EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NAMIBIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE HIMBA OF EPUPA FALLS

BY

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ABSTRACT

Namibia, located in southwest Africa, is comprised of twelve different indigenous peoples with different histories and cultures. One indigenous group, the Himba, occupy the Kunene Region in the North. This project examined the interaction between the Himba of Epupa Falls and the Namibian government using interviews conducted between June 26th to June 28th of 2016. One of the major topics to be addressed is conservancies and ecotourism, which is the biggest contributor to the Namibian economy. The goal of the study was to determine how the Himba view the actions of their government and what they want from it going forward. The main findings were that the Himba have very little interaction with their government and the conservancy that they live on, and are mostly concerned with their day-to-day life.

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1990, Namibia is one of the youngest countries in the world. It is located in southwest Africa, along the west coast of the continent. Namibia shares a border with South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Angola, and Zambia. The climate of Namibia is predominantly dry compared to the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, although there is some variation in different parts of the country (Goudie 2014). Namibia is named after the Namib Desert, which stretches along the west coast and across the southern half of the country. The Namib Desert contains many different climates, most of it receiving little rainfall throughout the year (Goudie 2014). The large, flat stretches are mostly unoccupied by people due to the harsh conditions. While there is still wildlife in the region, populations are limited by the sparse vegetation and limited access to water on the desert coast (Dupont 2006). Rainfall in the desert varies based on location, increasing from the coast toward the interior. The semi–arid northern area of the country
receives more rainfall than the southern region, and rainfall increases moving in from the coast (Dupont 2006; Goudie 2014). There is considerably more wildlife here than in the South, and where most Namibians and tourists are located. An important feature of Namibia is the Central Highlands, which divides the interior of the country from the desert. The name refers to the increase in elevation, as the interior of Namibia has a much higher altitude than the coast. The high altitude makes this part of Namibia both cooler and wetter than the coastal desert (Goudie 2014). Rainfall in the Central Highlands ranges from low near the desert coast to high in the more-vegetated interior.

Namibia is inhabited by 12 different groups of indigenous people that span across the entire country (Malan 1995). The largest of these ethnic groups is the Ovambo, who make up about half of the total population of Namibia (Potgieter 1991). The other half is divided up amongst the other native peoples as well as whites. The first settled groups were the Damara and the San (also referred to as the bushmen) (Malan 1995). These groups moved into Namibia from other parts of Africa, most notably Angola in the North, before fragmenting into the many different groups seen today. Although the exact time is not known, it is estimated that the first groups moved in as early as 1390 (Wallace 2011; Malan 1995). The exact period of time when this movement occurred is not known, although archeological evidence such as cave drawings and preserved artifacts give a rough estimate of when and where settlement first occurred (Wallace 2011).

Before Namibia was established as a country in 1990, it was a colony of Germany from 1884 to the end of World War I in 1915. During this time there was many conflicts between native Namibians and the German colonists. The Germans launched a campaign to exterminate the native population, with upwards of 30,000 people killed (Horst 1980). Over time many more
Germans moved in the country and continued to exploit the locals until the fall of the German Empire. Namibia then became a colony of South Africa, during which time more conflicts arose between Namibians and colonial powers. After a long fight for independence, Namibia was finally declared independent in 1990 (Bauer 2001).

The creation of the Namibian government and constitution was overseen by the United Nations Security Council as part of Resolution 435, which sought to end conflict in southern Africa and to promote free and fair elections in the colony formerly known as South-West Africa (Potgieter 1991). Namibia’s creation is somewhat of a unique case, as its constitution was formed by a constituent assembly without having to negotiate with the former colonial power (Erasmus 2010; Potgieter 1991). The first election received a large amount of international attention, as the world waited to see if a smooth transition of power could occur in a region that had long been plagued by violence and ethnic conflicts (Erasmus 2010). The elections proceeded without conflict and the result was deemed to be fair by the United Nations (Potgieter 1991).

The Namibian government was modeled after the American government, with a three-party system based in the capital city of Windhoek. The government is headed by a president and prime minister elected every 5 years along with a bicameral legislature and a Supreme Court (Erasmus 2010). Today, the country has a population of 2.3 million and encompasses an area just under 319,000 square miles. Namibia has the second lowest population density per unit area in the world, and much of the economy is dependent on tourism (Forrest 1994).

The Himba are one of the indigenous peoples of Namibia that occupy the northern part of the country near the Kunene River as well as southern Angola. The Himba are semi-nomadic, and keep herds of cattle in place of hunting and gathering (Malan 1995). They are the last nomadic group in Namibia, occupying small villages in place of large cities. The Himba live in
the Kunene region of Namibia, far away from the large cities near the capital and in the Caprivi region (Novelli 2009).

The traditional lifestyle of the Himba is unique and well-preserved in Epupa, which is different from the major urban cities in other parts of the country (Novelli 2009). Tourists have always been attracted to the national parks of Namibia, but a growing minority choose to visit the less developed areas in the North near the Kunene River (Ashley 2000). Unlike other indigenous groups, many Himba have chosen to continue tradition and resist the changes that have occurred throughout the country (Tarr 2007). This stark difference from the rest of Namibia makes the Himba unique, and many tourists are interested in the simple lifestyles that they have (Ashley 2000). Himba women occupy villages during the day while many of the men work elsewhere. These women take part in traditional housework while watching over livestock during the day (Ezzell 2001). This resistance to change is more than just cultural, with many proposed building projects in the area meeting opposition from locals who want to keep their homeland from changing (Bollig 2011; Ezzell 2001; Tarr 2007). Many Himba today occupy Epupa Falls, which is located near the northern border of Namibia near Angola. Named after the series of waterfalls in the area, Epupa Falls is relatively isolated due to the absence of paved roads connecting it to the rest of the country (Ezzell 2001). Traveling in and out requires motorized transportation, which is not available to many inhabitants. Despite this, Epupa Falls has become a popular tourist destination due to its scenic waterfalls and the presence of Himba villages (Novelli 2009).

In northern Namibia there are Chiefs that have significant influence in one area and make decisions for the people who live within. Epupa Falls is home to four different chieftaincies along the Kunene River (Bollig 2011). The prominent figures are usually supported by one
ethnic group and are the ones who interact with the Namibian government (Taylor 2008). Chief Kapika is the current Chief of the Epupa Falls region who makes important decisions regarding land use and communication with the outside world (Tarr 2007). Chieftaincies are a remnant of the colonial past in Namibia that have continued to persist after independence (Bollig 2011).

During South African rule, Chiefs were given areas of land in northern Namibia and given the power to govern those areas. After independence, these Chiefs remained in power and proved to be troublesome as they often opposed government initiatives and believed that they knew how to best manage the area under their control (Tarr 2007; Taylor 2008). The Namibian government has allowed these local leaders to keep their positions, in large part because of the stability that they provide to the areas they watch over and because they do not have nearly as much power as they did in colonial times. Although chiefs do not have the strength they once did, it is noteworthy that within a democratic country there are leaders who are awarded power through lineage and not through voting. These Chiefs are highly respected members of the community and have significant influence over people in the area (Bollig 2011; Taylor 2008). It is important to keep this in mind when discussing the Himba, who still have a Chief in power that has been very resistant to change in Epupa Falls (Tarr 2007; Ezzell 2001).

Conservancies are an important part of many places in Namibia, including Epupa Falls. A conservancy is an area of land that is owned and managed by a local community. These communities apply to become conservancies and are responsible for protecting wildlife on the land they occupy. In exchange, they are able to receive profits from ecotourism and can work with private companies to help establish a market for tourists. Profits from tourism are distributed throughout the community and can help establish new infrastructure in remote areas. Conservancies give local people ownership of the land they live on and use, giving them a strong
incentive to protect and manage it (Shakleton 2002; Silva 2014). Studies on the effectiveness of conservancies have demonstrated that having citizens involved in conservation efforts gives them much more incentive to participate and be supportive of programs (Shackleton 2002). One survey collected data between 2009 and 2011 in 2 separate conservancies in Namibia to determine how people felt about transitioning into a conservancy (Silva 2014). The findings were that one group, which overwhelmingly supported the change, were most satisfied with the new jobs and economic growth that could fund community projects. The other group was highly dissatisfied with the conservancy, believing that only those that worked within the tourism industry benefitted and that very few jobs were created (Silva 2014). Some of the notable benefits of conservancies that don’t involve monetary gain include a sense of community and a connection to the area being protected. Conservancies are spread all around the country with varying levels of success and only some locations. Usually the ones with the best locations and infrastructure for ecotourism are able to make significant amounts of profit. In other cases, money is being earned from the conservancy but the community has not seen the direct benefits from the program because of a mismanagement of funds (Silva 2014; Ashley 2000). For these reasons, there has to be other incentives to gain support from citizens.

As of October 2016, there are 82 registered conservancies in Namibia. Epupa Falls in part of the Epupa conservancy, founded in October of 2012 (Source: Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organizations). It is one of the newest conservancies in Namibia, the oldest of which were founded in 1998. The Himba are the native occupants of the Epupa conservancy, and therefore should be aware of the land use restrictions and protection of wildlife that come along with being a conservancy. Ideally, they will also understand the many benefits that come with living on protected land as well. Conservancies are all run independently and operate differently,
and I hope that this project will reveal how the Himba feel about living on the Epupa conservancy and how successful it has been up to this point.

Conservation efforts are put forward from the Namibian government and receive a lot of support from the international community, but to the average citizen conservation is not something that is highly valued (Silva 2014). However, these same citizens are willing to support conservation efforts because of the strong economic incentives that are provided for them as well as non-economic ones. Even if conservancies are not profitable, partial success is possible because of the non-monetary incentives to participate (Silva 2014). Foreign countries have played a crucial role in developing tourism in Namibia through financial support. In 1992, the European Commission allocated money to Namibia in order to begin tourism development in the newly-founded country (Novelli 2009). In the following years strategies were developed to maximize tourism and expand it to different parts of the country. Today donations still play an important role in conservation efforts, and many areas are still dependent on receiving money from foreign entities (Nyakuna 2014; Shackleton 2002). Within Namibia, native groups agreed to joint-ventures with private companies outside of the country to set up lodges to attract tourists. These agreements were mutually beneficial, as part of the profits from the lodges went toward improving the local community and new job opportunities arose (Novelli 2009). Namibia has made significant progress in developing tourism, however there is still a reliance on foreign donations and the work of NGO’s to sustain areas that are not profitable (Silva 2014; Novelli 2009; Shackleton 2002). Some argue that the current model favors large tourist enterprises and the private sector over smaller community-run areas, which tend to struggle financially (Nyakuna 2014).
In June 2016 I participated in a study abroad program from the University of Arizona in Namibia. As part of this class I conducted a survey for the Himba people designed to study their relationship with the Namibian government. The group I travelled with consisted of myself, 2 other undergraduate students, Dr. Hans-Werner Herrmann, and a translator, Anitha. The other students and I all brought different interview questions for the Himba villagers. The goal of this project is to find out what the Himba think about the actions of their government and what they want their representatives to provide for them. Additionally, those surveyed will be asked about their opinions on conservancies, which are a major contributor to the Namibian economy and are part of what separates Namibia from the rest of Africa.

Based on Namibia’s history and economy, I expect that those interviewed will be generally supportive of protecting the environment and ecotourism in general. Namibia’s government has a history of stability, with no revolution movements or political unrest in its short existence. The Himba have a minimalistic lifestyle compared to the rest of the country, so I imagine that anything they want from their representatives in government will not be beyond the sustenance level. I predict that access to clean water will be a top concern for many of those surveyed, with Namibia being a very arid country in the midst of a long drought.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The project was conducted by asking five different questions to the inhabitants of nine different Himba villages in Epupa Falls between June 26 and June 28 of 2016. Epupa Falls is located in Northwest Namibia. It extends all the way to the Kunene River, on the border between Namibia and Angola. The area along the river dominated by dense vegetation and tall trees as well as a wide range of animals. The rest of Epupa Falls is flat and sparsely vegetated, with very
little wildlife. This is where the Himba villages were located. Villages are small and spread out, so most of the area was unoccupied and a car was needed to reach multiple villages a day. The climate is very dry and hot for most of the year with a short rain season in the summer, making the Kunene an important source of water for the locals. The locations we used were selected by our translator, Anitha, who knew which local villages had people to survey and would be willing to take part in the projects. Anitha is from Epupa Falls, so she was familiar with the people in the area and the language. In order to encourage participation, we provided food, tea, petroleum jelly, and tobacco to each of the locations we visited. Additionally, we provided 10 kg bag gram of pap to each village that participated. Pap, the most abundant food in the area, is a grain-based porridge that is served with every meal in Himba villages. We wanted to ensure that the responses to our surveys were honest and that we left a good impression in the villages for future visitors.

Each Himba village was made up of small huts that surrounded livestock pens and other possessions. The livestock in the area was composed of chickens, goats, and cattle. Several dogs also lived in the villages, used to protect livestock from local predators. Himba villages are typically made up of man one man, his wives and their children. Each wife has her own hut, the largest of which belongs to the first wife. Men in the villages are often working away from home, so in their absence the first wives are in charge.

Before the questioning started, we gave the food and household items to the first wife. The surveys were all conducted in a group environment, with all of the interviewers and participants sitting together. We introduced ourselves to each of the members of the village and told them where we were from. Each of the interviewers had prepared a list of 5-7 questions for the villages. All of the questions were reviewed by Anita beforehand to ensure that the Himba would
understand them and be able to respond. After each question was asked, each of the survey participants was given the chance to answer before moving onto the next question. There were three interviewers asking questions, and we alternated who asked their questions first, second, and third in the different villages. The five questions I provided were:

1) How old are you?
2) Did you vote in the last election?
3) What should your representative in Windhoek focus on providing for you?
4) Are conservancies important? Why or why not?
5) What do you like to do most?

I recorded all of the responses that I collected to these questions, and made note of every time a participant had no opinion on the question or did not know how to answer. I also made sure that responses were recorded in such a way that each participant’s answers could be connected, which proved to be important as some participants came and left between questions, resulting in some partial responses to the survey. In the beginning I attempted to record the name of all the participants, but early on it was apparent that the language barrier made it too difficult to do so. To overcome this challenge, I numbered each of the responders and tried to note their position in the village (first wife, visitor, child, etc). The gender of the participant was also noted with the answers that they provided. All of the questions were asked by the translator, which could have created some bias in the responses collected. The questions were designed so that language barrier issues would not come up.

Details about the layout of each village were noted along with answers. I specifically noted the size and amount of huts and the number of people living within the village. Additionally, I took note of the livestock present in each location as well as the number of
animals in each of the herds. In Epupa Falls livestock are an accurate indicator of wealth so knowing details about livestock revealed more information about each of the villages.

I recorded observations about each of the locations that we visited and the way that each of the participants responded to the questions. I took note of the amount of men, women, and children that lived in each of the villages. I also included information about what was built in each of the locations and the amount of livestock present. In order to get the most data possible, I recorded everything that participants said in response to my questions, including the reasoning behind their answers. It was also important to note the social environment of each of the villages, as interviews were not private and responses could have been influenced by having other villagers present. A social environment is made up of both physical surroundings and other people in the same area, both of which can influence how a person would respond to a question. Each village had a different group of people, and the different assortments undoubtedly influenced the responses collected. For example, one village had a man present that answered all of the questions in detail while the women spoke very little throughout the entire visit. Including these details in the observations could help locate a potential source of error or bias that may be present in the final results.

RESULTS

Between the nine villages visited, 33 participants gave an answer to the first of five questions (How old are you?). Of the 33 participants, 14 gave a numerical answer while 19 gave some answer that was not a number. Among men, there were 6 total participants, of which 2 gave a numerical response and 4 were unsure. Of the 27 women that answered, 17 were able to provide a number while 10 were not.
Of the 33 participants in this part of the survey, 58% provided a number for their age, with the remaining 42% responding that they were unsure or giving an answer that was not a number (i.e. many years, very old). Of the men surveyed, 33% were able to give an answer. Among women, this figure was 63%. I cannot say for sure whether or not responders’ age numbers were accurate or not, but I still recorded every answer that I received.

Figure 2: Age Distribution of Participants

The age distribution of those who responded is shown in Figure 1, with 11 of the 33 responders falling between the ages of 15 and 25. Older participants were generally unable to answer this question, indicating that they lost track of their age at some point in time. The Himba did not carry any sort of identification or have recorded birth records, so numerical responses were skewed in the younger direction. For this reason, the responses were likely inaccurate to some degree. Unfortunately, the unreliability of the data prevented me from making any definitive conclusions from the results.
The second question of the survey (Did you vote in the last election?) also received a total of 33 responses from the same group of people that responded to the first question. Of the 33 that responded, 20 stated that they did vote in the last election. Among men, 5 of the 6 responders gave an answer of yes. Among women, 15 of the 25 responders answered yes. Elections occur once every 5 years in Namibia, so it is possible that some of those surveyed were not of voting age at the time of the last election.

After the second question, the data collection changed as the questions being asked required the participant to give a more detailed response rather than a simple one-word answer. For this reason, the number of responses to questions dropped off drastically. The third question of the survey (What should your representative in Windhoek focus on providing for you?) received a total of 3 responses from the 9 villages we visited.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Village</th>
<th>Total Number of Responses</th>
<th>Responses That Answered Question</th>
<th>Answers to Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Okapare</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omuhandja</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovahakauna/hakaona</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oyiyandjaseino</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovazemba</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okapipori</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovizorombuku</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Free transport, school, water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okapare</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orokatati</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>N/A</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Responses to Question 3

Because I did not receive as many answers to the question as I anticipated, I chose to record every response that I got from participants, regardless of whether or not it addressed the original question. “Total Number of Responses” is the amount of people that provided any sort of response to the question, including those that answered it. Of the 9 people that responded to the question, only 3 gave an answer to the question. The other 6 responders instead commented on their own relationship with the Namibian government. 5 of these 6 people discussed their lack of communication with their government. The common theme among these answers was that the Namibian government reaches out to the Himba during election years to collect votes and then disappears until the next election. The one remaining responder commented on the improved infrastructure in Epupa Falls and praised the government for improving the area.

The fourth question (Are conservancies important? Why or why not?) received a total of 16 responses from the villages visited. Once again, I recorded every response to the question, regardless of whether or not it answered it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Village</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Positive Responses</th>
<th>Negative Responses</th>
<th>Indifferent Responses</th>
<th>Comments from Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Okapare</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omuhandja</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>They know not to kill animals, but don’t understand why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovahakauna/hakaona</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Used to be able to hunt animals, but now can’t. Maybe would</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the chart, “indifferent” responders were those that did not answer yes or no to the question because he or she believed that they did not know enough about conservancies to answer. The only people that were included in this category were those who explicitly stated that they did not know enough about conservancies to answer the question. This was indicated by telling our translator they did not understand the question, usually while shaking their heads or laughing. Participants that neither gave an answer nor explained why they could not answer were not included in the chart. Of those polled, only 2 stated that they were supportive of conservancies. 9 of those that responded did not support conservancies and the remaining five felt that they did not know enough about conservancies to give an answer. Supporters of
conservancies all praised the community benefits that they brought. Negative responses all focused on the increased restrictions that conservancies brought to the protected areas. The five that were unsure were aware of the existence of conservancies, but not details on how they were created or operated. Those who did not give any sort of answer did not know what conservancies were at all.

The fifth and final question of the survey (What do you like to do most?) received the widest range of answers due to its open-endedness. The purpose of this question was to better understand the ideas and opinions of the Himba, and to put their survey responses into context. Understanding the wants and needs of the Himba is important when considering what they want their government to provide for them. Rather than list individual detailed responses, I have grouped similar responses based on their general theme. 29 of the people surveyed gave an answer to the question.
DISCUSSION

The relationship between the Himba people and the Namibian government is complicated and seems to be lacking in several areas. The questions provided in my survey were designed to both to gauge the political involvement of the Himba and determine what actions they want their government to take in improving the country. The main finding of the project was that the Himba do not have much interaction with or knowledge about the world outside of their villages. This is in part because the Himba that I interviewed did not have any way to connect to places outside of the villages they lived in. None of the participants had a car or any form of reliable transportation, so their interaction with areas outside of Epupa was severely constrained. Knowing this, it is not surprising that participants had very little interaction with the government and its programs.

Over 60 percent of those surveyed voted in the last election, which is surprisingly high based on the rest of the survey results. The Namibian government is responsible for reaching out to collect votes from more remote areas during election years (Potgieter 1991). This is important, as the government makes an effort to include these people in the elections. Interestingly, voter turnout has steadily declined in Namibian elections since independence, despite an increase in the amount of registered voters. Despite this, the ratio of votes distributed to different political parties has remained relatively constant over time (Keulder 1998). Although a majority of those surveyed claimed to have voted in the last Namibian election, there seemed to be very little connection between the voters and the politicians they were electing.
This political disconnect became especially apparent in the responses to questions 3 and 4. Question 3 saw a significant drop off compared to Question 2, with only 3 participants stating something they would want a representative to provide for them. Five of the survey participants mentioned that after votes are collected from the local people, the Namibian government effectively disappears until something else is needed from the citizens. One of these five people went on to say that she had not seen any benefits from the government since Namibia’s independence in 1990 (Friedman 2006). Only one participant had something positive to say about government actions, describing the newly built school and health clinic in the area. This level of voter apathy is not uncommon in Namibia. Most voters cast their ballots based solely on party affiliation rather than individual issues (Glover 2000).

Namibia’s representative government is dominated by a single political party, the South West African People’s Organization, or SWAPO. Support for SWAPO comes from all around the country and the party has received a large majority of votes in every one of Namibia’s elections. The largest ethnic group in the country, the Ovambo, are overwhelmingly supportive of SWAPO and control most of the positions of the power within the government (Potgieter 1991). Opposing political parties are mostly supported by one group of people in one area, and for that reason they gather little support nationwide. These smaller parties each gain small amounts of support and allow SWAPO to continue dominating the government, which has been the case since Namibia’s independence. Voter apathy allows SWAPO to strengthen their power in the government as many Namibians do not have a local political party and will continue to vote for them because the country has been steadily improving since independence (Glover 2000). Voting strictly based on party lines leads to low voter volatility, and discourages voters from educating themselves on issues up for debate (Keulder 1998).
The fourth survey question continued this same trend, with most survey participants not giving an answer to the question. Conservancies are an important part of the Namibian economy, with a majority of the country being protected land that is owned and operated by local people (Silva 2014). With this in mind I expected the Himba to at least understand what conservancies were and how they worked. The lack of knowledge about conservancies is further evidence that the Himba are mostly unaware of the actions of the government. Although conservancies are operated at the local level, they are ultimately controlled by the Namibian government, which provides many economic incentives for those who apply. Conservancies are a way for local people to gain ownership of the land that they live on, and profits made from tourism are intended to benefit the community as a whole (Silva 2014). In practice, however, this has not always occurred and occupants of conservancies have been subjected to restrictions on land use while not receiving the benefits of tourism (Ashley 2000; Shackleton 2002). These problems arise because those in charge of running conservancies have interests that are detrimental to those occupying the land. Local leaders want to secure a source of income through tourism and go to great lengths to promote conservation to ensure that a conservancy will be profitable over a long period of time (Silva 2014). Current Namibian policies regarding conservancies favor large tourist hubs that are supported by private companies while small, community-run conservancies struggle to make any profit while still being subjected to land use constraints (Nyakuna 2014). Locals who are not involved in creating the conservancy want stability and security in their lives and sometimes the implementation of land use restrictions directly contradicts these (Shackleton 2002; Silva 2014). Regulating land use interferes with these people’s lives, restricting agricultural grounds and limiting the amount of hunting that they can do near their homes. So
although there may be new benefits to infrastructure coming from a conservancy, people’s day-to-day source of income and food can be disrupted by conservancy policies (Silva 2014).

Because of this it is not hard to see why many of the Himba were not supportive of conservancies. Most of those interviewed were only aware of the land use restrictions that came with conservancies and not the many benefits that they can bring to a community. Only one of the survey participants mentioned the improved infrastructure in Epupa Falls, and he was one of only 2 people that had a positive opinion of conservancies. This finding is another example of the disconnect between the Namibian government and the Himba. Conservancies are a significant part of the Namibian economy yet most of those interviewed did not know about any of the benefits that they provide or the reason for their existence. Because conservancies are operated at a local level, the Namibian government cannot be entirely blamed for people’s loss of land use. One way to help remedy this problem would be to give more control to those who live in conservancies instead of giving all power to local governments, who reap the rewards of conservancies without the drawbacks (Ashley 2000; Shackleton 2002). All of the occupants of conservancies should help decide how to run them, as they are all affected by how conservancies operate. Until this takes place, many people will continue to be hurt by conservancy policies. As it stands, tourism in Namibia is reliant on joint-ventures with private investors because they are the most profitable model. Even Epupa Falls, which is located in a more remote part of the country, has several lodges located along the Kunene River that attract many tourists. This trend toward privatization will continue to until community-run tourism is competitive in the tourism market (Nyakuna 2014).

The final question of the survey aimed to determine what kinds of things concerned the Himba people on a day-to-day basis. My goal was to gain some perspective into the lives of
those who took part in the project and to better understand the answers given to me in earlier questions. From the first village it was apparent that there was a communication gap between myself and those surveyed, with the question being interpreted as, “What do you want most?” rather than “What do you like to do most?” The result was a series of answers that, while not answering the initial question, accomplished the same goal. Determining what was important to the Himba people helped me better understand the concerns and priorities that they have. The common theme from the answers to this question is that the Himba do not think of life outside the villages they live in. Almost all of the answers from the participants were just improvements to their current lifestyle. There was no mention of owning land or moving into a different area, rather most responders just wanted to continue what they were already doing, albeit with more financial and resource security.

Taking all of the survey responses into consideration, it is clear that the Himba people primarily care about Epupa and maintaining the current traditional lifestyle they have. The third and fourth questions were especially revealing, as most of the people surveyed were unable to give an answer to either. There are several reasons why this may have occurred, including the participant not understanding the question or not feeling comfortable giving an answer. I had initially hoped that a large amount of data would help me learn about the relationship between the Himba and the Namibian government, but the subsequent results revealed that this relationship was mostly nonexistent. So, while the survey did not get the volume of responses that I was originally hoping for, it provided some insight into the minds of the Himba people and helped me understand how they feel about their country and the government that runs it.

The survey that I created for this project could be significantly improved for future studies. The sample size for the survey was small and therefore not the best representation of the
Himba population as a whole. An improved study would include more total participants as well as more locations. The second question of the survey asking whether or not a participant voted in the last election was partially skewed because not every participant was of voting age at the time of the last election in 2015. Some participants were also not Namibian citizens, as they were not born in Namibia or had not lived there for 4 years (Melber 2003). Originally I hoped that by first asking the person’s age, I could determine which of those surveyed would not have been eligible to vote. However, it quickly became apparent that the ages I was being given were not entirely accurate, as some of those that claimed they had voted would have been underage at the time of the last election. Similarly, some of those who did not vote in the last election may have been underage at the time and should not have been considered in the poll. While this did not invalidate the second question entirely it definitely could have impacted the final result. The third and fourth questions both had a similar problem, as most of the people surveyed did not know enough about government representation and conservancies to share their opinions on them. Future studies should be mindful of this and choose questions that the Himba can relate to, or should focus more on the lack of a relationship between the Himba and government.

Another possible source of bias could be from the group of participants that were included in the survey. As seen in the results, most of the participants were women, and many of the men in the villages chose not to take part in the discussions. Most of the women surveyed were also young, which may be part of the reason that so many of them were unfamiliar with the subject matter in the questions. Future projects should take note of this sampling bias. Translation and a language barrier can also be present in a survey, and this was especially apparent with question 5 when the question proposed was answered in a variety of ways throughout the 9 villages.
REFERENCES

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