invoked to pool resources for food: *There are two monies in the community: from the conservancy and the borehole. Where is the money and where are the treasurers*, one person asked? One of the conservancy committee members reminded everyone that the conservancy had already gifted money and that the borehole money should be discussed. Uaranda, the WPC chairperson, suggested that the WPC meet separately. Once they returned, they reported that they would give N\$1100 – including N\$100 for the person travelling to Opuwo to withdraw the money. Whereas the conservancy monies were understood to belong to the conservancy and thus to all the conservancy members, the money which had been generated through the renting-out of the borehole, technically, belonged to the specific water-point association, whose members did not extend to all those homesteads between Ozondundu's interconnected places. Nevertheless, as deliberations took place in Otjomatamba it was thus expected of the WPC to contribute. Some men, however, also suggested going hunting again and to make use of the conservancy's own-use quota.

Redress and bureaucratic and state power

The next morning, we arrived at the designated tree once more. Most of the key senior men were already present, sitting on chairs in a circle. Some police officers from Sesfontein were also there, some in police and some in military uniforms, standing at the outer edges of the circle or across the road at the store. Towards one side there were five men dressed in different Himba styles. Amongst them I recognised Unaro, and from Uazeika's homestead, Rahenga, Ngeyama and Kondoro. All of them were seated on their haunches and engaged in conversation. As we took a seat some distance away from the already gathered men, some discussed the newcomers' presence, commenting that they were not called to the meeting.

Most women present were those who were there the day before, with many arriving after us and wearing the same dresses as the day before – a sign of continuation but also of the fact that many had not returned to their homesteads in the neighbouring places but had slept in Otjomatamba. Some women sat on plastic crate boxes or small chairs; however, many took a seat on their *ekutu*. I counted 32 men present, including younger men and boys, with about 13 women present, a third of the men. There was some discussion about how to write the paper or cards which would be given to the newcomers. The problem was that the names of the heads of homesteads were not public knowledge, or at least were communicated as if they were not public knowledge. Katjiko, a younger, unmarried man and one of the conservancy committee members, was busy writing the cards. Tuapuka stood to talk:

When we finished the meeting (yesterday), perhaps you went to sleep without talking about what is in your heart. Yesterday we took the paper that was signed by Muteze and Herunga and

which stipulated that the Himba did not have permission, to the Sesfontein police. We explained that we had gone to Opuwo to look for Herunga. Tjimaka said that they will not leave without Herunga. But now we don't need to sit with Herunga. We are not considering Herunga. We will just proceed, write the cards, and give them to the police to be handed over to the newcomers.

Kakume Kozohura then stood to speak. Like Tobias, he was an *orata* to *osoromana* Herunga. He announced that Tobias was in Otjomatamba and that he had met with him the day before. It was then suggested that somebody should be sent to call them to the meeting. As we waited for Tobias and Herunga to arrive, an *otjermana* was selected. Another police vehicle arrived – this time from Opuwo. They parked across the road at the shop. The *otjermana* proceeded to welcome both the Opuwo and Sesfontein police – with more or less ten policemen present, four in police uniforms, four in military, and two in casual wear. This created a strong visual display of state power and authority, and further circumscribed the gendered and gendering of the meeting space as masculine and patriarchal. Despite such a large number of policemen, their comportment and manner of engagement with the other men were familiar and relaxed: Many knew each other personally and had grown up together. Most of them remained outside the circle and towards the outside of the proceedings. Their role seemed to be more observational and symbolic – to act as witnesses, to signal the need for conflict-free deliberations, as well as to legitimise the actions of residents.

Tobias and Herunga, who had in the meantime arrived, were welcomed. The *otjermana* then proceeded to ask the police to collect all the sticks, machetes, and guns (used for hunting). The police, however, refused and insisted that the people should organise this themselves, a gesture which once again signified the limits of their authority. Muteze's *omusia*, an enterprising person in his early 20s, started to collect all the walking canes, sticks and guns and placed them underneath a distant tree. Later, this practice was explained to me as *ombazu* – part of inherited ways in which disputes (*otjiposa*) were negotiated. The people “who were not from here” were then asked to leave the meeting. *You were not called*, the *otjermana* asserted. The five men from the *ovayenda* homesteads stood and moved beneath another distant tree. Tuapuka stood to talk, giving a synopsis of the situation. This was followed by a discussion regarding the events of the past days. One person interjected that people were starving staying here and not solving the problem. People suggested that Tjimaka should be called to clarify the situation. Another person stood and interjected: *There is no need to call Tjimaka. Last year on the 24th of April they were given six months. There is no need to call a person not belonging here. Just call the whole group and tell them that this Friday they must leave.* This was a strong and explicit expression of non-belonging and exclusion.

Muteze spoke for the first time and requested that Herunga be consulted. One police officer supported this request. However, there was some debate: Some wanted Herunga to say whether it was true or not that the *ovayenda* could not speak in his absence, and others wanted the meeting to proceed. Whilst this discussion continued more people arrived from the *ovayenda* homesteads. There were two cars parked at the store and some men started walking towards the meeting, carrying their foldable

chairs. I recognised one of them as Bernard, Tjimaka's brother. After some discussion, it was asserted that people wanted to hear from the newcomers why they had not left. The newcomers were then called back to the meeting space where some sat on their haunches, others on chairs, on one side of the circle.

One man stood to talk. He explained that he was not part of the meeting last year and that he had only arrived in the last months. He was, however, part of the meeting on the 14th of February. The only reason that he was still in the place was that he was having troubles, he explained. He was waiting for someone to come and help him to move the livestock and now that that person has arrived, he would leave. He sat down again. After him, Bernard, Tjimaka's brother stood to talk. First, he welcomed people and then proceeded to explain that he came here because of *osoromana* Herunga. *Herunga is my uncle and Muteze is my brother*, he asserted, mobilising classificatory kin-relatedness as a way to invoke belonging. *Are you also chasing the shop owners? Or only the Himba? Why only the Himba? What is wrong with the Himba?* he asked, before sitting back down again.

The *otjermana* interrupted to say that he was not addressing the issue at hand. Another man stood to talk: *On the 14th of February we talked. When you came here before the whole area was green and you could not see the red mountain. Now you will see, that the area is burned because of your livestock. We are asking you to leave because you burned the area. We are talking about livestock, instead of the shop – these are different things. That is why people took that decision, our place is burned.* The *otjermana* interjected again: *We are closing the meeting. You said that you came here because of osoromana Herunga. People are just skipping over that. You must not dig the story that is already done.*

Tuapuka stood to talk and responded to Bernard: *Maybe if we have drought again next year. Maybe you will just go and come back again. We have not stopped you from asking again. But we are asking you to leave now. And it is not your Herunga, it is our Herunga.* Bernard questioned whether these actions were only directed towards Himba. This, however, was quickly deflected, arguing that the “place was burned”, meaning it was over-gazed, and this was the reason for acting. The *ovayenda* were encouraged to return if needed and, in case of drought, and to ask again – given that they observed the social norms. Thus, there was a concerted effort to ensure that social institutions of reciprocity were upheld and that amicable relations were fostered and maintained. Rakotoka, a younger man, spoke: *We are going to write the names now. Friday at 4 pm is the closing date. The paper will be given to both the Opuwo and Sesfontein police as witnesses.* Katopianda, Muteze's brother stood to speak: *We will be here until Friday. We will not be working because of this. What we want from you is just to leave the place. I can hike in your car, and you in mine. We can still talk to each other. We just want you to leave the place.* Here again, emphasis was placed on maintaining relationships of reciprocity.

The *otjermana* asserted that it was time to close the meeting and for the head of the homesteads of the *ovayenda* to be named so that it could be written down and the two *ozosoromana* could sign. It was also time to start cooking, he asserted. Some of the men present refused to give any names. Appeals were made to the police, but they only tried to encourage people amicably. Those who did give their

names or who were already known were then handed a piece of paper. Every time somebody was given a paper he had to say “Yes, we are leaving”. The Opuwo police officers present were instructed to witness this – with the Opuwo police carrying more legitimacy due to it being the regional capital.

One by one, a paper was given to the newcomers. One man stood to say that he was staying at another person’s homestead, and he would not speak on behalf of that person. Unaro refused to accept the paper. He would not leave the place, he asserted, explaining that he was given settlement rights both by Kamutjiha and Herunga and that he had arrived through Hiniimwe. One police officer confronted him: *Did you tell Hiniimwe that you were being chased?* He replied that Hiniimwe said they should not leave but talk to the people who permitted them. Kondoro, from Uazeika’s homestead, then spoke: *I came because of drought. I was given permission by osoromana Herunga. I want to hear from him that I must leave.* Another younger man said that he came because of drought but now he will just leave. Bernard stood again and spoke: *I did not come because of drought. I came here to settle. Osoromana Herunga gave permission to me.* Kahini, another person stood and asserted that he had nothing to say. He was settled in Otjondunda but his cattle were moving unaccompanied into Otjomatimba – he would escort them out of the area now. Yet another man stood and said that he was talking on behalf of Kanduka (the livestock owner from Sesfontein). He was here because of drought and came without permission, he said. But he was just taking care of the livestock. He had now talked to the owner, and he would come to move the livestock.

Another young man stood and introduced himself as representing the Kapika homestead. In 2015, during my research, Mutaambanda Kapika had been recognised as the chief (*ombara*) of the Ombuku Royal House (also known as the Kapika Royal House) by several members of the local communities based in the Epupa constituency and in and around the northern town of Okangwati. However, this appointment was also part-and-parcel of an ongoing chieftaincy dispute with his half and older brother, who had served as chief of the Ombuku Royal House since the 1980s, also laying claim to the position. At this meeting, it emerged that Mutaambanda had livestock in Otjomatimba and Otjondunda. The person representing his household explained that their livestock moved unaccompanied into the area from Otjondunda due to the lack of grazing further south. However, he agreed to herd the livestock back south.

Rahenga, Uazeika’s nephew, also stood to talk, explaining that he was waiting for Uazeika to arrive and then they would be moving their livestock. Eventually, 12 names were recorded, and cards were handed over.⁷⁵⁹ Tuapuka stood:

Some people said they were leaving. Three people said Herunga permitted them. And one is waiting for his boss. Give the papers to those who said that they will leave so that they can go

⁷⁵⁹ Including – Ngeyama Kena Kutjinda, Unaro, Kondoro, Munionganda, Bernard Ueitiminua, Kahini, Kapika, Uazeika, Tjiuju,

and prepare their things. There is no need for them to sit and listen. Those people who said they will go, they must go. Do not listen to the action that will be taken against the rest.

As some young men stood and left, the discussion between Bernard and others continued. Eventually, he asked if Herunga had not said that all newcomers should leave, not only the Himba? The Sesfontein head of police, who was also present, interjected: *The main point is about the drought and to say why you came here.*

I came here to settle, not because of drought, Bernard asserted again. This was followed by a discussion. Eventually, the *otjermana* interjected: *Did you hear (referring to Bernard) – the day we were having the meeting – Herunga said you must leave. Now we want each ozosoromana to say something.* Herunga stood to speak. He asked that no one should accuse anyone else because everyone gave permission to somebody without asking him and he was giving permission without asking them (the rest of the community). *Now we must forgive each other*, he asserted. He continued:

We have come to the agreement that everyone must leave that is new and then come back and ask again. Every person – Himba, Herero, Ovambo – must leave the place and Tjimaka also agreed. He does not know about Hiinmwe. He just heard that Hiinmwe send the paper to Muteze which read “Where I went, I was dying, so I will be back”. Muteze gave the paper to Tuapuka, Uaranda, Uandero (Ben) and Kamutjiha to go and see the place where Hiinmwe was. From there he came to tell Herunga, and he said it is fine. Muteze also agreed. People now said yes, your children can attend the kindergarten, but your livestock must leave.

Another man stood and confirmed that those children wanting to attend the pre-school were welcome to stay, but those who brought their livestock into the area because of drought must leave now. One man belonging to the *ovayenda* group stood to ask: *Is it your government rules or law that a child must attend school without anything to eat?* Another stood to respond that it had been decided that those who did not have permission to settle must leave. Bernard stood and eventually took the paper. However, it was unclear whether he would be leaving. Herunga stood again. *Everyone, even Damara, Herero, and Ovambo must go back. Giving permission to people without asking me, or me asking you, is not allowed. We are now asking for forgiveness.* In making this statement Herunga thus tried to deflect any feelings that the dispute was informed by ethnicised sentiments, and rather foregrounded the social norms which were transgressed, i.e., that people, including himself, had granted access without consulting with others. Johannes Kazendjou stood up to explain that when he was in Sesfontein Hiniimwe had sent him to come and ask the people. Later he came and met with Tuapuka. People were not happy, but they said yes. Hiniimwe and his brother came to talk to people here. They mentioned that five or six people were asking for drought. The sixth person did not come and replaced him with Hiinmwe. Unaro also came because of Hiniimwe. Some of the people were becoming impatient and there was a consensus that the meeting needed to conclude and should not be delayed.

Unaro stood up and said that he would not take the paper, but that the paper needed to be given to Hiniimwe as only he knows how he came into the place. Ben’s nephew, who was in his late 20s, then stood up to speak: *It is the whole community and the two ozosoromana who are saying you must leave. This area does not belong to Hiniimwe.* Tobias, who had been regularly contributing to the discussion,

affirmed that they had already been given 21 days to leave. This meeting was only to ask why they were still here. Herunga spoke again explaining that when the people were giving permission, they did not know that there were rules (*oveta*). *You must not give anyone permission without the permission from everyone*, he asserted, *people must go back to where they came from*.

Unaro did not take the paper. Instead, he stood and gave it to the police. He also refused to have his name be written down and argued that it should be Hiniimwe's name. After some deliberation, an agreement was reached. Unaro finally took the paper and agreed to leave, taking Hiniimwe's livestock. It was announced again for everyone to hear: *Friday at 4 pm is the final deadline to leave the place*. During these proceedings, Uazeika had arrived in a faded green, pick-up truck. He parked nearby and walked over to the circle of gathered people. His wife disembarked but remained seated close to the pick-up. It was the first time I had seen him in the place. A person from Otjomaoru explained the situation to him and handed him the paper. He did not resist but took the paper and agreed. After this, there was only one paper left – the one for Tjimaka. This paper was finally given to Tjimaka's son who was present. Two additional papers were written and given to Muteze and Herunga, as proof of their agreement. One man stood to affirm: *This is the paper you are getting from Otjomatamba/Otjapitjapi people telling you to go back where you came from*.

Tuapuka then declared that if they could get food and drink, they could proceed. *We need to organise the rules of the area*, he asserted. Tobias countered this: *On this day, people from Okaruu, Otjomaouru, Okarumbu, everybody must come and write the rules of the area. Everyone must be part of this. Not a person, but people*. Herunga stood and proceeded to thank people for leaving and assured everyone that the people and place would organise their laws (*oveta*). *Some ozosoromana are not working together. But we are working together*, he said. Another man stood and requested that no one should disturb the people while they were migrating. Muteze stood and thanked people as well as the police. Continuing in a more sombre tone, he reflected that there were now two groups: the ones that said they were leaving and the ones who were not going. *We will be against this last group*, he said. Continuing he asserted:

If these two groups are in conflict, their power will be put down and we will call the police. Here we just want peace. If the *ozosoromana* are starting to rule people badly this is where war is starting. We will now stand up and thank people, not accuse people. If you are not thankful that you could live here because of drought – now the mountain is finished – if you are not thankful, do you have Satan in your heart? Everybody here is from the same mother and father. You must be thanking people for breastfeeding you. And you must now thank the people and leave.

On multiple occasions, idioms of kinship and familial interdependencies were invoked to make claims both in terms of belonging and in an attempt to (re)establish terms for future cooperation and reciprocal relations. In his remarks, Muteze invoked ancestral relatedness in requesting that the *ovayenda* leave with a thankful attitude after having been “breastfed” and thus taken care of by the people from the area.

Bernard spoke for the last time, in an audibly different tone than before. He explained that he had donkeys. *If people still saw him here, they must not get angry and think that he was ignoring the date, but he will be waiting for his donkeys to return from the veld*, he explained. The meeting seemed then to have ended. Here and there smaller groups were forming, and discussions were taking place. There were some discussions about whether a separate meeting was needed to discuss some of the other cases mentioned during the meeting a month before. The newcomers who had received papers were dispersing and walking back to the cars, across the road to the shop or in the direction of their homesteads. Some, however, remained seated or were talking to others. Herunga reminded the group that the other cases and other newcomers who had come without livestock still had to be discussed and that a separate meeting should be held. There was no clear response to this assertion.

Some men gathered and left to go and hunt again. They returned later with two Springbok to be cooked and prepared. It was discussed that meat would be also gifted to both the Sesfontein and Opuwo police as a gesture of thanks for their assistance. However, later I heard that the police would return the following day to hunt.



The atmosphere at this meeting was tense and heightened – both due to the presence of a large number of police officers, many of the *ovayenda* homesteads, as well as a large group of people from the area. This meeting was a final concerted effort by a set of places and homesteads to force those newcomers who had been given 21 days, to leave. All of the *ovayenda* were asked to leave the place and to “go back to where they came from” – an assertion strongly rooted in the assumption that all persons and livestock had either a place of origin or a home-place to which they belonged and could return. The majority, however, were planning to move their livestock and homestead back to Otjondunda, where most had established homesteads in the previous eight years. At the end of the meeting, the ambiguities regarding the rules and norms governing pastoral mobility and migration were also reflected in a general calling to organise a larger public meeting, including people from the neighbouring areas, to codify and record the rules (*oveta*) of the area. Such assertions seemed to be couched within a developing awareness of the need to transform and re-imagine tenure within a context of increasing north-south migration, post-independent reforms, proliferating *ozosoromana*, and extended droughts.

The wait, anticipatory celebrations, and defiance

The following Thursday morning we drove to the meeting area to see if anything was taking place or if people were gathering. On the way there we met Rikondjerua at the borehole. She was carrying two large bags on her head, and we offered her a place in the car. The bags were filled with *okakuyu* used in the making of local perfumes (*otjizumba*) and had a deliciously citrus-like smell. She was planning to find somebody who could sell them for her in Oshakati and Windhoek, but first wanted to send the bags to Otjapitjapi and thus was heading to the store to await a car which could take them along. Once

in the car, Rikondjerua complained that she had not received any meat the day before. She commented somewhat tongue-in-the-cheek that it was because she did not have a husband to save some for her. As we approached the meeting area, we could see that some men were gathered and seated beneath a different tree inside the pre-school encampment. We passed and drove to the store.

There we found Uakurupa seated by a small fire and joined her. Uakurupa, being from Otjomaoru, had slept in the house of the store manager, an Otjiwambo- speaking woman, the night before. As we talked the topic shifted to the day ahead. It was said that people would just be waiting – there would be no meeting. Earlier that morning the WPC chairperson and the treasurer travelled to Opuwo to withdraw money so that food could be bought. Tjiheue (the person who kept livestock in Otjomatamba, care for by Piriko Kaporisa) had also gifted a goat to the community to be slaughtered. Some men had walked to the network location to request it from him.

In our conversation, I couldn't help mentioning the shift of the location of the gathering of men. Uakurupa explained that it was rumoured that this was done in case somebody had 'placed' something underneath the designated *Omumborombonga* tree. When I struggled to understand, it was explained that the men moved due to fears about the practice of *okuroua* (witching); because of the actions being taken against the *ovayenda*. Three cars had been seen leaving the newcomer homesteads and people were speculating that perhaps goats were being sold to pay a traditional healer to 'fix' the situation. Such rumours foregrounded how social power was perceived to be potentially at work in the unseen, and unsaid, and that the sanctioning of transgressive ways of settling and livestock movements also carried different kinds of social risks.



Much later in the afternoon, I returned to the upper part of the place. A few men could still be seen seated at the pre-school, a few pots where the meat had been cooked close by. However, most cars were now parked around the store. On approaching the store, I could hear *Oviritje* music playing at full blast. Several people were seated outside, on chairs beneath the tree, socialising and joking. After brief greetings, I entered the store. All of the goods sold, along with the two big, flat-top refrigerators in which the drinks were kept, were behind the counter, separated from the rest of the store by metal bars, with only a few openings where cash and goods could be exchanged. To the one side, there was a coin-operated jukebox rigged against the wall, with many people, mostly younger men, gathered around it. Several of the women who had been consistently present at the meetings were dancing on the rest of the floor space, their large *ozohorokweva* making swish-swish sounds across the cement floor, the air dense with heat. There was loud, playful laughter as some women tried out different dance moves. It was an atmosphere of celebration.

One person said they were celebrating and dancing like this because the Himba homesteads were leaving because the meetings had been successful. The dancing and playing continued for a while with different song requests from those inside the store. At some point, though the music ended, and a somewhat sudden solemn mood set in. Nobody had any more money for drinks and a few last coins

were passed around to play final songs on the jukebox. One by one the people began to leave the store, moving outside into the dusk, where I joined them. From here we could see that some men had moved away from the store and gathered once more beneath the original tree. It was mostly the senior men and/or wealthy stock owners. They were just resting (*okusuva*) I was told. There would be no meeting. Not for the first time, the highly gendered nature of public space made itself felt. As the sun set, I returned home to await the outcome of the following day – the day on which the newcomers had to leave.



The next morning, I saw the conservancy's white pick-up truck pass by my house and head towards the *ovayenda* homesteads. Officially they had until four in the afternoon to start migrating and escorting their livestock and cattle-herds out of Ozondundu. Like the day before, we drove to the meeting space to see if anyone had gathered. When we arrived, some women had already started cooking beneath one of the trees. People gathered sitting in small circles, mostly in the shade. As usual, the space was gendered, although also divided along generational lines. We joined Mukurukaze, one of Uakoka's older daughters and Ngavahue – engaging in various conversations, the atmosphere around us convivial and relaxed. Around midday, the police arrived from Opuwo. The Springbok meat which had been cooking was distributed. Bowls and plates which had been brought from home were filled with gently cooked meat and scoops of porridge (*oruhere*). The wait continued.

After eating, people slowly moved once again towards the set tree in the early afternoon. The *otjermana* noted that the presence of the police would not force any person to leave. Several homesteads, including Unaro, Tjimaka and Uazeika's homesteads and livestock were still in the place. The food and the bullets to hunt more were finishing and people were growing tired. It was decided to send someone to the MLR offices in Opuwo. Katiopianda, Muteze's brother volunteered to travel to Opuwo with his car to inform the Ministry of the situation. Despite people having gathered, it soon became clear that this was not a formal meeting and soon everyone started to walk over to the store or left to go to their homesteads. Some remained seated beneath the different trees – more as a symbolic act of showing presence while the issue lingered on. Thus, regardless of the determination which characterised the two meetings on Tuesday and Wednesday and the celebratory mood on Thursday, by late Friday afternoon, it became clear that not all of the newcomers and their livestock had left.

Mobilising wider socio-political networks

On Saturday morning Uakurupa walked over from the neighbouring homestead where she had slept the night before. She had come to tell us that Tuapuka was going from homestead to homestead, telling everyone that they should not think that they will be resting: There would be another meeting. The police had informed him that some of the newcomers had sold goats in Opuwo to pay for a lawyer to represent their case in court. The police also told him that they should not confront the people or

homesteads that were left. The discussion was now on a “high level” – in other words, it must be dealt with in the government offices and court houses in Opuwo. Taking along most of my neighbours, we drove to the meeting space.

Upon arrival, I noticed that all of the senior men were already present, including the two *ozosoromana*. Many of the women who had been following the proceedings were also there. Yet there were not as many people as at the meetings on Tuesday and Wednesday. As usual, we joined the circle closer to where other women were seated. The meeting had already begun and Katjiko, from Otjapitjapi, was speaking:

This problem that we have – the people at Ombombo have the same problem. There are four homesteads there. It is now the idea to come together and discuss with the people from Ombombo side. Together we will march in Opuwo. Now we want to be a group. First people from Ombombo will gather here – to work as one group.

Ombombo was a place north-east of Otjomatempa within the Okangundumba conservancy. It was also a place that was closely related to this area – due to the sharing of historical grazing grounds, migration histories, as well as past and pre-independence chieftaincy boundaries.⁷⁶⁰ One person interjected to say that in Ombombo there were more wild animals, and the conservancy was using the money properly – were the people informed that this side people were dying of hunger? Did they prepare themselves before coming here? Muteze replied that he had requested them to bring along some meat. Everyone was then informed that on the coming Tuesday people from the places of Otjipoko, Ombombo, Otjite, Okaruu, Omao and Epungue would be coming to Otjomatempa and that there would be a meeting. The people would be coming with their tents – in other words, to stay until the problem was solved.

Here and there we could hear that there were some discussions about selling cattle to hire a lawyer. It was announced that on Monday 10 men from the community as well as the two *ozosoromana* would travel to Opuwo to meet the men from Ombombo. This was followed by a long to-and-fro discussion about how many cars were needed and where the fuel should come from. Tuapuka full-heartedly said that he would drive no matter if people contributed money or not. At some point days before he had jokingly referred to his car as the “government car”.

There were some rumours that the newcomers were telling the lawyer that they were not being given settlement because they were Himba. This generated emotional responses. Some in a more radical mood threatened to burn the *kraals* of some of the *ovayenda* homesteads. The atmosphere had a different energy – as if the build-up of the past week had finally reached a peak. There was a feeling of impatience and frustration, but also motion after the previous days of resting and waiting. Other discussions swerved towards the issue of food – discussions which were ever-present at these large, continuous gatherings. After the set arrangements were made, the meeting came to an end. Like many others before, the people remained seated and smaller circles formed, engaging in discussions or socialising. Slowly some of those who were planning to drive to Opuwo started leaving to prepare their things. We also

⁷⁶⁰ Also see Chapter 4.

returned to our house, to finish our washing which had been put on hold the previous week. The rest of the weekend passed without more public meetings.



It was said that some men were attending a political event at the Ombombo clinic when they heard that people there were having the same problem. A decision was made to form a group and mobilise wider socio-political networks. Many were later attending a funeral in Ovinjange where the situation was further discussed, and it was agreed to meet in Opuwo to continue discussions. This group, however, was taking form through the mobilisation of *specific* socio-political networks – through the mobilisation of factional belonging to the Vita Thom Royal House and the Ovaherero Traditional Authority – the dominant authorities within southern Kaoko. In an effort to sanction the actions of particular newcomers, these networks were drawn upon to strengthen their case.

During the weekend and up until Tuesday people gathered sporadically in the meeting space, whilst most continued with their everyday life. Some senior men had travelled to Opuwo on Monday where meetings took place. Eventually, the Tuesday came and went, and no meeting was held. Despite this, several men from neighbouring areas and places began to arrive on this day and evening.

The final meeting and finding resolution

Early on the Wednesday morning, I saw a large group of men, some of whom I knew, others not, walking fast from the direction of the *ovayenda* homesteads. Curious as to what was happening, we drove to the meeting space. A much larger group of men had already begun to gather – with 40 already present, many we were told from neighbouring places in southern Kaoko, mostly towards the north-east, east, and north of the Ozondundu area. On the other side of the tree, there were approximately 13 small tents of different kinds and colours scattered across the dry, open space, and several cars were parked close by. As usual, women were greatly outnumbered with about 10 present. Three Opuwo police officers were seated at their vehicle across the road, close to the store. Some noted that the Sesfontein police were also expected.

As usual, we sat next to Ngavahue, who over the last weeks, I had befriended and who was one of the few women consistently present. However, on this day she complained about being exhausted. The days before they had moved their belongings and livestock from Okarumbu to Otjize – together with all the other homesteads and livestock based at Okarumbu. As it had rained adequately at this point, the decision had to be made to move to allow the grazing at Okarumbu to recover. Yet, due to the meetings and gatherings of the past week and a half, the move had to be orchestrated quickly and, as a consequence, some of their chickens had suffocated whilst travelling. Moreover, none of them had slept much in the days before.

The meeting was set to begin. Tobias stood, welcoming everyone, explaining that the meeting would be about those who had come without permission. There was some discussion about contributing

money for buying the bullets and petrol needed to go hunting and about food preparations. Ben also stood to welcome people naming the different areas from which representatives were present. He mentioned that all of the people present were the same people, what separated them was only the grazing of the animals. He appealed to everyone not to be afraid to speak.

Katjiku, a younger, unmarried man, spoke: *There are two points – we need to organise the cooking areas, and secondly, we need to decide who would be going to Opuwo.* The elected *otjermana* stood up: *We must start with stating why we are going to Opuwo.* Katjiku then continued to describe, chronologically, how the situation had played out, finally explaining that three of the homesteads under consideration had left and nine were still in the place. Furthermore, he explained that no one must give permission for settlement without the whole community agreeing, asserting:

Osoromana Herunga had given permission to Tjimaka. People were then looking for Herunga and he denied having given permission to him. Tjimaka was making excuses after he had agreed to leave. First, his car was having problems and he told us that his son was ill and in Oshakati. Someone offered to borrow his car and trailer to him to move, but then Tjimaka was saying that he did not have petrol. Later he said that he would first take some of the goats and then return later. People were refusing his offer, however, and told him that on Wednesday (today) he must take all of his things. We want to see him migrating.

Evident here were the tactics deployed by Tjimaka in navigating and delaying his departure. One police officer, who had joined the meeting, suggested that first, the people must go to call the *ovayenda* homesteads. If they refused, then the police would attempt to call them. As Tuapuka and another person left to do so, a committee was formed to organise the cooking. Some of the visitors complained that they were expecting to find the tents of Ozondundu homesteads also in the meeting area, but there were none. Katjetjua, who had a homestead in Okarumbu, explained that he and others were in the process of moving to Otjize and some of them were having problems: One of his calves had been eaten by a leopard. The *otjermana* responded that another person's son broke his arm, but still, he had left and travelled here. Muteze continued to apologise, explaining that people were moving livestock. There was some more discussion and eventually, it became evident that this was done in a somewhat joking manner, as a way to negotiate hospitality and sociality mainly between specific men who belonged to the same, shared age-mate groups (*omakura*). Some were demanding those who did not have their tents there to “pay” (*okusuta*) – a specific practice related to the *omakura* institution.

Tuapuka then returned together with Rahenga, Unaro and another man, Tjozongombe, whom I did not know. They had taken some time to fetch them, and it was explained to me that you could not simply arrive at a homestead and demand that people come with you. Despite the animosities between the residents and the newcomers, certain set norms with regards to arrival and sociality were still observed: First you would take your time to greet, ask about the well-being of each other and those present, joke a bit, and then finally to ask them to come to the meeting. These forms of sociality once again foregrounded peoples' avoidance of direct confrontations and the ongoing value placed on fostering conviviality between people and maintaining relationships. After their arrival, all of the canes

and sticks, machetes and knives were also once again collected and placed underneath a distant tree. The *otjermana* welcomed everyone and then addressed the three men who had just arrived:

You were supposed to leave by last Friday. If you go with peace, that is how we work together. But you did not leave the place and that is why there are so many people here today. Everyone here now came to listen and to witness. Why are you not leaving the place yet? And today it is not like we are having a meeting. The meeting was last year and last month. It was said, thanks we have been living together, now tomorrow you must leave the place and go where you came from. In some years I will come to your place because of drought. Leave the place with peace and it will be good. That is why people came here and why they are still here.

The three men present indicated that they had heard. The *otjermana* asked them to say that they had heard and whether they were leaving or not. Unaro was the first to speak: He replied that he had heard and that he would be leaving. The *otjermana* spoke again and asserted that everywhere the feeling was the same because everywhere was the same. In other words, there was drought everywhere and thus there was no need to wait for their area to recover. Addressing them directly, he asked that they find their cattle this evening and the following night sleep elsewhere.

Rahenga and the other person responded that they were still gathering their cattle herds. Some men were becoming impatient and asking them if they were not informed about both previous due dates. Unaro spoke again: *We are leaving. If you wake up and it is dark, you can't see how to go. But we will be leaving the place. We heard. There is no way to say anything.* The *otjermana* asked if this was a real yes or only a yes because they were being asked to say yes. It was suggested once more that a paper must be written and signed by both *ozosoromana*. One person noted that the last time after the date was given some had disappeared and travelled to Opuwo, what if this was to happen again? The *otjermana* responded:

If they disappear the wives will be left at home with the small children. Tomorrow the livestock needs to be moved. Livestock does not walk in the night. But if people are working together, they could leave at 7 in the morning. They must come together with their cattle and tell them they are leaving. The people must feel free to go and look in the kraal of others, and make sure they do not leave their cattle here.

The police were requested to sleep in Otjomatimba as well as to search for Tjimaka in Opuwo. There was no one at his homestead, only dogs and the goats. Turning to the three men present, someone asked them the exact time they would be moving. Unaro responded that they did not know the time. One man then instructed them that they should take the livestock that was already sleeping in the *kraal* and leave the others that were still in the veld. They could return for them later. When they had come into the place, the first person brought some livestock, then the second person brought more and the third more. Now they can also leave like that, he asserted. The *otjermana* continued, adding: *When you came here, maybe you had five cattle, and tomorrow you are leaving with a big ox. It won't work like that. Tomorrow you will leave with the five you came with.* Unaro then asked what would happen if he was still gathering his livestock the following day. *You were given almost a month to gather all your cattle,*

another person responded somewhat impatiently. The *otjermana* added: *Tomorrow I will just come to greet you. We have the same eanda, but I do not want to find you here.*

The meeting started to come to an end, the atmosphere was tense, with some speculation that the *ovayenda* wouldn't leave. The discussion then veered to the other areas and the place-politics that animated them. Muteze suggested that a committee be created to travel to all the places and to write up the rules: Namely that no one person was allowed to give permission for settlement or drought-related access. Finally, it was agreed that everyone would meet the next morning to travel to the other places. There were some discussions that the men should go to those homesteads who were to leave the next day at five in the morning, when the cattle were being milked and before they could send them back into the veld. The meeting then broke off into discussions over contributions for petrol and food.

As the gathered people dispersed into groups, everyone found a place to sit to wait for the food. I was told that the day before seven Springbok had been killed. When we arrived earlier that morning, a space for cooking was already set up. Most of the women, including myself, gathered beneath one tree, whilst the large group of men broke off into various smaller groups beneath the different trees. Beneath the set meeting tree, some men started playing the *onyune* game, with many spectators. Others were seated next to their tents or cars. The tense atmosphere began to subside. The women I sat with mostly exchanged stories but later got into a heated discussion over raised school fees. Some complained that it was only them caring for the children without support from the fathers or father's family and that it was not easy. In the distance you could hear the music playing from the shop where some had gathered to dance and socialise. Eventually one of the younger women started collecting the plates and soon we each received a generous piece of meat. Some quiet complaints about the distribution could be heard, as the crowd was large, and many wanted to take some meat back to their homesteads for the older people or children who were absent. Afterwards people once again slowly dispersed, leaving for their homesteads, to the store, and travelling back to Otjize and other surrounding places.

The departure and exodus

Early the next morning at our campsite, I could hear noises coming from the three homesteads clustered at the northern reaches of the place, two of which belonged to Unaro and Uazeika. Blaring goats and the sound of people talking loudly and hurriedly echoed against the hillsides. Curious, I decided to walk there. I found the homesteads busy packing and bundling their belongings into Muteze and Tuapuka's pick-up trucks – both of whom were assisting in transporting these, along with the people from the homesteads and the kid goats. Unaro and his family were heading to Otjikoti, a rainy-season cattle-post in the neighbouring jurisdiction area to the north close to Otjize. It was not clear whether he would be staying there. Uazeika's homestead and their livestock were heading back south to Otjondunda.

Towards one side, close to and around two pick-up trucks, observing the process, was a handful of men, their presence quietly intimidating. Many of these men were from the neighbouring places who

had remained after some had left the day before. It was evident that it was due to their presence, the mobilisation of wider networks, and the mood of the last days that the situation had culminated in this final exodus. Once all the pick-up trucks had departed towards the set destinations and the livestock herded in the same directions, I, along with the gathered men, left.

When we drove to the meeting area the people were cooking and preparing meat again under a tree. The police began to arrive once more to facilitate the process – but also to claim the meat which had been gifted to them. Some men, we were told, had left, and drove to Tjimaka's homestead to make sure that all the livestock had left. Some men gathered to one side to discuss the journey onwards to Okahua and Ombombo. Around noon we witnessed part of an exodus. A large number of Tjimaka's goats, perhaps 200 or more, passed along the wide gravel road which ran next to the meeting space. The goats were heading south and were accompanied by one of Tjimaka's wives. It was said that they were moving to Okanandjira, a place in southern Kaoko where Tjimaka had also established a cattle-post in recent years. She was walking with an umbrella and was dressed in an *ohorokweva*. For some time, we sat watching the goats. I noticed that those around me did not recognise Tjimaka's wife and that, despite her having been in the place for the last four to five years, there seemed to not have been much interaction between her and others within Otjomatempa. Soon after the next meeting was called.

Tobias welcomed everyone and while he was talking some of the visitors began to leave the place. Most of the tents were no longer pitched – their work was done. We were informed that representatives from the State Veterinary offices as well as the non-governmental organisation Conservation Agriculture Namibia were present. The visitors stood to speak, informing the people that in January and February there had been an outbreak of FMD in the Kavango district further east. As a result, the movement of animals was now being controlled and there would be restrictions on livestock movements within Kaoko, with regulation and control points being set up along the main roads. All the Meatco Abatoirs⁷⁶¹ would be closed in Oshakati until the problem was contained. Two auction dates were then announced, with one being planned in one month in Otjomatempa, to try and assist farmers during the drought and with the current restrictions on livestock movement.

There was some discussion about the difficulty of selling livestock and some complained that buyers at these local auctions were exploitative. However, this was a long-standing issue and those present did not seem to have the energy to take the debate further on this particular day. The *otjermana* thanked everyone and expressed thanks that there was no conflict concerning the dispute and the *ovayenda*. This was expressed in a saying: *Epango rizorerwo riuri uzeu omunue umwe kautooro ona* – which refers to the idea that one finger does not manage to pick up lice – in other words, people need each other to solve a problem. Concluding he stated:

⁷⁶¹ Meatco (Meat Corporation of Namibia) is one of the more prominent meat processing and marketing companies in Namibia.

To settle in somebody's area without permission is against the rules. If a single person gave permission this is also not allowed. This is what people will be looking at. Maybe you are an *orata* from Okangwati. We will not look at that. You will be leaving the place.

Some people continued to praise others for working together and for having talked without anger. *We do not want to separate people*, one man asserted. Muteze continued, thanking people, and reflecting that maybe it was the work of God that it was going smoothly. He also thanked the police for not ignoring their problem. And then he complained about the number of women present throughout the past weeks. Uakurupa responded somewhat tongue-in-cheek asking all the men present from the other places where they had left their wives.

The meeting was now ending, and the men were planning to travel to Okahua. We were seated close to Ngavahue, who leaned over to ask Muteze if she would be travelling (I had asked her earlier if any of the women would be partaking in the deliberations in other places and she had not been sure). He responded somewhat surprised, asking, *what for? This is men's business; your business is to speak to Kaundjirue (myself) about when you will be making the house again.*

Due to the weeks of successive meetings, my house-building process had come to a halt. Whereas the outer structure had been standing for a long time, the slow process of plastering had been delayed. This delay was not only due to the meetings, but also the difficult process of collecting the wet cattle-dung, transporting it, fetching enough water (it required at least one large drum) as well as digging and fetching several buckets loads of sand from the river-bed and transporting it back to the house. Moreover, once one layer of plastering had been done, there was a waiting period before another could be added. The work of plastering was still largely done by women – and it was this work which Muteze pointed out should be occupying Ngavahue and myself. This moment then once again strongly foregrounded the gendering of public life and the division of labour within this context. Moreover, it foregrounded the lack of a women's political association and platform for fully participating in these processes.

No ritual was made of the goodbyes or departure. Soon the cars filled, and all the tents were packed. Before much more could be said, several of the men departed in different vehicles. I was torn about whether to follow the procession. However, as it was an all-male entourage, I decided to remain in Otjomatamba and the following days, Ngavahue, myself and with the assistance of others plastered and constructed the house.

Conclusion

The site of the *ombongarero* (meeting) and *otjiposa* (dispute) was characterised by multiple knowledge practices, logics, and forms of communication – verbal, non-verbal and extra-linguistic modes of

meaning-meaning and participation. In particular, there was a strong performative way of knowing⁷⁶² whilst simultaneously bureaucratic and written technologies and logics were mobilised to try and solve the dispute and sanction what was perceived to be a breaching of existing institutions of mutual reciprocity and norms governing the negotiation of access-rights to pastures and land, especially the allocation of drought-related access-rights. Furthermore, deliberative, and performative practices were continually producing and re-producing social values and norms associated with the *ombongarero*, and with cultural institutions and customs (*ombazu*) of dispute resolution (*otjiposa*).

For example, during the meetings, people were continually reminded of “mutual obligations of respect and recognition”⁷⁶³ and to maintain long-lasting relations of reciprocity. The newcomers were encouraged to return in case of experiences of drought, provided that they followed set norms and procedures. Now and then more temperamental personalities were moderated through rhetorical strategies – such as metaphorical-speak⁷⁶⁴ or through simply not responding to more open displays of ‘heated’ emotion. Moreover, the practice of removing all possible weapons from the deliberation space also symbolised intentions to avoid possible conflict or displays of animosity. Within this context, body language and dress, comportment, and tone of voice all played an important part in communicating and enacting these values and creating a sense of formality and cooperation, with the meeting continually oscillating between convivial conversations and judicial inquiry.⁷⁶⁵ Additionally, comportments were relationally aligned and re-aligned towards seeking consensus and building rather than breaking relationships.

Thus, despite sanctioning the behaviour of the newcomers there was an attempt to restrict confrontations to the space of the meetings, to allow the newcomers to continually explain their positions and situations, and to keep relations respectful. Nevertheless, notions of respect were still embedded within hierarchical, gendered, and patriarchal understandings of authority – with seniority especially playing a crucial part in whose voices were audible and brought into conversation and dialogue, and which actors had agency in influencing the making and negotiation of norms. Yet the institution of *osoromana* and patriarchal authority was likewise tethered to a culture of consensus-seeking and thus, within the context of this dispute, was also called upon to account for their governing practices – for *their* breach of inherited norms. They were therefore being held accountable and needed to perform, re-enact, and re-establish their authority relationally, with the public meeting space a critical space for the dialectical making of authority and political power.

⁷⁶² Dwight Conquergood, “Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research,” *TDR/The Drama Review* 46, no. 2 (2002).

⁷⁶³ White, “Custom.”

⁷⁶⁴ Due to the very real limitations of translation and language barriers such rhetorical practices cannot adequately be portrayed or represented here – yet it is important to note that people often deployed rich metaphors and imagery in communicating and deliberating.

⁷⁶⁵ Friedman, *Imagining*, 127.

Moreover, unlike in ‘Western’ legal systems, practices of dispute resolution did not revolve around defending fixed positions but were rather directed towards the continual creation and negotiation of relations between particular socially, economically and politically situated persons and actors, groups, documents, papers, positions and statements, and to produce social knowledge, legitimacy and normative networks.⁷⁶⁶ Additionally, it involved the continual mediation between state and customary law – with the boundary between ‘state’ and ‘customary’ law in this context understood as porous and historically co-constitutive.⁷⁶⁷ Not setting up the dispute as opposing and fixed positions to be defended, created space for ambiguity and flexibility and thus allowed for actions such as asking for forgiveness, and for people to shift and change positions during and throughout the process and dispute.

Yet these two week-long proceedings had a notably different air and feel to them than the first meeting. Many had lost patience for deliberation and instead sought action – such as marching, symbolic protests, and appeals made to the state and state authority by travelling to and from between Opuwo, Sesfontein and Otjomatamba. Thus, people drew on a range of different practices to negotiate the exclusion and eventual out-migration of those who were perceived as having settled forcibly or unlawfully. For instance, the written cards given to the *ovayenda* and the detailed recordings of the proceedings formed a crucial part of asserting legality, and producing legitimacy – specifically concerning the state and the state ‘pyramid’ – and in an attempt to produce agency and sanctioning power. These technologies and paper artefacts were actively performed as powerful and binding agreements through the presence of the state police, who acted as ceremonial witnesses and additional sources of state authority (along with the state-recognised *osoromana*), and through specific ritual practices, such as publicly handing over the cards. Such practices portrayed strong awareness of the production of legitimacy as being contingent upon having followed ‘procedure’.

Thus, as became evident during this dispute, increasingly the “hegemony of textualism”⁷⁶⁸ in the production of legality, legitimacy and power was re-configuring flexible practices of negotiating temporary access-rights, pastoral mobility, and citizenship. During the period of colonial rule, livestock movements across the by-then ward boundaries were governed by issuing permits and permission papers. Yet the negotiation of access-rights was still predominantly done verbally and according to flexible agreements (as delineated in Chapter Six). Eventually, after several unsuccessful attempts to force the newcomers to leave wider socio-political networks were mobilised in the hope of strengthening the efficacy of their cause. These networks involved neighbouring chieftaincies and *ozosoromana* and *ozorata* who shared socio-political affiliation and concerns for policing grazing boundaries and territories. In a final attempt groups of men gathered at the newcomers’ homesteads to subtly coerce them to pack up and escort their livestock beyond the Ozondundu area.

⁷⁶⁶See, for instance, Manfred O. Hinz and Helgard K. Patemann, *The Shade of New Leaves: Governance in Traditional Authority; a Southern African Perspective* (LIT Verlag Münster, 2006) Also see Kyle McGee, *Latour and the Passage of Law* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 3.

⁷⁶⁷ See Friedman, *Imagining*.

⁷⁶⁸ Conquergood, “Performance,” 147.

Some of the *ovayenda* who had been asked to leave correspondingly deployed various tactics to resist, avoid, evade, delay, and negotiate their out-migration. These included stating that they were waiting for their cattle to return from the veld, that the livestock had yet to be gathered, and demands that the heads of homesteads or responsible patrons and/or *osoromana* be present. Furthermore, the newcomers who had been asked to leave included households and livestock herds which were in the place and belonged to chiefs or patrons but were looked after by workers, clients, or kin. Yet to re-establish and re-enforce particular norms governing the negotiation of access to pastures and land – i.e., that no one person, including the *ozosoromana*, was allowed to allocate temporary or permanent access-rights without consultation with others – the newcomers were instructed to leave the place with their livestock, and only to return if these norms are observed. Who exactly the ‘others’ entailed; according to which chieftaincy boundaries these consultations had to be negotiated; and, how exactly consultations had to be practiced, seemed to be an open question. During these two week-long deliberations several of the cases discussed during the first meeting, including some which entailed in-migration of newcomers, were not mentioned at all.

Consequently, the dispute generated a particular politics of belonging and place, circumscribed within (patriarchal) arenas of authority and power. In referring to the politics of place, I follow Moore in asserting that “rather than conceiving of localities as inert, fixed backdrops for identity struggles, we need to see them as products of those contestations.”⁷⁶⁹ As already touched on, the dispute was generating new understandings of place and territory rooted in the further formalisation and bureaucratisation of mobility, settlement and citizenship – with those present repeatedly calling for the codification and thus the writing down of place and tenure rules (*oveta*). Thus, it was through this particular dispute a felt need arose to codify place rules. Several persons noted that this had to be done with neighbouring areas.

Moreover, Otjomatamba’s emergent place-identity in relation to a set of interconnected places and the Ozundundu conservancy was performed *through* the dispute. This re-configuring of place-identity thus also shaped understandings of who constituted a newcomer and who a resident. With the different homesteads constituting the Ozundundu conservancy being divided, both along the lines of divergent migration histories as well as socio-political and factional belonging, this dispute also played an important part in the production of a sense of solidarity and collective identity, an identity which was materially, symbolically, and discursively performed as distinctly ‘Herero’ and as entangled with particular forms of pastoral land-use, values, and territoriality.

The space of the public meeting was also crucial for the ongoing and dialectical construction and performance of gendered identities and the negotiation of dominant femininities and masculinities. Yet, importantly, these dialectical constructions were also continually cross-cut with other shifting

⁷⁶⁹ Donald S. Moore, “Subaltern Struggles and the Politics of Place: Remapping Resistance in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands,” *Cultural anthropology* 13, no. 3 (1998): 347.

identifications – specifically kinship and seniority, and emergent political and cultural identities. Thus, even though this dispute was characterised by consensus-seeking practices, it was characterised by different levels of participation, and highly gendered participation politics. The gendering of the space was not only circumscribed by who talked or led the deliberations and through the spatial orderings of the seating, but also by how the space of the public meeting was differentially embodied, with different forms of motion and fixity, practices of concealment, visibility and display, presence and non-presence produced through specific bodily practices. People’s movements continually “architecture a social space”⁷⁷⁰ – yet this emergent space also again delimits the capacity for certain embodiments.

The space of the meeting was performed and relationally enacted as a masculine space, circumscribed through patriarchal power. The wooden club which Tuapuka had brought to the first meeting and quietly (yet ardently) displayed next to his chair; the new and old pick-up and 4x4 trucks which were usually parked in the vicinity of the meeting; the few guns used in the hunting expeditions which were eagerly and proudly cared for; and the mobile chairs used by the men were all circulating symbols of masculine identities. The hunting trips, especially, mobilised all of these symbols in a performance of masculinities. With its all-male entourage, the younger, unmarried men on the back of one of the pick-up trucks, owned and therefore driven by, almost exclusively, the senior or wealthier men, departing into the valleys, with one or two guns poised and ready and strong excitement in the air. Upon return, the animals shot were off-loaded in the public space where a few men skilled in skinning and cutting the meat, would take over. Afterwards, the meat was distributed and taken to a cooking space, where, after (sometimes heated) negotiations, one or another woman would take control of managing the communal cooking, assisted by others – usually younger and/or unmarried women.

However, following Hendrickson,⁷⁷¹ I argue for recognising the role of clothing and dress as a crucial “symbolic form reflecting and shaping the imagination of ethnic, political and gender identities” within this context. For example, the *ohorokewa* and its diverse embodiments did not only mark women’s transition to marriage and motherhood within Otjiherero societies – symbolising the “responsibilities of adulthood and women’s acquiescence to them” – but also, importantly, have, over the decades, come to represent and be represented as “Herero society, ‘traditionalism’, and history within a wider plural socio-political world”.⁷⁷² In other words, despite the gendered public space and women’s relative silence during the proceedings, it is important to consider the role of “cultural performances” and symbolic action as modes of participation in public life and in shaping place-identity and formation.⁷⁷³ Within the meeting, the differential embodiments of the *ozohorokweva* thus also communicated registers of presence and power, and Herero belonging and identity – with these collective performances working to circumscribe the space symbolically.

⁷⁷⁰ Hastrup, “Anthropological,” 168.

⁷⁷¹ Ibid., 26

⁷⁷² Ibid., 25

⁷⁷³ Conquergood, “Rethinking,” 265, 364.

Chapter 8 Between ‘customary’ and ‘state’ law and authority

Introduction

In the days and months after the meeting and the exodus of the *ovayenda*, the rhythms of everyday pastoral and farming life within Ozondundu continued. The homesteads that had migrated and moved their livestock to Otjize, the rainy-season cattle-post, remained there until the end of May, where some pursued cultivation; women spend their days in the mountain valleys harvesting berries (*ozombwe*) and other plant products; and, as the rainy season months came to a close, others slowly, but surely, assessed the state of the pastures and began moving livestock back to dry-season cattle-posts and livestock camps situated in outlying pastures. Yet despite the resumption of everyday life, the issue and dispute which culminated in the out-migration of the *ovayenda* from Ozondundu remained and generated an emerging politics of place and belonging and an ongoing legal dispute. Moreover, the extended drought period combined with the FMD-restrictions imposed on regional livestock movements were placing pressure on households in managing their losses and strategies for survival and making it difficult to refuse those ‘asking for drought’ (*omuningire wourumbu*).

By mid-May, about six weeks after the out-migration of the *ovayenda*, I learnt that chief Kapika’s homestead (from the Epupa constituency) had moved part of their herds from Otjondunda to Otjize, establishing a cattle-post. Unaro and his household had left Otjikoti (situated close to Omao) and moved back into the Ozondundu area, similarly, creating a cattle-post at Otjize. By the end of May with the migration of the households back to Okarumbu for the dry-season, the Kapika homestead joined them, moving livestock to Okarumbu. Then, at the beginning of June, barely two months after they had been forced to leave, Unaro, Uazeika and Tjimaka’s households had unceremoniously returned to Otjomatamba – reoccupying their still-empty houses and homesteads. Despite their return, no further deliberations were held to the extent of what took place before, and up until I finished my research in April 2016, some of these homesteads and their livestock remained in the place and area. However, eventually, a legal case was opened by the larger socio-political group which had formed during the final days of the meeting and the issue was thus shifted and to be dealt with directly through state law. This legal case aimed to address several disputed pastoral mobilities and settlement across southern Kaoko.

This chapter then engages with the bureaucratic and legal meanderings that followed the dispute; and how different actors navigated and narrated the situation alongside the continuation of everyday and pastoral life. In doing so, this chapter, first of all, looks at and analyses the larger political and legal context of the dispute, including how the legal case became rooted within historically contingent struggles over authority, land, and resources⁷⁷⁴ and eventually encompassed several

⁷⁷⁴ Taylor, “Naming.”

neighbouring chieftaincies in southern Kaoko. Moreover, this chapter examines how these long-standing struggles were finding new avenues for expression through the translation of post-colonial tenure policies and decentralisation reforms, and the state-legal power vested in Traditional Authorities in the governing and administration of land-access. In turn, I detail how this was impacting local authorities, specifically the authority vested in the institution of local headmen and creating an uncertain and fragmented political and legal landscape.

Yet as illustrated throughout this chapter, in navigating this uncertainty, different actors and groups deployed different tactics – including the political mobilisation of ethnicity and inherited political identities vis-à-vis the state and competing groups.⁷⁷⁵ This chapter then also details these practices and tactics in the hope of illustrating how ‘communal’ tenure was being co-produced, from the ground-up, and between localities and the state. And lastly, this final chapter is concerned with analysing some of the consequences of the dispute and the evolving situation, particularly for the common resource situation in southern Kaoko, intragroup and local authority relations, and long-standing institutions of situated and grass-roots level adjudication and reciprocity.

Bureaucratic and legal meanderings

The week after the newcomers’ departure from Ozondundu, we travelled to Opuwo. With us in the car was Ben’s nephew, Tjako, who informed us that the group that had initially formed in Otjomatemba, was meeting in Opuwo on this day. The aim was to discuss what had occurred in Okahua and Okatumba – two of the places the group had travelled to to address similar disputes. The group was planning to meet at the Ministry of Land Reform’s offices, and it was agreed that we would join the meeting. In the days before, several men who had accompanied the travelling group had recounted what had transpired. In Okahua there had been no meeting and the conflict almost turned violent. The group found women and children at one homestead and proceeded to ask them to escort the livestock out of the place. However, the head of the homestead found out what was happening and returned home, escorted the cattle back to the homestead, and refused to leave. Were it not for the Opuwo Police arriving just on time, there would have been violence.

The police advised everyone to take up the issue legally, in other words, through state law and the Magistrate’s Court in Opuwo. In Okatumba (close to Omao), the second place the group visited, the situation took a different turn. Some homesteads were accused of not having permission to settle – yet these homesteads had been in Okatumba since before 1990. The said persons were originally from southern Angola, having first migrated to Kaoko as labourers. Eventually, they married locally and started their own homesteads. However, because other newcomers were being asked to leave, these homesteads were signalled out and told to return “to where they came from” – an autochthonous refrain

⁷⁷⁵ Taylor, “Post.”

echoed throughout the dispute, and which now was becoming entangled with contestations regarding national citizenship. One person was said to have retorted that the man who had initially brought him from Angola when he was a child became like a father to him. If they wanted him to leave, it should be this father who should take him back personally. Thereafter the group agreed to take up the issue in Opuwo and it was here that we joined them.



As we entered the MLR conference room, situated in a new, modern, and air-conditioned building, the group of men were already seated, gathered around a long, rectangular wooden table. All their hats were on the table in front of them and everyone was quiet and waiting. Everyone was dressed for the occasion, mostly in suits. Present were predominantly senior men, with a few younger ones. At the head of the table was one of the ministry employees. We took a seat acutely aware of our presence as the only women.

Muteze was the first to speak. He explained that the homestead at Okahua was given permission for a short time and for drought reasons but then refused to leave with the return of rains. “We need help – with us it goes up to a certain point and then our rights are being cut,” he asserted, asking for assistance from the state. The state representative (SR) responded that they did not have the right to act in this situation. Rather, he explained, the primary power was situated with the TAs. He instructed the group to go to the regional councillor’s office (Kunene Regional Council) and then to come back again. From there the exchange went back and forth:

Muteze: We are here because people are fighting. Some came without permission. Some came and settled because of one person, and some because of drought. We want the government to hear this news and see how they can help us.

SR: It is not possible to organise a meeting now. The financial year is already closed, and money is needed for petrol and food. The meetings with the Land Board with regards to area boundaries were discussed and have passed.

M: In terms of land rights – who has the right to talk? To address the issue.

SR: When it comes to the communal area it depends on the Traditional Authorities.

M: The land that we are arguing over – it was not given. It was taken by force and now we want it back.

SR: Then you must go to the governor’s office, and she will have the right to decide what you can do from there.

M: This issue we are just giving it to you. You can just sit with this issue. And while you are sitting, we are dying. We had already gone to every office. They also don’t have the right to intervene. It was a waste of time. We visited the governor’s office, and the regional council. The only way now is to talk straight to the minister.

The state representative once again communicated that he was powerless to address the issue unless there was written proof of the agreements made and that temporary rather than permanent settlement rights were granted. At this point a permission letter concerning the Okahua case was passed around,

however, this letter, which stated that the Okahua homestead had been granted permanent settlement rights by three senior councillors, was also a matter of contention, given that it had been issued through only one of the TAs active in the jurisdiction area and without consultation with the rest of the residents. This seemed to further complicate the case. The state representative advised those present to seek legal advice. The meeting was over quickly and, once outside, the group agreed to go and see a lawyer at the regional Magistrate's Court.



According to the Communal Land Reform Act, the TAs – and specifically their respective state-recognised chiefs (*ozombara*) – had the primary legal power to govern the administration of land-rights, which then, if formally registered, are ratified and overseen by the regional Lands Board.⁷⁷⁶ Apart from ongoing and largely unsuccessful attempts to register communal land-rights with Kaoko, the state was increasingly encouraging local *ozosoromana* to fix the allocation of access-rights in writing and on paper – in other words, to bureaucratised and formalise the process.⁷⁷⁷ However, due to the social and environmental realities of mobile land-use practices, the increased movement of livestock and people during times of drought, and long-standing institutions of mutual reciprocity, in many cases, the negotiation of temporary access-rights to pastures and water, and the duration of the access granted was still predominantly verbally negotiated and according to flexible agreements.

Moreover, and importantly, with the two main TAs in southern Kaoko not having clear territorial jurisdiction and with places and communities divided in terms of socio-political affiliation, even where there were written agreements, these were disputed as they entailed access given by only one *osoromana* and TA in areas where two or more were recognised. Such claims were difficult to dispute legally, through the state and according to the CLRA legislation. The only way such disputes could thus be settled was through legal means – in other words through taking the case to the state courts.



Upon arrival at the regional Magistrate's Court, we were all ushered into a small consultation room. The state lawyer joined us, with most of those present already on familiar terms with him. Several to-and-fro discussions between the group and the lawyer followed. Essentially, the group asked the lawyer for the quickest way to force the newcomers to migrate out of their areas and remove their livestock. One of the men at one point interjected, asserting: "When people at Ombombo are discussing the grazing of their animals it touches the people at Ongango and Otjapitjapi. If we are talking about the settlement, what are we talking about? We are talking about the livestock because people don't eat grass." In other words, what was at stake was not necessarily the acceptance of newcomers *per se*, but access to limited land-based resources, specifically pastures and water.

⁷⁷⁶ Hinz, "Traditional."

⁷⁷⁷ Uerikambura Tjipepa, Chief Development Planner, Ministry of Lands and Resettlement, Opuwo, 16.03.2015 & 29.03.2016, unrecorded interview

During this meeting, it also emerged that the group of men mostly consisted of those representing the neighbouring chieftaincies of Ongango, Otjaptjapi and Ombombo, and as already mentioned in the previous chapter, *ozosoromana* and *ozorata* who belonged primarily to the Vita Thom Royal House and the OvaHerero TA. The lawyer advised them that it would be better to take the case to the High Court in Windhoek and to hire a private lawyer. According to his advice, the Magistrate's Court in Opuwo would not be able to assist them as the primary power lay with the TAs as well as the Lands Board. He explained that it would cost them about N\$50 000 to hire a lawyer in Windhoek. The issue was discussed and negotiated amongst those present. Eventually, it was decided to pool their money and hire a private lawyer. As the meeting closed, the group requested the lawyer to assist them in formalising and writing down the settlement rules and customary law for their area at a later stage.

Socio-legal and rural-urban entanglements

As illustrated, land disputes within this context were negotiated between multiple scales and localities, through different knowledge and deliberative practices, and between different yet intersecting and entangled legal systems and relations of authority. Thus, the above detailed bureaucratic and legal meanderings were marked by a search for agency and authority in controlling territories within a pluralist legal order and between the state and multiple TAs (who formed part of the post-colonial state), and local *ozosoromana* and *ozorata*.

Within Namibia, as well as other former colonies, dual legal systems were established through colonial rule, with these systems and the relations between different legal orders being “highly dependent on the State” and its’ brokering of the distribution of power and legitimacy.⁷⁷⁸ Whereas “urban power spoke the language of civil society and civil rights” and “rights-based privileges to citizens” – albeit with understandings of citizenship simultaneously embedded within a racial ideology and hierarchies – rural power, on the other hand, was discursively circumscribed through ideas of “community and culture”, and reproduced through “rural tribal authority”.⁷⁷⁹ Consequently “ethnicities were governed through customary laws” – with this language of ‘custom’ and ‘tradition’ not only circumscribing power but also enforcing it.⁷⁸⁰ This then eventually gave rise to the production and reproduction of the distinction between ‘citizens’ and ‘subjects’ within the colonial state, and between ‘racialised citizenship’ and ‘ethnicised subjects’.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁸ Friedman, *Imagining*, 111. Also see, for instance, Lynn Berat and Robert J. Gordon, “Customary Law in Namibia: What Should Be Done,” *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 24 (1991); Sally Falk Moore, *Social Facts and Fabrications: Customary Law on Kilimanjaro, 1880-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); John L. Comaroff, “Colonialism, Culture, and the Law: A Foreword,” *Law & Social Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2001); Anthony Costa, “The Myth of Customary Law,” *South African Journal on Human Rights* 14, no. 4 (1998).

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ Mamdani, “Beyond,” 654.

⁷⁸¹ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton studies in culture/power/history (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996).

This making of a dual legal order and the colonial and, later, the apartheid state was also “mutually dependent” and helped to “bolster policies of separate development, racial and ethnic segregation, and legalised racism”.⁷⁸² Within Namibia, this two-tier legal system was geographically enacted along with the division between the ‘Police Zone’ and the ‘Northern Native Territories’, with so-called customary or traditional law ascribed to the last mentioned. In this regard, particular colonial understandings and ideas of ‘custom’ and ‘customary’ were mobilised in circumscribing “rural power”.⁷⁸³ Moreover, the colonial making of the category of ‘customary law’ and this dual legal order, in many cases, meant that with “vernacular dispute-settlement institutions, their jurisdictions and mandates severely restricted, [these institutions] were everywhere formally, sometimes forcibly, incorporated into the colonial state at the lowest levels of its hierarchy of courts and tribunals”.⁷⁸⁴

In the decades after independence and the spirit of democratisation and restitution, constitutional recognition (Article 66) was given to ‘customary law’.⁷⁸⁵ However, this legislative reform eventually foregrounded a “constitutional conflict of rule” with regards to the relationship between state/statutory and customary law, and the question of which takes precedence in different cases relative to Namibia’s liberal Constitution.⁷⁸⁶ Within a pluralistic post-colonial legal order and in attempting to integrate laws from different origins, several issues, ambiguities and uncertainties have arisen, with two problems especially foregrounded both in the South African and Namibian context: “one is how to measure the status of customary law against constitutionally guaranteed rights to freedom from discrimination on gender, sex and related grounds. The other is the problem of authority”.⁷⁸⁷ In other words, the question of who had the authority to determine the sources of law and enforce justice; who had the authority to define the “domain of custom”; and who should be ruled through this ‘customary’ domain?⁷⁸⁸

It was thus also concerning the last problem that TAs or ‘customary’ authorities were given state recognition, and which defined the criteria for recognition – however, as I have illustrated throughout this thesis, this did not make this problem obsolete, but rather opened up the arena for further, ongoing contestation and new challenges. Such inherited governing modes and institutions are what Mamdani has referred to as the “bifurcated state”⁷⁸⁹ – a particular legacy of late colonialism and indirect rule rooted in the ongoing (re)production of a dual legal system and essentially realised through

⁷⁸² Friedman, *Imagining*, 111.

⁷⁸³ *Ibid.*, 655

⁷⁸⁴ Comaroff, “Colonialism,” 306.

⁷⁸⁵ Hinz, “Traditional,” 67.

⁷⁸⁶ These constitutional conflicts and contradictions are detailed in Friedman, *Imagining*, 115; Also see Thomas Widlok, “Good or Bad, My Heritage: Customary Legal Practices and the Liberal Constitution of Postcolonial States,” *Anthropology Southern Africa* 31, 1-2 (2008): 18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23323256.2008.11499959>.

⁷⁸⁷ White, “Custom,” 4.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁹ Mamdani, *Citizen*.

“two forms of power under a single hegemonic authority.”⁷⁹⁰ However, the making of such dual legal systems was also characterised by a “vast array of attempts to institutionalize the relation between both regimes of power”⁷⁹¹ and, in practice, entailed various, complex interdependencies and mutualities. Friedman⁷⁹² has argued that with regards to Kaoko, state and customary institutions and legal practices were historically enfolded into each other and, instead of being separate, autonomous entities, they emerged in a co-constitutive manner – a dynamic which continues post-independence and forming a “single legal complex” rather than a dual one.

From 1919 onwards the newly established South African colonial administration imposed Roman-Dutch law and “introduced magistrates’ courts to the territory” according to the parallel establishment of districts within the then SWA.⁷⁹³ Later, legislation was released granting Native Commissioners appointed to the ‘Northern Native Territories’ the power to act as magistrates and to, within a court setting, preside over and, in some cases, modify particular principles of ‘customary’ law and jural practices.⁷⁹⁴ In 1939 with the establishment of the Native Affairs office in the then Kaokoland, a “periodic court was established in Opuwo”, with the officer in charge assigned as “acting magistrate”.⁷⁹⁵ This was followed by the establishment of the Kaokoland Tribal Council some years later, which eventually also took on a judicial role, with disputed cases or cases where the authority of the sub-headmen or headmen were challenged passed onto the Council and Native Commissioner’s court for final deliberation.⁷⁹⁶ It was within this legal milieu that *oveta* were negotiated and institutionalised, and colonial livestock and homeland policy implemented. Eventually, in practice, this meant that Native Affairs officials and administrators had the “final authority over the interpretation and application of both customary and state law” mediated through the Kaokoland Tribal Council.⁷⁹⁷

Such enmeshment between different levels of authority and legal systems as well as the simultaneous curtailing and empowering of local chiefs and headmen in governing disputes and legal institutions,⁷⁹⁸ created what Friedman termed “legalistic ambiguity”⁷⁹⁹ – an ambiguity which could then be navigated by colonial officials as well as powerful leaders and the ruling elite who sought different outcomes and/or who could mobilise uncertainty and ambivalence in shifting notions of jurisprudence.⁸⁰⁰ Furthermore, this enmeshment and the power of the colonial officials in enacting final legal authority cultivated and institutionalised a particular paternalistic “state-related political

⁷⁹⁰ Bettina von Lieres, “Review Article New Perspectives on Citizenship in Africa,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25, no. 1 (1999): 141.

⁷⁹¹ Lieres, “Review,” 141.

⁷⁹² Friedman, *Imagining*, 112–122, 159.

⁷⁹³ *Ibid.* 112

⁷⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 113. For a more detailed historical engagement see Friedman, *Imagining*, 112–18.

⁷⁹⁶ Uerikambura Tjipepa, Chief Development Planner, Ministry of Lands and Resettlement, Opuwo, 16.03.2015, 29.03.2016, unrecorded interviews

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 114

⁷⁹⁸ Also see Berat and Gordon, “Customary,” 636.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁰ For more on “the state of ambiguity” as social and political strategy see Van Wolputte, “natives.”

imagination”.⁸⁰¹ According to Friedman, it was only after the 1980s when the Native Commissioner’s courts were abolished that “a clearer delimitation of praxis began to emerge between two spheres of judicial administration in Kaokoland”.⁸⁰² However, this trend was once again reversed post-independence and in the ongoing struggle to align the different national and vernacular legal practices and systems. In an interview with Muteze,⁸⁰³ he detailed how the administration of land and dispute resolution transformed post-independence:

After independence the law of the government started – they handed over this law to the Traditional Authority. This law had different parts. After local discussions in the place, the case should be taken to the Traditional Authority office in Opuwo (where the chief approves). Then, from there, the information and papers are transferred to the MLR. They will then decide, via the Lands Board, if they agree or disagree. Then the permanent settlement of the person becomes legal. Before Independence, rights were not there. Agreements were made verbally, and it was not written down. It was the same, but different. There were no Traditional Authorities, just the Governor’s office. Before independence disagreements were taken to the Governor’s office. This was where the final decision was made.

Moreover, one of how transgressors had been sanctioned in the past was through the use of corporeal punishment – through, for example, public beatings, with a person placed over a drum – with such practices at least partially rooted in the colonial making of ‘customary’ authority and colonial officials’ use of and sometimes explicit encouragement of such practices.⁸⁰⁴ After independence, this practice was ruled unconstitutional.⁸⁰⁵

Assembling normativity, legal efficacy, and authority

In post-independent Kaoko, the dualist legal order had been incorporated within one “single legal complex” composed both of “the State and the traditional authority, the magistrate’s court and the traditional court, and state and customary law”⁸⁰⁶ – with local actors in the search for justice and agency, continually negotiating between and co-configuring this socio-legal, material, and technical complex. Whereas before, most cases were addressed through ‘traditional’ courts, with only cases where the authority of local *ozosoromana* was challenged or a few exceptional ones were taken to Opuwo and the Native Commissioner and Tribal Council, in post-independent Kaoko, the regional Magistrate’s Court had become a common legal avenue for dealing with a range of disputes and conflicts, although “many people do not fully understand its procedures” nor state legal processes.⁸⁰⁷

However, the challenges of integrating multiple legal sensibilities and histories of practice, together with translating standardised state reforms within culturally and historically contingent

⁸⁰¹ Friedman, *Imagining*, 119.

⁸⁰² Friedman, *Imagining*, 114.

⁸⁰³ 22.04.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjize

⁸⁰⁴ See Friedman, *Imagining*, 119, 121; Mamdani, “Beyond,” 656.

⁸⁰⁵ Friedman, *Imagining*, 122

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 169

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 160

‘communal’ lands continue to (re)produce particular legal ambiguities and uncertainties, while also transforming these standardised reforms. Furthermore, a “relational ambiguity”⁸⁰⁸ was also generated at the intersection between colonial and post-colonial tenure policies, and with regards to the distribution of authority and sources of authority in governing access-rights to land. On the one hand, the CLRA and Traditional Authorities Act decentralised the primary power for the allocation of land-use rights to the TAs – and thus symbolically and legally to the realm of ‘customary law’. On the other hand, despite the perceived move towards part-decentralisation, the administration of land and access-rights had, in reality, become more centralised, as primary (legal) power ultimately rested with the state-recognised chiefs and with the Land Boards who were mostly based in Opuwo. Thus, despite both permanent and temporary access-rights still predominantly verbally negotiated according to social norms and situated adjudication, such agreements could only be legally formalised once signed off by one of the TA’s state-recognised chiefs.

Navigating this post-independent tenure regime, and shifting relations of authority, demanded continual travelling between different localities, between urban and rural lifeworlds, state (the police) and ‘customary’ authorities, and between the different state authorities and ministerial offices. Yet eventually expressed through the movements from one office to the next within Opuwo, was the contested autonomy and authority of local *ozosoromana* in the governing of land-access. This search for agency and the (re)assertion of their authority was pursued through a politics of collective presence and performance – with their movement between the different government offices, aimed at creating visibility and recognition within the urban context and thus in relation to the state, which included the TAs: As Muteze reiterated, the law of the government was handed over to the TAs. Moreover, evident in this movement between the TAs, the ministry, the governor’s office, and the Magistrate’s Court were long-standing and inherited legal practices by *ozosoromana* of making (paternalistic) demands on the state and of the state as an important source of “outside patronage”⁸⁰⁹ in the co-production of legitimacy and power. However, apart from the bureaucratic meanderings described above and the repeated travelling, specific knowledge and socio-material practices were likewise mobilised in an attempt to re-establish and produce particular norms, and to assemble political authority.

For example, as I have illustrated in Chapter seven, during the two-week-long deliberations in Otjomatamba, practices of recording and documentation were meticulously observed and performed, with the two *ozosoromana* signing a written agreement each time a consensus was reached or travelling to the Police Stations to record formal statements. In an interview with Katjetjua Mukuaruze he explained that these practices were only necessary due to the refusal of some newcomers to leave and to “support the process”:

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid., 172

⁸⁰⁹ Van Binsbergen, “Introduction,” 42.

E: During the meetings, there were all the time papers written and given to the headman to sign. Is it new processes or is it part of the Namibian laws that you have to document everything?

K: People were refusing to leave when chased away therefore, the letters were signed by the headman to support the process of people being chased away. Those letters were given at homes to specific people who have been chased away, but previously it was not necessary because people were cooperating.⁸¹⁰

Within this context, written technologies and paper “artefacts” were thus performed and were in themselves performative of legality and as the “dominant emblem of the formal dimension of bureaucracy” and what Muteze called the “pyramid”.⁸¹¹ This mobilisation of paper artefacts and documentation was illustrative of a keen awareness of legality hinging on “observing procedure correctly” rather than on social action, and as governed by particular bureaucratic and “administrative logics”.⁸¹² However, at the same time, these paper and material artefacts co-produced the ongoing assembling of actors, localities, spaces, discourses, ecologies and socio-political networks in an attempt to produce normative and legal orders and forms of territoriality.⁸¹³ In other words, it was through the assembling of specific relations and networks that agency and social action continued to take form, with these relations having to be established and re-established, performed and practiced.⁸¹⁴

For example, wider socio-political networks were mobilised – with this mobilisation together with the politics of belonging generated through the dispute – pointing to “the multifaceted relational processes at the core of normative change: the normative comparisons that are made, the linkages to normative publics that are sought – and which of these can successfully induce solidarity”.⁸¹⁵ And lastly, as the group moved from one office to the next, it was male, patriarchal power that was once again being (re)enacted to the state – with these moments being critical in fostering political influence and alliances, in establishing hierarchies and cooperation, and as part of the multitude of “ways in which women and men themselves negotiate and renegotiate femininities and masculinities vis-à-vis politics and the State”.⁸¹⁶

These bureaucratic and legal meanderings nevertheless were marked by a state of impasse – which eventually led to the opening of a case at the High Court in Windhoek. After the discussion in Opuwo, it was decided to send three persons to Windhoek, to find and hire a lawyer – with the group thus choosing state over custom⁸¹⁷ and turning to the state judicial system. As the case essentially concerned land-rights within communal lands and with these rights protected under Constitutional law, the case could only be addressed through the High Court.

⁸¹⁰ Katjetjua Mukuaruze, 31.03.2015, recorded interview, Otjize

⁸¹¹ Matthew S. Hull, “Documents and Bureaucracy,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 252.

⁸¹² Akhil Gupta, “Messy Bureaucracies,” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3, no. 3 (2013): 438–39.

⁸¹³ See, for instance, McGee, *Latour*, 3.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12

⁸¹⁵ Julia Eckert, “Rumours of Rights,” in *Law Against the State: Ethnographic Forays into Law's Transformations*, ed. Julia Eckert et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 165.

⁸¹⁶ Becker, “concise,” 173.

⁸¹⁷ Friedman, *Imagining*, 164.

Between liberal rights, recognition, and conviviality

In the days following the meetings in Opuwo, everyday life in Otjomatempa seemed to be continuing along with its usual daily rhythms. However, about two weeks after the exodus of the newcomers there was a rumour that somebody had burnt the *kraal* of the two homesteads “at the back” – those that had belonged to Unaro and Uazeika. Some hours later I walked over to the still deserted homesteads, where, indeed, I found smoke rising from the still smouldering ashes – a white-grey circle where the *kraals* use to be. This highly symbolic political act has to be situated concerning the perceived genealogies of the arrival of the newcomer homesteads – genealogies which were linked to rumours of having moved their livestock into *kraals* which had been left by prior homesteads, and/or having constructed *kraals* without first having negotiated access. Moreover, the *kraal*, or the *otjiuunda*, unlike the house (*ondjuwo*), was also symbolically associated with the agnatic principle⁸¹⁸ and with patrilineal belonging and relatedness, and thus with ancestral land-relations. Hence, the burning down of the *kraals* was a powerful expression of exclusion and local agency and an attempt to deter the newcomer households from returning. Such acts were part and parcel of the ongoing search for agency to control and manage territorial boundaries.



Image 14: The partially burnt kraals of the newcomer homesteads.⁸¹⁹

Despite the opening of a legal case and acts such as these, it was also evident that many were concerned with trying to manage and keep the dispute within convivial confines.⁸²⁰ Thus, one interlocutor explained that if a person came to ask for temporary access-rights, you would not let that person die (in other words, you would accept her/his livestock) – especially if there was grazing – and despite that

⁸¹⁸ Steven Van Wolputte, “Coming of Age and Authority: Milk as a Source of Power in Himbaland, Northern Namibia,” in *Ageing in Africa: Sociolinguistic and Anthropological Approaches*, ed. Makoni, Sinfree and Stroeken, Koen (New York: Routledge, 2017), 23.

⁸¹⁹ Photograph taken by Elsemi Olwage.

⁸²⁰ On the concept of conviviality see Nyamnjoh, “Chieftaincy.”

person having arrived with her/his livestock. The act of hiring a lawyer and taking the case to the High Court was seen as the last resort as “nobody wanted to close relationships” and the next time you would be the one “asking” (negotiating access) elsewhere. Here he echoed a locally rooted judiciary sensibility in which an “ideal judicial process is restorative rather than punitive”.⁸²¹

Moreover, as expressed above, there was a shared concern for maintaining long-lasting reciprocal relations – both in terms of securing future access in times of need, as well as due to local understandings of social power. In other words, maintaining and accurately managing the severing of relationships was critical to avoid accusations or becoming a potential target through the practice of witchcraft (*okuroua*). Thus, forcing households and their livestock to leave an area and moving the dispute and case to the High Court weighed heavily on some people. Soon after the exodus of the homesteads from Otjomatamba, Tobias had travelled north to the Epupa constituency via hitch-hiking. He explained that when you were ‘chasing’ (*okuramba*) someone and their livestock, you should know that in the area from which they came, there was grass. Otherwise, they could accuse you, saying “it was you that put my cattle in the fire”. After his trip, he believed that people were migrating and moving livestock further south rather because they “fell in love” with the area, or in the hope of migrating further south and beyond the VCF. These comments and local practices highlighted the notions of justice and “legal sensibilities”⁸²² at play, and the importance of different forms of knowing and social knowledge which characterised the different processes of adjudication. Nevertheless, given a growing understanding of the situation, mistrust was festering between people, and between homesteads, with this shaping intragroup relations and understandings of social personhood.

Some months after the dispute we met with two elder men belonging to one of the Herero homesteads in Otjondunda.⁸²³ After explaining my interest in the settlement dispute they were eager to talk. One of them started explaining how the newcomer homesteads had, some years back, began to migrate into the place:

When they came, they came to “ask for drought” (*omuningire wourumbu*), and we accepted. When the rain came, however, they were refusing to leave. This resulted in a conflict and fight at Okanamuva (a cattle-post). We were accusing them of not coming for drought, but rather to win over the place and the land. People were threatening each other with guns. Here there were no rains and even drought, but still, they were refusing. We don’t have a problem with people – but it is bringing conflict to these areas.

From his perspective, the newcomer homesteads did not have permanent settlement rights– with longer-established residents eventually accusing them of wanting to “win over the place and the land”. In the case of Otjondunda, this led to violent threats and to conflict at one of the nearby cattle-posts (this was the same conflict narrated by Tobias). However, despite this, the homesteads had, in recent years,

⁸²¹ Friedman, *Imagining*, 170.

⁸²² Clifford Geertz, “Local Knowledge: Fact and Law in Comparative Perspective,” *Local knowledge*, 1983 Also see Friedman, *Imagining*, 159.

⁸²³ 17.04.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjondunda

increased from three to around ten. The other man, in weighing in on the perception that these settlement practices were aimed at taking over the land, stated:

First, we were not knowing what they were looking for. But it is because of *opolotika*. They want to take this area to belong to them. What makes us to see that is that they are trying to win over the land.

Despite having initially proclaimed that the problem was not with the people, as our conversation progressed it seemed that increasingly this situation was giving rise to particular normative, othering and ethnicised discourses. Our first interlocutor reflected on the newcomer's manner of arrival:

If you decide to accept one person, others will bring cattle to drink and later put them in the *kraal*. Will you allow that person to stay together with you? They are like snakes. They are not people, just like snakes – they wake up in the night and bite you. They are not cooperating. Will you allow these kind of people to stay together with you? They are like a snake-like a jackal. First, they will come as a drought cattle-post, then later you see they are making a homestead.

Specific genealogies of arrival and ways of negotiating access and settlement were understood as being entangled with practices of *opolotika* and were likewise equated with snakes and jackals – with jackals often associated with trickery and cunningness, but also as deceptive and 'skelm'⁸²⁴ (*okuskelma*). These analogies were reflective of the relations of mistrust which were taking form and the erosion of local notions of social personhood and institutions of reciprocity. Moreover, and as addressed in Chapter six, struggles over land and territory, were increasingly rooted in culturally-inflected models of pastoral land-use as grounds for the expression and enactment of group identities and belonging. As expressed in the sentiments above, this politics of belonging also have to be understood in relation to a growing sense and fear that the common resource situation in southern Kaoko was becoming more and more of an open-access situation – fuelled by “micro-frontier”⁸²⁵ processes and dynamics. With many strategically navigating drought-related access-rights, this was also placing pressure on local norms and as noted above, fostering mistrust. In deliberating issues of justice, these regional migrations were simultaneously interpreted as a particular post-independent phenomenon, as entangled with new and emerging (global) legal regimes, and as a long-standing effort by some groups to claim authority and thus the power to control land-access.



The lack of both local and state sanctioning power, as well as the inability for the dispute to be resolved locally was interpreted by some as partially rooted in the constraints brought on through the liberal, post-independent democratic transition to rights-based citizenship and human-rights discourses. In talking to Muteze, he argued that in the past people did not refuse to leave out of fear of being beaten, but now there were rights, and everyone was “using rights” – even if they were damaging others.

⁸²⁴ 'Skelm' is an Afrikaans term used to denote characteristics associated with being cunning, sly, sneaky and untrustworthy.

⁸²⁵ Kopytoff, “Internal,” 27.

Tumbee Tjirora,⁸²⁶ a wealthy stock owner from Omao 2 and a politically influential figure in southern Kaoko who formed part of the group, reiterated this view of rights and peoples' misuse of them:

It is because of rights – people are misunderstanding it and thinking that everyone has the right to move whenever she/he wants, and to settle wherever. We need procedures. First, we approached the police, then the governor's office – both of whom did not have any power to force people to move. Then we went to the MLR office. They also did not have the right. Everyone was referring us to the Magistrate's Court. Then we decided to look for a lawyer. A lawyer is the fastest way.

Tuapuka Kazendjou likewise repeated that “some people take Independence and hear and understand it in a wrong way.” He also emphasised that all three of the state-recognised TAs had Himba chiefs – “meaning the Himba are ruling” which resulted in ‘some’ persons “thinking that they could settle wherever they wanted”. Uaranda Kavetu similarly explained that the “law (*oveta*) says that you are not allowed to give permission on your own. But now the Namibian government is saying that you will not touch the rights of others.” Ueinjenguaije Hiyavihongo Musaso – a 65-year-old local councillor and one of the wealthier stock owners of Omao 2 who was also part of the group, explained that nowadays it was a common occurrence for people to ask for drought and temporary access-rights, and then to refuse to leave with the return of the rains. Echoing others, he explained that the problem now was that “everyone sees themselves as Namibian and as having the right to settle where ever she/he wants.” These commentaries were directed towards the liberal law of the state and specifically the constitutional right to land within the now ‘communal’ lands and were also couched within longer-standing, inherited tensions between the different groups within Kaoko. As Kazendjou pointed out in reference to the TAs chiefs, “the Himba are ruling”.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, due to the problematic ways in which ethnicity had been mobilised by the colonial and apartheid state, the post-independent state was reluctant to allow for any land or other claims based on such associations or “group-based collective rights”.⁸²⁷ Yet post-independent democratisation and uneven developments eventually also gave rise to the rhetoric of cultural rights and to a tension between liberal individual rights, and assertions for collective group rights and belonging – especially concerning questions of resource access and land.⁸²⁸ Thus, Lieres⁸²⁹ noted that during the first decades of democratisation within Africa, two dominant political discourses emerged – “one of political rights, legal proceduralism and social justice, and another of cultural rights and customary politics”. The tension between these two discourses ultimately threw into relief the limits of a “Western liberal political model of citizenship”⁸³⁰, with scholarship arguing for re-defining understandings of citizenship in post-colonial contexts and for “moving away from the idea of the

⁸²⁶ 22.04. 2015, unrecorded interview, Omao 1

⁸²⁷ Widlok, “Good,” 13.

⁸²⁸ Lieres, “Review,” 139.

⁸²⁹ Lieres, “Review,” 139; Also see Steven Robins, Andrea Cornwall, and Bettina von Lieres, “Rethinking ‘Citizenship’ in the Postcolony,” *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 6 (2008).

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*, 140

citizen as a bearer of rights towards the idea of the citizen as participant and claimant, embedded in a series of networks guaranteeing inclusion and preventing marginalization from wider social and political processes”.⁸³¹

In this context, rights-based ideas of citizenship were seen by some as threatening vernacular understandings and institutions through which one’s residency (*omaturo*) and rights to access and land were established and re-established – with these vernacular institutions hinging on the ongoing, everyday negotiation of one’s belonging to particular clans and groups.⁸³² However, as illustrated in Chapter Two, the institutionalisation of colonial indirect rule within north-western Namibia contributed to the emergence of particular political identities by tying together legitimate political authority with belonging to a shared ethnicity⁸³³, through organising rights to access and power according to an ethnic hierarchy, and, ultimately, the fostering of elitism.⁸³⁴ Consequently, in navigating relations with and vis-à-vis the post-independent state and in making sense of new regimes of legality and rights, many Kaokolanders continue to mobilise ethnicity in contesting their exclusion, or in claiming inclusion and entitlements – with this, in turn, co-producing particular political identities.

Mamdani also argues for critically engaging with the institutional legacies of colonialism and indirect rule and for situating “the colonial state as a legal/institutional complex that reproduced particular political identities”.⁸³⁵ Thus, as he expressed it:

“You understand your relationship to the state, and your relationship to other legally defined groups through the mediation of the law and of the state, as a consequence of your legally inscribed identity. Similarly, you understand your inclusion and exclusion from rights or entitlement based on your legally defined and inscribed race or ethnicity. From this point of view, both race and ethnicity need to be understood as political – not cultural, or even biological – identities”⁸³⁶

In other words, the interwoven struggles over land, authority, and resources (especially pastures)⁸³⁷ were again generating rigid divisions between ‘Herero’ and ‘Himba’, divisions which belied the everyday realities of interrelations, intermarriage, co-habitation, and shared ancestries, and the cross-cutting forms of political belonging and association within Kaoko. Moreover, this mobilisation of political identities also has to be situated in relation to wider transformations and specifically concerning the rise of the global indigenous rights movement and discourses. In recent years, the ‘Himba’ especially (along with some other groups in Kaoko) have managed to gain international recognition with regards to indigenous identity, rights and associations.⁸³⁸ This has thus led to different interest groups and actors

⁸³¹ Ibid., 146

⁸³² Lentz, “Land,” 38.

⁸³³ Lentz, “Land,” 46.

⁸³⁴ Friedman, “Making.”

⁸³⁵ Mamdani, “Beyond,” 652.

⁸³⁶ Ibid., 663

⁸³⁷ Taylor, “Post.”

⁸³⁸ See, for instance, Sidney L. Harring, “God Gave Us This Land: The Ovahimba, the Proposed Epupa Dam, the Independent Namibian State, and Law and Development in Africa,” *Georgetown International Environmental Law Review* 14 (2001); Bollig and Heinemann, “Nomadic”; Michael Bollig and Susanne

politically mobilising ethnic categorisations as well as the institution of chieftaincy towards asserting competing claims to territory and authority.⁸³⁹ The pollicisation of ethnicity vis-à-vis the state and by different interest groups was also evident in the legal case.

The state, ethnicity, and the politics of custom

Some weeks later I met with Tumbee Tjirora. He explained that the case had been filed in Windhoek in March/April 2015 against nine people who had settled in and between the Ombombo and Ongango chieftaincies/villages. Moreover, this case was opened *against* the MLR and the Lands Board and thus also against the state, with the applicant (the group) filed as the Vita Thom Royal House. However, despite using this TA as an applicant, the chief himself was not involved. A group of his senior councillors, including *osoromana* Muteze, had set this legal action in motion in the name of the TA. Thus, with the formation of the larger socio-political grouping, different cases within the historically established, neighbouring chieftaincies of Ombombo and Ongango were taken to address the problem symbolically and judicially. The only case from Otjomatempa included was that of Unaro Tjipurua, who, as noted above, had eventually migrated back to Otjomatempa. The rest of the accused were settled, for example, at Okahua, Outjoue, Okatumbu (close to Omao) and Otjikukutu. Shortly afterwards, as the due state legal process dictates, several of the accused issued legal responses (with the assistance of lawyers) and challenged the call for their forceful removal from these areas. To highlight some of the issues at stake and how the local dispute in Otjomatempa reverberated into the surrounding areas and wider issues, I will briefly delineate what the others were accused of and in which ways they mobilised counterclaims to contest their disputed belonging and settlement, and/or access-rights to pastures.⁸⁴⁰

The genealogies of arrival of most of these persons – all of whom were male heads of households – reflected similar complaints to those raised during the dispute in Otjomatempa. For instance, they had negotiated temporary access-rights and with the return of the rains, had refused to leave; or they had negotiated access through close kin without consulting others; they had settled permanently in dry-season or seasonal cattle-post places; and, lastly, some were accused of having no permission to settle at all. These accusations were strongly denied by several of the accused, who also furnished counter genealogies of arrival detailing how they had gained access and subsequent authorisation. For example, with regards to the Okahua case, three senior councillors from the place wrote a letter to confirm that the accused did have permanent settlement rights and they challenged anyone who claimed to be the ‘owner’ of the place to state such claims so that these could be discussed.

Berzborn, “The Making of Local Traditions in a Global Setting. Indigenous Peoples’ Organisations and Their Effects at the Local Level in Southern Africa,” in *Between Resistance and Expansion: Explorations of Local Vitality in Africa*, ed. Peter Probst (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004).

⁸³⁹ Taylor, “Naming”; Taylor, “Post.”

⁸⁴⁰ The case documents were shared with me by Tumbee Tjirora.

The person at Okahua furthermore accused the travelling group of having “violated” his “property rights” when they entered his homestead and attempted to force his livestock out of the place. And finally, he stated that he had settled following “Himba customary law”.

One of the cases at Okatumbu invoked the power invested in all three state-recognised TAs and argued that he had been settled by a senior councillor of the Otjikaoko Traditional Authority and in accordance once again with “Himba customary law”. Several of the accused also invoked the claim that they were “not educated” and thus had not known that applications for customary land-rights had to be made in writing and thus asked to be granted time to apply for such rights following the CLRA. Importantly, the accused were able to get written support from both the Vita Thom Royal House and Otjikaoko Traditional Authority’s chiefs – both of whom denied their support of the initial case and expressed their support for the settlement of all of the listed persons, and others, such as Tjimaka Tjivara. The issue of widespread drought and the pressures this placed on households was also mentioned repeatedly. These legal struggles eventually resulted in only a select few of the accused being issued with court orders to leave the said chieftaincy areas, including Unaro Tjipurua – orders which were then again appealed and had to be re-addressed.



As illustrated, in disputing the case, the accused invoked ‘Himba customary law’ and drew on the support of the chiefs from both of the TAs, or, in some instances, specifically from the Otjikaoko Traditional Authority. Since the Constitutional recognition of customary law, several state-recognised TAs have embarked on a process of “law-ascertaining processes”⁸⁴¹ – of self-stating and recording customary law. Both the Otjikaoko and the Vita Thom Royal House participated in this project which eventually led to a set of publications.⁸⁴² Nevertheless, in invoking specifically ‘Himba’ customary law and not customary law as ascertained by the TAs, the accused was once again mobilising particular political identities in relation to the state and state law. Furthermore, these counter-claims also pointed to the ongoing struggles between different authorities and different claims to authority over land and resources⁸⁴³ – with claims to ‘ownership’ over places and ancestral land-relations invoked in legitimising the authority of some to allocate access-rights. Evident here then was the multitude of ways in which “individuals and cultural communities seeking ‘right and might’ both as ‘citizens’ and ‘subjects’ in the modern nation-state as a reality not an ideal”.⁸⁴⁴ Yet, it was especially “the ambiguities of power and the past [which] are central in mediating the processes associated with the making of the State and subject-citizen in Kaokoland”.⁸⁴⁵

⁸⁴¹ Hinz, “Traditional,” 84.

⁸⁴² See, O. Hinz, *Customary Law Ascertained Volume 3: The Customary Law of the Nama, Ovaherero, Ovambanderu, and San Communities of Namibia* (Windhoek: University of Namibia Press, 2016), <http://gbv.ebib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=4439358>.

⁸⁴³ Taylor, “Naming.”

⁸⁴⁴ Nyamnjoh, “Chieftaincy,” 235.

⁸⁴⁵ Friedman, *Imagining*, 237.

“What kind of land is communal land?”

In our interview with Tjirora,⁸⁴⁶ he mirrored concerns about how “constitutional guarantees”⁸⁴⁷ and forced settlement were perceived as eroding the rights of some groups in controlling territorial boundaries and securing land-access within Kaoko’s ‘communal’ areas:

“...we are really having a big problem and it gives us a headache when people are talking about it because it means as I am in communal land, my homesteads is also for everyone. It is not a good word or statement to be said to people. It does not sound good. We were colonised and we thought it is gone but seems to me we are still colonised with such statements and that is something we will never tolerate. We are in an independent country we have to move forward but not backwards we must fight against poverty but not promote poverty. Imagine if I had 50 head of cattle but because of an overcrowded area I remain with 10, that is poverty that I am promoting. I always hear about resettlement farms and the population in Okaoko area is around about 60 000 but people who have been resettled so far are very few they have not even reached 10 people, which means the majority of people are living in communal areas. So, if we are not controlling our own land then we will not remain with productive land. That is a big problem that we are facing not a small one. Another contributing factor to our problems is that the traditional chiefs that are recognised in Okaoko land are the Ovahimba chiefs, I mean the gazetted ones. Most of them are from Opuwo and North of Opuwo, they are from places like Etanga, Ovinyange and Otjihandjasemo but none of the chiefs is from our side. When people have to be settled or have to deal with land issues then the said chiefs are the ones having the right to deal with land issues therefore, we are really under very big pressure on this side. Most of our people are not approved when they are applying for chieftainship.”

Here Tjirora compared the current understanding of “communal” land as “public land” as another form of colonisation, with them needing better legal mechanisms to control their land to ensure future access – not only to land – but to productive land where one could realistically pursue pastoral futures. Moreover, the decision to take the dispute to court and to engage in legal action was explained as an effort by local senior and ‘big’ men and *ozosoromana* to exercise and re-assert political authority over pastures, resources, and land within a context where all the chiefs were said to be rather representative of northern Kaoko, and Himba. This situation was expressed by Tjirora as them being “still colonised”.

Hence, as already alluded to in previous sections, some local *ozosoromana* in southern Kaoko thus perceived their lack of authority and power as a result of the growing marginalisation of ‘Herero’ (and implicitly of the Ndamuranda) leaders and representatives within the regional political and governance structures and TAs – with their loss of historical dominance translating into a feared loss of authority over land and resources.⁸⁴⁸ Tjirora, like many others in southern Kaoko, subscribed rather to the Ovaherero Traditional Authority (which cooperated with the Vita Thom Royal House) and was recognised as a key political figure within the regional ranks of SWAPO. Like many others, those ascribing to this TA were struggling for state recognition within Kaoko and were challenging the sovereignty and authority of the three state-recognised chiefs. As already noted, these struggles were rooted in a long-standing factional dispute and belonging.⁸⁴⁹ Tjirora explained and rationalised the

⁸⁴⁶ 23.07.2015, recorded interview, Omaso 2

⁸⁴⁷ Lieres, “Review,” 140.

⁸⁴⁸ See, for instance, Friedman, *Imagining*, 193.

⁸⁴⁹ Friedman, “Making”; Friedman, *Imagining*.

decision to take legal action despite the severe financial costs and the necessity to pool resources to do so:

“Generally, it is not easy to do something with a lot of people but if you let them understand why they have to contribute they will pay, but if they do not understand it will be difficult to pay. On top of it all, there is also the situation of not selling their cattle and the severe drought that is hindering the people. The other thing is, when people are just moving into your area without permission and taking over your land then it is like someone who is hanging you up with a rope. Therefore, you will spend any little money you have on this case. If you can remember, the said land is the grazing area for the cattle that help us to take care of our children and also for cultivation to maintain the family. You are then left without a choice, either leave the family with hunger or to have a court case, because you will not want to lose your own land. This is the only land we have, if you look at farm prices, they are very expensive, and we will never afford to own a farm one day. We are living here and have young children that have to farm here when they are grown up also, the places are already occupied. How will our children have places of their own one day? As I am moving around, I came across many illiterate people that will never go back to their young school age and attend a school where they can live from. The only education they are left with is farming and that does not need further studies, as with gardening, and instead of going to the towns like Opuwo and just idling there – some are in Epupa doing nothing and just misusing alcohol and become robbers because of the difficult situation created by us of not controlling our land to sustain us.

We are facing drought due lack of rain which is the will of God which we cannot control because we cannot talk to him. And then we are facing drought that is created by human beings as well, how can we survive? Most people say we are mistreating the Ovahimba and we don't like them, but it is not like that. The Ovahimba that we have settled a long time ago are still living here with us, we have not chased them away. We are only chasing the Ovahimba who are settling without permission. Why we are saying people must apply for settlement is because we have to look at the available resources, like water, the size of the area and grazing itself. Besides, we also look at our families, now we are all living together but when the children are grown up, they will get married and have to start their own family. Where will they start their homesteads? My father's homestead is in Ombombo, I left my uncle there and came to start my own homestead with my wife and children that is how it should be done by everyone. That's why we are settling people for a short period according to seasons to allow the grass to grow so that we can control the land, if we allow everyone to just settle how will we survive? We do this to allow the cattle to have grazing during raining season and drought. People are coming here thinking that we have a lot of grass or big open spaces, but it is not like that – it is only because we are controlling, and they are just allowing people to settle anyhow. Commercial farms are having quarters (camps) divided by fences but here we are dividing our areas by head (of homestead) knowing how to use the grazing as we do not have fences that divide our areas. Other people are coming to destroy our way of conserving our grazing. That's why we have a severe drought this time, normally we don't face such severe drought. Even if we did not receive enough rain for four years, we used to survive with our old grass till the rain comes again. We used to have remainders of grass that grow quickly if even we receive a little rain but this time, we do not have any grass which needs heavy rain to let the grass grow. My garden is full of grass because it used to be locked which is a sign that we have received enough rain if it was not enough the grass wouldn't have been that much. The drought is because we did not manage our grazing very well and because the cattle are now a lot, and they are over grazing. That is our biggest concern. That's why we prefer to sell the little cattle we have to fight the case in court. People are fighting us, even the governor of Epupa is fighting saying that we are chasing the Ovahimba in our areas, but we have decided that we will not stop the case we will proceed with the court even if it cost us to appeal. If your land is taken over, how are you going to survive? Many conflicts around the world are about land and what else can you do if your land is just taken over and people just occupy it? There is a bad word used by the governor saying that it is a communal land – now just imagine when we are going to own land if we cannot afford to buy commercial farms or own land in towns as they are for sale as well. What kind of land is communal land and where are we going to stay if it is for everyone?”

Tjirora framed the dispute and the case filed with the High Court thus first and foremost as a land issue and as some newcomers trying to take over and occupy their land. Thus, the legal costs were justified as it was an act of reclaiming their land. As already addressed, the dispute was likewise framed in a future perspective and orientation, and animated by anxieties about future access, specifically for their children and descendants, concerning neo-local settlement norms, and the capacity of future generations to establish their autonomous homesteads and pastoral livelihoods. Tjirora also invoked the perceived perils of ongoing urbanisation and experiences of poverty in situations where the land is no longer able to provide sustainable livelihoods.

He again affirmed his resistance to the concept of ‘communal’ land – with its implicit connotation as shared and the lack of authority in co-determining how this sharing was to be governed and controlled. He was, however, also quick to emphasise that this dispute and case was not against any particular group, nor the ‘Himba’ – with such accusations having been directed towards them. Rather, as illustrated in Chapter three, what was at stake rather was the enforcement and re-enactment of specific ritual and political authority in the allocation of land-access within the set jurisdiction boundaries. This mobilised the group to write down new rules for governing settlement and pastoral mobility, including land-use zoning, within southern Kaoko. Here communal conservancies especially have emerged as key technologies for re-asserting more decentralised forms of authority, as part-and-parcel of ongoing “strategies of localization”,⁸⁵⁰ and in institutionalising particular forms of territoriality:

“We have concentrated mainly on three places, namely Ongango, Otjapitjapi, Ombombo and in the rules we are going to decide on grazing seasons, e.g., when the cattle will graze in which area and so and also how the settlement applications will be handled. We will include a lot of things like which areas to use for gardens and which areas not to use and also areas that people will not settle which will only be for conserving the wild animals. We will also consider the conservancy rules so that they later will not be in contrast with one another. We have observed that the rules of the conservancy and the Ministry of Mines are in contrast, sometimes when you put aside an area for hunting or for wild animals you realise the Ministry of Mines are starting to dig holes without even communicating to you and their machinery and compresses are in the areas which create inconveniences. The mining is operated from Windhoek, and they do not consult with the local leaders when bringing their machinery, we just see their people in operation. We want to know their areas of operation so that we know exactly the mining areas and divide our grazing areas from the mining side to keep our animals far from their areas to avoid animals falling in their holes.”

Evident here was the drive to formalise and standardise land-management practices between neighbouring areas, and to follow the concept of conservancy as a model for land-use zoning, control, and management. Some of the rules that would be considered would be that no one person could grant settlement rights – including the *osoromana* – and the re-institutionalisation of settlement committees. Before and soon after independence there were settlement committees – but according to Muteze they have “lost the compass” and there was no longer a clear “procedure”. The expressed need to establish

⁸⁵⁰ Arturo Escobar, *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

and write down the rules was also strongly driven by the ongoing proliferation of *ozosoromana* and political fragmentation. In this regard “they [were] burning themselves”, Tjirora asserted. In the past, the South African administration did not accept *ozosoromana* appointing themselves. It was now the “traditional playing together with politics” – he observed – echoing the distinction between *ombazu* and *opolotika* which different actors mobilised in making competing claims to authority and recognition, including through competing first-comer claims.

Yet also evident in talking to Tjirora were the conflicting claims being made on communal land. In stark contrast to the community-based natural-resource paradigm, mining exploration and prospecting licences were controlled by the state and issued in Windhoek through the Ministry of Mines and Energy (MME), without prior consultation with local leaders and community-based organisations. Thus, struggles over who had the authority over land and resources transverses different scales and were embedded in conflicting ideologies of environmental governance and decentralisation. In a later interview with Tjirora,⁸⁵¹ he also explained that the conservancy should be a way to control grazing boundaries and that it was not just for wildlife but the area: for the grazing, the mining resources, and the tourism benefits. “Before everything could be taken away from you, but now it’s in our hands”, he asserted, mobilising the CBNRM discourse as a political and counter-technology for autonomy, localisation, and inclusion.

The micro-politics of place and belonging

At the grass-roots level, different actors were also continually mobilising different tactics to control grazing boundaries and to assert particular territories. This was also evident in another vignette which concerned the trajectory of Tjimaka Tjavara after he and his brother were forced to leave Otjomatamba. When we met with Ben⁸⁵² soon after their exodus, he recounted the following:

When Tjimaka left Otjomatamba he went to live at a cattle-post of Okanadjira (Oupoko) – together with more or less 280 goats and 44 cattle. When he settled there, people again asked him to leave. He refused. There is a diesel-engine borehole. The people from the place proceeded to remove the engine to force him to leave. However, Tjimaka was cooperating with some of the residents, and they went to buy another engine. Other people saw this and came and pulled out the underground pipes. Tjimaka then took his cattle to drink at the settled-place close by. People told him to not live at the cattle-post (Okanadjira), but to just come and ask for settlement. He did not like that and just wanted to bring the cattle to drink. People told him if you bring your cattle there will be a fight. But then he brought the cattle again. Then a fight broke out, and a person had to be hospitalised – as, in the end, the cattle were refused water. The next day Tjimaka took their cattle to drink at another borehole. People there refused as well. They just took the cattle and closed them in the *kraal*. This story spread and was retold in Opuwo. The Governor, as a result, travelled to the area. She organised that the cattle and people be given water and reprimanded the residents. The people complained that this was enabling Tjimaka and others to move and settle in the area.

⁸⁵¹ 08.10. 2015, unrecorded interview, Omao 1

⁸⁵² 20.05.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba

This was once again illustrative of the use of diesel-powered boreholes as a technology of exclusion and of these water-points becoming key sites of conflict, confrontation, and violence within these struggles over land-use and access. Although perceived as a cultural taboo, several attempts were made to refuse water access as a way to force Tjimaka's household and livestock to adhere to land-use rules and to prevent him from settling at a particular cattle-post. The technological and material specificities of these water-points – as opposed to natural springs, hand-dug wells, and solar-powered boreholes – as well as newly formed WPAs thus also enabled these expressions of exclusion and confrontation and challenged norms governing the sharing of water-access. Eventually, however, this conflict and the act of refusing water to livestock was rumoured to be opposed by the Governor – with this understood by some as their ongoing marginalisation within larger structures of governance and political authority.



After some weeks of no visible discussions within Otjomatamba with regards to the return of the newcomers in early June, we were informed that there would be a spontaneous meeting. Several people, mostly older, senior men and women were already gathered beneath the same *Omumborombonga* tree. It was the day when the state pensions were distributed and thus many were already seated and waiting for the government vehicle to arrive. Unaro and some of the men from Uazeika's homestead were present. As everyone slowly formed a circle and moved closer, we were informed that the goal of the meeting was to discuss three points: First of all, to read the court order to Unaro, who had returned to the place; secondly, to discuss the issue of those who had returned; and, lastly, to come back to the issue of the other cases which were supposed to have been discussed before, including the case of Uakoka Tjizembisa.

This was followed by some deliberation as both *ozosoromana* were absent and there were only about 16 people present. From there the discussion went back and forth but it seemed eventually that the main concern was why the newcomers had returned and whether or how they should be confronted. One person noted that Boesman⁸⁵³ - who was the one of the first seven homesteads who had come to Otjomatamba from Otjondunda years before – had a small boy in the place, taking care of some livestock for him. Others countered that some women were in the place only for their children to attend the school. The issue of Chief Kapika at Okarumbu was also raised. Kamutjiha slowly stood up to explain:

Kapika had asked at Otjomatamba but was refused – he then proceeded to Otjize – where people once again refused him. They told him to leave his cattle and just go and ask elsewhere. He then disappeared. Finally, he contacted them and told them he had found his children and bought petrol to assist with the move. By the time he wanted to move, he was informed that it was not allowed due to the FMD restrictions. He then moved his livestock to Okarumbu and started asking for water. Finally, Muteze told him to remain and to wait until the movement of livestock was possible again.

⁸⁵³ Boesman was the nickname of one of the men who had moved livestock from Otjondunda into Otjomatamba and who had formed part of the previous exodus.

Others corroborated this story and that he had, in fact, not been accepted, but was only restricted due to the FMD bans on the regional movement of livestock and the difficulties of acquiring a permit for movement. Whereas before livestock movement permits could be issued by any of the extension veterinary clinics in southern Kaoko with the outbreak of the FMD only the state veterinary was qualified to issue permits.⁸⁵⁴ This meant that to move livestock, after having acquired permission papers from the *ozosoromana*, stock owners had to request the state veterinarian to come and verify that their livestock was disease-free. Several check points and command centres were erected across Kaoko during this time to regulate livestock movements and these could not be crossed without a permit.⁸⁵⁵ These restrictions also resulted in the lack of an active livestock market in Opuwo and the disruption of the regional economy, which, combined with the ongoing drought, placed immense pressure on stock owners and households. Moreover, the selling of goats constitutes one of the main currencies through which people generate cash to deal with health needs and/or schooling, or other unexpected needs, with this livestock economy strongly contributing to Opuwo's economic vitality. In the end, buyers had to travel to the villages to buy livestock, bringing together several cattle from different places, which the state veterinarian described as "locus of infection"⁸⁵⁶ and thus was also closely regulated and controlled.

As addressed in Chapter Two and as scholars such as Van Wolputte⁸⁵⁷ and Miescher⁸⁵⁸ have shown, mobile animal and livestock epidemics and infectious diseases and ongoing attempts at control, containment, prevention and eradication by different state agents and veterinary scientists and technicians, played a major part in shaping and co-constituting the socio-economic, technological, and political histories of Namibia's north-western region. In contemporary Kaoko, these non-human agents also influence the negotiation of and sharing and use of resources. As spatial mobility constituted a key strategy for dealing with droughts and with most livestock markets centred on Opuwo, this placed major economic constraints on households and likewise influenced the ongoing legal and local negotiation of the dispute. As a consequence, negotiations regarding temporary access-rights and drought-related agreements and allowances made during this time had to be adjusted, and, whereas before, stock owners could navigate translocal livelihoods, or negotiate access in other places, they were confined to neighbouring areas. This meant that livestock movements commenced from Otjondunda and further south, into Otjomatempa, and from Omaso and surrounding places, into Okarumbu. As one woman commented on the influx of livestock from Otjondunda and Warmquelle: "You will not guess which cattle belongs to them. You can count their ribs like the wooden poles from an unfinished (plastered) house."

⁸⁵⁴ This national response was designed based the World Organisation for Animal Health and OIE terrestrial court (see National Contingency Plans: <http://www.oie.int/animal-health-in-the-world/official-disease-status/fmd/>).

⁸⁵⁵ Dr A.K. Mungunda, Chief Veterinary Officer, 16.03.2016, unrecorded interview, State Veterinary Offices, Opuwo

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁷ See Van Wolputte, "Subject"; Van Wolputte, "Cattle"; Van Wolputte, "Vicious."

⁸⁵⁸ Miescher, *Namibia*.

During this short meeting, it was noted that a further four men had recently arrived from Otjondunda with livestock and without asking. Johannes Kazendjou added that this constant influx of cattle was disturbing the wild animals, forcing them to move further away and into neighbouring conservancies. They had attempted to hunt the day before but were unsuccessful. Others complained about the lack of and dwindling state of the pastures. Meanwhile, the court order which had been issued to Unaro was brought out and handed to him. It was unclear why he had been signalled out within the case, a question to which I never received an answer. Unaro then asked Vejandjua to translate and read the court order. It was a slow process as we made sense of the order together. Essentially, it stipulated a set date on which he was meant to leave the wider Otjapitjapi/Ombombo chieftaincy area – which was in a few weeks. Unaro, however, seemed eager to contest this court order and did not plan on leaving the area.

Throughout the meeting, Ben also tried to continually raise the issue of water: The earth dam water was drying up and he wanted to discuss where all these animals would drink now and how they would manage the financial contributions to the borehole. With the borehole still rented out, this statement seemed to be more geared toward expressing discontent over the returned newcomers, than with real financial concerns. In other words, both the conservancy and the water-point, and thus other resources such as wildlife and water were continually brought into the conversation and mediation, with their sharing and management being inseparable from that of pastures and land. Moreover, these assertions were also meant to stress disruption and discontent, and particular notions of ownership against the influx of newcomers and livestock herds.



As the year stretched into July and the dry season, I was told that there would no longer be any meetings concerning the newcomers nor the other cases still to be discussed. This was mainly due to the FMD restrictions on regional livestock movements. One of the residents also half-jokingly speculated that perhaps the Himba ‘witched’ the entire Namibia so that they could forcibly stay at the places until the rains returned. However, not everyone was happy with the situation being left like this. Tuapuka Kazendjou⁸⁵⁹ explained that he thought that the problem was with the community (*otjiwana*). When he had investigated the situation, he realised that some individuals brought back the newcomers, and this was the reason he no longer wanted to deliberate and talk with others in the place. He felt that the meetings and everything they had done were a waste. Kandungombo (a person from Khorawib (close to Warmquelle) who was related to homesteads in Otjomateba) came and moved livestock into the area and was allowed – so others followed soon after. He wondered out loud if it would be like this in the future: “It is trouble for us”, he asserted, asking: “How would I have peace knowing that people could just come and put their tent, just like that?”

⁸⁵⁹ 29.10.2015, unrecorded interview, Otjomatamba

At the end of September, we met with Muteze⁸⁶⁰ at his Okarumbu homestead. Here I was told that there were four people who in the end had received court orders to leave the areas, however, they had refused to do so. These cases were said to be once again under consideration at the High Court. “In the end, they will be removed by force, as they came by force”, he asserted. However, people were also aware that Unaro and Uazeika’s homesteads were back because of the extent of the drought and the FMD restrictions. As a consequence, they were waiting and planned to only address the situation again when the rains returned.

As Muteze explained, regarding Chief Kapika – he first came to Otjondunda, and later moved his livestock to Otjize and then Okarumbu. People could not do anything: To send him back to Otjondunda would be to send his animals to their death. At that point, there was one household from Ondera, three from Omao 2, and one from Oromoa (Otjokavare) at Okarumbu which had negotiated temporary access-rights. “The engine at Okarumbu is just pumping water 24-7”, Muteze exclaimed concerning the number of livestock in the place.



Uahungira⁸⁶¹ headed a homestead in Omao 2. He was one of the wealthier stock owners with around 198 heads of cattle and 164 small-stock. However, managing larger herds during the drought was difficult and he was one of the homesteads that had moved livestock to Okarumbu. When we first met with him in Omao, he had just returned from Okarumbu on foot, appearing exhausted and desperate. He explained that had been asking to take some of his cattle to Okarumbu since April and wrote a letter to both *ozosoromana*. They, however, kept “turning around and around” (*okutanauka*) – not saying yes, and not saying no.

After some time, he decided to take the livestock to Okarumbu (some goats plus 40 head of cattle). After that people had discussed the situation and had asked him to return 30 cattle and the goats to Omao, and to just leave 10 cattle with calves. In the end, he brought back the goats but left all the cattle in Okarumbu. He thought perhaps that he would be beaten or that there would be conflict, but what could you do when all the grazing at your side was finished, he asked? The FMD restrictions were making it more difficult to sell and it was too risky to move the herds far due to livestock being weak and grazing limited. When we meet him some weeks later, he once again looked worn and tired. Most of his adult children were elsewhere, in Opuwo and Ruacana and he had only one worker assisting him. He did not know where to ask anymore (for pastures) and he was suffering livestock losses, he explained. Bringing home, the severity of his emotional distress and the affective experiences of the drought, he closed the interview with a sombre confession: “Some days I just want to dig a hole and die.”



⁸⁶⁰ 23.09.2015, unrecorded interview, Okarumbu

⁸⁶¹ Pseudonym

Despite ongoing attempts to enforce particular normative orders with regards to the negotiation of access-rights, in reality on the ground these orders were continually challenged given the realities of living with drought and FMD restrictions. Sometimes these norms were intentionally imbued with ambiguity. Thus, with regards to people asking for drought-related and temporary access-rights, the *ozosoromana* and *ozorata* in some cases delayed giving a definite answer – with this ambiguity and their “turning around and around” (*okutanauka*) creating a space where relationships are maintained rather than broken and where there were opportunities for negotiation and re-negotiation.



Some weeks after, we drove past the kindergarten and noticed that people were gathering – despite the assertions that no more meetings would be held. As we stopped to greet, we were told that it concerned Katjiri Katjimbari – the security guard who worked at one of the stores and had moved some livestock belonging to his uncle, Kandungombe into the place. Kandungombe lived in Okuvare (Khorawib) – a small, settled place close to Warmquelle. However, his ancestral homestead was in his birth place Otjondunda. He had started a cattle-post in Otjomatamba already in 1991 and was closely related to several homesteads in Otjomatamba – with Tobias’ being his classificatory brother. In other words, he had a long-standing relationship with the place as a seasonal cattle-post. However, Katjiri did not show up for the meeting and so the gathered men dispersed and sent somebody to find him.

The meeting finally took place some days later and we were called to attend. As the meeting progressed it emerged that Katjiri had brought 17 cattle into Otjomatamba. He had been asked to return the cattle and then to first ask and consult with the people – in line with the set social norms. Initially, he had agreed to do so, yet he did not take the cattle back. It was then decided to have another meeting. Katjiriri’s elderly unmarried and ill mother was also living in Otjomatamba and he was arguing that the cattle were for her. People, however, were not convinced as the ear tags indicated that the cattle belonged to his uncle, Kandungombe. Moreover, it was stated that Katjiriri was not settled, he only came into the place as a worker. Eventually, it was agreed that his uncle be called to Otjomatamba for him to account for his cattle.

Meetings were symbolic and performative and worked (literally) towards enforcing respect and recognition as much as grazing boundaries and specific norms. Attempts to sanction forceful settlement practices were also undercut by ongoing drought-related livestock movements by those who were settling because of drought (*ovarise*) and the reciprocal demands this placed on people and places. Additionally, the dividing lines between residents and newcomers were crosscut by multiple other alliances and relatedness⁸⁶² which, in turn, shaped how micro and place-based politics were practiced and negotiated.



⁸⁶² Lentz, “Land,” 48.

By December homesteads from Okarumbu moved to Otjize due to the arrival of early rains and the growing demand for much-needed grazing. Several homesteads from Otjomatimba proceeded to move livestock to Otjize as grazing there also dwindled. In late January 2016, we met with Unaro, who had also joined the seasonal migration to Otjize. His cattle-post stood in the upper part of the place on top of a small hill, with temporary dome-shaped shelters constructed from wooden poles, heavy-duty black plastic and old tents, and a mosquito net creating a protective layer inside. He explained that he had had to travel to Windhoek to attend a court hearing on a particular day and had been informed. However, he did not consider hiring a lawyer as he did not know what he had done wrong.

Conservancies and the politics of exclusion

At the beginning of 2016, as the legal case dragged on in Windhoek, there was a rumour that the 'Himba' homesteads at Otjondunda wanted to establish their own conservancy. To discuss the issue, I met with Kandungombe Mumbura sometime later, who was from Otjondunda and who had also been discussed in relation to livestock movements into Otjomatimba. He⁸⁶³ explained that many of the Himba homesteads settled at Otjondunda were not yet members of the Anabeb conservancy due to their settlement still being a matter of contention:

K: They are not members of the conservancy, we didn't permit them because they didn't ask and they settled illegally. They are troubling us, look at how they are dividing places by force. Therefore, they said they have been here for 10 years so they must be accepted. We told them even if you have resided for 10 or 5 years you are strangers here and you were not permitted to stay here. We have said you must go back where you came from and come and follow the correct procedures to be members of the conservancy, you will not benefit here because you are strangers here and you don't have legal papers from your headman, so you are just strangers.

E: Meaning that they have to take all their livestock back first and then come back to ask?

K: Yes, legally, is what we are saying but they don't understand.

K: When you are legally permitted you will be monitored for five years and another five years to see how you will behave yourself, then you will go to the office and be registered and when you are coming from there you will have to provide a clearance that you have left the other conservancy and you want to become a member of the new one, e.g. if you are coming from Opuwo you must be accompanied by a letter stating that you have been a member of that conservancy and now you are coming to join another one.

U: Who will give you this letter?

K: The headman where you are coming from must give you this letter.

By refusing conservancy membership, the 'newcomer' Himba homesteads in Otjondunda thus were symbolically and materially excluded and relegated to ongoing strangerhood and non-belonging. Here then conservancy membership was mobilised as a technology of exclusion. However, experiences of being denied membership and thus residency eventually led the excluded homesteads to express their

⁸⁶³ 17.04.2016, recorded interview, Khowarib

desire to establish their own conservancy within the already existing Anabeb conservancy. This request was, however, refused by the TAs active in this conservancy, as well as by the regional authorities and state. As Moore⁸⁶⁴ has noted, “situated struggles over territory are themselves highly territorialized; they have constitutive spatial politics”. Thus, actors were drawing on different technologies and tactics within “multiple fields of power”⁸⁶⁵ and across different scales to sanction and contest what was perceived to be the ongoing forceful settlement of households and their livestock herds within different parts of southern Kaoko – including both appeals to the state and state law; local deliberations and dispute-resolution institutions and practices; the mobilisation of conservancy membership; and, the locking-up of boreholes in attempts to control grazing boundaries.

These micro-politics of place pointed to the reality that the ongoing strengthening of one’s claims to long-term use and access to resources and belonging was an ongoing and negotiated process, a process which could not rely on force or conflict but rather was driven by the continual building of consensus and recognition.⁸⁶⁶ Moreover, these situated and networked struggles over territorial control can be understood as ongoing “acts of localization”⁸⁶⁷, of the production of locality, and pointed to the “different scales or organization and control within which particular spaces (and places) are [and become] embedded”.⁸⁶⁸



A month later in February 2016, almost a year after the dispute, it was decided that the case would not go to court. Rather the lawyer would first re-assess the strength of their case. There was some discussion on collecting money for Muteze to travel to Windhoek as he was the main legal representative of the group and was needed for negotiations. Several months after my research ended, the court case was combined with another already ongoing legal case which concerned the settlement of households within the so-called ‘core conservation’ areas in some of the conservancies neighbouring Ozondundu and in southern Kaoko. Thus, to strengthen their legal standing and in the spirit of a growing movement to exert control over territories and land by specific political actors, different cases were thus subsumed into this larger legal battle, with conservancies now legally mobilised.

Although conservancies were not legally binding, nor held any traction concerning tenure, such settlement practices could be contested in appeals against “settlement in the commonage”⁸⁶⁹ – and according to the CLRA. The CLRA defines commonage as those areas excluding the homesteads and their immediate boundaries and as the commons shared for the grazing of livestock, its boundaries and conditions of usage are determined by the TAs. Thus, the gazetting of communal conservancies and the

⁸⁶⁴ Moore, “Subaltern,” 347.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid., 348

⁸⁶⁶ Lentz, “Land,” 42.

⁸⁶⁷ Arjun Appadurai, “The Production of Locality,” *Counterworks: Managing the diversity of knowledge* 204 (1995): 214.

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid., 215

⁸⁶⁹ Norman Tjombe, case lawyer, 12.10. 2016, unrecorded interview, Windhoek

design and implementation of the land-use zoning plans required the verification of the TAs as it concerned the ‘commonage’. With the verification of the TAs, later settlement in the core conservation areas could thus be legally disputed as these areas were legitimised through the TAs as being restricted to conservation rather than pastoral use. However, this case involved complex legalities – with some of the households having settled in ‘core conservation’ areas arguing for being lawful residents (*ovature*) who had their seasonal grazing in these areas long before the establishment of conservancies.

Moreover, this case also pointed to the ongoing tension between the demands for mobile land-use and flexible land-relations within this context – with livestock camps and seasonal cattle-posts often shifting depending on the availability of pastures – and the mapping of cartographic and rigid territorial and land-use boundaries and standardised models of land use which accompanied the gazetting of conservancies and registration and formalisation of land-rights. Additionally, it foregrounded the tensions between different land-use and livelihood practices, and, in particular, between wildlife conservation and pastoralism – especially during conditions of drought and economic strain.

Conclusion

This chapter has described some of the happenings after the newcomers’ exodus from Ozondundu following the two-week-long deliberations and the eventual mobilisation of larger socio-political networks. In particular, I took a closer look at how the dispute was embedded both within struggles over the reiteration and refashioning of specific norms and rules governing settlement and access-rights, the distribution of authority in reconfiguring these normative orders, and wider, longer-standing, and interwoven struggles over land, resources, territory and belonging between the different chieftaincies and factions within Kaoko. These struggles were also articulated through an intertwined loss of political authority and land, and the perceived marginalisation of particular groups within regional governance structures.

Friedman has argued that within Kaoko, state and customary orders are dynamic and evolve relative to each other, with the boundaries separating them being porous and shifting, and with this increasingly giving way to “legal hybridity”⁸⁷⁰ – with both local and state actors and traditional and magistrate courts borrowing, integrating, and translating between multiple legal and jural sensibilities. This “legal hybridity” was also evident during the dispute with key actors continually drawing on both bureaucratic and performative ways of knowing towards deliberating, asserting, and producing legitimacy – and with legitimacy having to be negotiated simultaneously in relation to (re)establishing local-level recognition and consensus, and to the state bureaucratic procedures and law, and the TAs. Due to the constitutional protection of land-rights within communal lands, and the existence of multiple

⁸⁷⁰ Friedman, *Imagining*, 173.

and overlapping jurisdictions in southern Kaoko, unresolved land disputes have to be legally addressed through the state's judicial system and thus through the High Court in the capital city.

At the same time, local-state relations within Kaoko continue to be shaped by a heritage of ambiguity, uncertainty and marginality⁸⁷¹ – with the ongoing mapping of politico-legal, decentralisation and tenure reforms onto Kaoko's culturally and historically contingent contexts fostering ambiguities with regards to the constitution and distribution of authority, and the criteria governing the constitution of citizenship and long-term ownership over land-based resources (expressed here as a concern for land).⁸⁷² On the one hand, there has been a drive for the formalisation of land-rights and thus for individual land claims to be registered and institutionalised. Although this process has largely been ignored by Kaokolanders due to the ways it conflicted with local and mobile land-relations, rumours regarding the process and anticipation of such claims were interpreted as driving regional migration patterns, pastoral mobilities and forceful settlement practices.⁸⁷³ On the other hand, the emerging alliances between the state-recognised chiefs and TAs and global indigeneity discourses were being read as fostering an 'ethnic' or group bias concerning the (state) governing of rights to land-access – with this process experienced and seen by some as leading to the dissolution of the prior political dominance of a minority group and of the 'Herero' or more specifically the Ndamuranda Herero faction.

The dispute and the legal case that eventually followed, primarily concerned those who were perceived as having settled with force (*ovature wokomasa*) or with arrogance (*ovature ovana manjengu*). However, at the same time, the legal case articulated a critique against the TAs and the state – specifically concerning rights-based discourses, the more centralised distribution of legal authority and power in governing the 'customary' politico-legal domain and land-access, and against the perceived favouring of groups within regional political authority structures. Thus, the initial legal case taken to the High Court was also against the state and the Lands Board, as overseers of the allocation of communal land-rights. In doing, particular headmen and political leaders were re-asserting and re-establishing their political allegiance, both as a means to strengthen their claims to political power and in seeking and assembling legitimacy through state law. However, eventually, and given that their case was not supported by the state recognised TAs, conservancies were mobilised to try and legally contest the ongoing integration of newcomers across southern Kaoko as well as various chronologies of place-formation and integration.

Nevertheless, as I have shown, the micro-politics of place and belonging was still very much in the hands of resident homesteads, with different actors mobilising a range of different tactics and socio-spatial practices in attempts to control grazing boundaries, assert authority, or enact a politics of belonging, inclusion and/or exclusion. This included denying newcomers conservancy membership, the

⁸⁷¹ Van Wolputte, "Vicious," 81; Friedman, "Cultivating."

⁸⁷² Also see Carola Lentz, "Decentralization, the State and Conflicts over Local Boundaries in Northern Ghana," *Development and change* 37, no. 4 (2006).

⁸⁷³ Clemens Greiner, "Land-Use Change, Territorial Restructuring, and Economies of Anticipation in Dryland Kenya," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 10, no. 3 (2016): 534.

locking of boreholes, and the burning of old *kraals*. Locally rooted institutions of flexibility, reciprocity, and solidarity – especially concerning drought-related livestock movements – together with FMD restrictions on livestock movements and the ongoing drought, likewise complicated how struggles over land and resources were negotiated at a grassroots level. To some degree, such negotiations were giving way to growing relations of mistrust and antagonism, and the more rigid fashioning of boundaries between ‘Herero’ residents (*ovature*) and ‘Himba’ newcomers (*ovayenda*). In addition, it likewise imbued other livestock movements and in-migrations with ambiguity, despite these involving more socially legitimate mobilities, including by former residents and neighbouring kin, and demanded that drought-related mobilities be negotiated in a more formalised and controlled manner.

Yet, shaping the micro-politics of place and belonging was also still the historical fissures within shared land-use communities, and divergent forms of political and factional belonging, with the newcomers’ ongoing negotiation of their social belonging and settlement and access-rights hinging on the shifting relations of solidarity and trust between residents, including relations – or lack thereof – of material and economic support within a context of inequality – and the co-governance of politically fragmented territories. Broadly speaking, the larger situation was fuelling the building and rekindling of alliances between the Ongango, Ombombo and Otjaptjapi ‘chieftaincies’, despite past struggles over succession, recognition and chieftaincy claims and fissions. Moreover, it was clear that this micro-politics of place and belonging alone was not enough to enforce grazing and territorial boundaries, with this eventually combined with lengthy local deliberations and state legal mechanisms, as well as renewed effort to codify ‘customary’ law and bureaucratised the allocation of land and grazing rights.

Concluding discussion and summary

“Locality, as the space of the colonial ‘customary’ or the neoliberal-democratic ‘community,’ appears thus as the place of a future anterior: a condition in which current practices of governance bring together elements from the past and a still-emergent present and in which the alchemy of precolonial, colonial, and early postcolonial temporalities are enmeshed”.⁸⁷⁴

This thesis centred on a particular land and grazing dispute. In focusing on this dispute, I drew on a situational analysis approach. Such an approach takes a particular event not as an illustration or example, but as the starting point for one’s ethnographic praxis and analysis, and as a diagnostic and emergent event. Moreover, it allows for a processual and practice-orientated approach towards questions of continuity and change and social conflict, examining these dynamics both as contingent, as well as open-ended and ongoing.⁸⁷⁵

My reasons for focusing on and delineating this dispute as a diagnostic event were due to the ongoing situation of increased land and grazing disputes and in some instances local level conflicts, specifically in southern Kaoko, and in recent years. These disputes were driven by north to south pastoral and household migrations which began in the mid-2000s, and which increased together with other regional livestock movements during an extended drought period starting in 2012. Broadly speaking, these disputes can be read as symptomatic of the historical and colonial encapsulation of Namibia’s north-western region, and growing demand for land-access and land-based resources such as pastures, within a context of pastoral lifeworlds, increased population and livestock numbers, and livestock wealth inequities, and larger climatic and environmental changes, including the loss of perennial grasses and instances of land degradation.⁸⁷⁶ Increasingly these disputes were shifting to the state courts, and in particular, to the High Court in the capital of Windhoek, and were negotiated within a post-colonial and legally pluralistic context.

This thesis critically explored what happened for a particular dispute to eventually end up at the level of the High Court. In doing so I detailed the grassroots level social navigation and negotiation of the dispute and the situation. Moreover, I examined three interrelated thematic threads through the dispute: the local-level (re)fashioning of overlapping and culturally-informed, colonial and post-colonial institutions of land governance, the social navigation of this legally pluralistic context and how

⁸⁷⁴ Juan Obarrio, “Time and Again: Locality as Future Anterior in Mozambique,” in *African Futures: Essays on Crisis, Emergence, and Possibility*, ed. Brian Goldstone and Juan Obarrio (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 189.

⁸⁷⁵ See Bruce Kapferer, “In the Event: Toward an Anthropology of Generic Moments,” *Social Analysis* 54, no. 3 (2010); Evens and Handelman, “ethnographic.”

⁸⁷⁶ Michael Bollig and Anja Schulte, “Environmental Change and Pastoral Perceptions: Degradation and Indigenous Knowledge in Two African Pastoral Communities,” *Human Ecology* 27, no. 3 (1999); Michael Bollig, “Success and Failure of CPR Management in an Arid Environment: Access to Pasture, Environment and Political Economy in Northwestern Namibia,” *The Changing Culture and Nature of Namibia: Case Studies*, Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2006.

this shaped and re-figured patterned modes and practices of pastoral mobility and migration in the region, and the emerging politics of belonging.

A large part of this thesis then was dedicated to analysing how historically-constituted institutions governing access-rights to pastures, water and land were practiced and were being (re)negotiated, through the dispute and the different encounters it generated between different socially and economically located persons and places, and between intersecting and multiple normative frameworks, knowledges and temporalities.⁸⁷⁷ Thus, I engaged with the complex ways in which emergent normative orders and authority relations were being reconstituted within specific “fields of human interaction that are organised by historically dynamic institutions and social forms”⁸⁷⁸ and how this was co-producing and contesting post-independent ‘communal’ tenure from the ground-up, and between localities and the state. As White has pointed out, “privileging the official genealogy of the rules at stake is somehow quite fundamentally to misrecognise the way that they acquire normative force in actual practices”.⁸⁷⁹

Post-independent state reforms have partially situated tenure systems within ‘communal’ lands within the domain of ‘customary’ law and authority. Within the context of southern Kaoko, and as illustrated, inherited ‘customary’ institutions governing access rights to land and land-based resources were still strongly informed by the norms and values rooted in the practices of kinship and ancestral and mobile land-relations, including long-standing cultural conceptions and valorisations of place (*otjirongo*) and place-belonging. In other words, rights to land and various user, temporary and access-rights to land-based resources were still intimately tied up both to one’s patri- and matriclan belonging and the everyday reckoning of extended kin relatedness and dual descent.⁸⁸⁰ In addition, the seasonal and localised rainfall patterns and endemic droughts shaped and continue to shape the social values governing the flexible and reciprocal sharing of and temporary access to pastures, including access across overlapping territories.⁸⁸¹

Yet, and as shown, these institutions were and continue to be simultaneously informed and shaped by changing pastoral and political economies and inherited ‘customary’ rules or laws (*oveta*) which took form with the mapping of chieftaincies and later ward boundaries – realised through the institutionalisation of South African colonial indirect rule (1917-1990), colonial livestock policies and patriarchal structures of rule. With time, rights to land had to be expressed through a colonial idiom of ethnic belonging and difference, with such politics of ethnicity eventually embedded in the formation of chieftaincies and affiliated chiefly lines, in intragroup struggles and conflict fuelled by colonial

⁸⁷⁷ Lieba Faier and Lisa Rofel, “Ethnographies of Encounter,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (2014).

⁸⁷⁸ White, “Custom,” 2.

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid., 3

⁸⁸⁰ Lentz, “Land,” 1.

⁸⁸¹ Kirsten Hastrup, “Water and the Configuration of Social Worlds: An Anthropological Perspective,” *Journal of Water Resource and Protection* 5, no. 04 (2013): 61.

discursive practices and favouritism, and in popular resistance against colonial rule. As Friedman⁸⁸² has shown, these processes gave rise to a factional split between different but also competing “politico-ethnic formations”, rooted in a politics of autochthony, and to new forms of intersecting social and political belonging. Thus, despite the ongoing importance of kinship, the negotiation of grazing rights and land-access were also (re)defined and subject to ongoing redefinition within emerging chieftaincies and later factional affiliation and belonging.⁸⁸³

As detailed in Chapters Two and Three, due to these complex colonial, political and frontier histories, eventually three Traditional Authorities were state-recognised post-independence, with other chieftaincy claims pending. In southern Kaoko, two dominant authorities were established and state-recognised, rooted in this long-standing factional dynamic, colonially-constituted political (and ethnicised) identities, and divergent migration histories: the Vita Thom Royal House and the Otjikaoko Traditional Authority. The last-mentioned was politically shaped by indigeneity and autochthonous claims and identified with a former ‘Himba’/‘Tjimba’ and ‘big group’ (*Otjimbumba*) section, whilst members of the Vita Thom Royal House were associated with those who had migrated and re-migrated into the region, including, from southern Angola, during the first decades of the 20th century (mostly as a result of the German colonial war and genocide) and with the legacy of a minority ‘Herero’ or ‘small group’ (*Okambumba*) section and the previous colonial state-supported elite.⁸⁸⁴ Moreover, although not officially recognised in southern Kaoko, many local leaders were also affiliated with the Ovaherero Traditional Authority, and with different chiefly lines within the TAs.

During the last three decades, these institutions were likewise enfolded into normative frameworks introduced through the mapping of post-colonial tenure reforms and the establishment of communal conservancies. Rights over land and land-based resources were now simultaneously expressed through conservancy membership, and rights-based citizenship and could be formalised through the state’s titling and registration process. Moreover, land-access and administration were to be legally governed through the state-recognised TAs, and in conjunction with the state via regional Land Boards. Importantly, and as shown, the state recognised TAs could not claim bounded and exclusive territorial jurisdiction – an assumed ‘ethnographic fact’ implicitly embedded with the Communal Land Reform Act and the Traditional Authorities Act – with most areas and places in southern Kaoko rather governed by multiple TAs. As Hinz⁸⁸⁵ has noted, the standardisation of ‘traditional’ or ‘customary’ authority structures through the TA Act was aimed at easing the state’s administrative functioning – however, due to the heterogeneity of inherited structures and colonial legacies of indirect rule, this standardisation and restructuring was and continues to be problematic in several Namibian contexts. For one, many groups who share political and/or cultural-linguistic

⁸⁸² Friedman, *Imagining*.

⁸⁸³ Lentz, “Land,” 1.

⁸⁸⁴ Friedman, “Making”; Friedman, *Imagining*.

⁸⁸⁵ Hinz, “Traditional,” 78–79.

affiliation and belonging are scattered across different regions and places. This social reality does not correspond to the legal-discursive attempts both by the TAs Act and CLRA to map particular ‘traditional communities’ onto bounded territories and governed by a set authority and ‘customary’ law – cartographic and socio-legal imaginings which are still reflective of the complex “colonial inheritances of postcolonial states”.⁸⁸⁶ Despite discussions as to revising these legislations, the ongoing mapping and translation of blueprint reforms in historically and legally diverse ‘communal lands’ continue to have real consequences and effects.

This thesis then explored how people, in socially navigating this legal pluralism, were continually engaged in rich “bricolage work”⁸⁸⁷ through drawing on these “sedimented layers”⁸⁸⁸ or palimpsest – with long-standing cultural and political institutional arrangements and organising principles, instead of being completely abandoned rather being refashioned and reproduced, and within changing political economies and ecologies. In particular, I traced how this palimpsest was being reconfigured, struggled over and/or reified – including through mobility practices – and analysed how this played out through intertwined struggles over authority, land, and belonging.

Already early in my research, it was evident that the disputed newcomers within Otjomattemba and the steady complaints about the proliferation of homesteads and livestock in the place were motivated not only by a shared concern for dwindling pastures but also by what was labelled as *opolotika* and the (contested) existence of two headmen (*ozosoromana*), each affiliated with an oppositional TA – yet with only one of them state-recognised. Chapter Three thus examined the intersecting normative frameworks and knowledge practices which were mobilised to assert and contest legitimate authority – specifically, the authority vested in the local institution of *osoromana*.⁸⁸⁹ As demonstrated, ritual authority vested in the practice of kinship, specifically patrilineal kinship, and seniority, and in the enactment and emplacement of first-comer claims, were still key culturally-informed institutions practiced in socially legitimising local claims to authority, including competing claims to being and becoming *osoromana*, and in rooting ancestral land-relations. Thus, evidenced was that locally, a “kin-group model of integration”⁸⁹⁰ was still strongly practiced in which the “the principle of precedence” within histories of place-formation was closely entangled with conceptions of authority – and especially the authority to govern land-access, and the settlement of newcomers. Historically, including in pre-colonial times, the distinction between first and late-comers was mobilised to organise both mobility and settlement frontiers,⁸⁹¹ with these institutional arrangements shaped by the rhizomatic dynamics of place-formation. Hence, these institutions were practiced as more permanent and ancestral

⁸⁸⁶ White, “Custom,” 5–6.

⁸⁸⁷ Frances Cleaver and Jessica de Koning, “Furthering Critical Institutionalism,” *International Journal of the Commons* 9, no. 1 (2015): 6.

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁹ Also see, Behr, Haer and Kromrey, “What,” 467.

⁸⁹⁰ Kopytoff, “Internal,” 16–17.

⁸⁹¹ Ibid. Lentz, “Land,” 14.

homesteads were established close to springs and river-beds and as previously politically open areas (subjectively and politically defined) and those used as cattle-posts and rangelands became settled by kin-based groups and through integrating strangers and late-comers through an idiom of kinship and dual descent reckoning.⁸⁹² This model was identified by Kopytoff⁸⁹³ in his seminal theory of the “African internal frontier” as a key characteristic of the evolution of political institutions across African frontier contexts which were socio-historically constituted through “many population movements of many kinds and dimensions”.

Yet, and as shown in Chapter Three, the authority vested in the institution of *osoromana* was simultaneously legitimised through mobilising an inherited patriarchal and hereditary model, institutionalised during colonial rule and former ward and chieftaincy boundaries, with such claims have become powerful tools in securing both local and state recognition. These intersecting normative frameworks were not mutually exclusive but were struggled over and informed each other, with past state-appointed headmen also culturally and socially legitimising their authority through for instance creating symbolic ties to the land and place. These struggles and contestations over the authority vested in the institution of local *osoromana* and local relations of authority also found expression in Otjomatamba’s contested place-genealogy as a settled place or a previous cattle-post belonging to Otjapitjapi. These local struggles over ‘customary’ authority were thus also a struggle over territorial integration – of how interrelated settled and cattle-post places were territorially integrated.

As noted, since the onset of colonial indirect rule, claims to authority and territory (previously rooted in kinship, seniority and first-come claims, as well as ‘bigmanship’) increasingly relied on and could be strengthened through colonial cartographic boundaries, ethnic belonging, and state recognition – with political actors, and especially ‘big’ and senior men, and different patrilineal clans strategically negotiating this process to secure land and resource claims within a wider landscape characterised both by contestation, mobility and colonial border-making. Yet, given the heterogeneity of Kaoko’s political and cultural histories, this process was cross-cut by ongoing political fragmentation. For example, some groups enacted their belonging to a larger pan-Herero society, including claiming affiliation to chiefly lines in central Namibia.⁸⁹⁴ Processes of political fragmentation were also fuelled by colonial indirect rule, which festered already existing tensions between groups and especially over competing claims to authority, land, and self-determination.

The mapping of ward boundaries thus took place and was negotiated over years, as local actors navigated the placement of boreholes, their intersecting chiefly, socio-political, and ethnic affiliation, and their positioning within the hierarchy of the regional political and patriarchal structure – between being and becoming councillors, sub-headmen, headmen and chiefs. Some shared land-use communities eventually sought autonomy from larger and contested chieftaincies in allocating livestock

⁸⁹² Kopytoff, “Internal.”

⁸⁹³ Kopytoff, “Internal,” 7.

⁸⁹⁴ See for instance, Bleckmann, “Colonial.”

permits and in dealing with the state and thus mobilised to establish their own ward – as was the case with Ozondundu. Nevertheless, at the same time and politically, homesteads affiliated with different lineages and later factions – with this scripting a continuous opening and closing, and the differential pathways and networks through which both pastoral mobility and access-rights to land-based resources could or could not be negotiated and with these networks cutting across ward boundaries. Such practices were indicative of how, despite the mapping of bounded ward and chieftaincy boundaries and attempts by the colonial state to produce “stable territories”,⁸⁹⁵ the making of territories here was cross-cut with long-standing political institutions in which territory and political authority were constituted through incorporation, integration and affiliation, rather than mutual exclusion, with such incorporation, especially between first-comer/late-comer relations and divergent forms of politico-ethnic belonging, orchestrated, defined and contested at different scales.⁸⁹⁶ Hence, there was both historical continuity and mutual interdependence between local and large-scale political organisation and dynamics, with one informing and shaping the other.⁸⁹⁷

As noted in Chapter Two, the rooting of legitimate authority at a regional level was eventually embedded within the hierarchical construction of first and latecomers and the kin-group model of integration. Hence, these institutions were transposed within the larger regional political formations, with some groups, and in the interwoven struggles over authority and land, construed as “intruders” and others as the “original” inhabitants.⁸⁹⁸ This politics of autochthony has to be understood relative to how historically constituted chieftaincies were also embedded within divergent patrilineal relatedness and mutually affiliated patri- and matrilineal clans, and thus likewise in the practice of kinship, in place, and competing local-level first-comer claims.⁸⁹⁹ However, these politics of autochthony were also fuelled by attempts to socially and symbolically legitimise claims to political authority, especially as a form of counter-claim in a context where particular groups, and especially the ‘small group’ or ‘Herero’ faction were perceived as having become the “rulers” through being favoured by the colonial state (see Chapter Two).⁹⁰⁰

Thus, ancestral validation was and continues to be negotiated and enacted both at a local and larger regional level and in changing contexts, with the colonial and post-colonial state and chieftaincies beyond Kaoko, as noted above, historically constituted as key outside sources of legitimacy for validating and recognising competing claims.⁹⁰¹ Moreover, locally, competing first-comer claims (as social and political constructs and narratives⁹⁰²) had to be articulated and re-articulated through situated practices which embed particular patrilineages and clans, and genealogies of kin-relatedness within the

⁸⁹⁵ Rizzo, *Gender*.

⁸⁹⁶ Lentz, “Land,” 3.

⁸⁹⁷ Kopytoff, “Internal,” 7,52.

⁸⁹⁸ Friedman, “Making”; Friedman, *Imagining*.

⁸⁹⁹ Lentz, “Land,” 14.

⁹⁰⁰ See, Friedman, *Imagining*; Bleckmann, “Colonial.”

⁹⁰¹ Friedman, “Making.”

⁹⁰² Lentz, “Land.”

landscape and places. This included for instance the location of graveyards and ancestral homesteads and shrines, including the ruins of such homesteads, and the social and political histories of wells and boreholes. Additionally, these claims were established and re-established through “oral knowledge”⁹⁰³ practices, including emplacing and performing divergent social migration histories and migratory pathways.⁹⁰⁴ Moreover, ancestral validation and authority were also and continue to be performed through mobilising colonial maps and borders and thus hereditary chieftaincy claims.

However, with the post-independent restructuring, the institution of local headmen was not formally given recognition within the newly introduced TA institutional blueprint. Rather, each TA was set to be headed by a chief and his/her normally twelve councillors. In adjusting to these requirements, some (although not all) headmen were thus incorporated into the new structure as councillors, yet at a local level continued to function as they had in the past and according to former ward boundaries as *ozosoromana*. However, despite still being relevant and practiced at the grass-roots level, post-independence these ward boundaries were also no longer formally recognised by the post-colonial state. Consequently, when conservancy borders had to be negotiated, many local headmen mobilised this process in an attempt to reaffirm their jurisdiction boundaries and claims to authority, at least symbolically and cartographically, and in the eyes of the state (including the TAs).⁹⁰⁵

Yet, with ward boundaries no longer state-recognised and conservancies holding no legal traction in terms of tenure, this still created opportunities and openings for already existing socio-political fissions within shared land-use communities to find expression, often through for instance competing first-come claims and the appointment of additional headmen, and for territorial claims to be re-negotiated. Hence, such openings generated a perceived “institutional vacuum” or “interstitial frontier” in southern Kaoko;⁹⁰⁶ it created land-areas which became once more politically defined and subjectively perceived as open to legitimate “intrusion”. Thus, former wards were increasingly co-governed by multiple *ozosoromana*, each vying for state-recognition through affiliating to oppositional TAs and through a local-level politics of place and intertwined notions of political and ritual authority.⁹⁰⁷

Fuelling this on a regional level and at a macro level was the lack of official territorial jurisdiction by the TAs *combined* with the legal power vested in them in the administration and allocation of land-access – with the different TAs each likewise appointing their own headmen in the hope to expand their territorial reach and followers, yet with official recognition of these headmen often constrained by the state-imposed institutional requirements and limits to the payroll. In addition, and already from the late-20th century onwards, these struggles between oppositional chieftaincies, headmen and TAs were also embedded within national party politics, with this, combined with the historically-

⁹⁰³ Rizzo, *Gender*.

⁹⁰⁴ Bleckmann, “Colonial.”

⁹⁰⁵ Bollig, “Socio”; Bollig, “Towards.”

⁹⁰⁶ Kopytoff, “Internal,” 16–17.

⁹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

constituted factional dynamic between the ‘big’ and ‘small’ group, adding another and highly politicised layer within a region historically dominated by oppositional parties. In other words, making paternal and recognition claims on the post-independent state increasingly hinged not only on the mobilisation of particular pasts and hereditary claims but also on performing one’s political belonging to the governing SWAPO party.⁹⁰⁸ Locally, shared land-use communities split and divided in terms of political belonging, with this, in turn, mobilising people, especially more marginal factions, to appoint their own headman to represent them, and, importantly, in their dealings with the post-independent state, including the TAs. Such practices pointed to local (re)interpretations of the institution of *osoromana* as a critical and local point of contact to the state, and hence as a political position, while simultaneously legitimised through claims to ritual authority.

As illustrated in this thesis, and as Friedman⁹⁰⁹ has shown, this plural, competing and post-independent claims to authority were however countered and contested. This was done through for instance weaving two opposing yet interrelated normative fields embodied by the notions of *ombazu* (custom) and *opolotika* respectively. On the one hand, through mobilising particular versions and understandings of the past and knowledge practices, inherited patriarchal political structures and territorial boundaries were legitimised as custom and thus associated with community and solidarity and construed as politically incontestable. On the other hand, through invoking *opolotika*, other and usually more recent claims to authority were socially and culturally de-legitimised and relegated to a normative field of division and conflict – as associated with post-independent party politics, and especially, with seeking state recognition. Thus, both the sources of custom and custom itself were disputed and were illustrative of how “customary tenure rules and institutions were, and continue to be, subject to multiple interpretations and claims, and are in themselves characterized by legal pluralism”.⁹¹⁰

These post-independent disputes over territorial integration and authority were also shaping the regional patterns and practices of pastoral mobility. Hence, the politically construed ‘institutional vacuum’ in the more politically fragmented parts of southern Kaoko not only opened up spaces for competing claims to authority and political belonging but also created novel avenues for negotiating access-rights and larger regional and pastoral migrations. Consequently, and since the 2000s, several Himba households migrated from northern into southern Kaoko, specifically to the Anabeb and Sesfontein conservancies at the southern reach of the Opuwo rural constituency, neighbouring Ozondundu. Many of these migrations involved the production of particular translocal place-relations, with ancestral homesteads and some cattle-posts still maintained in northern Kaoko, and only some junior family members, wives, nephews, or labourers managing the households, satellite cattle-posts, and herds in southern Kaoko. Moreover, during the subsequent years, several contested household and

⁹⁰⁸ Friedman, *Imagining*.

⁹⁰⁹ Friedman, *Imagining*, 225.

⁹¹⁰ Lentz, “Land,” 43.

pastoral migrations took place across and into southern Kaoko – including numerous smaller local movements of households and livestock across jurisdiction boundaries and especially during an extended drought period, starting in 2012.

During my research period in 2014-2016, many of these migrations were still contested, despite some households having lived and settled for instance in the Anabeb conservancy for several years and some more than a decade. Their contested settlement was rooted in rumours and assertions that their settlement was facilitated through a particular or one *osoromana*, who, in the hope of securing his local claims to authority and thus state recognition, had welcomed the arrival of newcomers, and validated their settlement through his affiliated state-recognised TA. Moreover, at a local level competing *ozosoromana* and residents detailed that several of these households were initially arriving on the premise of drought-related and thus temporary access-rights (*omuningire wourumbu*), yet subsequently refused to leave and later were joined by other family members, who brought along more livestock. Such mobilities and settlement practices were discursively and normatively situated as being fuelled by the practice of *opolotika*. These rumours and assertions foregrounded how, and as noted in Chapter Eight, claims to land and resources within this context could not be established through coercion alone, with these pastoral mobilities commented upon and valorised through specific situated discourses.

The circulating rumours and normative discourses inevitably also informed the dispute in Ozondundu. In Otjomatamba, and as detailed in Chapter Six, central to the dispute were households who formed part of what can be termed a larger “migratory drift”⁹¹¹ – Himba households who had migrated from northern Kaoko in the hope to, over time, become settled – to establish additional/alternative claims to land and pastures. As the drought reached southern Kaoko several of the Himba households migrated and/or moved livestock north into Ozondundu. Here too many residents were under the impression that temporary-access rights had been granted to these newcomers, together with several others from the neighbouring areas and other places in northern Kaoko severely affected by the drought. In mid-2014 however, a meeting was held and all of those who come due to the drought was asked to return to where they had come from, given the dwindling state of pastures, but most likely also due to growing fears regarding land-grabbing. By the time I started my research in November 2014, tensions were simmering. Those who had been asked to leave remained, and more households and livestock arrived, with some suspected of simply chasing their cattle into an existing *kraal*. Some claimed close kin-relatedness and/or being clientele to patrons who had initially been granted temporary access-rights, yet who left again. Others had constructed permanent homesteads and had been there for five years, claiming permanent settlement. Eventually, this situation culminated in the local-level dispute starting with the first meeting detailed in Chapter Five, followed by a series of meetings under the Leadwood Tree as described in Chapter Seven, and the mobilisation of wider socio-political

⁹¹¹ Diallo, “Processes.”

networks which led to the eventual exodus of the newcomer households and their livestock in mid-2015.

To better understand what was at stake in this situation, this thesis then took a closer look at the disputed mobilities and the politics of belonging, as well as how, locally, institutions governing access-rights to land, pastures and water were practiced and refashioned during the dispute and within a context of inherited institutional arrangements.⁹¹² As illustrated in Chapter Five, as a consequence of the heterogeneity of the different migrations and livestock movements into Ozondundu during the years prior, during the first dispute meeting several cases were raised and deliberated to differentiate which of these pastoral mobilities were socially legitimate – with the question of what is socially legitimate “always subject to contestation”.⁹¹³ Evident here was thus the centrality of situated adjudication in the governing of shared pastures and land. Thus, the differential belonging and intersecting social, economic, and political locatedness of the different newcomers had to be extricated and their genealogies of arrival discussed and collectively established. In doing so, belonging, and vernacular understandings of residency (*omaturiro*) were performed, specifically in relation to the Ozondundu boundaries and those considered residents (*ovature*).

Moreover, the norms governing both permanent and temporary access-rights to land and pastures were reiterated – that no one person had the right to allocate these rights without wider consultation with those considered resident homesteads and the approval of both of the *ozosoromana*. Hence, evident in this dispute were also the limits of the authority vested in the *ozosoromana*, with precedence given to collective deliberation, especially concerning land-access and residency. Yet also surfaced during this meeting was the struggle to clearly delineate the boundaries between those considered settled (*ovature*) and the newcomers or ‘those who are migrating’ (*ovayenda*). This struggle however should be read as an intentionally generated ambiguity, reflective of the flexibility and fuzziness which characterises group and territorial boundaries within this context, and with this being a key dynamic enabling and mediating pastoral mobility and relations of cooperation in shifting drylands and during times of drought. Thus, as Sullivan and Homewood⁹¹⁴ emphasise, within such pastoral contexts the “negotiation, between groups and individuals, is critical in enabling exchange and reciprocity, as is an ability to recognize potential alliances through the process of reckoning relationships.” The wider one’s networks, the larger the area over which one can potentially access and utilise resources, specifically pastures and water, with practices of exchange and reciprocity crucial to activating and maintaining such networks, and with both the wealthy and poor livestock owners

⁹¹² Cleaver and Koning, “Furthering,” 5.

⁹¹³ Ben Cousins, “More Than Socially Embedded: The Distinctive Character of ‘Communal Tenure’ regimes in South Africa and Its Implications for Land Policy,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 7, no. 3 (2007): 309.

⁹¹⁴ S. Sullivan and K. Homewood, “On Non-Equilibrium and Nomadism: Knowledge, Diversity and Global Modernity in Drylands,” in *Food Sovereignty, Agroecology and Biocultural Diversity: Constructing and Contesting Knowledge*, ed. Michel P. Pimbert, 1st, Routledge studies in food, society and the environment (London: Routledge, 2017), 135.

especially concerned with maintaining these. Hence, already during this first meeting, and despite newcomers being given 21 days to leave the place, emphasis was placed on welcoming these households back if needed in the future and given that they respect the set social norms.

Nevertheless, despite the ‘collective’ constituting the residents shifting and changing, and depending on (contested) histories of place-formation and territorial integration, during the dispute, the conservancy boundaries and membership were enacted as a powerful symbolic technology in asserting shared territorial belonging and land-use boundaries, and thus residency. Also evident during this first meeting was that the ‘customary’ norms and rules governing the allocation of both temporary access-rights to pastures and water, and residency were being re-negotiated and crafted *during* the dispute, and in response to the different cases discussed and deliberated, the rise of new forms of co-governance by multiple *ozosoromana*, and larger legal, political, and environmental changes.

As shown in Chapter Six, given the importance of the ongoing reckoning of relationships and the need for persons to negotiate their belonging, the allocation of access-rights within this context was still practiced in a highly situated and decentralised manner despite larger colonial tenure policies and recent state reforms.⁹¹⁵ Thus, it was reiterated that newcomers (and primarily the head of the homestead, or senior owner of the livestock) had to physically pay a visit to the place (without any livestock), and verbally negotiate access according to expected forms of sociality and mutual recognition (*okuningira ousemba*). Moreover, he/she was expected first to approach the local councillors and key residents (*ovature*) – especially those with who a kin relation could be established and first-comer homesteads – who then would take the message to the headmen who had the state-sanctioned authority (through the TAs) to issue livestock movement permits and according to inherited *oveta* (laws). Additionally, permanent settlement or residency rights had to be collectively decided on.

Such norms were place-based and depended on how interrelated settled and cattle-post places were territorially integrated. Yet, in practice, it was difficult for a person to travel to all the places and homesteads within a shared land-use community, and usually, a point of contact was found/made, with this usually close kin relative, senior councillor and/or senior person with ritual authority either informing the other residents, organising a meeting, or taking the message to the *ozosoromana*, and subsequently relaying the answer. Also evident during the dispute meeting, was that in practice some councillors and headmen had been allocating access-rights, especially drought-related and temporary-access-rights without wider consultation, while such rights difficult to deny once the livestock is already in the place. Throughout the dispute, it was thus emphasised that in the future all of Ozondundu’s residents had to collectively decide on residency rights within the boundaries of the conservancy and that no one person could allocate temporary-access rights without the permission of *both* the *ozosoromana*, preferably in written form. In addition, ideas for (re)establishing settlement committees and local ‘police’ to control mobilities were put forward.

⁹¹⁵ Cousins, “More,” 296, 304.

Furthermore, household migration and livestock movement between historically neighbouring and overlapping land-use communities, many of whom shared close kin-relatedness, were also often negotiated less formally, and usually only required that such movements be communicated beforehand in an act of mutual recognition. However, given the larger in-migrations into the region and the political divisiveness, such practices were also increasingly disputed, their genealogies of arrival questioned, and the status of their settlement intentionally imbued with ambiguity. As shown, this was done through for instance mobilising the conservancy boundaries, with this still creating or rather circumscribing the necessary space for manoeuvring and ongoing negotiation. In such cases, political belonging and affiliation strongly co-constituted kin-relatedness in delimiting one's agency to (re)negotiate residency and reciprocity – with the question of who imbues your case with ambiguity being one of power and authority and how shared land-use communities were divided.

Thus, in analysing the socio-legal particularities of the dispute, Chapter Six also detailed the different pastoral mobilities which constituted the disputed cases, including tracing their enfolded in heterogeneous but also patterned livestock movements and household and pastoral migrations. In doing so, I illustrated how pastoral mobilities had to be first of all socially and relationally navigated, and at the intersection of multiple and situated belonging(s). For one, some newcomer Himba households in Ozondundu, although still discussed during the meeting, were not asked to leave in 21 days and were in fact considered either settled (*ovature*) or with their settlement allocated a still ambiguous status. Thus, the belonging of various 'Himba' newcomers intersected with other levels of relatedness, and importantly, kinship, gender, and socio-political affiliation in both changing and dynamic ways, shaping ways of being and becoming (un)related to the resident homesteads and Ozondundu, and their agency in negotiating both grazing rights and their belonging.⁹¹⁶

Building on prior chapters, Chapter Six thus showed the often-strong disjuncture between official discourses of belonging and how relatedness is negotiated in practice. For instance, in detailing two cases raised during the first dispute meeting, I demonstrated how virilocal settlement norms were tactically navigated by married women – and in this case to facilitate the household migration of her affinal kin and livestock movements from northern Kaoko to Ozondundu. Although not asked to leave, these livestock movements and the household migration it entailed were still deliberated, and especially the residency of her affinal kin remained undecided. Nevertheless, this case foregrounded the importance of kinship in opening up possible avenues for establishing one's residency over the long term. Yet it also showed how kin-relatedness was still a matter of negotiation and of translating one's belonging through the everyday reckoning of relationships and dual descent along other cross-cutting lines of difference, including gender. In another case, a married woman in a polygynous marriage likewise navigated virilocal settlement norms to (re)establish a homestead in her home-place and to create multilocal residencies for herself to access pastures, economic autonomy, and independence. This

⁹¹⁶ Carsten, *After*, 82.

case, as it involved livestock movements into Ozondundu and again, independent movements by a married woman were likewise disputed and deliberated, yet mainly by the senior men. These cases pointed to how, regionally, gendered norms were plural and changing, and were being changed, especially through women's self-directed mobility and economic practices. Thus, persons were also transforming "their culturally inscribed normative repertoires through their social activities"⁹¹⁷ and practices. Furthermore, some of the new-comer Himba homesteads' in-migration were orchestrated by senior male heads of homesteads or patrons who were more closely related to key resident households, especially through intersecting matrilineal and political belonging. Hence, orchestrated regional livestock movements by wealthy patrons and other headmen simultaneously involved the household migration of junior kin and/or clients and their families, including some from northern Kaoko, with their residency hinging largely on these heads of homesteads, at least during the first years of their arrival. Moreover, and as discussed, what differentiated the disputed pastoral mobilities were primarily their genealogies of arrival, socially construed strangerhood and reasons for migrating.

To better understand what was fuelling these regional migrations, Chapter Six likewise explored the varied dimensions of pastoral mobility beyond the exclusively ecological and economic imperatives, including the diversity of kinetics that animated people and/or households to seek out alternative places and pastures. Although explored more directly in this chapter, this theme weaves throughout this thesis, given that pastoral and social mobilities are closely intertwined and often co-constitutive – each shaping the other in its movement. Thus, I showed how, together with experiences of drought, and the separation of larger herds within dryland environments, pastoral mobilities and the decision to move were motivated by several interrelated and intersectional kinetics, including, 1) desires to negate interpersonal conflict and maintain relations, 2) to create spatial and geographic distance between oneself and close kin due to fears and/or suspicions regarding witchcraft, 3) desires/needs for autonomy and independence, including economic autonomy, 4) desires/needs for social mobility, 5) due to affective place-attachment and love, 6) due to the close and affective life-bond between people's well-being and that of their herd, 7) to construct an ancestral homestead and/or move the ancestral shrine, 8) to establish additional/alternative claims to land over the long term, and 9), in anticipation of ongoing post-independent reforms – including communal land rights' titling and registration, the shifting VCF, and the opening up of land-access beyond the VCF.

Yet, these pastoral mobilities, as noted above, had to be socially and relational navigated, including within historically and culturally-constituted values and ways of knowing – such as with ancestral and unseen and occult realms and how this was affectively lived, interpreted, managed, and negotiated. Moreover, these mobilities were rooted in long-standing political institutions in which long term claims to land, pastures and territory both fuels and was fuelled by various and translocal livestock

⁹¹⁷ Nyamnjoh, "Chieftaincy," 234. In this assertion Nyamnjoh draws from the classical work of John L. Comaroff and Simon Roberts, *Rules and Processes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

and social movements, including regional household migrations, and with such movements orchestrated within particular hierarchical and gendered social power relations, including institutions of seniority and patronage. In addition, these mobilities had to be navigated within changing institutional arrangements, shifting drylands and micro habitats, disease ecologies, and growing demand for land-access, specifically pastures. Lastly, and as noted, different pastoral mobilities were also differentially valorised and commented upon.

As discussed, and illustrated in Chapter Six, the larger situation was also generating a particular politics of belonging rooted in two different and culturally-constituted models of pastoral land-use – with the differences between the two articulated through divergent environmental relatedness and land-use values, as well as through an idiom of ethnic difference. Within this discourse, ‘Himba’ mobility was construed as too nomadic, deviant, unsustainable, and only driven by an immediate concern for pastures and *their* pastoral futures. These politics of belonging was embedded within larger and circulating (colonial) ideologies of mobility and sedentariness, in which nomadism was situated as being environmentally destructive and as engendering negative social values. Yet, at the same time, it was expressing and differentiating a shared ‘Herero’ identity – with land understood as “central to both material livelihood and the politics of belonging”.⁹¹⁸ The dispute thus eventually stretched beyond factional and local level political divisions and generated commentaries on regional intragroup differences and inequalities – articulated here primarily as differences in livestock wealth and land-use values and relations. In essence, these politics of belonging were fuelled by attempts to circumscribe emerging normative orders – particularly to sanction the claiming of land and pastures through what was perceived as trickery and coercion. Hence, and as shown in Chapters Seven and Eight, it formed part of a larger process of seeking and assembling legitimisation and recognition relative to wider publics, including fellow residents and the state – with long-distance transhumance pastoral migration and particular forms of translocality (as discursively constituted by ‘Himba’ mobility) framed as not being conducive to conservancies, the sustainable use of pastures and land, and decentralised water-management.

Chapter Seven followed the dispute proceedings and deliberations after the newcomers who had been asked to leave in 21 days, refused to do so. I demonstrated how, to address this situation, residents, first of all, drew on vernacular dispute resolution institutions – with the dispute first and foremost dealt with on a local level and through several consecutive meetings (*ozombongarero*), animated by a politics of recognition, presence, conviviality and mutual obligations of respect and reciprocity. Hence, these institutions were still practiced and highly valued, especially for adequately managing the long-term maintenance of relationships and imbuing inherited institutions with normative power and authority. Yet, at the same time, the dispute was also characterised by the production of legal

⁹¹⁸ Lentz, “Land,” 37, 54.

hybridity and syncretism,⁹¹⁹ both through translocal social practices and the mobilisation of different logics and knowledges – especially in the face of resistance and avoidance tactics. Local (male) actors travelled between localities and scales of state and customary authority and governance, between the urban centres of Sesfontein and Opuwo, and between various networked affiliations in the search for agency to sanction the settlement of the newcomers. This legal syncretism was also enacted through for instance the performance of ‘procedure’ and paper artefacts and the presence of the police as key to assembling legitimacy in a legally plural context. Moreover, central to this deliberative process was the fostering of solidarity, the re-negotiation and mobilisation of wider socio-political networks, and the building of alliances. Hence, the dispute in Otjomatamba reverberated out and eventually neighbouring headmen, councillors and senior (male)heads of homesteads primarily from the historically connected, overlapping and socio-politically affiliated Ongango and Ombombo chieftaincies travelled to Otjomatamba and joined the deliberations. These networked, legally hybrid and political practices eventually lead to the out-migration and exodus of the newcomers.

As demonstrated in Chapter Eight, following this local-level deliberation in Otjomatamba, the group travelled together to various places to replicate this successful repulsion of homesteads whose settlement were contested. However, in many instances, these confrontations generated conflict and eventually all parties involved were advised to take up the issue legally, and through the state courts. Given that it concerns the forced expulsion of homestead and communal land rights, a legal case ultimately was pursued and opened with the High Court in Windhoek. This legal case was further motivated by the fact that many newcomers who had left Ozondundu during the dispute, unceremoniously returned with the onset of the dry-season a few weeks later and as FMD restrictions complicated regional livestock movements. This case however did not only involve the disputed settlement of particular homesteads but was also against the state and the Lands Board, and eventually against the TAs.

As shown, up until recently few settlement or temporary access-rights agreements were captured in written form. Rather, these agreements, given their inherent flexibility and especially during times of droughts, were mostly done verbally. Moreover, and importantly, given the patterns of land-use within Kaoko, including the prevalence of both multilocal residencies and translocal households, few to no households have taken up the formal state registration and titling of land-rights. Yet, with disputed settlement cases rising, some local headmen mobilised their affiliation to the state-recognised TAs to legally (de)legitimise these in writing, while others were suspected of having negotiated land-access through the chiefs directly. With legal power centralised in the state-recognised chiefs and TAs, these officeholders could technically allocate land access while side-stepping local social norms and hierarchies and situated forms of adjudication – especially in areas which were politically fragmented. Moreover, and as shown, this process was also driven by the cross-fertilisation between state and

⁹¹⁹ Friedman, *Imagining*; Benda-Beckmann and Benda-Beckmann, “dynamics,” 19.

customary authorities and national and oppositional party politics,⁹²⁰ with ‘headmanship’ redefined by some as local-level politicians and as part and parcel of the state, each seeking to expand their follower-base.

Furthermore, the legal case opened by the networked group of local headmen and councillors was flawed from the start, given that it did not have the official support of the TAs and the state-recognised chiefs, specifically the chief from the Vita Thom Royal House – the main authority represented by the group, and which was recognised in Kaoko. Locally, this was explained as due to the chiefs being all ‘Himba’ and to the ‘Himba’ ruling now. As illustrated, these ‘ethnic’ idioms were both political, socio-historical, and cultural identities, with such assertions illustrative of changing political and economic relations within the region – with the former ‘Herero’ and especially the ‘Ndamuranda’ elite increasingly perceiving themselves as being and becoming marginalised, including in the regional TAs and state structures. Such marginalisation was understood relative to for instance the rise of the global indigenous rights movement and the recognition afforded to the ‘Himba’ as indigenous peoples, with this further legitimising the ancestral validation of particular TAs, chiefs, and groups in a wider context, and to the exclusion of others. In addition, such marginalisation was read against the rise of rights-based citizenship – with some groups perceived and construed as misusing their constitutional rights in claiming access to land. And lastly, such assertions should be situated relative to histories of conflict and contestation in which particular relations of power and authority were previously bolstered by the colonial administration, and later perceived to be reified through claiming political belonging to the governing SWAPO party, and with others now understood to be mobilising in turn to undermine such claims – both socially and politically.

Thus, although the shift of vesting legal power in ‘customary’ authority and law in the governing of communal lands has been officially situated as a process of decentralisation, at the grass-roots level this process was viewed as becoming more centralised within the chiefs and TAs and consequently embroiled in long-standing struggles between different but also changing factions over authority, land and belonging. The legal case thus articulated grassroots assertions for self-determination, autonomy, and sovereignty in controlling territories – with these assertions driven by “place-based strategies that rely on attachment to territory and culture; and network strategies that enable social movements to enact a politics of scale from below”.⁹²¹ In enacting a politics of scale from below, and as noted, conservancies were powerful material and symbolic technologies for re-enforcing and re-asserting particular authority relations, jurisdiction boundaries and place-genealogies and for extending the bureaucratic procedures and power through which one’s belonging becomes formalised and through which exclusion could be performed, including legally. Yet, together with the opening up of the legal case (despite widespread critique against rights-based discourses), this also pointed to the

⁹²⁰ Friedman, *Imagining*.

⁹²¹ Escobar, *Territories*, 32.

open-ended and continuous relational configuration of heterogonous technologies, knowledges, and networks across diverse and spatially distributed sites in an attempt by particular (male) actors and groups to assemble and enact legal efficacy and re-assert authority over land and resources in a legally plural context.⁹²² Hence, given the lack of agency locally in controlling territories, people were engaged in rich bricolage work – drawing not only on different strategies, but also assembling these in a manner reflective of an understanding that consensus and recognition needed to be negotiated, extended and established at different scales and in relation both to the state and local residents. These processes – and what in fact can be considered ongoing and often tiresome work – in turn, were also refiguring both localities, institutions and the politics of belonging.

For one, through the dispute, alliances between particular local headmen and chieftaincies were (re)established, including affiliation to the Ovaherero TAs, and the recognition of ‘Herero’ leaders and headmen within the Vita Thom Royal House. Such weaving of alliances worked to territorially (re)incorporate Otjomatamba and Ozondundu within particular and larger socio-political networks and to reassert inherited relations of authority and ancestral land-relations. Additionally, by building alliances, this group expanded their territories and possibilities for pastoral mobility while simultaneously assembling political power to control territorial boundaries within larger shifting topographies power. Moreover, there was a renewed and collective drive by these affiliated headmen to standardise, codify, formalise, and bureaucratised ‘customary’ rules (*oveta*) governing the negotiation of access-rights, with these rules aimed at both curtailing as well as reinforcing the authority of *ozosoromana*. Such assertions built on an inherited territorial and tenurial model embodied by former ward, now conservancy boundaries – and aimed to embed land-use rules in the conservancy land-use plans – and with these rules administered by headmen.

Yet, at the same time, this model was also and had to be refashioned in response to plural authorities, and the growing need to set up structures and agreements for co-governance, especially between affiliated leaders and multiple headmen and councillors, and within a context still strongly shaped by collective practices of deliberation and situated adjudication. However, the question of co-governance was still strongly disputed – given the inseparable and interwoven relationship here between authority and land. As noted, some newcomers have mostly claimed land and grazing rights through affiliating to the oppositional TA – the Otjikaoko TA – their mobilities were thus also interpreted as invariably incorporating territories and making territorial claims in places historically governed rather through the Vita Thom Royal House and the Ovaherero TA and other chiefly lines, and with many of these mobilities simultaneously navigated within translocal place-relations, with ancestral land-relations thus enacted between northern and southern Kaoko. Moreover, and as illustrated in the legal case, ‘Himba’ customary law was invoked to contest the expulsion of particular homesteads and their livestock – with this pointing to how ‘custom’ was created through the state and with such claims resting

⁹²² George E. Marcus and Erkan Saka, “Assemblage,” *Theory, culture & society* 23, 2-3 (2006): 102.

on the assumption that this law applies to places across Kaoko. Such assertions carry a wider appeal, with the ‘Himba’ strongly associated with Kaoko within public and popular imagination and with this case now deliberated in a national context. Thus, given that this case shifted from grass-roots practices of situated adjudication to the High Court, this also meant that the boundaries of belonging defining group-based property and land rights were simultaneously being refigured and contested in a different and remote legal setting – with this potentially having consequences for future conditions of mobility and settlement in the region. In other words, local nuances and multivocality are lost in favour of fixed positions to be defended, making it difficult for the outcomes and judgements to be responsive to the socially and politically embeddedness of communal land-rights. This opens up questions of fairness and jurisprudence in a legally pluralistic context.

Yet, and as shown, the micro-politics of belonging was still largely in the hands of resident land-use communities – with people mobilising a range of place-based tactics to enact the non-belonging and exclusion of those whose settlement was disputed, including the burning down of *kraals*, locking of boreholes, refusing conservancy and WPA membership, excluding households from public or community events, and relegating households to ongoing strangerhood. Moreover, the ongoing forceful settlement practices and movement of livestock into shared pastures were generating tensions between households and between groups, and in some instances conflict.⁹²³ This was eroding of notions social personhood, generating mistrust, and challenging long-standing values of reciprocity and conviviality, especially in managing shared pastures during times of drought. Given this mistrust, the boundaries between ‘residents’ and ‘newcomers’ were becoming more rigidly defined (by specific groups), including through an ethnic idiom and the (re)construction and re-imagining of a shared ‘Herero’ identity as regionally differentiated, and as rooted in different culturally-constituted land-values, including place-attachment and more sedentary forms of land-use and governance.

These micro-politics of place and belonging were critical in (re)inscribing and (re)embedding specific ‘bundles’ of land-rights and overlapping user-rights, including grazing rights, both politically and socially, in legitimising or delegitimising different claims and interpretations, and thus in (re)weaving the institutional fabric needed to counter what was becoming or what was politically construed by some actors as an open-access common resource situation. Locally, this likewise entailed that authority and claims to authority be (re)established through ensuring that consensus is sought, including with homesteads differently aligned in terms of political belonging. Thus, given the legally plural context and despite the vesting of legal power with the state-recognised TAs in the allocation of land-access, ‘communal’ tenure was also refigured from the ground-up. However, resorting to state authorities and state law in circumscribing this process, and given the context of rights-based citizenship and the paradigm of individual land-rights and titling, this might mean that going forward and in the future rights to land and land-based resources will be more precisely defined, with newcomers drawing

⁹²³ Also see Cousins, “More,” 305.

on these technologies to legitimise their settlement and claims, and despite local exclusion and non-belonging, and with the hope of embedding their rights to land also socially and politically over time – including through the ongoing creation of satellite cattle-posts. If such applications are approved by the TAs, it would thus rest on the Land Boards to investigate counter-claims and on residents themselves to mobilise and be sufficiently versed in the process to protest.

Lastly, this thesis has demonstrated how ‘customary’ authorities and land governance continued to be enacted, practiced, and performed as the domain of senior men, with disputes such as these becoming key arenas for circumscribing patriarchal and male power. However, and through particular ethnographic examples, this thesis has touched on how women’s economic, pastoral and socio-spatial practices were continually inscribing various claims beyond the reach of patriarchal control as well as the state.⁹²⁴ Moreover, and in practice, the politics of place-making and the everyday production of translocal place-belonging had to be continually and relationally negotiated relative to female agency, embodiments and mobility, with women’s (im)mobility practices being crucial in the integration of different localities, places and cattle-posts, what it meant to be or become settled (*omaturiro*), and in performing social and political belonging. In addition, the post-independent context and almost ritual emphasis on ‘gender equality’ within the state apparatus were also opening up possibilities for future women-centred forms of political association and the refiguring of gendered and patriarchal norms which no longer can be culturally justified.

Given the ongoing, emergent, and open-ended dynamics of the case and the situation discussed in this thesis, several further critical questions remain. For one, how is growing relations of mistrust refiguring the reckoning of relationships as a key practice in opening and closing options for mobility and settlement? Can local customary institutions and communal tenure be refashioned to be responsive to the demands of co-governance and in a context of competing, overlapping and historically-constituted struggles over land, authority, and ancestral validation? Would this mean a de-coupling of ritual and political authority and how would this be realised? How will the ongoing push to formalise, bureaucratised, and codify ‘customary’ rules affect existing dynamics and norms, including the centrality of ambiguity and negotiability, and the political and social embeddedness of rights to land and land-based resources in enacting flexibility and reciprocity, maintaining relationships and accessing pastures, especially during times of extended droughts and dry-periods? Are local-level disputes going to give way to more conflicts and confrontations in the face of ongoing larger and anthropogenic-driven climatic and environmental changes, colonially-scripted lack of access to pastures and land, and growing population numbers? And lastly, what does this mean for visioning and realising pastoral futures, including the centrality of land and cattle for social and ancestral belonging, authority, political power and livelihoods?

⁹²⁴ Moore, “Subaltern,” 368.

Bibliography

- Adriansen, Hanne Kirstine. "Pastoral Mobility: A Review." *Nomadic Peoples* 9, 1/2 (2005): 207–14.
- Appadurai, Arjun. "The Production of Locality." *Counterworks: Managing the diversity of knowledge* 204 (1995): 225.
- Archambault, Caroline. "Fixing Families of Mobile Children: Recreating Kinship and Belonging Among Maasai Adoptees in Kenya." *Childhood* 17, no. 2 (2010): 229–42.
- Becker, Heike. "A Concise History of Gender, 'Tradition' and the State in Namibia." In Keulder; Namibia, *State, Society and Democracy*, 171–98.
- Becker, Heike, Emile Boonzaier, and Joy Owen. "Fieldwork in Shared Spaces: Positionality, Power and Ethics of Citizen Anthropologists in Southern Africa." *Anthropology Southern Africa* 28, 3-4 (2005): 123–32.
- Behr, Daniela, Roos Haer, and Daniela Kromrey. "What Is a Chief Without Land? Impact of Land Reforms on Power Structures in Namibia." *Regional & Federal Studies* 25, no. 5 (2015): 455–72.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13597566.2015.1114923>.
- Bell, Vikki. "Performativity and Belonging: An Introduction." *Theory, culture & society* 16, no. 2 (1999): 1–10.
- Benda-Beckmann, Franz von, and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann. "The Dynamics of Change and Continuity in Plural Legal Orders." *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law* 38, 53-54 (2006): 1–44.
- Berat, Lynn, and Robert J. Gordon. "Customary Law in Namibia: What Should Be Done." *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 24 (1991): 633.
- Bleckmann, Laura. "Poetry, Landscape and the Spatialisation of Collective Memory in Otjiherero Praise Poems." In *Atlas of Cultural and Environmental Change in Arid Africa*. Edited by Olaf Bubenzer, Andreas Bolten and Frank Darius. Africa praehistorica 21. Köln: Heinrich-Barth-Institut, 2007.
- Bleckmann, Laura. "From Remembering to Re-Membering and Resistance: A Performative Memory Practice of the Herero of Kaokoland." European Doctoral Seminar on Anthropology of Social Dynamics and Development, ULB Brussels, 2009. https://limo.libis.be/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=LIRIAS1796759&context=L&vid=Lirias&search_scope=Lirias&tab=default_tab&lang=en_US.
- Bleckmann, Laura. "Counter-Memories of the Namibian Independence War from Kaoko." Basler Afrika Bibliographien: The South African Empire: Researching South Africa's Legacies of Colonialism and Hegemony in 20th century Southern Africa, 2011. https://limo.libis.be/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=LIRIAS1796697&context=L&vid=Lirias&search_scope=Lirias&tab=default_tab&lang=en_US.
- Bleckmann, Laura. "Colonial Trajectories and Moving Memories: Performing Past and Identity in Southern Kaoko (Namibia)." Doctoral dissertation, Social and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute for Anthropological Research in Africa (IARA), Catholic University of Leuven, 2012.
- Bollig, M., and M. Schnegg. "Introduction: Specialisation and Diversification Among African Pastoral Societies." In Bollig; Schnegg; Wotzka, *Pastoralism in Africa*, 1–28.
- Bollig, Michael. "Contested Places. Graves and Graveyards in Himba Culture." *Anthropos*, 1997, 35–50.
- Bollig, Michael. "Risk and Risk Minimisation Among Himba Pastoralists in Northwestern Namibia." *Nomadic Peoples*, 1997, 66–89.
- Bollig, Michael. *"When War Came the Cattle Slept...": Himba Oral Traditions*. Köln: R. Koppe, 1997.
- Bollig, Michael. "Power and Trade in Precolonial and Early Colonial Northern Kaokoland 1860s-1940s." In Hayes, *Namibia Under South African Rule: Mobility & Containment, 1915-46*, 175–93.
- Bollig, Michael. "The Colonial Encapsulation of the North-Western Namibian Pastoral Economy." *Africa* 68, no. 04 (1998): 506–36.
- Bollig, Michael. "Framing Kaokoland." In *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History*. Edited by W. Hartmann, J. Silvester and P. Hayes, 164–70. Cape Town, South Africa: University of Cape Town Press, 1999.
- Bollig, Michael. *Risk Management in a Hazardous Environment: A Comparative Study of Two Pastoral Societies*. Studies in Human Ecology and Adaptation. New York: Springer, 2006.
<http://www.springer.com/gb/BLDSS>.
- Bollig, Michael. "Success and Failure of CPR Management in an Arid Environment: Access to Pasture, Environment and Political Economy in Northwestern Namibia." *The Changing Culture and Nature of Namibia: Case Studies*, Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2006, 37–68.
- Bollig, Michael. "Kinship, Ritual and Landscape Among the Himba of Northwest Namibia." In Bollig; Bubenzer, *African Landscapes*, 327–51.
- Bollig, Michael. "Chieftaincies and Chiefs in Northern Namibia: Intermediaries of Power Between Traditionalism, Modernization, and Democratization." In *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century*. Edited by Jost Dülffer and Marc Frey, 157–76. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

- Bollig, Michael. "Socio-Ecological Change and Institutional Development in a Pastoral Community in North-Western Namibia." In Bollig; Schnegg; Wotzka, *Pastoralism in Africa*, 316–40.
- Bollig, Michael. "Towards an Arid Eden? Boundary Making, Governance and Benefit Sharing and the Political Ecology of the "New Commons" of Kunene Region, Northern Namibia." *International Journal of the Commons* 10, no. 2 (2016): 771–99.
- Bollig, Michael, and Susanne Berzborn. "The Making of Local Traditions in a Global Setting. Indigenous Peoples' Organisations and Their Effects at the Local Level in Southern Africa." In *Between Resistance and Expansion: Explorations of Local Vitality in Africa*. Edited by Peter Probst, 297–329. Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004.
- Bollig, Michael, and Olaf Bubenzer, eds. *African Landscapes: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Studies in Human Ecology and Adaptation. New York: Springer, 2009.
- Bollig, Michael, and Heike Heinemann. "Nomadic Savages, Ochre People and Heroic Herders: Visual Presentations of the Himba of Namibia's Kaokoland." *Visual Anthropology* 15, 3-4 (2002): 267–312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08949460213911>.
- Bollig, Michael, and Elsemi Olwage. "The Political Ecology of Hunting in Namibia's Kaokoveld: From Dorsland Trekkers' Elephant Hunts to Trophy-Hunting in Contemporary Conservancies." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 34, no. 1 (2016): 61–79.
- Bollig, Michael, Michael Schnegg, and Hans-Peter Wotzka, eds. *Pastoralism in Africa: Past, Present, and Futures*. New York: Berghahn, 2013.
- Bollig, Michael, and Anja Schulte. "Environmental Change and Pastoral Perceptions: Degradation and Indigenous Knowledge in Two African Pastoral Communities." *Human Ecology* 27, no. 3 (1999): 493–514.
- Bollig, Michael, and Diego A. Menestrey Schwieger. "Fragmentation, Cooperation and Power: Institutional Dynamics in Natural Resource Governance in North-Western Namibia." *Human Ecology* 42, no. 2 (2014): 167–81.
- Borchgrevink, Axel. "Silencing Language: Of Anthropologists and Interpreters." *Ethnography* 4, no. 1 (2003): 95–121.
- Bourke, Lynsey, Sian Butcher, Nixon Chisonga, Jumaní Clarke, Frances Davies, and Jessica Thorn. "Fieldwork Stories: Negotiating Positionality, Power and Purpose." *Feminist Africa 13 Body Politics and Citizenship*, 2009.
- Brickell, Katherine, and Ayona Datta. "Introduction: Translocal Geographies." In *Translocal Geographies*, 17–34. Routledge, 2016.
- Buys, Gerhard L., and Shekutaamba V. V. Nambala. *History of the Church in Namibia, 1805-1990: An Introduction*. Gamsberg Macmillan, 2003.
- Caplan, Patricia. *Understanding Disputes: The Politics of Argument*. Berg Oxford, 1995.
- Carsten, Janet, ed. *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Carsten, Janet. *After Kinship*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Casey, Edward. *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. University of California Press, 2013.
- Claasen, P. "Reconciling Violent Resource Conflicts in the Kavango Region of Namibia." In *The Long Aftermath of War: Reconciliation and Transition in Namibia*. Edited by André Du Pisani, Reinhart Kössler and William A. Lindeke. Freiburger Beiträge zu Entwicklung und Politik 37. Freiburg, Br., Germany: Arnold Bergstraesser Institut, 2010.
- Cleaver, Frances, and Jessica de Koning. "Furthering Critical Institutionalism." *International Journal of the Commons* 9, no. 1 (2015).
- Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff. "Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony." *American Ethnologist* 26, no. 2 (1999): 279–303.
- Comaroff, John L. "Colonialism, Culture, and the Law: A Foreword." *Law & Social Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2001): 305–14.
- Comaroff, John L., and Simon Roberts. *Rules and Processes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Communal Land Reform Act. Republic of Namibia, Windhoek. 2002.
- Conquergood, Dwight. "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research." *TDR/The Drama Review* 46, no. 2 (2002): 145–56.
- Conquergood, Dwight. "Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics." In *Turning Points in Qualitative Research: Tying Knots in a Handkerchief*. Edited by Yvonna S. Lincoln and Norman K. Denzin, 351–74. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003.
- Cooper, Allan D. "The Institutionalization of Contract Labour in Namibia." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25, no. 1 (1999): 121–38.
- Costa, Anthony. "The Myth of Customary Law." *South African Journal on Human Rights* 14, no. 4 (1998): 525–38.

- Cousins, Ben. "More Than Socially Embedded: The Distinctive Character of 'Communal Tenure' regimes in South Africa and Its Implications for Land Policy." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 7, no. 3 (2007): 281–315.
- Cresswell, Tim. *Place: An Introduction*. John Wiley & Sons, 2014.
- Devisch, René. "The Shared Borderspace: A Rejoinder." In *The Postcolonial Turn: Re-Imagining Anthropology and Africa*. Edited by Rene Devisch and Francis B. Nyamnjoh, 197–272. Cameroon, Leiden: Langaa Publishing and Common Initiative Group and African Studies Centre, 2011.
- Diallo, Youssef. "Processes and Types of Pastoral Migration in Northern Côte D'Ivoire." *Mobile Africa: Changing Patterns of Movement in Africa and Beyond*, 2001, 153–68.
- Dieckmann, Ute. "'The Vast White Place': A History of the Etosh National Park in Namibia and the Hai//om." *Nomadic Peoples*, 2001, 125–53.
- Dieckmann, Ute. *Hai//om in the Etosha Region: A History of Colonial Settlement, Ethnicity and Nature Conservation*. Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2007.
- Eckert, Julia. "Rumours of Rights." In *Law Against the State: Ethnographic Forays into Law's Transformations*. Edited by Julia Eckert et al., 147–70. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Elinor, Ostrom. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Escobar, Arturo. "Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization." *Political geography* 20, no. 2 (2001): 139–74.
- Escobar, Arturo. *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Evens, Theodore M. S., and Don Handelman. "The Ethnographic Praxis of the Theory of Practice." *Social Analysis* 49, no. 3 (2005): 1–11.
- Faier, Lieba, and Lisa Rofel. "Ethnographies of Encounter." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (2014): 363–77.
- Foeken, Dick, and Samuel O. Owuor. "Multi-Spatial Livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa: Rural Farming by Urban Households—The Case of Nakuru, Town, Kenya." *Mobile Africa: Changing Patterns of Movement in Africa and Beyond*, 2001, 125–40.
- Forrest, Joshua Bernard. "The Drought Policy Bureaucracy, Decentralization, and Policy Networks in Post-Apartheid Namibia." *The American Review of Public Administration* 30, no. 3 (2000): 307–33.
- Förster, Larissa. *Postkoloniale Erinnerungslandschaften: Wie Deutsche Und Herero in Namibia Des Kriegs Von 1904 Gedenken*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2010.
- Friedman, John T. "Making Politics, Making History: Chiefship and the Post-Apartheid State in Namibia." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005): 23–52.
- Friedman, John T. "Making Politics, Making History: Chiefship and the Post-Apartheid State in Namibia." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005): 23–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070500035620>.
- Friedman, John T. "Cultivating Ambiguity in (Post-) Colonial Namibia: Reflections on 'History' and Conflict in Kaokoland." *Cambridge Anthropology*, 2007, 57–76.
- Friedman, John T. *Imagining the Post-Apartheid State: An Ethnographic Account of Namibia*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2011.
- Galaty, John G. "The Indigenisation of Pastoral Modernity: Territoriality, Mobility, and Poverty in Dryland Africa." *Pastoralism in Africa: past, present, and future*. New York: Berghahn, 2013, 473–510.
- Galton, Francis. "Recent Expedition into the Interior of South-Western Africa." *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 22 (1852): 140–63.
- Gargallo, Eduard. "Beyond Black and White: Ethnicity and Land Reform in Namibia." *Politique Africaine* N° 120, no. 4 (2010): 153–73.
- Geertz, Clifford. "Local Knowledge: Fact and Law in Comparative Perspective." *Local knowledge*, 1983.
- Geschiere, Peter. *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997.
- Geschiere, Peter. "Witchcraft and Modernity: Perspectives from Africa and Beyond." *Sorcery in the black Atlantic*, 2011, 233–58.
- Geschiere, Peter. *Witchcraft, Intimacy, and Trust: Africa in Comparison*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- Gewald, Jan-Bart. "Herero annual parades: commemorating to create." In *Afrikaner schreiben zurück: Texte und Bilder afrikanischer Ethnographen*. Edited by Heike Behrend and Thomas Geider, 131–51. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 1998.
- Gewald, Jan-Bart. *Herero Heroes: A Socio-Political History of the Herero of Namibia, 1890-1923*. Oxford: James Currey, 1999.
- Gewald, Jan-Bart. "Colonization, Genocide and Resurgence: The Herero of Namibia 1890-1933." *History*, 2000, 40.
- Gewald, Jan-Bart. "Flags, Funerals and Fanfares: Herero and Missionary Contestations of the Acceptable, 1900-1940." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 15, no. 1 (2002): 105–17.

- Gewald, Jan-Bart. "Herero Genocide in the Twentieth Century: Politics and Memory." *African dynamics*, 2003, 26.
- Gewald, Jan-Bart. "Imperial Germany and the Herero of Southern Africa: Genocide and the Quest for Recompense." *Genocide, war crimes & the west: History and complicity*, 2004, 59–77.
- Gewald, Jan-Bart. "On Becoming a Chief in the Kaokoveld, Colonial Namibia, 1916–25." *The Journal of African History* 52, no. 1 (2011): 23–42.
- Gibson, Gordon D. "Double Descent and Its Correlates Among the Herero of Ngamiland." *American Anthropologist* 58, no. 1 (1956): 109–39.
- Greiner, Clemens. "Patterns of Translocality: Migration, Livelihoods and Identities in Northwest Namibia." *Sociologus*, 2010, 131–61.
- Greiner, Clemens. "Land-Use Change, Territorial Restructuring, and Economies of Anticipation in Dryland Kenya." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 10, no. 3 (2016): 530–47.
- Greiner, Clemens, and Patrick Sakdapolrak. "Translocality: Concepts, Applications and Emerging Research Perspectives." *Geography Compass* 7, no. 5 (2013): 373–84.
- Gupta, Akhil. "Messy Bureaucracies." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3, no. 3 (2013): 435–40.
- Gupta, Akhil, and James Ferguson. "Discipline and Practice: 'The Field' as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology." *Anthropological locations: Boundaries and grounds of a field science* 100 (1997): 1–47.
- Hannam, Kevin, Mimi Sheller, and John Urry. "Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings." *Mobilities* 1, no. 1 (2006): 1–22.
- Harring, Sidney L. "God Gave Us This Land: The Ovahimba, the Proposed Epupa Dam, the Independent Namibian State, and Law and Development in Africa." *Georgetown International Environmental Law Review* 14 (2001): 35.
- Harring, Sidney L., and Willem Odendaal. *"God Stopped Making Land!": Land Rights, Conflict and Law in Namibia's Caprivi Region*. Legal Assistance Center, 2012.
- Hastrup, Kirsten. "Anthropological Knowledge Incorporated." In *Social Experience and Anthropological Knowledge*. Edited by Kirsten Hastrup and Peter Hervik, 168–80. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Hastrup, Kirsten. "Getting It Right: Knowledge and Evidence in Anthropology." *Anthropological Theory* 4, no. 4 (2004): 455–72.
- Hastrup, Kirsten. "Water and the Configuration of Social Worlds: An Anthropological Perspective." *Journal of Water Resource and Protection* 5, no. 04 (2013): 59.
- Hayes, Patricia, ed. *Namibia Under South African Rule: Mobility & Containment, 1915–46*. Oxford: James Currey Publishers, 1998.
- Hendrickson, Hildi. "The 'Long' Dress and the Construction of Herero Identities in Southern Africa." *African Studies* 53, no. 2 (1994): 25–54.
- Hendrickson, Hildi. "Bodies and Flags: The Representation of Herero Identity in Colonial Namibia." In *Clothing and Difference: Embodied Identities in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa*. Edited by Hildi Hendrickson, 213–40. Body, commodity, text. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996.
- Hinz, Manfred O. "Traditional Governance and African Customary Law: Comparative Observations from a Namibian Perspective." *Human rights and the rule of law in Namibia*, 2008, 59–87.
- Hinz, Manfred O., and Helgard K. Patemann. *The Shade of New Leaves: Governance in Traditional Authority; a Southern African Perspective*. LIT Verlag Münster, 2006.
- Hinz, O. *Customary Law Ascertained Volume 3: The Customary Law of the Nama, Ovaherero, Ovambanderu, and San Communities of Namibia*. Windhoek: University of Namibia Press, 2016.
<http://gbv.ebib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=4439358>.
- Hitchcock, Robert K. "Refugees, Resettlement, and Land and Resource Conflicts: The Politics of Identity Among !Xun and Khwe San in Northeastern Namibia." *African Study Monographs* 33, no. 2 (2012): 73–132.
- Hodgson, Dorothy L. "Pastoralism, Patriarchy and History: Changing Gender Relations Among Maasai in Tanganyika, 1890–1940." *The Journal of African History* 40, no. 1 (1999): 41–65.
- Hodgson, Dorothy L. "Gender, Culture & the Myth of the Patriarchal Pastoralist." In Hodgson, *Rethinking Pastoralism in Africa*, 1–28.
- Hodgson, Dorothy Louise, ed. *Rethinking Pastoralism in Africa*. James Currey Ltd, 2000.
- Hull, Matthew S. "Documents and Bureaucracy." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 251–67.
- Jackson, Michael. *Existential Anthropology: Events, Exigencies and Effects*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2005.
- Jacobsohn, Margaret. "Negotiating Meaning and Change in Space and Material Culture: An Ethno-Archaeological Study Among Semi-Nomadic Himba and Herero Herders in North-Western Namibia." Doctoral Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1995.
- John, Law. "Actor Network Theory and Material Semiotics." In *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*. Edited by Bryan S. Turner, 141–58. John Wiley & Sons, 2016.

- Jones, Brian. "The Evolution of Namibia's Communal Conservancies." In *Community Rights, Conservation and Contested Land: The Politics of Natural Resource Governance in Africa*. Edited by Fred Nelson, 119–33. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Kapferer, Bruce. "Situations, Crisis, and the Anthropology of the Concrete: The Contribution of Max Gluckman." *Social Analysis* 49, no. 3 (2005): 85–122.
- Kapferer, Bruce. "In the Event: Toward an Anthropology of Generic Moments." *Social Analysis* 54, no. 3 (2010): 1–27.
- Kavari, J. U., and Laura E. Bleckmann. "Otjiherero Praises of Places." In Bollig; Bubenzer, *African Landscapes*, 473–500.
- Kavari, Jekura, Dag Henrichsen, and Larissa Förster. "Die Oturupa." *Ethnologica* 24 (2004): 154–63.
- Kavari, Jekura Uaurika. "Social Organisation, Religion and Cosmos of the Ovaherero." *Journal of Religion and Theology in Namibia* 3, no. 1 (2001): 116–60.
- Keulder, Christiaan. "Traditional Leaders." In Keulder; Namibia, *State, Society and Democracy*, 150–70.
- Keulder, Christiaan, and Macmillan Education Namibia, eds. *State, Society and Democracy* 3. Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers., 2000.
- Kopytoff, Igor. "The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture." In *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*. Edited by Igor Kopytoff, 3–86. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Legal Assistance Centre. "Our Land They Took": *San Land Rights Under Threat in Namibia*. Windhoek: Land, Environment and Development (LEAD) project, Legal Assistance Centres (LAC), 2006.
<http://www.lac.org.na/projects/lead/Pdf/landtheytook.pdf>.
- Leinaweaver, Jessaca. "Informal Kinship-based Fostering Around the World: Anthropological Findings." *Child development perspectives* 8, no. 3 (2014): 131–36.
- Lentz, Carola. "Decentralization, the State and Conflicts over Local Boundaries in Northern Ghana." *Development and change* 37, no. 4 (2006): 901–19.
- Lentz, Carola. "Land Rights and the Politics of Belonging in Africa: An Introduction." In *Land and the Politics of Belonging in West Africa*. Edited by Richard Kuba and Carola Lentz, 1–34. African Social Studies Series 9. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006.
- Lentz, Carola. "Land and the Politics of Belonging in Africa." In *African Alternatives*, 37–58. Brill, 2007.
- Lentz, Carola. *Land, Mobility, and Belonging in West Africa: Natives and Strangers*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.
- L'Estoile, Benoît de. "The Past as It Lives Now: An Anthropology of Colonial Legacies 1." *Social Anthropology* 16, no. 3 (2008): 267–79.
- Lieres, Bettina von. "Review Article New Perspectives on Citizenship in Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25, no. 1 (1999): 139–48.
- Mafeje, Archie. "The Ideology of 'Tribalism'." *The journal of modern African studies* 9, no. 2 (1971): 253–61.
- Malan, Johan S. *Peoples of Namibia*. Johannesburg: Rhino Publishers, 1995.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton studies in culture/power/history. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. "Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, no. 4 (2001): 651–64.
- Marcus, George E., and Erkan Saka. "Assemblage." *Theory, culture & society* 23, 2-3 (2006): 101–6.
- Massey, D. *For Space*. London: Sage Publications, Ltd, 2005.
- McGee, Kyle. *Latour and the Passage of Law*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015.
- Miescher, Giorgio. *Namibia's Red Line: The History of a Veterinary and Settlement Border*. New York: Springer, 2012.
- Miescher, Giorgio, and Dag Henrichsen, eds. *New Notes on Kaoko: The Northern Kunene Region (Namibia) In Texts and Photographs*. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2000.
- Miescher, Giorgio, and Lorena Rizzo. "Popular Pictorial Constructions of Kaoko in the 20th Century." In Miescher; Henrichsen, *New Notes on Kaoko*, 10–47.
- Moore, Donald S. "Subaltern Struggles and the Politics of Place: Remapping Resistance in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands." *Cultural anthropology* 13, no. 3 (1998): 344–81.
- Moore, Henrietta L., and Todd Sanders. *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities: Modernity, Witchcraft and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Moore, Sally Falk. *Social Facts and Fabrications" Customary" Law on Kilimanjaro, 1880-1980*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Moran, Mary H. "Social Thought and Commentary: Time and Place in the Anthropology of Events: A Diaspora Perspective on the Liberian Transition." *Anthropological Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (2005): 457–64.

- Mosimane, Alfons, and Julie A. Silva. "Boundary Making in Conservancies: The Namibian Experience." In *Cartographies of Nature: How Nature Conservation Animates Borders*. Edited by Maano Ramutsindela, 83–111. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.
- Muduva, Theodor Kupembona. "Grazing Rights in Communal Areas of a Post-Independent Namibia: A Case Study of a Grazing Dispute in Western Kavango Region." University of the Western Cape, 2014.
- Müller, Birgit, Anja Linstädter, Karin Frank, Michael Bollig, and Christian Wissel. "Learning from Local Knowledge: Modeling the Pastoral-nomadic Range Management of the Himba, Namibia." *Ecological Applications* 17, no. 7 (2007): 1857–75.
- Mushimba, J. "Disputed Land: Owambo Cattle Farmers in Ukwangali." In *Biodiversity and the Ancestors: Challenges to Customary and Environmental Law: Case Studies from Namibia*. Edited by Manfred O. Hinz and Olivier C. Ruppel, 75–87., 2008.
- Mushimba, Julia. *The Land Dispute Between the Owambo Cattle Farmers and the Ukwangali Traditional Authority*. Windhoek: University of Namibia, 2006.
- National Planning Commission, Namibia. "Kunene Regional Development Profile 2015: The Ultimate Frontier." 2015.
- Nature Conservation Amendment Act (Act 5 of 1996). Republic of Namibia, Windhoek. 1996.
- Neve, Geert de. "Hidden Reflexivity: Assistants, Informants and the Creation of Anthropological Knowledge." In *Critical Journeys: The Making of Anthropologists*. Edited by Geert de Neve and Maya Unnithan-Kumar, 77–100. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Nyamnjoh, Francis B. "Chieftaincy and the Negotiation of Might and Right in Botswana Democracy." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 21, no. 2 (2003): 233–50.
- Nyamnjoh, Francis B. "Blinded by Sight: Divining the Future of Anthropology in Africa." *Africa Spectrum*, 2012, 63–92.
- Nyamnjoh, Francis B. "Fiction and Reality of Mobility in Africa." *Citizenship Studies* 17, 6-7 (2013): 653–80.
- Obarrio, Juan. "Time and Again: Locality as Future Anterior in Mozambique." In *African Futures: Essays on Crisis, Emergence, and Possibility*. Edited by Brian Goldstone and Juan Obarrio, 181–95. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.
- Odendaal, Willem. *Elite Land Grabbing in Namibian Communal Areas and Its Impact on Subsistence Farmers' Livelihoods*. 2011.
- Owen-Smith, Garth L. *An Arid Eden: A Personal Account of Conservation in the Kaokoveld*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2010.
- Richters, Jochen. "Biomass Changes in North-Western Namibia: First Results from a Remote Sensing Modelling Approach." *EARSeL eProceedings* 4, no. 2 (2005): 157–70.
- Rizzo, Lorena. "NJ Van Warmelo: Anthropology and the Making of a Reserve." In Miescher; Henrichsen, *New Notes on Kaoko*, 189–206.
- Rizzo, Lorena. *Gender and Colonialism: A History of Kaoko in North-Western Namibia, 1870s-1950s*. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2012.
- Robins, Steven, Andrea Cornwall, and Bettina von Lieres. "Rethinking 'Citizenship' in the Postcolony." *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 6 (2008): 1069–86.
- Salazar, Noel B. "Towards an Anthropology of Cultural Mobilities." *Crossings: Journal of Migration & Culture* 1, no. 1 (2010): 53–68.
- Sanders, Todd. "Reconsidering Witchcraft: Postcolonial Africa and Analytic (Un) Certainties." *American Anthropologist* 105, no. 2 (2003): 338–52.
- Scelza, Brooke A. "Female Mobility and Postmarital Kin Access in a Patrilocal Society." *Human Nature* 22, no. 4 (2011): 377–93.
- Schnegg, Michael, and Michael Bollig. "Institutions Put to the Test: Community-Based Water Management in Namibia During a Drought." *Journal of Arid Environments* 124 (2016): 62–71.
- Shapi, Martin K. "Grazing Land Dispute Between VaKwangali and Ovakwanyama and Ovandonga Speaking People in Mpungu Constituency in the Kavango Region." University of Namibia, 2005.
- Silvester, Jeremy, Marion Wallace, and Patricia Hayes. "'Trees Never Meet'. Mobility and Containment: An Overview 1915-1946." In Hayes, *Namibia Under South African Rule: Mobility & Containment, 1915-46*, 3–48.
- Stals, E. L.P., and Antje Otto-Reiner. *Oorlog En Vrede Aan Die Kunene: Die Verhaal Van Kaptein Vita ("Oorlog") Tom, of Harunga 1863-1937*. Windhoek: Capital Press, 1999.
- Stassen, Nicol. *The Thirstland Trek, 1874-1881*. First edition. Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2016.
- Stone, Linda. *Kinship and Gender: An Introduction*. Westview Press, 2010.
- Sullivan, S., and K. Homewood. "On Non-Equilibrium and Nomadism: Knowledge, Diversity and Global Modernity in Drylands." In *Food Sovereignty, Agroecology and Biocultural Diversity: Constructing and Contesting Knowledge*. Edited by Michel P. Pimbert. 1st, 115–68. Routledge studies in food, society and the environment. London: Routledge, 2017.

- Sullivan, Sian. "Gender, Ethnographic Myths & Community-Based Conservation in a Former Namibian 'Homeland'." In Hodgson, *Rethinking Pastoralism in Africa*, 142–64.
- Sullivan, Sian. "How Sustainable Is the Communalizing Discourse of 'New' Conservation." In *Conservation and Mobile Indigenous Peoples: Displacement, Forced Settlement, and Sustainable Development*. Edited by Dawn Chatty and Marcus Colchester, 158–87. Berghahn Books, 2002.
- Sullivan, Sian. "Maps and Memory, Rights and Relationships: Articulations of Global Modernity and Local Dwelling in Delineating Land for a Communal-Area Conservancy in North-West Namibia." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2005.
- Sullivan, Sian. "Maps and Memory, Rights and Relationships: Articulations of Global Modernity and Local Dwelling in Delineating Land for a Communal-Area Conservancy in North-West Namibia." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2005.
- Taylor, Julie J. "Post-Apartheid 'Tribalism'? Land, Ethnicity and Discourses on San Subversion in West Caprivi, Namibia." *African Studies* 67, no. 3 (2008): 315–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00020180802504999>.
- Taylor, Julie J. *Naming the Land: San Identity and Community Conservation in Namibia's West Caprivi*. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2012.
- Taylor, Julie Jennifer. "Naming the Land: Identity, Authority and Environment in Namibia's West Caprivi." Doctoral Dissertation, University of Oxford, 2008.
- Tim Ingold. "Against Space: Place, Movement, Knowledge." In *Boundless Worlds: An Anthropological Approach to Movement*. Edited by Peter W. Kirby, 29–43. Berghahn Books, 2008.
- Tönsjost, Silke. "Plants and Pastures. Local Knowledge on Livestock-Environment Relationships Among OvaHerero Pastoralists in North-Western Namibia." Master's dissertation, Institut für Ethnologie, Universität zu Köln, 2007.
- Tönsjost, Silke. *Umverteilung Und Egalität: Kapital Und Konsummuster Bei OvaHerero-Pastoralisten in Namibia*. Münster: LIT Verlag, 2013.
- Traditional Authorities Act. Republic of Namibia, Windhoek. 2000.
- Turner, Victor. "Dramatic Ritual/ritual Drama: Performative and Reflexive Anthropology." *The Kenyon Review* 1, no. 3 (1979): 80–93.
- Van Binsbergen, Wim M. J. "Introduction: The Dynamics of Power and the Rule of Law in Africa and Beyond: Theoretical Perspectives on Chiefs, the State, Agency, Customary Law, and Violence." In *The Dynamics of Power and the Rule of Law: Essays on Africa and Beyond; in Honour of Emile Adriaan B. Van Rouveroy Van Nieuwaal*. Edited by Wim M. J. Van Binsbergen, Riekje Pelgrim and Emile A. B. van Rouveroy Nieuwaal. Leiden: LIT Verlag, 2003.
- van der Westhuizen, Christi. *Sitting Pretty: White Afrikaans Women in Postapartheid South Africa*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2017.
- van Warmelo, Nicolaas Jacobus. *Notes on the Kaokoveld (South West Africa) And Its People* 26. Pretoria: Union of South Africa: Department of Native Affairs, 1951.
- Van Wolputte, Steven. "In Between House and Cattle Pen: Moving Spaces in Himbaland." In *People, Cattle and Land: Transformations of a Pastoral Society in Southwestern Africa*. Edited by M. Bollig and J. B. Gewald, 369–400. R. Köppe, 2000.
- Van Wolputte, Steven. *Material Culture in Himbaland, Northern Namibia*. Tervuren: Royal Museum for Central Africa, 2003.
- Van Wolputte, Steven. "Subject Disobedience: The Colonial Narrative and Native Counterworks in Northwestern Namibia, C. 1920–1975." *History and anthropology* 15, no. 2 (2004): 151–73.
- Van Wolputte, Steven. "The Political Ecology of Water in Northwest Namibia, 1915–1980." *Bulletin des séances= Mededelingen der zittingen* 52, no. 4 (2006): 459–77.
- Van Wolputte, Steven. "Cattle Works: Livestock Policy, Apartheid and Development in Northwest Namibia, C 1920–1980." *African Studies* 66, no. 1 (2007): 103–28.
- Van Wolputte, Steven, ed. *Borderlands and Frontiers in Africa*. LIT Verlag Münster, 2013.
- Van Wolputte, Steven. "Vicious Vets and Lazy Locals: Experimentation, Politics and CBPP in North-West Namibia, 1925–1980." *Journal of Namibian Studies* 13 (2013).
- Van Wolputte, Steven. "'The Natives Are Clever Enough': Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia and the Politics of Ambiguity in North-West Namibia." *Social Dynamics* 41, no. 1 (2015): 166–83.
- Van Wolputte, Steven. "Sex in Troubled Times: Moral Panic, Polyamory and Freedom in North-West Namibia." *Anthropology Southern Africa* 39, no. 1 (2016): 31–45.
- Van Wolputte, Steven. "Coming of Age and Authority: Milk as a Source of Power in Himbaland, Northern Namibia." In *Ageing in Africa: Sociolinguistic and Anthropological Approaches*. Edited by Makoni, Sinfree and Stroeken, Koen, 109–35. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Van Wolputte, Steven, Els Hoorelbeke, and Laura Bleckmann. "Fenced Frontiers and Murky Boundaries: Two Cases from Kaoko, Northern Namibia." In *Borderlands and Frontiers in Africa*. Edited by Steven Van Wolputte, 151. LIT Verlag Münster, 2013.

- Vigh, Henrik. "Motion Squared: A Second Look at the Concept of Social Navigation." *Anthropological Theory* 9, no. 4 (2009): 419–38.
- Wallace, Marion. *A History of Namibia: From the Beginning Until 1990*. With the assistance of with John Kinahan. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2011.
- Weichhart, Peter. "Multi-Local Living Arrangements—terminology Issues." *Mobil und doppelt sesshaft. Studien zur residenziellen Multilokalität. Institut für Geographie und Regionalforschung der Universität Wien, Vienna*, 2015, 61–82.
- Werner, Wolfgang. "A Brief History of Land Dispossession in Namibia." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19, no. 1 (1993): 135–46.
- Werner, Wolfgang. *From Communal Pastures to Enclosures: The Development of Land Tenure in Herero Reserves* 60. Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit, 1997.
- Werner, Wolfgang. *'What Has Happened Has Happened': The Complexity of Fencing in Namibia's Communal Areas*. Windhoek: Land, Environment and Development Project, Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), 2011.
- Werner, Wolfgang. "Tenure Reform in Namibia's Communal Areas." *Journal of Namibian Studies: History Politics Culture* 18 (2015): 67–87.
- Werner, Wolfgang. "Land Tenure and Governance on Communal Land in Namibia." Paper presented for the Second National Land Conference, September 2018.
- White, Hylton. "Custom, Normativity and Authority in South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41, no. 5 (2015): 1005–17.
- Widlok, Thomas. "Good or Bad, My Heritage: Customary Legal Practices and the Liberal Constitution of Postcolonial States." *Anthropology Southern Africa* 31, 1-2 (2008): 13–19.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23323256.2008.11499959>.
- Widlok, Thomas. "The Decision to Move: Being Mobile and Being Rational in Comparative Anthropological Perspective." In *Knowledge and Action*. Edited by Peter Meusbürger, Benno Werlen and Laura Suarsana, 253–65. Knowledge and Space, 1877-9220 9. Cham: Springer Open, 2017.
- Withers, Charles W. J. "Place and the "Spatial Turn" in Geography and in History." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70, no. 4 (2009): 637–58.
- Youkhana, Eva. "A Conceptual Shift in Studies of Belonging and the Politics of Belonging." *Social Inclusion* 3, no. 4 (2015): 10–24.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging." *Patterns of prejudice* 40, no. 3 (2006): 197–214.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics." *European journal of women's studies* 13, no. 3 (2006): 193–209.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations*. London: Sage, 2011.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. "Power, Intersectionality and the Politics of Belonging." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Gender and Development*, 367–81. Springer, 2016.

