

Re-individualising human remains from Namibia: colonialism, grave robbery and intellectual history

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Abstract

In 1885, the Berlin pathologist Rudolf Virchow presented three human skeletons from the colony of German South West Africa to the Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory. The remains had been looted from a grave by a young German scientist, Waldemar Belck, who was a member of the second Lüderitz expedition and took part in the occupation of colonial territory. In an attempt to re-individualise and re-humanise these human remains, which were anonymised in the course of their appropriation by Western science, the authors consult not only the colonial archive, but also contemporary oral history in Namibia. This allows for a detailed reconstruction of the social and political contexts of the deaths of the three men, named Jacobus Hendrick, Jacobus !Garisib and Oantab, and of Belck's grave robbery, for an analysis of how the remains were turned into scientific objects by German science and institutions, as well as for an establishment of topographical and genealogical links with the Namibian present. Based on these findings, claims for the restitution of African human remains from German institutions cannot any longer be regarded as a contemporary phenomenon only but must be understood as part of an African tradition of resistance against Western colonial and scientific practices.

Key words: Grave robbery, colonial history of Namibia, Rudolf Virchow, Berlin Society of Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory, re-individualisation of human remains, claim for restitution

Introduction

A search for traces starts with a chance stumbling, a 'warm trail' and hypothetical links. The starting point for the case in question was a notice published in

1885 in the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* (*ZfE*) by the Berlin pathologist, anthropologist and archaeologist Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902), which stated that the chemist and engineer Karl Eugen Waldemar Belck (1862–1932) had ‘brought back’ from his ‘journey to Angra Pequena and Damaraland’, in what is now Southern and Central Namibia, in addition to various bodily data ‘about the natives’, three ‘skeletons of Hottentots’.¹ The then Director of the Namibian National Archive, Werner Hillebrecht, ‘stumbled’ over this ‘source’ in 2011, when the human remains of twenty Namibians had been returned from the Charité University Hospital in Berlin to Windhoek after several years of negotiations.²

The historical source attracted the particular attention of the authors, because it gave the names of the deceased and therefore for the first time held out the possibility of identifying the human remains which had been carried off from Namibia to Germany during the colonial era. The debates surrounding the restitution of remains which took place in 2011, as well as an additional restitution in 2014, had been essentially shaped by the question of the (indeterminable) identity of the bones.³ They therefore highlighted the dilemma that, in the majority of cases, human remains from colonial acquisition contexts, which were usually exceptionally violent, could no longer be identified by name and returned to the descendants of the deceased.⁴

During a review of Berlin collection listings following the 2011 restitution, one of the three names cited in the source already enabled us to make a link between Virchow’s text, a Berlin collection, the eponymous Rudolf Virchow Collection (RV Collection) and corresponding ‘collection objects’ in the possession of the Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory (BGAEU). Although the names, places of death and burial of the three individuals behind the skeletons had already been published in 1885 in the journal of the BGAEU, the *ZfE*, the Society had not made any publicly visible efforts to date to conduct further research into the provenance of the two skeletons still present.

At the start of our article, we provide the decisive communication from Belck, as it was published by Virchow in 1885. The text passage makes it clear why a rather random search for traces led us from Windhoek to Berlin, to the BGAEU archive and then to various colonial records archives, and finally pointed us towards archives of African oral tradition and memory as well as towards possible descendants. The aim of de-objectification, re-individualisation, re-biographicisation and therefore also re-humanisation⁵ of the human remains found required interdisciplinary connections to be made between all areas and subjects of relevance to colonial and postcolonial provenance research.

The ‘Aufsammler’⁶ or ‘collector’ Belck had supplied Virchow with the following information relating to the ‘3 skeletons of Hottentots’:

The affected individuals, I. Jacobus Hendrick, II. Jacobus !Garisib and III. Oantab, were killed on 30 March 1884 by the Herero at a place, by the name of ||Kharabes. All three were Hottentots and indeed Jacobus Hendrick belonged to the Nama-tribe of the Zwaartboois, J. !Garisib was a cousin of Hendrick, therefore probably also Zwaartbooi (if not related by marriage); I could not ascertain the tribe of Oantab, who served

as a cattle guard with Hendrick. On the characteristics of J. Hendrick I also add that he was lame with one leg and was active as a schoolmaster amongst the Herero of Otyimbingue until the outbreak of war in 1880. The bodies were buried by the Hottentot King Jan Jonker Afrikander, who passed this place shortly afterwards, that is, covered them with stones, which in the case of Oantab took place in a very incomplete manner, so that I had to search for the bones, which had been dragged away by hyenas and jackals, in a radius of a few hundred feet around. By contrast, Oantab's head, like that of J. Hendrick, was fairly well preserved.⁷

In this way, Belck disclosed not only his procedure – a grave robbery and the subsequent shipping of the bones to Berlin – but also local reaction to his activities. In the *ZfE*, he reported further: ‘In Walfisch Bay, Mr. Belck found himself required to leave a skull, among other things, for the daughter of Jacobus Hendrick, who had heard that the traveller was bringing the frame of her father.’⁸

In the context of global debate around return, restitution and repatriation, this reference to an ‘enforced’ return directly at the site is of particular relevance. It alludes to forms of protest, objection and resistance by local communities to the removal of human remains by agents of colonisation. In the course of this article, we will discuss in more detail the quoted ‘requirement’ by the daughter of Jacobus Hendrick, as well as Belck’s deception of her: Belck did not actually leave her the skull of her father but, rather, that of Jacobus !Garisib.

Traces in the colonial archive

The archive of colonial writings and images is essentially an imperial archive, which was created by mission societies, colonial administrations and trading companies to record the history of Namibia in the nineteenth century, and which contained the letters, reports, cards, regulations, statistics and photographs of missionaries, officials, traders (and sometimes their wives as well).⁹ These are supplemented by private archives where possible, and thus where applicable by any available diaries of (research) travellers such as Belck, of officials, merchants and the military. The documents of a literate African elite and thus, e.g., letters or reports by a schoolmaster such as the aforementioned Jacobus Hendrick, by a chief or *kaptein*, as Belck referred to Jan Jonker Afrikaner, or by men and women from the Christian elite, to which both Hendrick and probably his daughter belonged, are only rarely found in this archive.¹⁰ The communications by Belck offer a variety of traces which enable research for named individuals, locations and contexts within this imperial archive. The question of how and from whom Belck, who stayed in the area for only a few weeks, could have found out about the graves seemed important to us, as did the question of from whom he acquired the personal information about the men. We were interested to discover whether Belck’s communications could be verified, supplemented and/or re-evaluated in the light of ‘other’ additional sources such as any potential testimony by the schoolmaster and his daughter. Our principal interest was to obtain any potential indications of descendants of the three men and the one daughter.

We have not found a private archive for Waldemar Belck, and have therefore been unable to uncover a diary, which could have supplied further information about his travels in south-western Africa.¹¹ A few letters and published articles by him relating to his journey, together with some commentaries by his European travelling companions and by contemporary Europeans resident in Namibia provide a sketchy picture of his interests and activities. From August 1884, he stayed in Angra Pequena (Lüderitz Bay) on the southern Namibian coast, equipped with some 'astronomical' measuring devices by the BGAEU and the Geographical Society of Bremen,¹² apparently as a 'companion' to the Bremen merchant brothers Adolf and August Lüderitz. In this year, Adolf Lüderitz had acquired land along the coast from an African ruler, under questionable circumstances; this land was then placed under the 'protection' of the German Empire. Belck recorded for posterity, with his camera, the so-called German flag-hoisting in Angra Pequena on 7 August 1884.¹³ He was therefore one of the number of those scientifically and technically-educated young men who were recruited for initial explorations of mineralogy, flora and fauna by German companies engaged in efforts to secure trading relationships, land and mining concessions.¹⁴ The Lüderitz expeditions may be seen to exemplify the fact that, from the outset, the 'driving force in the history of colonial appropriation' included not only economic and political but also so-called scientific interests.¹⁵ From November 1884, Belck stayed in Walvis Bay and, from February 1885, in north-western Namibia, and, within of a network of European merchants and research travellers, took part in discussions and negotiations with local rulers concerning land concessions, on behalf of August Lüderitz.¹⁶ This network must have been important for his collecting activity and for his anthropometric, mineralogical, botanical and entomological researches, even though no direct references can be found in the historical sources to the involvement of this network in Belck's grave desecration, and to the history of the bones. As was usual at the time, Belck undertook his journeys in central Namibia in the company of 'Hottentots and bastards', men who were chiefly responsible for the ox-cart transportation, due to their expertise and knowledge of the territory and its routes.¹⁷

According to a notice in the BGAEU Archive, the grave desecration took place on 6 December 1884 in ||Kharabes.¹⁸ In the preceding days Belck was involved in discussions between various merchants and the local Topnaar *kaptein* Piet Haibib with regard to the Lüderitz land concession. Key roles were played in these discussions by Ludwig Koch, Lüderitz's so-called landing agent in Walvis Bay, and the merchant Guillermo Mertens, with whom Belck undertook another journey into north-western Namibia for the purpose of brokering further concessions with the Zwartbooi *kapteins* in Otjitambi from February 1885.¹⁹ On 7 December, Belck undertook anthropometrical measurements of David !Gaubit from the 'Hottentot tribe' of the Zwartbooi south of ||Kharabes.²⁰ Around the same time, he appears to have investigated in detail some of the mines in the region.²¹

Belck's knowledge of the graves of the three men, the grave desecration and the elicitation of their biographies obviously took place within a context of intense political and economic structuring of imperial seizures by German merchants and travelling researchers. The lower Kuiseb river itself had been a 'playground for German

mining expeditions' since 1884, as the German geologist Friedrich Moritz Stapff, who stayed in the area himself in 1885, pointedly remarked.²² To put it differently: the grave desecration did not occur in the wake of this structuring but was, rather, an immanent component of an imperial assertion of the right to rule, exploit and know, which, alongside land and mineral concessions, also included anthropometric data and therefore also skeletons. It clearly also did not seem contradictory to Belck to take part in negotiations with local rulers and, at the same time, commit a robbery of the graves of individuals who had considered themselves as belonging to the communities of these rulers. The place of settlement, death and burial of the three men who died in March 1884 was located in the area under the rule of the Topnaar *kaptein* Piet Haibib; Jacobus Hendrick and Jacobus !Garisib seem to have considered themselves as belonging to the community of the Zwaartbooi, as Belck states.

A consideration of the African history of the region around Walvis Bay in the early 1880s reveals a multi-layered history of migration, flight and impoverishment of Zwaartbooi, Topnaar and Damara families, among others.²³ This development was essentially determined by conflict across the whole of central Namibia and by the expansive politics of the Herero cattle herders, who were equipped with the most modern weapons, and was associated with the displacement or integration of economically and militarily weaker communities and families such as those of the Zwaartbooi, Topnaar and Damara. In this situation of severe crisis, *chiefs* and *kapteins* formed what were often rapidly changing political and military alliances, which forced families into flight or migration in quick succession, and which were frequently accompanied by a loss of cattle, an essential economic basis. The small Christian elite in central Namibia was also affected in many ways by these developments. The settlement of Jacobus Hendrick and Jacobus !Garisib in ||Kharabes should also be viewed in this context, as will be explained in more detail below. ||Kharabes – often designated as Karabes²⁴ on historical maps, and used synonymously with the place name Arechananis²⁵ – is located around 60 km south of Walvis Bay on the lower Kuiseb River in Namibia's western coastal strip. In 1884, ||Kharabes lay directly outside the enclave of Walvis Bay, which belonged to the British Cape Colony.

In the preceding decades, both families had settled in the region of Rehoboth in central Namibia, which was the main location of the Zwaartbooi community.²⁶ This political grouping belonged to the Nama-Oorlam society in south and central Namibia, which had become Christianised in the 1830s at the latest, and which mainly spoke Cape Dutch and was literate; it did not just subsist from cattle rearing but, rather, participated in capitalistic cattle trading and in commercial big game hunting.²⁷ The Zwaartbooi community left the Rehoboth region from the mid-1860s and settled in western Namibia around the Ameib mission station, and then from the late 1870s principally in the Walvis Bay region and finally in north-western Namibia around Otjitambi. The Rhenish missionary Baumann, who lived for a time in Walvis Bay, noted in 1881 that the Ameib Zwaartbooi society was 'totally defeated', had 'separated' into three to four 'parts' and that a grouping had settled in 'Swartbank' by the Kuiseb,²⁸ which was located to the north of ||Kharabes. Unlike

the latter, Swartbank is still inhabited today. As a Christian schoolmaster, Jacobus Hendrick, who apparently lived until 1880 in Otjimbingue, where the centre of the Rhenish Mission Society was located,²⁹ joined this new settlement in ||Kharabes together with his relative Jacobus !Garisib. The surname Hendrick, and even the one or another 'Jakobus Hendreck' or an 'Anatje Hendrik', is frequently mentioned in documents on the history of the Zwaartbooi in Ameib and on the lower Kuiseb.³⁰

From the late 1870s, the Swaartbooi *kapteins* Abraham, Petrus and Cornelius Zwaartbooi, in alliance with the Topnaar *kaptein* Haibib and the Afrikaner *kaptein* Jan Jonker Afrikaner (who buried the three dead men in ||Kharabes in 1884), carried out repeated raids on Herero cattle herders, which led to revenge attacks by the latter. A revenge action of this type finally drove the cattle herders to ||Kharabes at the end of March 1884.

In the following weeks, several missionaries in central Namibia commented briefly on this military event. The missionary Philipp Diehl in Okahandja, who was around 400 km away from the location of the incident, apparently heard about the event just one day afterwards and noted in his diary: 'A division of the Maharero commandos inc. the Otjimbingue [i.e. Herero cattle herders] shot down the Nama Jakob Hendrik [sic] at Zwartbank [near ||Kharabes]. In addition to Hendrik and his people a bastard, Willem Cloete, was also killed.'³¹

The event was mentioned by Diehl and other missionaries primarily because the additional better-known Christian men Petrus Gertze and Jonas Richer also met their deaths.³² The missionary Johann Böhm further added to his communication: 'But Jakobus Hendreks [sic] was a bitter enemy of the Herero.'³³

The Topnaar *kaptein* Haibib also informed the British magistrate in Walvis Bay 'that the Herero have attacked Jacob Hendriks'. The magistrate reported to Cape Town: 'Haibib fears attack on Rooibank – panic amongst Topnaars.'³⁴

The influential *omuhona* of the Herero, Kamaharero, in turn stated months later to the British Commissioner, William C. Palgrave, that the reason for the revenge attack in ||Kharabes had been that 'Topnaar' had stolen cattle from Herero and kept them 'hidden' in the British Walvis Bay. He also declared that he would ensure that the widow of Petrus Gertze was cared for.³⁵ This indicates that the event became widely known in central Namibia and was still being discussed at the highest political levels even eight months later, at the time of Belck's arrival in Walvis Bay.

The lines of conflict merely hinted at by Belck in his communications to Virchow, and which led to the deaths of the three men mentioned, may be anchored more broadly in the colonial archive. The archive not only furnishes more detail about the fields of conflict hinted at by Belck, but also extends the (family) biographies and circumstances of death of the three men, as well as the local and regional history of ||Kharabes. It also illuminates the contemporary networks of knowledge and communication about this specific event. It may well be assumed that Belck became integrated into this knowledge network upon his arrival in Walvis Bay, and thus did not come across the three graves by chance during his travels within the Walvis Bay region. It also must have been easy for him to obtain information about the biographies of the three men either before or after the grave robbery. The question must be

left open as to whether the conflicts outlined here, which affected the entire region, gave Belck the impression that a grave desecration could be carried out without significant political risk.

Belck could not have undertaken the grave desecration alone, much less the shipping of the bones to Berlin. It is striking that he told Virchow that he could 'find out' the missing information concerning the ages of the three men or skeletons, if desired.³⁶ The phrase confirms that further individuals in Walvis Bay knew of his actions.

In fact, the grave desecration in December 1884 was the subject of intense, at least semi-public discussion. As already quoted above, in Walvis Bay, Belck found himself 'required to leave a skull, among other things, for the daughter of Jacobus Hendrick, who had heard that the traveller was bringing the frame of her father.'³⁷ The phrase makes it explicit that Belck's grave desecration provoked immediate criticism and resistance and led to a demand for a restitution. In this way, it also becomes apparent that the – nameless – daughter would not have agreed to any 'exhumation' that Belck might potentially have envisaged, regardless of the manner in which it was requested.³⁸ However, Belck made a pretence of a 'genuine' restitution: from the statements and from the skeletal parts available in the RV Collection of the BGAEU it becomes apparent, as discussed further below, that Belck left the daughter with the skull of Jacobus !Garisib – which was in fact already damaged by the gnawing of animals and was incomplete – and not the skull of her father. In the conclusion of this article, we will discuss in more detail this African criticism of Western scientific and deception practices. This criticism also confirmed our efforts to intensify the search for descendants of the three men and the daughter of Jacobus Hendrick.

Traces of the bones of Jacobus Hendrick and Oantab in the history of Berlin collections

On 18 July 1885, Rudolf Virchow presented the three skeletons to the BGAEU in detail.³⁹ The Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory, founded in 1869 by Rudolf Virchow, Adolf Bastian and Robert Hartmann, was at that time the largest and most important anthropological association in Germany. It enjoyed its period of greatest significance in the decades preceding and following 1900, that is, during the German colonial era. On the basis of the information supplied by Waldemar Belck, Virchow declared in front of the assembled learned members that the skeletons of Jacobus Hendrick, Oantab and Jacobus !Garisib were 'the only [skeletons] of Hottentots from the Namaqua Land to be found in Europe' and that they were 'good examples of the old race', which had preserved 'a relative independence and purity'.⁴⁰ The skeleton of Jacobus !Garisib was already missing most of its skull. As described above, while still in Walvis Bay, Belck had given it to Jacobus Hendrick's daughter instead of returning her father's skull to her, apparently because !Garisib's skull was already badly damaged. As Virchow remarked, he had purchased the three skeletons using funds from the Rudolf Virchow Foundation.⁴¹

On 19 December 1885, by contrast, Rudolf Virchow reported before the BGAEU that he had spent 768 marks and 46 pfennigs during the year on human skulls and

skeletons, among them ‘from Mr. Belck 2 skeletons and 1 skull from Namaqua Hottentots.’⁴² According to this, only the skull of !Garisib’s skeleton was purchased by Virchow; however, all trace of this becomes lost. The bones entered into Virchow’s anthropological collection at the Pathological Institute of the Charité Hospital in Berlin. Remains of threads and fine drill-holes in the skeleton bones suggest that the skeletons were initially mounted and erected. In the years afterwards, Virchow repeatedly used the bones and measurement data supplied by Belck for comparative racial-anthropological investigations.⁴³

Waldemar Belck, who was twenty-three years old on his return from south-western Africa, came up with a plan in 1886 to submit the scientific findings from his journey for his doctorate. He wrote to the Philosophy Faculty of Berlin University:

Returned just a few months ago from a research journey to the South-West African colonies, I wish, when fitting, to take the doctoral examination at Berlin University, in the Philosophical Faculty. I now permit myself the humble request, whether a treatise would suffice for the purposes of the thesis, which contains the findings of my journey in geographical, climatological-meteorological, ethnographic anthropological and mineralogical respects. . . . I would be in a position to attach to the thesis a self-prepared map of the areas travelled by myself, as well as numerous photographs and drawings, . . . Waldemar Belck, Engineer – Africa Traveller.⁴⁴

The promised evaluation of the journey and its anthropological spoils, i.e. the bones, measurement data, drawings, plaster casts and photographs brought back, and also the planned doctorate, were never realised, however – the reasons for which remain unclear. There thus exists no expedition report from the collector (unlike, e.g., the cases of the botanist Hans Schinz or the zoologist Leonhard Schultze-Jena). This marked the end of Belck’s link to the bones of Hendrick and Oantab. It also marked the end of Belck’s association with Africa; his journey to German South West Africa remained a brief, isolated episode in his biography. Later, he travelled in Armenia and collected Chaldean inscriptions. After Virchow’s death in 1902, Belck obtained sole access to his anthropological collection in the Pathological Institute of Berlin University for some time.⁴⁵ In 1913, he left the BGAEU due to a dispute. Cornelia Essner’s observation that expeditions and their scientific exploitation were of immense significance for the careers of young academics in the metropolis confirmed itself in Belck’s case *ex negativo*.⁴⁶ Belck’s African journey is preserved for scientific posterity through the use of his name in the taxonomic designation of plants (*Acrotome belckii* 1885, *Crotalaria belckii* 1888, *Crinum belckianum* 1896) and of a grasshopper (*Conchotopoda belckii* 1887) from Namibia.⁴⁷

Upon their accession into Virchow’s collection, the status of the bones changed: the mortal remains of Jacobus Hendrick and Oantab became objects within a scientific collection. When Rudolf Virchow died in 1902, his private collection and also the collection of skulls assembled by means of funds from the Rudolf Virchow Foundation passed into the possession of the BGAEU, in accordance with the stipulations of his will.⁴⁸ Initially prompted by Virchow himself, Curt Strauch (1868–1931), a

younger forensic scientist at the University of Berlin, began to catalogue Virchow's anthropological collection for the first time from 1902, and thus also the two Namibian skeletons (Strauch classification numbers: SK 59, SK 60).

A three-volume index of the RV Collection was produced around 1910. The consecutive entries in the index make it apparent that the third skeleton brought back by Belck, that of Jacobus !Garisib, did not enter the collection. The names of the people from whom the skeletons originated have disappeared in this index; thus the bones were further de-individualised and objectified, in accordance with the dominant logic of an anthropological collection. By contrast, an anatomical peculiarity of skeleton RV 2152, from Jacobus Hendrick, was listed: a healed, but rigidly fused fracture of the right upper and lower femur. Inventory cards with detailed entries were also created around 1910.

It was probably in the course of making the inventory of the RV Collection that the two skeletons were re-labelled. Older, already-faded lettering including the names, which was probably applied by Rudolf Virchow himself, can still be made out.

After the First World War, the RV Collection, including the two skeletons, remained in the possession of the BGAEU. When the Africanist, ethnologist and anthropologist Bernhard Struck published a comprehensive study of the cephalic index in Africa, the skulls and measurement data supplied by Belck formed part of the research material. Both skulls here appear as nameless 'Zwaartboois'.⁴⁹

They were stored in the building of the Berlin Museum of Ethnology until 1943. In the chaos of the end of the Second World War, large parts of the collection went to the Berlin Marstall (Stables), from the ruins of which they were rescued after the war had ended. From there, the collection came under the aegis of the Institute for Anthropology founded in 1955 at the Humboldt University in East Berlin, which was directed by the anthropologist and sports physician Hans Grimm (1910–95). The Institute was integrated into the Berlin Museum of Natural History in the late 1960s as the 'Anthropology Section'. During the division of Germany, the collection documentation, which had been largely preserved, was located in West Berlin and was not accessible to officials responsible for the collection in East Berlin; therefore the collection was re-catalogued from 1964. Cataloguing took place using the objects available, in some cases with annotation of anthropological and medical findings.

At present, the RV Collection comprises around 3,500 objects. The appropriation contexts of the skulls and skeletons of Namibian origin in the RV Collection were in some cases comparatively well documented by contemporary collectors;⁵⁰ for the most part, however, in-depth provenance research is still required. According to the current state of knowledge, there are remains from five Nama, two Herero and one Ovambo, including the skeletons of Jacobus Hendrick and Oantab. The region of origin of an additional skull simply described as 'Hottentott?' is unclear; in addition to the Namibia of today, South Africa also comes into question in this case. There is also a skull with the origin information: 'German South West Africa', but without ethnic assignment, and a further skull from a person from the region east

of Windhoek, whose ancestors are described as San and 'Bechuana'.⁵¹ At that time, 'Bechuana' was understood to mean an ethnic group who lived primarily in the east of British Bechuanaland (today's Botswana), with smaller sub-groups which had however been settled 'for a long time' in German South West Africa (east of Windhoek, Gobabis, Okavango-Zambezi area).⁵²

The RV Collection was and is first and foremost a research collection that is not accessible to the general public. As far as is known, individual objects were used for exhibition purposes only in exceptional cases, e.g. for an exhibition which commemorated the 150th birthday of Rudolf Virchow in 1971.⁵³ Thus we can rule out with some certainty the possibility that the two skeletons would have been shown in any public exhibitions.

In the late 1960s, Hans Grimm took over the training of students of ethnography in Leipzig in the subject of Physical Anthropology.⁵⁴ For this purpose, students from Leipzig travelled to Berlin and were granted access to the collection there. The Leipzig ethnography students even included African students such as Kwami Ansa Asamoah (1938–2015) from Ghana, who completed a placement in the area of physical anthropology and obtained his doctorate in Leipzig in 1968 with a thesis in social anthropology.⁵⁵

Since the 1960s and 1970s, the human remains present in the Berlin anthropological collections have been used principally by biological anthropologists and physicians from Germany and abroad for research into, e.g., the state of dentition of indigenous populations, migration movements and the diets of pre-industrial populations.⁵⁶ The skeletons of Jacobus Hendrick and Oantab have also been used for research: boreholes are present at the pelvic bones, which were probably made only within the last 30 years. They were obviously intended for the purpose of obtaining bone substance for histological, isotope or DNA studies.⁵⁷ The skeletons from south-western Africa thus became knowledge objects; however, we are not aware of any of the scientific knowledge generated by them.

It was unfortunately the practice in anthropological collections that the scientific usage of the objects was not documented or recorded. This means that, in a concrete individual case, it is possible to later reconstruct what research was carried out on which objects only when a corresponding study has been published – which is not usual and which we could also not establish for our case. The lack of documentation suggests a subcutaneous historical forgetfulness in everyday anthropological practice in working with the collection objects. The increasing reduction in historical information about the individual skeletons that is apparent in the indexes created in the course of the history of the collection also testifies to the limited development of historical awareness in the scientific culture of physical anthropology.

While a 1910 inventory card still held relatively comprehensive details of a person, the context of acquisition and object condition,⁵⁸ an index card from the 1960s primarily listed anthropological deviations and pathologies. The name of Belck appears, but that of Jacobus Hendrick is absent.⁵⁹ The current database still contains only minimal details of region, ethnicity and collector.

The paradox remains that the reduction in historical knowledge about the individual skulls, skeletons and other human remains stands in direct contrast to the

description of the RV Collection as a historical research collection. One would think that increased knowledge about the history of the collection would be welcomed as a positive gain. However, it seems that there is a certain vested interest in the de-historicisation of the skeletons. The fading-out of the circumstances of acquisition and the contexts of origin, which are increasingly seen as politically damaging and ethically problematic, obviously seems to be a precondition for continued use of the bones as anthropological research resources.

Traces in the oral tradition of the lower Kuiseb area

In order to finally reconnect the skeletons of Jacobus Hendrick and Oantab with places, events and, above all, people from contemporary Namibia, oral traditions and the contemporary Namibian culture of memory were relevant to our research. Research into oral history in Namibia has shown that not only is the memory of the colonial genocide of 1904–8, which is currently subject to much discussion, very present in the collective memory,⁶⁰ but also the events of the early phase of mission and colonisation, in particular military conflicts, have found their place in the oral tradition and are still remembered and discussed.⁶¹ The military conflicts between the Herero and Nama in central and southern Namibia in the late nineteenth century, which include the conflict on the lower Kuiseb described at the start, are thus a subject of oral narratives.⁶²

Oral traditions and personal memories and observations by experts relating to everyday Namibian life or Namibian history have also been repeatedly recorded in writing by European missionaries, settlers, scientists and agents of the colonial administration(s) since the nineteenth century. Walter Moritz, a missionary of the United Evangelical Mission in Walvis Bay between 1965 and 1972, ‘collected’ oral traditions relating to the lower Kuiseb region, primarily for his numerous small historical studies and linguistic guides of the area.⁶³ In the booklet published in 1997, *Verwehte Spuren in der Namibwüste*, Moritz mentions the place ‘Karabes . . . also named Arechananis’, and characterises it as formerly inhabited.⁶⁴ According to Moritz, ‘Karabes’ is derived from the name of the nearby dry territory ‘Kharabel’, which in turn refers to the word ‘||Kharab’ for ‘gravel in the riverbed, or fine loose sand’. ‘Arechananis’ is rooted according to Moritz in the Khoekhoegowab word †arexa-lnanis, interpreted as ‘place of spiky grass’, derived from †areb for ‘spiky grass’. Moritz also describes Arechananis as a ‘bald place’ to the east of the gravel road, which still leads down the Kuiseb today. Moritz’s descriptions and localisations are of significance because Karabes and Arechananis are often both no longer marked on today’s maps – in contrast to historical maps.⁶⁵

Furthermore, Moritz gives an account of what he was able to find out about the place in 1969, in discussion with the evangelist Jacobus Stevenson from Walvis Bay.

Stevenson said . . . The two Hendriks brothers lived here, they were from the Swartbooi. When the Herero fought against them, they wanted to flee to Rooibank and they were murdered. In 1955, Stevenson still saw the blood-spattered rocks. – One of their sisters, Hanna Hendriks, is married to Nikolaas /Keiseb.⁶⁶

Moritz's account of Stevenson's narrative concerning Karabes represents the oldest 'fragment' of local oral tradition available at that time concerning the deaths of Jacobus Hendrick and Jacobus !Garisib at Karabes. Moritz repeatedly obtained from Stevenson further accounts of historical and economic circumstances which were important for knowledge of the lower Kuiseb.⁶⁷ Stevenson may be classed as an interlocutor of Moritz who was particularly knowledgeable about the location, since the latter not only describes him as an evangelist, trained at the Paulinum theological seminary in Otjimbingue, but also as 'foreman of the Topnaar'.⁶⁸

A survey of the ethnological publications about the lower Kuiseb that have appeared since the 1950s shows that, in 1957, Stevenson had already conveyed substantial knowledge about the history of the region to the German African linguist Oswin Köhler and the Namibian ethnologist Kuno Budack.⁶⁹ According to Köhler Stevenson (sometimes also Stephenson) was born in 1888,⁷⁰ that is, only four years after the deaths of Jacobus Hendrick, Jacobus !Garisib and Oantab and the theft of their skeletons. According to Walter Moritz, Stevenson was the son of an African woman by the name of ||Oabi,⁷¹ who could have been related on her mother's side to Piet ||Haibeb, who served as *kaptein* in the 1880s,⁷² and a Scottish prospector by the name of James Argyll⁷³ – after whom Stevenson also called himself 'Argyll(e)'.⁷⁴ When, following the death of the *kaptein* Piet ||Haibeb in around 1910, no one succeeded him, Jacobus Stevenson was chosen as *headman* by the Topnaar in 1936, according to Budack – even without official recognition by the South African administration. He held the office until about 1972,⁷⁵ when an officially recognised headman was installed: Esau Koitjie, who could for the first time be linked back again to the captaincy of ||Haibeb.⁷⁶

Jacobus Stevenson can therefore be considered to be a supra-regionally recognised expert in the history and political, social and spiritual circumstances in the region, who had experienced the early phase of German colonisation as a child. The fact that even in 1969 Stevenson still linked Karabes with the death of two men from the Hendrick family in a battle against the Herero suggests that knowledge of the event must have been part of the local culture of memory, or at least part of his immediate social environment during his childhood and his youth. Stevenson's references to traces of blood from the battle and to the sister Hanna thereby raise the question of whether the battle of 1884 and the kinship of brothers and 'sister' were only collapsed together and/or moved closer to the present in memory, or whether a sister of Jacobus Hendrick and Jacobus !Garisib could actually have still been alive in 1969.⁷⁷

While knowledge of the event and the corresponding names and locations in the region therefore still existed in 1969, a visit to the area of the lower Kuiseb in March 2014 and the interviews conducted at random during this visit by Sebedeus Swartbooi and Larissa Förster with residents of Utuseb, Swartbank, Klipneus, Soutrivier and Homeb showed that a vague memory exists of the intriguing historical circumstances here, but that it has faded considerably with the passage of time.⁷⁸

In the first place, it was possible to at least partially confirm the relevant place names. Thus, one of the landmarks on the lower Kuiseb is in fact a dry territory named ||Kharabeb or ||Harabeb. While a place name derived from this was not current, the name †Arexa!nanis was familiar to the interview partners.⁷⁹ It appeared, however, not to designate a single place so much as an expanse to the north of the territory mentioned. †Arexa!nanis was linked back – as already in Moritz’s account – either to a spiky grass named †areb⁸⁰ or to the *Bushman grass* typical of the Namibian desert, which often sprouts out of the desert sand after rainfall.⁸¹

On the question of historical-political references, early colonial military conflicts between the Nama and Herero and also between Germans and the indigenous population of the region were mentioned, although not connected with ||Harabeb or †Arexa!nanis. The surname Hendrick(s) was known in the region and was linked with a family in Walvis Bay; a connection with a particular battle from colonial or later times could not, however, be established. The discussion partners encountered could not remember or locate graves with references to the places, names and events mentioned, nor the grave robbery or the restitution demanded by Jacobus Hendrick’s daughter from Waldemar Belck. It can be assumed that the latter most likely would have been registered in the family tradition of the Hendrick family itself.

However, the fact that the conflicts cited had led to deaths was present in the discussions on the lower Kuiseb. The most concrete allusion to this was a place name which Sebedeus Swartbooi brought into play in the interviews. ‘Khoeka!nas’, the designation for a place at which two Khoe men (thus Khoekhoegowab- or Nama-speaking men), who were not actually explicitly named, had met violent deaths a long time ago. It is notable that, according to the current state of research, this place has been included in only a few scientific works concerning the lower Kuiseb, one of them in fact being the ‘Topnaar Place Names Along the Lower Kuiseb River’, which were mapped – far removed from all historiographic discussions – by the geologists Ward and A.J. van Wyk in 1985. They describe Khoeka!nas, as an ‘area of a general battle between the Topnaar and the Herero’, based on information from Gert |Nariseb from Soutrivier in 1979 – which could relate to the military conflict on 30 March 1884.⁸² By analogy to Stevenson’s description from 1969, it is possible that the designation Khoeka!nas also relates to the ‘two Hendriks brothers’ and their place of death or burial – even though Oantab and at least three more people also died at the battle in question (see above). In the discussions, it remained open whether a route marker formed from piled stones which was located on the plain before the dry river ||Kharabeb, and thus in the vicinity of †Arexa!nanis, was connected with the historical events handed down in oral tradition.

The oral and/or written-up traditions relating to the lower Kuiseb thus essentially provide fragments which can be picked up by provenance research. For example, they facilitate a localisation of the relevant places in the contemporary lower Kuiseb landscape, and contain at least an ‘echo’ of the historical events. Their lacunae make it apparent that other routes must be sought to further follow traces in the oral historical archive, in particular by way of genealogical connections.⁸³

Traces in family oral tradition

By publishing a newspaper article with the key information on the event in the Namibian daily newspapers *The Namibian* and *Republikein*⁸⁴ Dag Henrichsen, Larissa Förster and Holger Stoecker were able to get in touch with the Khoekhoegowab-speaking oral historian Hans Axasi †Eichab, who contacted further family members to investigate his family history with respect to the circumstances described. It turned out that the stories passed on in the family oral archive referred extensively to the conflict-prone history of the Kuiseb region at the end of the nineteenth century, because for one thing this was the reason for the flight and displacement of the family not only down the Kuiseb (towards Utuseb and Walvis Bay) but also into other parts of the country, such as to Rehoboth, Kalkrand, Gobabis, Aranos, Fransfontein, Sesfontein, Khorixas and Outjo. The family history memories suggest that the three historical individuals belonged not only to the generation, but also to the kinship network of Hans Axasi †Eichab's great-grandmother. According to this account, Jacobus !Gariseb is understood to be the brother of †Khoan Garises (1869–1969), through whose daughter Kappi Garises and granddaughter Martha Dama Garises (1914–95), mother of Hans Axasi †Eichab, the historical events had been passed down.⁸⁵ Furthermore, Hans Axasi †Eichab identified some of the recitations passed down in the family as praise poems for the three historical individuals.

Grave robberies in the lower Kuiseb area are also remembered by the family of Hans Axasi †Eichab, for example via Kappi Garises' stories from the early colonial era:

I can vividly recall how my grandmother told us horrific stories about a raid, massacres, rapes, abductions, desecration of the dead, burials and exhumation and exportation of human remains in the lower !Khuiseb over the waters (i.e. sea) to somewhere. . . . We, then as children took it up just as stories about the mythological Khoegaroen (i.e. meneaters) . . . , but now I realised that it is my own flesh and blood.⁸⁶

According to family genealogies, a woman by the name of Anna Hendrick comes into question as the daughter who spoke to Waldemar Belck in Walvis Bay. Today, her restitution-seeking role has been assumed by Hans Axasi †Eichab together with the relatives of Jacobus Hendrick, Jacobus !Garisib und Oantab: 'All the members from the personally affected communities within the ranks of !Ainin, Swartboois and !Naranin descendants are . . . awaiting a positive solution towards restitution and return of the mortal remains of their loved ones.'⁸⁷

With the elicitation of such traces in oral tradition, our research project has returned to the context of morality, ethics and the politics of knowledge out of which it was catapulted by Belck and his successive scientists, collectors and archivists of the Berlin intellectual landscape. The authors hope that it will be possible to achieve a more extensive re-individualisation and re-biographisation of the skeletons of Jacobus Hendrick, Jacobus !Garisib and Oantab – with the prospect of their return to Namibia – through further joint researches into the oral tradition of the families in question.

Conclusion

The newspaper articles published in Namibia in 2016 revived the critical discussion of the grave desecration which had already been initiated between Belck and the daughter of Jacobus Hendrick in 1884. They led to a complaint and a demand for restitution of the respective skeletons, underpinned by Namibian families and communities. This should be understood as a fundamental criticism of the history of knowledge production in European academic and museum institutions, within the context of global debates surrounding the return and repatriation of human remains from formerly colonised territories.⁸⁸

The criticism and demand for restitution expressed in 1884 by Jacobus Hendrick's daughter in relation to the removal of human remains was not unique in colonial Namibia. Belck himself had already experienced resistance to his anthropological measurements. As he reported to Virchow:

I remark as a curiosity that the cousin of the King of Bethanien, a certain Ruben Frederiks, did not wish to be measured by me, because he feared he would then have to become a – German soldier.⁸⁹

Ruben Frederiks' fear was certainly unfounded. However, it serves as a highly illuminating metaphor for the disciplining of African bodies and personalities by colonial science, and makes the resistance of local subjects audible and comprehensible.

In late 1885 moreover, just one year after Belck's grave robbery, the Swiss botanist Hans Schinz was strongly criticised by the Ndonga elite and likewise confronted with a demand for restitution and with a threat of violence when he stole the skeleton of an African soldier from a battle site in northern Namibia. Just like Belck, he made a pretence of a return.⁹⁰ Current Namibian demands for restitution, as communicated by the descendants and communities via Hans Axasi †Eichab to Dag Henrichsen, Larissa Förster and Holger Stoecker, thus stand within the traditions both of criticism of Western scientific practices⁹¹ and of African demands for restitution. They show that African families' and communities' pre- and early colonial experiences with Western researchers still have an impact today, and still offer points of contact for a renegotiation of colonial history and its dramatic consequences. Historical provenance research, in written and oral, state and private archives, renders these new negotiations possible by taking on board contemporary discourses and oral traditions. Bio-anthropological methods can make a significant contribution to provenance research relating to particular human remains, but it should never be limited to these methods.

Notes

Translated from German by Cadenza Academic Translations

- 1 'Sitzung vom 18. Juli 1885', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie (ZfE)*, 17 (1885), (316) ff. In this article all quotes from *ZfE* have been translated from German.

- 2 Cf. L. Förster, “You are Giving Us the Skulls – Where is the Flesh?” Die Rückkehr der namibischen Human Remains, in H. Stoecker, T. Schnalke and A. Winkelmann (eds), *Sammeln, Erforschen, Zurückgeben? Menschliche Gebeine aus der Kolonialzeit aus akademischen und musealen Sammlungen* (Berlin, Chr. Links, 2013), pp. 419–446 and also by the same author, “These Skulls Are Not Enough”, *darkmatter journal. in the ruins of imperial culture*, 13: www.darkmatter101.org/site/2013/11/18/these-skulls-are-not-enough-the-repatriation-of-namibian-human-remains-from-berlin-to-windhoek-in-2011. For an overview of the human remains which have already been returned to their countries of origin from German collections, see S. Fründt and L. Förster, ‘Menschliche Überreste in deutschen Institutionen. Historische Entwicklungen und zukünftige Perspektiven’, in J. Zeller and M. Bechhaus-Gerst (eds), *Deutschland postkolonial? Die Gegenwart der imperialen Vergangenheit* (Berlin, Metropol-Verlag, forthcoming).
- 3 Cf. L. Förster, ‘The Face of Genocide: Returning Human Remains from German Institutions to Namibia’, in C. Fforde, H. Keeler and T. McKeown (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Indigenous Repatriation: Return, Reconcile, Renew* (London, Routledge, forthcoming).
- 4 Cf. L. Förster and H. Stoecker, *Haut, Haar und Knochen. Koloniale Spuren in naturkundlichen Sammlungen der Universität Jena* (Weimar, Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2016).
- 5 Cf. on the re-humanisation of human remains, C. Rassool, ‘Re-Storing the Skeletons of Empire: Return, Reburial and Rehumanisation in Southern Africa’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41:3 (2015), 653–70; L. Förster, “The Long Way Home.” Zur Biografie zurückgegebener Objekte/Subjekte, in T. Greub and M. Roussel (eds), *Figurationen des Porträts* (Paderborn, Wilhelm Fink, 2018), pp. 637–56.
- 6 The term ‘Aufsammler’ [‘collector’] is used in German to denote the person who first took an item in order to make it an object within an academic collection.
- 7 ‘Sitzung vom 18. Juli 1885’, *ZfE*, 17 (1885), (317). Belck’s letter to Virchow himself has probably disappeared. In the course of this article, the people and places mentioned here will be discussed in more detail.
- 8 *Ibid.*, (318).
- 9 On the colonial archive for the history of Namibia in the nineteenth century, see D. Henrichsen, *Herrschaft und Alltag im vorkolonialen Zentralnamibia. Das Herero- und Damaraland im 19. Jahrhundert* (Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien and Windhoek, Namibia Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft, 2011), pp. 313–17.
- 10 On the African written culture in the region, see D. Henrichsen, “‘Iss Worte”. Anmerkungen zur entstehenden afrikanischen Schriftkultur im vorkolonialen Zentralnamibia’, in L. Marfaing and B. Reinwald (eds), *Afrikanische Beziehungen, Netzwerke und Räume* (Münster, LIT Verlag, 2001), pp. 329–38.
- 11 Belck’s biography is recounted in outline by A. Ruhe, ‘Frankfurts Schliemann; der self-made Archäologe Belck’, October 2011, www.fws-ffm.de/Belck.htm. This article considers additional facets of Belck’s travels in south-western Africa and his publications relating to these at other points, where necessary.
- 12 BGAEU Archive, BGAEU-PK 7: Minutes of the Board, 20 June 1884.

- 13 The photograph may be viewed online via the database of the Bremen State Archive: www.staatsarchiv-bremen.findbuch.net/php/main.php?ar_id=3672#372c3135x23x19.
- 14 On the so-called second Lüderitz expedition, which Belck obviously belonged to, see the summary in D. Henrichsen (ed.), *Hans Schinz. Bruchstücke. Forschungsreisen in Deutsch-Südwestafrika* (Basel, Basler Afrika-Bibliographien, 2012), pp. x ff.
- 15 B. Kundrus, 'Die Kolonien – "Kinder des Gefühls und der Phantasie"', in B. Kundrus (ed.), *Phantasiereiche. Zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus* (Frankfurt a.M., Campus, 2003), p. 8.
- 16 Some of Belck's political activities, often together with August Lüderitz or Ludwig Koch, Carl Höpfner, Eduard Pechuel-Loesche and/or Guillermo Mertens (to name just a few of the merchants and travelling researchers) are mentioned in J. H. Esterhuysen, *South West Africa 1880–1894. The Establishment of German Authority in South West Africa* (Cape Town, C. Struik, 1968), pp. 67ff., 95ff. Some of the (date) information from Esterhuysen is not supported by the original sources which we viewed. In the sources, Belck's roles in these discussions and negotiations are described in a variety of ways: Sometimes he is merely a participant in discussions, sometimes he is the bearer of documents; in the case of the negotiations with the Zwartbooi *kapteins*, he serves as chief negotiator together with the merchant Mertens, on behalf of August Lüderitz. See W. Belck, 'Meine Reise zu den Swartboois', in National Archives of Namibia (NAN), ZBU 1060, Besiedlungssachen, Belck to Generalkonsul, Otjimbingue 31 March 1885, fols 106ff. See also W. Schüssler and A. Lüderitz, *Ein deutscher Kampf um Südafrika 1883–1886: Geschichte des ersten Kolonialpioniers im Zeitalter Bismarck* (Bremen, Schunemann, 1936). On the history of political treaties along the Namibian coast from 1884 to 1886, see U. Kaulich, *Die Geschichte der ehemaligen Kolonie Deutsch-Südwestafrika (1884–1914). Eine Gesamtdarstellung* (Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 2nd ed., 2003), pp. 58–60.
- 17 W. Belck, 'Die koloniale Entwicklung Südwestafrikas', *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, 3 (1886), 109.
- 18 BGAEU Archiv, Notice on inventory card RV 2152: "6./12 1884".
- 19 See also the information on this in Esterhuysen, *South West Africa*.
- 20 See 'Sitzung vom 18. Juli 1885', *ZfE*, 17 (1885), (316).
- 21 This is suggested by his reports on mineralogical researches in the Kuiseb region, cf. Belck, 'Die koloniale Entwicklung', esp. pp. 55ff.
- 22 F. M. Stapff, 'Südwestafrikanisches Gold', in *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, 5 (1888), 77.
- 23 On the following, see in particular Henrichsen, *Herrschaft und Alltag*, pp. 166–191.
- 24 G. S. Nienaber and P. E. Raper, *Toponymica Hottentottica*, H-Z (Pretoria, S.A. Naamkundesentrum, 1977).
- 25 Cf. the maps: Th. Hahn, *Original Map of Great Namaqualand and Damaraland* (1879); F. M. Stapff, *Originalkarte des unteren !Khuseib Thales* (Gotha: Justus Perthes, 1887); G. Gürich, 'Originalkarte der im Auftrage des Deutschen

- Goldsyndikates in den Jahren 1888, 1889 in Deutsch-Südwestafrika unternommenen Reise (Südlicher Teil), 1891', *Mitteilungen der Geografischen Gesellschaft in Hamburg*, 1881–92:1; *Kriegskarte von Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1904* (Berlin, Dietrich Reimer, 1904), Rehoboth sheet.
- 26 Hans Axasi †Eichab in conversation with Dag Henrichsen, Windhoek, 6 February 2018.
- 27 In addition to Henrichsen, *Herrschaft und Alltag*, see B. Lau, *Southern and Central Namibia in Jonker Afrikaner's time*, *Archaeia* No. 8 (Windhoek, National Archives, 1987).
- 28 Archiv der Vereinten Evangelischen Mission [Archive of the United Evangelical Mission], Wuppertal (German acronym: VEM), RMG 1.602, Christian Baumann to Inspector in Walvis Bay, 9 August 1881, 9 September 1881.
- 29 To date, it has not been possible to verify Hendrick's activities (and possible training as a teacher) in Otjimbingue.
- 30 On Ameib, see VEM, RMG 1.598, Diaries of Johann Böhm: 'Tagebuch von Ameib von 1867–1875', p. 15 (9 September 1867: Jakob Hendrik Nanseb), p. 36 (2 May 1870: Anatje Hendrek), p. 52 (January 1873: Jakobus Hendrek, Zoon Jakobus Hendrekonde). We have not yet succeeded in directly linking this name with the Jacobus Hendrick who was killed in March 1884.
- 31 VEM, RMG 1.607, Diary of Ph. Diehl, 31 March 1884. 'Maharero' refers to the particularly influential *omuhona* Kamaharero in Okahandja, Diehl's mission station.
- 32 At this point, we shall refrain from listing all references to the various missionary communications about the event which we have been able to elicit.
- 33 Western Cape Provincial Archives (Cape Town), Carl Hugo Hahn Accession, A2048, Vol. 7: Böhm to Carl Hugo Hahn, Walvis Bay, 29 April 1884.
- 34 NAN, NA 291, "Transgariiep and Walvis Bay" 1884, General Report: Simpson to Under-Secretary for Native Affairs, Walvis Bay, 1 May 1884. The report is also found in NAN, WLB 5/1/1, p. 18 and dates ||Haibib's communication to 19 April 1884. Rooibank is located halfway between ||Kharabes and Walvis Bay and represented the most southerly point in the British enclave.
- 35 E. L. P. Stals (ed.), *The Commissions of W. C. Palgrave. Special Emissary to South West Africa 1876-1885* (Cape Town, Van Riebeck Society, 1991), p. 400 (23 December 1884). *Omuhona* is the Herero designation for *chief*.
- 36 'Sitzung vom 18. Juli 1885', (317).
- 37 *Ibid.*, (318).
- 38 Only limited information is available concerning local burial and mourning rites for the period in question. Ethnographic information on the Topnaar in the early twentieth century indicates that graves were rarely visited and that the voices of ancestors were considered to be potentially dangerous. The Nama-Oorlam elite, which also included the Topnaar and Zwaartbooi, had however (also) performed Christian rites for decades. For general information, see Th. Widlok, 'Unearthing Culture. Khoisan Funerals and Social Change', *Anthropos*, 93 (1998), pp. 115–26.
- 39 'Sitzung vom 18. Juli 1885', (318).

- 40 *Ibid.*, (319).
- 41 *Ibid.*, (317).
- 42 'Sitzung vom 19 Dezember 1885', (547).
- 43 Cf. R. Virchow, 'Physische Anthropologie von Buschmännern, Hottentotten und Omundonga', *ZfE*, 19 (1887), (664).
- 44 Waldemar Belck to Wilhelm Scherer (Dean of the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Berlin), 8 February 1886, in Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences, Berlin, No. 250, Literary Estate of Scherer, Wilhelm.
- 45 'Sitzung vom 16.5.1902', in BGAEU Archive, BGAEU-PK; BGAEU-ADI 47.
- 46 C. Essner, *Deutsche Afrikareisende im neunzehnten Jahrhundert. Zur Sozialgeschichte des Reisens* (Stuttgart, Steiner, 1985).
- 47 H. Schinz, 'Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika (mit Einschluss der Grenzgebiete) in botanischer Beziehung', *Mitteilungen aus dem botanischen Museum der Universität Zürich*, LV (1911), pp. 54, 102–3.
- 48 B. Kunst and U. Creutz, 'Geschichte der Berliner anthropologischen Sammlungen von Rudolf Virchow und Felix von Luschan', in H. Stoecker, T. Schnalke and A. Winkelmann (eds), *Sammeln, Erforschen, Zurückgeben? Menschliche Gebeine aus der Kolonialzeit aus akademischen und musealen Sammlungen* (Berlin, Chr. Links, 2013), p. 88; U. Creutz and I. Wustmann, 'Die anthropologische Rudolf-Virchow-Sammlung an der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin', *Charité-Annalen*, 3 (1984), p. 293.
- 49 B. Struck, 'Versuch einer Karte des Kopfindex im mittleren Afrika', *ZfE*, 54 (1922), p. 95.
- 50 H. Schinz, *Deutsch-Südwestafrika. Forschungsreisen durch die deutschen Schutzgebiete Gross-Nama- und Hereroland, nach dem Kunene, dem Ngami-See und der Kalahar, 1884–1887* (Oldenburg and Leipzig, Schulz, 1891), pp. 259–60; D. Henrichsen (ed.), *Hans Schinz. Bruchstücke. Forschungsreisen in Deutsch-Südwestafrika* (Basel, Basler Afrika-Bibliographien, 2012).
- 51 BGAEU Archive, NSRV 39 and 40, Index of the skull collection, no date.
- 52 K. Dove, 'Betschuanen', in H. Schnee (ed.), *Deutsches Kolonial-Lexikon* vol. 1 (Berlin, Reimer, 1920), p. 194.
- 53 I. Wustmann, 'Anthropologische Gedenkausstellung für Rudolf Virchow im Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin', *Neue Museumskunde*, 16 (1973), pp. 124–8.
- 54 B. Streck, 'Vorwort', in K. Geisenhainer, L. Bohrmann and B. Streck (eds), *100 Jahre Institut für Ethnologie der Universität Leipzig. Eine Anthologie seiner Vertreter* (Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2014), p. 15, fn. 15.
- 55 A. Asamoah, 'Die Entwicklung der sozial-ökonomischen Struktur von Bevölkerungsgruppen der Ewe in Ost-Ghana und Togo unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Stellung des Häuptlings', PhD dissertation, Leipzig, 1968; published as: *Die gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse der Ewe-Bevölkerung in Südost-Ghana* (Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1971).
- 56 H. Grimm, 'Zur Geschichte und zur aktuellen Bedeutung von Schädel- und Skelettsammlungen', *Abhandlungen und Berichte des Staatlichen Museums für Völkerkunde Dresden*, 39 (1982), pp. 269ff.

- 57 Statements based on photos by the anthropologist Margit Berner (Vienna) and the anatomist Andreas Winkelmann (Neuruppin).
- 58 BGAEU Archive, inventory cards RV 2152 and RV 2153.
- 59 Card index cards RV 2152 and RV 2153 from the new index of the RV Collection in the 1960s, retained at the Berlin Museum of Medical History at the Charité.
- 60 E.g. K. Alnaes, 'Living with the Past: The Songs of the Herero in Botswana', *Africa*, 59:3 (1989), pp. 267–99; M. Biwa, 'Weaving the Past with Threads of Memory': Narratives and Commemorations of the Colonial War in Southern Namibia', Ph.D. dissertation, University of Western Cape, 2012, <http://etd.uwc.ac.za/xmlui/handle/11394/2991>; C. W. Erichsen, *What the Elders Used to Say: Namibian Perspectives on the Last Decade of German Colonial Rule* (Windhoek, Namibia Institute for Democracy, 2008); L. Förster, *Postkoloniale Erinnerungslandschaften. Wie Deutsche und Herero des Kriegs von 1904 gedenken* (Frankfurt a.M., Campus, 2010).
- 61 E.g. Henrichsen, *Alltag und Herrschaft*; A. Heywood, B. Lau and R. Ohly (eds), *Warriors, Leaders, Sages and Outcasts in the Namibian Past. Narratives Collected from Herero Sources for the Michael Scott Oral Records Project 1985–6* (Windhoek, MSORP, 1992).
- 62 E.g. A. Kaputu, 'The War Between the Nama and the Herero', in Heywood, Lau and Ohly (eds), *Warriors, Leaders, Sages and Outcasts in the Namibian Past*, pp. 2–49; B. Lau, *The Mbanderu* (Windhoek, Michael Scott Oral Records Project, 1986).
- 63 Cf. W. Moritz, *Verwehte Spuren in der Namibwüste. Alte Ansiedlungen am Kuiseb*. Aus Alten Tagen in Südwest, Pamphlet 13. (Werther/Westf., self-published, 1997); W. Moritz, *Die Nara, das Brot der Wüste*. Aus Alten Tagen in Südwest, Pamphlet 11, (Werther/Westf., self-published, 1992).
- 64 Moritz, *Verwehte Spuren*, p. 26. On this, see also J. D. Ward and A. J. van Wyk, 'Topnaar (#Aonin) Place Names Along the Lower Kuisib River, Central Namib Desert', *Bulletin of the Desert Ecological Research Unit*, May (1985), 7, where Arechananis is likewise listed as 'abandoned village'.
- 65 See note 25.
- 66 Moritz, *Verwehte Spuren*, p. 26. L. Förster thanks Sebedeus Swaartbooi for the reference to this text passage.
- 67 Cf. Moritz, *Die Nara*, p. 41.
- 68 L. Förster thanks Walter Moritz for allowing her to inspect his notes from his time in the lower Kuiseb and for the chance to view slides and photographs and listen to sound recordings from this time. She visited Walter Moritz on 11 December 2014 in Werther near Bielefeld.
- 69 O. Köhler, 'Die Topnaar-Hottentotten am unteren Kuiseb', *Ethnological and Linguistic Studies in honour of N.J. van Warmelo, Ethnological Publications*, 52 (Pretoria, Department of Bantu Administration and Development, 1969), pp. 7, 111, 115, 119; K. Budack, 'Die traditionelle politische Struktur der Khoe-Khoen in Südwestafrika', PhD, University of Pretoria, 1972, p. 246.
- 70 Köhler, *Die Topnaar*, p. 107.
- 71 L. Förster is most grateful to Walter Moritz for this information.

- 72 Budack, *Die traditionelle politische Struktur*, p. 246. On the role of kaptein Piet ||Haibeb in the land negotiations on the lower Kuiseb, cf. above in the present article.
- 73 *Ibid.* It is possible that this related to James Arthur Campbell, the precise duration of whose stay in southern Africa remains to be elicited, cf. www.lochmelfort.co.uk/?s=James+Arthur+Campbell.
- 74 He is therefore termed Jacobus Stevenson, Jacobus Argyll(e) or Argyll(e) Stevenson in the literature.
- 75 Budack, *Die traditionelle politische Struktur*, p. 246.
- 76 T. Widlok, 'Unearthing Culture: Khoisan Funerals and Social Change', *Anthropos*, 93: 1,3 (1998), pp. 115–26; M. Krämer, 'Neotraditional Authority Contested: The Corporatization of Tradition and the Quest for Democracy in the Topnaar Traditional Authority, Namibia', *Africa. Journal of the International African Institute* (in preparation).
- 77 Reference should here be made to the fact that the married couple Hanna Hendrick and Nicolaas |Keiseb mentioned by Stevenson are possibly also mentioned in Moritz, *Die Nara*, p. 41.
- 78 The interviews were conducted with fifteen individuals from the region who had been recommended by one or the other party as being knowledgeable about the area; they were mostly aged over sixty years. Krämer, 'Neotraditional Authority', estimates that around 300 Topnaar live on the lower Kuiseb. Consequently, the interviews should not be seen as in any way representative; they do however convey an impression and certain tendencies. L. Förster is grateful to the Fritz Thyssen Foundation for facilitating this field research with a travel grant.
- 79 As in Moritz, *Verwehte Spuren*, the places or landscapes named were vaguely connected with the name Aus/Auses/Autsinanis.
- 80 Moritz, *Verwehte Spuren*, p. 26.
- 81 V. Van den Eynden, P. Vernemmen and P. van Damme, *The Ethnobotany of the Topnaar* (Gent, Universit t Gent, 1992), p. 17. On this, see also E. S. Klaassen and P. Craven, *Checklist of Grasses in Namibia* (Windhoek, National Botanical Research Institute, 2003), p. 78; *Setaria verticillata* in Khoekhoegowab is here cited as †*areb*, as also in Moritz, *Verwehte Spuren*, p. 26.
- 82 Ward and van Wyk, *Topnaar Place Names*, pp. 5, 7, here as 'Khoe-ka!as'. The authors supply GPS data, hence a visit to the area with GPS would appear worthwhile.
- 83 L. F rster had already made attempts in this regard while in Windhoek; however, these proved unsuccessful. Provenance research, which aims at re-individualisation and genealogical assignment, can be undertaken only in close collaboration with oral tradition experts in situ.
- 84 L. F rster, D. Henrichsen and H. Stoecker, 'Tracing the Descendants of Kuiseb's 1884 Grave Robbery', *The Namibian*, 6 May 2016, p. 13; also by the same authors, 'Grafrowery in die Kuiseb. Help om nasate op te spoor', *Die Republikein*, 11 August 2016.
- 85 All information is derived from the correspondence of Hans Axasi †Eichab with Dag Henrichsen, in particular e-mails dated 28 April 2017, 29 January 2018.

- 86 E-mail to Dag Henrichsen, 28 April 2017.
- 87 E-mail to Dag Henrichsen, 29 January 2018.
- 88 Cf. C. Fforde, *Collecting the Dead: Archaeology and the Reburial Issue* (Duckworth, London, 2004). P. Turnbull and M. Pickering (eds), *The Long Way Home. The Meaning and Values of Repatriation*, Museums and Collections vol. 2 (New York and Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2010); Fforde, Keeler and McKeown, *The Routledge Companion to Indigenous Repatriation*.
- 89 ‘Sitzung vom 30. März 1886’, *ZfE* 18 (1885), (240).
- 90 Cf. D. Henrichsen, ‘Die “Skelettaffaire” und andere “Geheimnisse” – Sammlungsstrategien, Grenzüberschreitungen und Wissenskonzeptionen des Zürcher Botanikers Hans Schinz’, in H. Stoecker, T. Schnalke and A. Winkelmann (eds), *Sammeln, Erforschen, Zurückgeben? Menschliche Gebeine aus der Kolonialzeit aus akademischen und musealen Sammlungen* (Berlin, Chr. Links, 2013), pp. 121–9.
- 91 Cf. G. Krüger, *Kriegsbewältigung und Geschichtsbewusstsein. Realität, Deutung und Verarbeitung des deutschen Kolonialkriegs in Namibia 1904–1907* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1999), p. 112.