

(Sm)othering others? Post-millennial anthropology in Namibia

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Abstract

This paper provides a selective overview of the social science literature produced on Namibia since the start of the millennium with a particular focus on anthropology. While still concerned with 'peripheral areas' like Kunene and Bushmanland, more recent studies have shifted their focus to the north, the most densely populated region. On the basis of this overview, suggestions are made concerning future topics. Speculation is also offered on how priorities are established, and concerns are raised about the increasing bifurcation of outputs between Namibian- and non-Namibian-based researchers. The possible smothering of local researchers has implications as the Government's efforts to control research take on new forms.

In Namibia, the millennium started with promise for the social sciences, marked by the formation of the Association for Southern African Anthropology (ASNA) at its highly successful meeting in Windhoek.¹ But how justified was this optimism? This brief essay attempts to assess selectively recent developments in Namibian social science.² It has to be selective because a preliminary bibliographical search yielded over 200 items of anthropological interest published post-2000.³ By default, the focus of this article is on social and cultural anthropology, rather than sociology, for the simple reason that the former disciplines have swamped sociology in terms of academic output. As a rough gauge, during the past years there have been only three traceable sociology doctorates awarded, compared to more than 30 in anthropology.⁴ After broadly surveying these

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¹ Debie LeBeau and Robert Gordon, (eds.), *Challenges for Anthropology in the 'African Renaissance': A Southern African Contribution*, Windhoek, University of Namibia Press, 2002.

² Robert Gordon, "The Stat(U)S of Namibian Anthropology: A Review", *Cimbebasia*, 16, 2000: 1-23.

³ Grateful thanks to Janie Swanepoel who assisted in the literature search.

⁴ Ashley Currier, *Out in Africa: LGBT Organizing in Namibia and South Africa*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2012; Lucy Edwards-Lauch, *The Effects of HIV/Aids-Related Mortality on Family Structures in Namibia*, Unpubl. PhD, University of Namibia, 2009; Thomas A. Fox, *Mass Media, Lifestyle and Young Adults (Un)Reflexive Negotiation of Social and Individual Identities in Windhoek*, unpubl. PhD, University of Stellenbosch, 2012.

ethnographically informed works, this essay considers the anthropological habitus of the country.

Factors too many to enumerate, but including South African administrative policy which steered anthropologists (especially foreign ones) towards non-sensitive topics and areas commonly seen as 'peripheral', coupled with interesting scholarly questions, expanding scholarly network clusters, and, dare we say it, a Manichean desire for something as different as possible from capitalist urban alienation — all combined with the questionable assumption that 'virginity is valuable' — led to a concentration on areas known as 'Kaokoland' and 'Bushmanland'. And, topically, the issues addressed in these locales could hardly be labelled key to improving the situation of Namibians generally. Not that this is necessarily a bad thing: seeing out of the corner of the eye, or peripheral vision, is sharper than ordinary vision; and this is certainly true in Kaoko, especially in Friedman's *Imagining the Post-Apartheid State*, a theoretically sophisticated empirically grounded study.⁵

The Kaoko region continues to be well-served with several fine-grained studies based on extensive fieldwork. Topically and theoretically, they are diverse, ranging from Oxford structuralism⁶ to Rouchian films⁷ to visual analyses of tourist-Himba interactions.⁸ Others have moved further away from the 'exotic' to popular culture, pop music and beer drinking.⁹ Historical analyses examining the politics of the region's relationship to the centre are also important.¹⁰ In terms of monographs, the work of Bollig stands out.¹¹ Not only does he report on long-term fieldwork, but he has the added advantage of having undertaken an in-depth comparative perspective with the pastoral Pokot in Kenya. Given the reality of climate change and increasing global desertification, his focus on the ecology of arid areas is certainly prescient.

⁵ John Friedman, *Imagining the Post-Apartheid State. An Ethnographic Account of Namibia*, New York, Berghahn, 2011.

⁶ David Crandall, "Classifying the Animal Kingdom: Are the Himba Naturalists?", in: Michael Bollig and Jan-Bart Gewald, (eds.), *People, Cattle, and Land: Transformations of a Pastoral Society in Southwestern Africa*, Köln, Köppe, 2001, 433-448; idem, "Understanding the Hyena's Character in African Folktales: The Himba Case", *Africa*, 72 (2), 2002: 153-170.

⁷ Rina Sherman, *Keep the Dance*, 75 minutes. France/USA: DER, Watertown, 2007.

⁸ Marijn Kraak, *Authenticized*, 100 minutes, Netherlands, Zuis, 2013; Michael Bollig and Heike Heinemann, "Nomadic Savages, Ochre People and Heroic Herders: Visual Presentations of the Himba of Namibia's Kaokoland", *Visual Anthropology*, 15 (3-4), 2002: 267-312.

⁹ Steven van Wolputte and Laura Bleckmann, "The Ironies of Pop: Local Music Production and Citizenship in a Small Namibian Town", *Africa*, 82 (3), 2012: 413-443; Steven van Wolputte and Mattia Fumanti, (eds.), *Beer in Africa. Drinking Spaces, States and Selves*, Münster, Lit, 2010.

¹⁰ For instance, Steven van Wolputte, (ed), *Borderlands and Frontiers in Africa*, Münster, Lit, 2013; and of course various articles by Michael Bollig.

¹¹ Michael Bollig, *Risk Management in a Hazardous Environment: A Comparative Study of Two Pastoral Societies (Pokot Nw Kenya and Himba Nw Namibia)*, New York, Springer, 2006; Michael Bollig, Michael Schnegg and Hans-Peter Wotzka, (eds.), *African Pastoralism, Past, Present, Future*, London, Berghahn, 2013.

Building on the rich legacy of the Marshalls, who have themselves been the object of study, 'Bushman' or San studies continue to proliferate.¹² In Nyae Nyae itself, there are two major ethnographic sources. John Marshall's *Kalahari Family* is a five part, 360-minute long documentary based on over 50 years engagement and 2 million feet of film.¹³ While it tends to slip occasionally into the 'anthropologist as hero' genre, its effectiveness lies precisely in the fact that it is difficult to determine whether it is a documentary or an advocacy film, as it skewers the Worldwide Fund and its community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) agenda (see Nuulimba and Taylor, this volume).

Bieseles and Hitchcock have also provided a rich, textured account of developments there since Independence, focusing largely on the efforts to promote indigenous schooling and the 'heroic' (their term) attempts to secure land rights by creating the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, something hailed by USAID as an international success story.¹⁴ This is a justly acclaimed book by two experienced anthropologists: Bieseles is one of the few fluent Ju/' speakers with a long-term engagement in the area, while Hitchcock is a foremost expert on Human Rights, especially with respect to the San/Bushmen. Nevertheless, the book does not go far enough and displays a certain naiveté.

Given that CBNRM is believed to be the only possible means of ensuring indigenous land rights, what is lacking in the above account is a discussion of how that organizational edifice was constructed and branded. In this regard, it would have been informative to read how CBNRM was conceptualized in Windhoek, a process in which Hitchcock participated but failed to reflect upon. In other words, how might the outcome have been different if Hitchcock and Bieseles had not been on the scene? They are silent on the issues raised by Sullivan regarding the sustainability of this donor driven discourse of 'new' conservation, and how it might mask difference, inequality and aspirations;¹⁵ indeed, how it might even homogenize and silence alternative perspectives. Like many studies of CBNRM, they assume the long-term viability of CBNRM, apparently accepting at face value claims by official stakeholders that it is viable. They fail to appreciate that tourism, a major bait for persuading locals to accept conservancies, is a notoriously fickle market, or how global forces and neo-liberalism have shaped CBNRM. On the contrary, Bieseles and Hitchcock attribute the 'main cause of present day suffering' to a 'lack of understanding' of Ju/'hoansi grassroots governance by the government, NGOs

¹² Sonja Speeter-Blaudszun, *Die Expeditionen der Familie Marshall*, Münster, Lit, 2004; Liisa Barbash, *The Marshall Family Expeditions*, Cambridge, Peabody Museum, (in press).

¹³ John Marshall, *Kalahari Family*, 360 minutes, Watertown, DER, 2003.

¹⁴ Megan Bieseles and Robert Hitchcock, *The Ju/'Hoan San of Nyae Nyae since Independence: Development, Democracy and Indigenous Voices in Namibia*, New York, Berghahn, 2011.

¹⁵ Sian Sullivan, "How Sustainable is the Communalising Discourse of 'New' Conservation?", in: Dawn Chatty and Marcus Colchester, (eds.), *Conservation and Mobile Indigenous People*, Oxford, Berghahn, 2002: 158-187; idem, "Protest, Conflict and Litigation: Dissent or Libel in Resistance to a Conservancy in North-West Namibia", in: Eeva Berglund and David Anderson, (eds.), *Ethnographies of Conservation: Environmentalism and the Distribution of Privilege*, Oxford, Berghahn, 2003: 69-86.

and neighbours.¹⁶ Biesle recently urged that “most importantly we ask anthropologists to consider what may happen if Namibian politicians see the Ju/'hoansi portrayed as rejecting the very environmental approaches by which their land was finally secured”.¹⁷

Surprisingly, hard data on the extent of San poverty is rare. An exception is Wiessner, who has created a small NGO with a part-time facilitator to encourage the growing of sweet potatoes, apparently with some success.¹⁸ Several colleagues have suggested that scholars do not engage with Sullivan's critique because the CBNRM 'club' wanted it ignored. The situation requires tact because anthropologists are concentrated heavily in peripheral regions, the same areas where conservancies have been established and where CBNRM NGOs are major stakeholders and gatekeepers.

Another project in Nyae Nyae which has received much attention is indigenous education. For example, Hays examined why the Nyae Nyae Village Schools project was unsuccessful.¹⁹ She argues that slogans such as *Education for All* failed to acknowledge Ju/'hoansi's own survival educational strategies and concluded that adult and non-formal education should be prioritized. The importance of 'informal education' is also emphasized in Polly Wiessner's recent paper, by far the most cited paper in Namibian anthropology.²⁰ While the control of fire has major evolutionary implications, she adds a new twist by studying the topics of conversation during daytime and around the fire at night. She found that most day-time conversation was technical or functional, while fireside conversations were social, consisting largely of stories. Apart from preparing cooked food, firelight extended the day and more importantly provided a venue for socializing and social bonding, including singing and dancing. Wiessner's findings suggest that fire and language may be more closely related than conventional views assume: that language and hearths co-evolved. This is evidence that solidly grounded empirical research can have pay-offs.

One social scientist who managed to navigate the conflict-prone and tricky terrain of CBNRM is Julie Taylor.²¹ Her sensitive and self-reflective work shows how the Khwe used their complex relationships and interactions with NGOs, and the creation of a conservancy in the former Caprivi (now Zambezi) region, to develop a sense of identity in the struggle to control land and resources in relation to their Mbukushu neighbours. She demonstrates how the CBNRM oriented NGO had to depoliticize the situation that allowed for increasing state intrusion. She deals proactively with the thorny issue of how

¹⁶ Biesele and Hitchcock, *Ju/'Hoan* : xiii.

¹⁷ Megan Biesele, “Speaking Truth to a Powerful Film”, *Anthropology News*, 45, 2004: 8-9.

¹⁸ Polly Wiessner, “Owners of the Future? Calories, Cash, Casualties, and Self-Sufficiency in the Nyae Nyae Area between 1996–2003”, *Visual Anthropology Review*, 19 (1-2), 2004: 149-159.

¹⁹ Jennifer Hays, *Owners of Learning: Education, Rights and the Nyae Nyae Village Schools in Namibia*, Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2015 (forthcoming).

²⁰ Polly Wiessner, “Embers of Society: Firelight Talk among the Ju/'Hoansi Bushmen”, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111 (39), 2014: 14027-14035.

²¹ Julie Taylor, *Naming the Land. San Identity and Community Conservation in Namibia's West Caprivi*, Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2012.

the divide between 'development' practitioners and academics could be bridged: officials simply do not like being studied, especially when their expertise might be called into question.²² Khumalo's hybrid dissertation focused on whether women's empowerment was achieved through CBNRM in Zambezi and came to a negative conclusion.²³ Another recent doctorate by Welch has analysed the N=ǀa Jaqna Conservancy in Western Bushmanland.²⁴ As a former employee of WIMSA, he was intimately involved in its operation. He thus discusses some of the conflicts within the conservancy and concludes that it is still too soon to tell what the impact of conservancies will be on San and their land rights. One consequence, or maybe even a symptom, of CBNRM is the increase in paperwork, as the state strives to become 'a Utopia of Rules'.²⁵ Perhaps the most balanced assessment of CBNRM, especially those in the Kunene region where they dominate the organizational landscape, is by Bollig and Schweiger.²⁶

In her neglected dissertation and book, Uta Papen studied the National Literacy Program and focused on three types of literacy: bureaucratic literacy, e.g. dealing with government forms;²⁷ consumer literacy, for example, the opening of credit accounts; and tourism literacy, e.g. managing relations with foreign tourists. The need for literacy is well recognized by the educational programs run in Bushmanland.²⁸

The San have also been studied in other contexts. Widlok has continued working with the Hai//om in the Mangetti Block and in Owambo. He is currently developing theoretical ideas about sharing and exchange which will have ramifications far beyond Mangetti.²⁹ Another scholar who is moving beyond the narrow realm of fieldwork is Chris Low, who is expanding his work on Khoisan healing.³⁰ Dieckmann has done in-depth studies of the

²² Marie Karaisl and Julie Taylor, "Practitioners, Academics and Community Conservation: Bridging Divides for Mutual Benefit in Namibia", Working paper, 2008, <<https://sites.google.com/site/kalahariborderlands/publications>> [accessed 15 October 2015].

²³ Kathryn Khumalo, *Women's Views on Conservation Based Income Generation and Women's Empowerment in the Kwandu Conservancy in Caprivi, Namibia*, unpubl. PhD, University of Montana, 2012.

²⁴ Cameron Welch, *'Land is Life, Conservancy is Life.' The San and the N=ǀa Jaqna Conservancy, Tsumkwe District West, Namibia*, unpubl. PhD, McGill University, 2013.

²⁵ David Graeber, *Utopia of Rules*, London, Melville House, 2015.

²⁶ Michael Bollig and Diego Schweiger, "Fragmentation, Cooperation and Power: Institutional Dynamics in Natural Resource Governance in North-Western Namibia", *Human Ecology*, 42, 2014: 167-181.

²⁷ Uta Papen, *Literacy and Globalization: Reading and Writing in Times of Social and Cultural Change*, London, Routledge, 2007; also discussed in: Gregor Dobler, "Private Vices, Public Benefits? Small-Town Bureaucratization in Namibia", in: Anne Peters, Lukas Handschin and Daniel Hoegger, (eds.), *Conflict of Interest in Global, Public and Corporate Governance*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2012, 217-232.

²⁸ Hays, *Owners*.

²⁹ Thomas Widlok, "Sharing by Default? Outline of an Anthropology of Virtue", *Anthropological Theory*, 4, 2004: 53-70; idem, "Sharing: Allowing Others to Take What is Valued", *HAU, Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 3 (2), 2013, 11-31.

³⁰ Chris Low, *Khoisan Healing: Understandings, Ideas & Practice*, unpubl. PhD, Oxford University, 2004; idem, "Finding and Foregrounding Massage in Khoisan Ethnography", *Journal of Southern African Studies*,

Hai//om in the Outjo and Etosha regions, work that complements Sylvain's sensitive ethnography of the 'silent San' workers in the Omaheke Region.³¹ Tourism is of course seen as a major source of income for San people, and Koot has written an insightful study of San and tourism based on his long experience at a tourist camp near Tsintsabis. Importantly, he has started examining 'whiteness': what Europeans get out of their interaction with San.³² The tourism trade is still largely controlled by Europeans and Papen presents a sensitive picture of the local Namibians' desire to break into the tourism industry.³³ Following Widlok's lead, Dieckmann, Sylvain, Suzman and Hitchcock have also written extensively on San relations to the Namibian state.³⁴ Undoubtedly, anthropologists and other activists played a role in creating the Office of San Affairs under the aegis of the Deputy Prime Minister, but as several have commented, this might simply be a form of window-dressing to neutralize criticism.

While the 'San' and 'Himba' hubs still attract a great deal of attention among social scientists, other areas and issues have come to the fore. Concentrating on one small region can lead to special insights, as demonstrated by anthropologists connected to the University of Hamburg who have focused on the area known as Kunene-South, a region pioneered by the work of Sullivan.³⁵ This group of researchers has produced a remarkable series of articles based on three issues: how people survive using reciprocity and the sharing of food and valuable resources³⁶ within a broad trans-locality framework

33 (4), 2007: 783-799; idem, "Birds and Khoesan: Linking Spirits and Healing with Day to Day Life", *Africa*, 31, 2: 2011: 295-313.

31 Ute Dieckmann, *Hai//om in the Etosha Region: A History of Colonial Settlement, Ethnicity, and Nature Conservation*, Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2007.

32 Stasja Koot, *Dwelling in Tourism: Power and Myth amongst Bushmen in Southern Africa*, Leiden, Africa Studies Centre, 2013; idem, "White Namibians in Tourism and the Politics of Belonging through Bushmen", *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 38 (1-2): 2015: 4-15.

33 Papen, *Literacy*.

34 Thomas Widlok, "Corporatism and the Namibian San", in: Debie LeBeau and Robert Gordon, (eds.), *Challenges for Anthropology in the African Renaissance*, Windhoek, University of Namibia Press, 2002: 206-216; Ute Dieckmann et al., (eds.) *'Scraping the Pot': San in Namibia Two Decades after Independence*, Windhoek, Legal Assistance Centre, 2014; Rene Sylvain, "Disorderly Development: Globalization and the Idea of Culture in the Kalahari", *American Ethnologist*, 32 (3), 2005: 354-70; idem, "Drinking, Fighting and Healing: San Struggles for Survival and Solidarity in the Omaheke Region, Namibia", in: Robert Hitchcock, Kazunobu Ikeya, Richard Lee and Megan Bieseke, (eds.) *Updating the San: Image and Reality of an African People in the 21st Century*, Osaka, National Museum of Ethnology, 2006: 131-150; idem, "Essentialism and the Indigenous Politics of Recognition in Southern Africa", *American Anthropologist*, 116 (2), 2014: 251-264; James Suzman, "Etosha Dreams: An Historical Account of the Hai||om Predicament", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 42 (2), 2004: 221-238; Robert Hitchcock, "Authenticity, Identity and Humanity: The Hai||om San and the State of Namibia", *Anthropological Forum*, 25 (3), 2015: 262-284.

35 Sian Sullivan, "Detail and Dogma, Data and Discourse: Food-Gathering by Damara Herders and Conservation in Arid Northwest Namibia", in: Karin Homewood, (ed.), *Rural Resources and Local Livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Oxford, Currey, 2005: 66-99.

36 Michael Schnegg, Julia Pauli and Clemens Greiner, "Pastoral Belonging: Causes and Consequences of Part-Time Pastoralism in Northwestern Namibia", in: Michael Bollig, Michael Schnegg and Hans-Peter Wotzka (eds.), *Pastoralism in Africa. Past, Present and Future*, Oxford, Berghahn, 2013, 341-362; Michael

that emphasizes the importance of remittances and other urban-rural flows; developing the notion of trans-local households;³⁷ and dealing with issues of reproduction by focusing on gender and marriage.³⁸ In this regard they are confirming Tvedten's³⁹ shanty town findings: that the inhabitants use the rural lands of their relatives as a form of security in an insecure and changing urban environment.

In the heavily populated North, there have been several fine studies. Dobler has traced trading and border commodity flows, while Nordstrom has vividly documented the economy of smuggling into Angola.⁴⁰ What constitutes a border, socially, culturally and geographically, must also be treated as problematic and Van Wolputte has raised interesting questions in this regard.⁴¹ The question becomes even more complex when one considers recent work on the SWAPO camps in Angola by Williams, telling the story of exile in which memory obviously plays an important role.⁴²

There are also issues concerning the reintegration of ex-combatants in Namibia which Metsola uses as a lens to understand state formation and citizenship.⁴³ He shows the strategies the regime used to pacify these discontented veterans before deploying them to pacify threats to the regime, all the while developing an exclusionary nationalism portrayed powerfully in recently erected monuments. Another boundary which has

Schnegg, "Reciprocity on Demand; Sharing and Exchanging", *Human Nature*, (forthcoming); Michael Schnegg and Theresa Linke, "Living Institutions: Sharing and Sanctioning Water among Pastoralists in Namibia", *World Development*, 68, 2015: 205-214.

³⁷ Clemens Greiner, "Patterns of Translocality: Migration, Livelihoods and Identities in Northwest Namibia", *Sociologist*, 60 (2), 2010: 131-161; idem, "Migration, Translocal Networks and Socio-Economic Stratification in Namibia", *Africa*, 81 (4), 2011: 606-627; idem, "Can Households be Multifocal? Conceptual and Methodological Considerations based on a Namibian Case Study", *Die Erde*, 143 (3), 2012: 195-212.

³⁸ Martina Gockel-Frank, "The Gift from God: Reproductive Decisions and Conflicts of Women in Modern Namibia – Case Study of Khorixas, Kunene South", in: Suzanne Lafont and Diane Hubbard, (eds.), *Unravelling Taboos: Gender and Sexuality in Namibia*, Windhoek, Legal Assistance Centre, 2007: 182-196; Julia Pauli, "Celebrating Distinctions: Common and Conspicuous Weddings in Rural Namibia", *Ethnology*, 50 (2), 2011: 153-167; idem, "Creating Illegitimacy: Negotiating Relations and Reproduction within Christian Contexts in Northwest Namibia", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 42 (4), 2012: 408-432; idem, "Sharing made us Sisters: Sisterhood, Migration and Household Dynamics in Mexico and Namibia", in: Erdmute Alber, Cati Coe and Tatjana Thelen, (eds.), *The Anthropology of Sibling Relations*, New York, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013: 29-50.

³⁹ Inge Tvedten, "As Long as they Don't Bury Me Here". *Social Relations of Poverty in a Namibian Shantytown*, Basel, Basel Africa Bibliographien, 2011.

⁴⁰ Gregor Dobler, "From Scotch Whiskey to Chinese Sneakers: International Commodity Flows and New Trade Networks", *Africa*, 78 (3), 2008: 410-432; idem, "Private Vices"; idem, *Traders and Trade in Colonial Ovamboland, 1925–1990: Elite Formation and the Politics of Consumption under Indirect Rule and Apartheid*, Basel, Basel Africa Bibliographien, 2014; Carolyn Nordstrom, *Shadows of War*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004.

⁴¹ Van Wolputte, *Borderlands*.

⁴² Christian Williams, *National Liberation in Postcolonial Southern Africa: A Historical Ethnography of SWAPO's Exile Camps*, London, Cambridge University Press, 2015.

⁴³ Lalli Metsola, *Reintegration as Recognition: Ex-Combatant and Veteran Politics in Namibia*, unpubl. PhD, Helsinki, 2014.

enjoyed significant attention concerns issues of sexuality, epitomized by a useful volume by Lafont and Hubbard.⁴⁴ Two important books and a variety of articles by Lorway and Currier on gay activism in Windhoek have also appeared.⁴⁵ Both have been critical of insensitive outside NGO involvement. There have also been recent studies concerned with AIDS and condom usage.⁴⁶

Elsewhere, Fumanti has pioneered the study of elites, especially the moral economy of young elites in Rundu and how they mark distinction.⁴⁷ He presents a powerful narrative that counters the Afro-pessimistic view of a predatory state. Becker has blazed the trail with analyses of gender and 'traditional authorities', while Fairweather has pioneered the study of 'heritage sites'.⁴⁸ Indeed the trinity of memory, heritage and identity can be said to be one of the leading interests on the contemporary scene. An intriguing recent study in this regard is Wendi Haugh's 'Lyrical Nationalism', a descriptive analysis of song composition and competition in a Catholic youth organization. Here, song remains one of the most effective modes of remembering. As a linguistic anthropologist, Haugh has focused on private and especially public discourses in plays and radio talk-shows;⁴⁹ and, through them, she analyses how people in Owambo view threats to health and prosperity. Rather than turning to witchcraft to alleviate these problems, they call for greater government engagement and stronger Christian virtues.

It is useful to distinguish between public history and public memory. Important studies of Herero-speakers by Förster and Morgan focus on remembering the 1904–07 war, while Bleckmann impressively examines a range of memory and ritual practices in southern Kaoko.⁵⁰ In Rundu, Akuupa has analyzed state-organized festivals as well.⁵¹ Combining

⁴⁴ Suzanne Lafont and Diane Hubbard, (eds), *Unravelling Taboos: Gender and Sexuality in Namibia*, Windhoek, Legal Assistance Centre, 2007.

⁴⁵ Robert Lorway, *Namibia's Rainbow Project: Gay Rights in an African Nation*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2014; Currier, *Out in Africa*.

⁴⁶ Nicolle Rigillo, "Faith in God, but not in Condoms: Churches and Competing Visions of HIV Prevention in Namibia", *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 43 (1), 2009: 34-59; Gockel-Frank, "Gift"; also see Debie LeBeau's website at <<http://www.developmentafrica.com/>> [accessed 15 October 2015].

⁴⁷ Mattia Fumanti, *The Politics of Distinction: African Elites from Colonialism to Liberation in a Namibian Frontier Town*, Herefordshire, Sean Kingston, 2015 (forthcoming).

⁴⁸ Heike Becker, "'New Things after Independence': Gender and Traditional Authorities in Postcolonial Namibia", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32 (1), 2006: 29-48; Ian Fairweather, Fairweather, Ian, "'Showing Off': Nostalgia and Heritage in North-Central Namibia", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29 (1), 2003: 279-296.

⁴⁹ Wendi Haugh, *Lyrical Nationalism in Post-Apartheid Namibia: Kings, Christians, and Cosmopolitans in Catholic Youth Songs*, Lanham, Lexington, 2014; idem, "A Luta Continua: Coping with Threats to Prosperity and Health in Post-Independence Namibia", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35 (1), 2009: 99-113.

⁵⁰ Larissa Förster, *Postkoloniale Erinnerungslandschaften: Wie Deutsche und Herero in Namibia des Kriegs von 1904 gedenken*, Frankfurt, Campus, 2010; Karie Morgan, *'To Heal the Wounds': Namibian Ovaherero's Contests over Coming to Terms with the German Colonial Past*, unpubl. PhD, University of North Carolina, 2010; Laura Bleckmann, *Colonial Trajectories and Moving Memories: Performing Past and Identity in Southern Kaoko (Namibia)*, Unpubl. PhD, University of Leuven, 2012.

historical analysis with fieldwork, he shows how the notion of 'Kavangoiness' was a colonial construct, and how it is now interpreted by local people through the incorporation of cosmopolitanism and modernity.

Meanwhile, in an effort to shape public history, the SWAPO-led government has erected several expensive monuments and museums designed by North Koreans that seek to glorify the heroic liberation struggle and obliterate alternative interpretations. Such is the blatancy of this effort that it has already been subject to several critiques;⁵² with the recent opening of the new Liberation Museum, more are sure to follow.

In the rush to engage with memorialization it might be well to remember prominent historian Richard White's warning that "only careless historians confuse memory and history. History is the enemy of memory. The two stalk each other across the fields of the past, claiming the same terrain".⁵³ Critical anthropology, like critical history, should challenge and upset the assumptions taken for granted which those in power seek to seduce us with. Tucked away in the Owela Museum is a splendid example of such critical anthropology: the small San display curated by Dieckmann is an exception to the hagiographic tone set by museum apparatchiks. Like anthropologists of yore, they romanticize and justify a new hegemony.⁵⁴

Ironically, the 2000 ASNA conference alluded to in the introduction of this paper was a significant turning point in a number of ways. It also marked the last occasion a South African doctorate was awarded on a Namibian topic⁵⁵ for more than a decade.⁵⁶ While anthropologists outnumber all the other social scientists doing research in Namibia, UNAM continues its rather outmoded elitist view of anthropology, treating it as a colonial discipline despite the fact that it was (and is) the science most critical of colonialism. Perhaps understandably, though, as the guiding force behind the Odendaal Commission was an anthropologist (J.P. van S. Bruwer), and its recommendations amounted to the only large-scale effort to implement 'Grand Apartheid' in Southern Africa.

To be sure, anthropology is implicated in the colonial exercise, but if colonialism is defined as using knowledge to control 'the other', then all social sciences amount to

⁵¹ Michael Akuupa, "'We can be United, but we are Different': Discourses of Difference in Post-Colonial Namibia", *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 33 (3-4), 2010: 101-113.

⁵² Heike Becker, "Commemorating Heroes in Windhoek and Eenhana: Memory, Culture and Nationalism in Namibia, 1990-2010", *Africa*, 81 (4), 2011: 519-543; Reinhart Kössler, "Facing a fragmented Past: Memory, Culture and Politics in Namibia", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 33 (1), 2007: 361-382.

⁵³ Marilyn Lake, "Monuments of manhood and Colonial Dependence: The Cult of Anzac as Compensation" in Marilyn Lake (ed), *Memory, Monuments and Museums*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2006, 43-57: 43.

⁵⁴ Ute Dieckmann, *The San: Images and Identities. A Guide to an Exhibition*, Windhoek, National Museum of Namibia, 2010.

⁵⁵ Published as Debie LeBeau, *Dealing with Disorder: Traditional and Western Medicine in Katutura, Namibia*, Köln, Köppe, 2003.

⁵⁶ Michael Akuupa, *National Culture in Post-Apartheid Namibia. State-Sponsored Cultural Festivals and their Histories*, Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliografien, 2015.

forms of colonialism. It can be argued that they also have the notion of controlling the other at root. Perhaps the archetype for colonialism was the Civic Action Program aimed at 'winning the hearts and minds' (WHAM) of the populace: the idea of getting the local population to support the military through development. However, a preliminary perusal of these documents suggests that the chief social scientists involved in developing and implementing these 'operations' were not anthropologists so much as psychologists, historians and geographers. The role of the ethnologists that were involved seems largely to have been to develop etiquette manuals for military personnel who were dealing with the local populace. In these other social science disciplines the critical self-reflection, so common a feature in anthropology, is clearly lacking, at least in the Namibian context.

While the University of Namibia still does not offer degrees or courses in anthropology, or even have an anthropologist on its staff, the University of the Western Cape continues to produce MA degrees under the guidance of Professor Heike Becker, a leading Namibianist. She has also supervised a PhD by Michael Akuupa, now published as a monograph. To be sure, several Namibians have expressed an interest in becoming anthropologists, and funding is available for study at several institutions, but the lack of (well-) paid prospects has apparently been a major hindrance. Despite this, the spectral legacy of anthropology is very much alive in the scholarly and popular imagination in Namibia. Several of the key characteristics of anthropology, its concern with 'culture' and its emphasis on fieldwork, have been annexed by other disciplines, most notably by historians and a few sociologists like Hayes, Kössler and Currier.⁵⁷ In the decade or so after independence, a period that witnessed an influx of representatives of the 'development aid consultancy' industry, anthropologists were in reasonable demand, making use of their knowledge base for innovative 'quick and dirty' research strategies.⁵⁸

It is not as if local social scientists have not been busy. The University of Namibia created a *Journal for Studies in the Humanities and Social Science* in 2012 to promote local research. A quick perusal suggests the most common category is Zimbabwean literature with a smattering of essays concerned with health (AIDS and reproduction), land matters and education. Locally based social scientists have also produced a substantial amount of 'grey matter' in the form of rather inaccessible consultancy reports, focusing largely on HIV/AIDS and land issues, but the financial downsizing of the NGO sector has resulted in reduced demand.⁵⁹ On the other hand, the *Journal of Namibian Studies* does publish regularly and in significant quantities, but at an annual subscription cost of EUR 50, it proves inaccessible to all but the wealthy (although this

⁵⁷ John Liebenberg and Patricia Hayes, *The Bush of Ghosts: Life and War in Namibia, 1986–90s*, Cape Town, Umuzi, 2010; Kössler, "Facing"; Ashley Currier, "The Aftermath of Decolonization: Gender and Sexual Dissidence in Postindependence Namibia", *Signs*, 37 (2), 2012: 441–467.

⁵⁸ See for instance LeBeau's website at <<http://www.developmentafrica.com>> [accessed 15 October 2015].

⁵⁹ There appears to be a bifurcation emerging. Many of the articles in the journal simply ignore relevant Namibian ethnography; e.g. Francis Nyathi, "The Rights of the Dead: A Case of the Ovahimba People in Namibia", *Journal for Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3 (1–2), 2014: 136–146.

has apparently been altered recently). In addition, two journals with a regional focus, *Anthropology Southern Africa* and the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, also provide increasingly prestigious publication outlets.

It is not only the academic elite at UNAM who have an ossified view of anthropology, but also the 'educated' public. The Namibian Academy for Tourism and Hospitality (NATH), for example, offers short courses in archaeology and ethnology for tour guides, but the topics they cover are questionable. The one ethnographic book to be found in almost all tourist shops is Malan's *Peoples of SWA/Namibia*, originally published in 1980 but constantly being reprinted and available in both English and German. It is often referred to in many of the newer travel guides as 'authoritative'. Perhaps even more significant is the fact that *The Native Tribes of South West Africa*, originally published in 1928, is still in print! Meanwhile, the Namibia Scientific Society is planning to reprint Loeb's *In Feudal Africa*, an account based on fieldwork done in Owambo in 1948. Instead of simply ridiculing this situation, it is more interesting to question why such works are still so popular. Is it a case of nostalgia for a settler world that never really was?

Another major source of local social scientific publication has been the Legal Assistance Centre, which has published edited volumes on inheritance, gender and sexual taboos⁶⁰, and, perhaps most noteworthy of all, a weighty analysis of the current situation of the San.⁶¹ These volumes are responses to donor priorities and not necessarily those of local stakeholders. Ironically the major source of scholarly publications on Namibia is now the Basel Africa Bibliography in Switzerland.

Undoubtedly, the anthropologist who has had the greatest impact in contemporary Namibia is Law Professor Manfred Hinz, the putative godfather of the Community Court Act (2003) that created linkages between customary and state legal systems. For many years, Hinz and his teams have assiduously recorded the 'living law' as 'self-stated' in customary courts.⁶² Questions remain, however, concerning the legitimacy of these laws and how they might perpetuate inequality. The project, with its focus on 'ethnic groups' (as defined largely by the Odendaal Commission), is eerily reminiscent of projects carried out by South African ethnologists under the aegis of the erstwhile Department of Bantu Administration and Development.

Another striking point about the production of social scientific knowledge in Namibia is the number of dissertations that grew out of first-hand experience as volunteers or

⁶⁰ Legal Assistance Centre, (ed.), *The Meanings of Inheritance*, Windhoek, LAC, 2005; LaFont and Hubbard, *Unravelling*.

⁶¹ Dieckmann et al., *'Scraping the Pot'*.

⁶² Manfred O. Hinz, "The Ascertainment of Customary Law: What is Ascertainment of Customary Law and What is it for? The Experience of the Customary Law Ascertainment Project in Namibia", *Onati Socio-legal Studies (online)*, 2 (7), 2012: 85-105; idem, "Traditional Governance and African Customary Law: Comparative Observations from a Namibian Perspective", in: Nico Horn and Anton Bösl, (eds), *Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Namibia*, Windhoek, Macmillan Namibia, 2008: 59-87.

workers in the country.⁶³ Many of these studies focussed on the sites where their authors originally worked, and frequently they incorporate innovative research strategies such as photography, suggesting that the simplistic view that the metropole should determine research priorities needs to be challenged. If there is one thing that characterizes this generation of anthropologists, it is how responsive they are to 'their' communities' needs and aspirations. Thus Schnegg and Pauli have worked with local collaborators in developing a community history, an exercise repeated in different forms by Boden, Williams, and Dieckmann, while Friedman has used his prior experience in Namibia to develop a good critique of post-structuralist anthropology of development.⁶⁴ Others like Michael Pröpper and Inge Tvedten have combined poverty analysis and monitoring with anthropological insight in larger inter-disciplinary projects.⁶⁵

So what of the future? Clearly there are lacunae. Geographically, the southern regions remain woefully understudied, as does Windhoek and small towns generally. Given changes in the global division of labour, attention should focus on what is termed the 'precariat': those working in the mines, engaged in what amounts to piecework. New forms of sociality, in particular the spectacular rise of Pentecostal 'gospel of prosperity' churches need attention, especially as Namibia claims to be the most Christian country in Africa and until relatively recently such independent churches were rare. With the emphasis on 'constructing the nation' one needs to look beyond the ritual inventions. Many years ago, Bruwer suggested the holding of an agricultural fair in Owambo in order to distract people from pressing issues. Perhaps the emerging situation calls for an anthropology of distraction? In short, issues of access to resources — material, social and cultural — or what Weber called the opportunity structure and the striving and construction of 'middle-class' lifestyles, should be emphasized.

Building on insights generated by Friedman and Metsola, the question of governmentality, or the increasing development of bureaucratization and the 'Utopia of Rules'

⁶³ E.g. John Friedman, "On the Post-Structuralist Critique of Development: A View from North-West Namibia", *Development Southern Africa*, 23 (5), 2006: 587-603; Haugh, *Lyrical Nationalism*; Koot, *Dwelling*; Williams, *National Liberation*; Welch, *'Land Is Life'*; Taylor, *Naming*.

⁶⁴ Michael Schnegg, Julia Pauli et al., *Living Together, Culture and Shared Traditions in Fransfontein*, Köln, , 2007. Also available at <<http://www.fransfontein.org/index.html>> [accessed 15 October 2015]; Gertrud Boden, (ed.), *Iqamtee / Aa ǀXanya — the Book of Traditions: Histories, Texts and Illustrations of The ǀXoon and 'N/ǀOhan People in Namibia*, Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2007; Dieckmann, *San*; Christian Williams, *Remembering St. Therese*, Windhoek, Out of Africa, 2003; Friedman, "Post-Structuralist Critique".

⁶⁵ Michael Pröpper, *Culture and Biodiversity in Central Kavango, Namibia*, Berlin, Reimer, 2009; Michael Pröpper and Felix Haupts, "The Culturality of Ecosystem Services. Emphasizing Process and Transformation", *Ecological Economics*, 108, 2014: 28-35; Michael Pröpper and Björn Vollan, "Beyond Awareness and Self-Governance. Approaching Kavango Timber Users' Real-Life Choices", *Land*, 2 (3), 2013: 392-418; Inge Tvedten, "If you don't fish, you are not a Caprivian: Freshwater Fisheries in Caprivi, Namibia", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28 (2), 2002: 421-439; idem, "Moving to Town or Staying Behind: Social Relations of Migration in Namibia", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 38 (2), 2004: 393-423.

needs to be examined.⁶⁶ This is indeed a vital and immediate issue, as the government has now proposed a National Research Council which will regulate research, especially that of non-Namibians. The proposed powers of this new body are so draconian that it is being challenged by several NGOs, while the government has hired the most expensive South African attorney available to defend its proposals (see Onoegbu, this volume).

Finally, given the way the regime is trying to frame 'public memory', as well as the fact that several fieldworkers have already been 'monitored' by the security apparatus and threatened with deportation, the future of fieldwork in Namibia is potentially in doubt, at least in its present *laissez faire* form. Like Leporello in Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*, social scientists are in danger of becoming servants and procurers in the state's efforts to seduce its citizens, denizens and anthropologists.

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