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**TO BE KHWE MEANS TO SUFFER: LOCAL  
DYNAMICS, IMBALANCES AND  
CONTESTATIONS IN THE CAPRIVI GAME  
PARK**

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## DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my work. Each significant contribution to and, quotation to, this research report from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature

Date: 31 March 2003

Signed by candidate

## **ABSTRACT**

In 1998, Namibia's Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) introduced a conservation and tourism development plan for the West Caprivi Game Park. The plan, known as the MET Vision for Caprivi, is aimed at increasing local people's participation and opportunities to benefit from conservation and tourism. Using data that I have collected over six years whilst working for a Namibian NGO implementing CBNRM (Community-based Natural Resource Management) in West Caprivi, I trace how ethnicity, wildlife, land and leadership have been instrumental in the shaping of Khwe identity. I demonstrate how the MET Vision's successful implementation will be undermined if it does not take sufficient account of the complex nature of differences and power imbalances in West Caprivi that preclude equity in either planning or benefit distribution, and result in the maintenance of Khwe as a separate social category.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

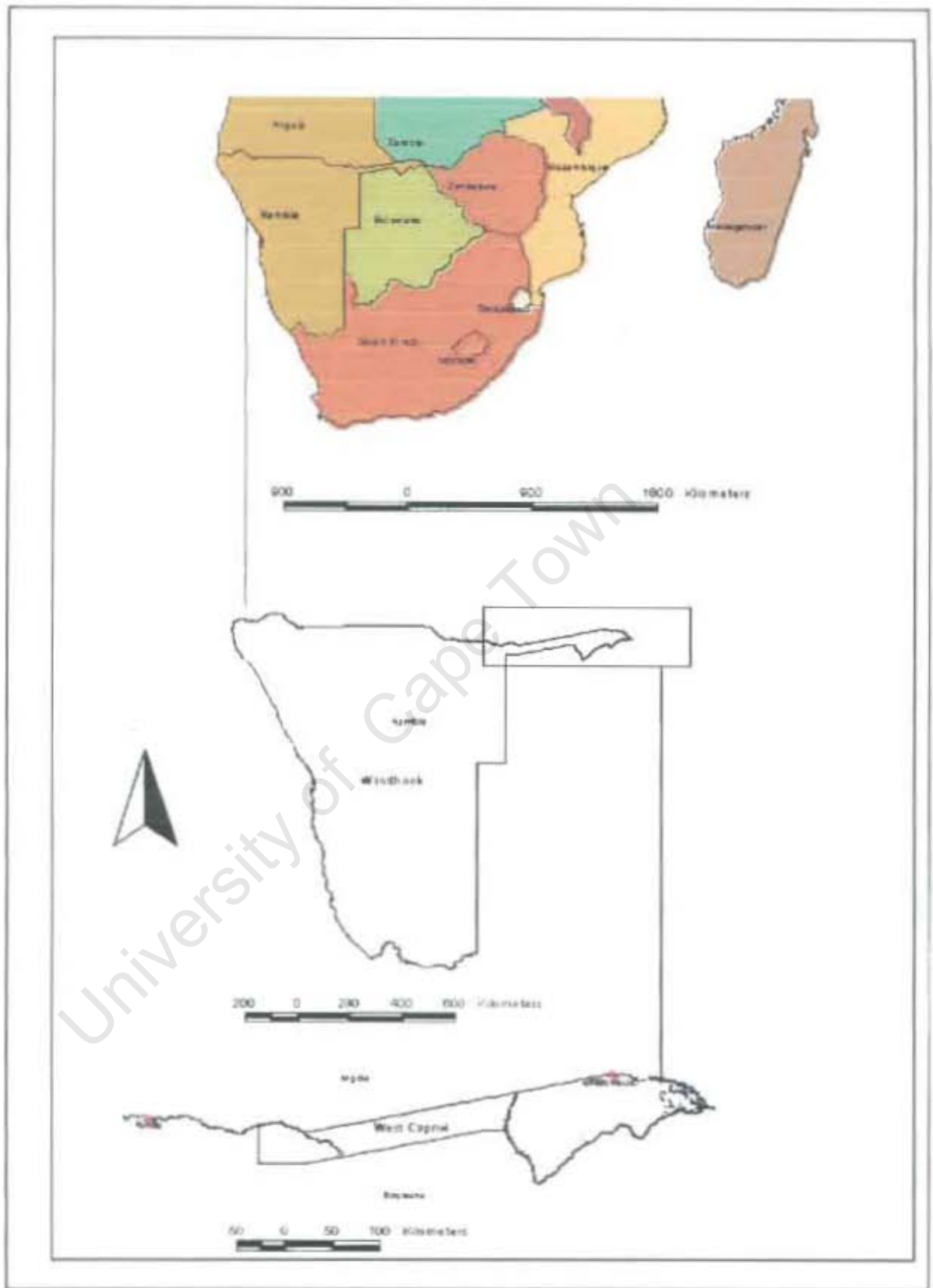
### 1.1 Outlining the argument

The principles of integrated conservation and rural development have moved from the fringes of the development agenda to mainstream government policy in southern Africa. In Namibia, a community-based natural resource management programme, operating since before independence, currently receives full government support. As part of the Namibian government's initiatives to allow rural people to benefit from wildlife conservation, Namibia's Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) has compiled what is in effect a land-use plan for the existing Caprivi Game Park. The Park, also known as West Caprivi, is in the north east of the country, sandwiched between Angola in the north and Botswana in the south (see map 1). The area's current status will change from a Game Park to a National Park.<sup>1</sup> The change will mean the demarcation of various different land-use zones while some parts of the present Game Park will be completely deproclaimed, giving those areas the status of communal land (see map 2).<sup>2</sup> The plan, referred to hereafter as the MET Vision or Bwabwata National Park Plan, has the potential to radically alter the livelihood opportunities of people living in West Caprivi. It may improve access to certain resources, such as livestock, tourism and trophy hunting revenue for some, but might at the same time radically reduce income-generating opportunities and access to natural resources upon which others presently rely.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2000, cabinet approval was given for the Park's change in status. But instability in the region and, more recently, a lack of funding have prevented implementation of the Park plans until the present (A. Kanyinga, MET Chief Control Warden for the North-East. September 2002, pers comm).

<sup>2</sup> National Parks are regarded as the areas with the highest conservation status in Namibia. Most National Parks are fenced and no longer have resident populations other than Ministry of Environment and Tourism staff working there. On the other hand, West Caprivi, which is currently a Game Park, has a resident population of approximately 4 000 people (Suzman, 2001: 54). Most of the people in West Caprivi have lived in the area since before its proclamation as a Game Park in 1968. In Namibia, communal land lies north of the so-called 'red line', a veterinary fence that is the symbolic divide between privately owned land belonging mostly to white commercial farmers, and the communal areas which are former 'homelands' earlier created for supposed exclusive occupation by distinct ethnic categories by the South African administration, in terms of its apartheid policies. In the communal areas, land is state-owned but occupied and communally managed by the local people.



**Map 1: Southern Africa, Namibia and the Caprivi strip**

Most of those living in West Caprivi call themselves Khwe and see themselves, and are regarded by others, as a distinct and separate social group. This dissertation attempts to investigate the ways Khwe are categorised, and to explore some of the local dynamics linked to this categorisation that have shaped the social fabric of West Caprivi, and which have the potential to further influence the outcome of MET's Vision.

The issue at the heart of the dissertation is the MET Vision for Caprivi, and the extent to which its conservation and development strategy takes sufficient account of the differences and power imbalances in West Caprivi that presently construct and maintain the Khwe as a separate social category and that have the potential to undermine the MET plan's successful implementation by compromising the equity it proposes. My discussion traces the development of Khwe identity formation and focuses on wildlife, land and leadership, all of which underpin the local dynamics that have been instrumental in the shaping of Khwe identity. I use this introduction to describe the evolution of the development and conservation discourse that has had a direct impact on MET policy in Namibia.

## **1.2 Chapter outline**

The following chapter outline traces the key arguments of the dissertation. The MET plan draws heavily on participatory development and community-based natural resource management discourse. In the introduction I review the MET plan and development/conservation discourse before outlining my overall argument about how the complexity of attitudes and practices in West Caprivi today help to maintain a distinct Khwe identity, and how that in turn tends to undermine the objectives of the MET plan. The chapter ends with a discussion of my research methods.

Most residents of West Caprivi see themselves, and are regarded by others, as two distinct and separate categories: Khwe, who comprise about ninety percent

of the population, and Mbukushu, comprising ten percent of the population.<sup>3</sup> Chapter two traces the process of Khwe identity formation. I show how the social signifiers and identity markers of the Khwe today, and the way Khwe regard themselves as a dispossessed and marginalised group, are tied to the relationship between Khwe and Mbukushu. The chapter then relates Khwe categorisation to the MET plans in West Caprivi. Chapter three considers the differing approaches used by Khwe and Mbukushu to land use and wildlife and their implications for the MET plan. I demonstrate how the local contestations arising from conflicting local attitudes towards land use and wildlife reinforce the categorisation of the Khwe as a marginalised group. For the Khwe residents of West Caprivi, the MET plan symbolizes Khwe loss of autonomy and alienation from government-level decision making. It argues that successful implementation of any development plan in West Caprivi is dependent upon recognition of the livelihood needs and of the present marginalisation of Khwe from the state. Chapter four picks up on the issue of marginalisation by focusing on the Namibian government's failure to give the popular Khwe traditional leadership official recognition. I show that the government's support for an Mbukushu chief's power over the Khwe has helped marginalise the Khwe, has strengthened perceptions of difference between Khwe and Mbukushu, and has further reinforced people's categorisation as Khwe. It has also led to local resistance in the form of support for the Khwe traditional authority and resistance to Mbukushu control over West Caprivi. Because the Khwe traditional authority is not recognised, the influence and decision-making power of Khwe leaders as regards implementation of the MET Vision is likely to be small, and local support for the plan minimal. This is because, despite the MET plan drawing heavily on participatory development and community-based natural resource

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<sup>3</sup> Fewer than 100 !Xu are also resident in Mushangara and Omega, West Caprivi. This dissertation focuses only on Khwe and Mbukushu, who together form the vast majority. Because of their small numbers, and socio-economic marginalisation, the !Xu (otherwise known as Vasekele) stand out as a forgotten people in West Caprivi's decision-making processes, rare employment opportunities and, in fact, in almost every aspect of life there. The !Xu population, that was estimated at 600 in 1990, is steadily dwindling as they leave the settlements of Mushangara and Omega for the former Bushmanland. They are heavily dependent on the bush to survive. Although hunting is illegal, they are often seen walking in the bush with bows and arrows. Seasonally, many !Xu work on Mbukushu or Khwe fields in return for milk, food or a minimal daily wage. I fear that the !Xu feature again in this dissertation only as shadows, not because I set out intending to sideline them but because they are so few in number and because I have had little to do with them.

management discourse, it offers little rationale for promoting equity, particularly since local conditions are such that the power imbalances preclude equity in either planning or benefit distribution. Chapter five argues that, if the MET is to realise the kind of development it proposes, its implementation needs to take account of the local tensions and differing attitudes that construct the Khwe as a distinct social category. And it explains how, by glossing over the complex attitudes and practices in West Caprivi that maintain the categorisation of the Khwe as subordinates, the plan risks compromising its own equity proposals.

### **1.3 To be Khwe in West Caprivi: Conflicts, attitudes and power imbalances**

My dissertation title comes from a statement made often in West Caprivi. Many Khwe conversations attend to the suffering that people feel they experience because they are Khwe. The term Khwe actually means people. But, for those who experience daily humiliation and hardships that they associate with their identity as Khwe, to be Khwe really means 'to suffer'. Neighbouring people regard Khwe as inferior for a number of reasons. The Khwe leadership system is not as rigid, structured and orderly as that of their neighbours, leading to perceptions by outsiders that they are disorganised and undisciplined. The social pressure they assert on one another to share and to put down those who show ambition ensures that the Khwe seem poorer than their neighbours. Khwe do not have fields the size of their neighbours', a feature that reinforces outsiders' perceptions of them as lazy. Poverty, desperation and the difficulties they face in adapting to living circumstances that change more quickly than people's ability to adapt has led to alcohol problems that characterise many Khwe settlements. The raucous and jovial banter evident in Khwe conversations also sets them apart from their neighbours who emphasise dignity and seriousness. Whilst neighbouring languages are used for school instruction and radio programmes, *Khwedam*, the Khwe language, features in few places other than conversations between Khwe, and in some anthropological or linguistic texts (Köhler, 1989, 1991, Brenzinger, 1997, Brenzinger and Naude, 1999, Kilian-Hatz, Ngyengye and Naude, 1999). The above are some reasons that the Khwe come to feel marginalised. Their sense of marginality has impacted severely on everyday life in West Caprivi. Encroachment on their land, disregard for the legitimacy of

their leadership in the eyes of the Namibian government, harassment at the hands of Namibian security forces, and perpetuation of a slave-master relationship between Khwe and members of some neighbouring chieftainships, particularly that of the Mbukushu, further construct the Khwe as different, and reinforce their sense of marginality.

#### 1.4 The MET Conservation and Tourism Vision for Caprivi

In 1999 Namibia's Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) released a plan to change the status of the Caprivi Game Park. The overall goal of the plan is to improve management and nature conservation in the area, and to allow for the communities whose members live there to benefit equally from wildlife and tourism. The MET's 'Conservation and Tourism Development Vision for the Caprivi' has received the go-ahead from cabinet, but has not yet been implemented. The MET Vision is divided into four components, focusing on conservation, tourism, equity and partnership. I have summarised the four sections of the plan below and in the following map (see Map 2).



**Map 2: The Caprivi Region, including the proposed Bwabwata National Park (Travel News Namibia, September 1999: 13)**

In order to trace the social dynamics in West Caprivi that the MET plan should consider if it is to achieve its objectives, it is useful to situate the plan in an ideological and historical context. The MET Vision has been developed in the

context of changing approaches towards development and conservation, influenced primarily by the concept of community-based natural resource

#### **The Bwabwata National Park Vision**

(adapted from MET, Directorate of Environmental Affairs, *A Conservation and Tourism Development Vision for Caprivi*, June 1998 and 'The Bwabwata National Park: Vision for the Future' in *Travel News Namibia*, September 1999)

##### **1. Conservation Vision**

The West Caprivi Game Park is to be upgraded in conservation status, and renamed Bwabwata National Park (BNP). The Park, which will cover an area of 556 462 ha, will be zoned into a large multiple use area, with two core conservation areas.

The multiple use area will allow the resident community to benefit directly from sustainable use of wildlife and tourism while carrying on with their normal economic activities of crop and stock farming. Only small stock will be permitted and new agricultural schemes and settlement will not be encouraged. The Barakwena (sic) community has expressed interest in obtaining a tourism and hunting concession in the area so as to improve the local economy and provide employment. This possibility will be explored soon in consultation with the community.

Mutc'iku/Bagani and Omega (60 000ha combined) will be deproclaimed from the Park as agricultural development centres. Cattle may be kept only in the deproclaimed and properly fenced-off Mutc'iku/Bagani and Omega areas. The BNP is to remain cattle-free for conservation and veterinary reasons.

The currently unproclaimed Kwando Triangle on the west bank of the Kwando River (measuring 20 500 ha) will be proclaimed and incorporated into the BNP. The Kwando Triangle, together with Buffalo and Mahango along the Kavango River, will be classified as core conservation areas where settlement will not be allowed.

##### **2. Tourism Vision**

Communities neighbouring and living in the BNP will be given conditional tourism rights in the Park. These will allow them to establish their own tourism facilities in the BNP or to enter into joint ventures.

##### **3. Equity Vision**

The MET wants to ensure that everyone gets a fair share of the benefits from wildlife and tourism. The equity vision allows controlled access to the Park for sustainable harvesting of resources such as reeds, grass and palm leaves.

##### **4. Partnership Vision**

The MET's role is mainly the conservation of parks and enabling community participation and benefit sharing through changing policy and legislation. Local authorities, communities and their leaders have a responsibility to assist with the management of resources.

management which acknowledges people as integral to the environment and legitimate users of natural resources (Kiss, 1993, Murphree, 2000). The following overview describes the shifts in conservation and development discourse that have impacted on West Caprivi and the drafting of the MET's plans.

environmental sustainability and social justice (Brosius et al, 1998) that CBNRM, and by extension the MET Vision, promise.

Various other dominant paradigms, along with CBNRM, have been and continue to be challenged by development anthropology. In the age of modernisation, when the west mounted a seeming crusade to export the concept of development to the rest of the world, anthropologists raised the alarm of a hegemonic, 'quick and dirty' and top-down process (Chambers, 1997, Escobar, 1995). Now that dominant development discourse has shifted to notions of participation, 'people-centredness', democracy and equity, anthropologists have again sounded their caution (Gardner and Lewis, 1996, Suchet, 2000). Case studies about projects that promote grassroots development and community-ownership abound, many showing how the projects have been compromised because of their failure to be concerned with the massive wealth and other social and cultural discrepancies that exist on the ground. Often, it has been shown (Cooke and Kothari, 2001, Cornwall, 1998, Twyman, 1998), local elites benefit from development projects whilst the situation of the poorest of the poor, for whose benefit they are intended, worsens.

The MET plan, in its current form, says all the right things – terms such as equity, participation and good governance are peppered throughout the document. Yet realisation of these may be impossible, given the existing local imbalances, tensions and power plays in West Caprivi, particularly those that lead to a persistent categorisation of the Khwe as separate and distinct. Power inequalities cannot be wished away by a development programme, no matter how progressive its rhetoric. But raised awareness amongst policy makers of local socio-political dynamics can help tailor each programme and project to meet the needs of the poor and the circumstances of each local situation.

### **1.5 West Caprivi in history**

I now present the historical context of land in West Caprivi that will lay the foundation for the rest of the dissertation. Administration of the land between the Kavango and Kwando rivers and bordered by Angola in the north and Botswana

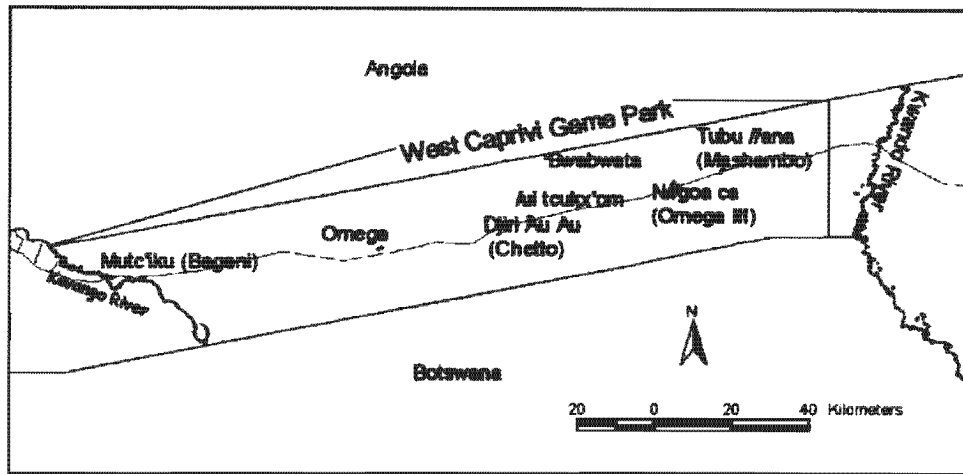
in the south (see appendix 1), known as the West Caprivi, was under German control from 1890. However, the German administration hardly affected local residents, because its officials tended to avoid the area with its scarce water supply and poor transportation routes (Fisch, 1999).

After the 1919 Versailles Peace Treaty, the League of Nations, with its practice of creating 'mandates', declared what was then South West Africa, as a South African protectorate. In 1962, a South African established Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs, commonly referred to as the Odendaal Commission<sup>6</sup>, recommended that West Caprivi become a 'Bushman reserve'.

But before the recommendation had been realised the Department of Nature Conservation intervened, and West Caprivi was declared a Game Park (Government of the Republic of South Africa, Notice 19 of 1968). The Caprivi Game Park comprised all the land from the Kavango until forty kilometres west of the Kwando River, with the Angolan and Botswana boundaries as the north and south borders of the Park (see map 3). Despite the declaration, however, West Caprivi was a South African Defence Force military zone for twenty years. Today, more than ten years since Namibia's independence in 1990, when the area's military status was lifted, the West Caprivi still has the status of a Game Park.

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<sup>6</sup> Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs, 1962, p. 99, no. 384. The Odendaal Commission, established to identify areas for 'homelands' for the various indigenous populations in South West Africa, followed the same principles as underlay the apartheid system's construction of Bantustans (Suzman, 2001: 28).



**Map 3: The Caprivi Game Park (current status)**

Independence saw a socio-ecological survey of the Caprivi Game Park being undertaken at the behest of the MET (Brown and Jones, 1994). Its report recommended that the people living in the Park should be allowed to remain there and that, in terms of CBNRM principles, any conservation plans for the area should involve and benefit the residents<sup>7</sup>. As the following quotes show, people living in West Caprivi at the time were negative about laws and restrictions placed by Nature Conservation officials (who had been appointed by the SADF during the area's occupation).

Elephants trample your lands. They chase you if you try to get them out. They eat people's *mahangu* (pearl millet), the people's food... yet when people complained to Nature Conservation at Buffalo Camp they were warned that they would be punished if they hurt an elephant (Resident elder in Bagani/Mutc'iku, quoted in Brown & Jones, 1994: 50).

Nature Conservation says the wildlife is theirs. So they must also be responsible for the damage to our gardens (Resident of Chetto quoted in Brown & Jones, 1994: 50).

After independence, a Namibian NGO, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC), took on the role of assisting the Ministry of

<sup>7</sup> In southern Africa, settlements have usually been prohibited in proclaimed conservation areas. Most San living in areas that were set aside as National Parks were evicted (eg. the Hei //om San in Namibia's Etosha National Park and the Tyua San from Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe).

Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism (later renamed Environment and Tourism) to implement the proposal to involve local West Caprivi residents in conservation efforts. In consultation with local people, a project was initiated which included a Community Game Guard and Community Resource Monitor programme, tourism, craft and small enterprise development, and capacity building of a development committee chosen to work with the local traditional leadership and IRDNC.

By 1996, despite the deaths of some local residents by wildlife attacks, and fields and livestock being decimated by game, West Caprivi's people were actively involved in looking after local natural resources. Game Guards were monitoring wildlife movement and confiscating illegal weapons with the support of the local leadership, and there was a sense of growing support for wildlife conservation. But other than employment as Game Guards or Resource Monitors, there were few of the benefits from wildlife that the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) had promised. Consequently, when Namibia's legislation was amended (Republic of Namibia, Act 5, 1996: Nature Conservation Amendment Act) to allow neighbours and residents of Parks to benefit from wildlife, the West Caprivi leadership, comprising mostly Khwe headmen, requested the government for permission to establish a conservancy.<sup>8</sup> In Namibia, a conservancy is the only legal mechanism that allows rural people to earn an income from trophy hunting. Because of the area's status as a Game Park, however, government denied the request.<sup>9</sup>

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For an account of the forceful removal of Hei //om from Etosha in the late 1950s and 1960s, see Gordon, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> 'A conservancy is ... an institution set up by a group of people to manage and benefit from their common property, in this case wildlife. It is a legally recognised, multiple-use area defined and created by its residents to engage in specific natural resource management activities. In return for taking on the responsibility of applying sustainable management practices, conservancies are given the rights to benefit from sustainable use of the resources. The conservancy is required to operate democratically, with a representative committee, a constitution, transparent management and equitable benefit distribution plan... At the start of 2001, more than 7.5 million hectares of Namibia's communal areas were under conservancy status or developing as conservancies.' (Jacobsohn, M. 2001)

Residents in the Caprivi Game Park have since become increasingly disillusioned with Namibia's national CBNRM programme. There is a sense that, although their community has given the MET overt support, they have received little in return. In 1999, the local leadership heard about MET's 'Conservation and Tourism Development Vision for Caprivi'. They expressed misgivings about some aspects of the plan, but were generally enthusiastic that MET was acknowledging the need for change. A consequence was renewed hope that the plan would allow for more local involvement and potential benefits from natural resource management.

For many years I have been hearing about benefits, benefits, benefits. I stopped believing it would happen because people say the government is against us. But this plan brings me some hope that the things we have been promised might still come (Headman, Chetto).

The plan's implementation has, however, been delayed, specifically due to the area's political instability since early 2000 (P. Iilonga, Deputy Minister of Environment and Tourism. September 2001, pers comm.).

West Caprivi's security situation has been unstable for a number of years. In late 1998, all but a handful of the approximately 700 Khwe residents of Omega III and the neighbouring villages of Guixa and /qovexa fled their homes and West Caprivi after alleged harassment by Namibian Defence Force (NDF) soldiers (Inambao, 1998). Most began returning home in July 1999, just before Caprivi secessionist rebels attacked the administrative centre of the Caprivi region, Katima Mulilo, and killed 13 people in August 1999. The incident sparked off another wave of migration from West Caprivi to Botswana (Grobler, 2000). In January 2000, soon after Namibia had opened its doors to Angolan government armed forces to use the region to attack UNITA (The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) held areas in southern Angola, the first of a number of attacks was mounted on passing civilians by unknown gunmen on the West Caprivi tarred road. A number of residents were killed or injured (Amupadhi, 2001a), resulting in further mass movement from West Caprivi to

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<sup>9</sup> In appendix, see letter addressed to Chief Kipi George from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism dated 2 December 1996.

Botswana's Dukwe refugee camp, near Francistown. By mid 2002, most had again resettled in West Caprivi. Local Khwe leaders reported, at a meeting on 10 December 2000, that they were continuously being targeted by the NDF and persecuted, harassed and wrongfully arrested (Amupadhi, 2001c, Amupadhi, 2001d, Inambao, 2001b). In 2000, Khwe men from villages in West Caprivi were frequently held for questioning (sometimes for days), or arrested by Namibian armed forces, and three were charged with high treason, to be dismissed in 2002, for alleged collaboration with UNITA (IRDNC, 2000b).<sup>10</sup> This situation has overshadowed development, conservation, and all other plans in the region (Amupadhi, 2001b, Inambao, 2001a). Since the return of Angolan government armed forces to Angola, and the subsequent death of UNITA leader, Jonas Savimbi, early in 2002, the security situation has stabilised. My dissertation then, is written in anticipation that the area's current stability will allow for the MET Vision to be implemented.

## **1.6 Research methods**

I was a fieldworker for IRDNC, a Namibian CBNRM-implementing NGO for three years (1997-1999) before registering for the Master's programme at the University of Cape Town in 2000. In mid 2000, I returned to the Caprivi region for six weeks of fieldwork, specifically for this dissertation and, after completing the coursework section of the course, returned to work for IRDNC in Caprivi at the start of 2001. For much of the first three years I spent in West Caprivi, I lived and worked in various villages in the Game Park (see Map 4) and spent most of my time with residents of the Park. Without even being fully conscious of its academic potential, for almost three years I had the opportunity for participant observation in West Caprivi. I was fortunate to develop strong relationships with

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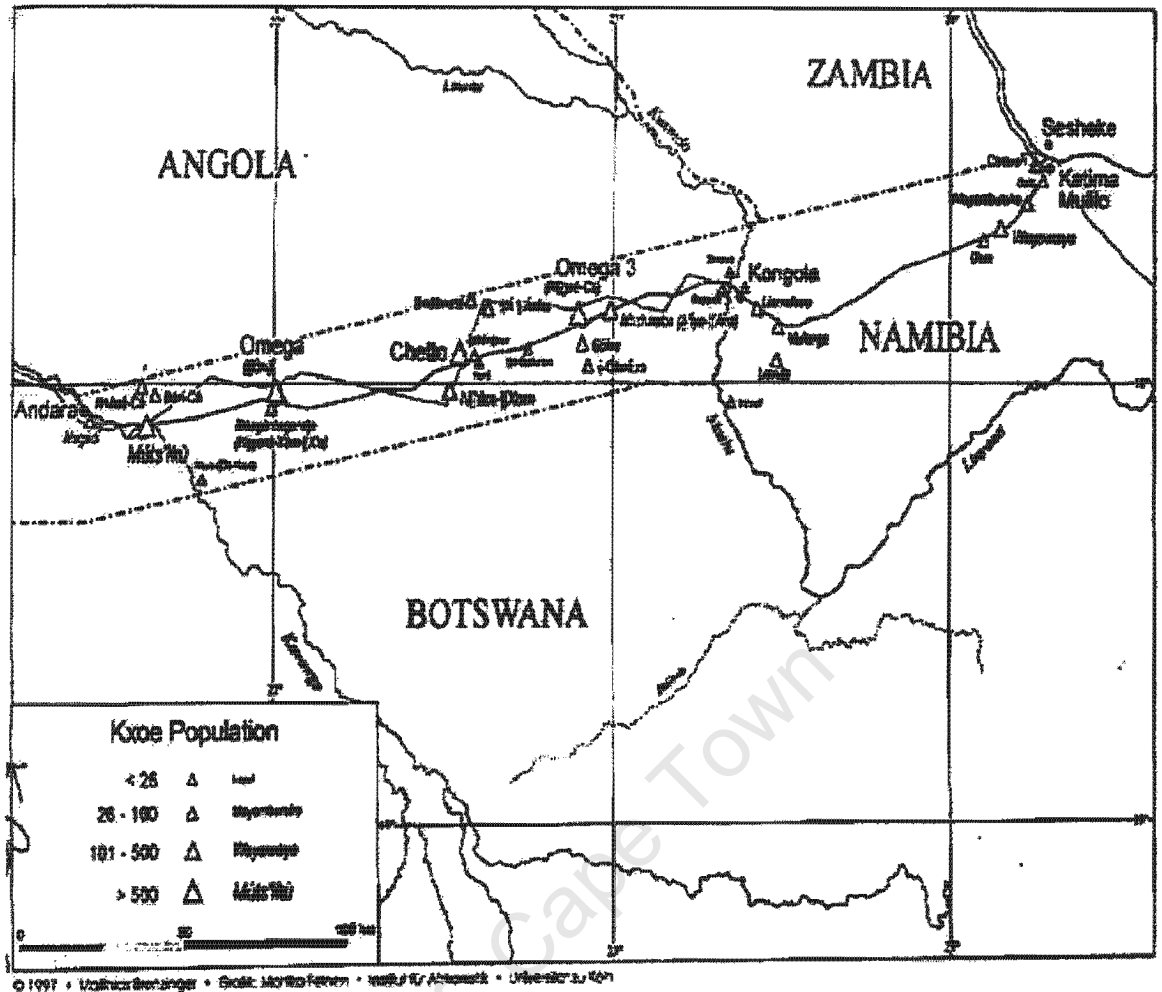
<sup>10</sup> Fifteen men detained in August 2000 have not been seen since, and their families had been unable to obtain any information about their whereabouts or whether charges have been laid against them (Menges, 2001a) until a state attorney announced, during a court case in late 2001, that they had indeed been arrested by the Defence Force but had escaped to Angola the night of their detention (Menges, 2001b). The court case followed a July 2001 request by relatives of the missing men, to a Windhoek-based human rights organisation, the Legal Assistance Centre to demand their release. Following this incident, a number of Khwe men arrested by the NDF, attest to having been told by soldiers that if they did not cooperate they would also be forced to dig their own graves and then killed like their fifteen friends. For Khwe, this case heightened their already pervasive sense of persecution by the state.

many people who shared with me their detailed knowledge of the area, understanding of the local dynamics and politics and their aspirations and dreams. Both these interactions, and those from interviews and focus group discussions conducted with the assistance of a West Caprivian colleague for the purpose of this dissertation, inform this text. During the formal field-research period I made use of a semi-structured survey to gauge the views of Park residents to the MET plans, but much of my data build on anecdotes and information gathered prior to the survey. Other methods used to collect information include field notes written during my time in the West Caprivi, a literature review and minutes of village and leadership meetings held in West Caprivi.

Village name	Number of focus Group discussions	Total number of People interviewed	Village population (Brenzinger, 2001 cited in Suzman, 2001:54)
Mutc'iku	25	88	1 202
Omega <sup>11</sup>	7	26	730
Chetto	8	43	590
Omega III	1	2	638
Mashambo	2	22	119
Others	3	13	535
Total	46	194	3 814

**Table 1: Number of focus group discussions and people interviewed during mid 2000 survey**

<sup>11</sup> All settlements mentioned in the dissertation have *Khwedam* names, but in the case of Omega, Chetto and Omega III, I have chosen to use the SADF-given names that are still in common use.



**Map 4: Khwe settlements in the Caprivi strip (Brenzinger, 1997)**

My employment as an NGO facilitator has given me the opportunity to familiarise myself with conservation and development issues from a practical, on-the-ground perspective. I am fully cognisant that my immersion in a development-focussed NGO world may also cloud my understanding and interpretation of events. But I believe this is balanced by the advantage of an extended period of time in West Caprivi that has allowed for a more in-depth understanding of attitudes and local politics than would have been possible had I only spent six weeks there. The advantage of previous training in anthropology taught me to adopt a critical questioning stance and to view all things from a myriad of perspectives and angles. However, I cannot claim to have fully grasped all the dynamics surrounding CBNRM, ethnicity, leadership and land

entitlement in West Caprivi.<sup>12</sup> Each day I have spent with West Caprivi residents I have found myself forced to review my thoughts, a process that I doubt will ever reach conclusion. Thus the following glimpses and perspectives on some of the burning issues in West Caprivi remain just that: fleeting glances of processes rapidly transforming and constantly in flux. Despite their transience, I hope that the hopes and vision of those West Caprivian residents recorded here may be taken into account when the MET plans are finally implemented.

University of Cape Town

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<sup>12</sup> For a perspective on land, natural resources, identity and leadership amongst San in neighbouring Botswana, see Hitchcock (2002).

## CHAPTER 2

### UNLIKELY NEIGHBOURS: THE WEST CAPRIVI 'COMMUNITY' AND THE CATEGORISATION OF THE KHWE

#### 2.1 Neighbours worlds apart: Khwe and Mbukushu in the West Caprivi from an outsider's perspective

I can't tell what community is, until it has started I won't know... I think most people do not understand what it is because it is a new thing, not an old thing (Ngande Sebela, Chief of Ququa village, Botswana, aged approximately 60; quoted in Taylor, 1998: 2).

Before coming to West Caprivi one might be told that the most noticeable people living between the Kavango and Kwando rivers are the Khwe and Mbukushu. The Khwe, this informant would tell one, are Bushmen who have very weak leadership, depend on foraging for bush food for a large part of their diet and can usually be told apart by their smaller stature, lighter skin and pitiable poverty. The Mbukushu, on the other hand, are likely to be described as a more sedentary, taller, darker-skinned people who live along river courses, cultivate large fields of maize and pearl millet (*mahangu*), fish, and own herds of cattle. Yet, it would be difficult for an outsider driving through West Caprivi to distinguish by sight between Khwe and Mbukushu. There are Mbukushu who bear the lighter skin that is renowned as a Bushman characteristic. Many Khwe are tall and dark-skinned. Songs described as traditionally Khwe sound uncannily similar to the drum beating or finger-piano led chants of the Mbukushu. In the early morning, a group of women weeding their millet fields may as easily seem to be Khwe as Mbukushu.

After spending time in the area, it might become easier to distinguish between the two. One may learn that a field ploughed by cattle is more likely to belong to an Mbukushu than a Khwe. Khwe, one will be told, own fewer cattle and usually plough their fields by hand with a hoe. The dusty men seen walking alongside the road carrying a hooked stick used to catch springhares (*gondo*), and a two

litre water bottle, followed by a few skinny dogs, are surely Khwe. On Friday afternoon, the teacher in Calvin Klein jeans who asks one in good English for a lift out of West Caprivi to visit relatives at the neighbouring Divundu growth-point is surely Mbukushu.

But, beware. As soon as one feels certain that one is now able to distinguish very clearly between Khwe and Mbukushu, one will meet a family who say that they are Mbukushu, but subject to Khwe traditional leadership. One will meet a group who say they are Khwe but subject to Mbukushu traditional leadership. One will find a family that calls itself Mbukushu searching for false mopane seeds (Guibourtia Coleosperma) and mangetti nuts (Ricinodendron Rautanenii) deep in the bush. One will come across a man who calls himself Khwe whipping his cattle while they plough his large field. Of course, the longer one spends in West Caprivi, the easier it will become to differentiate between the two categories, if only because by that time one will have learnt which villages consist mostly of people described as Khwe or as Mbukushu, who speaks what language, and who considers him/herself to be Khwe or Mbukushu. But even now, more than five years since I first arrived in West Caprivi, and after I can recognise almost everyone in the area, I still occasionally greet someone with the customary Khwe greeting *mbamba*, only to be answered *moro* in Thimbukushu fashion.

## **2.2 The myth of the common good: Who is the community in West Caprivi?**

The Tourism and Development Vision for the Caprivi proposed in 1998 by Namibia's Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) reflects the government's commitment to involve people who live near wild animals in the management of natural resources, so that they benefit from these resources through income-generating activities. The MET has stated its commitment to consult with local people in the West Caprivi and the rest of the region, and its policy reflects 'community-based natural resource management principles'.

In a section of the MET Vision report headed 'How is the MET doing so far?' the Ministry of Environment and Tourism states that it has previously neglected the Caprivi region and that 'our relationship with communities [in the Caprivi] has

been one of conflict rather than cooperation' (MET, 1998: 1). The document further explains how the MET aims to redress these imbalances by implementing a strategy whereby the conservation as well as local development needs of people living in and neighbouring on the Parks in the Caprivi region can be met. There are a number of references to the MET's commitment to consult with local people<sup>13</sup> in drawing up and implementing the plan. In the document, the terms community, and Barakwena<sup>14</sup> or Mbukushu communities, are used to denote the people who live in, and neighbour on the West Caprivi Game Park. The MET plan thus recognises local divisions, but makes no mention of the way those who call themselves Khwe have been categorised and marginalised. The conflicts and tensions arising from the perceived differences between those calling themselves Khwe and those calling themselves Mbukushu has the potential to disrupt development plans, including that of the MET, in the West Caprivi. This chapter documents the process of Khwe marginalisation by presenting a history of the West Caprivi according to Khwe informants. The discussion will reveal the deep fission lines that those referred to as Khwe perceive between themselves and those who call themselves Mbukushu.

### **2.3 Common localities does not equal community**

The use of the term community as a blanket reference for people who classify themselves or others, or both, into a clear-cut category has been shown to be problematic (Cornwall, 1998, Taylor, 1998, Li, 1996, Peters, 1996). The criteria for being classified as a group, according to Merton and Homans (in Sharp, 1988: 13), are that there should be established patterns of behaviour in accordance with which members of a group should interact. Further, the people comprising a group should define themselves as members of that group, and should be defined by others as belonging to the group. However, even those who fit into this definition are not necessarily egalitarian or conformist in nature. Between people, no matter how bound they are by locality or genealogy, there are conflicting hierarchies of power and authority. People are creative and

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<sup>13</sup> Local people here refers to the people who live within the borders of the Caprivi Game Park.

<sup>14</sup> Use of the term Barakwena as a designation for Khwe was popularised by the South African Defence Force, and today many Khwe refer to themselves as Barakwena. Its origin is likely to be the names Mbarakwena (Köhler, 1971), Kwengo, Makwengo or Mbarakwengo, used by

constantly react to change and shift the boundaries of community membership and exclusion (Cohen, 1985: 34). In addition, within the symbolic construct of any 'community' (Cohen, 1985: 12) one finds gender differences, generational differences, and a myriad of other power and ideological struggles.

Often, the boundaries around people sharing lifestyles, localities and family relations may seem stable and clearly defined. But the level of collectivity where a community of purpose is thought always to exist, and where those representing a group of people are said to act for the common good, is more a myth than a practical reality. This is particularly the case where the notion of community is used to denote homogeneous and harmonious units in which people supposedly share common aspirations and needs (Cooke and Kothari, 2001: 6). In the words of Ramphela and Thornton (1988: 35) '... many projects have failed in both urban and rural areas as a result of the assumption that communities did in fact exist. The community of wealth, of purpose, or of responsibility that was meant to drive the project and ensure its access to resources was simply not there.' In development interventions that seek the social and economic empowerment of the poorest of the poor, it is therefore useful to reflect on the cleavages and differentiation that are a feature of any human grouping.

According to Barth (1969) group identity is generated, confirmed and transformed in the course of interaction and transaction between decision-making, strategizing individuals. The constructionist notions of identity discussed by Barth (1969) and by Jenkins (1997) build on the idea that people, and by extension the culture and groupings they create, are complex and dynamic. Whilst a number of factors, including descent and socio-economic status, may affect any individual's ability to cross social boundaries, no person's identity is set in stone.

This does not, however, make the differences between perceived groupings any less potent. Nor does it dilute othering tendencies between those who regard themselves as belonging to diverse social groups. In West Caprivi, there has been

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Mbukushu, Fwe and Yeyi to denote the Khwe (see Brenzinger, 1997 for a discussion of Khwe xenonyms).

a long history of labelling that has informed attitudes about 'being Khwe' or 'being Mbukushu'. The following discussion describes current perceived differences between so-called Khwe and so-called Mbukushu and points to the labelling that reinforces the separate categorisation of Khwe.

In West Caprivi, the MET faces the challenge of implementing its conservation and tourism development plan in ways that take account of what will later become clear is an on-the-ground lack of any single local community because there are persisting tensions between the area's people that have led to those categorised as Khwe having been, and continuing to be marginalised.

#### **2.4 The history of West Caprivi according to the Khwe**

Memories and the recording of the past are as biased, contested, conflict-ridden and complex as the people who are the subject of the stories they create. West Caprivi, with its history of movement and war is fraught with such contestations. It is thus impossible to write an objective account of the region's past. My focus here is directed towards telling West Caprivi's story from the perspective of the region's self-labelled Khwe residents,<sup>15</sup> and on the process of continual boundary construction and reconstruction through the eyes of those so described. I annotate the discussion with references to published descriptions of various historical episodes and processes and with other local perspectives. The aggregated and annotated oral history of West Caprivi derives from experiences and narratives I gathered at various points between 1997 and 2001 rather than from systematically collected oral narratives. For that reason, I present it through my own narration of the Khwe story.<sup>16</sup>

The story of West Caprivi's residents reveals a constantly shifting social landscape shaped by migration, environmental hardships and international influences. According to my primary informants, Khwe people were the first to

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<sup>15</sup> To write a comprehensive oral history of West Caprivi would require an entire thesis of its own, and that is not my intention here.

<sup>16</sup> In using the terms Khwe and Mbukushu I do not presume that the people to whom I refer can be categorised into neat groups with fixed boundaries. The fluidity of group boundaries and social constructedness of identity is undeniable. But, for practical reasons, I use the terms that both the people who call themselves Khwe as well as those who call themselves Mbukushu use to denote themselves and others.



Bushmen'.<sup>18</sup> There was little competition from any others, most people choosing to avoid the area's malaria, tsetse and lung disease (Brenzinger, 1997: 28).

My informants related that Khwe lived contented and peaceful lives until the people they refer to as Mbukushu moved south into the West Caprivi and surrounding area. The majority of my respondents recalled reports of how these Mbukushu people wreaked havoc on the local people (stealing young women as slaves), on the landscape (clearing large expanses of bush for agriculture), and on the wildlife (hunting indiscriminately until the wildlife was almost completely decimated). Once the Mbukushu, whose descendents currently live from a combination of fishing, agriculture and pastoralism, had moved into and settled in West Caprivi, said most Khwe, the latter's forefathers were subjected to brutal attempts by the former to dominate them. They related incidents, recalled for them by older people, of when it became dangerous to walk in the bush because Mbukushu men would stalk Khwe and try to kill them. An old Khwe man in Mutc'iku told a story of how, when he was a child, one of his relatives was caught in the bush by some Mbukushu who took him to their village and tied him onto the outside of the wooden fence around their cattle kraal. He spent a terrified night, with lions roaming around the kraal, but managed to escape. Other old Khwe men and women related stories of their sisters being captured by the Mbukushu to be turned into slaves, and that this persisted right until the 1950s (G. Boden, March 2003. pers comm.). They comment that today's paler-skinned Mbukushu are the descendants of such stolen Khwe women. For the majority of Khwe with whom I have spoken, the Mbukushu were regarded as a wasteful people who settle in an area and use up all the natural resources indiscriminately. Many Khwe said that the reason that Mbukushu have moved into West Caprivi is that they have decimated the wildlife, veldfoods and firewood where they were before, and that they are now doing the same in West Caprivi.

Khwe blame many of the calamities in West Caprivi on the Mbukushu. The decrease in wildlife numbers, large-scale tree chopping, increases in theft, and

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<sup>18</sup> More than likely the River Bushmen label refers to people now called //ani Khwe, the majority of whom have since assimilated with the Mbukushu or moved to Botswana.

progressive loss of land (either loss of user rights, or because the resources on the land have been over-exploited and the land is now regarded as 'useless') are all believed to have been caused by Mbukushu. Khwe often said that Mbukushu are trying to steal their land. In the mid 1990s, when a number of Mbukushu families moved from the Kavango region into the West Caprivi Game Park, they are said, I was told, to have negotiated with the Khwe chief, Kipi George, who assigned them certain pieces of land. Subsequently, however, more and more relatives joined the initial group and, my informants explained, they unilaterally increased the size of their fields and villages. Without permission from Chief Kipi George's Khwe Traditional Authority, some of these later in-migrants then extended their settlement to a riverine area that the Khwe Traditional Authority had agreed with MET to set aside for wildlife utilisation. Today, many Khwe are furious that Mbukushu remain settled on this land without any opposition from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. Although Khwe families have also since settled in the area that it had been agreed would be kept aside for wildlife, Khwe leaders still complain about MET's failure to enforce the plan, pointing particularly to the continued presence of very recent Mbukushu settlers in the area (WWF, 1997).

Looking back to earlier times, the literature records that Mbukushu first moved south from what is now Angola into West Caprivi between 1795 and 1800. Over the next century, they moved progressively southwards, following the river courses and settling along both the Kavango and Kwando Rivers as well as at Bwabwata in the centre of West Caprivi, near to the Angolan border (Brenzinger, 1997; see map 4). In 1945, a tsetse invasion struck the eastern part of West Caprivi, after which the majority of Mbukushu<sup>19</sup> settled there moved out of West Caprivi (Brown and Jones, 1994: 3). In 1970, in terms of apartheid-government recommendations, says the MET's socio-ecological survey report, almost all Mbukushu who remained in West Caprivi thereafter were resettled along the west bank of the Kavango River or on the eastern bank of the Kwando River (Brown and Jones, 1994: 3). It is only since the departure of the SADF, after

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<sup>19</sup> Exact figures of numbers of Mbukushu who moved in and out of West Caprivi are not known. Mbukushu and Khwe informants said that oral reports testify that there have always been fewer Mbukushu than Khwe in West Caprivi.

Namibian independence in 1990, that around 1 000 Mbukushu have moved back into the Game Park and settled along the Kavango River (WWF report, 1997) and around Omega village, in the centre of West Caprivi.

Although the relationship between Khwe and Mbukushu has strongly influenced Khwe identity politics, it is the encounter between Khwe and the SADF that has had the greatest recent impact on Khwe self-perception and on their socio-political situation today. Between the mid-1970s and 1990, the SADF established a strong presence in West Caprivi and enlisted Khwe and !Xu, from Angola, Botswana and West Caprivi, to form a 'Bushman Battalion' (Suzman, 2001: 55). At the time, the majority of West Caprivi's Khwe either chose to settle in the newly established army base at Omega or were forced to leave their villages to concentrate around other SADF bases in West Caprivi where most men found work as SADF trackers.<sup>20</sup> Brenzinger (1998) discusses how Khwe, who had, in the two decades preceding their involvement in the SADF, become reliant on mine-wage incomes earned on the Witwatersrand, lost access to this resource in 1975 when Botswana closed the Molembo border post through which migrant labourers had made their way to South Africa. The consequent loss of cash earnings, coupled with the 1968 proclamation of West Caprivi as a Game Park, which forbade Khwe from hunting, left the Khwe in a dire economic situation. It was therefore difficult for them to turn down the offer of well-paid cash jobs with the SADF. According to Suzman (2001:56):

The SADF ultimately became the centre of the Kxoe [sic] socio-economic and political world. Its presence resulted in greater dependency on the cash economy, a commensurate change in livelihood strategies, the sedentarisation of large portions of the Kxoe population, and a radical and traumatic transformation of the Kxoe worldview.

When the SADF withdrew in 1990, at the time of Namibian independence, they took with them to South Africa about 1 600 Khwe who chose to emigrate to South Africa (Brenzinger, 1997: 24).<sup>21</sup> This left approximately 6 000 people in

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<sup>20</sup> Suzman (2001: 56) notes that in the late 1980s, Omega, the largest SADF base in West Caprivi, was home to around 4 500 Khwe and !Xu.

<sup>21</sup> This figure refers only to the Khwe who emigrated to South Africa. Approximately 2 000 !Xu, most of whom had been recruited by the SADF in Southern Angola also chose to move to South Africa (see Brown and Jones, 1994, Douglas, 1997 and Suzman, 2001)

West Caprivi, of whom the majority were Khwe,<sup>22</sup> followed by around 600 !Xu (Brenzinger, 2001, in Suzman, 2001: 53),<sup>23</sup> and about 70 Mbukushu (Brown and Jones, 1994: 41).

Two labelling processes have been instrumental in the categorisation of Khwe in present-day Namibia. The first is an assumption that hunter-gathering and foraging constitute an identity marker of the Khwe. The second is their identity as soldiers for the SADF in the year preceding Namibian independence. The following discussion traces these processes.

## **2.5 Becoming labelled as Khwe**

### **2.5.1 Categorisation as hunter-gatherers: the labelling of Khwe as foragers**

The Khwe, while ascribed the designation of Bushmen or San and regarding themselves as such, are often also regarded as being only on the margins of this category. They are classified as San because they speak a click language, because their leadership, while not egalitarian, is rather fluid and consensus-seeking rather than hierarchical, because 'leveling devices' (Lee, 1990: 242-245) exist to prevent mass discrepancies in the acquisition of wealth and power, because they depend for a large part of their subsistence on food gathered in the bush, and because they harbor a variety of other features that characterise people as Bushmen (cf. Lee, 1993, Widlok, 1999). But simultaneously, the Khwe demonstrate features which are not stereotypically 'Bushman':

It should be noted that these so-called Bushman people have ... been involved in contract wage-labour, the cultivation of crops and small-scale cattle farming for several generations. From the mid-1970s wage labour (mostly SADF salaries) largely replaced the men's traditional contribution to the subsistence economy (Brown and Jones, 1994:45).

In another oft-cited passage, written before the arrival of the SADF in the Caprivi, Tinley (1966) claimed that most Khwe men,<sup>24</sup> many of them mine-

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<sup>22</sup> Sindano, J. et al. 1989 (in Brenzinger, 1997) quote official SADF figures from 1989 stating that 4 800 Khwe, who had worked as soldiers for the South African army, would be directly affected by the withdrawal of the SADF. It is unknown what proportion of West Caprivi's total Khwe population this entailed, but a number of sources report that most Khwe men in West Caprivi were enlisted (Brown and Jones, 1994: 41, Suzman, 2001: 56).

<sup>23</sup> See note 3.

contract workers in South Africa, no longer knew how to hunt with bows and arrows. The Khwe, he said, had become cultivators who produced insufficient food to sustain them through the dry season. Consequently, they had become dependent on employment and retail stores to survive. The only Khwe who could still hunt did so because of a symbiotic relationship with neighbouring Mbukushu who exchanged game meat for tobacco, salt and money (Tinley, 1966, in Brown and Jones, 1994:40). According to linguist Oswin Köhler (1966, in Diemer, 1996: 13), Khwe hunter-gatherers had, since their nineteenth century contact with Bantu-language groups, been introduced to stock farming and agriculture. Much published evidence, then, points out that, for at least the last two hundred years, Khwe have not conformed to the stereotype of isolated bands of foragers.

But, says Gusinde (1966, in Diemer, 1996: 14), despite their long and intensive contact with Bantu-language speakers of indigenous African descent, people whom Khwe refer derogatorily to as *Goaba*, Khwe still displayed many 'Bushman' traits in the 1960s. Analysts could thus still focus, Gusinde (1966) adds, on their propensity towards hunter-gathering in a migration territory where the richness of wildlife provided ample meat all year round. Gusinde describes the Khwe as semi-nomads traversing long distances to hunt in the wet season, and concentrating around water sources where wildlife and veldfoods abound during dry times of the year.

Along a similar although more romantic vein, Breytenbach, then the South African Defence Force colonel responsible for SADF activities in West Caprivi, wrote that when he arrived in the Caprivi in the 1970s most of those he refers to as Barakwena:

...still lived as stone age hunter-gatherers, clothed in skimpy, animal skin loincloths... They used bows and poisoned arrows to hunt the bigger game and snares to trap the smaller animals. The women collected an ample and varied supply of berries, nuts, bulbs and tubers from the surrounding bush.

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<sup>24</sup> Exact figures of the number of Khwe men involved in mine migrancy are not recorded. Tinley (1966, in Brown and Jones, 1994: 41), in a survey of the West Caprivi for the SWA Department of Nature Conservation, says: 'The majority of the present day Barakwengo (sic) males obtain mine contract work ...'.

Theirs was a hard but innocent and idyllic life. The family formed a close-knit unit and there was no strife within the clan. All their possessions were shared, except knives and bows and arrows (Breytenbach, 1997: 78-9).

1990s research findings (Brown and Jones, 1994, Diemer, 1996, WWF, 1997), while recognising that Khwe are neither timeless and static, nor bound in their identities as 'pure foragers', further attest to the persistent importance of veldfood and wild meat for their subsistence, and to the other physical and social characteristics that mark them as 'Bushmen'.

In the same way that outsiders have portrayed Khwe in varying ways, Khwe themselves also draw on either their 'bushmanness' or on their status as sedentary agriculturalists, depending on which image will benefit them most given the circumstances. A young Khwe man, active in a development programme in Botswana's Ngamiland, told me that he believed the Khwe should try to benefit from their hunter-gatherer stereotype by offering to guide tourists on nature trails. Other Khwe informants emphasised the cultural and economic value of wildlife and the bush, both in their past and their future. All stressed that, while they know how to farm and desire to farm, they can all also live from the bush. And they value their ability to depend on diverse resources. Indeed they tactically underplay the associations they are thought to have with 'the bush' when holding discussions with the Ministry of Education, but stress them during meetings with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, when they see the potential advantages to be gained from conserving wildlife and other natural resources (cf. Bird-David, 1992).

By contrast, said my primary Khwe informants, Mbukushu know how to survive only from their fields and cattle, and do not know how, nor wish to live with wildlife. Discussions with Mbukushu respondents tended to confirm the sense that they did want more wildlife in their area. This is despite the records that suggest that they too have a long history of using the bush, and of hunting and gathering alongside their dependence on farming and pastoralism (van Tonder, 1966). Whilst both Mbukushu and Khwe were said to be largely dependent on both farming and the bush for subsistence, association with 'the bush' has

remained a determining characteristic, in both their own and others' eyes, of only Khwe identity.

### **2.5.2. 'Enter the master trackers'<sup>25</sup>: categorisation as soldiers**

During the fifteen years of intense involvement with the South African Defence Force, the docile, 'harmless people' image of the Khwe was muted in favour of one that described them as master trackers and wily soldiers. Writing with somewhat a van der Postian nostalgia and regret, if not guilt, about the loss of their earlier 'innocence' and 'purity', SADF Colonel Breytenbach, in his novel *Eden's Exiles* (1997: 79 – 88), has claimed that an idyllic past where people lived in harmony with nature ended for what he calls these 'little Stone Age men' with the 1970s SADF recruitment drive in West Caprivi, resulting in the 'annihilation of their culture'. From then on, he has argued, Khwe became 'intrepid ambushers' who are 'skilled stalkers by nature', and are so successful that the MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertc/o de Angola) 'tremble in their Russian boots' (Breytenbach, 1997: 80) as soon as they discover that Khwe trackers are on their spoor. The SADF saw no contradiction in drawing on and reinforcing both the image of Khwe as innocent savages having a deep connection with nature, and long-standing stereotypes depicting Bushmen as having superhuman stamina, excellent tracking skills and incredible veldcrafts (see Erasmus 1997: 3). The appeal of the image of Khwe as wily soldiers, drawn by the SADF from romantic literature about Bushmen (van der Post, 1958, 1961) and further reinforced during Khwe involvement with the SADF, has left an indelible mark on West Caprivi's people. Brown and Jones (1994:41) in their MET-sponsored socio-ecological survey report, attest that not only is 'the present population distribution of West Caprivi ... a legacy of natural movement, political ideology and war... [T]he withdrawal of the SADF early in 1990 and the emigration of nearly 4 000 Omega residents to South Africa has traumatised the remaining population'.

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<sup>25</sup> Title of *Sunday Times* article (13/10/96) describing how the supposedly phenomenal tracking skills of former Khwe and !Xu 31 Battalion soldiers are then being employed a couple of thousand kilometres away from West Caprivi to patrol sheep farms and track down stock thieves in the Eastern Cape's Elliot district, South Africa.

For Khwe, enlistment into the SADF had meant economic upliftment (no matter how short-lived this may have been), protection from what was seen as Mbukushu oppression, and a strengthening of their social power base through the external valorisation of their Bushmen identities, precisely because of the stereotypes about Bushmen that had led to their recruitment.

Enlisted Khwe were constantly referred to as Bushmen or 'Bushies' and reminded that they were very different from, and, as soldiers, better than other Black Africans. As one of my Khwe colleagues has recounted, his South African Defence Force commanders described SWAPO<sup>26</sup> in such disparaging terms that he was shocked to discover later that SWAPO members were actually just ordinary people, much as they themselves. Moreover, the SADF reinforced the Khwe's fear of and antagonism towards those people the Khwe called *Goaba* and whom they associated with their earlier experiences of land dispossession and loss of autonomy (Suzman, 2001: 56).

A theme that ran through many Khwe leadership meetings I attended was how their previous association with the SADF had led the Namibian government to be against them, and to want to undermine them and their communal structures. Moreover, they say, much of the suffering and discrimination they endure is also because most Khwe voted, in previous elections, for the opposition Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) party, an organisation that has also been regarded as having worked with rather than against the South African administration and military. The discrimination that Khwe say they experience ranges from harassment at the hands of the Namibian Defence Force, through the failure of the Namibian government to recognise the Khwe Traditional Authority to the perceived lack of state support for community based conservation efforts in West Caprivi.

## **2.6 Unacknowledged overlap: Khwe and Mbukushu as relatives**

Whilst conversations with Khwe emphasize a sense of an unambiguous difference between Khwe and Mbukushu in West Caprivi, it is equally striking

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<sup>26</sup> South West African People's Organisation, now the governing party in Namibia, but, before 1990, the main Namibian liberation movement.

how many similarities exist between those who call themselves Khwe and those who call themselves Mbukushu.

For much of the last two hundred years, Khwe and Mbukushu have interacted and lived together or as neighbours. Some prominent Khwe personalities, who are vocal supporters of aboriginal rights and opponents of Mbukushu settlement in West Caprivi and Mbukushu domination of the Khwe, have an Mbukushu parent and speak fluent Thimbukushu. The incongruities in the way people present themselves to outsiders, and even within the respective categories to which they belong, and the way they behave are similar. Many of those who call themselves Khwe have family ties with people who refer to themselves as Mbukushu.

The relationship between the Khwe and the Mbukushu provides a reminder of Leach's seminal important (1954) study of Kachin identities in Highland Burma where he described how people talked of themselves as if there were clear-cut collective identities and entities, whilst their everyday interaction and organisation suggested a complex pattern of overlap and variation, which was also recognised by local people. The Kachin and Shan people, Leach said, were commonly regarded as very distinct and separate categories, much as were the Khwe and their Mbukushu neighbours in West Caprivi. 'Nevertheless' added Leach, 'Kachins and Shans are almost everywhere close neighbours and in the ordinary affairs of life they are much mixed up together' (Leach, 1954: 2). As I have indicated, the same applied to the Khwe and Mbukushu in West Caprivi.

Why then does the distinction between West Caprivi's Khwe and Mbukushu persist? In part it is because those who call themselves Khwe regard themselves as members of an increasingly marginalised and oppressed group that needs to distinguish itself because of the years of gradual land dispossession they have experienced and the concomitant loss of autonomy the group's leaders have faced. A consequence is that the large majority stress the supposedly vast differences between themselves as Khwe and their Mbukushu neighbours, rather than identify the features they share with Mbukushu. This occurs despite their

intensive interaction and links with Mbukushu. In further part the distinction persists because outsiders too have come to see the Khwe as a separate and increasingly discriminated against category, sometimes associated with a Bushman stereotype and at other times seen as particularly vulnerable. The maintenance of Khwe identity is thus constructed both emically and etically. And it is the political tool that paradoxically both drives and reinforces the marginalisation of the Khwe as a category and their distinctiveness as a group.

## 2.7 Conclusion

Communities do exist. People believe in communities, desire community, and act as if they exist even when they don't. The word 'community', then, refers in a self-contradictory way to a belief and practice. The problem is that we cannot infer the practice from the existence of the belief; that is, while the belief may be real enough, the reality may not reflect it (Ramphele and Thornton, 1988: 38).

The differences that are used to distinguish groups are almost never just symbolic, and they are virtually always expressed and experienced in real terms. In the case of the Khwe, their limited access to political power and material resources, that most of them say is a direct result of their marginalisation and long-term dispossession, as well as their descent, have profoundly limited their scope to move beyond the parameters of their Bushman identity. Yet, Khwe identities are not fixed. As Jenkins has pointed out (1997: 13), ethnicity results from the flux of interpersonal transactions, and such transactions affect Khwe ethnic identity too. The ethnic divisions in West Caprivi seem so straightforwardly rigid and clear, and yet indeterminately complex at the same time. Of course there is some level of fluidity and overlap between those calling themselves Khwe and those calling themselves Mbukushu in West Caprivi as my references to Thimbukushu speaking Khwe people above indicates. But the predominant sentiments reflect a strong and shared sense of inequality and conflict between Khwe and Mbukushu, and that these have been shaped by years of categorisation. Consequently, they need to be accounted for in the design of development interventions. Comaroff (1997: 70) and Motzafi-Haller (1994) are by no means alone in pointing out that group identity is always situational and completely bound up within and influenced by historical forces. As I have

averred above, and go on to demonstrate further below, in West Caprivi these historical forces have charged relationships between Khwe and Mbukushu, and have ensured that Khwe regard themselves as a very distinct and separate social category.

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## CHAPTER 3

### LIVING IN A GAME PARK<sup>27</sup>: LOCAL CONTESTATIONS OVER THE MEANINGS AND RELEVANCE OF LAND AND WILDLIFE IN WEST CAPRIVI

#### 3.1 Introduction

The Ministry of Environment and Tourism's plans to modify the status of the West Caprivi Game Park have sparked lively local debates and discussion about land, wildlife and livelihood options available to the Park's residents. My research has revealed how the MET plan for West Caprivi tends to reinforce the Khwe sense of alienation from decision making at government level. Those classified as Khwe feel that the plan disregards their status as both 'first people' and the most populous section of West Caprivi's population. Their sense that the MET plan discriminates against them were most apparent both in general discussion and in opinions Khwe respondents shared with me. That sense has also helped to reinforce Khwe perceptions of themselves as a marginalised and disempowered group and contributed, in turn, to their being separately and distinctly categorised in the kinds of ways I have discussed in Chapter 2.

The present chapter highlights various localised contestations over the meanings of varying survival strategies and the ways people make both use and sense of land and wildlife in West Caprivi<sup>28</sup>. It shows that there are both distinct similarities and marked differences between Khwe and Mbukushu land- and natural resource-use patterns, and that the differences have become iconic of the kinds of distinctions between the two that reinforce the image of Khwe as Bushmen and therefore peripheral. My research findings thus tend to echo existing stereotypes about agro-pastoralists and former hunter-gatherers, and show the cleavages to be deep while the relationship is simultaneously (and

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<sup>27</sup> I have adapted this heading from the title of J. Diemer's 1996 unpublished Masters Thesis, 'The Barakwena of the Chetto Area: Living in a Game Reserve'.

<sup>28</sup> Although this dissertation focuses on the situation of Khwe, both Khwe and Mbukushu respondents were consulted for their perspectives on the proposed Bwabwata National Park. Most Mbukushu respondents were more negative about the plan than Khwe, citing their dependence on agro-pastoralism and fears that the MET plans will reduce land available for farming.

paradoxically) narrow. Whilst a strong attachment to the land exists among the Khwe majority residents of the Park, this attachment reveals itself to be focused on access and usufruct rather than ownership rights. The stereotype of the Khwe as reliant on the bush is thus confirmed, but at the same time Khwe are shown to be shrewd and adaptive in their assessment of the livelihood options available to them under changing political and environmental circumstances.

The chapter begins with a description of the proposed changes in land status in West Caprivi that will impact on livelihood options there. In order to demonstrate existing and potential livelihood choices, and the resultant loss of autonomy that Khwe have experienced, I discuss the significance of cattle farming and food resources obtained from the bush - and especially from the two Core Wildlife Areas of the proposed Bwabwata National Park - to Khwe residents of the Park. I then explain how both are deemed vital to their survival. The discussion then compares Khwe and Mbukushu perspectives to 'living with wildlife' and concludes by explaining how the MET plan could inadvertently increase Khwe loss of autonomy, thereby further contributing to their categorisation as a marginalised social category.

### **3.2 Current status of West Caprivi and proposed changes that will directly affect land status and livelihood options**

As discussed in previous chapters, the West Caprivi, between the Kavango River and a line of longitude around forty kilometres west of the Kwando River, is currently a proclaimed Game Park (see map 3). The people living in this Park, most of whom classify themselves as Khwe, are spread out in villages throughout the Park. They are allowed to collect bush foods and medicine in the Park, but hunting is prohibited. Although the hunting of small game such as spring hares is illegal, it is considered common practice, and offenders are not prosecuted. Medium-scale agriculture and animal husbandry is also practised, and nutritional and medicinal needs are supplemented by the consumption of a wide variety of wild leaves, berries, roots, bark, nuts, fruit, honey and other resources collected from the bush.

Most non-Khwe residents of the Park classify themselves as Mbukushu. They are concentrated around the two large eastern settlements of West Caprivi, Mutc'iku and Omega, with just two households in the mostly Khwe village of Chetto in the central part of West Caprivi. They are almost completely reliant on their large fields of pearl millet and maize, and their herds of goats and cattle, although they also complement their livelihoods by gathering natural resources found in the Park. The majority of people living in West Caprivi, both Khwe and Mbukushu, depend almost entirely on the bush for building materials.

Although not formally stated in legislation, the current status of the Game Park allows a wide range of livelihood options to its residents. The Park provides building materials, natural resources for food and to make crafts, opportunities for farming and limited formal employment as civil servants, or as Community Game Guards and Resource Monitors through the national community-based natural resource management programme. But, as the following discussion will demonstrate, livelihood options are not a reflection of totally open-ended local choices.

### **3.3 Cattle farming in West Caprivi and the power of the state**

All places which have names used to be cattle farms. There were many cattle in West Caprivi before [in earlier times] (Old Khwe man, Chetto).

1996 saw an outbreak of lung disease among cattle in parts of northern Botswana adjacent to the majority Khwe villages of Chetto and Omega III in West Caprivi. In an attempt to curb its spread, the Botswana government decided to cull all cattle in the area where the disease had been reported. Resisting this ruling, some Khwe farmers in West Caprivi who also owned cattle in Botswana tried to secure their livestock - which they used for draught, meat and milk - by removing it to Namibia. When the Namibian government detected the possible presence of infected cattle in parts of West Caprivi, it decided to remove all cattle from the affected areas (R. Mkandawire, State Veterinarian, November 2001. pers comm.). Farmers in Chetto and Omega III now had two options. They could either move their herds to Omega, forty to eighty kilometres from the affected

villages, where it was considered that cattle would not be infected with lung disease as it was distant enough from the contaminated area, or they could sell their cattle to a butcher.

Former cattle owners, most of them Khwe, recall that they were compensated N\$400 per fully-grown beast and N\$40 for each calf. They regarded these amounts as too small, and resentment towards the government for killing the cattle 'for no good reason' persists to this day. Some cattle owners slaughtered their cattle for their own subsistence rather than selling or moving them.

Today West Caprivi residents earn insufficient to enable them to replace their herds. This is because the incomes they had previously generated from employment in South African gold mines, and in the SADF, and which had enabled people to buy large livestock, are no longer available to West Caprivi residents.

Most former cattle owners say they do not really understand why their cattle were killed. But, they add, they suspect Namibian government discrimination against them, as it was only the two majority Khwe villages that were affected by the state veterinarian's decision. By contrast, the people of Omega and Mutc'iku, two villages with predominantly Mbukushu populations and higher numbers of cattle, had neither to sell nor to move their cattle. Some Khwe informants go on to say that their cattle were culled because of neighbouring Botswana's fear that its beef industry would be affected by lung disease finding its way from Angola through West Caprivi into Botswana. But, whatever the believed reason for the cull, Khwe feel an acute sense of powerlessness and a lack of understanding regarding decisions made concerning the area where they say they have always lived. They also point to many other instances when government has not consulted the local leadership regarding issues facing West Caprivi. Their experience of marginalisation, such as that which followed their loss of cattle, has confirmed for Khwe a widely held local perception that they are targets of state discrimination:

How will people live? How can you feed your children with small fields? That is punishment, so that people can't live... Why must they only punish the Khwe? They are saying "you can't develop, you must continue suffering" even though we are the ones who knew how to look after the wildlife here (Khwe man, Mashambo).

As did the 1996 cattle cull, the introduction of the MET Vision for West Caprivi, proposed in 1998 but not yet implemented, will impact heavily on livestock farming in West Caprivi. According to the MET plan, the land currently known as the West Caprivi Game Park will be proclaimed a National Park with a strict division of different land use zones. The existing large cattle populations at Mutc'iku and Omega settlements has led to MET's decision that these two villages should be completely de-proclaimed, reclassified as communal land, and fenced to prevent the free movement of potentially disease-ridden cattle into Botswana. In other words, the two settlements will fall outside any kind of Game Park and National Park control. This will also mean that, once the Botswana government is satisfied that cattle in West Caprivi are held in a tightly controlled area, the international border fence, erected in the 1990s to control the spread of cattle disease, will be removed, allowing again for free movement of game across the border.<sup>29</sup>

As occurred during the 1996 lung disease outbreak, Khwe now question the reasoning behind the state's decision regarding the creation of cattle free zones in those parts of West Caprivi that are to be declared a National Park. They complain that Mutc'iku and Omega residents, two of the largest settlements in West Caprivi, where Khwe live together with Mbukushu, will be allowed to herd cattle, whilst in Chetto, Omega III and Mashambo, where most residents are Khwe, it will be illegal to stock cattle. They interpret this decision too as yet another sign of the Namibian government's blatant disregard for the well being of Khwe.

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<sup>29</sup> The free movement of wildlife across international boundaries has been described as Trans-boundary National Resource Management (TBNRM). 'TBNRM refers to areas that span well defined international borders which allow the free movement of wildlife and water courses, as well as the free movement of tourists and people' (Makombe, K. ed., 1995). Also see Mendelsohn and Roberts (1998) for an overview of transboundary opportunities in the Caprivi region.

Since independence, almost all residents of West Caprivi, irrespective of ethnic allegiances, participated in the state sanctioned community-based natural resource management programme that began after independence, where assurances of future benefits from wildlife were given as an incentive to encourage local conservation. But the subsequent policy decision to de-proclaim and fence Mutc'iku and Omega, where cattle farming is to be allowed, has led to bitterness from the Khwe residents of the Park. For almost ten years, they say, they have actively supported the government's conservation agenda by setting aside areas for wildlife usage, setting up an institutional framework for negotiating with government, and supporting a team of Community Game Guards and Resource Monitors. Now, after a decade of participation and support for the national community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) programme, they feel that they are being excluded from the potential benefits of conservation. The suggestion by MET that they can establish conservancies in the de-proclaimed areas<sup>30</sup> offers them little consolation, they say, since: 'The fence will prevent wildlife from moving into this area and soon our children will be unable to recognise the animals' (Khwe man, Mutc'iku). Or as another person said: 'We don't want the Game Park to get smaller. They should let us live with our wildlife. We don't want any more fences. We can live without fences' (Khwe man, Mutc'iku).

Many Khwe respondents said that they are unhappy about the prospect of the proposed de-proclaimed areas being fenced, mainly because they do not want to feel trapped or enclosed. This finding confirms those of the MET's post-independence socio-ecological study of West Caprivi (Brown and Jones, 1994) which also pointed to the widespread rejection, by West Caprivi residents, of the idea that their settlements be fenced. Indeed, the report notes, Omega may have been one of what may be very few military bases that is not completely enclosed by a security fence; and it suggests that this may have been because of the Khwe and !Xu peoples' strong aversion to living behind a fence (Brown and Jones, 1994: 53).

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<sup>30</sup> Conservancies, as described earlier, are locally established institutions to which the Ministry of Environment and Tourism grants limited rights over tourism and wildlife.

Hofmeyr's (1990) discussion of the resistance to fences erected, in line with apartheid policy to demarcate black and white areas in South Africa, reflects similar concerns to those of West Caprivi residents. She documents how Blacks living adjacent to fences in the Potgietersrus area related the 'wire' to their land dispossession. The fence cut off access to vital resources, in this instance water, and symbolised the loss of decision-making and control over the land and the resources it offers, both in the short and the long terms. As was the case in Potgietersrus, the residents of West Caprivi are familiar with notions of territory and its demarcation. But these rights to land and its use are continuously conferred and negotiated instead of being marked in precise terms such as by a fence. In the same way that boundaries demarcated by fences became a 'strict and permanent reality' (Hofmeyr, 1990: 11) to the Black population around Potgietersrus, the threat of a fence around Mutc'iku and Omega elicits a deep and keenly felt sense of dispossession by the Khwe residents of these two villages.

Another reason for Khwe people's general dislike of living behind a fence relates to their continuing dependence on veldfoods. This is because they imagine the proposed fence as a barrier preventing people from leaving the village to go into the bush to gather food. The acting Khwe chief, Thaddeus Chedau, raised this concern at a 1999 meeting with the MET's Director of Resource Management. The Director responded that there would be free movement in and out of the enclosure. But, Park residents say, a decade of unkept promises has left them with little trust in the MET. They are worried that, although movement in and out of the fenced area may be agreed upon initially, once the fence has been erected, people's movement in and out, to collect food in the Park, will be forbidden: 'It seems to me that people will be fenced and nothing will happen there. We won't even have animals to attract the tourists' (Khwe woman, Omega).

There is also a perception amongst many of Mutc'iku's and Omega's Khwe residents that the fence proposal is evidence that the government 'doesn't want people to benefit from the whole area'. Some of these were the very people who had previously promoted community-based natural resource management and

discouraged poaching. Yet they now anticipate being excluded from the potential benefits of CBNRM. Residents of West Caprivi say that their support for MET is now being rewarded with 'bones and not the meat we were promised'. They believe they have been doubly cheated because, not only will there be no real opportunities to benefit from wildlife and tourism, especially in Omega, but the proposed livestock enclosures may be too small to allow for expansion of the cattle numbers already present in Mutc'iku and Omega, and having no access to grazing areas outside the enclosures will then be a problem. Equally problematic, and in this instance for both Khwe and Mbukushu respondents, is that fixing the size of the enclosures by fencing them will preclude increased cultivation when that is required if the population grows - this despite the fact that some people, mostly Mbukushu, see a positive side to the fence through its function in protecting their cattle and fields from the hazards of marauding wildlife.

Of greatest concern about the proposed fence is that it will divide people, the physical barrier becoming a symbolic boundary between those who live inside and those who remain outside. Khwe maintain that all of those calling themselves Khwe in West Caprivi are related, that bonds between families are strong, and that relatives need to move freely from village to village, spending months at a time visiting kin and offering mutual support. Now they fear that because livelihood opportunities will differ across the fence, some villages will have cattle and large fields, others none, some villages will benefit from tourism and trophy hunting, and others not, introducing income disparities that they predict will result in jealousy and conflict.<sup>31</sup>

Villages that will remain outside the two de-proclaimed zones, including the majority Khwe settlements of Chetto and Mashambo, are set to become multiple-use areas within the confines of the new National Park. According to MET's document outlining the Bwabwata National Park plan (MET, 1998), this means that small-scale agriculture and small-stock farming will be allowed, but cattle prohibited. The residents of the multiple-use areas are expected, instead, to benefit from the Park through revenues from tourism and trophy hunting, the

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<sup>31</sup> See Woodburn, 1997: 352 for a discussion on sharing ethic, a feature that has come to be stereotypically associated with San.

latter to be transferred from the MET to local people and administrative structures.

Today, no residents of the proposed Bwabwata National Park multiple-use areas have any cattle. But all have vivid memories of the cattle they have been unable to replace since the 1996 culling.

When nature conservation came here and called this place *lxoxo xom* [*Khwedam* for 'land of wild animals', the phrase Khwe use for Game Park], did they not find people here? They found us here, with our cattle. So where did the idea come that people can't live with both wildlife and cattle? We lived well together. When MET came here they found us with our cattle. The government then said that our cattle had diseases, and killed them all. And now that we have lost our cattle, they say that if we have cattle again they will give diseases to the Botswana cattle. What sense does that make? ... What have we done wrong in the world that we need to depend on the government for food all the time? <sup>32</sup> (Khwe headman, /ui Tcukx'om).

Whilst claims that Chetto and Mashambo residents' cattle herds were vast may be exaggerated, interviews and leadership meetings I attended clearly showed that most Khwe aspire to combine dependence on wildlife and the veld with herding large livestock and agriculture. Whilst some Khwe respondents agree that cattle were probably introduced into West Caprivi by Mbukushu, they are adamant that cattle are now firmly entrenched as vital components of Khwe life. On the one hand such people are quick to point to their inherent knowledge of the bush and ability to survive from the food that can be found in the bush. On the other, they are just as adamant that they have long been pastoralists and would be unable to survive without cattle.

But more important for them than the principle of rights to herd cattle is the fact that the restriction on cattle herding has been decided by outsiders, and that local people are losing control over their land and decisions about how to use that land (cf. Taylor, 1999): 'The people said yes [to the multiple-use area idea], but we

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<sup>32</sup> This respondent is referring to the food aid that the government gives to vulnerable groups, including the Khwe. He mentioned this after speaking about how he heard a radio programme where a farmer was able to sell his maize for a large profit. The respondent then wondered if he would ever be in a position to earn this kind of income from farming without cattle to plough the land.

should not have supported that... Every time people oppress us, we say “yes, yes, yes.” Enough of that, we won’t carry on like that’ (young Khwe woman, Chetto). Another statement echoes similar sentiments:

If someone says to you, “you are not allowed to keep cattle and plough” then he is killing you. The Khwe know this area, it is our place. If we want to go somewhere to find /gom (mangetti nuts) and sleep there, then we will go. But how can someone who doesn’t even know the area tell me what I can do and where I can go. If we want to look after wildlife we will do it. But no one shall order us what to do (Khwe man, Omega).

Although local people may not now be able to replace their erstwhile cattle herds, they feel it is important that, if finances allowed in future, the option to range large livestock should remain open. For Khwe who live in the proposed multiple-use area, then, the total ban on cattle-keeping there is regarded as further proof of their land and rights dispossession. It confirms for them their belief that, because of their earlier association with the SADF, the SWAPO government now wants to ‘kill the Khwe’ or force them to remain poor. ‘We don’t think this is a good development. People need to have cattle to plough fields. You cannot plough with a goat or a chicken. The government is killing the people. Cattle are people’s strength’ (Headman, /ui Tcukx’om).

All my interviewees, both Khwe or Mbukushu, regarded cattle as valuable assets that can provide the financial stability enabling people to remain based in a single place. Most Khwe who have fled to Botswana in the last few years were from Omega III where there have been no cattle since the 1996 culling, and various informants explained that Omega III’s residents had fled partly because they had no cattle to secure their livelihoods in Omega III, a point that the late civil servant responsible for the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation in Omega confirmed (Hamukoto, July 2000. pers comm.). In the minds of West Caprivi’s rural residents, no matter whether Khwe or Mbukushu, cattle are a symbol of stability without which life is tenuous and insecure.

People living in the proposed multiple-use areas are also concerned that they will be unable to increase the size of their fields if they are only able to work the land by hand. Attempting to address this concern at a meeting with the West Caprivi leadership in 1999, senior MET officials, including the Director of Resource Management, assured the West Caprivi leadership, that, in the absence of cattle, the government will provide residents of the multiple-use area with access to tractors to plough their fields. But the Acting Khwe chief did not support the proposal because, he argued, it would end up being discriminatory: 'It's not a good plan. The government tractors which they promise won't plough for everyone' (Acting chief of the Khwe, Mutc'iku).

Most Khwe present at the meeting added that they did not believe the tractors would ever materialise, and added that even if they did, it would be more difficult to maintain them than cattle. They realise the danger of relying too heavily on modern technology which they do not have the financial or technical resources to maintain, and interpret the state's offer of tractors as further evidence of local people's loss of local control and increasing dependence.

Nor do residents of the proposed multiple-use area have much faith in MET's promise of hunting and tourism revenues coming their way. This is understandable given that it has been ten years since they were assured of the possibility of receiving money earned by the West Caprivi in MET's hunting quota auctions, valued at around a million Namibian dollars a year (M. Jacobsohn, 2001. pers comm.). Year after year, the hunting revenues have been channelled into the state treasury. More recently, the MET has announced that the money will be deposited into a Game Products Trust Fund the beneficiaries of whom are not clearly understood locally. Either way, the trophy hunting revenues earned in West Caprivi have, to date, never found their way back to the people of West Caprivi. This fact has increased local people's sense that government is an outside agency that exploits their resources for its own benefit and over which they have no control.

We want to see lots of wild animals [here]. But those who want to should [also] be able to farm with cattle and goats. Otherwise how will they feed their children? Wildlife can bring money for your community, but it

won't feed your children. Only your goats and cattle can provide you with meat and milk (Mbukushu headman, Shamakwi).

There must be cattle. Even if we get money from wildlife, that will not be your own money, that money will belong to the whole community. (Khwe man, Chetto)

Such concerns also point to the problem that even if money were received from trophy hunting or tourism, the funds would belong to Park residents in aggregate and not to any particular individuals. Consequently, not enough would reach individual families to compensate for their loss of income from the meat and milk of individually owned cattle. Given the high value of the trophy hunting revenue in West Caprivi (approximately a million Namibian dollars a year), if this money were equitably distributed, it could indeed provide a substantial lump sum to individuals or families with little other income. But to date even the relatively small earnings of N\$20 000 over a five year period from the N//goabaca Community Campsite (L. Halstead, February 2003. pers comm.) have not been distributed or used<sup>33</sup>, and this fact may have fuelled the idea that 'community funds' are inaccessible and insufficient to provide for everyone.

Of more relevance to the disillusionment felt by West Caprivi's Khwe residents towards their prospects of benefiting from trophy hunting is their sense of limited decision making powers over what the government plans and decides for the region. Most respondents expressed concern that, even were hunting revenues handed to 'the community' by the MET, the state would decide through which local institution to channel such funds, and that it would be very unlikely that that would be an institution chosen by the Park's Khwe residents.

### **3.4 The bush as food store**

In what initially seems a stark contrast to the importance that Khwe respondents attached to rearing cattle, is their fervent self-association with the bush, and insistence that they are dependent for survival on food and medicinal resources found in the bush. In discussions about the land along the Kavango River that is

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<sup>33</sup> The N//goabaca Community Campsite committee, the West Caprivi Management Committee and the Traditional Authority have met on numerous occasions to decide how to use the campsite earnings, but have so far not been able to agree on how the money should be used.

classified by the MET as a Core Conservation Area, Khwe emphasised their connection to the place and the importance of the bush as a 'garden' where wild food can be collected:

That is where we come from. Those are our fields where we get food and medicine. It is our garden. We even used to plough there and some want to continue (Khwe man from Mutc'iku about Buffalo Core Area).

The permanent availability of water in the Kwando and Buffalo Core Wildlife Areas, along the banks of the Kwando and Kavango Rivers respectively, afford them a high degree of bio-diversity compared with the central areas of West Caprivi. It is in these portions of land, both of them housing the ruins of former SADF military bases that were characteristically positioned in the most scenic parts of the West Caprivi, that most of the wildlife in the West Caprivi Game Park is concentrated. The Core Wildlife Areas are not only home for much game. They also contain riverine vegetation which is not found elsewhere in West Caprivi. Both Core Areas are manned by rangers, anti-poaching staff and labourers employed by the MET. The Kwando Core Area, often referred to as the Golden Triangle, falls on the eastern boundary of the West Caprivi Game Park and is not currently formally part of the Park (see Map 2). It thus has no official conservation status but, due to the prevalence of game there, the area is under strict MET control.

Both Core Areas have a long history of settlement and use by the residents of the Park. The Buffalo Core Area is known in *Khwedam* as Dinga Goma. The name, which refers to the high occurrence here of *dinga*, the 'Khwe potato' (*Tylosem Esculentum*), points to the importance of this bush food for Khwe. Dinga Goma was the birthplace of many Khwe now resettled in designated plots in Mutc'iku, and they remember lively villages at Kwa Beye and Qarati, both now in the core area. Many former residents, most of them Khwe, recall being forced to vacate their villages in Dinga Goma by the SADF for military security reasons. Since independence, the Namibian government has prevented settlement in Dinga Goma (other than by MET staff) to preserve the area's conservation status. The following quote from a former resident of Dinga Goma relates the sense of

dispossession and alienation from decisions made by government to his loss of residence rights there: 'It is our place. It was Dinga Goma before it was named Buffalo (by the SADF). The SADF took our people away from there, and now another government is preventing us from using the area' (Khwe man, Mutc'iku).

Dinga Goma has significance as a former settlement area, burial site and also as a valuable wild 'garden' where some plants which are not found in the rest of the Park grow. Mutc'iku residents of all ages are able to draw accurate maps of the area, pointing out pans and places where certain veldfoods and medicines are to be found.

Wild foods found in Dinga Goma that are less prevalent in other parts of West Caprivi were named by almost all respondents. These are *dinga* (Tylosema Esculentum), *dini* and *tcipa* (varieties of honey), *tjindjere* (Berchemia Discolour), *tcere* (Dioscorea Asteriscus), *navirindongo* (Friesodiel Siaobovata), *iceore*, *deo* (mushroom), *mavumbura*, *manjeo k'uani* (a sweet tuber), *tcu kx'om* (Diospyros Mespiliformis), */qom* (Ricinodendron Rautenii), *=iya* (a sweet root), *do* (Nymphaea Capensis), *=goo* (springhare), and *//eu* (fish). Medicines include *funga doa* (pregnancy medicine), *ngyao* (Acacia Nigrescens), *=abe*, *ndue du* (to make men strong), *//gu tco* (cough medicine), *=u tco* (head medicine), *=xei tco* (eye medicine), *=e tco* (ear medicine) and women's medicine for cramps. Dinga Goma also contains building resources such as thatching grass, and *='aa* (Phragmites Australis).

The neighbours of the Core Area say that they do not gather much food, medicine or building materials from Dinga Goma since it is illegal to do so now that it falls under the MET's control. But they stress the importance of renewed access, particularly to the riverine food and medicine collection areas. Most respondents support Dinga Goma's status as a Core Conservation Area, but believe that controlled harvesting of certain resources, especially those which are uncommon elsewhere, such as *dinga*, and fishing with traditional methods (without using nets) would not harm the area's environmental integrity.

The Kwando Core Wildlife Area, is also considered valuable for its natural resources. People living at Mashambo, a village bordering the Core Area hope that MET will allow them access to *tceu* (Guibourtia Coleosperma), *//qaani* (Grewia Retinervis), */gom, dinga*, honey, and springhares in the Golden Triangle. The Khwe residents of Mashambo and other villages in the dry central part of West Caprivi have an intimate knowledge of the features and waterpans of the Kwando Core Area, as demonstrated by the recital of almost all pan names and locations by respondents.

For the majority of Khwe respondents, a further vital reason for having access to the Core Areas is so that their children will be able to see the animals and to know the place: 'If the children don't see these animals they will never believe us when we say that they existed here' (Young teacher, Chetto).

In the past, intimate knowledge of water sources in the bush, and of animal behaviour, may have been vital for survival. Now, that knowledge is regarded as just as critical, but for reasons such as the transmission of cultural information and local history (many waterpans and sipwells are named after an event that occurred there). Khwe claims to the historic, cultural and practical relevance of the Core Areas are thus intricately interwoven into their efforts to maintain a distinct Khwe identity, and their loss of access is often used, in conversation and at meetings, as a symbol of their land dispossession and political marginalisation.

In her discussion of people's access to, and control over, natural resources in Saadani village, Tanzania, Mwaipopo (2001) has shown how people there also attach meanings and values to natural resources, and identify themselves through their interaction with those natural resources on which they depend for their livelihoods. For the people of Saadani, as in West Caprivi, autonomy is translated as rights to natural resources. Thus, the state's power in making decisions regarding the use or management of local natural resources not only limits local people's choices, it also leads to their understanding of the state as a hegemonic and repressive institution (Mwaipopo, 2001: 13).

### **3.5 Using the land well: combining cattle, wildlife and other natural resources**

There is no difference between cattle and wild animals. If it weren't for people they would live together (Khwe man, Mutc'iku).

Wildlife is regarded as a lifeline for those who call themselves Khwe. For them, land without wildlife is classified as dead and holding little promise for sustenance: 'When the rain comes you should be able to see the spoor of animals in the sand. If you do not have animals in your area, it shows that you are not chief of your place, you do not know how to live' (Khwe man, Omega III).

It cannot be denied that those classified as Khwe, when armed with SADF weapons, were instrumental in the mass slaughter of game during the time of the SADF occupation. Giraffes were pursued on horseback and shot at close range, and large numbers of antelope, sometimes far more than could be consumed, were hunted. Most Khwe men who were involved in the indiscriminate hunting, whilst eager to relate their hunting exploits, now point out that there was so much game that no one expected numbers to dwindle to what they are now:

In the past there were many animals in West Caprivi. There were so many that you couldn't even get to the waterhole. But when other groups came, they ate our meat and moved our animals. People of West Caprivi also hunted, but not enough to finish all the animals. Now you only see a few elephant or kudu. We want MET to give us back our animals (Khwe Management Committee member, Mashambo).<sup>34</sup>

Khwe now say that the current state of affairs is a sign of mismanagement of the bush, and of uncontrolled migration into the Park (see chapter 2) that has made control of poaching and wood harvesting difficult. Through the eyes of my informants, the present day situation can also be blamed on the heavy hand of government ministries, which, they say, make decisions that sometimes seem contradictory. As an example of ill conceived government plans where local

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<sup>34</sup> There is a widely held belief in West Caprivi that the SADF removed much of the area's wildlife with helicopters and trucks. It is true that game translocations did take place, and in fact the last rhinoceros in the Caprivi was taken out of the area by the SADF, but it is unlikely the game was removed in such vast quantities as is locally claimed.

people were not consulted, a Khwe informant pointed to the Ministry of Correctional Services' establishment of a prison farm near Popa Falls in 1996. The prison farm falls in a prime potential tourism area of the West Caprivi Game Park (see chapter 4).

At the moment we are not looking after West Caprivi because there are so many different [government] ministries working here and so many different people have moved here. But if it was only Khwe, like in the old days, we would know how to look after the land (Khwe man, Mutc'iku).

All Khwe respondents regarded wildlife as an important asset that gives evidence of the healthy state of the bush: 'If there is no wildlife on your land, the land is worth nothing. But with animals, the land can be useful' (Khwe headman, Omega).

Their vision of the future includes an increase, and continued presence, of wildlife in West Caprivi. But this vision does not preclude the desire to own livestock and have large fields: 'It's better to live with animals, and there must be many trees that are not chopped down. But there must be place for all three: people, animals and farming' (Old Khwe woman, Omega).

### **3.6 Benefiting from wildlife: local attitudes and contestations**

Neither Khwe nor Mbukushu have ownership rights over wild animals, and both experience the hazards of living in close proximity to wildlife. There are occasional human deaths and livestock losses after encounters with wild animals, and elephants frequently raid fields. Both Khwe and Mbukushu recognise that wildlife has economic value, even though they have little evidence of the financial benefits of wild animals. But the commonality between Khwe and Mbukushu regarding wildlife ends there. In many discussions about living with wildlife, and living on land designated as a Game Park, I heard sharp distinctions being made between these two ways of living, and that they were a clear marker of the differences between Khwe and Mbukushu.

All the Park's residents regard wild animals as a highly regarded resource. But Khwe and Mbukushu do not value them for the same reasons. Asked whether

they think living with wildlife can bring benefits, both Khwe and Mbukushu almost unanimously respond that wild animals are a potential economic resource. Tourism, meat, the sale of live game, leather crafts and employment opportunities (offered by the MET, tour operators, trophy hunters and conservation NGOs) were listed as potential benefits by most Khwe and Mbukushu respondents. Only one Mbukushu respondent said that wildlife could bring no benefits, explaining that, though he has heard claims that wildlife can bring benefits, he has never seen any materialise. What he does see, he said, are elephants, hippos and buffalo eating his crops, a sentiment shared by a Khwe resident of Chetto village: 'I know that people can get benefits from wildlife, but it is not enough to know. We keep hearing about benefits and keep telling the community this, but we see nothing' (Khwe man, Chetto).

Despite the almost universal recognition of the value of wildlife, Khwe respondents reported that its value goes far beyond financial gain, while Mbukushu respondents saw game simply as potentially of economic benefit. The majority of Khwe respondents stressed the cultural and educational significance of exposing future generations to wildlife and their desire to have wildlife near to their villages. In contrast, a young group of exclusively Mbukushu men I interviewed thought it was important to be able to see wild animals, but preferably in an enclosed area far from their homesteads and fields.

For Khwe then, wild animals are an important cultural resources. Wildlife symbolises a time when they recall that food was abundant, when the oppression they say is inflicted on them by others, such as the government and those they know as Mbukushu, was not yet evident. Wild animals thus represent an autonomy they say their forefathers experienced. It has become a symbol of their Khweness, of their distinctiveness. Their loss of decision-making powers over and ownership of wildlife thus represents the domination they feel from outside agencies such as the state.

For Mbukushu, there is no need to draw on wildlife as a symbol that represents prior times, and no political necessity to emphasize their distinctive identity. Mbukushu respondents explained that, although they appreciate certain wild

resources found in the bush, they regard living from the bush as a sign of backwardness and their farming lifestyle as progressive. The Mbukushu traditional authority is recognised by the state, whilst that of the Khwe has been denied formal recognition by government (see Chapter 4). Mbukushu status as Namibian citizens is not marked by the kind of government discrimination that Khwe say they experience. Compared to the Khwe, Mbukushu are far better represented at local and national government level (there is currently not a single Khwe representative at regional or national government level), and the majority of Mbukushu support the SWAPO ruling party. However, they do not support all the government does. For example, a number of the Mbukushu respondents complained about the state-enforced conservation status of West Caprivi. But such dissatisfaction does not imply the acute sense of disempowerment and loss of autonomy that it does for Khwe, for whom the symbolic capital value of wild animals has increased concurrently with their loss of control over these resources, and of other decision-making powers in their lives.

While recognising that wildlife has the potential to bring financial benefits, Mbukushu feel that potential is overshadowed by the disadvantages of living in a Game Park. That Khwe are more tolerant of wildlife than Mbukushu is a broadly held idea discussed in both Khwe and Mbukushu circles. When expressed and confirmed in interactions between them it helps strengthen the categorisation of Khwe as a distinct and separate category, and indeed as Bushmen.

The following anecdote demonstrates the differing perspectives of Khwe and Mbukushu towards wildlife. At a Mutc'iku community meeting, where issues of living in a Game Park were being discussed, Khwe participants referred insistently to wildlife as 'our cattle', and of how they had always lived amongst wild animals: 'We know some people are unhappy, but if you live next to your 'cattle kraal' it is good. It means your own belongings are nearby' (Old Khwe man, Mashambo). An Mbukushu elder gave a different perspective by drawing an analogy between the expectation that people live with wildlife and a man forcing his wife to sleep in the cattle kraal at night. For most Mbukushu, wildlife represents the old hardships of living in the bush from which they believe people

ought to progress to settlements and farming (cf Alexander and McGregor, 1996). For them, wild animals should be kept behind a fence as a potential resource, with people remaining on the other side of that fence.

For Khwe, in contrast, living in a proclaimed conservation area is seen as problematic only because so little game is left. Various people exasperatedly told me that the MET is inefficient in controlling the Game Park and managing the bush because its agents had not prevented in-migration (to Mutc'iku and Omega) and have failed to prevent people indiscriminately chopping trees and burning the bush at the wrong time of the year. The comment of an Mbukushu woman living in the recently established village of Poyo Poyo, on the boundary of the Buffalo Core Area, that the Mbukushu are living peacefully in the Park and are not bothered by the MET, is precisely the kind of evidence Khwe residents use to indicate the MET's inadequacy in preventing the movement of people into, and the establishment of large scale agriculture and animal husbandry in the Park. The most negative aspect of living in a Game Park for most West Caprivi Khwe is not the presence, but rather the lack of wildlife.

The only concrete evidence that Khwe cite of the area's conservation status is the MET-imposed ban on hunting in, and free access to, the Core Areas. Other day-to-day activities continue as before, although a sense of dispossession and of local people's lack of decision-making authority at state level is acute. For Khwe, the notion of ownership of the land comes from being able to use that land, be it for foraging or farming. Tenure is thus understood as the ability to settle and have access to the food, medicinal, building and other natural resources to be found in the Park. For the Khwe, therefore, living in a Game Park or National Park is not a bind, as long as they are allowed continued access to local natural resources.

### **3.7 Loss of autonomy and categorisation as Khwe: a threat to the MET plan's implementation**

The MET plan has the potential to improve opportunities in West Caprivi. But to Khwe residents, its current form represents decision-making at state level that

takes little account of their opinions and aspirations. Decisions to preclude the right to stock cattle in designated multiple-use areas, and to fence villages to prevent the influx of cattle into such areas, underline the Khwe's sense of loss of autonomy, particularly in relation to the MET plan. Other aspects of the plan also confirmed for my Khwe respondents that, in the eyes of government, they had minimal status. The following discussion overviews some of those concerns relating to their loss of autonomy that those calling themselves Khwe have experienced, following the MET plan.

A small Khwe village, comprising one extended family household and named Doppies after the then SADF camp nearby, is situated in the core of the Kwando Core Wildlife Area. Residents of this village say that the area now classified as the Kwando Core Area has always been part of a larger living area within which they were intermittent foragers and farmers. Previously most Doppies residents left the village in the rainy season to grow crops in nearby villages outside the present Core Wildlife Area boundaries, returning to the village in the dry season. In 1999, however, the residents of Doppies received a letter from the MET instructing them to vacate their homes because, the letter said, the high status of a Core Area does not allow human settlement other than by nature conservation staff. They refused, saying that Doppies is their home and that their presence there had no adverse effect on the game.

But soon thereafter, they had almost all fled to Botswana. This followed a secession attempt, by rebels of the Caprivi Liberation Movement in the town of Katima Mulilo, over a hundred kilometres from Doppies. The Namibian Defence Force responded with a heavy-handed 'mopping up' campaign throughout Caprivi. Fearing both the Caprivi rebels and the Namibian Defence Force, most Doppies residents fled, some to Botswana where they were housed at the Dukwe refugee camp, others to the two West Caprivi settlements of Omega III and Mashambo where they remain today. The *Dixa //ae* (settlement owner) of Doppies, now in Omega III, has explained to me that he wants his family to return to their long-settled Doppies homes to prevent outsiders from poaching there.

Significantly, for the broader group of people calling themselves Khwe, MET's eviction order to Doppies' residents is further evidence of the all pervasive nature of the state, and of a spiralling process of land dispossession.

It thus constitutes but one example of many leading to a sense of dispossession that Khwe have about the Kwando Core Area. At a number of meetings, MET officials have claimed that the Core Areas are to become 'the most important wildlife areas'.<sup>35</sup> Residents who have long lived in and used what has become the Kwando Core Area now fear that the MET will completely exclude them from the whole area, a fear reinforced by the fact that the MET plan makes no mention of Khwe beneficiaries in the Kwando Core Area. This omission has caused massive discontent among West Caprivi residents who regard it as another sign that other people are favoured by government.

According to the MET plans, both Core Areas are destined for tourism with a number of community-owned campsites being developed along the river. The plan proposes that, in the Kwando Core Area, the present residents of the east river bank, which falls outside of the Core Wildlife Area and the Park, will earn benefits from the Core Area. In correspondence with MET, the Khwe Traditional Leadership have requested that residents of the Park also be acknowledged as claimants to the Core Area and be granted rights to establish a campsite at Goe Ca (*Khwedam* for 'cattle water'), a pan local Khwe know as a former settlement.

The Buffalo Core Wildlife Area has also come to be regarded as a potent symbol of Khwe dispossession and loss of rights to self-sufficiency. According to the MET Vision document, plans for the Buffalo Core Area include the building of a tourist lodge, ostensibly to benefit all people neighbouring the Core Area. They include residents of West Caprivi in the Mutc'iku area, and those living on the western bank of the Kavango river. Both Khwe and Mbukushu respondents were adamant that employment opportunities and other financial benefits from the

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<sup>35</sup> Statements of this kind were made by an MET warden at an IRDNC Quarterly Planning Meeting in early 2001; to a Khwe delegation who visited the MET office in Katima Mulilo, the administrative centre of the Caprivi Region, in September 2001; and to me by a MET ranger at the Buffalo Core Area in 2001.

proposed development should be granted exclusively to Game Park residents, who have endured great crop and livestock losses to wildlife, and who, unlike the eastern neighbours of the Park, have not benefited from employment opportunities already offered by a MET-run campsite and a number of privately owned lodges established on the eastern river bank of the Kavango.

The MET thus now finds itself in the predicament that all neighbouring residents (and not only those who have long resided in the Game Park) are becoming hostile to the Park and engaging in illegal hunting if they do not feel they are also benefiting from the conservation area. We need to note, in addition, that the residents of the Park see themselves as the sole legitimate potential beneficiaries of developments in the Buffalo Core Area of the proposed Bwabwata National Park. For Mbukushu residents of the Park, the Buffalo Core Area holds the potential for employment and financial security. For Khwe residents, the value of Buffalo, or Dinga Goma as they call it, is both economic and cultural. Those classified as Khwe regard Dinga Goma as a significant symbol of Khwe cultural heritage and history, and their exclusion from the area is seen, therefore, as a significant loss of autonomy.<sup>36</sup> Maintaining some claim on Dinga Goma is thus equated with the maintenance of Khwe identity, of the land and resources that represent that identity, and therefore, of their right to exist as a legitimate and recognised first nation population.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter confirms the persistence of stereotypes about differences between Khwe and their neighbours. But it also identifies some of the contradictions inherent in such attitudes. The Mbukushu, while they portray themselves, and are portrayed by others, as cultivators and herders who are intolerant of living in the

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<sup>36</sup> A further sign of their escalating sense of loss of control over the place where they live, and of the lifestyles they choose, is the government prohibition on the use of a path running through Dinga Goma (Buffalo Core Area), that has long been used by Khwe to visit relatives in Botswana. For Khwe residents of West Caprivi, the border is already an arbitrary construct that has divided them from access to their broader food collection areas and to their families on the other side. The fence simply reinforces the sense of government insensitivity to their lifestyles, because travelling to the official border post at Mohembo is an expensive detour. A route between Mutc'iku and the nearest village in Botswana that could normally be walked in less than a day becomes a trip of fifty kilometres or more, now requiring transport fares that most people cannot afford.

bush with wild animals, share with the Khwe a long history of subsisting, at least in part, from resources found in the bush. The Khwe, by contrast, portray themselves and are portrayed by others as depending heavily from the bush for their livelihoods and as attaching immense cultural significance to wild animals. Yet they are also highly dependent on cultivation and farming for their livelihoods - almost as much so as their Mbukushu neighbours.

These differences between Khwe and Mbukushu are reflected in turn in the ways in which they have respectively reacted to the MET's land use and conservation proposal for West Caprivi. Both Khwe and Mbukushu residents recognise the potential for economic benefits in the Park plans. But only Khwe associate the plan with a broader process of discrimination that they feel they experience from the Namibian government. The majority of Khwe are materially poor. They have almost no political power and little formal education. Many youth express the desire to become integrated into mainstream Namibian society. But most adults do not see a space for their voices to be heard in Namibia's current political climate. For them, Khwe identity, and the land and natural resources they associate with this identity, can be used to maintain their distinctiveness and perhaps to regain the autonomy and decision-making ability that they have seen slipping from their grasp. The MET Vision, in their eyes, does not take into account the aspirations and livelihood choices and combinations of the Khwe majority among the Park's residents. The loss of opportunity to strategise for their livelihoods by sometimes depending on the bush and its resources, and other times on cattle and agricultural resources, is asserted by Khwe respondents who describe the importance of maintaining access to both resources interchangeably. Khwe thus relate the plan to their ever diminishing autonomy in West Caprivi and to the marginalisation they feel they experience from the state. The MET Vision then, instead of contributing to the 'equity' envisaged in the plan, implicitly reinforces their categorisation as Khwe and ignores, indeed reinforces, their marginalisation, thus relegating them to long-term inferior status and, in all likelihood, to ever-greater poverty.

## CHAPTER 4

### LEADERSHIP STRUGGLES AND THE REINFORCEMENT OF DIFFERENCE

#### 4.1 Introduction: Khwe resistance to state autonomy

'The idea that states – modern nation-states included – should have a monopoly of force or control is so far from the reality that it is only surprising that it took so long before it became recognised by anthropologists' (Claessen, in Skalnik, 1989: vii).

Modernist administrations struggle to deal with local systems of governance that do not fit conventional models of modern governance (Beinart, 1987, Isaacman et al., 1996, Skalnik, 1989). In West Caprivi, the Namibian state has dealt with the Khwe Traditional Authority, with its flexible, inclusive, consensus-seeking style of governance, by refusing to grant the body any official government recognition. Instead the national government has chosen to validate the claims of a chief, who classifies himself as Mbukushu, to rule all West Caprivi, and to deny the legitimacy of the Khwe Traditional Authority in what Khwe observers regard as an obviously party-politically motivated move. The Khwe traditional authority, the leadership body with the greatest local support in West Caprivi, has a history of supporting the DTA (Democratic Turnhalle Alliance) party, whilst the Mbukushu traditional authority backs the ruling SWAPO party.

Political considerations and lack of government recognition for the Khwe traditional authority have not however, undermined the extent of local legitimacy for the Khwe leadership body. The majority of those who regard themselves as Khwe see the state's imposition of Mbukushu leadership over them as state-sanctioned oppression and discrimination against them as Khwe. Their antagonism to Mbukushu rule and to the state, and their effort to gain official recognition for their leadership has become as much a symbolic quest for autonomy as a struggle for what they regard as emancipation from Mbukushu overlordship. Resistance to the state's power to delegate local authority in the various ways it has in West Caprivi (see below), is reflected in the Khwe

traditional leadership's strong local support in the region, despite the fact that its Traditional Authority has not been recognised or accredited by the national government. Other effects of government efforts to maintain some measure of control over local governance through the Mbukushu traditional authority include an increase in Khwe self-perception that they constitute an oppressed minority group, and a process (outlined below) whereby Khwe reinforce their distinctiveness and claim that they constitute a separate and bounded social category.

The lack of government recognition for the Khwe traditional authority also has practical implications for local development initiatives and processes. It is likely that national political pressure will force the MET, in attempting to implement its plan for the region, to consult more with Mbukushu leaders than with what its officers regard as self-appointed and illegitimate Khwe leaders, even though they do have the support of the majority of West Caprivi's residents. One might therefore predict that most Khwe, who are likely to have been afforded less of a voice in the implementation of the MET Vision for West Caprivi, will associate the plan with the increasing entrenchment and control of outside authorities, in this case the government and the Mbukushu Traditional Authority, over the region's land and people. As a result, as I will demonstrate below, there is a strong possibility that the majority of West Caprivi's population now living in the heart of what the MET envisages will be the Bwabwata National Park will mount significant local resistance to the implementation of the plan. And a likely consequence will be disastrous results for both the development and the conservation agenda of the MET plan

#### **4.2 'Khwe do not have leaders': Khwe traditional authority and the state**

When Namibian President, Sam Nujoma, visited West Caprivi's Omega village in March 2001, the majority Khwe residents were touched that the President had made the effort to come to address them at the height of a period when many had suffered landmine injuries and attacks from UNITA bandits as a result of spill-overs of the Angolan war into the region. But the thrust of the President's address

turned out to have little to do with the security situation. Instead, in the words of a Khwe resident of Omega, he 'cut our wounds even deeper' when he told the large gathering, most of them Khwe, that Khwe do not have a history of self-leadership and that the Khwe Traditional Authority is null and void in the eyes of government. The Khwe people, said the President, fall under the Mbukushu Traditional Authority (Khwe man, Omega, March 2001). According to the President, I was told, the Khwe are answerable to the Mbukushu chief, Erwin Mbambo, even though he has never resided in West Caprivi and, as I indicate below, has only limited legitimacy as chief even among Mbukushu people (Inambao, 2001c) and almost none amongst Khwe people. Moreover, the majority of West Caprivi's residents, most of them Khwe, regard themselves as the subjects of a Khwe Traditional Authority. Irrespective of who occupies the office of Mbukushu chief, they have little regard for that authority as one to which they should be subject or pay allegiance.

Some months after the President's speech in Omega, his statement regarding the Khwe leadership was made official when the Minister of Local and Regional Government and Housing, responsible for issues of traditional leadership in Namibia, sent a letter to the Khwe acting chief. In the letter he said that he had been mandated by the President to inform the Khwe leaders that 'the area claimed by the Khoe (sic) community traditionally in terms of chieftainship belongs to the Mbukushu traditional authority' and that 'there is no reason why a Khoe traditional authority must be established.' However, he conceded, 'the Khoe community is allowed to practice their culture, customs and language freely' (letter from Dr. N. Iyambo, the Minister of Regional and Local Government and Housing to Thaddeus Chedau, the Khwe Acting Chief, 18 July 2001).

This statement appears to contradict the Namibian Traditional Authorities Act which defines a 'traditional community' as 'an endogamous social grouping of persons comprising of families deriving from exogamous clans which share a common ancestry, language, cultural heritage, customs and traditions, recognises a common traditional authority and inhabits a common communal area'

(Republic of Namibia, Traditional Authorities Act No. 17 of 1995, Sec 1). According to the Act, each such traditional community has the right to have its own traditional authority, recognised and paid by government.

All contemporary Khwe respondents agree with colonial correspondence where Khwe, referred to there as Barakwengo, are described as having 'a language of their own, customs of their own and their own mode of livelihood' (letter from the Office of the Native Commissioner in Rundu, 26 October 1953, to the Chief Native Commissioner in Windhoek, South West Africa administration, in High Court of Namibia proceedings, 1997). Khwe, they say, speak Khwedam, a completely different language from Thimbukushu, which is spoken by Mbukushu people. They have customs and traditions that have indeed been moulded and changed, and been influenced by neighbours, but that nonetheless remain distinctive from most customs and traditions regarded as Mbukushu in origin. And they can trace their ancestry using Khwe family names.

Khwe informants who believe that the Traditional Authorities Act can accommodate acknowledgement and formal recognition of a Khwe leadership body have strong reasons for wanting their traditional authority recognised by the Namibian state. Traditional authority structures are powerful institutions in independent Namibia. The leaders of traditional authorities, regarded as chiefs, are officially recognised by the state and are granted the opportunity to sit on the Council of Traditional Leaders, a committee whose members advise the President. Government departments and various other organisations consult chiefs and headmen about most local land-use, planning, legal and other decisions, especially those affecting people under that particular leadership body's jurisdiction. Traditional ('tribal') courts are locally given the mandate to govern the resolution of marriage, inheritance and land use disputes, and have the power to hand down heavy penalties to certain categories of offenders. A significant source of income for traditional authorities with official recognition is the salaries that the Ministry of Local and Regional Government and Housing provides to chiefs and to a specified number of headmen in each traditional authority structure. These salaried officials are referred to in the legislation as

chiefs' traditional councillors.

In the eyes of many of my Khwe respondents, lack of Namibian government recognition for their Khwe traditional authority effectively denies Khwe people any form of state recognition as a self-defined group of people with similar rights to those of other self-defined groups in the country. For Khwe in West Caprivi, the quest for state recognition of their leadership body has become symbolic of their efforts to make their voices heard by the government and to integrate themselves, as a separate identifiable group, into the broader Namibian society. Simultaneously, that quest is symbolic of the process they persist in pursuing to maintain some sense of their own autonomy and authority regarding decisions affecting the region where they live. The government's refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of their leaders is understood by most Khwe respondents to be part of a government plan to 'destroy the Khwe people', as punishment for their allegiance with the SADF during Namibia's liberation struggle, and their support for the DTA since independence. Discussion of the recent background of the Khwe leadership allows for a broader interpretation of the government's reluctance to officially recognise the Khwe traditional authority.

#### **4.3 Khwe leadership: Governance by consensus and authority from the ground up**

According to a commission of inquiry assigned the duty of demarcating homelands for Blacks by South Africa's South West Africa administration in the early 1960s, 'any form of government is wholly unknown' to Khwe, referred to by the Commission as Barakwengo Bushmen (Republic of South Africa, 1962: 99).<sup>37</sup> However, Khwe informants who remember this period maintain that they have always had leaders. These leaders, known as *dixa // 'ae* (settlement owner), controlled access to land and resources in and around a settlement, represented people of the settlement in encounters with outsiders, and mediated conflicts amongst residents in the settlement. *Dixa // 'ae* were recognised as leaders if they were regarded by members of their settlement's community as adequately

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<sup>37</sup> A 1940 publication, *African Political Systems* (eds. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard), raised the issue of different forms of political and leadership systems that do not conform to usual

experienced or as personally qualified to fulfil the above duties (Boden, 2002: 2). Genealogical rules qualified certain individuals for leadership roles, most leaders having inherited their position from a classificatory brother or a classificatory nephew or sister's son.<sup>38</sup> However, the personal characteristics of an individual to fulfil the demands of office, such as experience and knowledge, were regarded as most significant in qualifying someone for a leadership position (Boden, 2002: 8).

The leadership system then reported as being used by Khwe was presumably not formal and structured enough for the South West Africa administration. As a consequence, in 1953, the administration recognised only two Khwe chiefs, one who represented the *//xom Khwe* ('river people', Khwe living along the Kavango River) and the other the *//xo Khwe* ('dry people', Khwe living in the central and eastern parts of the Caprivi) (interviews with Khwe informants, July 2000). Whilst their status in the eyes of the colonial administration was thereby officially recognised, both these chiefs had been locally recognised and respected leaders previously. Respondents remember that these two chiefs, each of whom worked with a team of local Khwe headmen and advisors, were widely recognised and their leadership respected (Brown and Jones, 1994: 48).

By the late 1980s, Khwe in West Caprivi were living in close proximity to one another, and in large army camps, as a result of South African military occupation. By extension, group leadership became even more centralised. According to Suzman (2001: 62), early centralisation of the Khwe traditional authority structure had also been a response to increasing pressure from neighbours, particularly Mbukushu. In 1987, three Khwe candidates who were either genealogically in line to succeed the previous leaders or who were regarded as personally qualified for the post, stood for election as *//'axa* – 'captain' or chief of all Khwe in West Caprivi. This was during a large community gathering in Omega, where most Khwe lived at the time (*/Useb,*

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expectations. This text would have been useful for the *volkekundige* advisers to the commission to understand the Khwe leadership system.

<sup>38</sup> Boden (2002: 8) describes classificatory brothers in Khwe kin terminology as being full brothers, as well as the sons of two full brothers or two full sisters, and the sons of all people who call each other brothers or sisters.

2001). Kipi George, classificatory sister's son of one of the two previously recognised Khwe chiefs, was chosen.<sup>39</sup>

The new chief immediately took on a leading role in advocating aboriginal rights issues for the Khwe, and even addressed the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations in Geneva when he was acting on the board of the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) in 1997. In the time he spent with WIMSA, a Windhoek-based advocacy organisation for San people and their rights, Kipi George became sensitised to development and human rights issues as they pertained to his own followers, especially the scant government recognition of his status and, by extension, that of the people he represented.

With the decline in the security situation in the Caprivi in 1998 (see chapter 1), Kipi George fled to Botswana where he stayed at a United Nations High Commission for Refugees camp until just before his death in 2000. Since then, the security situation in West Caprivi has precluded large gatherings of the kind needed to elect a new chief. However, an acting-chief, Thaddeus Chedau, who was appointed at a Khwe gathering in Mutc'iku (Khwe informants, June 2001), has carried out some of the responsibilities of the //’axa.

Felton (1998) has described the structures and procedures used now by the Khwe traditional authority. The //’axa, she explains, has a series of Khwe headmen under his authority. These headmen are in practice the equivalent of the *dixa* //’ae, although their duties have changed along with changing economic, social and political conditions (Boden, 2002: 5). Each headman is chosen by consensus at a village meeting, with smaller villages represented by one headman, and two or more in larger settlements. The headmen fulfil a variety of administrative functions including dispute resolution, the setting and collection of fines for misdemeanours, and representing their villages at Khwe leadership gatherings and in meetings with those organisations and government officials that recognise

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<sup>39</sup> The Khwe kin term for a man's sister's son and for a man's grandson are both *n//gori* (G. Boden, May 2002. pers comm.), with the result that many of my respondents also referred to Kipi George as the grandson of Ndumba, one of the former Khwe chiefs.

that they need to work with the institution and its members and therefore do consult with them. The //’*axa* is tasked with guiding the headmen, who can refer cases to him (Felton, 1998: 3).

Khwe informants with whom I discussed the situation were quick to point out that Khwe have always had their own leaders, and that distinct positions of authority are, and have long been recognised. In order to offer evidence of the legitimacy of their present leadership structure, respondents readily listed the roles and responsibilities of their chief and headmen in ways that almost reflect the structure of neighbouring people’s traditional authorities. But closer analysis of the Khwe leadership structure reveals that, in practice, it is very different from that of its Mbukushu and other neighbours.

Each Khwe village has a headman who is responsible for natural resource use and management, conflict resolution, and interaction with outsiders, whether government officials or Namibian Defence Force soldiers stationed in the area. These headmen have been chosen either by genealogy and/or because they have shown exceptional personal characteristics. The headman’s leadership is continuously scrutinised by his Khwe subjects who are quick to point out when he has become too self-important or makes decisions without obtaining consensus from the larger group. Jealousy and rivalry between headmen and potential incumbents is rife, and villagers occasionally hold community meetings to either confirm the leadership of a certain headman, or to put another person in his place. For example, In Omega III, between 1997 and 1999, I heard about frequent disputes between two headmen who were each considered by certain families to be headman of that village.

Headmen also answer to the chief, who is also subjected to continuous scrutiny and criticism, and are expected to meet with the chief in order to discuss issues of broad significance. The centralised Khwe leadership structure, with its chief and headmen, resembles neighbouring chieftainships, such as that of the Mbukushu. But Khwe leadership, unlike that of its neighbours, places utmost importance on the value of every Khwe person’s contribution to decision making rather than

relying on the representative powers of elected leaders. A good chief or headman is thus one who can display leadership qualities without compromising the attainment of group consensus in decision making.

Having spent some years schooling in Botswana, and living near to the Kavango region with its rigid leadership structures, Kipi George, the Khwe chief, was familiar with the formalities of traditional leadership as expected by the Namibian government. But his position as chief of the Khwe did not provide him with the same kinds of relative wealth or status that were the mark of neighbouring chieftainships. Lee (1990: 242-245) has argued that there are established social levelling mechanisms among San people, and that they result in a reduction of social and material inequalities and ensure that no one becomes too rich or powerful. They also ensure sharing, extensive consultation, and consensus seeking. In small groups of people this is achieved relatively easily. But to share materially, to consult effectively and to attain consensus in a population of some thousands is a difficult task.

In the eyes of Khwe informants, the existence of a Khwe leadership structure is indisputable because it is there for anyone to see in daily operation. But its relative informality and the inclusiveness in the way it operates is foreign to Namibian government officials who tend, as most modernist administrators and developers do, to associate traditional authority with strict, rigid and exclusive structures. In most Khwe villages, the headman is indeed a well-recognised figure whose status is rarely disputed. Yet, whilst the headman may be an authority figure, his status depends on broad consultation and on maintaining the humility required to seek out and include the views of all villagers in decision-making. A good Khwe leader then, does not promote his status or show ambition, but rather promotes the larger group and the value and importance of each individual within that group. At most leadership meetings, a core group of headmen is present and may appear to dominate deliberations. But elders, educated youngsters, and anyone else who is interested may join the group and have as much opportunity to speak, and have their views taken seriously, as the headmen. In this way, every single Khwe individual, whether young or old, man

or woman is able to contribute to discussions and to influence decision-making. In West Caprivi, all headmen who are locally recognised as village leaders are men although I have been told that women are not exempt from this position. Women participate in decision-making processes and discussions, but they say their domestic duties prevent them from attending as many meetings as men. Men insist that women are not excluded at leadership meetings and they are encouraged to participate, but there are more men than women at most meetings, and the women are usually far less vocal than their male counterparts. However, I have attended some meetings where women have aired their views confidently. I have also found, from attending community meetings throughout the region, that Khwe women are far more active in participation and decision making at meetings than their Mbukushu neighbours.

As described above, it is thus difficult for Khwe leaders to draw up a final and conclusive list of who their leaders are. Local people recognise the headmen who have distinct roles and responsibilities in each village. But to simplify local leadership by listing a few people as headmen or councillors has the potential to offend others or to make certain individuals seem too important. For the same reasons, Kipi George was recognised as the overall chief of the Khwe, but his status was never displayed with pomp and ceremony, and his economic and social position never rose higher than that of his subjects. It was by maintaining a direct link with his subjects, and by consulting with as many of them as possible, that Kipi George's local legitimacy and authority as chief was strengthened. I often noticed how Kipi George's popularity in certain villages was directly linked to the amount of informal contact that he made with that village. In Mashambo, for example, it was not through formal meetings, but through visits to his wife's family who lived there, that Kipi George came to be respected.

In 1998, WIMSA and CASS<sup>40</sup> facilitated a workshop in West Caprivi. It aimed to collect a list of the names of all locally recognised Khwe headmen in order to submit it to the Ministry of Local and Regional Government and Housing (MLRGH) as part of an application for official government recognition of the

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<sup>40</sup> The Centre for Applied Social Sciences, based at the University of Namibia in Windhoek. 70

Khwe Traditional Authority. In order to satisfy government requirements as spelled out in the Traditional Authorities Act, the traditional leaders of an area ought to be divided into set categories. The Act distinguishes senior traditional councillors from traditional councillors (which are in effect simply different terms for local leaders that in West Caprivi are called headmen or *dixa //’ae*).

After independence in 1990, when traditional authorities were first being registered, Chief Kipi George had submitted a list of names to the MLRGH to fill these positions. Most of the candidates he proposed were young and literate, characteristics that the chief regarded as necessary for an effective working relationship with government. Yet in 1998, when asked by a CASS researcher<sup>41</sup> to name the headmen who comprised the Khwe traditional authority, the chief had given a different list of names from those he had listed for submission to the MLRGH. The WIMSA/CASS workshop, called to try to resolve these apparent inconsistencies, stimulated heated discussions about the differences between elders, councillors and headmen, as well as about who has the characteristics and support to be a headman or councillor and who does not. There was confusion among participants who felt that the locally recognised headmen, most of whom are illiterate, should retain their status as village leaders whilst younger, more confident and literate men and women should take the lead in discussions with government officials. Most of those present at the workshop (including a disproportionately high number of Mutc’iku residents - the workshop was held in that settlement) ended up being listed as headmen, creating yet another list, one that was inconsistent with both the earlier two. Had the workshop been held in Omega, then it is more than likely that more old men from Omega would have been present and, such is the fluid nature of Khwe leadership politics, it is they who would likely have been listed as the Khwe headmen.

Another example of the flexible nature of Khwe leadership can be found in a case of two Khwe headmen of Omega in West Caprivi who agreed to work with the Mbukushu chief as headmen in his administration. In 1998, the Mbukushu chief, Erwin Mbambo, called a meeting at Omega and invited the two prominent

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<sup>41</sup> Silke Felton, a researcher with the Centre for Applied Social Sciences of the University of Namibia, in 1998.

and locally recognised Khwe headmen there to collaborate with him and perform the duties of headmen under his traditional authority body. Both agreed to do so once they were assured that they would be remunerated. If they worked for him, they were told by the Mbukushu chief, they would receive salaries for the work they were doing. Indeed, as they told me later, the only reason they had been willing to work with Mbambo was because, until then, they had never been paid for their time-consuming responsibilities as Khwe headmen. But, they explained further, they had really wanted to continue working for the Khwe Traditional Authority that they believed should be recognised by the government. Having waited in vain for many years for such recognition to be granted, and with their families starving at the time, they were meantime willing to do almost anything to provide their children with food and had accepted Mbambo's offer.

When the situation became known amongst those who had long constituted themselves as the Khwe Traditional Authority, and amongst whom the two had counted themselves as members, they were officially banned, as defectors to Mbambo's camp, from ever again participating in a Khwe leadership meeting. Yet some months later they decided to leave the Mbukushu Traditional Authority, realising, they explained to me, that what they had done constituted betrayal of their own people. And, when they had appeared at a Khwe leadership meeting to explain themselves, they described how their poverty and their desire to voice Khwe concerns in the Mbambo camp had led them to accept the Mbukushu chief's offer. They publicly apologised for having co-operated with the Mbukushu chief, and were promptly welcomed back, not only into the community of Khwe, but as Khwe headmen.

Despite the fact that the two men just discussed reneged on their commitment to the Mbukushu chief when they felt the opprobrium of their Khwe peers, another two headmen who say they are Khwe - both are from Mutc'iku village - continue to work as Khwe representatives at the Mbukushu traditional authority. When I discussed this situation with one of them, who has previously served as a headman with the Khwe Traditional Authority, he explained to me that, even though he now works with Chief Mbambo, he believes that the Khwe Traditional

Authority should be recognised by government. As with the Omega headmen, he said, his apparent change of allegiance to the Mbambo camp was a practical one – his years of working as a Khwe headman on the Khwe traditional authority had not provided him with any income and, with his family hungry, he had agreed to occupy a headman's office in Mbambo's administration.

Evidence of this kind suggests that, even if they have agreed to work with Mbambo as chief, most Khwe headmen, like the majority of Khwe in West Caprivi, do not support him as their leader. Most regard the officially unrecognised Khwe traditional authority as the only legitimate leadership body in the area. Yet, in order to provide for the basic needs of their families, some are willing to play the role of Khwe headmen in Mbambo's Mbukushu traditional authority structure.

I have shown that historical evidence (Brown and Jones, 1994, /Useb, 2001), academic research (Boden, 2002, Felton 1998, 2000, Suzman, 2001) and local practice confirm the existence of a Khwe traditional authority body which has the support of the majority residents of West Caprivi. But, for Namibia's modernist government, the Khwe traditional authority body's failure to conform to conventional models of traditional authority, primarily a consequence of its inclusive and rather flexible leadership style, has been interpreted as proof of the illegitimacy of that structure as properly representative.<sup>42</sup>

#### **4.4 National politics and local governance**

As indicated earlier, a regular topic I heard discussed at many Khwe community and traditional authority meetings I attended was the oppression and discrimination that Khwe felt they experienced from the Namibian government. One way that this discrimination manifests itself, they believed, is in the failure of the government to recognise the Khwe traditional authority because, they claim, of party politics. The government, they say, supports Chief Mbambo because of his loyalty to SWAPO and his rumoured personal relationship with

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<sup>42</sup> Despite their equally non-modernist forms of traditional authority, other San Traditional Authorities (!Xu and Ju/hoan) have been recognised by the Namibian government, thereby fuelling Khwe perceptions of discrimination by the state.

the President. And it disregards the Khwe simply and primarily because of their history of DTA opposition party support.

The reign of Chief Erwin Mbambo of the Mbukushu has been beset by controversy ever since he came to power after independence in 1991. Mbukushu respondents explain that Mbambo was a teacher of many Swapo leading figures in exile, and that that was the reason he was appointed by the SWAPO government, rather than popularly chosen, as is required by the Traditional Authorities Act, to take the chieftainship position. The former Mbukushu chief, Majavero, who is not a SWAPO party supporter, challenged Mbambo's chieftainship in the High Court of Namibia in 1991. Although the court found that neither of them is a legitimate chief since neither had been appointed or elected in terms of the relevant law,<sup>43</sup> Mbambo was inaugurated in July 1991 (N. Tjombe, August, 2001. pers comm.).

By 1999, Mbambo's always quite limited authority was waning, even amongst his Mbukushu subjects. He was alleged to have misappropriated a large amount of money from traditional authority coffers for which he was unable to account (Inambao, 2001c). As a result, two locally organised referendums were held to determine the level of support for his authority amongst Mbukushu. In both referendums, over 90% of those who voted were not in favour of Mbambo. However, the MLRGH refused to accept the results, reflecting what Mbukushu informants told me is a government plot to keep Mbambo in power. As a consequence, the current situation is that Mbambo is not recognised as chief by most of his Mbukushu constituents, even though he continues to be recognised by the state. Strong government backing, such as the MLRGH's declaration that the results of the leadership referendum were invalid, and the President's assertion that Mbambo is not only chief of the Mbukushu, but also of the Khwe, has ensured that he has remained in office.

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<sup>43</sup> This law, The Native Administration Proclamation No 15 of 1928, preceded the Traditional Authorities Act No 17 of 1995.

From the perspective of most Khwe respondents, who are only too well aware that Mbambo does not have the support even of his Mbukushu subjects, by keeping him in office the state is not only maintaining a traditional leader who has little support. It is also imposing the rule of an Mbukushu chief over people who both disassociate themselves, and are externally disassociated, from the Mbukushu label, and have their own leaders whom they believe should be in authority over them. Khwe people are therefore very antagonistic to the Mbukushu chief's asserted right to exercise authority over them.

#### **4.5 Local resistance to state autonomy: the tension lines between national policy and local practice**

Khwe respondents understand the government's refusal to recognise their traditional leadership structure as a direct affront to those who identify themselves as Khwe. They associate the Mbukushu traditional authority's claims of jurisdiction over West Caprivi as a continuation of a long history of Mbukushu oppression of Khwe residents of the area. Stories abound of Khwe having been taken captive as slaves since Mbukushu arrived in the West Caprivi during the 1800s (Suzman, 2001: 55). Felton (1998: 6) reports being told that, until the arrival of the SADF in West Caprivi in the 1970s, Khwe had been tortured and sold as slaves. She also mentions that Khwe residents of West Caprivi claim to know of old people who have suffered such abuse. I too often heard memories recounted of such atrocities. And I also heard how, in the eyes of many local people, both Khwe and Mbukushu, the master-slave relationship of Mbukushu over Khwe has persisted till today. Mbambo's lack of popularity amongst the Mbukushu, and his image amongst many locally stationed government and organisation officials as unreasonable, bad-tempered and difficult to deal with, has certainly strengthened Khwe resolve against him. But this has not led to any organised co-operation between popular Mbukushu and Khwe leaders in expressing their joint resentment towards the government. It seems that this is partly due to the continuing sense of inequality that Khwe feel with respect to the Mbukushu, and to the fact that Mbukushu opponents to Mbambo's rule see little political advantage in allying themselves with Khwe, possibly because they are regarded by the government as enemies of the state and UNITA sympathisers.

Senior Namibia Defence Force personnel have often warned me that Khwe work with UNITA rebels in Angola. Moreover, since 2000 Khwe men have periodically been arrested by the Namibian armed forces on allegations of gun-running or providing UNITA with supplies. In addition, a number of senior government officials have often accused Khwe of working with UNITA at public meetings in West Caprivi and the Kavango region.

For people who see themselves as victims of slavery, the state's imposition of the Mbukushu traditional authority's jurisdiction over West Caprivi confirms their perception that the government views Khwe as a category of almost sub-human beings whose lives can and should be controlled by outsiders. Khwe informants often told me how the government treats them with little more respect and concern than they do the animals in the Game Park. This sentiment has impacted on Khwe attitudes and behaviour in two direct ways. First, a sense of bitterness towards the Namibian government pervades almost all community and leadership meetings. Second, most Khwe are determined to gain recognition for their local leadership body from the state so that they will be able to rule themselves autonomously. Whether such recognition is forthcoming or not, however, they continue to support the Khwe Traditional Authority that they have established for and amongst themselves.

The Khwe's prevailing sense of loss or lack of local autonomy has thus not been met with passive acceptance. Instead, local Khwe people in West Caprivi resist the government by continuing to support the Khwe Traditional Authority. Although their local system of leadership is neither sanctioned nor understood by the state, most Khwe still turn to that body for dispute resolution, for representation in meetings with security forces and organisations working in the area, as well as for local decision-making. The Traditional Authority has resisted its non-recognition by the state through continuing to meet, to consult with local people, and to hold discussions with regional government officials whenever deemed necessary, and whenever locally based government officials allow them to - which is more frequently than might be expected from officials of a government that rejects the Khwe traditional leaders representivity and

legitimacy, a phenomenon that reflects an on-the-ground pragmatism in the process of local administration. Yet Khwe traditional authority requests for an audience with officials at national level have been denied on several occasions and continue to be so denied.

On the ground, it is remarkable how effective the Khwe traditional authority has been in representing local people's needs, despite the lack of official state recognition. Between 2000 and 2002, there was an increase in the numbers of Namibia Defence Force and Special Field Force personnel stationed in the West Caprivi. Soldiers were stationed at most villages, and army bases placed every ten kilometres along West Caprivi's main road. Khwe village headmen often met with the senior army officials at these bases to inform them of village activities, or to request that officers control drinking and disorderly behaviour amongst the troops. The headman of Chetto village, for example, introduced all newcomers to his village to the army officer stationed there, kept the NDF informed of activities in the village and relayed complaints or concerns from civilians about NDF soldiers' behaviour. He also managed to ensure that security force personnel, whose base was situated right next to the village school, did not pass through the school when en route elsewhere, and did not expect schoolchildren to assist them to fetch water, a task soldiers had earlier been calling children from the classrooms to perform for them. Senior army personnel based at Chetto in turn approached the headman with problems they may have had with certain civilians. Chetto's Khwe headman explained to me that, although there was a high turnover in army personnel, he managed to maintain good communication with each incoming group of soldiers and to ensure their orderly behaviour in his village through his policy of regular interaction.

Another example of the effectiveness of Khwe leaders in representing people's concerns in West Caprivi can be found in the regular meetings the headman and other village representatives in Mashambo village have held with the Katima Mulilo-based Education Director regarding requests to establish a school in Mashambo. The low-intensity conflict that had persisted in West Caprivi until 2001, has left almost sixty young children in Mashambo without schooling

facilities, and another ten forced to seek schooling over one hundred kilometres away in Omega. Mashambo's Khwe leadership has thus worked hard and successfully to initiate discussions with local officials of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC) and to canvass their support for the development of a village school. It has also mobilised village residents to build houses for prospective teachers. As a consequence, MBEC has employed four teachers and, since 2001, has begun to install a temporary corrugated-iron structure to house two classrooms.

Clearly then, although local officials of government agencies in West Caprivi must be aware of the Mbukushu Traditional Authority's official jurisdiction over the area, they also recognise that, in practice, the Khwe traditional authority represents local people's needs. This is demonstrated, for example, by local officials of the Ministry of Health and Social Services meeting the Khwe traditional authority to receive requests for health services, and by local officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs fulfilling a request from the Khwe traditional authority to send mobile teams to issue birth certificates in West Caprivi. And I have seen cases disagreements between recipients of drought relief food from the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (MLRR), where MLRR officials have turned to Khwe headmen to advise them, or even to sort out the disputes.

There is thus clearly a disjuncture between the national government's position on the right of Khwe to have their own authority structure, and the practices of the local agents of that government who, pragmatically recognising the effective authority that the Khwe traditional structure exercises, are working with that structure. These on-the-ground practices, by the local officials of government agencies themselves, tend at least implicitly to undermine national government policy. Yet they have also demonstrated to Khwe the effective practical value of their own traditional authority structure and, by doing so, have strengthened Khwe people's resolve to fight for its formal recognition.

One way in which the Khwe Traditional Authority has practically demonstrated its leadership has since become a potent symbol of Khwe resistance. In 1996, development of a community campsite at Popa Falls, known as N//goabaca, commenced.<sup>44</sup> In the same year, the Namibian government's plans to establish a prison farm near the N//goabaca Campsite were opposed by the Khwe Traditional Authority. Khwe leaders did not think that a prison should be built in the West Caprivi Game Park, on land with prime tourism potential near the Kavango River. In addition, they regarded as inappropriate the low-security prison's location alongside an existing school and school hostel. However, with the Mbukushu traditional authority's support, the Divundu Rehabilitation Centre was completed in 1996. Two years later, staff of N//goabaca, by then a popular tourist destination that had created employment for three people, received an eviction notice issued by the Ministry of Prisons, and supported by Chief Mbambo, so that prison farm facilities could be expanded. In a move supported by the large majority of people living in West Caprivi, the Khwe traditional authority, aided by the Legal Assistance Centre, a Namibian human rights organisation, instituted legal proceedings against the Namibian government, to oppose the eviction order. It resulted in an out of court settlement in 1999, where the government allowed the community campsite to continue operating, and agreed to appoint a judicial commission of inquiry to review the status of West Caprivi land as well as of the Khwe Traditional Authority (The Namibian, 21 January, 1999).<sup>45</sup>

By 2002, the promised judicial commission had not yet been constituted, let alone begun to consider the merits of the case (N. Tjombe, 2002, pers comm.<sup>46</sup>). Meanwhile, the MLRGH had assigned the Council of Traditional Leaders,

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<sup>44</sup> N//goabaca Community Campsite was developed in 1997 by IRDNC, in partnership with the Khwe Traditional Authority. The camp, popular amongst 4x4 tourists, belongs to all residents of West Caprivi, and decisions about the camp, and income earned, are made at joint management meetings attended by the Khwe Traditional Authority, the West Caprivi Management Committee and a locally-elected Campsite Management Committee. The camp falls within the West Caprivi Game Park and is thus officially state land managed by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. Permission was obtained from the MET to develop the site.

<sup>45</sup> For more about the case see 'Bushmen Take a Feud to 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Court' (The Christian Science Monitor, 21 November 1997), and 'Kxoe to take land rights fight to court' (The Namibian, 26 June 1997).

<sup>46</sup> N. Tjombe is a human rights lawyer, working for the Legal Assistance Centre, who is representing the Khwe Traditional Authority in their efforts to gain official recognition.

comprising all recognised chiefs in Namibia, the responsibility of reviewing all applications for recognition of traditional authority structures. The Council investigated the Khwe case (Felton, 2000: 10). But the results of the investigation have never been disclosed. In 2001, the Khwe Traditional Authority again turned to the Legal Assistance Centre for help in legal proceedings against the Namibian government, this time in an effort to have its gain traditional authority status formally recognised. But a clogged judiciary has left that case pending, as it still is at the time of writing.

Writing about popular movements and politics in the South Africa's rural Transkei and Eastern Cape during the late 1800s and early 1900s, Beinart (1987) has explained that dominant groups in South Africa justified the exclusion of Blacks from involvement in government by asserting that rural Africans had no concept of political issues, and thus lacked the ability to participate in 'modern' political processes and institutions. As with Khwe in West Caprivi, Blacks living in rural South Africa fought their denial from any effective political rights through developing a local political culture of struggle and resistance to the South African state (Beinart, 1987: 25). Beinart (1987: 29) makes the point, valid for West Caprivi too, that one should not restrict the notion of resistance to understand only large and highly organised movements and processes. Less formal, but equally effective means of resisting subordination, says Beinart, are revealed in people's day-to-day struggles. Isaacman et al. (1996) too have expanded on the notion of local resistance in their discussion of peasant resistance to forced cotton production in Mozambique in the mid-1900s. Peasants, they say, generally failed to mount large-scale opposition which might allow for subsequent detailed historical analysis. Yet they did engage in resistance, even though the aims and importance of peasant protests, which tended to be isolated, covert and often passive, were hard to measure and easy to ignore.

It is similarly almost impossible to systematically measure the scale and effectiveness of Khwe localised struggles against their loss of autonomy to outsiders. The Khwe traditional authority's request that the Legal Assistance

Centre represent them in litigation procedures against the government may be the most confrontational step taken by the Khwe leadership to date. But it is by no means the only manifestation of their resistance to state threats to their autonomy. In the event of local conflict, it is the Khwe traditional authority to which Khwe residents of West Caprivi turn for dispute resolution or the imposition of fines, and not the organs of the national state that are ostensibly tasked with that responsibility. When Khwe residents of West Caprivi request government services such as mobile clinics, it is their Khwe headmen whom they send to Rundu or Katima Mulilo, the two administrative centres for the West Caprivi, to meet with state officials. The government's denial of their legitimacy has also not prevented Khwe headmen from meeting together.

The potency of such subtle forms of resistance, according to Skalnik (1989: 3), is that the 'powerless' are in fact less powerless than is imagined. The people on whom state power is imposed 'have a "power" of knowledge, empathy, consensus, compromise and experience, in other words the "power" of comprehensive participation' (Skalnik, 1989: 3). Skalnik goes on to add that, in instances where people experience a sense of powerlessness, the only strategy they can employ to defuse the imposition of state power, and to preserve their identity and integrity, is to try to outwit the state (Skalnik, 1989: 17).

Instead of accepting a state-imposed traditional leadership, West Caprivi's Khwe residents have strengthened their loyalties to the Khwe traditional authority, a body that the state neither understands nor recognises. Khwe outwit the monopoly of state power by employing what Skalnik (1989) calls 'comprehensive participation', that is the support that the majority of Khwe offer their Khwe leaders, over which the state has no control.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Khwe people's resistance to the state's imposition of Mbukushu leadership has impacted on how they see themselves in relation to those who self-classify as Mbukushu. The alienation of Khwe leaders from state-sanctioned channels of decision making has further entrenched perceptions of difference between Khwe,

who regard themselves as victims of oppression by the government and Mbukushu traditional authority, and Mbukushu, whom most Khwe view as the agents of their suffering. A direct result of Khwe seeing outsiders as making decisions for West Caprivi is that their sense of social and political marginalisation is increased, thereby fuelling their reason to feel that they constitute an alienated and distinct, separate social category.

In late 1999, the MET director, accompanied by various senior MET staff, visited West Caprivi to introduce the MET conservation and tourism plan to local leadership in and neighbouring the area. Both Khwe and Mbukushu leaders attended the meetings and were given an opportunity to express their opinions and concerns. The Mbukushu chief was particularly forceful and vocal in expressing his impressions of the plan, much of which directly contradicted what Khwe leaders said they hoped to achieve from implementation of the plan. For example, when the MET explained that they planned to demarcate some areas for cattle utilisation and others for multiple use, the latter being where people would be allowed to herd small stock but not cattle, the Mbukushu chief pressed for the expansion of exclusive cattle-use zones at the expense of the multiple-use areas.

It is true that many Khwe own cattle while others have ambitions of owning cattle. Yet they are opposed to the expansion of cattle-use zones in the Park because, they say, doing that will limit the areas of land available for wildlife and open up tracts of land for further migration and settlement by farmers who currently live outside the Game Park. But, Khwe leaders explained to me after the meeting they were uncomfortable about expressing their disagreement with chief Mbambo at the meeting. Instead of having taken the opportunity to inform the MET officials publicly of their land-use aspirations, they only complained bitterly about the Mbukushu chief's domination of the meeting, and only when alone and among themselves.

Their discomfort with disagreeing publicly with Mbambo can, I believe, be attributed to a familiar characteristic of Khwe relations between leaders and subjects, and indeed between leaders too. They do not confront one another in

public. Their high regard for consensus-seeking processes (cf. Silberbauer, 1981), added to their experience of years of having been classified as a sub-class of people, together played themselves out in the meeting through Khwe leaders inadvertently alienating themselves from the proceedings and ultimately from the decision - making process. The result, however, was their further marginalisation and a reinforcement of their own and various outsiders' sense that they constitute a distinct social category that is indeed unable to express its interests in policy matters.

In reports on the MET's preliminary consultations with local people about its plans for West Caprivi, Khwe sentiments have thus ended up being overshadowed by the more confident voices of the Mbukushu leadership. Doubtless, the lack of government recognition for the Khwe and, by extension the lack of MET recognition, has helped fuel the apparent reluctance of Khwe leaders to confront MET officials with their views. This was demonstrated in August 2001, when the West Caprivi's (Khwe) Traditional Authority requested an appointment with the Minister of Environment and Tourism to discuss the conservation status of their region. As had happened in other instances when the Khwe traditional authority had attempted to negotiate directly with national government officers, the national MET officials refused to grant the group an audience if it came 'under the auspices of the traditional authority'. According to the MET's letter responding to the Khwe Traditional Authority's request, the MET officials refused because the MET, 'as a government body cannot grant an audience to an authority which is not recognized in terms of the traditional authority act' (letter from T. Erkana, MET Permanent Secretary to the Khwe Traditional Authority, 31 August 2001).

MET officials nonetheless agreed to meet the Khwe delegation as 'citizens and people from West Caprivi'. And so the meeting took place, with the participation of the Khwe traditional leaders. But, as described to me by some Khwe leaders, the MET's denial of the delegation's authority to speak on behalf of other Khwe inhibited them from expressing their positions as representatives of the region's majority population.

Since state policy is that the only traditional leaders that MET is permitted to deal with are those officially recognised by the government, one would then assume that, as policy dictates, at a national level MET will be forced to work through the Mbukushu leadership in future consultations about implementing the MET's management and development plans for West Caprivi. But it would too simplistic to surmise that this translates into an acceptance on the MET's part to work only through Chief Mbambo.

Governments and their agencies are never monolithic. In West Caprivi, disparities between national policy and local practice demonstrate the tension lines that are always present within a state's machinery. The MET was willing to receive a delegation of concerned citizens from West Caprivi, but only as long as it did not represent itself as a traditional authority. This indicates that national government realises that there is a significant constituency in West Caprivi that has to be heard and will not be accessed if the conventional route of working through the Mbukushu authority is the only one used. But national government representatives cannot allow a meeting with that constituency's leaders to be a platform that will allow discussion about MET plans to become an opportunity for locally accepted leaders to claim a right to be recognised as a traditional authority. This is partly because it is not the MET's role to grant such recognition. It is also because of ever-present tensions between ministries and departments of state. Yet, the Khwe leaders who represent the West Caprivi constituency must avail themselves of every opportunity they might get to make such claims, and they cannot afford to let them slip by because of their political style at home. Their main struggle is an 'ethnic' political one that aims to realise their demand to be recognised as legitimate traditional leaders of a legitimately recognised socio-political unit that is different in its needs for resources from others. And to engage in such a struggle they need to play by the rules of the system in which such recognition is contested.

For Khwe, the struggle for increased involvement in the planning of the Bwabwata National Park, as in all other struggles for greater local decision-

making, are thus fused into their general struggle to attain official recognition for their leadership body, and thereby for their right to be recognised as a legitimate 'traditional community'. At present, most of the local people who stand to be directly affected by the MET plans are neither directly involved in the implementation of those plans, nor is there proper opportunity for the leaders they have selected to be directly involved in that process. It is likely, therefore, that resistance, in the form of local opposition to the MET plan will ensue, thereby compromising the local development and conservation goals of the intervention.

I have argued in this chapter that the Namibian government's failure to acknowledge the traditional authority of Khwe people has resulted in the domino effect of exacerbating the Khwe's alienation from the state and increasing their sense and experience of marginalisation. I have also argued that it has generated local resistance to the state and fuelled perceptions of difference between Khwe and Mbukushu that, in turn, maintain the sense that Khwe constitute a separate social category.

But like other people, Khwe are not passive agents upon whom the state acts. Khwe have resisted the national government's failure to recognise their traditional authority by continuing to support their leaders and by turning to that body to represent their interests at regional and national levels. As a result, at a regional level, state officials have had, at least informally, to recognise the legitimacy and efficacy of the Khwe traditional body, and they thus often deal with Khwe leaders. The resultant tension lines between national policy and local practice, and the fact that they are so apparent, have together further strengthened Khwe people's resolve to fight the imposed Mbukushu overlordship in West Caprivi. But the Khwe battle to gain official national recognition for their leaders, now formalised in a pending court case against the government, is far more than a fight by a minority group to obtain rights to which they feel they are entitled as Namibian citizens. Their struggle has become a potent symbol of their efforts to regain some measure of autonomy, of control over the land on which they live, and over decisions regarding the management of that land - particularly

those parts of it that will become part of the MET Vision once its consequent plan comes to be implemented. Ultimately, their struggle aims to limit what they regard as an unacceptable and unnecessarily overarching levels of state control over their lives.

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## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION: COMPROMISING THE MET VISION'S EQUITY IDEALS**

For rural people in marginal areas where monetary income is scarce, community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) presents a prospect for people to make land-use management decisions that can have positive conservation and socio-economic spin-offs. But at the same time, a CBNRM project, like any other development intervention, can unwittingly introduce or reinforce existing disparities in wealth and power that propel the socio-economic marginalisation of certain social sectors, and the increased wealth and power of others (James, 1999, Mwaipopo, 2001).

The Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism's Conservation and Tourism Vision for Caprivi is a case in point. On one hand it is an impressive community-based natural resource development plan that outlines the MET's commitment to community consultation (MET, 1998: 1), joint venture partnerships (MET 1998: 2) and equity (MET, 1998: 4) in its efforts to achieve conservation and development goals in Namibia's north east. Overall, the plan aims to improve land-use management practices for local people's benefit. On the other hand, a close look at the situation on the ground, such as I have offered in the chapters above, reveals how the plan, despite its authors' best intentions, will be compromised if its implementors fail to take account of the attitudes and social practices of people presently in the West Caprivi Game Park, and of how those attitudes and practices promote and maintain the categorisation and resultant marginalisation of the Khwe majority in the Park.

My dissertation has traced different arenas of social activity in which socio-cultural boundaries have been constructed and reinforced in West Caprivi. An overview of the history of West Caprivi from a Khwe perspective described how those who refer to themselves as Khwe have come to see themselves as

dispossessed and marginalised. Providing impetus to Khwe self-perception as a distinctive category was the SADF, present in West Caprivi during Namibia's war of independence, which reinforced stereotypes about 'Bushmen', and stressed their supposed prowess as hunters and soldiers, thus promoting their sense of being different. Khwe identity politics today, whilst still influenced by encounters with the SADF, are focussed around power struggles between Khwe and Mbukushu. To Khwe, Mbukushu have played a central role in the dispossession that both Khwe themselves and outsiders can see as central to their identity.

The relationship between Mbukushu and Khwe is the backdrop against which differences and power imbalances have been played out in the West Caprivi Game Park/proposed Bwabwata National Park. Contestation has centred around conflicting attitudes and aspirations about land, and how it should be used to be most productive, both over the short and the long term. Mbukushu value the land mostly in terms of its immediate agricultural capacity and have been successful in obtaining land for farming. Khwe also have aspirations of expanding their farming activities. But they also place importance on the value of the land as a source of bush food and medicines, as a place for both wildlife and humans and as a 'living archive' of their forefathers' dependence on the resources of the bush. Moreover, they see the long term as one in which they need to spread risk by depending for their livelihoods on a combination of agriculture, herding and foraging. For Khwe, land dispossession has been the forerunner to their political marginalisation. Their efforts to ensure access to the resources available on such land, have become synonymous with attempts to achieve socio-political empowerment. For Khwe, the expansion of Mbukushu ownership and control of farms and settlements in West Caprivi are a sign of an increasing Khwe sense that they are losing their autonomy, an autonomy that is attached to rights to use the natural resources. The state's increasing power to decide how natural resources are to be managed limits local people's choices and leads to their understanding of the state as a repressive institution. The MET plan then, negotiated in a context of inequality and identity struggles, has further instilled a Khwe sense of alienation from decision making about the land and its resources

at a government level, and has reinforced the Khwe sense of marginalisation from the state.

Unequal power relations that have typified the relationship between Khwe and Mbukushu, have also played themselves out in the Namibian government's failure to officially recognise the Khwe traditional authority while accepting Mbukushu traditional authority claims over West Caprivi. It is interesting to note however that despite the lack of de jure recognition for the Khwe traditional authority, this body is recognised as the de facto institutional structure responsible for West Caprivi, by both Khwe and agents of local government. Incongruities between on-the-ground recognition for the Khwe traditional authority and the lack of recognition afforded that institution by central government have deepened Khwe self-perception as a persecuted minority. In the same way that loss of control over land is locally interpreted as state-sanctioned oppression, struggles for the recognition of the Khwe traditional authority have become a symbolic quest for autonomy from a repressive state.

All of the above social dynamics have increased the Khwe self perception that they constitute a powerless minority group afflicted by the Namibian government's discrimination. That in turn, has resulted in a process whereby Khwe reinforce their own distinctiveness and claim that they constitute a separate and bounded social category. In the end, the category Khwe has come to seem immutable, and an almost self-fulfilling prophecy. Various characteristics, now regarded as unchanging, are used by Mbukushu and government agents to mark differences and undermine the rights of Khwe. The same characteristics, and the differences they represent are then seen by the contesting categories' members, as well as outsiders including the Namibian government, as unbridgeable.

In West Caprivi, a significant basis for contestations over power and resources then, is the socio-political construction and reinforcement of Khwe and Mbukushu characteristics and boundaries. These struggles, and the social boundaries that have developed with them, are likely to undermine the MET

plan's objective of equity if they are not confronted directly by the state and if there is no attempt to accommodate the by now thoroughly self-recognising yet marginalised category, Khwe. If MET ignores the local power imbalances in West Caprivi, the politically strong Mbukushu Traditional Authority, which does not represent the majority of West the proposed Park boundaries' residents, will control the plan's implementation, thereby alienating Khwe leadership structures and jeopardising the plan's objective of equitable decision-making and sharing of benefits.

Given current socio-political power relations in West Caprivi, the MET plan seems likely to represent the interests of a minority yet powerful social category in West Caprivi, whilst marginalising the social category who are both emically and etically viewed as weaker, and as the second-class citizens. It is likely that the majority residents of the proposed Bwabwata National Park will regard the plan as further evidence of their loss of autonomy, and of the government's discrimination against them. I predict that a long term implication of the MET plan, if it does not take account of the power struggles described in this dissertation, will be increasing disillusionment in CBNRM and the Namibian government for the majority of West Caprivi's residents. In West Caprivi, CBNRM has the potential to bring about social and economic empowerment to many of the people living there. The first hurdle towards achieving that goal; the state's acknowledgement of the way localised power struggles around land and the right to exercise power have shaped and bound identity formation, is yet to be realised.

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## **Appendices**

University of Cape Town





# **A Conservation and Tourism Development Vision for Caprivi**

*- A Discussion Paper -*

Ministry of Environment and Tourism  
Directorate of Environmental Affairs  
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## Introduction

About 30% of the Caprivi Region is administered by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) as protected areas. The rest of the region is communal farmland, but poor soils and distances from markets limit agricultural potential. Numerous agricultural schemes have been tried, but none have lived up to expectations. Mineral potential is virtually non-existent and the prospects for manufacturing and secondary industries are low.

By contrast, the region has wildlife, beautiful scenery and an "African atmosphere". It is surrounded by world class tourist destinations, including Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, the Kafue floodplains in Zambia, Chobe National Park and the Okavango Swamps in Botswana, Etosha National Park and the Namib Desert in Namibia, and other parks and resorts further afield. Caprivi is the key in a future trans-boundary southern African conservation and tourism network (see map).

Because of its location, natural assets, and the new Trans-Caprivi highway, the area is a tourism destination in the making. If sensibly planned, wildlife utilisation and tourism will be the basis for sustainable development in the region.

Furthermore, the tourism sector can support a range of secondary industries including the supply to lodges of fresh produce, meat, poultry, thatching grass, poles and other commodities. Craft manufacturing can develop as an industry within itself, since the skills already exist in the region and marketing is relatively easy. Communities can provide expert services, including guiding tourists on wilderness trails and mokoro safaris.

- Caprivi has a diversity of tourism products.
- The tourism industry can be shared between government, the private sector and communities.
- There are opportunities for formal employment and self-employment.

## How is the MET doing so far?

The MET has neglected Caprivi, for example...

- Until recently, the parks had no management and development plans,
- senior staff all live in Rundu or Katima Mulilo instead of inside the parks,
- housing in the parks is a disgrace,
- staff have low morale and a low work ethic,
- poaching and other infringements are common, and law-enforcement inadequate,
- wildlife numbers have dwindled (except elephant),
- our relationship with communities has been one of conflict rather than cooperation,
- MET-initiated research and monitoring has been inadequate to date.

In spite of past problems in Caprivi, the communities, NGOs and the MET have started working together to build a new future for the area. The formation of conservancies and the initiation of the North East Parks Project, provide the foundation for progress.

## Vision for the future

The MET recently completed management and development plans for the Caprivi parks. This process (which included extensive consultation with communities) was funded by the German Development Bank (KFW), which has earmarked a further N\$15 million for the development of the parks. The MET has four key visions for the north-east, namely;

1. a conservation vision,
2. a tourism vision,
3. an equity vision, and
4. a partnership vision.

They are as follows:

## 1. Conservation vision

The north-east parks offer a unique opportunity to conserve Namibia's only true tropical/wetland habitats and their rich biodiversity. The MET intends to upgrade all the parks to National Park status. This requires the re-proclamation of the old Caprivi Game Reserve to be re-named the Bwabwata National Park. It will consist of four zones, namely the Mahango Core Area (the old Mahango Game Reserve), the Buffalo Core Area, the Central Multiple-Use Area and the Kwando Core Area (see map).

This means that the currently unproclaimed Kwando Triangle (measuring 20 500 hectares) will be proclaimed as part of the park. The Bagani and Omega areas (60 000 hectares combined) are to be deproclaimed from the park as development centres, while the Multiple-Use Area (3 560 500 hectares) could become a Conservancy for the resident community.

The Bwabwata National Park is to remain cattle-free for conservation and veterinary reasons and to facilitate international co-operation between Namibia and Botswana in wildlife management. The MET and the MAWRD are working with the Botswana Government to reach agreement on its fencing requirements so that game can move freely between Botswana and Caprivi.

Ultimately, there could be a trans-frontier wildlife management programme between Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Angola and Zimbabwe. By properly managing the Caprivi parks, Namibia will be a powerful and worthy partner in a great regional effort which is sure to attract foreign investment and international tourism.

The Mudumu, Mamili and Khaudum parks will similarly be upgraded to National Parks.

The MET regards the north-east parks as a top conservation priority. They will be protected because of their unique wetland and floodplain habitats and their rich biodiversity. Their potential

## 2. Tourism vision

The MET intends to develop the north-east parks as a world-class tourism destination, which caters for the middle to upper end of the market as well as for Namibians. However, the parks are small and tourist numbers should not exceed carrying capacity – mass tourism will spoil our product. Caprivi's tourism product is "unspoilt Africa" which is a combination of scenery, wildlife and African cultures.

As a principle, the MET will not develop any lodges or campsites inside the parks. Instead, neighbouring communities, especially those who have formed a conservancy, will be invited to establish appropriate facilities either on their own or in joint venture partnerships with the private sector. The MET would prefer lodges or campsites to be just outside the parks (i.e. in the conservancy) with the conservancy being given a concession to guide their guests within the park. In certain areas, the MET could consider allowing a lodge or campsite inside a park, but there would be strict guidelines for such development

Within the next five years, there could be at least six new community or joint-venture campsites and three or four new lodges around the north-east parks. In addition to direct employment, these facilities could provide opportunities for many secondary industries.

The detailed tourism development options are as follows:

### Bwabwata National Park

#### Mahango Core Area

No lodges or campsites will be allowed in the Mahango because of its small size and the availability of sufficient accommodation at the existing lodges on the Okavango River. However, the community neighbouring Mahango could form a conservancy and establish a small lodge or campsite on the river near the gate at Mahango.

This could also give the conservancy an opportunity to sell hunting rights in the future. However, it will not be possible to give this conservancy exclusive rights to the Mahango because the lodges which are already outside the park need access to the park to remain viable. The MET should seek Cabinet approval to transfer the Government-owned Popa Falls Camp to the Mbukushu community in a joint venture agreement.

#### **Buffalo Core Area**

A community-based campsite opposite Popa Falls is already in operation. There is also place for a medium-size lodge development at Buffalo (40-50 beds), which could be a joint venture between a private investor and the communities in the area. Both of these facilities would have a concession to take tourists into the Buffalo Core Area.

#### **Multiple Use Area**

This area is already settled by people (mostly Barakwena) and some small stock (mostly goats). People and small stock would continue living here, but new settlement and new agricultural schemes will not be encouraged. This area has a lower conservation and tourism value than the core areas, but it is ideally suited to trophy hunting. The Barakwena community has expressed interest in forming a conservancy in the area, but the MET will have to change the legislation to allow a conservancy in a proclaimed park.

#### **Kwando Core Area**

The MET has identified three tourism options:

**Option 1 :** No tourism facilities to be developed inside the Kwando triangle but the three proposed conservancies on the east bank of the Kwando River (i.e. Kwando, Mayuni and Mashi conservancies) could each have their own lodge or campsite in their conservancy. The MET would give each one a concession (or a vehicle quota) to take their guests into the Kwando triangle. They could, for example, leave their lodge vehicles on the west bank (inside the park), take their guests across the river by boat, drive them around inside the park, and then boat them back to the lodge afterwards.

This means that the park is the main part of their tourism product, while the lodge is in the conservancy. This is the best option from an environmental, legal and tenure point of view, and is much simpler than having lodges inside the park.

**Option 2 :** The three conservancies on the east bank join forces, form a partnership with a private sector developer, and obtain a concession from the MET to establish one lodge inside the triangle (possibly at Fort Doppies) and a campsite. They would all be share-holders in the lodge and campsite and a system would have to be found to equitably share the profits and other benefits. Each conservancy could still have their own lodge or campsite within their conservancy (outside the park). But, this might cause unhealthy competition since the lodge inside the triangle would draw visitors away from the lodges outside. Nevertheless, this is a good option economically and could result in a high quality investment in the area.

**Option 3 :** Each conservancy has a campsite inside the Kwando triangle. The problem with this is that all the conservancies claim the triangle as their own. This means that there could be rivalry in deciding who gets which site or area. It also means that the staff running the campsite and their families may want to live in the triangle, which will lead to small villages becoming established. This will endanger people's lives because of the high number of wildlife in the area and detract from the undisturbed nature of the area.

This is the least favourable option and is considered to be marginal from an economic point of view.

The MET will only consider this option if the conservancies agree to work together amicably within the triangle and on condition that there will be no major villages or settlements alongside the camps in the triangle. The majority of the staff working in the campsites (and their families) should live outside the triangle. They could, of course, come in on a daily basis, either by road or by boat (across the Kwando).

At this stage, the MET has not decided on how to control day visitors to the triangle, but numbers must be limited in some way. The MET would welcome suggestions in this regard.

### **Mudumu National Park**

Lianshulu Lodge already has a concession to operate in the park. The MET has already agreed to give the proposed Lianshulu Conservancy a site on the southern boundary of the park where they could develop a small lodge or campsite. There is considerable scope for communities in this area to provide expert services such as mokoro safaris and guiding to guests. No additional developments will be allowed.

### **Mamili National park**

The MET would encourage the proposed conservancies neighbouring Mamili to each establish a small lodge and/or campsites on the border of Mamili. Each conservancy could then be given a concession (or vehicle quota) to take their guests into the park. The MET will not establish its own tourism facilities in Mamili so that all visitors to the park will have to stay at the community-run facilities. This will increase their economic viability.

### **Khaudum National Park**

Khaudum will be maintained as a "rustic" destination, but one or two small lodges could be established if the private sector shows an interest in the area. Existing bungalows at Sikaretti and Khaudum Camp are dilapidated and should be demolished. These sites will in future only cater for camping.

There is scope for the Nyae Nyae Conservancy to establish a facility outside the park if they wish. The area to the west of the park could also become a viable conservancy that could establish some tourist accommodation. This conservancy has not yet been formed.

## **3. Equity Vision**

The MET wants to ensure that everyone gets a fair share of the benefits from wildlife and tourism. At the moment, there are disputes over conservancy boundaries and chieftainships. The MET does not wish to be involved in such

disputes and urges the communities in Caprivi to settle these as soon as possible, so that conservancies can be registered and development can go ahead.

The equity vision allows controlled access to parks in order to sustainably harvest resources such as reeds, grass and palm leaves, and the provision of animals for specific traditional functions (e.g. the inauguration of a chief). The MET is prepared to consider this as long as the resources are available, the expectations are reasonable and the activities are properly controlled. It should, however, be recognised that parks are not a "bottomless pit". Instead, they should be seen as the core areas, which can provide the nucleus of animals and plants. Excess animals would naturally move out of the parks into the conservancies, which is where they could be sustainably utilised (but not exterminated !)

Similarly, it would be preferable to harvest seeds from within the parks and to cultivate new stocks in the conservancies, rather than to continually harvest limited resources in the parks.

## **4. Partnership Vision**

The conservation and sustainable development of the north-east parks and conservancies requires all stakeholders to work together as partners with a common goal.

The partners in this area are the MET, other ministries, local authorities, communities and their leaders, NGOs and the private sector.

The MET's role is mainly the conservation of the parks and enabling community participation and benefit sharing through changing policy and legislation – this has largely been done. Through the North-East Parks Project, we have started to define the conservation and development objectives of the proclaimed areas.

Other ministries will be asked to consult the MET when they plan their activities in the region, so that one plan does not conflict with another. Similarly, the MET will soon brief Cabinet on the north-east parks project and the emergence of conservancies.

### The MET is committed to:

- establishing basic infrastructure such as housing, gates, signs, offices, water and other necessities in the parks;
- placing staff in the parks so that they can manage the areas better and respond more efficiently to issues such as problem animal management;
- giving neighbouring conservancies priority tourism rights in the parks;
- limiting trophy hunting inside the parks so that conservancies can offer trophy hunting in their areas instead, providing that wildlife numbers have reached appropriate levels;
- working with communities and other relevant stakeholders so that everyone feels part of the management and development process; and
- pursuing the ultimate goal of trans-boundary natural resource management within SADC.

Local authorities, communities and their leaders have a responsibility to look towards the future and not get distracted by local political disputes which jeopardise development. In addition, the establishment of conservancies and the implementation of wise land-use and natural resource management is essential for the future of the parks. Most of the north-east parks are small, and wildlife continuously moves in and out of the parks. It is no good to have wildlife protected *in* the park but not *outside*. Similarly, it will not help if poachers eradicate game in the area, or set fires which destroy the habitat. If neighbouring communities adopt a more "nature-friendly" approach, everyone wins. If not, everyone loses.

Fortunately, some emerging conservancies have established community game guards, who have already made a positive contribution in the area. The MET would like to work closely with the game guards in the future.

The MET would like to discourage leaders in Caprivi from handing out tourism concessions to private investors without careful planning and consultation. It is concerned that these investors may secure long-term rights without the community getting its fair-share of the benefits. The MET is also concerned that if everyone gives out concessions in an unplanned and uncoordinated way, we will end up with too many lodges and campsites, and mass-tourism instead of quality-tourism. We must take care not to "kill the goose that lays the golden egg".

In this regard, the MET is in the process of developing a Tourism Act that will help plan and regulate tourism development in Namibia.

NGOs have an important role, since they can help communities and the MET to achieve the conservation and development vision. NGOs have skills, qualified staff, and a presence in the area. They can assist conservancies with the development of management plans and campsites, and they can help to set up structures and systems for managing money earned from tourism and hunting. Because of their national and international connections, NGOs can help with the crucial task of training and skills development.

The MET acknowledges the contribution that NGOs have made, and looks forward to future cooperation. The MET invites the main NGO in the area (namely IRDNC) to continue operating from its camp at Susuwe, even after the Kwando triangle has been proclaimed as part of the Bwabwata National Park.

The Private Sector has experience in establishing and running tourism facilities. They understand the needs of tourists, the standards which tourists expect and how best to market their product. They also have access to funding. Thus, private investors are essential partners in the fulfillment of Caprivi's conservation and development vision. But, it is essential that they see Caprivi as a place of investment, not only as a place from which to make profits. Caprivi is not a "free-for-all". Investors should form honest partnerships, ideally with conservancies.

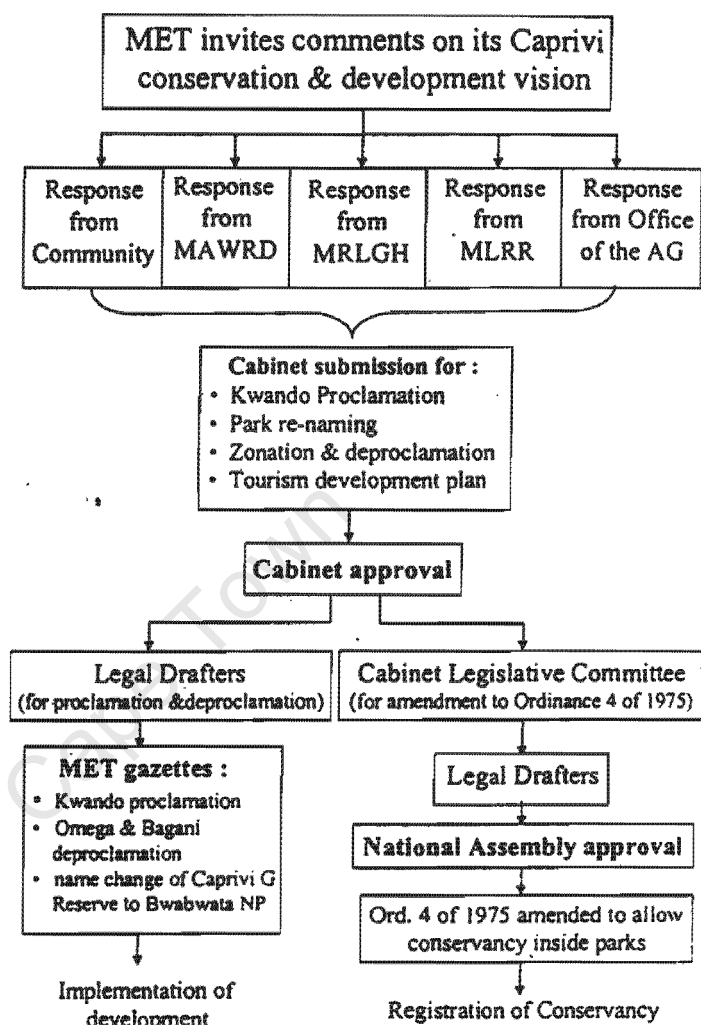
According to Namibia's Environmental Assessment Policy (and the emerging Environmental Management Act), an Environmental Assessment has to be done before a lodge may be built. This is to ensure that negative impacts are minimised, while positive impacts are enhanced.

In order to ensure proper participation by all stakeholders, the MET will establish joint committees for each park in the future. These will meet at regular intervals so that issues of mutual concern can be discussed, and so that everyone can be kept informed of what is going on in the area.

### What happens next ?

There is a process which has to be followed to implement the vision described in this paper. This process is a continuation of what has been done so far, namely stakeholder consultation and consensus building.

The process is illustrated as follows:



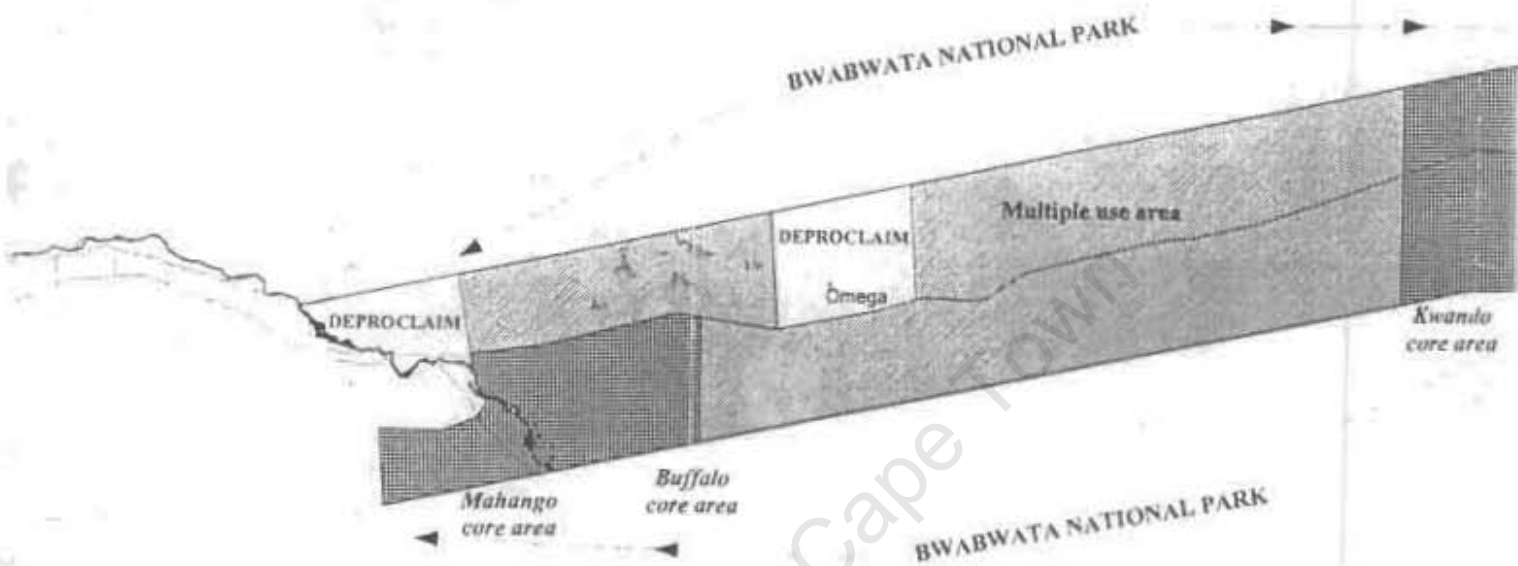
### Conclusion

Caprivi could be part of a world-class national and international conservation and tourism network.

But for this to happen we need to have the bold mind to take positive steps now. Ministries, communities, NGOs and the private sector must work towards a common goal – the sustainable development of Caprivi and the nation.

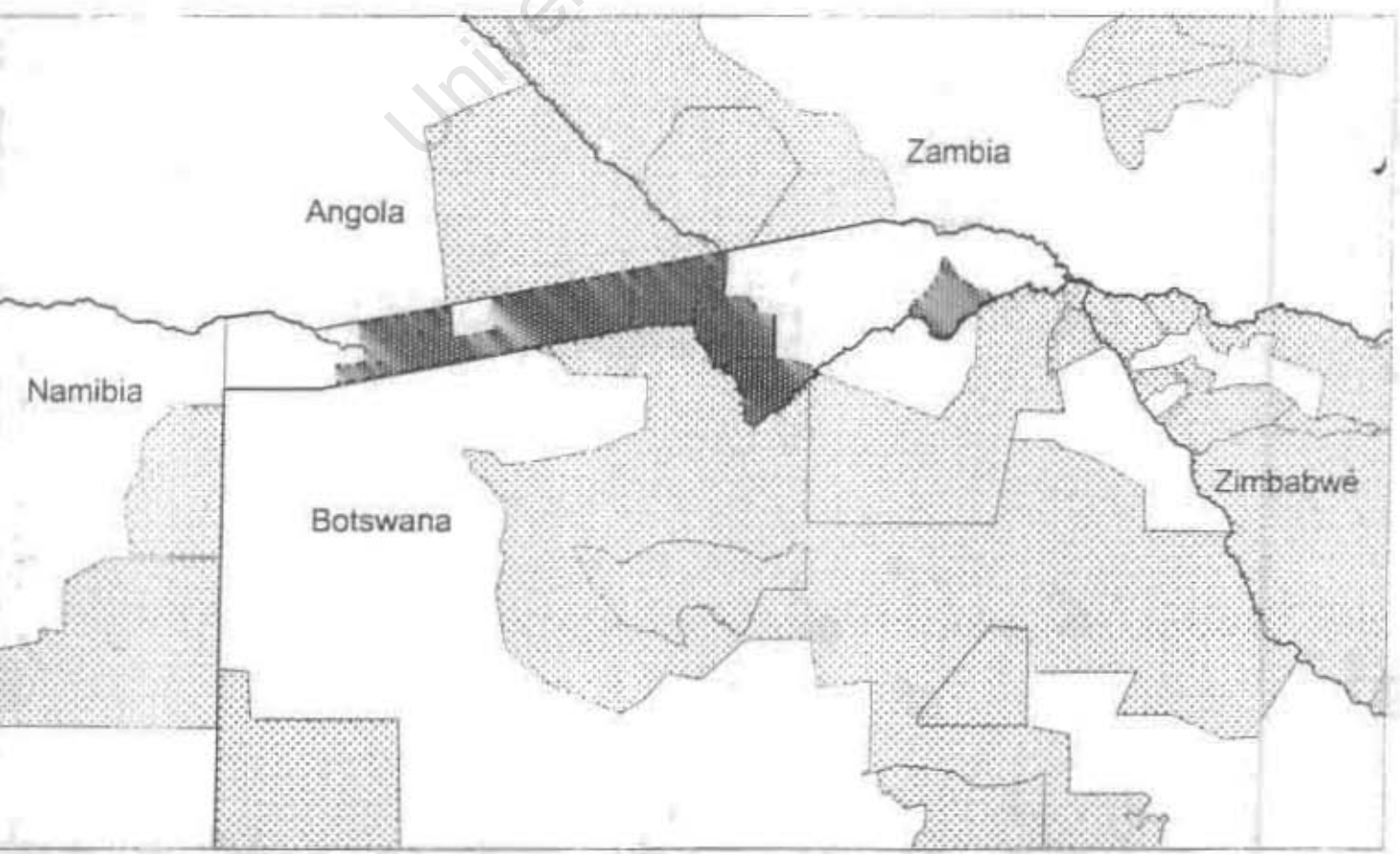
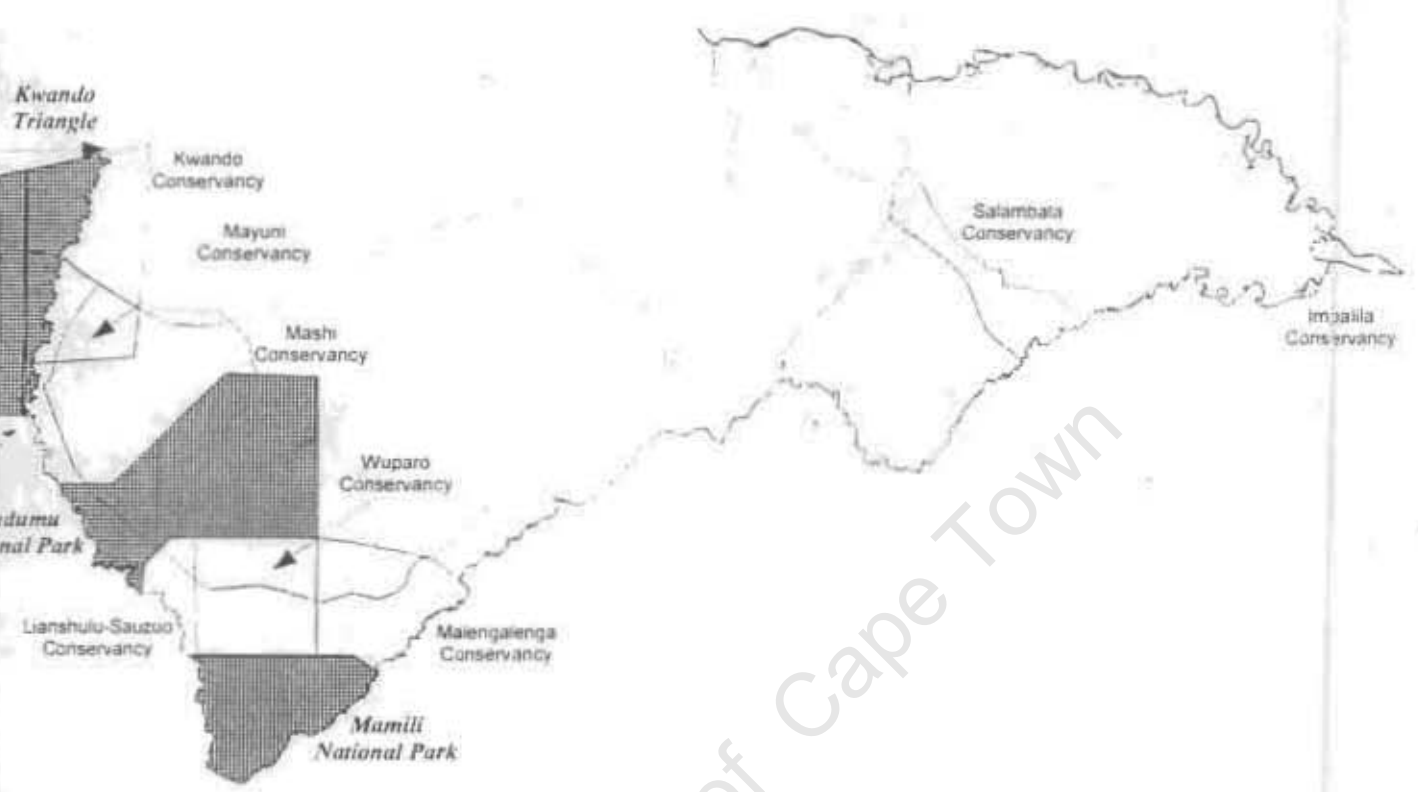
The Ministry of Environment and Tourism wishes to contribute towards achieving sustainable development through the wise management and utilisation of the north-east parks. The parks must be restructured to give local people, through proper investment and management, an income and programme, through attaching the Kwando triangle to the protected area network, and through re-proclaiming them as National Parks.

# Parks and Conservancies a vision for the future



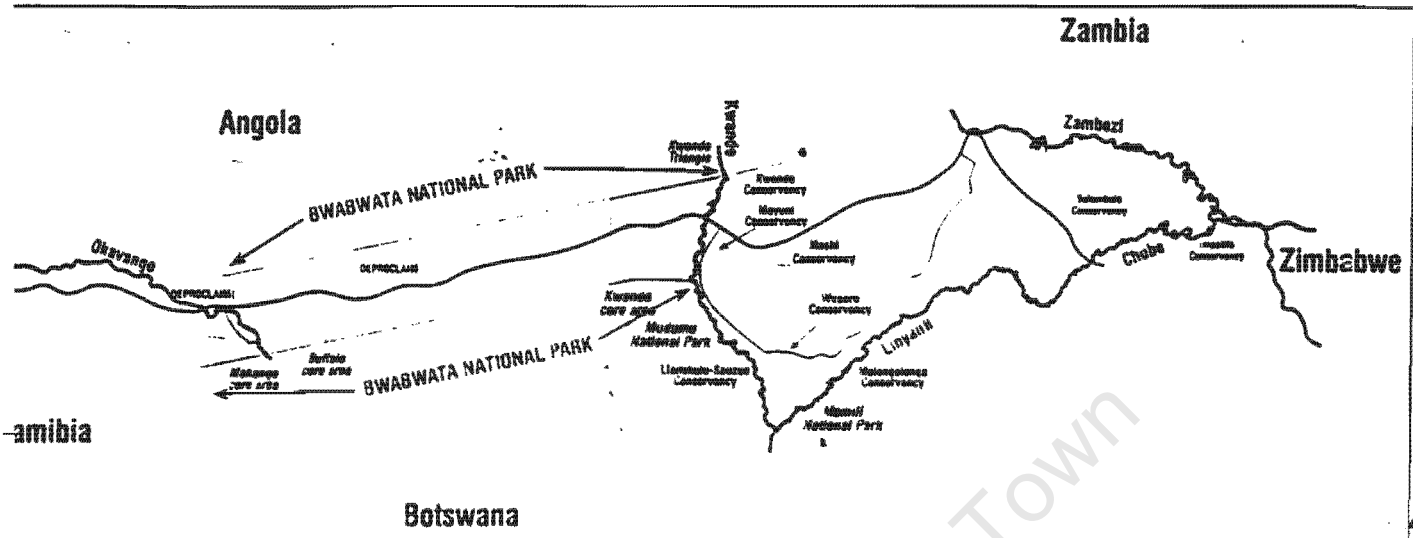
**Proclaimed parks, Wildlife Management Areas and emerging conservancies in central-southern Africa.**

Caprivi:



University of Cape Town

# The Bwabwata National Park Vision for the Future



The Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) recently completed management and development plans for the five parks located in the north-east of Namibia. This process (which included extensive consultation with local communities) was funded by the German Development Bank (KfW), which has granted a further US\$15 million for the development of the parks. The MET has four key objectives for the north-east, namely, a conservation, a tourism vision, an equity vision and a partnership vision.

## CONSERVATION VISION

The north-eastern parks offer a unique opportunity to conserve Namibia's only true tropical habitats and their rich biodiversity. The intention is to upgrade all the parks to national park status. Mahango and West Caprivi Game Parks will merge to become the Bwabwata National Park. The Mudumu, Mmamli and Ukwane parks will similarly be upgraded to national parks.

Subject to approval, the vision given for the following:

- 1 West Caprivi Game Park is to be proclaimed the Bwabwata National Park
- 2 The Kwando Triangle on the west bank of the Kwando River will be proclaimed and incorporated into the Bwabwata National Park
- 3 Mahango Game Park is integrated into the Bwabwata National Park
- 4 The Bagani Corner and the Omega agricultural areas are deproclaimed

Communities neighbouring the Bwabwata National Park will be given conditional tourism rights in the park. These will allow them to own either their own or in a joint venture, tourism facilities in the Bwabwata National Park. Preference will be given to communities in the established conservancies. Similar rights will be given to communities living in the park.

The park was proclaimed as a nature park because of the need to conserve the area's abundant wildlife, its wetland systems

and other unique natural features. In 1968, the area was given a higher status of conservation protection by being proclaimed as the Caprivi Game Park.

The boundaries of the park included all of West Caprivi, but excluded a small triangle of land known as the Kwando Triangle on the western bank of the Kwando River. Although unproclaimed, this area has always been managed by the MET and its predecessors as an integral part of the Caprivi Game Park. Not long after the proclamation, the area became a military zone occupied by the South African Defence Force (SADF). The movements of conservation staff were restricted and the area was never properly managed as a park. Only the military were allowed freedom of movement.

Following the withdrawal of SADF from the park, there were between 3 000 and 4 000 people, mostly San, living in the park. This was a fairly unique situation, as people generally do not live in game parks. The new vision therefore needed to find a way in which local people could continue to live in the area, while the park could be managed effectively.

In April 1990, a socio-ecological survey was conducted to investigate how conservation needs and the needs of the people could be reconciled and integrated. A report was produced which made provision for the zoning of the Caprivi Game Park into a large multiple use area, with two core conservation areas.

## The New Vision for the Bwabwata National Park

The old Caprivi Game Park will be re-proclaimed as the Bwabwata National Park. It will consist of four zones, namely the Mahango Core Area (the old Mahango Game Reserve), the Buffalo Core Area, the Central Multiple-Use Area and the Kwando Core Area (see map).

This means that the currently unproclaimed Kwando Triangle (measuring 20 500 ha) will be proclaimed as part of the park. The Bagani and Omega areas (60 000 ha combined) are to be deproclaimed from the park as agricul-

tural development centres, while the Multiple-Use Area could become a tourism and hunting concession for the resident community. The Bwabwata National Park will thus cover an area of 556 462 ha or 5564.62 km<sup>2</sup>.

The Bwabwata National Park is to remain cattle-free for conservation and veterinary reasons and to facilitate international co-operation between Namibia and Botswana in wildlife and livestock management. The MET and the MAWRD are working with the Botswana Government to reach agreement on fencing requirements so that game can move freely between Botswana and Namibia.

Ultimately, there could be a trans-frontier wildlife management programme between Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Angola and Zimbabwe. By properly managing the Caprivi parks, Namibia will be a powerful and worthy partner in a great regional effort that is sure to attract foreign investment and international tourism.

## Proposed Multiple-Use Area

This area provides for residents to benefit directly from sustainable use of wildlife and tourism while carrying on with their normal economic activities of crop and stock farming. In the areas to be deproclaimed, cattle may be kept only in the deproclaimed and properly fenced-off Bagani and Omega areas. No cattle will thus be allowed in the Bwabwata National Park or any other park in the north-east. This is in keeping with an undertaking by Namibia to help Botswana curb the spread of bovine lung sickness.

## Core Conservation Areas

The core conservation areas include the Okavango and Kwando River systems, which are of major national and international conservation importance. Both are viable habitats for many animal species, including endangered mammals and birds.

The 20 km of river bordered by the Mahango Game Park and the Buffalo core conservation area in the west, represents the only conserved areas of some 440 km of riverine habi-

tat along the entire Namibian length of the Okavango River. The Mahango/Buffalo area forms the upper reaches of the Okavango Delta and is of international importance because it affords protection to the Delta panhandle and various wetland species.

Apart from seasonal pans, there is no permanent water source for wildlife in the interior of the park. The Okavango and Kwando rivers thus provide vital water for large numbers of game, particularly elephant and buffalo, during the dry season.

## Game in the Core Areas

During a game count in October 1990, about 6 080 elephants, 550 buffalo, 1 353 hippo and scores of other species, including roan and sable antelope, kudu, reedbuck, lion, leopard, hyaena and wild dog were counted in these two core areas. About 5 000 elephants seasonally occur in the core areas and move between Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and Angola.

Namibia has a regional and international obligation to conserve elephants. Other species occurring in the area include side-striped jackal, sitatunga, bushbuck, reedbuck and lion. The area is also rich in wildlife. These core areas have tremendous tourism potential and are identified in Namibia's Tourism Development Plan as suited for the establishment of a variety of tourism facilities close to the Okavango and Kwando rivers.

The incorporation of Mahango Game Reserve into the Bwabwata National Park will lead to greater protection of the Okavango River system. The park has impressive numbers of crocodiles, hippos, bushbuck, reedbuck, roan and sable antelope, impala, elephant, buffalo and sitatunga. Mahango has the largest number of bird species of any of Namibia's parks - more than 400 species occur here.

Broad plains are flooded every year to form marshes. There are several endemic water plants and fish species. Several species of plants and insects occurring here are listed as threatened. (continued on page 15)

# Tourism options

## Mahango Core Area

At this stage, no lodges or campsites will be allowed in the Mahango because of its small size and the availability of sufficient accommodation at the existing lodges along the Okavango River to the north of the park. However, should the community neighbouring Mahango form a conservancy, MET would consider allowing it to establish a small lodge or campsite in Mahango.

The conservancy could also sell hunting rights in the area outside the park in the future. However, it will not be possible to give this conservancy exclusive rights to the Mahango because to remain viable the lodges which are already outside the park need access to the park.

## Buffalo Core Area

A medium-size lodge development at Buffalo (40 - 60 beds) should be developed as soon as possible and the MET will invite private investors to tender in the near future. The tenders will be evaluated according to a number of criteria, including the development's vision impact on the environment, social development and benefit-sharing, aesthetic appeal and the quality of investment.

## Multiple Use Area

This area is already inhabited by people (mostly Barakwena) and some small stock (mostly goats). People and small stock would continue living here, but new settlement and new agricultural schemes will not be encouraged. This area has a lower conservation and tourism value than the core areas, but it is heavily hunted for ivory poaching.

The Barakwena community has expressed interest in obtaining a tourism and hunting concession in the area to assist to improve the local economy and provide employment. This concession will be explored soon in consultation with the community.

## Kwando Core Area

Following extensive discussions with the communities in the area, it has been agreed that the Kwando, Mavuni and Masiwa conservancies will each be allowed to establish a campsite or small lodge inside the Kwando Triangle. The details and conditions for this still have to be negotiated. In addition, the conservancies could each still establish lodges or campsites in their conservancy outside the park.

## Khaudum Game Park (National Park)

Khaudum is dominated by three large communities, i.e. the Kwana, Herero and Nama. Regulations require

two four wheel drive vehicles at each party, due to the remoteness of the park. Visitors are relatively few, the camps are unfenced and tourists leave their vehicles at their own risk. Accommodation consists of two small camps, each with a few bungalows and campsites.

This is the only park that protects the northern Kalahan sandveld. Dominant vegetation in the region is the northern Kalahan dry woodland savanna and dry bushveld grass plains. Game includes elephant, lion, leopard, cheetah, kudu, topi, wild dog, hyaena, reedbeek, roan, antelope, giraffe, kudu, oryx and side-striped jackal.

Khaudum will be maintained as a "rustic" destination, but one or two small lodges could be established if the private sector shows an interest in the area. There is scope for members of the Nyate Nyate Conservancy to establish a facility outside the park if they wish. The area to the west of the park could also become a viable conservancy that could establish some tourist accommodation. The formation of a conservancy has not yet been initiated.

## Mudumu National Park

The park is situated on the eastern bank of the Kwando River in Eastern Caprivi. It supports small numbers of sitatunga and oryx, while buffalo, hippo, elephant, wild dog and man antelope are sometimes seen. Mopane woodlands and namethorn trees dominate the park, with termite mounds lining the Kwando River.

The privately-owned Lushutu Lodge is situated in a concession area within this park. There are several villages around the park. Lushutu Lodge has had eight night visits to some 100 numbers in two occasions.

Since Lushutu Lodge already has a concession to operate in the park, the MET would like to give the adjacent community a site in the southern boundary of the park where they could develop tourism facilities. There is considerable scope for communities in this area to provide expert services such as tracking, guides and guiding to guests. No additional requirements to those mentioned will be allowed.

## Mamili National Park

This park includes Likasa and Lubala villages on the Kwando/Lvuvu River and is the largest conserved wetland in Namibia. The surface area of water fluctuates considerably, but about 80 percent of the area is inundated during high floods. Rainfall averages 740 mm a year although up to 1,000 mm has been measured.

More than 400 bird species have been recorded here, while Namibia's largest populations

of buffalo roam the flood plains. Other species are elephant, hippo, lion, hyaena, crocodile, lechwe, sitatunga, impala and wild dog. Vegetation is dominated by species associated with flood plains and termite mounds. There are several surrounding villages that could benefit from this park by establishing a lodge or campsite on its periphery.

The MET would encourage the proposed conservancies neighbouring Mamili to establish a small lodge and/or campsites on the border of Mamili or perhaps inside the park. The MET will not establish its own tourism facilities in Mamili, so that all visitors to the park will have to stay at the community-run facilities. This will increase their economic viability.

## 2. TOURISM VISION

In partnership with communities and the private sector, the MET intends to develop the north-eastern parks as a world-class tourism destination, which caters for the middle to upper end of the market as well as for Namibians. However, the parks are small and tourist numbers should not exceed carrying capacity. Mass tourism could compromise Caprivi's product of "Sunset Africa" which is a combination of scenery, wildlife and African cultures.

The MET itself will not develop any lodges or campsites inside the parks. Instead, neighbouring communities, especially those which have formed a conservancy, will be invited to establish appropriate facilities either on their own or in joint-venture partnerships with the private sector.

The MET would prefer lodges or campsites to be set outside the parks, i.e. in the conservancy with the conservancy being given a concession to guide their guests within the park. However, in certain areas, the MET will allow a lodge or campsite inside a park, but there would be strict guidelines for such development.

## 3. EQUITY VISION

The MET wants to ensure that everyone gets a fair share of the benefits from wildlife and tourism. The equity vision allows controlled access to parks in order to sustainably harvest resources such as seeds, grass and stem leaves, and the provision of animals for specific traditional functions (e.g. the inauguration of a chief). Sustainable harvesting will be considered only if the resources are available, the expectations are reasonable and the activities are properly controlled. It would, however, be accepted that parks are not a "bottomless pit". Instead, they should be seen as the core areas, which can provide the nucleus of animals and plants. Excess animals would naturally move out of the parks to the conservancies, which is

where they could be sustainably utilised (but not exterminated). Similarly, it would be preferable to harvest seeds from within the parks and to cultivate new stocks in the conservancies, rather than to continually harvest limited resources in the parks.

## 4. PARTNERSHIP VISION

The MET's role is mainly the conservation of the parks and enabling community participation and benefit sharing through changing policy and legislation.

Local authorities, communities and their leaders have a responsibility to look towards the future and to assist with the management of resources. The establishment of conservancies and the implementation of wise land-use and natural resource management are essential for the future of the parks. The MET is committed to working closely with community game guards who have been appointed in some emerging conservancies.

Leaders in Caprivi are discouraged from granting tourism concessions to private investors without careful planning and consultation. Careful planning is needed to ensure that communities receive their fair share of the benefits and that the tourism product is not ruined by mass tourism instead of quality tourism. The MET is in the process of developing a Tourism Act that will help plan and regulate tourism development in Namibia. NGOs and communities and the MET to achieve the conservation and development vision.

The private sector has experience in establishing and running tourism facilities and has access to funding. Operators understand the needs of tourists, the standards which tourists expect and how best to market their product. Namibia's Environmental Assessment Policy and the Emerging Environmental Management Act stipulates that a minimum negative impact on Environmental Assessment has to be done before a lodge may be built.

## Working together

In order to ensure proper attribution by all stakeholders, the MET will establish joint committees for each park in the future. Within the next five years, there could be at least six new community or joint-venture campsites and three or four new lodges around the north-eastern parks. In addition to direct employment, these lodges could provide opportunities for many secondary industries. These include African art, painting, maintenance and other services, the supply of fresh produce, construction and laundry. Co-ordinated by the Department of Environmental Affairs of the MET.

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REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM

Directorate of Environmental Affairs

Private Bag 13306, Windhoek

Tel. + 264 61 249015 : Fax. + 264 61 240339 : e.mail - pwt@dca.mct.gov.na

Our Reference : N11/2 B

Enquiries: Peter Tarr

Date: 26 August 1999

IRDNC  
P.O.Box 9681  
Windhoek

Dear Mr Owen-Smith and Dr Jacobsohn

**RE: CABINET DECISION ON CONSERVATION AND TOURISM IN NORTH EASTERN NAMIBIA**

I wish to inform you of recent developments surrounding my Ministry's North East Parks Programme, which commenced in 1996. Over the past three years, an extensive process of consultation, surveys and research gathered information on the social, economic and ecological characteristics of the north east. This information has contributed to the compilation of management and development plans for the parks in the area and a collective vision of how these parks can contribute towards sustainable development, has been formulated.

As you are aware, this vision was approved by Cabinet on 20 July 1999. Cabinet's decisions from its 18<sup>th</sup>/20.07.99/004 session are summarised as follows.

- The Caprivi Game Park shall be renamed the Bwabwata National Park;
- The area known as the Kwando Triangle shall be proclaimed as part of the Bwabwata National Park;
- The Mahango Game Park shall be incorporated into the Bwabwata National Park;
- The central area of the Bwabwata National Park shall be zoned to provide for a multiple use area of community-based tourism and trophy-hunting, human settlement and development and the three core conservation areas (Kwando, Buffalo and Mahango) shall be zoned for special protection and controlled tourism;
- The Bagani and Omega areas shall be deproclaimed from the Bwabwata National Park and be fenced on their perimeter;
- No cattle shall be allowed in the Bwabwata National Park or any other game park in north-eastern Namibia.

- The Ministry shall give communities neighbouring to or living in, the Bwabwata National Park, conditional tourism rights in the park such that they can establish, either on their own or in a joint venture, tourism facilities in the Bwabwata National Park;
- The Ministry shall give communities neighbouring the Mamili National Park, the Mudumu National Park and the Khaudum National Park, conditional tourism rights in these parks such that they can establish, either on their own or in a joint venture, tourism facilities in these parks;
- The Ministry shall invite tender proposals for the development of a tourism lodge at Buffalo camp, and allocate the right to the best tender on the basis of his/her development and design vision, community involvement vision, environmental vision, and overall investment vision;
- The Khaudum Game Park shall be renamed the Khaudum National Park;

These decisions provide a new foundation upon which to build a truly integrated, community-based natural resource management programme in a formerly neglected area. The status and integrity of the parks have been re-defined and all efforts will be made to ensure that Cabinet's decisions are properly implemented. In this regard, my Ministry will continue its discussions with interested and affected parties with a view to involving as many stakeholders as possible, in the implementation phase.

To this end, you will soon be invited to a ½ day meeting to be held in Windhoek sometime in September (date and venue to be determined). At this meeting we will develop an implementation strategy for the next phase of the programme.

On behalf of myself and my Ministry, I wish to thank you most sincerely for being part of the North East Parks Programme, for supporting us and for helping to shape the vision which we hope to achieve.

Yours sincerely

Tangeni Erkana  
Permanent Secretary



## REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

## MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM

Tel: 249 015  
Fax: 240 339

Private Bag 13346  
Windhoek

NI2/1

02.12.96.

Chief Kipi George  
c/o WIMSA  
PO Box 11778  
Windhoek

Dear Sir

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION OF A CONSERVANCY

Your letter dated 21 October 1996 refers.

We appreciate your concern for the environment in Western Caprivi and your desire to form a conservancy.

The regulations concerning the establishment of Conservancies and Wildlife Councils on communal land have been published in the Government Gazette. This means that communities on communal land may now formally apply to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism for declaration of a conservancy.

As you will realise, the case of the Khoe people living in the Caprivi Game Reserve is different to that of other rural Namibians. The legislation making provision for communal area conservancies expressly excludes proclaimed game parks or nature reserves from being included in or being part of a conservancy.

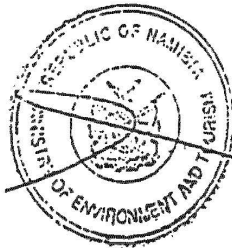
The Ministry is still going ahead with its plans to deproclaim parts of the Caprivi Game Reserve and consolidate other parts. We expect the proposal to be submitted to Cabinet early in 1997. Once deproclamation has taken place, you may go ahead with your application for declaration of a conservancy. If Cabinet does not agree to deproclamation of parts of the park, we will inform you and will begin exploring other options for ensuring that you and your people are able to benefit from the park's conservation activities. In the meantime we are still investigating the technical issues concerning the granting of a tourism concession to you and your people in the

Bagani area. We will inform you as soon as progress on this issue has been made.

In order to provide you with all the necessary information concerning conservancies the following is enclosed with this letter:

- ◆ A copy of the Nature Conservation Amendment Act, 1996 (Act 5 of 1996) as promulgated in the Government Gazette (No. 1333) of 17 June, 1996.
- ◆ A copy of the regulations concerning the establishment of communal area Conservancies and Wildlife Councils as promulgated in the Government Gazette (No. 1446) of 18 November, 1996.
- ◆ A copy of the application and approval procedure for conservancies.
- ◆ A copy of the conservancy application form.
- ◆ A copy of the pamphlet: Communal Area Conservancies in Namibia: A simple guide.
- ◆ A copy of the brochure: Questions and Answers about Communal Area Conservancies in Namibia.

Yours sincerely



HIVELUAH  
PERMANENT SECRETARY

cc Mr D Grobler (Acting Director: Resource Management)  
Mr A Esterhuizen (Acting Chief Control Warden, NE)  
Mr M le Roux (Park Warden)

*K E [Signature]*



Republic of Namibia

**Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing**

Tel.: 061 - 297 5111  
Telefax: 061 - 226 049

Government Office Park  
Luther Street

Private Bag 13289  
Windhoek

18th July 2001

Khoe Community  
P O Box 5026  
DIVUNDU

Attention: Mr. Thaddeus Chadau

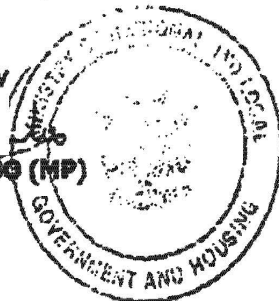
**RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE DISPUTE BETWEEN KHOE  
COMMUNITY AND MBUKUSHU TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY**

Please be informed that I have been mandated by the President to inform you that he has accepted some of the recommendations of the Council of Traditional Leaders for the 14 cases he has earlier on referred to the Council of Traditional Leaders for recommendation.

The area claimed by the Khoe community traditionally in terms of chieftainship belongs to the Mbukushu traditional authority. In terms of Section 5 (3) (a) and (b) of the Traditional Authorities Act, Act 25 of 2000, there is no reason why a Khoe traditional authority must be established. However, the Khoe community is allowed to practice their culture, customs and language freely.

Yours sincerely

**DR. N. FYAMBO (MP)**  
**MINISTER**





REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

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**MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM**

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Tel: (061) 2842287  
Fax: (061) 229936

4<sup>th</sup> Floor SWABOU Building  
7 Post Street Mall  
Private Bag 13346  
Windhoek

31 August 2001

The West Caprivi Traditional Authority  
and Management Committee  
C/o Private Bag 1050  
Ngweze  
Katima Mulilo

---

Dear Sir

**REQUEST FOR AN APPOINTEMENT**

Your letter dated 14 August 2001, has reference.

The request on behalf of West Caprivi Traditional Authority and Management Committee to have an audience with the Minister has been carefully considered.

The Ministry will grant an audience to the citizens and people from the West Caprivi, and the Ministry will be prepared to listen to your concerns and proposals, as long as the delegation, which is going to come for discussions, is not coming under the auspices of the traditional authority. Due to the fact that the Ministry, as a Government body cannot grant an audience to an authority which is not recognized in terms of the traditional authority act.

The Ministry of Environment and Tourism will be in a position to grant an audience on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2001, as specified under the conditions stipulated above.

~~I hope you understand the position of the Ministry, and the Deputy Minister and Under-Secretary for Natural Resource Management will meet with the delegation.~~

Yours sincerely

Signed by candidate

T C Erkana  
PERMANENT SECRETARY.

23 October 2002

Your Ref:  
Our Ref: Norman Tjombe

**BY HAND**

**THE HONOURABLE MINISTER  
MINISTRY OF REGIONAL, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING  
PRIVATE BAG 23289  
WINDHOEK  
NAMIBIA**

Dear Honourable Minister

**Re: THE KXOE TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY**

We act for Chief Thaddeus Cheddau, the Chief of the Kxoe Community of West Caprivi and the Kxoe Traditional Authority.

We have been advised by our clients that in a letter dated 18 July 2001 (which letter was only received by our clients during August 2001), our clients were advised by yourself that:

- a) his Excellency the President of the Republic of Namibia had mandated you to inform our clients that he had accepted some of the recommendations of the Council of Traditional leaders in connection with the dispute between our clients and the Mbukushu Traditional Authority;
- b) the area claimed by our clients traditionally in terms of our clients chieftainship belonged to the Mbukushu Traditional Authority;
- c) in terms of Section 5(3)(a) and (b) of the Traditional Authorities Act, No. 25 of 2000 there was no reason why a Kxoe Traditional Authority should be established; and
- d) our clients would be permitted to practice their culture, customs and language freely.

In regard to the recommendation made by the Council of Traditional Leaders and the decision made by his Excellency the President, we are instructed to request that you kindly furnish our clients with the following in writing, namely:

- i) the date when the recommendation aforesaid was made by the Council of Traditional Leaders to his Excellency the President;
- ii) a copy of such recommendation;
- iii) the date when the President made a decision to accept some of the recommendations of the Council of Traditional Leaders;
- iv) precise details (and a copy of any documentation pertaining thereto) relating to the recommendations aforesaid of the Council of Traditional Leaders accepted by his Excellency the President;

- v) the written reason(s) for the President accepting some recommendations of the Council of Traditional Leaders, as referred to in paragraph (iii) above;
- vi) the reason(s) for the his Excellency the President rejecting some of the recommendations of the Council of Traditional Leaders;
- vii) when and by whom the decision was taken to declare that West Caprivi falls under the traditional authority jurisdiction of the Mbukushu Traditional Authority;
- viii) the reason(s) for the decision referred to in paragraph (vii) above;
- ix) copies are requested of any documentation pertaining to the decision referred to in paragraph (vii) above;
- x) when and by whom the decision to declare that our clients were not entitled to their own traditional authority was taken;
- xi) copies are requested of any documentation pertaining to the decision referred to in paragraph (x) above;
- xii) the basis upon which it is alleged that our clients are "allowed to practice their culture, customs and language freely".

We are further instructed to advise you that our clients do not accept the recommendation of the Council of Traditional Leaders and accordingly do not accept the decision of his Excellency the President to declare that West Caprivi falls under the traditional authority jurisdiction of the Mbukushu Traditional Authority, and secondly, that they are not entitled to have their own Kxoe Traditional Authority designated as such. We are accordingly further instructed to reserve our clients rights to take appropriate legal action in this regard.

We look forward to hearing from you at your very earliest convenience in regard to the above information requested.

Yours faithfully

NORMAN TJOMBE

# REPORT ON WEST CAPRIVI SITUATION

JANUARY 2002, KARINE ROUSSET, IRDNC

## AIM OF REPORT

- 1) to provide NACSO with information about the security situation in West Caprivi,
- 2) to give an overview of current and planned IRDNC activities in West Caprivi,
- 3) to provide recommendations for how CBNRM goals can be achieved in West Caprivi.

## SECURITY SITUATION

### 1998

August - October: Over 1000 residents of Omega III and surrounding villages in West Caprivi flee to Botswana soon after an attack on Katima Mulilo by secessionist rebels. They say they were terrified after Namibia Defence Force (NDF) soldiers came into the village, threatened people and fired shots. Over the next few months, a few hundred more West Caprivians from villages throughout the Game Park also flee to Botswana, claiming persecution of the Khwe at the hands of the NDF and Special Field Force (SFF). Most of them are taken to the Dukwe Refugee Camp, near Francistown, whilst others find refuge with relatives.

### 1999

July: The majority of Namibian citizens who ran to Botswana in 1998 are repatriated. On the ground, the situation with security forces stationed in West Caprivi remains tense and after a few months the entire group, including others, return to Botswana.

Late 1999: The Namibian government allows Angolan government armed forces (FAA) to use the West Caprivi launch a counter-attack on UNITA rebels in southern Angola.

December: Suspected UNITA gunmen mount the first of a number of attacks on The Bushbaby cuca-shop in Mutc'iku. A number of Mutc'iku residents are injured in the attack, and flee to Botswana.

### 2000

January: French tourists are killed in a roadside attack on their passing vehicle near Omega on the West Caprivi tar road. Sporadic attacks on vehicles over the next few months claim more lives, including the wife of the West Caprivi Management Committee Chairman. A twice-daily military convoy for motorists passing through West Caprivi is introduced by the NDF (at the time of writing this report, in January 2002, the convoy is still operating). NDF camps are set up every 20 km along the tar road between Mutc'iku and Omega III. FAA soldiers are based in Mutc'iku, Omega and Chetto.

10 January: Liep Kamba (IRDNC Field Officer) and John Rindi, both Khwe residents of Mutc'iku, are arrested by security forces for suspected collaboration with UNITA and released after few days due to lack of evidence. Khwe men, including Thaddeus Tcadau, the Acting-Chief, who are under suspicion by the NDF are routinely questioned and held in detention for a few days at a time over this period.

22 January: CGG Thaddeus Mubili is killed by an FAA soldier at Mushangara. His cattle were stolen by UNITA. He reports this to the NDF. During the joint NDF- FAA patrol to follow UNITA, an FAA soldier steps on a landmine and is killed. The FAA accuse Thaddeus of complicity with UNITA and shoot him.

11-13 August: 15 Khwe men from Mutc'iku are beaten up and then detained by the NDF (John Muyambo, Sandre Dikoro, Diyando Kayawe, Mayima Rambo, Reno/Nelson Dikoro, Mathias Kavari, Mundu Dindo, Jamie Gombo, Eddi Boschof, Mbumbo Kapinga, Tauzen Mbongi, Dingomba Kapura, Mbumbo Ndikuwa, Thomas Andries, Mungomba Machai).

20 September: Oena Dihaku (IRDNC Field Officer), Tauzen Manu (sergeant at Omega Police Station), and Moses Mbango (West Caprivi Campsite and Management Committee member), all three prominent Khwe figures, are arrested on charges of high treason. Bail is granted on 12 October 2000. In November 2001, all charges against the 3 accused are dropped owing to lack of evidence.

10 December: Khwe and !Xu (Vasekele) leaders hold an emergency meeting to develop a strategy to counter what they describe as persecution, harassment and frequent wrongful arrest of themselves and their people as alleged UNITA collaborators and/or secessionists by the NDF. Many men at the meeting described being detained and questioned two or three times by the NDF. Although no evidence was found against them, they stated that they still feared for their lives. The meeting believed that the leadership of the Khwe people was being specially targeted by security forces, since virtually every man who had a salaried job, was a management committee member, or drove a car, had been detained, or was being repeatedly arrested and harassed.

Food shortages become a real problem as residents of West Caprivi are not allowed to wander in the bush to collect bush foods, which previously accounted for up to 50 % of their diet, and many fear planting crops due to the planting of landmines in their fields.

## 2001

22 January: Meeting with Adv. B. Gawanas, Ombudswoman, in Omega to bring to her office's attention the harassment that Khwe are experiencing from security forces.

6 February: A truck driving along the West Caprivi tar road without the military convoy is attacked, and the driver injured.

23 February: 2 civilians from Omega are seriously injured when stepping on mines planted near their homesteads. NDF and police refuse to take the wounded to Andara hospital. Another 8 mines, planted in the heart of Omega, are detected and defused by the NDF. In a later landmine incident in Omega, the civil servant responsible for the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation, and 2 NDF soldiers are killed, and a number of others injured.

21 May: At around midnight, around 100 UNITA bandits attack a homestead in Mutc'iku. One woman is killed, a boy injured, clothes and food are stolen and the bandits return to Angola with 2 women from the village. 3 NDF soldiers are seriously

injured when stepping on a landmine whilst following the bandits. Throughout the period covered in this report, villages such as Mutc'iku, Mushangara, Omega and Shamakwi experience sporadic attacks and theft from unknown bandits suspected to be UNITA rebels.

1-6 July: Representatives from the Legal Assistance Centre visit West Caprivi to collect affidavits from the relatives of the 15 Mutc'iku residents who were arrested in August 2000 and have not been seen since. SFF members say the meetings are illegal and twice shoot over a vehicle taking witnesses home after collecting their statements. In the High Court application that follows, the NDF states that an unknown number of people were arrested around the said dates, but that all detainees escaped to Angola on the night of their arrest. However, notes were written to the wives and relatives of the detainees after date that the NDF claims they ran away.

9 July: 5 Khwe men (around 18 years old) are arrested by the NDF in Mutc'iku on suspicion that they have weapons hidden on an island in the Kavango river.

10 July: NDF take one of the arrested men, Hans Dikua, to the river. His body is recovered from the river on 17 July. The army claims that he drowned. Relatives accuse the army of shooting him. Hans Dikua grew up along the river and could swim. The NDF refuse a post-mortem and organise for the body to be buried immediately. The other 4 detainees remain in custody at the Omega police cells.

22 July: Late at night, a group of 3 suspected UNITA bandits steal goods from Mangaranganja village near Omega.

August: The Khwe traditional authority receive a letter from the Minister of Regional and Local Government and Housing stating that the Khwe application for their leadership body to be officially recognised by the state has been denied by the president. The letter continues that the neighbouring Mbukushu traditional authority, under the leadership of Chief Erwin Mbambo (whose legitimacy as Mbukushu Fumu or chief has been questioned in a June 2001 referendum held in the Mukwe area, west of the Kavango river), is the legitimate traditional authority responsible for the West Caprivi. However, the letter concedes, the Khwe community is free to continue practising its culture, language and traditions. This government decision goes directly against the Traditional Authority Act, where it is stipulated that every 'traditional community' - defined as a 'people group' sharing ancestors, language and a common cultural history and traditions that usually live together in a communal area - has the right to have its own traditional authority recognised and paid by government. Khwe maintain that although their traditional authority system is not conventional, and decision making is built on a strong system of inclusive consultation and consensus-seeking, there is a traditional authority structure in place that is recognised by the majority of West Caprivi residents. Khwe regard the government's failure to recognise their leadership as a direct affront on the Khwe community. The Khwe traditional authority has requested the LAC to represent them in legal action against the state. In its project implementation in West Caprivi, IRDNC consults with the West Caprivi traditional authority. This traditional authority may not have government recognition, but it is the most widely accepted local leadership body in the area.

4 September: Meeting between a Khwe delegation from West Caprivi with Adv. B. Gawanas, Ombudswoman, and Adv. T. Namiseb, Director of Investigations at the Ombudswoman's office, Windhoek. The meeting raises community concerns over the security situation and targeting of Khwe. The lack of access to ID documents and birth certificates in West Caprivi leaves residents vulnerable to harassment.

5 September: The Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Defence refuse to meet with a visiting West Caprivi delegation, although a number of letters were sent requesting a meeting over a month in advance. The delegation want to discuss their concerns over the continuing lack of security in West Caprivi and to highlight their efforts and desire to work together with the security forces. Senior officials cite reasons for their denial of an audience to the delegation as that the group did not follow the correct channels by going via the Governor, and that the relevant people will not be available to meet with them.

September - November: The Caprivi Region Governor, Mr Sibalatani, is questioned by the Minister of Defence about IRDNC work in West Caprivi. The Governor then claims on a number of occasions that IRDNC has not kept him informed of activities in the West Caprivi area falling under his jurisdiction (Chetto - Kwando River). Meetings are held with the Governor to provide him with reports and letters that had been sent to him previously to inform him of IRDNC activities. Eventually, the Governor acknowledges that he has in fact received regular correspondence from IRDNC, but that these letters may have been misplaced by his secretary.

2002

March: Based on reports from IRDNC Field Officers, security forces are still present in West Caprivi, but the situation is less tense. Regular meetings are held between local headmen, IRDNC staff, and security forces. The NDF assists with the FO's programme and provide him with armed escorts to facilitate his work.

## **STATUS OF CBNRM IN WEST CAPRIVI**

### **IRDNC activities**

The security situation in West Caprivi has seriously impacted on IRDNC activities. Activities are reviewed every quarter, and changed according to the military situation. Regular meetings and information sharing sessions are held with the security forces, both at village and regional level and by junior and senior staff. Limited CGG patrols are taking place, all south of the tar road, and only after approval is gained from NDF forces stationed in the relevant areas.

All 3 IRDNC Field Officers in West Caprivi have been accused of complicity with UNITA. Oena Dihaku, in charge of a team of CGGs who led anti-poaching and illegal weapon confiscation campaigns with the police and army in West Caprivi, was arrested on a charge of high treason in 2000. His name was cleared when the case was thrown out of court due to a lack of evidence in November 2001. His project radio, used to communicate with the IRDNC Katima office, which was confiscated, remains in the hands of the police. Ronnie Mahindi, IRDNC community capacity-building Field Officer, fled Namibia when he heard he was about to be arrested for allegedly taking part in a UNITA ambush. Ronnie, who had just returned from paying CGG

salaries in his project car, fled to Botswana. He has informed senior project staff that he is keen to return home and clear his name, but fears arrest. He is still in Botswana. Lieb Kamba, Field Officer for enterprise development, was arrested and detained, but released after a few days owing to lack of evidence.

The thriving craft industry of West Caprivi was threatened because the place where palms for basket making are collected is now a no access zone under military control. Fortunately, IRDNC has been able to transport the craftmakers to an area about 150 km away from their villages to collect palms so that their income remains secure. Recent discussions with the NDF suggest that a military escort will be provided to allow craftmakers to collect palms in West Caprivi soon. Craft earnings have been vital to ensure food security in Chetto and Mashambo villages during the conflict period.

The N//goabaca Community Campsite staff members are being temporarily supported by IRDNC until tourism resumes.

Training workshops and meetings continue to be facilitated by IRDNC, although such activities are held outside of West Caprivi since the NDF do not allow group gatherings there.

Staff secondments to the IRDNC programme in the Kunene region have allowed for a transfer of skills, cultural exchange and for the boosting of motivation in the West Caprivi Field Officer, 2 Community Resource Monitors and 4 Community Game Guards.

Plans for 2002 include continuing support and training to the committee, CGGs, CRMs, and craftmakers, continuing information sharing with the security forces at all levels, finding opportunities for secondments in other parts of the country for key committee and staff members, and a mapping project in collaboration with the National Remote Sensing Unit, that is part of a regional Oral History Project.

### **Bwabwata National Park**

An application from the West Caprivi community for a conservancy to be established in West Caprivi was denied by MET in February 1996. In 1999, the MET held meetings with the West Caprivi community to discuss MET's Conservation and Tourism development Vision for the Caprivi. According to this plan, certain parts of the West Caprivi Game Park will be de-proclaimed (Mutc'iku and Omega), others will become multiple-use areas of a National Park (eg. Chetto, Omega III, Mashambo), and the Buffalo and Kwando Core Areas will be declared Core Areas of Bwabwata National Park.

The community supported these plans since it would allow for conditional rights over natural resource management, tourism and the potential to earn benefits from trophy hunting. However, local people fear that once the National Park is declared, promises to the community will be forgotten. Most local people do not support a MET proposal that a conservancy be established in Mutc'iku and Omega. Both of these villages have a high population and livestock density and will be fenced by MET and residents feel there is little likelihood that wildlife will remain inside the fence. In addition, residents of the proposed multiple-use area will not be allowed to keep cattle, and

they believe that income earned from wildlife will not compensate for the loss of the right to farm with cattle. Another concern voiced by West Caprivi residents is that they will not be allowed to collect bush foods and medicines throughout West Caprivi once the area is declared a National Park.

At an October 1999 meeting with MET, the Director of Resource Management stated that 2 hunting concessions existed for West Caprivi. The money from these concessions, she said, would be deposited into the Game Products Trust Fund and funds were to be paid out to a legally recognised body in West Caprivi. On 5 September 2001, representatives from the West Caprivi Management Committee met with the Deputy Minister of Environment and Tourism, Hon. Petrus Ilonga and MET under-secretary, Maria Kapere. The MET officials explained that trophy-hunting revenues can only be transferred to a legally recognised body. The West Caprivi Committee was advised to establish a Trust, with the assistance of George Masilo and Maria Kapere from MET. MET also assured the delegation that residents of West Caprivi will be allowed to continue collecting bush foods in the Park with a license from MET.

The most recent correspondence from MET to West Caprivi residents (ref: N11/16/1) explains that revenue from 2 hunting concessions in West Caprivi (around the Kwando core area, and in the Buffalo core area) may be used for wildlife conservation/management and rural development. However, MET is only prepared to negotiate with committees such as conservancy committees with regard to rural development. MET advises that a Management Committee be established for the central multiple use area of Bwabwata National Park, with whom MET can negotiate for funding related to wildlife conservation or tourism development.

A Management Committee, with representatives from all villages in West Caprivi, has been in place since 1996. This committee, which has been periodically re-elected, has broad legitimacy with West Caprivi residents, and has a 7 year history of representing community interests to MET and other government agencies, is the ideal body to consult with MET regarding developments in the multiple use area.

#### **Recommendations for action**

- χ NACSO should lobby MET to recognise the legitimacy of the existing West Caprivi Management Committee for negotiations related to obtaining trophy hunting revenue for tourism/conservation developments in the multiple use area of Bwabwata National Park.
- χ IRDNC should obtain advice from LAC, and request that the LAC assist the West Caprivi community to form a legally recognised Trust. The Trust should seek to obtain legal accountability over natural resource management in the area, and as such operate as a quasi-conservancy.
- χ NACSO can lobby MET to ensure that the proposed Bwabwata National Park will be declared in a category of protected area that will allow for direct negotiations between the MET and West Caprivi community.
- χ NACSO can continue to lobby MET to ensure the Ministry's intention to negotiate with communities in West Caprivi for conditional rights over tourism, hunting concessions and natural resource management once Bwabwata National Park is proclaimed.

## **Tourism**

Although there is almost no tourism in West Caprivi at the moment, this period offers an opportunity for preparation and planning. White Sands, a former trophy hunting camp, situated next to the N//goabaca Campsite, on a prime piece of Kavango riverfront overlooking Popa Falls, has immense future tourism potential. The former hunting concessionaire based here, donated the White Sands camp infrastructure to the West Caprivi community. However the camp was looted in May 2000 and almost all items removed. West Caprivi residents envisage the camp as a potential Joint Venture lodge. A number of tour operators have approached the community to develop the site, but up to now the status of the land has prevented any serious negotiations with the private sector. White Sands currently falls in the Game Park, although based on MET plans for West Caprivi, White Sands is in an area proposed for de-proclamation. After de-proclamation, the community will be able to apply for a PTO for the site. Until then, it is necessary to obtain permission from MET before any developments go ahead there.

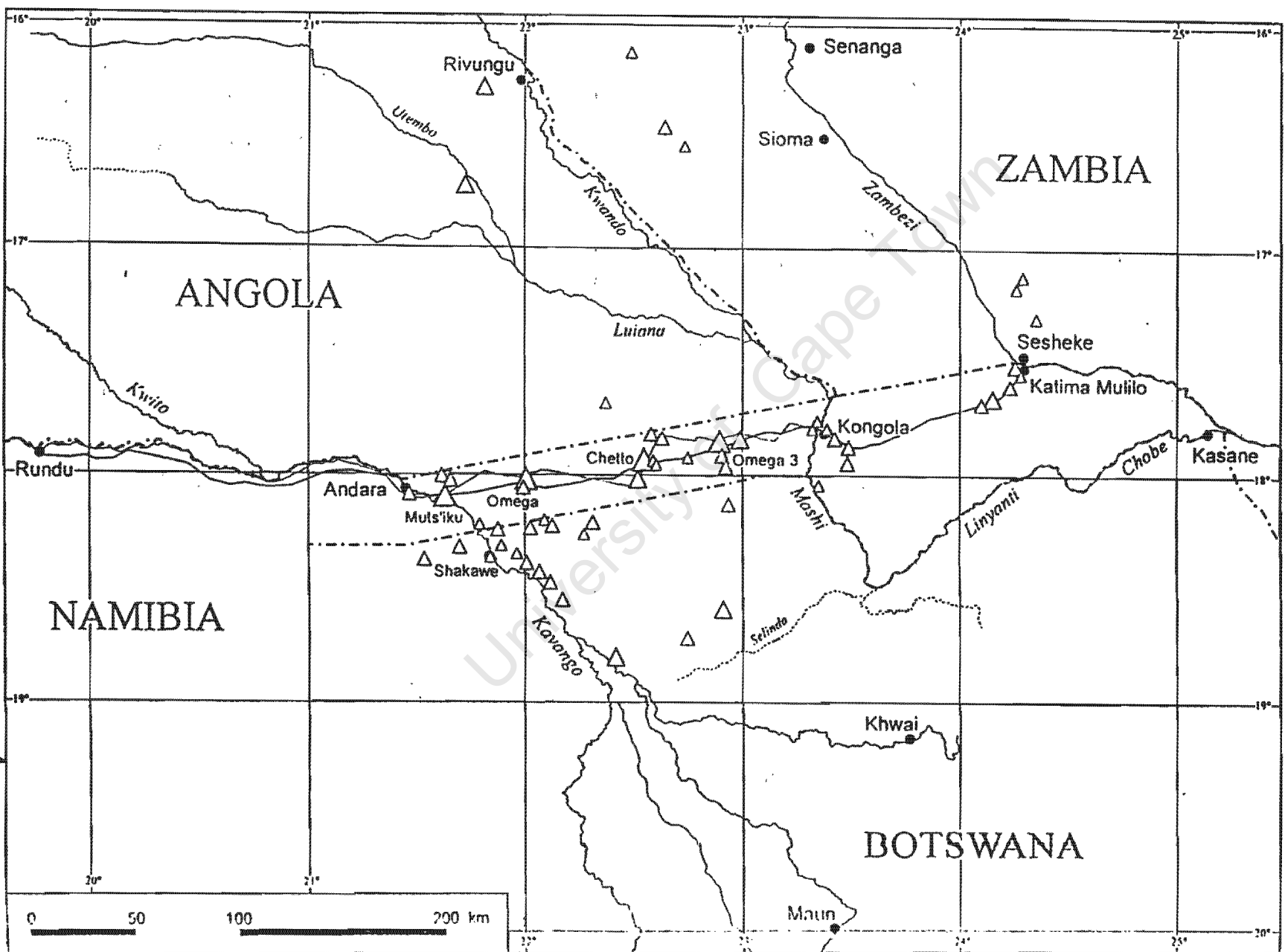
In August 2001, Chief Mbambo, the neighbouring Mbukushu chief, was intent to lease White Sands to a businessperson and began clearing the site. The West Caprivi community did not support this move as the large majority of West Caprivi residents do not regard Chief Mbambo as having authority over West Caprivi and because Chief Mbambo has no authority to lease land on behalf of the government (he has no tourism concession or PTO). Chief Mbambo has halted his developments for the moment.

At a meeting between the West Caprivi Management Committee, and the Deputy Minister and Under-Secretary of MET in 2001, the MET, in principle, accepted the community's claim to White Sands. But no commitment was given to grant the community rights to start developing the site until the Mutc'iku area's de-proclamation, a process that has been stalled by the security situation, is finalised.

## **Recommendations for action**

- χ The West Caprivi community will need assistance from NACOBTA and NACSO to continue lobbying MET to ensure that once the Mutc'iku area is de-proclaimed, they will automatically be granted permission from MET and MLRR for a PTO or concession to develop the site.

Map 2: Overview on Kxoe Settlements in Botswana, Angola, Zambia and Namibia



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