

# Preface

This book has come a long way. Data collection for some chapters already began in 1986 with research in the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi. While the manuscript is about to be completed in February 2005, I am currently doing fieldwork in Namibia and a limited amount of data from the latest period of investigations has entered the book. Hence, data collection, analysis and discussions on topics salient to this book span almost two decades. In the course of these twenty years I spent almost six years either in Namibia or in Kenya, mostly staying at the respective field sites. Numerous people and institutions have been of great help in making this possible. First and foremost I would like to thank both the Namibian and the Kenyan government for granting and extending research permits. My sincere thanks go to the Institute of African Studies of the University of Nairobi and the Institute of Geography and Environmental Sciences and the History Department of the University of Namibia as well as the Namibia Economic Planning and Research Unit for hosting me during my studies. The local traditional leaders under whose authority the respective field sites fell, namely Chief Kapkoyo of the Pokot around Nginyang and Chief Kapika of the Ovahimba living in the wider Omuramba/Omuhonga area, accepted me, a stranger, in their community and never objected to my numerous and at times unusual questions. Both communities are organised along gerontocratic principles. Hence, elders – many of them deceased by now – were of great importance not only as repositories of collective memories but also as men in a position to explain the intricacies of local histories and the complex fabric of their societies. Loriko, Wasareng, Kanyakol, Todokin and Lotepamuk among the Pokot were crucial. Among the Himba Katjira, Tjikumbamba and Kozongombe were such lead figures. I hope that this volume may to some extent contribute to conveying their knowledge and their memories to future generations.

In Kenya I would like to thank Yusuf K. Losute and his family for their hospitality. Yusuf's father Wasareng introduced me to many aspects of Pokot life. As an energetic elder he is a major actor in many of my case studies. Yusuf Losute proved to be a competent translator in the early phases of my research as did John R. Konopöchö, Bebe and Simon. Yusuf's brothers Teta, Arekwen and Amos acted as guardians during various periods of fieldwork. Many Pokot friends contributed immensely to the success of the research: Lomirmoi, Lopetö, Akurtepa and Rengeruk, Tochil and the unfortunate

Ngoratepa, Wiapale, Dangapus and Lokomol. In Kenya the early phases of my studies were facilitated by the kind hospitality of the Trittler and Glombitza families. Throughout the past twenty years, Kositei Mission Station was a secure haven. Many aspects of this research were discussed intensively with Father Sean McGovern and Sister Rebecca Janaček, both being in charge of developmental programmes in the region. During the major period of fieldwork in Kenya I benefited greatly from discussions with my colleagues Urs Herren and Cory Kratz during brief visits to Nairobi. During the first few weeks of field work Cory once rescued me from the scene of an accident I had been involved in. Her insistence that things like these may happen but do not portend anything for the future perhaps persuaded me to persevere.

In Namibia first of all I would like to thank the families of the late Kandjuhu Rutjindo and his son Mungerenyau Rutjindo. They welcomed me to their homes and taught me to speak and to behave appropriately and according to Himba norms and values. Like the Losutes in Kenya the Rutjindos provided a secure and comfortable base from which to explore social relations, economic strategies and worldviews. Both households were regarded as successful herding units where I learnt a great deal merely by observation. In Kaokoland, the friendship with Mutaambanda, Maongo, Tako, Motjinduika, Vahenuna, Karambongenda, Kakapa and Kamuhoke were and still are of great relevance. Be it for my greater awareness, be it for lesser emphasis on gender divides among the Himba, I found it easier to enlist women as trusted informants in north-western Namibia than in Kenya. Among the Pokot most of my information on women originated from the immediate social environment I was living in, notably from Chepösait who, adopting me as yet another child, for two years prepared my food while casually voicing her views on Pokot society. Among the Himba the elder women Kozombandi, Mukaakaserari, Kazupotjo and Watundwa were essential during various periods of my work. Anke Kuper shared a camp with me during a part of the study. Discussions with her on methodology and epistemology furthered my research work. Uhangatenwa Kapi furthered the project as an assistant in many aspects of anthropological fieldwork: from survey work to complex explanations of genealogical relations his endurance and practical intelligence were of great help. In Opuwo Father Zaby's guest house provided a quiet and peaceful place to rest. In Windhoek I greatly enjoyed the hospitality of the Baas family. Although Pokot lands and Nairobi are only some 300 km apart while my Namibian field site was about 1000 km away from the capital Windhoek, I always felt that the rural/urban gap was easier to bridge in Namibia: in the cosmopolitan Windhoek environment I benefited greatly from discussions with Wolfgang Werner, Peter Reiner and Antje Reiner-Otto, Werner Hillebrecht and Jekura Kavari.

Obtaining empirical data is one thing, data analysis and interpretation pose an entirely different kind of challenge. Sadly, my long-time teacher Thomas Schweizer died before this book was completed. Epistemology and

methodology were greatly influenced by his work, by discussions with him over many years and by the shared conviction that there is a reality out there, which is accessible and interpretable according to analytical principles. Hartmut Lang and Michael Casimir influenced key passages of the book as teachers, colleagues and friends. Michael Schnegg and Julia Pauli, Aparna Rao, Joachim Görlich, Barbara Göbel, Christoph Brumann, Erwin Orywal contributed to the manuscript in various ways: by discussing certain sections, by helping with data analysis or by drawing my attention to aspects I had overlooked. I felt privileged to share not only ideas but also an apartment with the historian Jan Bart Gewald. His intimate knowledge of southern African history was inspiring and helped me to contextualise data along diachronic paths. Polly Wiessner did more than others to transform the manuscript into a book by carefully reading chapter after chapter, correcting minor mistakes as much as pointing out major errors. During discussions with her the manuscript achieved its final form.

I would also like to thank three anonymous reviewers for their comments. Although criticism is sometimes hard to digest, I found the issues they put forward extremely helpful when finishing the manuscript.

As the book is written in English, which is not my native tongue, I had to rely on translators and native speakers for corrections: while Paul Harris worked on the initial manuscript, Eileen Küpper and Luise Hoffmann polished the final draft. Maps were expertly drawn by Monika Feinen. Sonja Gierse-Arsten and Nicole Körkel skilfully assembled the bibliography and the various sections of this book, making sure that from photographs, to tables and to bibliographic entries nothing was omitted. Brigitte Schwinge and Virginia Suter assisted during earlier periods of tiring data entry. Needless to say, any errors still found in the book are entirely my own responsibility.

This book would not have been completed without the emotional support from many people. During the early phases of research parental help is often necessary and I benefited greatly thereby. During the latter part of the study and throughout the entire phase of writing my wife, Heike Heinemann-Bollig, made many sacrifices to help me persevere. Her assistance ranged from help in the frantic search for “lost” literature or data bits to discussions on the heart of the matter: how to understand an alien culture and how to present it in writing. Last but not least I thank my two children, Antonio and Vivian, for sharing the most recent years of this project and for accompanying me on the long roads to the various the field sites.

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