



WHY CULTURE IS IMPORTANT

Culture is the representative voice of ethnicity in a community or country. Ethnicity speaks for culture, customary law, the collective rights of indigenous people and authority of chiefs both past and present.

An important part of integrating culture into our camps and guest activities is having an understanding of its meaning and especially of the different ethnic groups within Wilderness Safaris. To this end, socio-economic surveys conducted in 2009 and 2010 provided important information on our staff and the communities with whom we work and engage. Additional research is currently underway to help Wilderness Safaris further understand the influence of cultural tourism activities on communities.

At a time of increasing globalisation, the protection, interpretation and presentation of the heritage and cultural diversity of any particular place or region is an important challenge. Due to the ethnic diversity in the areas in which we operate and the number of different cultural groups whom we employ, Wilderness encourages and supports an ethic of acceptance and tolerance amongst staff, as well as between guests, staff and local communities.

Travelling with Wilderness Safaris offers a holistic experience and part of this relates to learning about and being aware of different cultures and their specific traditions.



DAMARA

The numerical dominant ethnic group living around the Torra Conservancy (Damaraland Camp) and Doro !Nawas Conservancy (Doro Nawas Camp), the Damara are believed to be amongst the original inhabitants of Namibia together with the Nama and San peoples.

Traditionally, Damara were hunters, gatherers, and goat herders. The community consists of several larger families called *haoti*. Their religion is focused on the 'eternal fire' and is intertwined with hunting activities. The Damara speak a Khoekhoe language similar to that of the Nama and recognisable by its characteristic clicks.

Damara people living in Namibia and broader southern Africa have mystified anthropologists as they are suspected to be a group of Bantu origin who speak a Khoisan dialect. But, although the Damara are dark-skinned, they have few other resemblances with any of the Bantu groups. It is speculated that the Damara were the first people to migrate to Namibia, possibly from West Africa.

Today in the rural areas, the Damara derive an income from livestock (which they have done for centuries), as well as crop farming. Many have moved into urban areas where they work in various fields. Amongst the most well-known Damara are Prime Minister Hage Geingob and the speaker of the National Assembly, Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab.



HIMBA

The Himba follow a very conservative way of life, keeping many of their traditions in the face of modernity, due to their largely isolated nature. Himba women still rub their skin with red ochre as a beauty product, aromatic herbs as an insect repellent and fat as a sunblock. They make numerous beautiful jewellery items, mostly from iron, ostrich shells and, more recently, from PVC pipes. Their intricate designs have become popular crafts. Himba homes are cone-shaped and made from palm leaves, cattle dung and mud. Men's duties include cattle herding, home construction and holding council with the headman.

The ritual fires and fire line of the Himba are an important part of ancestor worship and respect for these cultural traditions should always be observed when visiting a Himba village. The fire may only be generated by means of ritual fire-sticks (*ozondume*) of which each lineage-head keeps a special set. The fire is encircled by stones and symbolises sustained contact between the living and deceased members of the family. Its extinguishing would, therefore, indicate serious neglect on the part of the village head.

Originally the Himba settled in the mountainous regions of Kaokoland. They then fell victim to the Nama who raided the majority of their livestock and most of the Himba then fled across the border into Angola. In later years, hearing that the war between German forces and the Herero nation had ended, they moved back into Kaokoland where they remain today.

Most of the older generation still keep their traditions and, when their children return home, strongly encourage them to follow suit.



WILDERNESS ETHICS CHARTER AND CODES OF CONDUCT FOR CULTURAL TOURISM

Our charter and codes of conduct are based on our collective experience, numerous academic references and ingrained respect for indigenous communities and they include:

- Ensuring a high-quality experience that brings satisfaction and enrichment to guests, as well as greater knowledge and appreciation of our natural and cultural heritage;
- Guests and all stakeholders in tourism development should observe social and cultural traditions and practices of all people and recognise their worth;
- Developing products that provide authentic experiences while respecting the values and wishes of the people whose culture and history form part of the tourism experience;
- Respecting the values and aspirations of local host communities and striving towards providing services and facilities in a way that contributes to community identity, pride, aesthetics and the quality of life of residents.

The full text is available on our website.

Further Reading:
www.namibiatourism.com.na/pages/Culture
Himba: Nomads of Namibia by Margaret Jacobsohn



CULTURAL ACTIVITIES WITH WILDERNESS SAFARIS

Encouraging staff to be proud of their culture and to integrate it into guest activities allows our guests and other staff to learn about Africa's cultural diversity. Staff celebrate their culture, traditions and customs through day-to-day interactions, dress, singing, dancing and story-telling in the camps, adding character and uniqueness to our camp and guest experiences.

Wherever possible, Wilderness Safaris also offers visits to local villages and various cultural experiences in the areas in which we operate. Himba village visits are a possibility from Serra Cafema, as is a cultural visit to Bergsig or Fonteine Village from Damaraland Camp. An excursion to the Damara Living Museum is possible for those staying at Doro Nawas.

Any cultural visits should be undertaken with due sensitivity and respect for local traditions and lifestyle. It is critical that cultural tourism always increases knowledge, raises awareness and enriches all involved.

Below we describe ethnic groups you may meet on your journey, some of whom work in our camps.

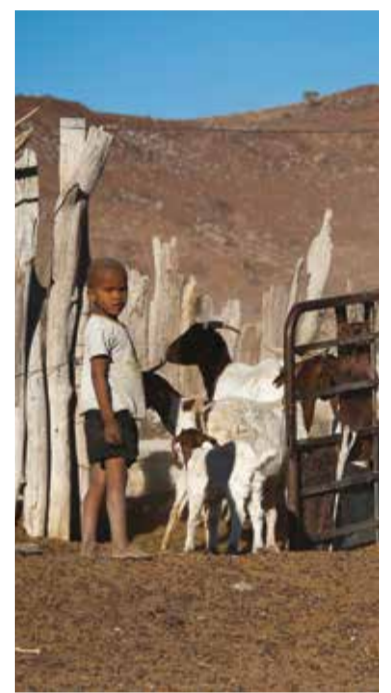


RIEMVASMAAKERS

During the German-Hottentot War of 1904-1907, refugees of Nama, Damara and Herero descent fled German South West Africa and settled in South Africa, in a 'Rural Coloured Reserve' north of Augrabies known as 'Riemvasmaak' after the local missionary settlement of the same name. A small community of Xhosa people had also settled in the area and Afrikaans became the lingua franca as the various ethnic groups intermarried and continued their traditional lifestyle: farming goats, sheep and cattle. In 1974, however, the area was declared a military training zone and as a result, the Riemvasmaak were moved: those of Xhosa origin to the Transkei, the so-called 'Coloureds' to adjacent areas, and those with South West African heritage to southern Damaraland.

Here, the community established De Riet village as their new centre, gradually spreading out to other permanent springs in the area and continuing their mainly pastoralist subsistence lifestyle, herding goats, sheep and cattle. Life was not easy, but in the 1980s, the community joined with the Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) NGO to create a community conservancy, which allows the continuation of subsistence farming while also permitting the utilisation of wildlife populations. The result is a community partnering in ecotourism and the first community conservancy registered in Namibia: the Torra Conservancy.

More about the Riemvasmaak Community can be learnt when staying at Damaraland Camp in the Torra Conservancy. Further information on Wilderness Safaris' partnership with the Torra Conservancy is in Snyman, S. (2012b) *Ecotourism joint ventures between the private sector and communities: An updated analysis of the Torra Conservancy and Damaraland Camp partnership, Namibia*, Tourism Management Perspectives, 4, 127-135.



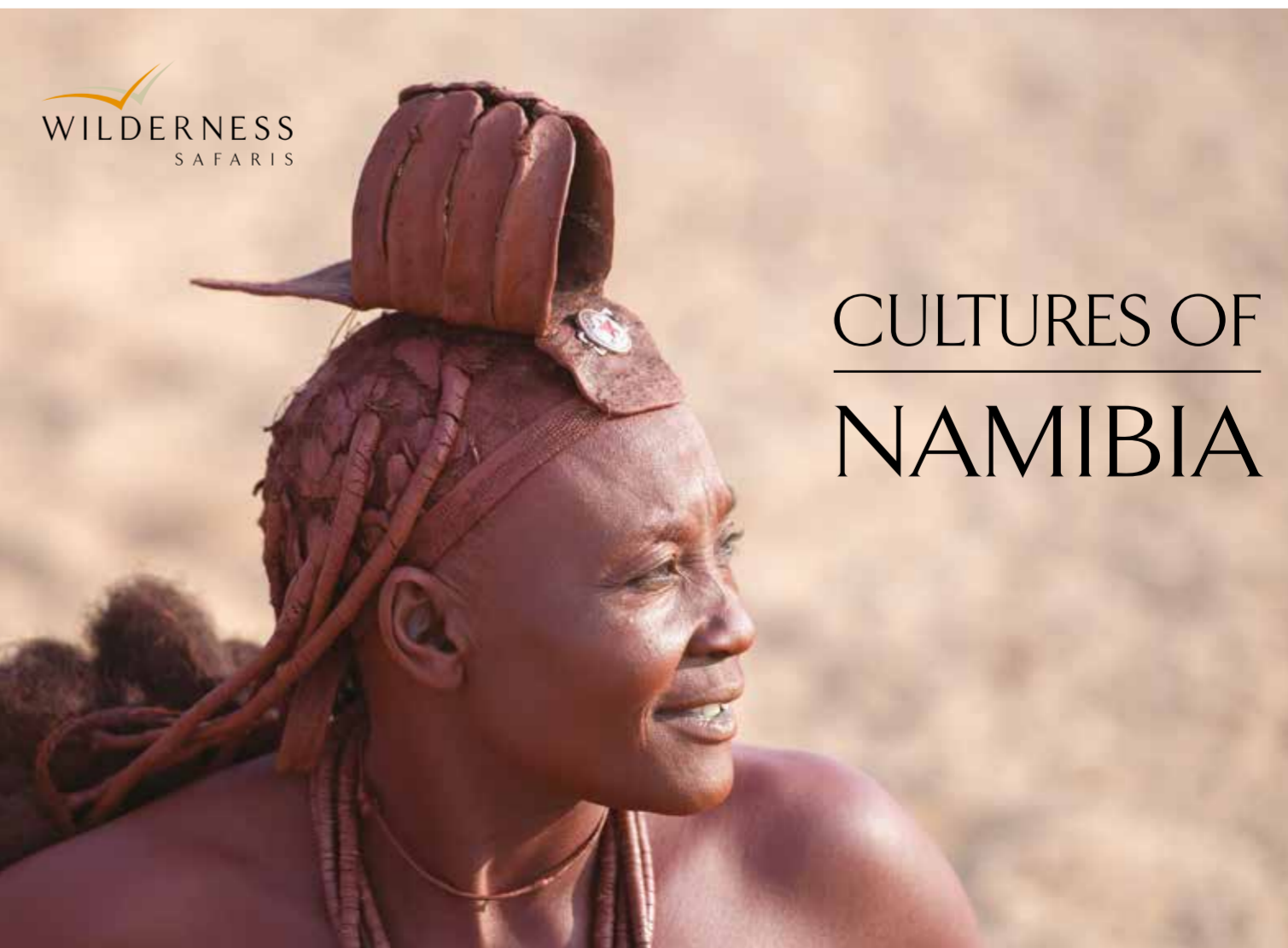
HERERO

The Herero consist of sub-groups: The Himba (or Tjimba), Mbanderu and Kwandu in Namibia, while the Mucubal Kuvale, Zemba, Hakawona, Tjavikwa, and Himba live in Angola.

In 1904, the entire Herero population was almost annihilated in one of Namibia's worst colonial wars, the German-Herero War. During battles in the Waterberg area, the German General Lothar von Trotha ordered the extinction of the Herero. German troops started driving Herero men, women and children into the Kalahari Desert. Large parts of the Herero population died in this genocide, while only a few escaped into what is modern-day Botswana. Of the around 80 000 Herero that lived in German South West Africa at the beginning of Germany's colonial rule over the area, only about 15 000 survived.

The Herero are pastoral cattle breeders of Bantu origin who follow a dual system of descent in which status, residence and tradition follow the paternal line while movable property and cattle follow the maternal line. Rhenish missionaries first introduced Victorian dress, but Herero women developed their own style with characteristic headdresses that represent cattle horns so integral to their own culture. Herero are a very proud people and the observance of their cultural traditions is very important to them even though it has been influenced by missionary activity. The 'ancestral fire' through which they communicate with their ancestors is still kept burning in a number of remote villages.

Today the Herero-speaking Namibians still honour their traditions during the annual Herero Festival held in Okahandja on Maharero Day in August. This festival is one of Namibia's cultural highlights.



CULTURES OF NAMIBIA

WILDERNESS SAFARIS



www.wilderness-safaris.com

Namibia is a truly unique melting-pot of diverse cultures. Influenced by many historic events, including German colonisation, the country celebrates at least 12 major ethnic groups, each observing their distinct cultural traditions. These diversities can be noticed in dress, language, art, music, sport, food and religion.

HIMBA

The word 'Himba' means "beggar," due to the naturally nomadic lifestyle of the Himba people, but also hinting at the dispossession of their lands – which caused them to move around previously colonial, segregated Namibia. Having fled to the north-west of Namibia after being displaced, they continue to live in the Kaokovand. Their socio-economic lives are based on livestock and tourism, and throughout the year Himba families move between different settlements in search of grazing for their cattle.

HERERO

The Herero arrived in Namibia around 1550, migrating from East Africa. Today they are centred in the areas of Okahandja, Waterberg (Okakarara) and eastward toward Omaruru and Otjimbingwe. Even though they were almost annihilated during their rebellion against colonial German forces in 1904, the Herero people today are amongst Namibia's foremost cattle ranchers and business people.

HAI/OM

The Hai/Om are derived from San people and practice a similar lifestyle. They are no longer regarded as authentic Bushmen due to many adapting to western-style clothing and living. Some now keep livestock and work in commercial farms which were once their hunting lands.

RIEMVASMAAKERS

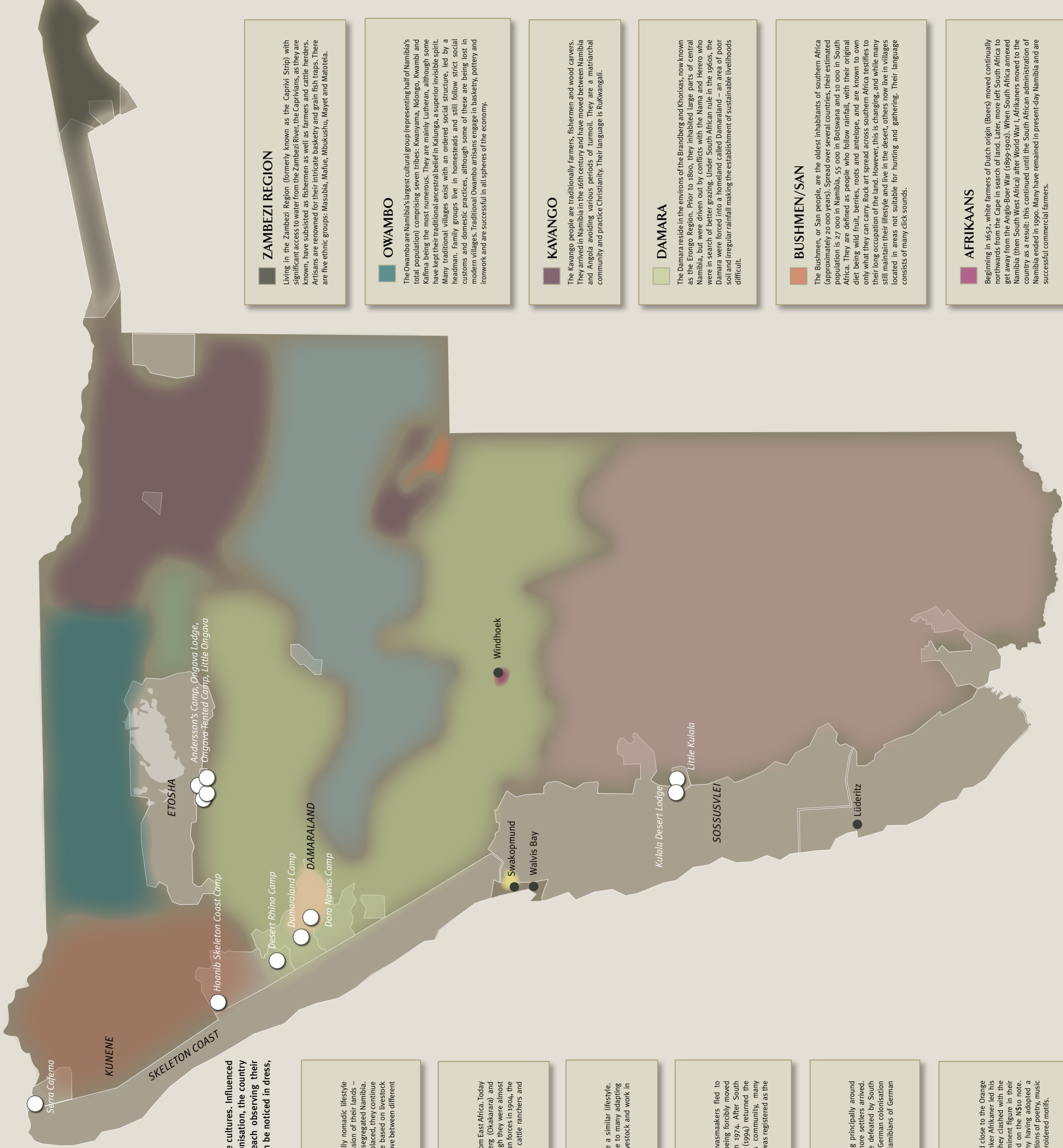
Originally of Nama and Damara descent, the Riemvasmaakers fled to and settled in South Africa's Northern Cape, before being forcibly moved to southern Damaraland during the Apartheid era in 1974. After South Africa's first democratic government of South Africa (1994) returned the land surrounding Riemvasmaak to the indigenous community, many Riemvasmaakers decided to stay in the area. The land was registered as the Torra Conservancy in 1998.

GERMAN

The Germans first arrived in Namibia in 1884, settling principally around Lüderitz. The country became a German colony and more settlers arrived. German rule ended in 1915 when German forces were defeated by South Africa. Namibia's history has been much influenced by German colonisation – a fact that is evident in the architecture and food. Namibians of German descent can be found throughout the country.

NAMA

Descendants of the Khoekhoe, the Nama originally lived close to the Orange River in the south, but in the 1820s, Nama Chief Jan Jonker Afrikaner led his tribe north into central Namibia. As pastoral nomads, they clashed with the Herero over grazing rights. Hendrik Witbooi was a prominent figure in their struggle against the German colonialists; he is pictured on the N\$10 note. Today, the Nama are spread throughout Namibia, many having adopted a western lifestyle. However, they have retained their traditions of poetry, music and dance, as well as art, particularly their colourful embroidered motifs.



ZAMBEZI REGION

Living in the Zambezi Region (formerly known as the Caprivi Strip) with significant access to water from the Zambezi River, the Caprivians, as they are known, have subsisted as fishermen as well as farmers and cattle herders. Artisans are renowned for their intricate basketry and grain fish traps. There are five ethnic groups: Masubia, Mafue, Mbukushu, Mayet and Matotela.

OWAMBO

The Ovambo are Namibia's largest cultural group (representing half of Namibia's total population) comprising seven tribes: Kwanyama, Ndongo, Kwambi and Kaifima being the most numerous. They are mainly Lutheran, although some have kept their traditional ancestral belief in Kalunga, a superior invisible spirit. Many traditional villages exist with an ordered social structure, led by a headman. Family groups live in homesteads and still follow strict social customs and domestic practices, although some of these are being lost in modern villages. Traditional Ovambo artisans engage in basketry, pottery and ironwork and are successful in all spheres of the economy.

KAVANGO

The Kavango people are traditionally farmers, fishermen and wood carvers. They arrived in Namibia in the 16th century and have moved between Namibia and Angola avoiding various periods of turmoil. They are a patriarchal community and practice Christianity. Their language is Rukwangali.

DAMARA

The Damara reside in the environs of the Brandberg and Khorixas, now known as the Erongo Region. Prior to 1800, they inhabited large parts of central Namibia, but were driven out by conflicts with the Nama and Herero who were in search of better grazing. Under South African rule in the 1960s, the Damara were forced into a homeland called Damaraland – an area of poor soil and irregular rainfall making the establishment of sustainable livelihoods difficult.

BUSHMEN/SAN

The Bushmen, or San people, are the oldest inhabitants of southern Africa (approximately 20 000 years). Spread over several countries, their estimated population is 27 000 in Namibia, 55 000 in Botswana and 10 000 in South Africa. They are defined as people who follow rainfall, with their original diet being wild fruit, berries, roots and antelope, and are known to own only what they can carry. Rock art spread across southern Africa testifies to their long occupation of the land. However, this is changing, and while many still maintain their lifestyle and live in the desert, others now live in villages located in areas not suitable for hunting and gathering. Their language consists of many click sounds.

AFRIKAANS

Beginning in 1652, white farmers of Dutch origin (Boers) moved continually northwards from the Cape in search of land. Later, more left South Africa to get away from the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). When South Africa annexed Namibia (then South West Africa) after World War I, Afrikaners moved to the country as a result; this continued until the South African administration of Namibia ended in 1990. Many have remained in present-day Namibia and are successful commercial farmers.

