



Auslandsaufenthalt zwecks Forschung für  
Masterarbeit (MA – Culture and Environment  
in Africa)

Aachen, 08.01.15

The PROMOS scholarship which I received from the University of Cologne supported my field research in Namibia's Omaheke-Region. I received 1,875.00 Euro which were used to pay for transport (flight), translation, petrol and other daily expenses. This research forms the basis for my master thesis which presents the results that I gathered in Namibia's resettlement projects Skoonheid and Drimiopsis from September 11<sup>th</sup> 2014 to December 11<sup>th</sup> 2014. I arrived in Namibia on September 6<sup>th</sup> 2014 and returned to Germany on December 20<sup>th</sup> 2014. My research was supported by the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN) and the Legal Assistance Center (LAC) in Windhoek.

The aim of my thesis is a case study on the consequences of social and personal sharing norms among the local population which includes San, Nama/Damara, and a few other ethnic groups (Wambo, Kavango, Herero, etc.). The ethnographic methods that were applied include participant observation, wealth ranking, open and guided interviews, free-listing tasks and individual network analysis. In Skoonheid, 49 individuals from 44 different households participated in the study. In Drimiopsis, 46 individuals from the neighborhoods of Kanyemba and Klein-Kanyemba participated and contributed information. Data analysis is still in progress and will compare the statements of different local groups along the lines of language, wealth, age and place of living.

### **Participant Observation**

This is probably the most often used techniques in ethnography. It can be described as 'being there without interference' and was constantly practiced during my stay. I was accommodated at the farm house in Skoonheid, which allowed me to participate in the daily lives of the local population and gave me the chance to gather data beyond the other methods that were part of research. Informal interviews, observation and mental mapping provided information which needs to be matched and compared with utterances and statements from formal interviews. Most observations have been made in Skoonheid due to my place of stay. However, valuable everyday life observations have also been made in Drimiopsis. Lingua Franca was Afrikaans while often translation from local languages into English or Afrikaans was needed. Most observations still have to be evaluated and brought into context with the other research results. Of most importance will be the observation of social gatherings such as pension pay-out day and the meetings of the local committees. Also the observation of internal power struggles and the commonly vague definition of personal property will be of importance.

## **Wealth Ranking**

The aim of this task was a better understanding for the situation of individual households, which could also be used as a tool for balanced sampling at later research stages. In Skoonheid it was conducted with all registered households (n=74). The definition of wealth criteria were left to the informants (n=5) who chose between a number of four and eight different wealth groups. The result was five major wealth groups according to natural break grouping: the two poorest groups had the most households and the top group had only three households.

In Drimiopsis it was conducted with the households of the neighbourhoods Kanyemba and Klein Kanyemba (n=83). The informants (n=5) chose to sort into four or five wealth groups. The result was four major groups: a small very poor group, a large lower middle group, a very small (five households) upper middle group and a medium-sized top group.

## **Open (semi-structured) Interviews**

For the recorded interviews it had to be opted for convenience sampling as some informants insisted to be interviewed while others refused. However, I tried to get impressions from the four/five wealth groups and to get female and male statements. Also the household language of the informants was taken into account. Results differed extremely along age lines and social status. Furthermore, the interviews were much shorter in Drimiopsis as people were less eager to tell about their living circumstances. No significant differences with regard to matters of sharing were noticed in reference to the household language. In both villages informal unrecorded interviews were conducted as well.

## **Free-listing**

Informants were asked to name goods that are regularly shared among the people of the village. Informants (n=12 in each village) were sampled according to wealth groups and availability. Results: Sharing is most often associated to food or items that serve for food accumulation (e.g. money, garden tools, and means of transport). Some informants in Skoonheid mentioned abstract terms such as love and prayer. Sharing of work was not mentioned by anyone and had also been denied upon probing in Skoonheid. The results differed insignificantly among the two villages.

## **Personal Network Analysis**

The items that were mentioned most often in the free-listing were used in the questionnaire for the network analysis. Informants were asked who they recently shared good A, good B, good C... with and who they recently received these goods from. For the given names the relationship (e.g. brother or neighbour) and the place of stay (if outside of village) was noted down.

Skoonheid: Eight informants were interviewed shortly before pension pay-out day and eight were interviewed shortly after. In the first round of interviews one San household and one Non-San household were chosen from each of the wealth groups (the two richest groups had been fused due to the small number of households in the top group). For the second round of interviews recipients and non-recipients of monetary support (pension, child support for widow(er)s, disability grant) were chosen from each wealth groups. Altogether 16 household-heads or –members were interviewed.

Statistical analysis still has to be conducted, but the first impression shows the most significant differences along wealth lines.

Drimiopsis: The first set of interviews (same sampling method as in Skoonheid) was conducted before pension payout. The second set of interviews was conducted in the two days after. The first impression shows no significant differences or commonalities along language or age lines.

### **The soccer-team experiment**

A small economic game was conducted with 15 members of Skoonheid's soccer team to test the feasibility of such experiments for later research stages. It was a combination of common-pool game and avoidance game. The participants had the choice to earn money for the team or for themselves. Interestingly, a significantly larger amount was dedicated to the common pool (i.e. the soccer team).

### **Agreement vs. Disagreement Questionnaire**

At the end of my stay I developed a questionnaire which applies the Likert-scale on certain statements that represented salient issues in the communities with regard to sharing. The questionnaire was answered by 40 informants in each of the villages resulting in 37 questions being answered by 80 informants. This data also still needs to be statistically analysed more thoroughly within the next month.

### **Summary**

The academic worth of my field research still needs to be evaluated, but personally it was an experience that made me grow in both personal and professional terms.