

Born in Etosha

Living and Learning in the Wild



Ute Dieckmann

Produced by the **Xoms |Omis Project** within the Land, Environment and Development Project of the Legal Assistance Centre.

© The author, the photographers, the Xoms |Omis Project within the Land, Environment and Development Project of the Legal Assistance Centre, the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA), and the Genographic Legacy Fund of the National Geographic Society, 2012

All rights reserved.

Printed by John Meinert Printing (Pty) Ltd in Windhoek.

ISBN 978-99945-61-43-8

PUBLISHER'S CONTACT DETAILS

Legal Assistance Centre

📍 4 Marien Ngouabi Street (former name Körner Street), Windhoek
✉ PO Box 604, Windhoek, Namibia
☎ +264 (61) 223356
📠 +264 (61) 234953
📧 info@lac.org.na
🌐 <http://www.lac.org.na>



THE
GENOGRAPHIC
PROJECT

Born in Etosha

Living and Learning in the Wild

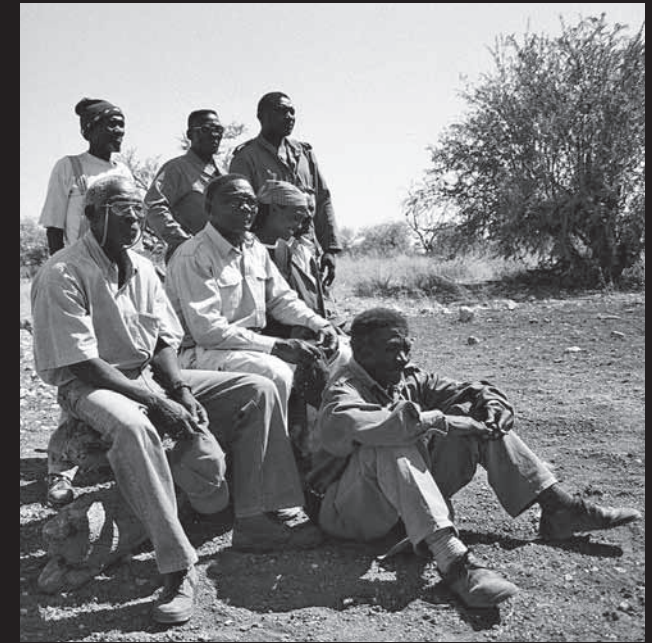


Ute Dieckmann

Acknowledgements

On behalf of both the Xoms |Omis Project of the Legal Assistance Centre and the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA), the author thanks the following people for their contributions to the project:

- the Hai||om elders, who have been the main drivers of the project, for the patience and selflessness with which they shared their knowledge and memories with me; in particular, I pay tribute to Hans Haneb, Willem Dauxab and Jacob |Uibeb, who died during the course of the project; to Kadisen ||Khumub and Jan Tsumib, who reside in Okaukuejo and Oshivelo; and to Ticky !Noboses, who resides on the farm Bellalaika;
- all the other Hai||om who contributed in one way or another to the production of this book;
- the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, for permission to conduct research in Etosha National Park;
- William Hofmeyr, for editing and additional writing; Avrielle du Plessis, for proofreading; Andrew Weir, for helping to conceptualise the design, and for designing the front and back covers and the imprint and title pages; and Perri Caplan, for the layout;
- Prof. Wilfrid Haacke, for assistance with Hai||om terminology and orthography;
- Dr Gillian Maggs-Kölling (Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry), Silke Rügheimer (National Botanical Research Institute), and Karen Nott (MCA Namibia), for technical assistance with botanical matters;
- the institutions and individuals who contributed photographs and maps, who are named in the “Photo credits” at the back of this book;
- the Embassy of Finland in Namibia, Namdeb (Namibia), Comic Relief (England), the German Research Council (DFG), Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst, Germany (EED), Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, Germany (GIZ), and the German Embassy in Namibia, for providing financial support for the overall documentation project; and
- the National Geographic Society, for sponsoring the book project through the Genographic Legacy Fund.



For the
Hai||om elders
Kadisen ||Khumub,
Willem Dauxab,
Jan Tsumib,
Hans Haneb,
Jacob Uibeb,
Ticky !Noboses
and all their grandchildren;
and for my son Tom

The Xoms |Omis Project

Available publications on Etosha focus mainly on the wildlife and natural resources of the park, while the few published histories are written from the perspective of the game wardens, colonial officials and policy-makers responsible for its conception and development. No popular publication pays much attention to people such as the Hai||om who lived in the area, and whose lives the proclamation of the park completely transformed.

The documentation of Hai||om cultural heritage in Etosha National Park began in 1999 as a small, collaborative project involving researchers from the University of Cologne, the University of Cambridge and a group of Hai||om elders who were determined to ensure that the record of their cultural history did not die with them. As the process gained momentum, it became formalised into the Xoms |Omis Project (Etosha Heritage Project), now managed through the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) in Windhoek.

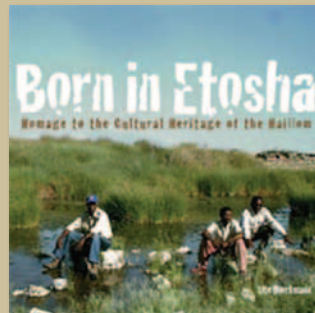
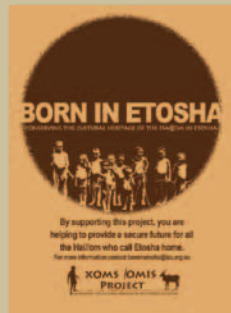
It is the aim of the Xoms |Omis Project that the documentation of Hai||om cultural heritage should deliver a unique body of cultural, historical and environmental knowledge. The documentation was undertaken in

partnership with the Multidisciplinary Collaborative Research Centre (ACACIA) at the University of Cologne, Germany; the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA), Windhoek, Namibia; Open Channels, London, England; and Strata 360, Montreal, Canada.

The publication makes no claim to being comprehensive or systematic; of necessity, it is selective in its sources and focus. Similarly, it does not present a version of a “pure” Hai||om past that was free from external influences; the reality is that the Hai||om have had contact with other indigenous ethnic groups for many centuries, and with white settlers for well over a century.

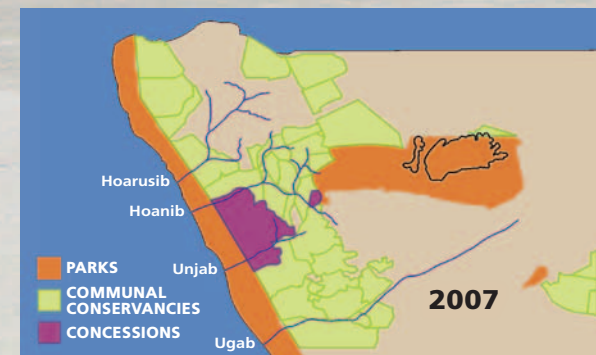
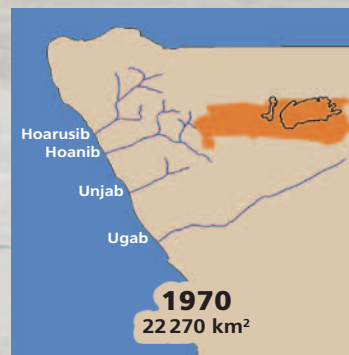
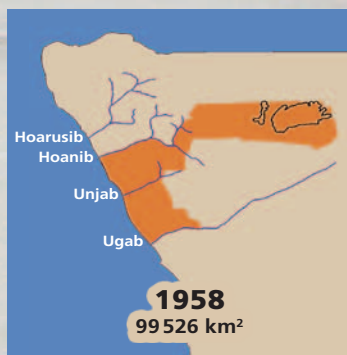
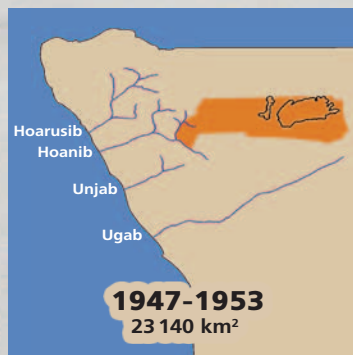
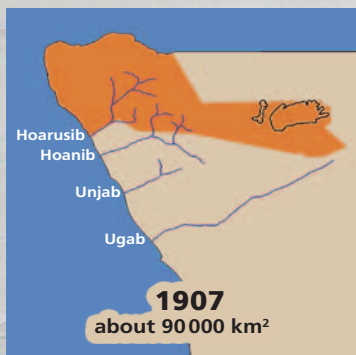
It is the author’s hope that by reflecting on aspects of the past, and comparing them with current realities, Hai||om children will continue to have pride in and be enriched by their cultural heritage. The value of such a reflective process need not be limited to Hai||om children, however. Children of all cultural backgrounds can benefit from learning something of the profoundly different experiences of Hai||om children in the past, and from comparing these realities to their own.

Some of the materials produced by the Xoms |Omis Project. They can be obtained at the Legal Assistance Centre, the Namibia Crafts Centre in Windhoek, and camp/lodge shops around Etosha. For details, see the project website: <http://www.xoms-omis.org>





Etosha National Park was the largest game reserve in the world when it was established in 1907. Today, although smaller, it is still one of the world's largest game reserves – the largest is the Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania – and it is the fourth largest in Africa. These maps show the size and boundaries of the park from the time of its establishment until its 100th birthday in 2007.





The Hailom's past in Etosha • 1



Settling down and moving on • 5



Water • 9



Hunting • 14



Preparing and sharing food • 23



Natural remedies • 48



Danger • 42



Getting married • 40



Bushfood • 26



The spirit world • 51



Growing up • 34



Dying • 54



Places • 61

Contents



The Hailom's past in Etosha

All over the world, Namibia is known as a country that is very beautiful, and that has many wild animals. Every year, thousands of tourists come to Namibia, mostly to see our deserts and animals. And most of these tourists have heard of a very famous game reserve: the Etosha National Park. They make sure that while they are here, they visit Etosha, because they know that it is one of the best places in the whole world to see wild animals.

Tourists to Etosha either stay at Okaukuejo, Halali or Namutoni, the three tourist “camps” (also called “rest camps”) inside the park, or they stay at lodges and camps near to the park. Wherever they stay, they may only drive around in the park during the day – at night, they must be back in the camps, or outside the park. They may never walk around in the park – except when they are in a camp, they must stay inside their cars all the time. So that is how people see Etosha today – it is a place for wild animals, that people are allowed to visit, but not to live in.

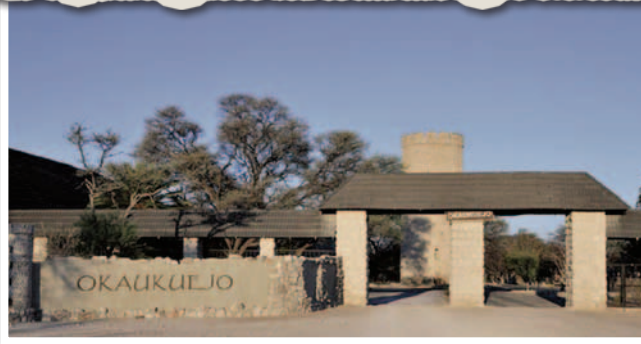
When they visit Etosha, tourists will certainly see many antelope, like kudu, oryx (gemsbok) and springbok, and many species of birds. They will probably also see elephant, zebra and giraffe, and if they are lucky, they might see rhinos and predators (animals that kill other animals for food) like lion, cheetah and leopard. It is hard for them to imagine that people used to live in this wilderness. But for a long, long time, the Hai||om people lived in what is today Etosha.

The Hai||om (meaning bush-sleepers, or tree-sleepers) did not always stay at one place – they moved from one settlement to another, living side-by-side with the animals. These settlements (small villages) were mostly near to permanent waterholes. This meant that they did not have

How much do you know about Etosha?

Have you heard stories about Etosha from your family members?

Have you ever been to Etosha? If so, which places in Etosha have you visited?



The waterhole popularly known as "Two Palms", on the edge of Fischer's Pan. The Hai||om call this place ||HauꞑGoab.



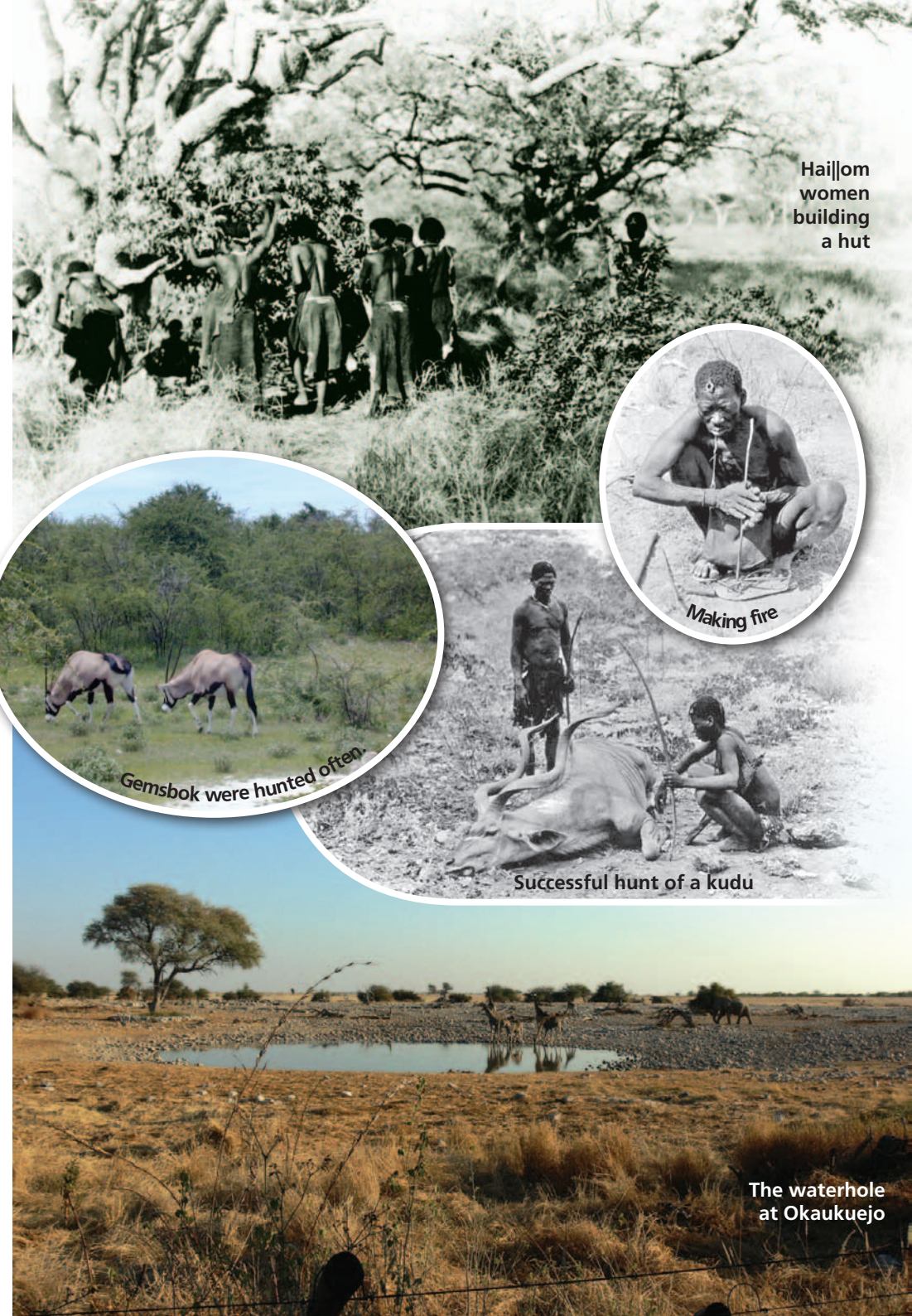
to walk far to get drinking water or to wash themselves. Waterholes also attract animals, and this made it easier for the Hai||om to hunt.

Today, when tourists drive around looking at animals, they will go to places like Rietfontein, Homob, Namutoni and Okevi. In the Hai||om language, these places had names like ||Nasoneb, †Homob, Aure|nammob, and Kevis. Most tourists don't know about these names – in fact, they mostly don't know anything at all about the Hai||om people. But where now there are only animals and tourists, the Hai||om once lived from nature, hunting wild animals and gathering bushfood from wild plants. Depending on the season, they used to eat meat, roots, tubers, leaves, berries and mushrooms.

About a century ago, from 1884 till 1915, Namibia was occupied by Germany, and was called German South West Africa. In 1907, the German colonial administration decided that certain parts of the country should be made into game reserves. One of these was the Etosha game reserve (at the time known as Game Reserve no. 2), which included parts of the Hai||om's ancestral land. At first, this did not affect the Hai||om people. They had already been pushed off much of their traditional territory outside of the game reserve by white settlers, but inside the game reserve, for almost another fifty years, they continued to live as they always had.

The Hai||om continued to live mainly from hunting and gathering. They also exchanged some goods with the Oshiwambo-speaking people from the north. For example, they would give the Owambo people salt, and they would get mahango in return.

In 1914, World War I broke out, and in 1915, the South Africans took over Namibia from the German colonial administration. They kept the game reserve as it was. Namutoni and Okaukuejo were police stations at the time. The Hai||om men sometimes worked at these police stations



Hai||om women building a hut

Making fire

Gemsbok were hunted often

Successful hunt of a kudu

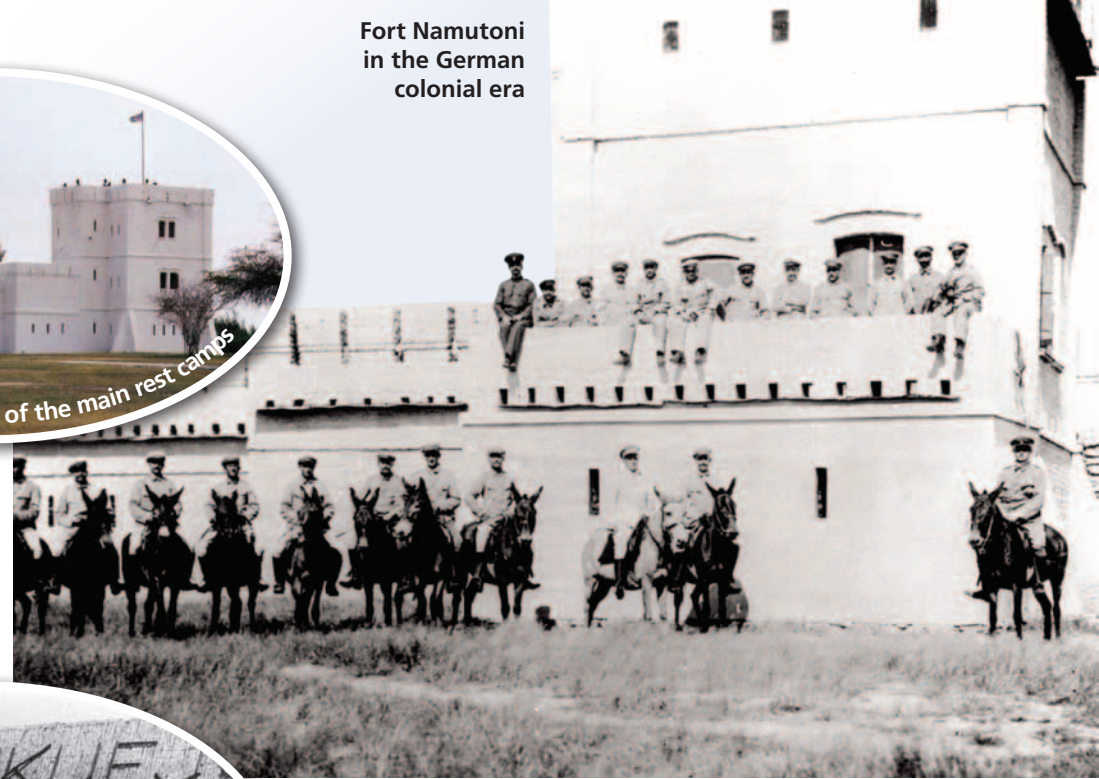
The waterhole at Okaukuejo

to earn some money. They also sometimes went out of the park to work on the settlers' farms. With the money they earned, they could buy things like blankets and clothes from the farm stores. They also sometimes bought livestock, which some of them used to keep during that time. (Although Etosha was a game reserve, it was not yet a national park, and it was not yet forbidden to keep livestock inside the game reserve.)

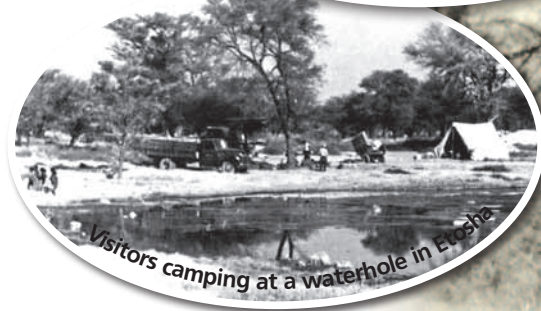
But then in 1954, everything changed. The South African administration decided that the people living inside Etosha had to move. A few Hai||om were allowed to stay there so that they could work for the Department of Nature Conservation (now the Ministry of Environment and Tourism), but most men, women and children had no choice: they had to leave. As a result, they moved out of the game reserve, and the only way they could survive was to work mainly for white farmers in the surrounding area. If they earned any money at all, it was very little. Often, all they got was some maize meal, sugar, tea and cooking oil, and – not very often – some meat. The Hai||om who were allowed to stay in the game reserve could not stay anywhere they liked – they all had to move to the police stations, which today have become the rest camps of Okaukuejo and Namutoni (and later Halali, which was never a police station, but was built as a rest camp in the late 1960s). Their dogs were killed, and their bows and arrows were taken away; the only way they could make a living was by working for the Administration.



Fort Namutoni today – one of the main rest camps



Okaukuejo in the 1950s



Visitors camping at a waterhole in Etosha



Hai||om were used for their hunting skills.

This book will tell you about the Hai||om's past in Etosha. We don't want this past to be forgotten.

CLICKS in some Namibian languages

In Namibia, we know that languages like Nama/Damara (Khoekhoegowab), Jul'hoansi and Khwe have click sounds – and so does Hai||om. There are not many languages that have these sounds, and people who are not used to them find it almost impossible to make the right sounds! There are four different symbols used to show the clicks in writing in Hai||om.

| This is a bit like the English “ts”, made while sucking in, not blowing out.

‡ This is a sharp sound, a bit like when you snap your finger and your thumb.

|| This is the click in the middle of “Hai||om”; people riding horses sometimes make this sound to tell the horses to move.

! This sounds like a cork coming out of a bottle; it is made by pulling the tongue down from the roof of the mouth.

**Are there clicks in your language?
Test your Hai||om language skills:**


Ama-ai gowab ge Hai||omgowaba!

(Hai||om language is a valuable language!)

Hai||omgowaba du a gowa ||kha?

(Can you speak Hai||om?)

(The Hai||om children can help the others to say these sentences correctly.)



A "trance dance" – dancing and singing to connect to the spirits. This book will tell you about the rich spiritual life of the Hai||om.

Hai||om elder Kadisen ||Khumub at a place called ‡Gunub where the Hai||om collected salt. This book will tell you about the ‡Gunub salt.

Settling down and moving on

These days, most people stay in only one place for the whole year. This was not so for the Hai||om in the old days, however. They did have permanent settlements, but they also moved about from one place to another at different times of the year – they were “semi-nomadic”. This was because they moved to where they could find food and water at different times of the year.



Hai||om honouring
an almost forgotten
settlement area
in Etosha

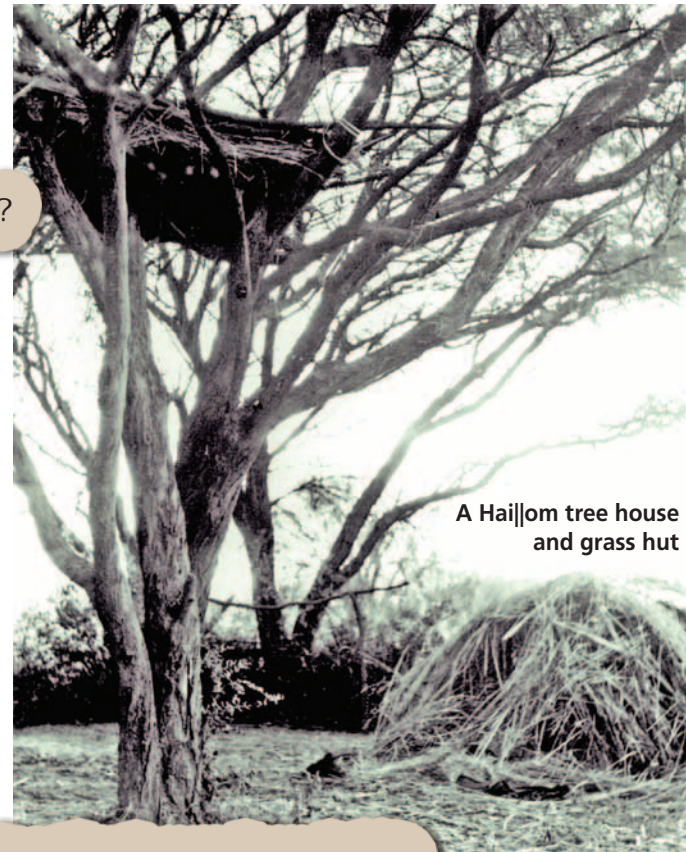


Do you stay at only one place for the whole year?

Do you move from place to place –
for example from a school hostel to your home?

Do you spend some time with friends or relatives, at their homes?

There used to be at least 40 permanent settlements in Etosha (although by the time the Hai||om had to leave Etosha in the 1950s, many of these settlements had already been abandoned). In most of these settlements there were about 30 to 40 people, but the number would vary from season to season – sometimes there could be as many as a hundred people in a settlement. A specific area in which there were important things like waterholes and bushfood would have a “headman” (*gaob*). A headman made important decisions about the use of natural resources. For example, he would decide when certain bushfood was ready to be collected, or where the men should go to hunt. He was something like the head of the extended household. (An extended household can be a group of closely related people, like parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins.) Usually (but not always) he stayed together with his close female relatives (wives, sisters, daughters, mother) and their partners and children. Teenage children always had their own huts close to their parents’ huts.

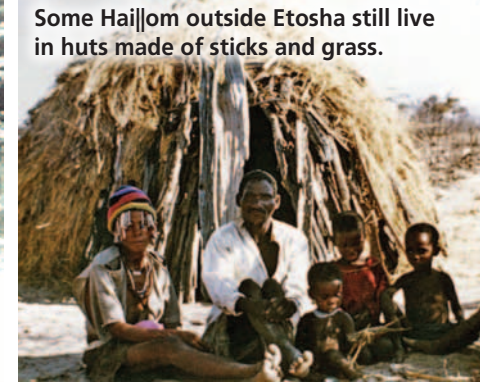


A Hai||om tree house
and grass hut

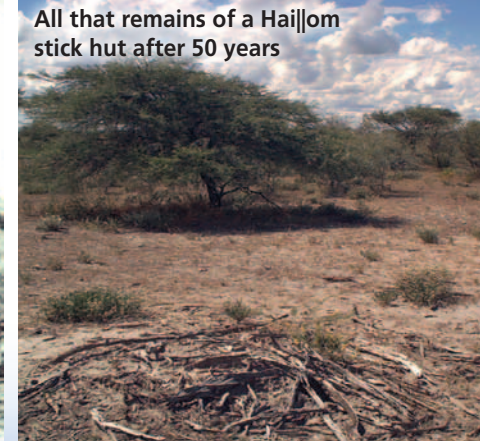
Who is living together in your household?
Who makes the important decisions?

The Hai||om usually made their settlements near to permanent waterholes (waterholes which had water all year round). But this did not mean that everyone stayed there all the time. In order to survive, they needed natural resources, like game and bushfood, so sometimes the men would move for a while to other places to hunt. At the end of the rainy season, thousands of zebra, wildebeest and springbok usually move westward from the eastern

Some Hai||om outside Etosha still live
in huts made of sticks and grass.



All that remains of a Hai||om
stick hut after 50 years



In the old days, Hai||om hunters would leave their permanent
settlements to follow herds of game, like this herd of springbok,
and would live in hunting camps for weeks or months.





A hut made of sticks, grass and palm leaves

A model of a stick hut ready to be covered with grass



part of the park. They feed on the new grass growing next to the pan. The Hai||om men used to follow these animals to hunt them. During this time, they stayed in hunting camps (!hamis) close to the Etosha pan. They made biltong (dried meat) from the animals that they hunted. In September, they would bring the biltong back to their settlements. This was very important food for the community during the dry season.

The women also sometimes moved away from the permanent settlements. On occasion, they would go to places where the bushfood was ripening. They would stay there in camps (!haros) for two to three weeks at a time. The bushfood they collected included uinan (plants with bulbs, like small onions) and #huin (bird plum, *Berchemia discolor*). The oldest and youngest people were always left behind to look after the permanent settlements.

The huts at the permanent settlements were made of sticks. The best sticks for huts came from mopane trees, but these trees did not grow everywhere, so the Hai||om had to use whatever trees they found in their area. The sticks were pushed into the ground in a circle, and then joined together in the middle to make a frame, with an opening left as a doorway.

(If the soil was too hard, the sticks were held in place with stones.) When the frame was ready, it was covered with grass. You had to pack more grass at the top to keep out the rain.

At the temporary camps (!hamis and !haros), the Hai||om used to make a sort of open kraal (like a hut with no roof) so that they could sit in the middle around a fire. There were sometimes only five or six people staying together for a while at !hamis and !haros – far fewer than at the permanent settlements. While they were at the temporary camps, they hunted and made biltong, or collected bushfood.



What material was used to build your homestead? Do you know where it came from?

Did your family build your homestead, or was it built for them by someone else?

Today most of the Hai||om live in houses like the corrugated-iron ones above and the wooden one below, in settlements and townships around the Etosha area.



A note on the names of plants and trees

In this book, we use different names for the same plants. We give the Hai||om names, but also often the common English names, and the scientific names. For example:

HAI OM	ENGLISH	SCIENTIFIC
<i>#huin</i>	bird plum	<i>Berchemia discolor</i>
<i>//ganas</i>	camelthorn	<i>Acacia erioloba</i>
<i>!gares</i>	black thorn	<i>Acacia mellifera</i>

Why do we have scientific names? Why aren't the common names from different languages enough? The reason for this is that sometimes different groups of people use different names for the same plant – and sometimes they use the same name for different plants! So, to avoid confusion, scientists have developed a system for giving one name to each plant. (These names are based on a language called Latin, which used to be spoken by the people who lived in Ancient Rome, in what is today Italy.)

Many plants and trees are related to other plants and trees. For example, we have many species of acacia in Namibia. The first part of the scientific name shows the group to which it belongs, called the genus (e.g. *Acacia*), and the second part is the species name within that genus (e.g. *erioloba*, or *mellifera*).

A note on acacias

For many years there has been disagreement about the scientific names of the trees we call "acacias", like the camelthorn tree. The problem is that the *Acacia* genus should actually be five separate genera. The first acacia to be scientifically named (*Acacia nilotica*) came from Africa, but there are many more acacias in Australia, and elsewhere in the world, than in Africa. Acacias in Australia are called "wattles". In July 2011, the International Botanical Congress finally decided that Australian wattles would continue to be placed in the *Acacia* genus, while the African acacias would officially be placed in the *Vachellia* genus – thus, *Vachellia erioloba*, *Vachellia mellifera*, etc. However, most people are likely to carry on talking about "acacias" for many years to come.

Water



Water is life. Getting water was often very difficult for the Hai||om in the old times – they could not just open a tap if they wanted to drink some water, or go to the nearest shop and buy a cool drink! It was even more important than food – human beings die sooner without water than without food. At most of the natural springs in Etosha, the people drank the same water as the animals. Usually, the people dug a ditch leading to a hole, to draw some of the water away from the main part of the waterhole. The animals were afraid of people, so they did not like their smell, and they stayed away from this hole. In this way, the Hai||om made sure that their drinking water was not too dirty.

The animals always drank at the far side of the waterhole. The settlements were always west of the waterholes. There was a simple reason for this: the wind usually comes from the east, so if the people stayed to the west, the animals would not be scared off by their scent – the humans were “below the wind” (“*onderkant die wind*”).

Most animals used to drink in the evening, during the night, and in the early morning. When the people woke up and started to move about, the animals went away from the waterholes. But the people did not go to the waterholes more than they had to – they did not want to frighten the animals away, because they depended on them for food. They used to scoop up enough water in a water bag (*||gam!gapas*), and then go away. In dry times, when the water level was very low, they used to suck up the water through reeds (*!ub*) and spit it into the bags. Water bags were usually made out of the bladder or stomach of a kudu, gemsbok or wildebeest, but they were sometimes made out of the stomach of a giraffe. The size of the water bag depended on what animal it had been made from – a big one could hold as much as five litres.

Where do you get your water from?
How do you store your water?



Hai||om elders at a natural well – one of the traditional places of the Hai||om

The water bags had to stay wet all the time, otherwise they would become dry and brittle, and easily break. The owners of water bags would hang them up in trees far away from the settlement. Then, if they went out hunting or looking for bushfood, they could drink from them when they were thirsty.

If the Hai||om could not get water from a waterhole, they sometimes got it from roots. However, the water from *#hapas* (most probably called water root kambroo in English) was not very good – it weakened people and made them sick. The Hai||om living in the south, around Ombika, !Gobaub, ||Haios, !Urop (Otjivasandu) and the farms Oberland and Mooiplaas, were called !Au!gakhoen. They had to get a lot of their water from *#hapan*, because there were not many waterholes in their areas. From !Gobaub to the south there were only a few potholes (*//garudi*) and pans (!*khubidi*), but no big, permanent waterholes, so the people depended on *#hapan*.

Apart from natural springs, in some places there are pans (!*khubidi*) that fill up with water after rain. The water at a !*khubis* does not last very long, so there were no permanent settlements near to them. But as long as there was water in the !*khubis*, people would stay there.

Potholes (*//garudi*) occur only where the stone is very hard – you will not find them in limestone. All the people knew about the *//garudi*. After good rains, they did not go to the waterholes – they just went to *//garudi*, because the water there is always cool. The animals could not drink at *//garudi*. The people closed them up with stones to keep out pests, so that the water would be clean. When you had finished drinking or filling up your water bag, you closed the *//garudi* up again. The animals went to the pans (!*khubidi*), where the water was deeper.



People and animals drink the same water.

When somebody from one family group came to the place of another family group (for example, if someone from Tsinab came to ||Nasoneb), he was not allowed to go to the waterhole to drink there. The Hai||om had a law which said that you had to go to the people's huts. If somebody came to your hut, you had to give him some water. The children were also taught to do this, in case there were no adults around.

If you saw a stranger at your waterhole, you would go and ask him who he was, where he came from, and why he was drinking your water. The Hai||om were suspicious of strangers. They were afraid that they might be putting poison into the water. Only if you knew for sure that there were no people near to a waterhole (perhaps because they had moved to some other place) would you go to that waterhole and drink from it. But if there were people staying nearby, you would only go to their huts. It was the law, and everybody knew it. And it was also the law that you had to give some water to anyone who was thirsty, and who had asked for water in the proper way.



How the elephant was killed by a tortoise

The elephant was the husband of the rain, and for a long time, they lived together in peace. They had enough food, they had enough water – everything was fine. But then one day, they started to fight. They continued fighting, on and on, and could not stop. Rain became very upset and told Elephant, “I am going to leave you, and then you will die from hunger!”

Elephant said, “Why should I? I am the man, I can live on my own, I don’t need you!”

“You will starve and you will be thirsty – I will take away everything that I bring. Remember, I bring the water, and I bring bushfood,” said Rain.

Elephant answered, “No man, I will get water somewhere else – there is lots of water. I will dig out the plants and eat them, and I will get water from them. I won’t die from hunger or thirst.”

“Alright, then,” said Rain, “I have decided to leave you now, and to take all the water with me.” So Rain left and took all the water with her. The rain brings the water that makes the plants grow, so she even took the water out of all the plants – all that was left was dry, useless fibre.

After Rain had left, Elephant stayed alone. It was not long before he started to struggle. There was no food left, there was no water left – Rain had taken it all. He dug for roots, but he didn’t find anything that he could eat – without water, the plants were dry and dead!



Elephant thought, “Oh dear, Rain spoke the truth – she has taken everything! Rain is there in the sky above the clouds, but I cannot fly there. I’m going to have to make a plan.”

He looked around to find someone who could fly. Finally, he found a brown crow. He told the crow to fly up to the top of the tallest tree to find Rain. The crow flew all the way up, and perched at the very top of the tree. The crow called, “Khoa, khoa, khoa, I am looking for Rain!”

“Kaboomm!!!”

Rain answered with a huge bolt of lightning. The crow got such a fright that she flew away, and returned to Elephant.

“You are useless!” shouted Elephant. “You didn’t bring any rain, you are too weak.” So he decided to send the pied crow (the black-and-white one, which the Hai||om people call the *gorab*). So he sent Gorab, and she flew up and up, and perched at the top of the tallest tree.

“Khoa, khoa, khoa, I am looking for Rain!” she called. Again, Rain sent out a lightning bolt, but Gorab wasn’t frightened. Instead of flying away, she just got out of the way and perched on the next tree. “Khoa, khoa, khoa, I am looking for Rain.” Again Rain sent a



lightning bolt, but Gorab just sat there and didn't move. This carried on for a while – Rain sent lightning, and Gorab just said, "Khoa, khoa, khoa, I am looking for Rain."

In the end, Rain got tired and gave up. "OK, you win – take this water bag and leave!" Gorab went back with the water bag. When Elephant opened it, there was a huge rainstorm, and the water flowed everywhere. At once the plants grew again, and there were plenty of animals, all of them fat. In all the time that Rain had been away, Elephant had had nothing to eat or drink, and he had become very thin. Now that there was water, he drank and drank, but his insides were so dry that they couldn't hold the water – it just flowed straight through him and came out of his bottom, like an open hosepipe.

He saw this and thought, "What can I do? Wait, I know – I will take a branch from a tree and push it into my bottom so that the water stays inside." He took a big branch and pushed it into his bottom. Then he drank and drank until he was not thirsty anymore. But now he needed to satisfy his hunger, so he wanted to look for bushfood. He saw a tortoise and said to him, "Come, you must look after the water in the pan – make sure that the birds don't drink all my water." Then he went to look for bushfood.

Tortoise sat beside the water. The birds were playing with the water, so Tortoise said, "Listen, you must not play with the water – this water belongs to a strong man!"

But the birds said, "We don't care, we are going to drink it anyway!" They drank and drank, until all the water was finished.

In the meantime, the branch that Elephant had put into his bottom had become his tail! He found plenty of bushfood, and he ate and ate, till he could eat no more. Then he came back because he wanted some more water – but the water in the pan was all gone!

"Tortoise, where is my water? I told you to watch my water!"

Tortoise said, "I tried, I told the birds not to drink, but they did not want to listen."

Elephant was furious with Tortoise. "You have wasted my water! I am going to crush you!" Tortoise just kept quiet. Elephant said, "I have changed my mind – instead of crushing you, I am going to swallow you whole."

Tortoise answered, "If that's what you are going to do, then go ahead – I am not afraid."

This made Elephant even more angry, and he grabbed Tortoise, put him in his mouth and swallowed him. Now, being inside an elephant isn't very nice – would you like to be inside an elephant? So now it was the turn of the tortoise to get cross. He started to scrape at the insides of the elephant, and that also isn't very nice – would you like to have a tortoise scraping at your insides?

Elephant said, "No, no, please don't do that – it hurts! Come out, come out of my bottom now!"

Tortoise replied, "No way – you have huge legs, and you would just crush me." Tortoise stayed inside and went on scraping and scraping. Finally, he reached Elephant's heart, and he carried on scraping. And that is how Tortoise killed Elephant – by scraping at his heart.

And because of that, people are afraid of the tortoise. A tortoise can even kill an elephant!



Hunting

A sepia-toned photograph of a hunter in a rocky, open landscape, aiming a bow and arrow. The word 'Hunting' is overlaid in large white letters at the top.

The Hai||om used to eat the meat of wild animals like zebra, gemsbok, kudu, eland and springbok, and also of aardvark and porcupine. Even though meat was only a small part of what people ate every day, it was very important. A successful hunter who brought back lots of meat was an important person in the community.

The men who went out hunting had to be well prepared. They carried some equipment with them: a digging stick, a knobkierrie, an axe, sticks for making a fire, a knife, a spear, a water bag, a bag for carrying bushfood – and of course, a bow and a quiver full of arrows, with different arrow points. Because life in the bush can be dangerous, they also took a “first-aid kit” with them. This was a bag containing various Hai||om remedies that they used if they became ill, were injured, or were bitten by snakes.

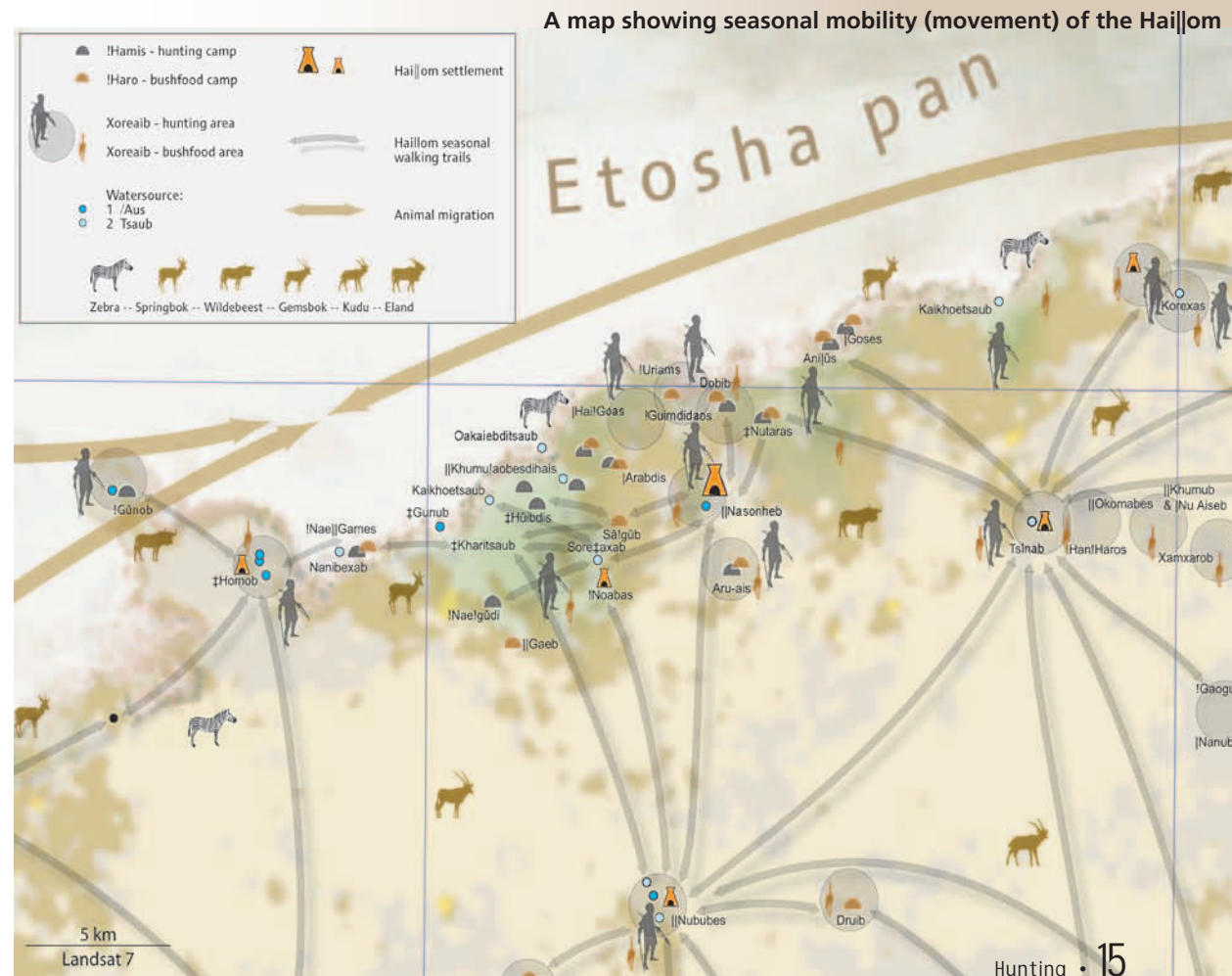
They did not hunt every day. There were many things to do to get ready for hunting. Some days were spent making arrows, spears, knives and axes. They also had to make new poison (!khores) for the arrows. Some men repaired their bows or made new bow strings. They would go out on the hunt only when the headman (*gaob*) gave the order. But first they had to finish the meat from the last hunt – the Hai||om did not believe in being wasteful. Unless it was needed for clothing, they also ate the skin of animals – it was never thrown away.

And then the *gaob* would say, “We are hungry now, the hunger is coming ... Come, we are going out to look for new meat.” Only then would the hunt begin. Sometimes, a long time would pass between hunts. It all depended on the size of the last animal that had been hunted, and how many people there were to feed. A zebra had a lot of meat. If there were not too many people, one zebra could last two weeks. The meat from an eland would last even longer. But the meat from smaller animals, like gemsbok and blue wildebeest, lasted less than a week.

How often do you eat meat?

What do you and your family do to get meat?
(Do you buy it? Do you hunt it? Do you slaughter your own livestock?
Does your family receive a meat ration?)

Do you know how the meat is processed before it reaches your plate?
Who slaughters it? Where does this happen?



There were various methods of hunting, depending on how the animal species being hunted behaved, and other circumstances. Some animals were caught in snares, and others, like aardvark and porcupine, were found in their burrows. Others would be chased down and killed with a knobkierrie. However, the most important tools for hunting were the bow and arrows, and the poison (!khores). The bow and arrow shafts were made from the wood of *ʒâun* (raisin bush) or other bushes that also have straight branches. The Hai||om usually polished them with fat from the kneecap (*saro ||goas*) of an animal, which made them red. They also used the bark of *!gûs* (false umbrella thorn, *Acacia luederitzii*) for polish.



Sometimes, they waited in a hunting shelter (!goas) at a waterhole, or along a game path leading to a waterhole. When an animal came close enough, they would shoot it. This method of hunting was called */ai*.



A Hai||om hunting shelter (!goas) at !Gonob. Hans Haneb shows how the !goas was used.

Often, they would get up before sunrise and wait for the animals to arrive for their morning drink. They had to be very quiet and careful when stalking shy animals. This method of hunting was called *||hawa*. Some animals like to lie in the shade when the sun is high; hunting an animal that was resting like this was called *somʒhaub*. Some animals, like zebra, springbok and wildebeest, move in big herds and are mostly found grazing on the plains. They could be hunted by running into the herd and shooting (*ʒkhami*).

Another method of hunting zebra or wildebeest needed a few men working together. One group of hunters would flush and chase the animals towards another group, who would shoot them. This was called *ʒhameri*. If a hunter saw an animal moving towards a waterhole, he could hide behind a bush ahead of the animal, and shoot it from the front when it arrived. Animals shot in this way usually died very quickly, but it was a difficult method, because the hunter



had to get into position without being noticed, and if he was upwind, the animal would smell him and run away.

Sometimes, the Hai||om also used dogs for hunting. (Nowadays, dogs are not allowed in Etosha.) Every household had two or three dogs; nobody would keep more than this, and puppies would be given away to other families who needed them. The dogs often worked together with the hunters, but some animals were too dangerous for dogs. For example, dogs were not used for hunting zebras, because they could easily kick dogs to death.

Hunting was difficult, and not every man was lucky. The experienced hunter was called a *kai||khâuaob*; a young man who was just beginning to hunt was a #kham||khâuaob. In order to become a *kai||khâuaob*, the young man first had to prove himself by shooting many animals (about 30 or 40) of different species. If he shot an eland, he immediately gained respect and became a *kai||khâuaob* – no further proof of his hunting skills was required, because eland are the biggest of all the antelope, and the Hai||om valued them very highly.

Depending on the size of the prey and how far away it was, different types of arrowheads were used. The most common one was *!khoreoas*. It was used with poison (*!khores*). *!Amooab* was bigger than *!khoreoas* and was used without poison to shoot animals at close range. It was very effective for small animals, like duiker, springbok, steenbok and warthog. It was also sometimes used when poison was scarce, or if the hunters had dogs to run the animal down. #Gis was used without poison in order to break bones, mostly of small animals like springbok. *!Gaab* was an arrowhead for young, inexperienced hunters, because if the hunter accidentally injured himself or someone else, it was easy to pull the arrowhead out of the flesh without causing a serious injury.



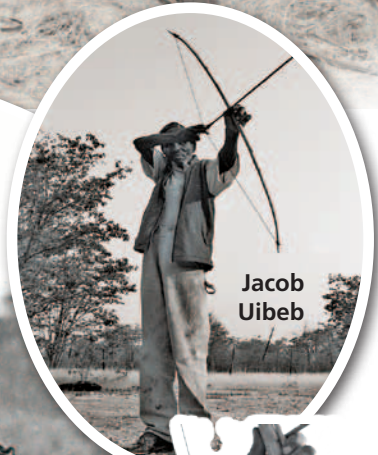
Hans Haneb shows how ...



Wearing grass to blend in with the surroundings



The plant used to make poison (!khores) for the arrows



Jacob Uibeb



Hans Haneb

The bows (*khās*) and arrows were made from a specific wood, for example, raisin bush (*Grewia spp.*) or purple-pod terminalia (*Terminalia prunioides*). The arrows were stabilised with feathers at the back, mostly from vultures.

If a hunter had been successful with his bow, but the bow had been broken or was too old, he would always go back to the same tree to get a straight branch for his next bow. The arrows were kept in a quiver (!gurub), which was made from animal skin, for example, the skin from the stomach of a zebra. The string for the bow was made out of strips of skin or the sinews of a kudu. The sinews or strips of skin would be softened and twisted in order to make the bow string.

The work did not end when an animal had been shot – a lot had to be done before the meat could finally be eaten. If a hunter was lucky, the animal might die immediately after being shot, but in most cases the animal did not die at once. A hunter might have to track a wounded animal till he found it – he would lose respect if an animal he had shot survived and escaped.

If an animal was only wounded, a hunter would try to find the shaft of the arrow (only the arrowhead would be left in the animal). Often, the blood on the shaft could tell the hunter where the arrow had hit, and so he would know how long it would take for the animal to die from the poison.

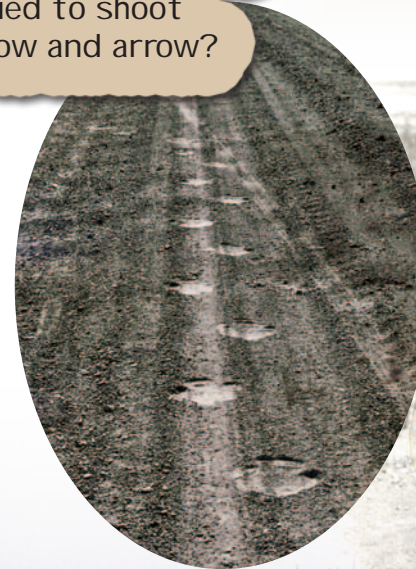
As the poison started to take effect, the tracks of an animal would change. The hunters had to be very careful to detect the correct spoor, especially where animals were moving in herds. Sooner or later the tracks of the wounded animal would become irregular, and finally they would start to move away from the herd. When he found the animal, he would kill it if it was still alive. If the other hunters were nearby, he would blow on a springbok horn to let them know of his success. If the animal was too big



Willem Dauxab

Have you ever made a bow and arrow?

Have you ever tried to shoot something with a bow and arrow?



Studying animal tracks



A herd of springbok

Returning from a zebra hunt



for him to carry alone, he would cover the carcass with sticks and go back home to fetch other men to come and help him.

The hunters would butcher the carcass at the kill site, and everyone would help to carry the meat back home. However, this was difficult with eland and other large animals, because there was simply too much meat to carry. Because in Hai||om culture it was wrong to waste anything, they would stay at the site for a few days and make biltong.

They usually made a fire at the kill site and roasted the animal's liver on the hot coals, sometimes adding the marrow from specific bones, and some of the fat from the back or belly. Bone marrow was very important for the Hai||om – it is an excellent source of protein and substances called essential fatty acids that we need to be healthy.

Of course, sometimes a hunter would not find an animal that he had shot – and wounding an animal without killing it was deeply embarrassing for a hunter. If this happened, when he arrived back home, he would not

tell anyone – not even his wife – that he had shot something.

A hunter who had failed like this was not allowed to eat sweet things. Even if he tried to keep it a secret, the truth would often come out, and his wife would know!

Then she would not give him any sweet bushfood that evening! He could eat bitter plants, but the Hai||om believed that if he ate sweet things, like berries, the poison on his arrow would not work. The next day, he would go out again and try to find the animal, hoping that the !khores had worked in the meantime.

Sometimes a hunter would shoot a big animal and have to come home without it, even though he was sure that the !khores would work and the animal would die. Then he would loosen the string of his bow; the rest of the hunters would see the loose string and immediately know that he had shot a giraffe, or possibly an eland. Then they would think, “Oh, tomorrow we will follow the tracks of the big animal.” A completely loose bow string meant that an animal would not go far and would surely die quickly.

Hunting for porcupines



In the old days, the only meat that the Hai||om people could get was what they could catch for themselves. Mostly, they hunted for antelope, but they also caught and killed smaller animals, like rabbits and porcupines. Yes, porcupines! Today, many people find this strange, but the truth is that porcupine meat is just as edible as the meat of an antelope.

Kadisen tells the story of his grandfather, Hans |Nuaiseb, who liked porcupines very much:

My grandfather, Hans |Nuaiseb, was a good hunter. Sometimes he used a bow and arrow, but he also used a rifle. Sometimes, in the mornings, he got up and first shot an antelope, so that the people he lived with had some meat to eat. Then he went to find a porcupine for himself, because he liked eating porcupine meat very much. When he found a porcupine burrow (a hole in the ground where a porcupine lives), he made a fire in front of the burrow, so that the smoke drifted into the hole. When the hole was full of smoke, he put out the fire and closed up the hole, so that the smoke would kill the porcupines inside the burrow. The next morning, he would come back to the hole and open it. He let the fresh air blow in for about an hour, until all the smoke was gone. Then he crawled into the dark burrow.

He had to be very careful, because sometimes the porcupines would not have died, and a porcupine can be very dangerous! But usually, the smoke killed them. In the middle of the burrow

there is a chamber that is wider than the tunnels. This is where the porcupines live. There are small openings out of this chamber into the air above, so it is not completely dark in there. But no light reaches the tunnels that lead to the chamber – they are very dark indeed!

Hans used to crawl into the tunnels, using a stick to feel ahead of him in the darkness. When he felt a porcupine that wasn't moving, he had to turn it around to pull it out head first (otherwise, if he pulled it out tail first, the long, sharp quills would get stuck inside the tunnel). Then he had to reverse backwards out of the tunnel, pulling the porcupine.

Sometimes, he would get two or three porcupines together in one burrow. When he had the porcupines outside, he cleaned them. He pulled out all the quills, and cut open the stomach. He removed the innards and took out the liver to cook it on a fire and eat it first. (Hai||om hunters did this with most of the animals they hunted – they cooked and ate the liver at the kill site.) Later,

he carried the rest of the porcupines back home. Everybody would eat the porcupines, but Hans |Nuaiseb liked porcupine meat more than anyone else – he was well known for this!

One day, he went out to catch porcupines again. He found a burrow and made a fire in front of it. He closed the opening and went away to wait for the porcupines to die. When he came back, he crawled into the tunnel of the burrow, just like he usually did – but this was an unusual day. When he poked ahead of him with his stick, instead of a porcupine, he felt something large and slithery – and very alive! It was a huge python, and it didn't like being poked with a stick, so it bit Hans on his head. The Hai||om people say that snakes don't die from the smoke – they just stick their heads into the ground. Hans grabbed the snake by the neck and pulled it out. Outside, he threw the snake onto the ground and beat it to death.

He went back into the burrow to get the dead porcupines that were inside. He took them out one after the other, cleaned them, and brought them back home. But for the rest of his life, he had a scar on his head where the hair would not grow because of the python bite.

On another occasion, Hans crawled into the porcupine burrow, but a black mamba followed him into the tunnel. Now, a python is not poisonous, but a black mamba is very different – it has very strong poison that can easily kill you. Luckily, he realised that the mamba had followed him into the tunnel, so he did the one thing

that would save him – he did absolutely nothing! That's right – he just lay there quietly, without moving a muscle, as if he was resting. The mamba crawled over his body and moved further up the tunnel. Keeping as calm as possible, Hans slowly reversed out of the tunnel. Then he blocked the hole completely so that the snake could not escape. He also looked for the other openings and blocked all of them.

During the year that we were moved out of the park, our whole family moved to the farm Oberland. Hans |Nuaiseb continued to look for porcupines on the farms outside the park. He was a shepherd, but while he was guarding the sheep, he was on the lookout for porcupine burrows. One day, when he was going to look for porcupines, we said, "Grandfather, we are coming with you." He made the fire in front of the hole. When he opened the hole and crawled in, we followed him. There is very little space in these tunnels, and they are deep and long – quite a few metres, in fact. We went all the way after him, right up to the chamber. There was some light in the chamber, at least, so we could see the porcupines. We helped to pull out the porcupines.

Afterwards, we thought we were very brave, but actually we were quite scared. Catching porcupines in this way is actually quite dangerous. If there are rocks in the tunnel, you can get stuck on them, and you may not be able to get out. This happened to a man named |Gamsob, who also used to look for porcupines. One day, when he had crawled into a burrow, a rock got stuck under his stomach. He could not move anymore, and he died there in the burrow. So you must know, catching porcupines can be very dangerous!



Hai||om men in trouble with the law

As we have seen, hunting was hard work, and it could also be very dangerous. Sometimes, Hai||om people preferred to get their meat in other ways, even if this meant breaking the law.

Before the Hai||om had to leave the game reserve in 1954, ||Hanixab and his family lived just to the south of Etosha, in the area of !Gub, which is now a farm. ||Hanixab was a lazy man, and not a very good hunter. In that area, there were farmers who raised cattle. And ||Hanixab knew two things about cattle: they had a lot of meat that tasted very good; and they did not run away like antelope, so they were easy to shoot. He used to go and kill the farmers' cattle and eat them, and then go and hide inside the game reserve. After a while, the farmers found out who was killing their cattle, so they sent the police to arrest ||Hanixab.

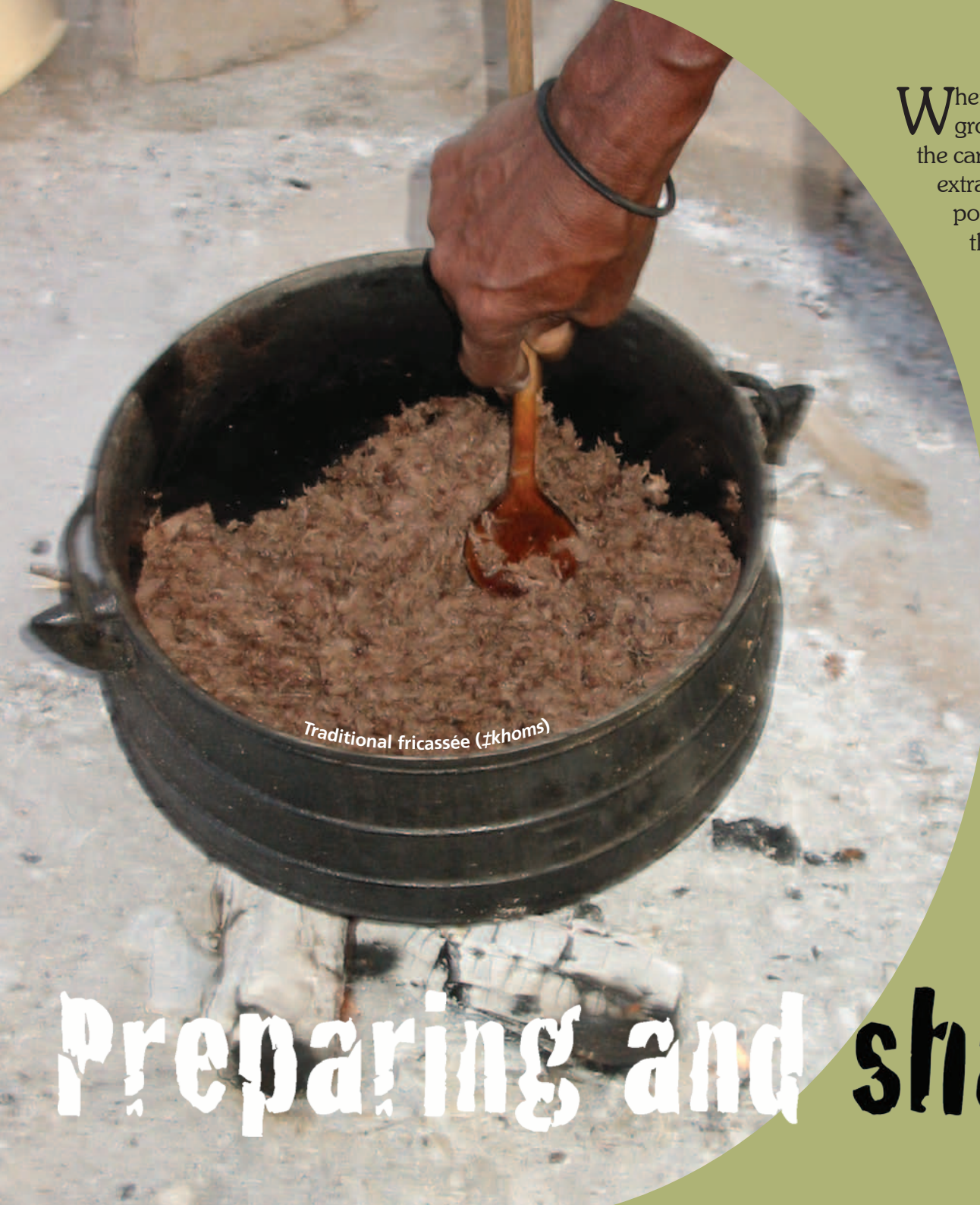
||Hanixab discovered that the police were coming to arrest him. He decided that the best would be for him to wait in ambush and shoot a policeman with a poisoned arrow. When the time came, he missed the policeman's leg, and the arrow killed the policeman's horse instead. The policeman fired a shot at ||Hanixab and injured him in the foot, but he was still able to run away and hide. Because they couldn't find ||Hanixab, the police arrested his wife and children instead. They forced them to dig a hole that was big enough to bury the horse in, but they were only allowed to use their digging sticks. Can you imagine how long it would take to dig such a hole in the hard ground, using nothing but sticks? They worked for days and days in the hot sun, but still the hole was not big enough.



||Hanixab knew what was going on, and in the end he took pity on his family and handed himself in at the Otavi police station. His family was released, but he had to spend a few years in jail for what he had done. When he came out of jail, he moved with his family to the area of the headman |Nuaiseb, at the waterhole ||Nububes inside the game reserve.

||Oreseb was another Hai||om man who got into trouble with the law. In the colonial times, many Owambo men from the area to the north of Etosha used to go to the south to work for a few years on farms or in the mines. On one occasion, two Owambo men passed through Etosha on their way back home. They were wearing smart new clothes, and they were smoking tobacco in new pipes. ||Oreseb was jealous of what they had. He was a very bad man, so shot them both with poisoned arrows. The men died, and ||Oreseb took their clothes and tobacco. In addition to being a bad man, ||Oreseb was also rather stupid, because he wore the smart new clothes that he had suddenly acquired everywhere he went – including Namutoni, where there was a police station.

The police had been following the two men, because they were themselves in trouble (perhaps they had stolen something). When ||Oreseb was seen wearing new clothes, the police immediately became suspicious. They questioned ||Oreseb, and he confessed to having killed the men – he even showed the police where they could find their bodies. ||Oreseb spent many years in prison because of what he did.



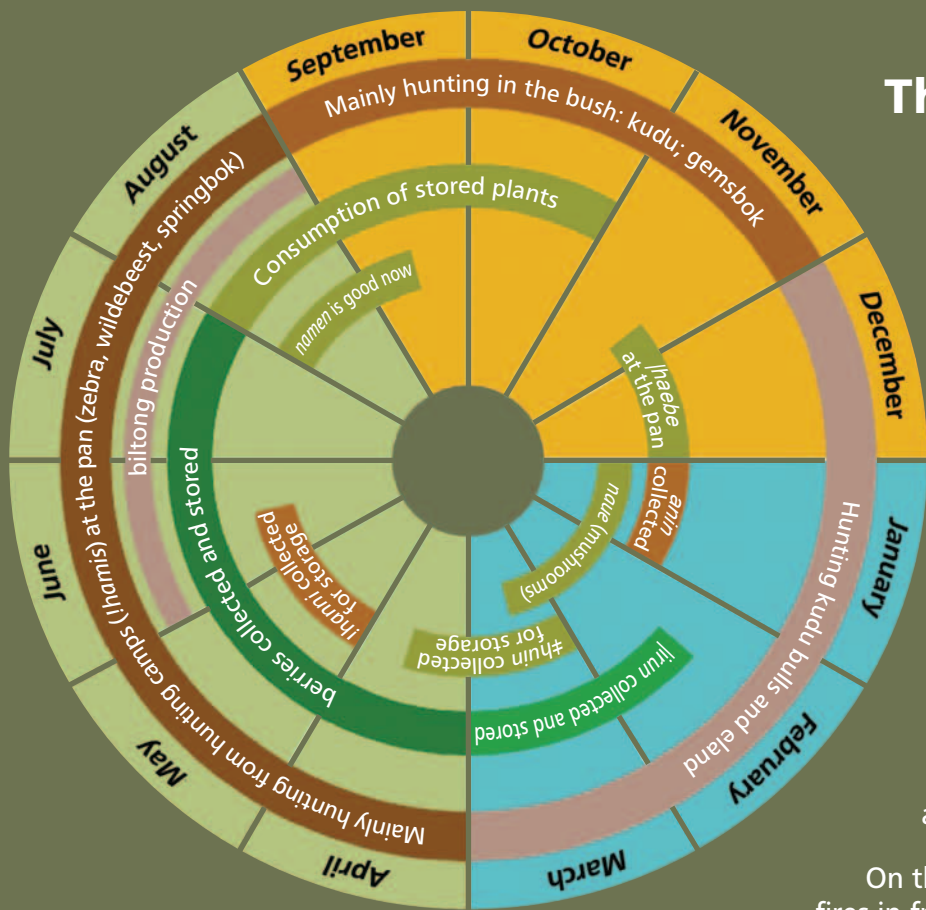
Traditional fricassée (*!khoms*)

When hunters arrived back at the settlement, they laid the meat on the ground under the kitchen tree (*!hais*) on the sticks used to carry the carcass, or on clean branches. Then they cracked open the bones to extract the marrow. They divided the meat, and the women got their portions to prepare at their huts. The hunters had their own fire at the *!hais*, where they cooked the special portions that they were entitled to. They would see which meat had the most fat, and put that meat aside. After the other meat had been cooked, they pounded it with a stone. Later, to make it richer, they mixed in the bone marrow. This dish was called *!khoms*. Every hunter was given his portion of *!khoms* in his bowl, using a big spoon made from the horns of blue wildebeest or from trees that have soft wood that is easy to carve. On top of the *!khoms*, each hunter also got his share of the meat with the most fat.

That is how it was with the Hai||om men – they did not wait for the women to make food. They gathered at the *!hais*, they cooked by themselves, they shared amongst themselves, and they ate alone. The women also cooked by themselves, but they shared what they had and ate with the children and the other women at their huts.

After the meat had been shared out, if the *gaob* (old man, headman) was there, he had to taste it first to see if it was good (this was called *tsaa-am*). If he thought it was good, and safe to eat, then the other elderly men could also taste to see if the food was good – that was the rule. It was not like today, when everybody just grabs and eats! The younger people had to wait for the older men to first *tsaa-am*.

Preparing and sharing food



The Hai||om calendar

The Hai||om had three seasons: *//haub* – the rainy season, starting with the rains that usually come around January; *sâugamas* – wintertime, from about April to September; and *soregamas* – the hot summertime, with occasional rain, from about August or September to December.

Hai||om elders are today no longer sure exactly how the days of the year were measured in the more distant past – whether the three seasons were divided into something like months, or exactly when one year ended and the next began. Once they became accustomed to the calendar that we use today, however, they used sticks to count the days and months, so that they knew exactly where they were in the year. They also gave Hai||om names to the various months of the year. For example, January was *!Khankaib* (“big eland”), February was *!Khan/goab* (“young eland”), and November was *!Hun//khâb* (“slow month”).

‡*nau‡norab*: a Hai||om ritual for the new year

Nowadays, it is the Hai||om custom to go out and make a noise by beating tins and drums on New Year’s Eve. In the past, there was a similar custom, known as *‡nau‡norab* (“*‡nau*” means “to hit/beat”; “*‡norab*” means “luck”).

On the last day of the year, the *gaob* would instruct the people to put out the fires in front of their huts. Everyone, from the youngest to the oldest, then had to go out into the bush to “hit the luck”. They did this by hitting the trees with sticks, while shouting “*‡nau‡norab*”. This was to ensure that the trees would bear fruit that year.

After the *‡nau‡norab*, all the people would go back to their huts. Then the *gaob* would make a big fire. All the people would come to fetch burning sticks. They would take these sticks back to their huts and use them to start their own fires.

The next day, when the new year had come, everyone would go about their business as usual. Because of the *nau‡norab*, they knew that they would find bushfood when the season arrived, and that they would have success when hunting.

At the time of the year when the trees that bear fruits and berries were in flower, it was the duty of the *gaob* to hit the trees with a stick. If he did not do this, bad luck would follow, and there would be no bushfood. When the bushfood was ready to be collected in the new year, the *gaob* first had to *tsaa-am* (taste) it. Only when he had done this, and declared that it was good, were the people allowed to go and collect their own bushfood.

When you are about to have a meal together with your family or other community members, are there any customs (like saying grace) that you observe before eating?

There were different rules about how to eat the meat of different animals. For example, if a young hunter killed a large antelope, he wasn't allowed to eat the bone marrow – only experienced hunters were allowed to do this. Animal fat was very important in the diet of the Hai||om. The best was eland fat – a mature eland bull could have 20 litres of fat, or even more! When an eland was killed, its fat was shared with all the households; only the kidney fat was held back, because it was used only by the experienced hunters to prepare *#khoms*. The fat of eland, kudu and gemsbok is delicious, but the fat of wildebeest and hartebeest is not so good, because it hardens quickly and is difficult to digest. When the Hai||om got a lot of fat, they saved some of it to use later to soften biltong, or to add to *#khoms* when game was scarce.

Nothing was wasted. The skins of different animals that had been hunted were used in different ways. Some skins were eaten; some were good to use as blankets; others were used to make things like clothes and bags. The skins of duiker, springbok and steenbok were used to make clothes; the soft skin from young gemsbok or kudu was used to make bags for the edible plants which the women gathered. The skin of an animal was treated in a special way before it could be used. First it was thoroughly cleaned. Then it was preserved by being rubbed with a mixture of bone marrow and kidney fat, together with powder made from the bark of the belly thorn acacia tree (*!gûs*, *Acacia luederitzii* or *Acacia reficiens*).

Today, we get leather from animal skins (which we call “hides”) that are preserved in big factories called tanneries, but the Hai||om did the same thing, using only what they found around them in nature.

Do you have any leather clothing, like belts and shoes?
Have you ever made anything out of leather?
Have you ever eaten an animal's skin?



Stamping kudu meat



Hai||om enjoy many types of tea.

Cooking methods are the same today; only the tools have changed.



Stones for stamping meat



Every part of the animal is used.



Bushfoods make a healthy meal.



The leg bones were cracked to extract the marrow.



All Namibians love pap (maize-meal).



Kudu skin is dried to make leather.



!liros (blue sour plum, *Ximenia americana*)



Bushfood

Most of us like meat very much, but no one can live only on meat. Wild plants were very important in the Hai||om's diet. Different plants were collected in specific areas, and at different times of the year. In some areas, there are many edible plants; in others, there are very few. The area around Namutoni has a lot of bushfood.

The most important sorts of bushfood were different berries, bulbs, tubers and corms, and certain leaves that grow after the rainy season. (A tuber is a swollen part of the root of a plant that is used for storing food, and for reproduction (potatoes are tubers); a corm is a short, thick, underground stem that stores food.) Usually, the women went out to gather bushfood, but the men also knew about what plants they could gather and eat while they were out on hunting trips.

The Hai||om collected berries from various raisin bush (*Grewia*) species. These are fairly common in the region, and are still regarded as valuable bushfood resources. †Aun, sabiron and ||naraka||nain are all members of the same plant family (*Tiliaceae*). Their berries have a sweet and refreshing taste, and can be eaten immediately or stored for some months. The stored berries were important when other bushfood became scarce in the late winter.

†Aus occurs as a shrub or small tree that is found throughout Etosha. The berries (†aun) are very nice because of their sweet taste; they ripen after the rainy season, and are most plentiful from mid-April to mid-June. The wood of the †aus is strong and flexible, and was used for bows and arrow shafts. The branches are still used to make baskets.



Collecting different types of edible corms (uinan and naurin)



†Gubun (Cucurbitaceae)



Grewia flowers



Grewia berries

The berries of different *Grewia* species were collected and eaten.



Grewia berries ready to eat



†Aun (berries of the †aus)



A Hai||om woman with a twig of †aus

† Grewia bush



||Naraka||nain



Collecting *sabiron* berries (*Grewia villosa*).

Sabiros has sweet, yellow-orange berries that are covered in fine hair. The ripe berries are collected and eaten or stored, but they don't have as much edible flesh as other *Grewia* species. The berries are most plentiful from late April to early July, and many berries remain on the shrub well into the winter. *Sabiros* is also a favourite food of guinea fowl, bush pigs and many small animals that forage (scavenge) for their food. The Hai||om children were warned by their parents to always spit out the pips, because they caused constipation.

The *#huis* tree (bird plum, *Berchemia discolor*) is bigger than the raisin bushes. It is a medium-sized tree which occurs singly (not in groups) throughout Etosha. When ripe, the drupes (fleshy fruits) of this tree turn orange, and become sweet. They contain a lot of vitamin C, which helps our bodies to fight off germs and infections. The Hai||om used to collect lots of *#huin* drupes and dry them. This made them even sweeter, and they could be stored for many months and eaten when other fruits and berries had become scarce. *#Huin* are still regarded as a delicacy, and they are sometimes sold in small cups on the streets of Namibian towns.

Another bushfood tree was *#iiros* (blue sour plum, *Ximenia americana*), but it is not very common in Etosha. The orange fruits are about the size of a Namibian fifty cent piece. They ripen around March/April and can be collected until June. When ripe, they taste sweet and sour at the same time; when they aren't quite ripe, they are very, very sour! In earlier times, the kernels (seeds) of *#iiron* were roasted, crushed and mixed with animal fat; this mixture was used to treat skin irritations and small wounds.



#huis (*Berchemia discolor*) trees and the drupes



#iiros (*Ximenia americana*)



Ximenia flowers



Ximenia berries



Ximenia berries ready for eating and other uses



Ximenia juice and 'wine'



Ximenia oil for skin care

Various bulbs and corms, also called *uintjies*, were important for the Hai||om, as they were for many other groups. Usually, the fibrous covering of the corms was removed, and they were eaten either fresh or baked in hot ash.

!Hanni is found throughout the Etosha area. It is available throughout the year, and was an important bushfood. The plant has erect, shiny green leaves. The corms (*!handi*) are about the size of a Namibian ten cent piece, with brown, papery scales. These were removed to expose the nut-like part in the middle. The corms do not become bitter in the dry season. Fresh corms can be eaten raw, but the older ones taste better when roasted. Guinea fowl and warthog also eat *!hanni*.

For the Hai||om, *#hapab* was a source of water in areas without springs or surface water. *#Hapab* is a large, white, fleshy tuber (probably water root kambroo, *Fockea angustifolia*). It could take a long time to dig out the tubers with a digging stick, because they often grow deep down in the ground. The water could be squeezed out and used to cook with.

#Gubun are found in many places. These plants have large, white, tuberous roots that can be roasted and eaten throughout the year. The fruit becomes orange-red when ripe, and the Hai||om used to collect and eat it from about March to April.

The *//nuus* (bush potato, *Walleria nutans*) was the Hai||om's potato. It is a perennial (lasting more than one year) plant with grass-like leaves; it reaches a height of about 20 to 30 cm. It develops small, roundish tubers (*/nuun*) which look like small potatoes. The young tubers found during the rainy season are very tasty, and are usually baked in hot ash. In the dry season, you needed to be an experienced bushfood gatherer to find the tubers, because it is difficult to see the dried-out plants above ground.

!Hanni (*Cyperus fulgens*, yellow nut-grass)



Digging up *uintjies*.



//Nuus (*Walleria nutans*, bush potato)



An older *!Handi* corm. The older corms taste better when roasted.



#Huin drupes in a cup for sale



!Hanni root



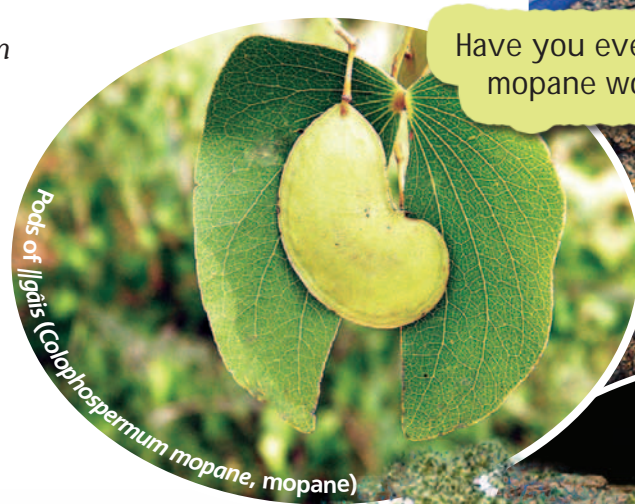
How many of these sorts of bushfood do you know about?

How many of them do you still eat?

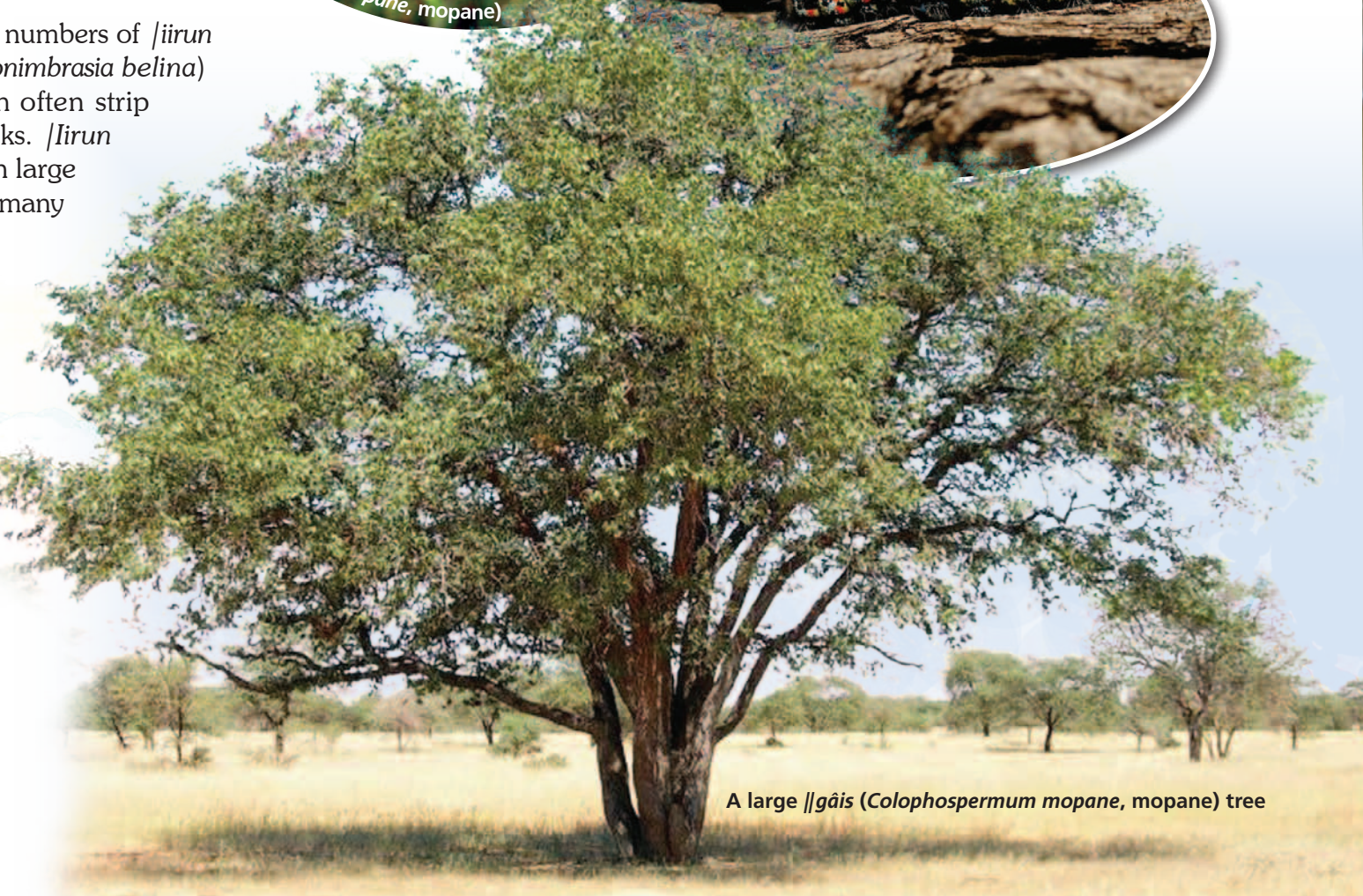


In many parts of Etosha, //gâis (mopane, *Colophospermum mopane*) is the most common tree. The Hai||om used its wood to build their huts, and its bark to make ropes. The //gâis has a sweet, aromatic resin in its leaves which could be eaten at once or stored. The kidney-shaped seed pods have lots of resin glands that provide an aromatic powder which is used as sâ (perfume). Today, there is an important project in Namibia that aims to extract the essential oil from the resin using very hot steam. This oil is used in perfumes, and is worth a lot of money.

During the rainy season, you can find large numbers of /iirun (the larvae of the mopane emperor moth, *Gonimbrasia belina*) on //gâis. They feed on the leaves and can often strip the trees completely bare within a few weeks. /iirun (also called mopane worms) are collected in large quantities and are considered a delicacy by many people.



Have you ever eaten mopane worms?



A large //gâis (*Colophospermum mopane*, mopane) tree

You probably know the huge, grey-white mushrooms which grow during the rainy season on termite hills – their tops can be almost as big as a dinner plate! The Herero call them *omayova*, and in Hai||om they are called *nau-i*. This mushroom can be roasted or prepared in many other ways, and almost all Namibians agree on one thing – they are absolutely delicious!



Nau-i being prepared for cooking

Have you ever wondered why *nau-i/omayova* only grow on termite hills? The reason is that the termites actually make ventilated (well-aired) structures, called “combs”, inside their hills, and the *Termitomyces* fungus grows on the decaying plant matter in these combs. When the rainy season comes, the fruiting body of the fungus – the mushroom – appears above the ground on the termite hill.

But why do the termites go to all the trouble of looking after a fungus? Termites eat plant matter, but on their own, they can't actually digest the cellulose in plants. The termites also consume some of the fungus, and this makes it possible for them to digest the cellulose in the plant matter that they have eaten. So the termites help the fungus, and the fungus helps the termites! (Relationships like this are called “symbiotic” – they are good for both sides.)



Poison

To make poison for their arrows, the Hai||om used the roots of the *!khores* plant (*Adenium boehmianum*). They would cut the root and squeeze out the sap, then cook it until it blackened. Before it was smeared on an arrowhead (*!khoreoas*), it was heated and softened again. This poison was strong enough to kill even a large antelope, by affecting its heart. The *!khores* was not very common in all areas of Etosha, and sometimes the Hai||om had to go far to find it. Arrowheads with poison were very valuable, and belonged to specific people. If a hunter had shot an animal and it had run away and died in another man's area, that man would return the arrowhead to the hunter, together with new *!khores*.

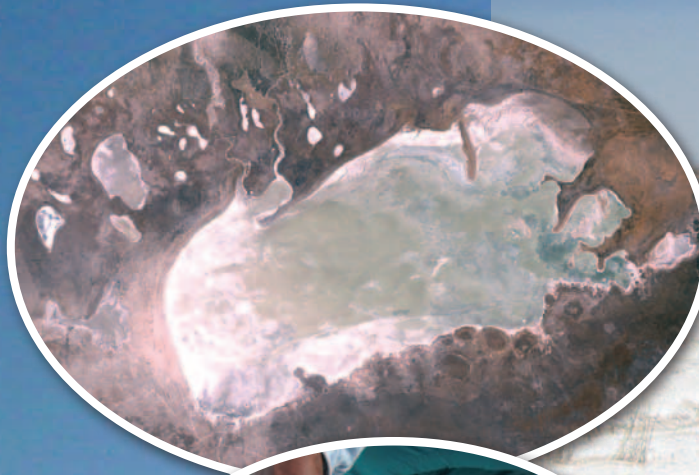
Are there any *!khores* plants where you live?



Salt

The Etosha pan is the place of salt. All humans and animals need to have small amounts of salt to live. Salting food also helps to flavour it, and preserves it so that it lasts longer. The Hai||om in Etosha lived in an area which was mostly very hot and arid (dry). They used to move around from place to place, and they did not have canned food or refrigerators to keep food fresh. They depended on what nature had to offer during the various seasons of the year.

Luckily, the Hai||om who lived close to the Etosha pan could collect salt from the pan. They used it to give flavour to their food. They also exchanged salt with other Hai||om people who lived further south, away from the pan. In exchange, they got things that were more plentiful in the south, like nuts, and the *!khores* plant which was used to prepare the poison for arrows. They also exchanged salt with the Owambo people who lived to the north of Etosha. The Owambo had a very different lifestyle – they spoke a different language, they cultivated crops and they kept livestock. In exchange for the salt, the Hai||om got iron, and also mahangu, the crop which the Owambo cultivated. They used the iron to make things like arrow-heads and knives; the mahangu tasted good, and it was very filling.



Kadisen ||Khumub collecting salt at ‡Gunub (Sueda)



Growing up



Kadisen ||Khumub telling Hai||om children about Etosha and the rich Hai||om history in the area

Today, all children are supposed to go to school. Every school day, the children of the people who are working in Okaukuejo are brought to school by bus. But in the old days, there were no schools – at least, not like the schools we have today, for example, at Ombika (close to Etosha’s southern gate) and at Oshivelo.

For Hai||om children in the past, “school” was nature itself. Children learnt everything they needed to know by listening to their parents, watching what they did, and doing things themselves. They never learnt how to read and write, and they had never seen a book. But they could tell which way an animal had gone by looking at small signs, like tracks in the sand, or how a blade of grass was bent. They could even tell how many animals there were, or whether or not an animal was injured. This skill is called “tracking”, and it was important for their survival. So we can say that tracking in the bush was their version of reading. Tracking is a skill that one cannot learn in any school today!

It is very sad that today, the knowledge of the Hai||om elders is slowly being lost, because their children are not growing up in nature anymore, and are not allowed to move around in the park. Because of this, many of the children don’t care about the elders’ skills, because they don’t need them in the world we live in today.

In the old days, children had to learn from a young age how to look after themselves. Babies and toddlers were carried in a skin of a small antelope (perhaps a springbok) on the backs of their mothers. So right from the start, they got to know the environment, and they saw how their mothers and the other women did important work, like collecting bushfood.



Hai||om girls had to become strong, for digging roots, making jewellery and carrying their younger siblings. Boys and girls learnt many skills from a young age.

The children were told which plants you could eat, and which were poisonous. They were also told which parts of animals they were not allowed to eat, because they were reserved for the elders. These special parts that only adults could eat were called soxa, which means “taboo” (things that you must leave alone – you must not eat, or touch, or experience them). The children were also taught how to listen carefully. The Hai||om always needed to hear what was happening around them. It was important for them to know what bird they were hearing – was it a barn owl? A grey lourie? A dove? An eagle? They needed to know if a noise coming from dense bush was made by an antelope, or a dangerous predator like a lion. In fact, the Hai||om knew that particular bird calls were warnings of danger. So there was plenty that they had to learn, even though they did not go to school.

Children also learnt from a young age to share, because sharing was important for survival. Today you may have enough food, but tomorrow you may not have any. So if you share what you have today with your friends, they will share with you tomorrow, and no one will be hungry.

Children had to understand to respect the elders. The sons had to get up earlier than everyone else in the mornings to make the fire, so that the fire was already burning when the elders got up. It was a hard life for the youngsters. If it was very cold, they were told to make a small fire for themselves somewhere else. That was how they were raised – the children had to learn to work by themselves, and take care of themselves.



How many different bird calls do you know?

Can you identify birds just by hearing them?



Growing up in Etosha: Learning by listening, watching and doing



By the 1940s, the Hai||om sometimes had coffee and sugar (in earlier times, they did not have these things). The boys used to put the pot on the fire to heat up the water, and they made the coffee. When the coffee was ready, the boys had to move away from the fire – they were not allowed to drink it! They were told that coffee was good for older people, but that if a boy drank coffee, it would make him weak.



What household chores are you expected to do at home?

What do you do in the morning when you wake up?

Do you ever drink coffee?

When children grew a bit older and began to understand the world, they started to do more work themselves. Girls were taken by their mothers and shown how to dig out the roots and tubers with digging sticks. Girls had to be strong and have tough hands so that they could get the roots out of the hard ground. They also had their own small bags to carry the bushfood they had collected.

When the girls were around ten years old, they had to stay away from the boys. The boys were also told to stay away from the girls – they were not allowed to play together anymore. At about this age, the boys had to move out of the huts of their parents. Two or three boys would stay together in their own hut. When girls became teenagers, they were taught to collect water, wood, bushfood and many other things for the elders. By the time they were about fifteen years old, they had to find and collect everything by themselves. If they saw many vultures in the air, they knew that an animal had probably been killed by a lion or some other predator. The girls had to follow the vultures and collect meat from the carcass of the animal. The women didn't shoot with bows and arrows – they found meat by watching the vultures.



The traditional knowledge of the Hai||om is slowly being lost because the children are not growing up in nature anymore.



For boys, it was very important to learn how to hunt, but hunting is not an easy skill to learn. They had to learn how to use bows and arrows. They were told that they were not allowed to shoot at people – bows and arrows were only for hunting animals which they could eat. When a boy was between eight and nine years old, his father would make him a small bow and arrow set, but the arrows would not have sharp points. This was to make sure that the boy would not hurt himself, or anyone else. Boys learnt how to shoot properly by first hunting mice, lizards, hares and small birds.

By the time he was about ten years old, a boy would be able to hunt bigger birds, like guinea fowl. If a boy shot a guinea fowl, he was not allowed to eat it. He had to bring the guinea fowl back to his father, so that his father could see that he was becoming a good hunter. His father would give the bird to the grandfather – only old people used to eat birds. When the father saw that his son was ready, he would give him a bigger bow, with bigger arrows. Now he would take his son with him when he went hunting. In this way, the boy learnt how to stalk animals and get very close before shooting them. In the beginning, he was not allowed to use poison on his arrows, because it is very dangerous. Later, when he was more experienced, his father would teach him how to use poison. At first, he would just get one arrow with poison. His other arrows would have no poison, but he could still use them to shoot guinea fowl or small antelope like steenbok. All the boys also had to learn how to catch porcupines – how to make the fire in front of the burrow, how long one had to wait, and what things to be careful of.

Once a boy had shot some large type of antelope – and especially if he had hunted the biggest of all antelope, an eland – he was regarded as an adult man.

Hai||om boys had to learn hunting skills; the girls had to learn the skills of collecting bushfood. What skills do you think you need to learn to survive in today's world?



Over time, the Hai||om's hunting skills have helped 'outsiders' such as visiting hunters who needed trackers and the government which needs rangers in Etosha National Park.





Getting married

A young man who wanted to get married had to be very determined! He would usually marry someone who was not from his own settlement. He could not marry a daughter of his mother's sister (his cousin on his mother's side), just as a daughter could not marry the son of her father's brother (her cousin on her father's side). Usually, the girl whom a young man married would be about five years younger than him.

When a boy fell in love and decided that he wanted to marry, he first had to give some gifts to the parents of the girl. In more recent times, these were often a blanket and a female goat. For a long time before he could get married, he also had to collect wood and water for the girl's parents. The parents had to see that he was a hard-working person; otherwise he would never get the girl. But if he worked hard, the parents would realise that he was a good man for their daughter. If he shot an animal, he had to give half of the meat to the girl's parents. He worked and worked, and through all this time he was not even allowed to kiss the girl. Some people made it even more difficult for the young man. For example, if he had shot a zebra, he had to carry half of the zebra with no help, so that they could see that he was a strong young man.

The girl would still be living in the hut of her mother, who would keep a close eye on her. The young man would not yet stay at their settlement. If he brought them food, he had to go back the same day. During this time, he would also see if the family of the girl were good people. If they had lots of fights and swore at each other, he might decide to stay away and find another girl to marry.

On the day of the wedding, the two families had to meet. The bride and the groom (the people getting married) came to the fire. First, the groom was asked if he was in love with the bride. If he said that he was, the bride was asked the same question. If she also said that she was, the two were married! Then, they could go home and live together in their own hut.

For a long time after the wedding, maybe three months, the husband would still not be seen at the settlement; he would not sit at the fire with the others. He had to leave early in the morning and come back very late in the evening. The Hai||om men were a bit shy, and they did not like to walk around in the rest of the family settlement. Gradually, the husband would get to know the family of his wife better, and he would also be seen at the settlement during the day.



Have you ever been to a traditional Hai||om wedding?

As far as you know if a man wants to get married, what does he have to do? (Must he serve the parents of the girl he wants to marry? Must he pay them something?) What does a woman have to do if she wants to get married?

If you get married one day, what sort of ceremony would you like?



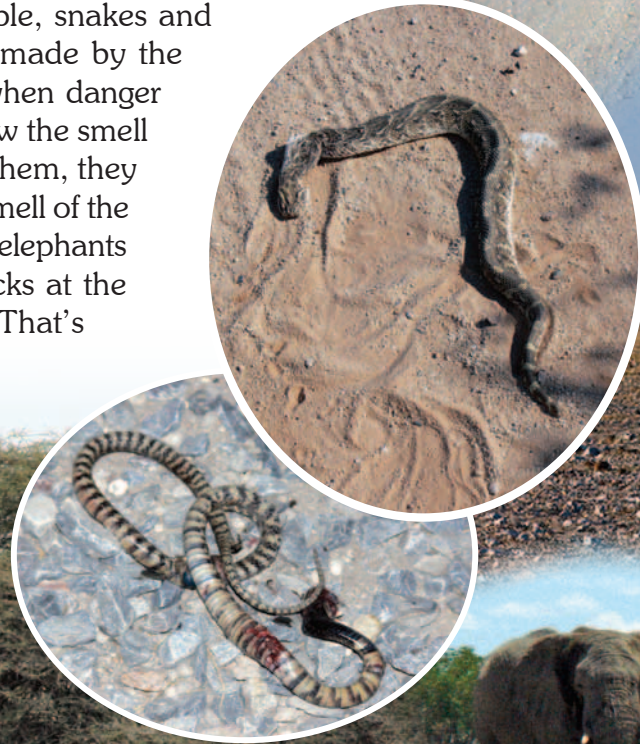
Danger



Living in the wild could be very dangerous for the Hai||om. The main threat came from wild animals, but the Hai||om knew how to protect themselves.

In the evenings, they always made a fire in front of the door to the hut, so that at night, if a dangerous animal like a lion came to the hut, they could grab a piece of burning wood to chase it away. They didn't use bows and arrows to hurt lions – they just chased them away with fire! Still, sometimes they were actually attacked by an aggressive lion. When this happened, they shouted: “//Gaisi ai!nâkarasa!” (“You ugly face, go away!”). Of course, it did not always work ...

There were also other dangers, for example, snakes and elephants. The people knew the sounds made by the different animals, and this warned them when danger was nearby. The Hai||om women also knew the smell of the snakes. When a snake was close to them, they caught it and killed it. They also knew the smell of the lions and elephants. They screamed at the elephants to chase them off, they threw burning sticks at the lions, and they beat the snakes to death. That's how they coped with dangerous animals.



Lions at Soreṭaxab



Once, the men were upset because a lion had “stolen” the antelope they had hunted. They weren’t thinking very clearly, because they decided it would be a good idea to attack the lion – they hoped to chase it out of the dense bush where it was hiding and scare it off. Well, they did get it out of the bush, but soon they wished that they hadn’t, because the lion pounced on one of them, a man named !Gauaseb, biting him in the buttocks and back. Fortunately, the lion was already very old, so

!Gauaseb was not immediately torn into little pieces. Another one of the men, named ||Khumub, tried to get the lion’s attention away from !Gauaseb, and he succeeded: now the lion left !Gauaseb alone and pounced on ||Khumub. He pinned ||Khumub down with his paws, but instead of biting him, the lion just pressed him against the ground.

Now ||Khumub became angry because the lion was making him look like a fool, so he decided to “fight dirty”: he kicked the lion in the testicles! Now it was the lion’s turn to become angry; he grabbed ||Khumub by his shoulder and began to drag him into the bush, with ||Khumub still wildly kicking at the lion’s testicles. He must have hit a few times, because the lion suddenly dropped ||Khumub and ran away. Fortunately, the lion was old and his teeth were already worn down – otherwise he would have bitten both men to death. Though both men were injured, neither was dead – they were big people, and the lion could not bite into their muscles. With the aid of Hai||om ointments, both men recovered fully.

This was not the only time the Hai||om met the old lion at Soreṭaxab. An elderly woman named ||Khumus from ṭHomob, whose people often came to Soreṭaxab, was once sleeping there. She was alone because at that time her husband ||Oreseb was staying elsewhere with another wife. Then an old lion – almost certainly the same one – came and attacked her, but all it managed to get was some clumps of hair and a bit of skin. The lion tried to chew on her head, but she screamed at him to go away and leave her alone – and that’s exactly what he did!

Not all encounters with lions ended like the story of the lions at Soretaxab. Although it did not happen very often, lions did sometimes kill people.

The lion that killed a mother



Once, the men were staying in a *!hamis* (hunting camp) some distance away from the settlement, to hunt antelope and make biltong. Only the children, women and old men stayed at the settlement. Now a very hungry lion approached the settlement. One woman had left her hut with her baby daughter to spend the evening sitting and talking with her mother at another hut. The old, hungry lion had come to the empty hut; he entered the hut, and lay in wait there. When it got late, the woman left her mother's hut and returned with her baby to her own hut. She heard some noise inside the hut, and she thought that maybe her husband had come back while she was away.

"Why are you sleeping in the dark?" she asked. "Why don't you make a fire?" When she entered, the lion was ready. He jumped onto the woman and bit her in the neck. The baby fell to the ground and started screaming. The woman also screamed – "Aaaaah-!!!" – but not for long, because almost at once, she was dead. The old men in the settlement heard the noise, and they knew at once that something was wrong. They grabbed their knobkierries and knives and rushed to the woman's hut. They could hear the terrible sound the lion made while chewing the flesh of the woman – "!Gu!gu !Gu!gu". The men rushed in, but they were too late – the woman was almost half eaten.

Now they were angry, so they attacked the lion with their knobkierries, but they were only old men, and not strong enough to kill the lion. The lion let go of the woman's body and rushed out into the night. So the people in the settlement just took the child and sat there around the fire the whole night, trying to comfort her.

The next morning, the old men went to the *!hamis*. They gave the husband the terrible news: "Your wife is no longer in this world – a lion has killed and eaten her!"

Now the husband was very angry. "This lion eats my wife?! He must die!" He and the other men all went back to the settlement to prepare to hunt down the lion.

Now you must know, if a lion does something like that, he runs far, far away from the place because he knows that he has made a big mistake. The men then tracked the spoor of the lion, until the sun went down. They slept out in the open, and as soon as the morning came, they carried on tracking the lion. They continued all day, and the next day, till at last, after two full days, they found the lion sleeping under a tree.

The husband whose wife had been killed spoke to the others: "No, we will not shoot this lion with an arrow. He ate my wife, so I will beat him to death with my knobkierrie." He told the other men not to interfere – this was between him and the lion! He approached the lion and stood over him where he was sleeping.

"*Xam, kai mama,*" he said, "Lion, stand up! (*xam* means "lion" in Hai||om.) The other men watched and shouted encouragement to him. Then he gave the lion a mighty blow on the head with his knobkierrie. The lion staggered to his feet, roared once, and fell down dead – the blow with the knobkierrie had split open his head! They butchered him, and they found some of the beads the woman had been wearing still inside the stomach of the lion.

The man said, "I have done what I had to do – now I am calm."

||Oreses and the lion at a termite hill

It is not so surprising that the Hai||om ate *nau-i* – the mushrooms that grow on termite hills. But did you know that they also ate the termites? They were also food – in fact, they have a lot of protein, just like meat.

One day, the women made a *!haros* (temporary camp) to collect some flying termites. Each woman chose her own termite hill. They used to burn grass so that the termites would fly towards the light in the night. A woman named ||Oreses had made a fire to attract the termites out of the termite hill. She had dug a hole close to the fire to collect the termites that flew into the flames and fell down.

It was raining lightly at the time, so ||Oreses had put some grass into a tree to make a shelter. She was quietly waiting for the termites to start coming out. Just then, a lion that was also looking for termites came by. The lion also decided to wait, and because of the rain, he also decided to seek shelter – under the same tree that ||Oreses was sitting under! He settled down, and in the darkness of the night, he did not notice her behind him. But she certainly knew that he was lying in front of her!

“There he sits! Oh, oh,” thought ||Oreses, “if he turns around, he will see me – and that will be the end of me!”

They say that people who are in great danger suddenly think much faster than they usually do.

Maybe that is why ||Oreses suddenly thought of a plan. She was wearing *//khaub* (a long necklace made out of beads and sticks) around her neck. Very, very quietly, she took off her *//khaub* and tied it onto the lion’s mane. Then she just sat there, waiting and watching the lion.

Water drops were collecting on the lion’s mane. After a while, he started to shake his mane to get rid of the water. When he did this, there was a terrible noise – *!gara!gara!gara* – it was the *//khaub* rattling as he shook his mane! The lion got a huge fright and ran away, but because he was running, the noise from the *//khaub* became even louder. Now he ran faster and faster, but the faster he ran, the worse the noise became. He ran and ran to get away from this terrible noise that he had never heard before, not even looking where he was running –



which was straight into a big tree. He hit his head against the tree, broke his skull – and fell down dead!

Now, sitting in her shelter, ||Oreses was too shocked to collect any termites. She just waited there until the night was over. When the sun rose, she went home. She told the men at the settlement what had happened, but they didn't believe her. "If you killed a lion with your //khaub, we will have to fetch it and eat it!" They all laughed at the idea – most Hai ||om men did not like to eat the flesh of a lion. But ||Oreses insisted it was true, so they went to check on her story.

The men then went to the termite hill where ||Oreses had made her shelter. Much to their surprise, they found the spoor of the lion. They followed his spoor – they could see that he was running very fast – until they found him lying dead under a big tree. Now the men had no choice – they had said they would eat the lion, so they butchered him and brought the meat back home.

That night, the men did a lot of eating, and the women did a lot of laughing!

Have you ever seen a lion?

What do you think you would do if you met a lion out in the bush?



Natural remedies

In the past, there were no hospitals, clinics or trained medical doctors in the areas where the Hai||om used to live. But they had different ways of treating themselves if they were sick. They knew all about the plants that grew where they lived, and some of these plants they used for their medicinal effects. Sometimes, for more serious problems, they would consult a traditional healer (!gaaioab).

The roots, bark, seeds or leaves of the different plants were used to treat different illnesses. For example, the root of !kharitsab (*Rhynchosia minima*) was used to treat different kinds of pain. If someone had body pain, for example, in the legs or the hips, you would make a small cut in the skin and rub in powder made from the dried root. If you had a stomach problem, you could cut a piece of the root, soak it in warm water, and then drink the water. The root was also chewed to prevent these problems from occurring.

A plant called gaegaeb (unidentified – we are not sure exactly what plant it is) was said to be stronger than !kharitsab, but it was used in much the same way. However, because it was stronger, you had to be careful not to take too much – otherwise, it was a little bit like !khores (the arrow poison). On the day that you used it, you had to rest, and not smoke any tobacco. (Of course, today we know that tobacco is very bad for you. It is best not to smoke at all. Just because people used to smoke tobacco doesn't mean that you have to!)

Sabob (also unidentified) was used to stop bleeding and to disinfect wounds. The root of the plant was dried and ground up, and the powder was rubbed into the wound. It was also used to stop pain, just like !kharitsab and gaegaeb.

‡Khaiab (purple-pod terminalia, *Terminalia prunioides*) was used against colds and coughs. The bark was cooked in water and it was drunk as a tea. The kernels of ‡iiros (sour plum, *Ximenia americana*) were roasted, crushed and mixed with fat for curing skin irritations and wounds.



A less bushy ‡Khaiab at ‡Homob





ʒAros (buffalo thorn, *Ziziphus mucronata*) is a tree or shrub that occurs throughout Etosha, usually as a single specimen at waterholes. Its roots, bark and leaves were used to treat coughs and chest ailments.



The ochre-red, fleshy berries of *ʒaros* are very bitter. Still, they were eaten raw. Sometimes, they were boiled to make them slightly less bitter. A Hai||om saying that features these bitter berries tells us something about how in those days, just like today, marriage was not always easy: "Marriage is not like eating *ʒaun* (raisin bush, which has very sweet berries) – it is like eating *ʒaron!*"



||Khuri||gam (devils' claw, *Harpogophytum zeyheri*, *H. procumbens*) tasted very bitter. The roots were dried and ground, and mixed into warm water to drink for stomach or kidney problems. It was also used to stop nose bleeds. Today, we know that *||khuri||gam* is very good to take if you have arthritis (pain in your joints, like knees, elbows, shoulders and fingers).

Did you know that today, *||khuri||gam* (devil's claw) from Namibia is sold all over the world as a treatment for arthritis?

Have you ever taken aspirin (for example in Disprin or Grandpa) for a headache? Well, did you know that like many medicines that we buy in shops today, aspirin originally came from plants? It is derived from a substance called salicin found in the bark of willow trees. As far back as 2 500 years ago, the Ancient Greeks used willow tree bark and leaves to treat headaches. In fact, there are records of salicins being used medicinally 5 000 years ago!



Seeing the future through bones

Traditional healers

If the medicinal plants did not help, you could go to a traditional healer (*!gaaob*). Most were men, but there were also some women. A *!gaaob* had both medical and religious skills, and could "see" and understand more than other people could. He would perform a medicine dance in the evening at a fire that was separate from the other fires at the settlement. The medicine dance was attended by other community members, who had to clap hands and to sing in order to enable the *!gaaob* to "see" the disease and to perform his healing rituals.



The spirit world



//Gamagu spirits

!Gaiaogu (traditional healers) were not only there to heal illnesses – they could also connect to spirits (*//gamagu*). In the Hai||om world, these *//gamagu* were all around, and they could bring good luck, or bad luck. They made the decisions about all things – when the rains would fall, what bushfood would grow, even whether the hunters would have luck when they were hunting. For example, if a hunter killed too many animals and just left some of the meat behind, the *//gamab* could punish him by making sure that he wouldn't have luck when he tried to hunt again. When the hunter realised that his luck had run out, he would go to a *!gaiaob* (traditional healer) to find out what he should do to get his hunting luck back. "What do I have to do," he might ask, "so that I can hunt antelope again?"

The *!gaiaob* would tell the man to come back in the evening with the other people in the settlement. He would make a fire, and the people would start to sing and dance, so that the *!gaiaob* could connect to the *//gamab* spirit. He would be told by the *//gamab* that the man had hunted too many animals and wasted the meat. The *!gaiaob* would then negotiate with the spirit, so that the hunter could again have luck when hunting.

The man would then be able to hunt again, but he had to be careful – if he again killed more than he needed, and wasted the meat, the *!gaiaob* would not be willing to help him anymore by connecting to the *//gamab*. So, in this way, some *//gamagu* helped to protect the animals which the Hai||om needed in order to survive. However, other *//gamagu* were very bad, and did bad things to the people just because they felt like it. If this was happening, the traditional healer would try to kill the *//gamab*. The story of the *//gamab* of Subeb tells you how they used a poisoned arrow to do this!



Have you been told any stories about *//gamagu* spirits?

Do you know about a *!gaiaob* who lives in your area?

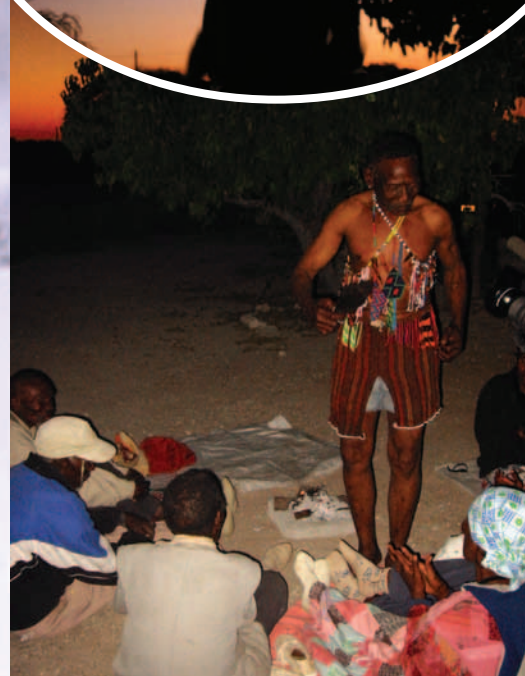


Elob, or !Khūb

The Hai||om believed in a Supreme Being, or God, called Elob, or !Khūb. He was the first man, and He created all the people; He was more important and powerful than all the //gamab spirits. Only the leaders were allowed to say His name – this was not allowed for anyone else, except in special cases. A hunter who had bad luck and was suffering from hunger could call for His help. Someone who was in great danger could also call on Him for help. However, if a child were to say, “!Khūb au de re, Elob au de re?” (God give [help] me?), the child would be beaten, and be told: “Sooxa gaob!” (“That big man is taboo!”)



Some people have suggested that this belief started when the Hai||om came into contact with white people, but the Hai||om elders say that this is not so – !Khūb was always very important to the Hai||om. They also say that in the past, !Khūb helped people when they asked Him to, but today, people ask too often, without a good reason for asking, and so !Khūb does not help as much anymore. !Khūb is tired of the sins of the people, so He is more distant than in former times.



Dying



Life begins, and life ends. In former times, when a person had died, the other people living in the settlement would come to comfort the husband or wife of the deceased person, or the parents, if a child had died. They would stay with them and give them support for a few days.

Nowadays we have morgues where corpses can be kept cool for quite a while before they are buried. Back then, however, there were no morgues, and so the Hai||om custom was to bury the corpse on the same day that the person had died. (It is also the custom of Muslims to bury the deceased on the day that he or she dies, or the next day at the latest.) In the more distant past, a dead person was always buried to the east of the settlement, in the direction of the sunrise, but in later in times, people were also buried in other directions from the waterhole.

The mourners would dig a hole and put the corpse into it, and then cover the grave with rocks. They did this because they did not have spades and picks to dig a deep hole in hard ground. By covering the grave with stones, they prevented scavengers from getting to the corpse. This custom continues today, even if a deep grave has been made and no scavengers can get to the corpse. If there are no rocks at the cemetery, then the mourners bring rocks with them to put on the grave.

Once the corpse had been buried, the people would stay for a while and cry at the graveside.

They would talk about the life of the deceased, and how he or she had died, so that the young people also would know about him or her. They would also leave some water at the grave on the day of the burial. They did this because they believed that the deceased would become thirsty.

Nowadays, most Hai||om funerals are conducted by pastors or priests. In the past, however, it was the traditional healer (!*gai*aob) who did this.

A scavenger does not kill its own food – it eats carrion (the meat of animals that have already died).

Did you know that many animals, like hyenas and jackals, are both predators and scavengers – they do hunt prey, but they will also eat carrion?



Old Hai||om graves in Etosha



After all the people had left, the *!gaaioob* had to stay at the grave for about 20 minutes to listen to what the spirit of the deceased was saying. He had to find out if it was a good spirit or a bad spirit. The Hai||om believed that after death, good spirits would go back to where they had come from; but bad spirits would stay, causing havoc and harming the people. If it was a good spirit, the *!gaaioob* could leave the grave, and the spirit would go in peace. But if he discovered that it was a bad spirit, he would try to chase it away.

After the burial, the members of the settlement would move the settlement to a new position near to the waterhole. They took the sticks of the old huts which were still good with them, and used them to build new huts. They did this because were afraid that the spirit of the dead person might be a bad spirit. When babies died, however, they did not move, because they thought that a baby would not have a bad spirit that would harm the people after the baby had died.



How are funerals conducted in your community?

What do you believe happens to the spirits of people after they have died?

A grave in
the Hai||om
cemetery at
Okaukuejo



A grave in
the Hai||om
cemetery at
Okaukuejo



This story comes from the area around ||Nububes.

It is said that Subeb died, and his spirit (*//gamab*) was moving around riding on an elephant, doing terrible things. Early every morning, the *//gamab* of Subeb came on the elephant to frighten the people out of their huts, and chase them all over the place. Of course, nobody could see the *//gamab* – they could only see the crazy elephant.

Early one morning while it was still dark, the elephant came again to chase the people around. He decided to pick on |Haudum, a big, fat man. |Haudum was terrified, and he ran away from the elephant into the bush without even looking where he was going. Because it was still dark, |Haudum did not see the big stump of an old tree in his way. He ran into the stump, and it jabbed him right between the legs – where it is very sore for boys and men to get hurt! When the people found him, he had fainted, and was lying next to the stump. Fortunately, even though he was in pain, he was not seriously injured. The elephant did not stop after that – every day, he still came to scare the people.

One of the elders named Elias was a *!gaiob* (traditional healer), so he could see the *//gamab*: “Oh, there is Subeb, sitting on the elephant,” he said. So it was decided to do something about the problem. That evening, all the people came together to make a fire, clap hands and dance. Elias entered into a trance, so that he could see the spirit world. He could clearly see the spirit on top of the elephant. While still in a trance, he took his bow and a poisoned arrow, and shot the *//gamab* of Subeb off the elephant. When a *//gamab* is shot with an arrow-head covered with *!khores* poison, then he dies a second death – and this time he does not come back. After that, the elephant ran away from that area, and the havoc was over.

//Gamab of Subeb

Wind

Living in Etosha, the Hai||om were directly affected by the weather. The wind was very important to them – some winds brought the rain that made the plants grow; others brought drought and hardship. They had names for the different winds. The wind that comes from the west was ||khabisis – it was the wind that brought diseases. They did not trust this wind. Nor did they trust the wind that comes from the south – they called it ||khoma ʒoas, mountain wind. They thought the best wind was the wind that comes from the east. They called this wind tūʒoas, east wind, or rain (tūs) wind. They thought of tūʒoas as the most important wind, because it brought the rainy season in March and April. It was good for kudu, gemsbok and hartebeest hunting, and it was good for eland as well.

We all know how a strong whirlwind sucks up dust in a tall column that can be seen from far away. We saw in the story of ||Gamab of Subeb how a ||gamab spirit can be evil, and cause a great deal of damage. Perhaps this is why the Hai||om name for a whirlwind is ||gamasares, which comes from ||gamab – they thought that a ||gamab was making the whirlwind happen. And in English, a whirlwind is sometimes called a “dust devil”.

Jackal and Hyena

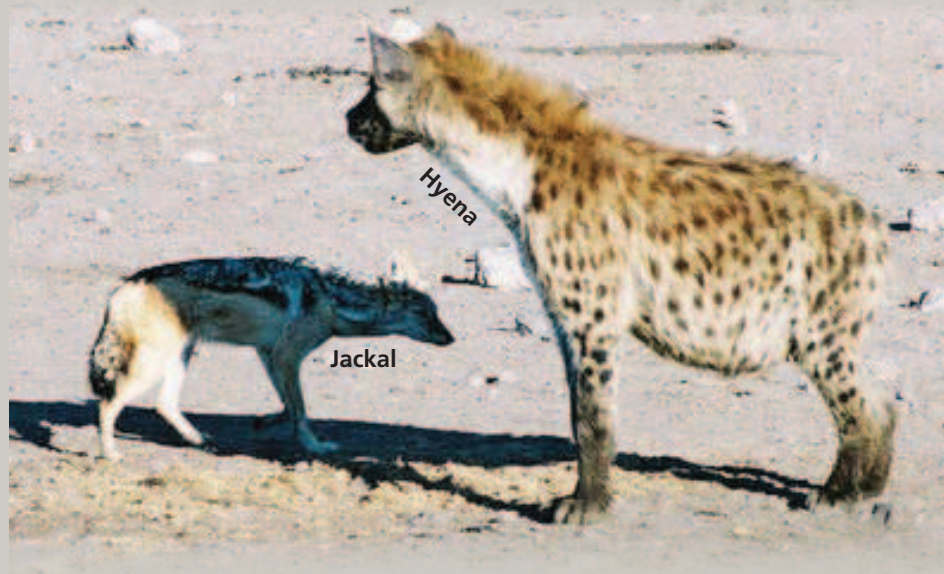
Jackal and Hyena always went around together. In a way, they were friends – but not very good friends! Hyena was stupid, and Jackal was cunning. In the old days, the people used to deliver supplies, like sugar, salt and maize meal, on an ox wagon. Jackal had a plan. He thought, “I will lie down in the road and pretend to be dead, then they will pick me up and put me on the ox wagon so that they can eat me later.” So he lay down in the middle of the road and pretended to be dead.

When the people came past with the ox wagon, they saw Jackal. One of the men said, “That jackal seems to be dead – we can cook him on the fire tonight and eat him.”

“Yes,” said the other, “but first we must make sure that he really is dead. Give me a sjambok!”

Jackal didn’t move at all. They carried on saying things like “Give me a knobkierrie!” and “Give me a rifle!” to scare Jackal, in case he was not really dead. Jackal didn’t move at all, so they decided that he really must be dead.

They picked him up, put him on the ox wagon, and carried on with their journey. Once they were moving, Jackal kicked a bag of sugar and a bag of salt off the ox wagon. Then he jumped off, but the people didn’t notice because of the noise the wheels made on the path. Jackal called to Hyena, “Come, let’s take our bags.”



He grabbed the bag of sugar, and Hyena grabbed the bag of salt. Jackal started eating the lovely, sweet sugar from his bag. When Hyena started to eat from his bag, he said, “Ai! Sies! Man, my food is bitter!”

Jackal did not want to share the sweet sugar with Hyena, so he decided to fool him. “Mine is also very bitter,” he said. “Hyena, give me your bag – I want to see if it tastes the same as mine.” Hyena gave his bag to Jackal. He only pretended to eat from it, because he knew that it contained salt, not sugar. He said, “Oh, yours is also salt – it tastes just as bad as mine.”

They didn’t have any other food, so they carried on – Jackal ate the sweet sugar, and Hyena ate the bitter salt.

When they were finished, Hyena got a terrible runny tummy. Jackal knew that this was because of all the salt Hyena had eaten, but he didn’t say a word. Jackal said, “Tomorrow it will be your turn, you must lie in the road and pretend to be dead so that we can get something to eat.”

So the next day, Hyena lay down in the road pretending to be dead, and the men with the ox wagon saw him. “Oh, there is a hyena,” said one, “we should pick him up. But first we must make sure that he really is dead. Give me a sjambok!” he said. Hyena didn’t move. “Give me a knobkierrie!” Still Hyena didn’t move. “Give me a rifle!”

This was too much for Hyena, and he jumped up and ran away! Jackal asked him, "Why did you not bring any food with you?"

"No, man, they wanted to kill me with a rifle, so I ran away!"

Jackal shook his head. "Well, now we must make another plan to get some food."

They went to a sheep kraal nearby. The people who kept their sheep there always suspected Jackal of being a sly sheep thief, so Jackal wanted to convince them that Hyena was actually to blame. Hyena and Jackal went into the kraal through the narrow entrance. They killed a sheep and started eating it. But Jackal was clever – after eating a few mouthfuls, he went to check that he would still be able to get out through the narrow entrance. He did this again and again, eating a bit and checking that he could still escape. When he was so full that he could only just fit through, he said, "Hyena, you finish the rest – I have had enough!" Hyena carried on eating and eating, and Jackal knew that he would not be able to escape.

Then Jackal squeezed through the entrance and ran off. Hyena also tried to get out, but he couldn't – he was trapped! Jackal started calling to the people: "Hey, people, come and look! You always blame me, but now you see – there is Hyena, he is the one that steals the sheep in your kraal!" The people came and saw with their own eyes. Hyena was struggling to get out of the kraal, but he was stuck in the entrance because he had eaten so much. The people took him out and gave him a severe beating. Jackal had left already.

The next day, the two of them met up again. Hyena was very angry with Jackal for getting him into trouble, but Jackal told him not to be so angry. "Forget about yesterday – today is your day! We need to get food! Look, there is a horse lying down and sleeping. You are so strong – you won't have to beat it with a knobkierrie or stab it with a knife. Just bite it in its back, and it will be dead."

Hyena was stupid enough to believe Jackal. He went up to the horse and bit it in its back. At once, the horse jumped up and kicked Hyena to death. Jackal just shook his head. "Yes, that's what you get for being stupid," he thought to himself as he went on his way.

A note on stories

The stories in this book are just some of the stories that Hai||om elders have told their children in the past. Often, a story doesn't stay the same – it grows and changes from one telling to the next, especially when it isn't read out from a book, but is told from memory.

Many stories and folktales are told again and again, and we find many of them in more than one language and culture, though often with small differences. The stories that are retold in this book are not only "Hai||om" stories. For example, the story of *Jackal and Hyena* is basically the same story that is told to many children, in different parts of the world. These stories have their origin in the old Flemish folktales about *Reynard the Fox*. In South Africa, they were retold by an Afrikaans writer named Pieter W. Grobbelaar, as *Jakkals en Wolf* stories. So, was he "stealing" the stories? No! He was doing what writers (and storytellers) have always done – taking existing stories and adapting them to the local situation. The *Jackal and Hyena* story in this book is a Hai||om version of a *Jakkals en Wolf* story. It was told by a Hai||om elder, and then adapted and translated into English.



Have you heard a version of the Jackal and Hyena story before? How many of the other stories in this book have you heard before?

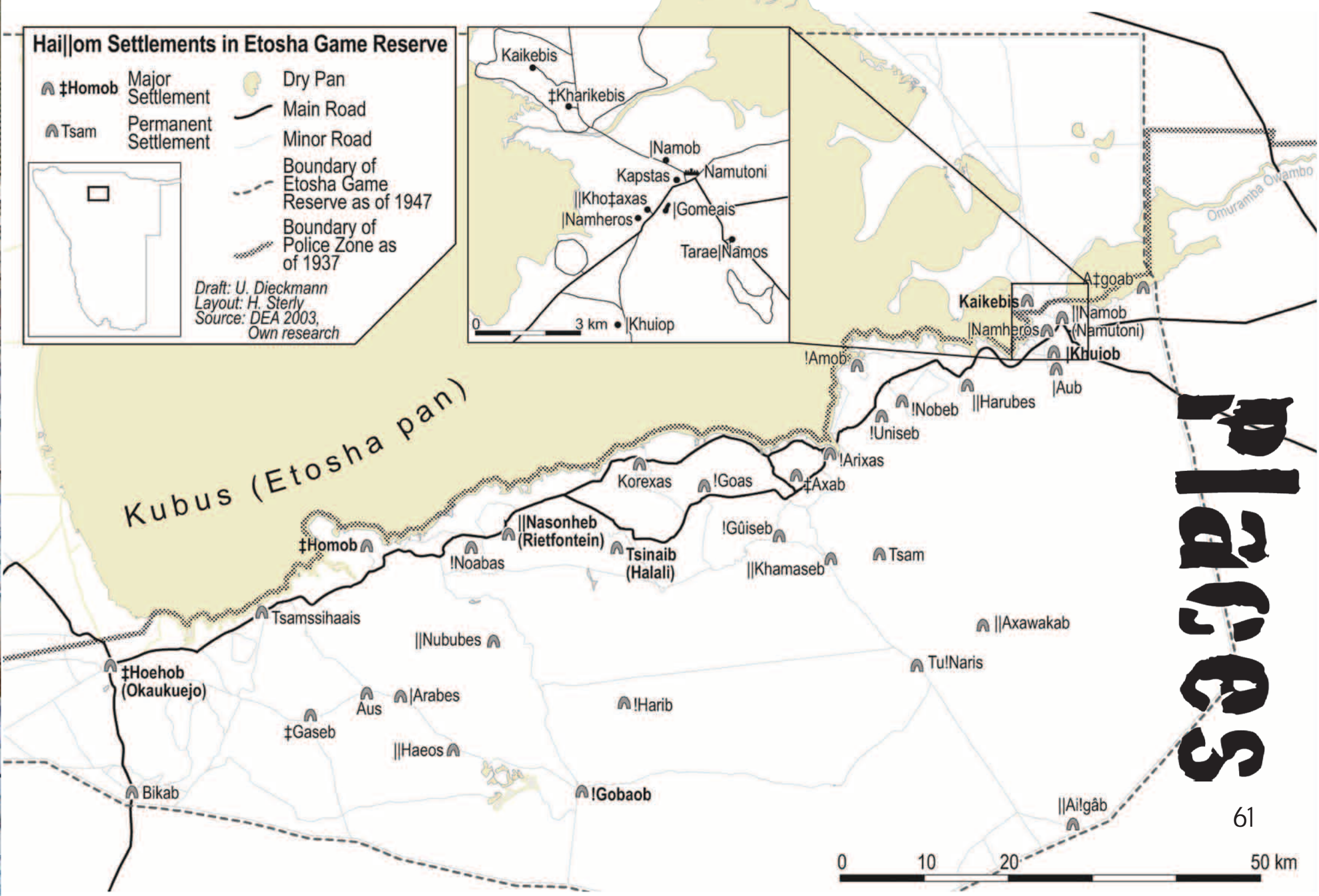
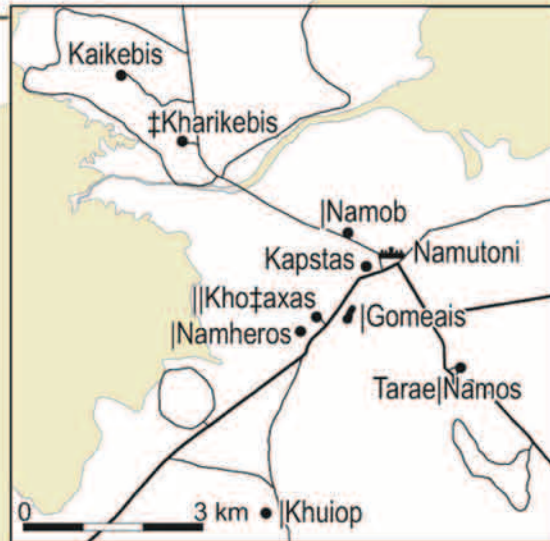
Can you remember any other stories that you were told when you were a young child?

Hai||om Settlements in Etosha Game Reserve

- !Homob Major Settlement
- !Tsam Permanent Settlement

- Dry Pan
- Main Road
- Minor Road
- Boundary of Etosha Game Reserve as of 1947
- Boundary of Police Zone as of 1937

Draft: U. Dieckmann
 Layout: H. Sterly
 Source: DEA 2003,
 Own research



Places





Just like Namibia as a whole, Etosha is a place of exceptional beauty, with the landscape changing from place to place – from woodland to grassland to desert ...

If you live in a rural area to the south of Etosha today, the places you know about will mainly be some nearby villages and farms, and some towns like Outjo and Otjiwarongo. You will probably know about tourist rest camps in Etosha (Okaukuejo, Namutoni and Halali), and of course you will know about Namibia's capital city, Windhoek, and regional centres like Opuwo, Oshakati and Swakopmund. You will probably have visited some, but perhaps not all, of these places.

Living in Etosha in the past was very different for the Hai||om. Today, you can go to some big supermarkets and clothing shops in places like Outjo; but if you had grown up as a Hai||om child in Etosha in the early days, you would have gone to very different places to get what you needed.

In those days, the important places were small settlements and waterholes. Usually, the settlements were built near to waterholes. People knew about different waterholes close to where they stayed, and also about some further away. Different waterholes were good for different things, like water even in dry times, or antelope to hunt, or the bushfood you could collect nearby. Now we will look at some of these places in Etosha.

What place do you think of as "home"?

What is the furthest you have ever been away from your home?

Why did you go there?

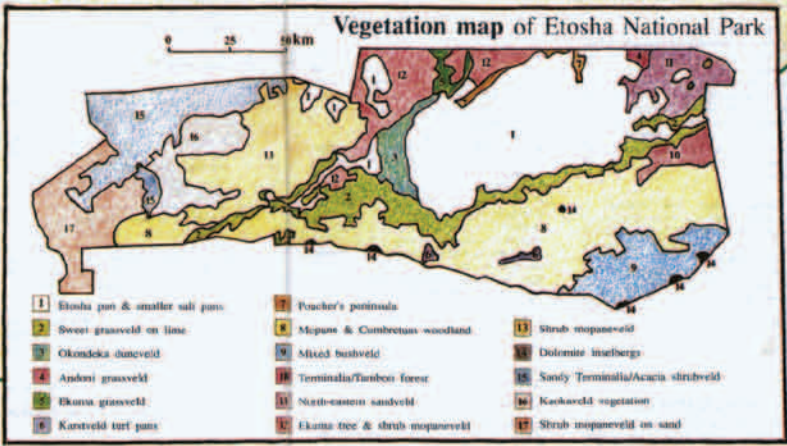


Etosha National Park • Roads open to tourists



- Rest-Camp
- Water-hole
- Windmill or Solar system
- Dry-hole
- Toilet
- Tarmac road
- Muddy road
- Tourist road
- km Distance in km

Halali	75	Namutoni	435	465	Okahandja				
	70	134	368	Okaukuejo					
	249	174	291	306	Otavi				
	260	290	175	190	116	Otiwarongo			
	190	265	245	120	186	70	Outjo		
	185	110	355	255	64	180	250	Toumb	
	507	537	72	437	363	247	317	427	Windhoek



Map compiled and drawn by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism

Ombika (Bikab)

The Hai||om called this place Bikab. It was an important waterhole that attracted a lot of zebra. There was a permanent settlement at Bikab, because there used to be water there, even in the winter. Long ago, there was a water snake at Bikab, but it was killed, and because of this, the water dried up. This happened before the new borehole was built.

People who lived in the area around Bikab also used to go to places that were quite far away – outside of what are today the borders of the park. They used to go to an area they called †Gaunguxas – today it is a farm called Oberland. They did this because there were potholes (//garudi) there, so they could collect water during the rainy season.

Have you heard of a farm called Oberland?
Do you know that it used to be called †Gaunguxas?
Do you know any other traditional names for farms?



Ticky !Noboses speaking about Ombika where she was born. She was well known in the area. A very small person, she was named “Ticky” because in those days, the smallest silver coin was called a “ticky” – it was around the size of the Namibian five cent coin. Ticky had two children and a few grandchildren. Do you know any of her descendants (children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc.)?



This photo of a corned beef tin shows that by the time the police stations had been established, the Hai||om did not only eat the meat they hunted and the bushfood they collected. By then, rations and supplies brought in from outside were becoming important. Times were changing ...

Okaukuejo (‡Hoeob)

The Hai||om name for salt bush (*Salsola etoshensis*) is ‡hoede. Because there is a lot of salt bush in the Okaukuejo area, it was known as ‡Hoeob, “the place with lots of salt bush”.

In the past, Okaukuejo was in the same territory as Bikab, and it was managed by the same headman (*gaob*). But in 1901, before the game reserve was proclaimed, Okaukuejo was established as a German military post; later, it became a police station. From that time, the Hai||om living around there had a lot of contact with the whites who were working there. Sometimes, they were also employed temporarily (not permanently) at the police station.

Tourism in Etosha had started in the 1930s and 1940s. In those years, it was a real adventure for visitors to come to Etosha. They used to camp close to the fountain at Okaukuejo. If a lion approached, they had to hide in or under their vehicles.

Then, in 1954, the Hai||om were evicted from Etosha. Those who used to live near to waterholes in the Ombika/Okaukuejo area had to come to Okaukuejo. When they got there, the white farmers from south of Etosha were already waiting to collect workers for their farms. The dogs of the Hai||om were killed, and they had to hand in their bows and arrows.

In 1955, Okaukuejo was officially opened as a tourist camp. The few Hai||om who were allowed to stay and work at Okaukuejo saw how Etosha’s tourist facilities were built. They helped with the maintenance of the roads and the drilling of artificial waterholes. At first, the Hai||om used to perform traditional dances for the tourists in Okaukuejo, but this was stopped later in the 1960s. Today, there are only a few Hai||om still living in Okaukuejo.



The first bungalows at Okaukuejo

The waterhole at Okaukuejo



†Aro!gara!garases

On the main road about 17 km from Okaukuejo, you can still see a large, bushy tree close to a crossroad. It is a buffalo thorn (†aros, *Ziziphus mucronata*). (In Afrikaans, this tree is called a *blinkblaar wag-'n-bietjie*, which means “shiny leaf wait-a-bit” – if you are not careful, its thorns will bite into your flesh and make you stop for a bit!)

This specific †aros was given the nickname †aro!gara!garases – and in time, the place came to be called †Aro!gara!garases. Now, if you speak Hai||om, you will know that this means something like “that damned †aros tree!” When the Hai||om were walking in the heat of the day, they would have seen it from far away: “Ei, the sun is now hot, let’s quickly go to that †aros so that we can rest in its shade.” But because the land is so flat there, and the †aros is so big, it was further away than it looked – much further! They would walk and walk, and still not get there: “That damned †aros – it is so far away!” When at last they reached the †aros, they would laugh about it. Even today, everybody still calls that particular tree †Aro!gara!garases.



†Homob

The Hai||om liked eating locusts, so they looked forward to swarms that came once in a while. They used to catch thousands of them. They would pound them and eat them. †Homob means “the place with lots of locusts”.

There are actually two waterholes at †Homob. The one to the left of where the cars park today was mainly for getting drinking water, while the one to the right was used for hunting. The hunting shelters (*!goadi*) close to the waterhole are still visible today. At different times in the past, there were two settlements at †Homob, one to the right of the road that now leads to the waterholes, and one to the left. The settlements were about 500 metres away from the water. The *gaob* (headman) of the area was named !Noboseb.

Do you know any relatives of the *gaob* !Noboseb, or people with the same surname?

Once tourism had started in the game reserve, but before the eviction, the Hai||om used to wait in the shade of a tree at †Homob for visitors to arrive. The visitors took pictures of them and rewarded them with sweets and oranges. This tree is still there today.



!Gobaub

A long time ago, there was only thick bush in the area around !Gobaub, and there was no water. One day, two men from |Aib were walking around looking for game and bushfood. They always took their bitch (female dog) with them when they were in that area. They knew there was no surface water there – they would have to get water from the root of #hapab (probably the water root kambroo plant). When they decided that it was time to go home, they looked for their bitch, but they could not find her. They called and called, and when at last she came to them, they saw that her paws were wet! The two |Aib men wondered where the bitch had found water. “Why are her paws wet? There is no water here! Come, let’s have a look.”

They followed the bitch deeper and deeper into the thick bush, until at last they came to a hole in the ground. The bitch crawled down into the hole, and when she came out, her paws were wet, because she had been drinking more water. The men were amazed: “We come here often, but we didn’t know about this source of water! Why didn’t we know about it beforehand? This is very unusual.”

They went home without drinking any of the water. Back home, they told the old man !Gauaseb about the water. The next day, !Gauaseb came with them to the //garus (a pothole that contains water). He saw the water and he also wondered: “What is going on here? We roam around here every day, and yet we have not seen this water before. This is very strange!”

!Gauaseb decided to consult the prophet Suxub. At that time, Suxub stayed at the Neins mountains (close to Outjo). They went to get Suxub, and he came with his family, his wife and his people. He said, “This evening, we have to look carefully for the signs to find out about the water.” So they made a fire, and danced around



The waterhole at !Gobaub

it, clapping their hands. Suxub realised that the //garus needed to be opened: “I will open it, but I first have to make cuts on my feet, and put my feet into the water, so that the blood flows into the water. Then that blood will open up the water.”

The next day, they went to the //garus again. Suxub cut his feet and put them into the water, and then he quickly stood back. Suddenly, the water burst out, making a gurgling sound – !gobau, !goba – and soon it was flowing strongly. The Hai||om say that the name !Gobaub comes from !goba, “burst open”. The water started flooding out into the surrounding area, to the south and to the north. The area became well watered and green. Animals moved to the area, and plenty of bushfood began to grow there. Soon, people moved there as well – they came from all directions to stay there. !Gauaseb told Suxub, “You opened up the water, so you will be the headman of this area.” And so Suxub became the headman.

In time, however, more and more Hai||om were staying there, and the people became jealous of each other. They started to fight

about the water of !Gobaub, because there was no other water in the area. Suxub was chased out from !Gobaub, so he fled to ||Nasoneb (Rietfontein), and he and his family stayed there for many years. His family was small – he had only three sons and two daughters at that time. Later on, when Suxub’s sons, Elias and Hendrik had grown up, the family decided that they should go back to !Gobaub, because the water was rightfully theirs. When they returned to !Gobaub, the sons of Suxub said, “We won’t go away, we are big now, and we won’t be chased away again.”

There was a big group of people living at !Gobaub – !Gauseb, ||Hanixab, and many others. Elias and Hendrik told them that they should move away. For a while it looked as if a fight would break out, but then Elias realised that they should not try to chase the people away: “No, we should rather make peace. Let’s make peace so that all of us can stay here.” Elias called a meeting to discuss who should be allowed to stay there, and he convinced the people that they should not fight about water. They decided that each family should build their own dam from which they could fetch water. They also decided that they should look for bushfood in different directions from the waterhole, and that they should hunt in different areas – !Gauseb’s group would hunt in one direction, and Suxub’s group would hunt in the opposite direction. The people were glad, and they stayed together peacefully, because there was enough water for everyone. This peace lasted until the time when they were all chased out of the park.

(This story was told by Kadisen ||Khumub, a grandchild of Suxub. At the time when they lived at ||Nasoneb, Kadisen’s father was still a young boy.)



Rietfontein (||Nasoneb)

||Nasoneb was another important Hai ||om settlement, with about 80 residents. The *gaob* (headman) in the years before the eviction was |Nuaiseb. There was a waterhole called ||Nububes in the same area as ||Nasoneb that was recorded on maps from the early 1900s. Today, however, it no longer appears on maps because it has dried up. However, there was also an important Hai ||om settlement at ||Nububes.

Have you heard of ||Nasoneb and ||Nububes?
Have you heard of the *gaob* named |Nuaiseb?
Do you perhaps know any of his descendants?

When more and more tourists began to visit Etosha, they would often come to ||Nasoneb, because it was easy to get there by road from Okaukuejo and Namutoni. They used to give sweets and oranges to the children, and tobacco, sugar or sometimes even clothes to the adults. The whites called ||Nasoneb “Rietfontein”, because of the dense reeds that grow there.

Kadisen speaking about ||Nasoneb where he grew up



The “Dorslandtrekkers” at ||Nasoneb

For a short time during the 19th century, some white people also stayed at ||Nasoneb. The Dorslandtrekkers were Afrikaners who left the Transvaal Republic (from the area around what is today Pretoria in South Africa) in search of a new homeland. They travelled through the arid (very dry) Kalahari in three waves during the 1870s. The last of these waves of Dorslandtrekkers stayed at ||Nasoneb for some time before moving on again. During their stay at ||Nasoneb, one Johanna Alberts died of malaria. Her grave is still there today. The Hai||om knew about this grave close to their settlement, but the children were not allowed to play there. They had to respect the grave, which was just called *Hû||hobas* (“white person’s grave”).



The grave of Dorslandtrekker Johanna Alberts at ||Nasoneb

There is some confusion about how long the Dorslandtrekkers were at ||Nasoneb. The new gravestone that was placed there gives Johanna Alberts’ date of death as 1876. As the Dorslandtrekkers only left in 1879, this would mean that they were there for about two-and-a-half years. According to a descendant of that group, however, a mistake was made on the gravestone. In fact, they were only at ||Nasoneb for a few months in 1879, during which time Johanna Alberts died. They then moved on to the Kaokoveld (Rusplaas and Kaoko-Otavi), where they stayed for about 18 months; towards the end of 1880, they crossed the Kunene River at Swartbooisdrift and settled in Angola. After five years, 46 families returned to an area near Grootfontein, where other Afrikaner settlers were trying to establish a new country called the Republic of Upingtonia. The rest of this group of Dorslandtrekkers stayed in Angola for about 50 years, but because of conflict with the Portuguese authorities, they came back to German South West Africa.

Did you know that for a while, the Dorslandtrekkers lived in the ||Nasoneb area in Etosha?

Halali (Tsinab)

The Halali tourist camp was opened in 1967. Unlike Namutoni and Okaukuejo, it hadn’t been a police station beforehand. The waterhole which you can see from the camp today is not actually a natural spring – it has been made so that the tourists can view game from inside the camp, and it is fed with water from a borehole. (Especially in the western parts of the park, many of the waterholes that tourists visit are artificial (not natural), or are at least given extra water from boreholes.)

Not far from Halali, however, there was a natural well with a permanent settlement, called Tsinab. Today, it has been almost entirely forgotten, and tourists can no longer get to it. It was never the best well, however. You could drink its water, but it didn’t taste good, and because it was not an open fountain, it was not easy for animals to drink there. Because of this, the Hai||om preferred to hunt animals on the nearby plains rather than at Tsinab itself.



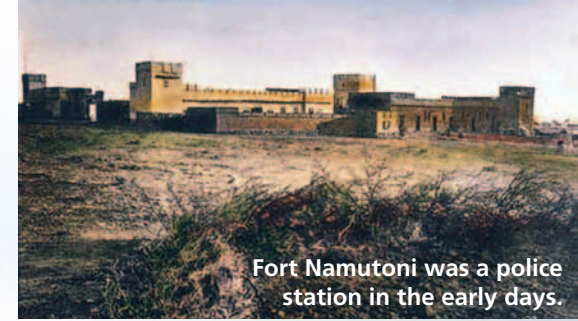
Halali gate in 1967 when it was opened

Tsinatsaub, the natural well near Halali



Namutoni (Aure|nammob)

Namutoni, or Aure|nammob (“the place that the men love”), was a favoured Hai||om hunting site before it was permanently settled by the whites. In 1903, a fort was built at Namutoni. There was a Hai||om settlement at another nearby waterhole, Klein Namutoni. It was in an area that was rich in bushfood, which is probably why its Hai||om name was Tarai|nammos (“the place that the women love”).



Fort Namutoni was a police station in the early days.



Klein Namutoni (Tarai|nammos)

|Gomais

In 1954, shortly before the Hai||om were evicted from Etosha, they were told to move from their settlements at waterholes in the Namutoni vicinity to a new settlement, called |Gomais (“densely settled place”). Once they had assembled, the Native Commissioner of Owamboland ordered them to leave the park. He said that this was necessary in order to protect the game! Even though the Hai||om had always been there without hunting too many animals, they had no choice. In the future, they would only be allowed to return if they had a permit. Within three months, they had all left the park to work on neighbouring farms. Only a few Hai||om whose labour was needed were allowed to stay at the police stations/tourist camps.

Has your family ever had to move away from where they were staying to a new place? If so, why did this happen?



|Gomais – the place where the Hai||om were ordered to leave Etosha

Klein Okevis (ǀKhari Kevis)

ǀKhari Kevis was a very large settlement where the Hai||om used to keep livestock. Before the eviction, they also got rations and tobacco there. The elderly Hai||om today say that the white people “tamed” them with these rations and tobacco. The grave of Fritz !Naob is at ǀKhari Kevis. According to the Hai||om elders, Fritz !Naob was the son of Fritz ǀArixab.



The waterhole at Klein Okevis (ǀKhari Kevis)



Receiving rations



Fritz ǀArixab

In the German colonial times, Fritz ǀArixab was known as Kaptein Aribib, because the Germans struggled with the Hai||om clicks and did not spell or pronounce Hai||om names correctly. Fritz ǀArixab played an important part in Hai||om history because he signed a treaty with the German colonial government in 1898.

In terms of the treaty, the “bushmen” had to give up all of their traditional territory (except for the waterhole !Naidaus, which is situated on a farm south of the current border of Etosha) in return for protection provided by the German colonial government. They would still be allowed to collect bushfood everywhere that they had

collected it in the past. They had to promise not to oppose the settlement of German farmers, but to assist them and to remain on good terms with them. In particular, they had to agree not to set grass fires.

“Kaptein Aribib” vowed to remain loyal to the German colonial government and to do what was asked of him. He was to receive an annual salary of 500 marks, but this amount would be reduced for every grass fire that broke out.

Even though Governor Leutwein tried to fulfil the government’s obligations, there were problems with the treaty. Firstly, according to the official

view, bushmen did not actually own any land. And secondly, although he was a respected person in his area, ǀArixab was not the overall chief of all the Hai||om – they did not have this kind of political structure.

Nevertheless, ǀArixab did continue to receive his allowance until 1904, when war broke out between the Germans and the Hereros. ǀArixab was shot on instructions from the Owambo chief Nehale for killing a number of Herero at Namutoni. After ǀArixab’s death and Leutwein’s replacement by the infamous General von Trotha, the treaty became irrelevant.

Photo credits

Many of the photographs in this book were taken by Ute Dieckmann. Most of the other photographs, including maps, were provided by the institutions and individuals named below, and a few were sourced on the internet.

Historical photos

- National Archives of Namibia (Denver Expedition Collection and other selected photos)
- Hanneliese Kendzia (Liesel Aschenborn Collection)

Contemporary photos and maps

- Etosha Ecological Institute
- Ministry of Environment and Tourism
- Ministry of Lands and Resettlement
- Andy Botelle
- Roger Collinson
- Victoria Haraseb
- Dianne Hubbard
- Bill Kemp
- Silke Rügheimer
- Harald Sterly
- James Suzman
- Ralf Vogelsang
- Ute von Ludwiger

Internet sources

- biodiversityexplorer.org – brown crow, page 12
- capeinfo.com – mopane worms in bowl, page 30
- clipart.com – prison graphic (original version), page 22 (edited version)
- djsphotography.co.uk – porcupine, page 21
- kyffhauser.co.za – *Grewia* berries on tree, page 27
- madetobeunique.com – python, page 21
- predatorconservation.com – jackal and hyena, page 59
- smugmug.com – mopane worm, page 30
- southernafricanplants.net – mopane wood, page 30
- facebook.com/pages/the-pure-oils-company – *Ximenia* oil, page 40
- staticflickr.co (Piet Grobler) – mopane seed pod, page 30
- toptropicals.com – *Grewia* berries ready to eat, page 27; *Aros* berries, page 50
- wikimedia.org – pied crow, page 13







Many Hai||om work as rangers in Etosha. These images show rangers tending to sick animals. If you love animals, perhaps you would like to work as a ranger in Etosha some day.



The author, Ute Dieckmann (right), with archaeologist Ralf Vogelsang (left) and members of the Hai||om community Okaukuejo.



Kadisen with members of the new generation of Hai||om



An even newer generation of Hai||om – Kadisen's grandchildren





I was
also born in
Etosha!

Born in Etosha: Living and learning in the wild has been written in the first instance for the Hai||om children who today live on farms and in towns outside Etosha, and in some cases in the Etosha rest camps – Okaukuejo, Halali and Namutoni. The aim of the publication is to provide these children with some insight into how Hai||om children grew up in Etosha in the past, and thus into how their own experiences compare with those of their ancestors. However, the publication is not only for Hai||om children: irrespective of their backgrounds, all children should benefit from engaging in such a process of self-assessment and comparison.

