

Carle K. J.

Donation from Wilfrid Metje Foundation brings word processing to the desert

A generous donation from the Wilfrid Metje Foundation has allowed the Desert Ecological Research Unit at Gobabeb to purchase a much needed word processor and to add word processing capabilities to a micro-computer. For research scientists, the most important part of their work is preparation of research results for publication in scientific journals. This entails a great number of "draft" manuscripts which are frequently altered during the writing process and as the comments of colleagues are incorporated. Needless to say, this involves time-consuming retyping, time which the scientists could better use carrying out more research. The word processor, which stores typescripts on disc, short cuts this process and results in a great saving of time for the scientist as well as producing a far better looking product. Hence the word processor can be considered an extremely important scientific tool.

The Wilfrid Metje Foundation was organized by South West African businessman Mr Wilfrid Metje in an attempt to return to the country, through well placed donations, funds which had actually been earned in South West Africa. Now administered by Mrs I. Metje, the Wilfrid Metje Foundation carries on in the tradition established by Mr Metje. The Desert Ecological Research Unit is just one of the many groups to which the Foundation has contributed.

Donations from Rossing Uranium Limited

Over the last three years, Rossing Uranium Limited has made a generous contribution toward the expenses of the Desert Ecological Research Unit. This support has allowed us to purchase some important pieces of equipment which added greatly to the effectiveness of our research programme. These include a BBC microcomputer, compatible with our BBC word processor, for use in laboratory applications and the processing of field data. An "ant mobile", designed by Alan Marsh to census the ant community of the Namib plains, proved to be an extremely effective research tool. We also purchased an array of glassware to enhance the effectiveness of our small laboratory. A Scholander pressure bomb for use in plant ecophysiology research has also added to the Unit's range of capabilities.

In addition, we have been able to employ a computer programmer on a temporary basis to write specific software for several research projects, as well as contribute toward the salaries of two staff members regularly using the computer and word processor. This latter possibility has greatly increased the efficiency of the DERU and filled a long-recognised deficiency in the staffing of the Unit. For all this valuable help, the Desert Ecological Research Unit is very grateful to Rossing Uranium Limited.

Topnaar (≠ Aonin) Place Names Along the Lower Kuiseb River, Central Namib Desert.

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INTRODUCTION

The recognition of localities in any given area is an important aspect of fieldwork. Henno Martin, the "father" of geology in South West Africa/Namibia, stated after his epic 2½ year sojourn the early 1940's in the Kuiseb Valley, Central Namib, that "No man can become really familiar with a landscape until he's given names to its landmarks, and in any case, naming is essential for communication and identification" (In: "*The Sheltering Desert*", 1957, reprinted 1974, p. 152). One method of identifying localities in Africa is a knowledge of the local place names used by an indigenous population.

The Kuiseb River, rising on the interior plateau some 20 km southwest of Windhoek, broadly arcs for some 440 km in a general southwesterly to northwesterly trend through the Great Escarpment and across the Central Namib Desert to reach the Atlantic coast near Walvis Bay (Stengel, 1964). Along its lower reaches, the Kuiseb forms a linear oasis well within the inhospitable desert tract and also acts as an effective barrier to the general northward migration of the dunes from the main Namib Sand Sea (Seely *et al.*, 1979/81). This Lower Kuiseb River ecosystem also supports a tribe of Nama people, the Topnaar (≠ Aonin), (Jenkins and Brain, 1967; Köhler, 1969; Budack, 1977). Their establishment in the Lower Kuiseb, which spans at least 300 years (Budack, 1977) has been facilitated by the relatively shallow water table in the river bed which, in turn, supports a riverine vegetation, notably *Acacia albida* Del. and *Acanthosicyos horrida* Welw. ex Benth and Hooker fil. (Seely *et al.*, 1979/81).

The term "Topnaar" is an approximate translation of the traditional tribal name, ≠ Aonin, which has been interpreted as "people of the marginal area" (Budack, 1977). Their use of the cucurbit, *Acanthosicyos horrida* (!nara), an endemic to the Namib, as a food source is particularly interesting (Budack, 1977) although this practice has declined in recent years (Detlinger, 1977). The well-defined patches of *A. horrida* hummocks, or !nara-fields, along the Lower Kuiseb River have been named by the Topnaar as have a number of traditional places, usually sites of present or past habitation. For example, Budack (1977) has recognized and mapped 54 !nara-fields along the Lower Kuiseb River, the majority of which are situated in the Delta between Rooibank and Walvis Bay.

In the course of fieldwork carried out under the auspices of the Kuiseb Environmental Project (Co-operative Scientific Programmes, C.S.I.R.), we found the Topnaar place names provided a useful reference for the identification of localities along the Lower Kuiseb River. We present here a map and brief description of a number of localities named by the Topnaar along the Lower Kuiseb River. This information is intended to supplement earlier maps, such as those of Stapff (1887), Jenkins and Brain (1967), Köhler (1969), Budack (1977), and update local place names along the Lower Kuiseb for future reference.

METHODS

We engaged the assistance of Gert /Nariseb from the Topnaar village, Soutrivier, some 5 km downstream of the Namib Research Institute at Gobabeb. He has travelled extensively along the Lower Kuiseb, particularly in his youth, and could remember the great 1933/34 floods. Place names, as recounted by Gert /Nariseb, were first obtained in the field in October 1979 and checked again in July 1981. Additional comments and the spelling of place names were obtained from Erastus Kaneb and Godfried Gaoseb. The spelling used here does not necessarily comply with the official Nama rules, nor has it been cross-checked with the Language Bureau in Windhoek. The "clicks" used in the pronunciation of Topnaar words are (Budack, pers. comm. to AJvW):

dental /; lateral //; postalveolar #; cerebral !;

RESULTS

The correct spelling of the Kuiseb River is *!Khuseb* (after Budack, 1977). The approximate positions of places known by Topnaar names, as given by Gert /Nariseb, are shown in Figure 1. Our informant, Gert /Nariseb, often referred to the "Old People" ("Oumense") when we asked the derivation of a place name. The following quotation from Köhler (1969) might clarify the time span meant by Gert /Nariseb when he spoke of the "Old People".

"In # *Nu-!hoas* (Zwartbank) traf ich im Jahre 1957 einen Topnaar namens Wilhelm Herero, der vor dem Ersten Weltkriege in *!Hu-daob* lebte. Wie er berichtete, war seine Familie die einzige, die damals den Platz bewohnte. Von *!Hu-daob* zog er später nach *!Aub*, wo noch andere Topnaar-Familien sassen." (Köhler, 1969, p. 102).

Place names are considered from upstream to downstream and the text numbering system corresponds with that used on the map (Fig. 1).

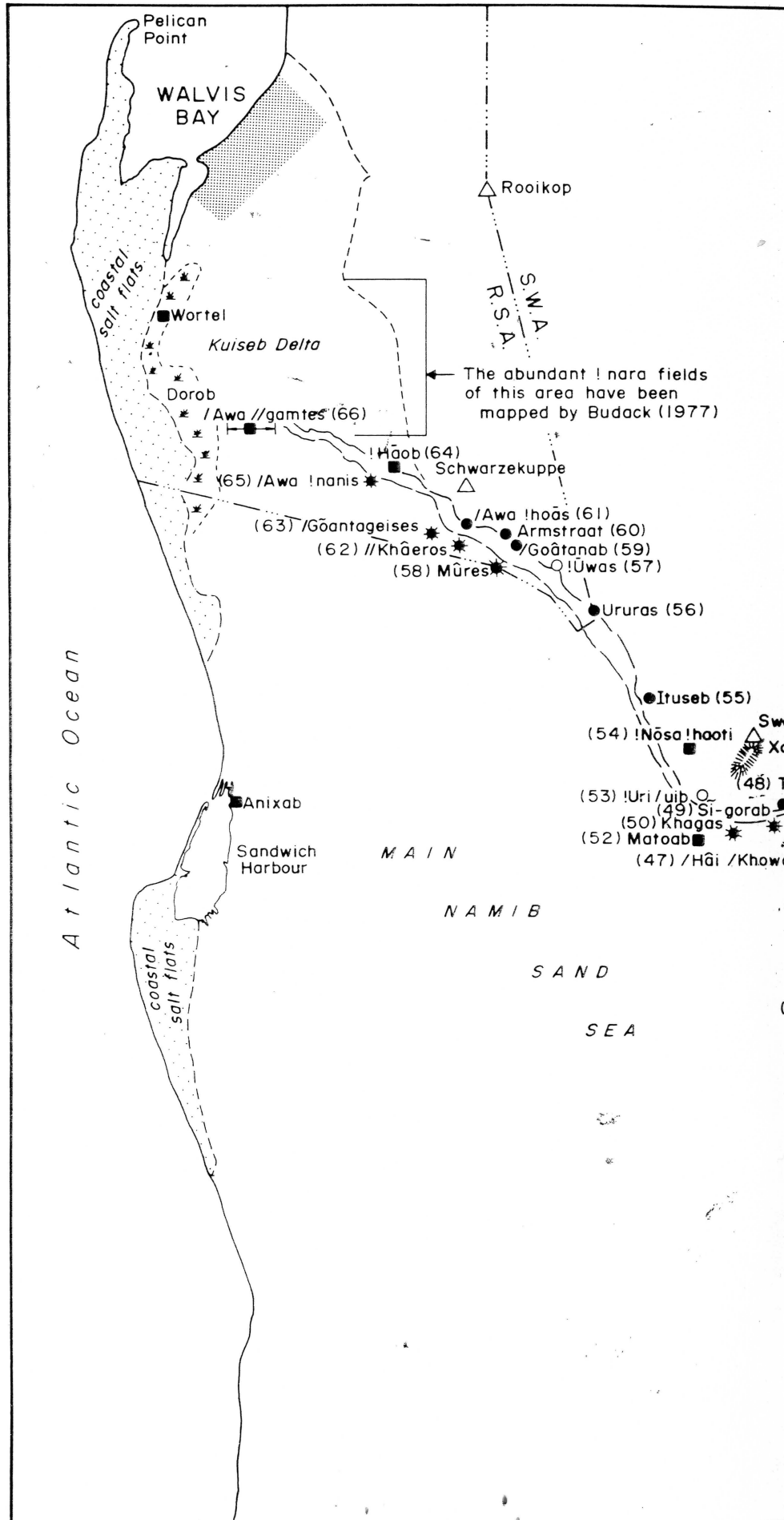
1. *Gai !hutaob* or *!Hutaob* (≡ Large dirt road) 23° 41½' S; 15° 31' E. Approximately 72 km upstream from the Namib Research Institute at Gobabeb. "Old People's" dwelling place where they lived on the southeast (left) bank, on top of the canyon. Several stone circles are still visible. According to Gert /Nariseb, the people used donkeys to transport their water from a good pool in the river. It was a well-known stopping- and last-watering point for the wagons of the early days when crossing the final section of the eastern dune Namib, on the way to Rehoboth. The localised occurrence of *Adenolobus gariepensis* in the vicinity of the stone circle is interesting.
2. # *Khari !hutaob* (≡ Small dirt road). Approximately 1 km downstream of above place. Noteworthy in that it is the first place in the Kuiseb canyon (when considered from upstream) that red dune sand reaches the gravel river bed in any appreciable quantity.
3. /*Gom #kaeb* 23° 42½' S; 15° 27½' E. An "Old People's" dwelling site situated on the north (right) bank. The site apparently takes note of a well-defined game path much used by the larger mammals, particularly zebra and oryx, entering the Kuiseb River from the south (dune) side.
4. // *Arubda //nab* (≡ where the baboon fell to its death) 23° 42½' S; 15° 27½' E. Approximately 58 km upstream of Namib Research Institute, on left bank. A very steep schist ridge with a slightly overhanging cliff-face which has the beacon WA 266A sited on its knife-edge. This place also takes note of several well-defined large game paths. Together with /*Gom #kaeb*, this area has often been erroneously called Hudaob on the maps. Alexander (1838) refers to this corner as Aniptanaab on his map.
5. # *Nāta //gāntes* 23° 41' S; 15° 26' E. "Old People's" name for seepage traces and thin tufa-like deposits in the relatively sheltered face of steep schist canyon wall on the north (right) side of the

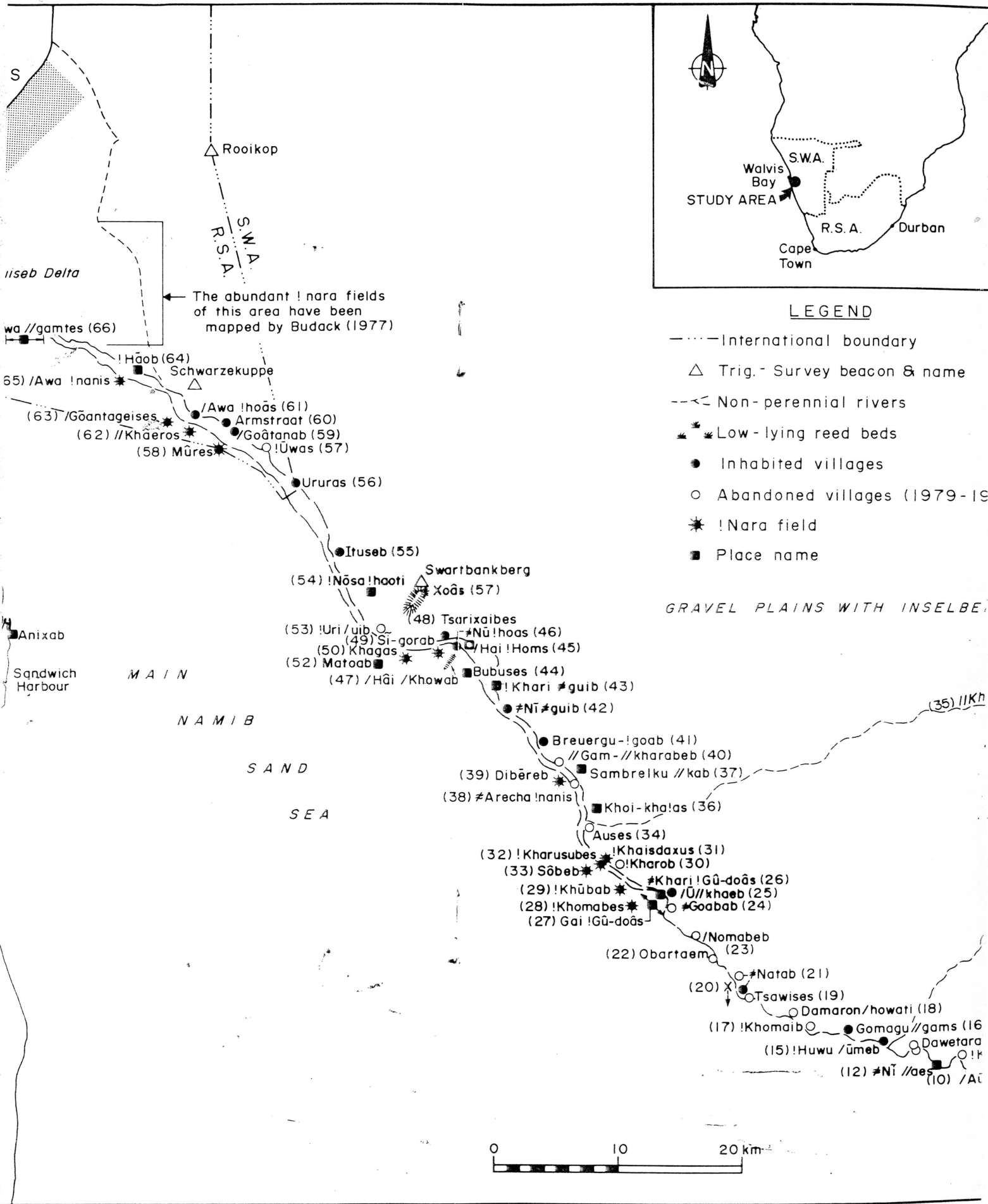
Kuiseb. Just upstream of beacon WA 273A. Apparently recognized because of these thin, tufa-depositing seeps which probably yield water in a good season(s).

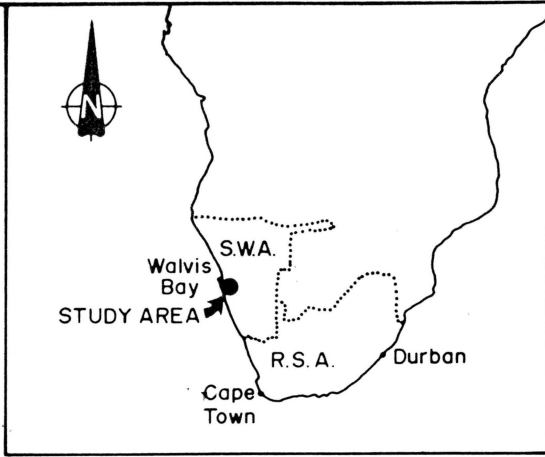
6. *Sarib* (≡ Name for the low, woody succulent shrub, *Zygophyllum stapffii*) 23° 41' S; 15° 22½' E. Approximately 45 km upstream from the Namib Research Institute, on the south (left) side of the river, "Old People's" place. Although locally known at the Institute as "Ron's or Tilson's camp", Tilson referred to it as *Nareb*. Gert /Nariseb was emphatic that *Nareb* was incorrect for that place.
7. // *Hārubes* 23° 40' S; 15° 20' E. "Old People's" name for the river bend where the red dunes of the main Namib Sand Sea start dominating the left bank of the Kuiseb. There are a number of stone circles in the vicinity, both above the canyon on the south side and in the canyon on the north side. These latter sites, according to a Damara, Willem Uwuseb, strongly resemble the hunting and temporary living shelters of the "Old People" that he is familiar with in the Uis/Ugab River area.
8. *Naramēb* A north (right) bank tributary which drains the vicinity of the Gorob mine, and has sometimes been referred to as the Gorob River.
9. /*Awa !ab* (≡ Red River) 23° 40' S; 15° 18' E. Abandoned village site on the north (right) bank. Together with an old kraal about 1 km upstream, this site is the most upstream habitation of the Topnaar within the memory of Gert /Nariseb.
10. /*Aūb* (≡ Fountain Spring) 23° 40' S; 15° 17' E. Abandoned village site on the north (right) bank. Named by the "Old People" for a spring in the vicinity. According to Gert /Nariseb, this area was renowned for puffadders and cobras.
11. *!Khari goras* 23° 39' S; 15° 15' E. Abandoned village site on the north (right) bank.
12. # *Ni //aes* 23° 39½' S; 15° 14' E. Prominent large black/dark amphibolite outcrop (Matchless Member, Precambrian Damara Sequence) on the left bank of the Kuiseb between beacons WA 294 and DW 300B.
13. *Dawetaraes* (≡ Elbow, or corner, in the *Tamarix usneoides*) 23° 39' S; 15° 13' E. Abandoned village site. One set of relict wooden stake enclosures on the right side, above the floodplain, and the other site within the riparian fringe on the floodplain on the left bank. The remains of the settlement on the right-hand floodplain indicate extensive goat kraals.
14. // *Naobes !ab* North (right) bank tributary draining the Hope Mine area and sometimes referred to as the Hope River. Named after an old woman whose husband was buried near the confluence. Their old village site is still visible on the extreme outer edge of the right-hand floodplain just up from the confluence with the Kuiseb.
15. *!Hūwu //web* (≡ Simile of an oven, both in geomorphological shape and temperature). 23° 38½' S; 15° 11½ - 12' E. Incorporates a relatively broad area the width of the valley from the present Homeb campsite upstream to the // *Naobes !ab* (Hope) confluence. Various relict village sites still standing on both sides of the river. Köhler (1969) refers to this site as *!Nūwu-!homeb*. This name has been corrupted to the present one used for this area, "Homeb". The dwelling site presently occupied on the right bank was the most upstream Topnaar settlement at the end of 1982. Prior to 1933/34 the Kuiseb apparently flowed closer to the dune side of the valley.
16. *Gomagu //gāms* (≡ Oswater or Ossewater) 23° 38' S; 15° 10' E. Apparently oxen of the early oxwagon-trekking days became stuck in the soft sediment, probably silts ("muds"), against the left-hand side of the valley. They could not be removed and were allegedly slaughtered. The village, on the right bank, is occupied and the "Old Man" Kooitjie was the headman of the Topnaar

- people at the time of our 1981 field check. He has been subsequently superseded by one of his sons.
17. !*Khomaib* 23° 37½' S; 15° 08½' E. Abandoned village site on the right bank above the present floodplain. According to Gert /Nariseb, the Kuiseb River used to flow against the right-hand margin of its present floodplain prior to the 1934 flood, after which it occupied its present course.
 18. *Damaron /howati* (≡ Graves of the Damara children) 23° 37½' S; 15° 07½' E. Abandoned village on the right bank above the present floodplain. According to Gert /Nariseb, three Damara children were burnt to death in a hut, probably as a result of their trying to steal milk. There is some controversy about this site being about another 1 km farther downstream. However, he could not give an alternative name for this old village site.
 19. *Tsarwises* (≡ *Euclea pseudebenus*, the false ebony tree). 23° 36½' S; 15° 05' E. Old village site on the right bank.
 20. Cross with arrow on map. A large stone cairn which apparently marks the path taken by the early oxwagons on the left-hand side of the Kuiseb. The crossing point was in the vicinity of ≠*Natab*.
 21. ≠*Natab* or /*Hôm /hâxas* (≡ Place with numerous trees) 23° 35½' S; 15° 04½' E. Old dwelling site on northeast (right) bank. Approximately 1 km farther downstream than the presently occupied ≠*Natab* village.
 22. *Obartaem* (Overtime) 23° 34½' S; 15° 03½' E. Relict village site in the left bank, approximately 2 km upstream of the Namib Research Institute. This name was apparently a corruption of "Overtime" which was the name given to the settlement by an "Englishman". This "Englishman" apparently lived at or near the settlement and was buried across the river.
 23. /*Nomabeb* or /*Hômabeb* (≡ Figtree; or The Place of the Fig Tree) 23° 34' S; 15° 03' E. Old village site on the northeast (right) bank and is the correct name for the site of the Namib Research Institute. This name has been corrupted to Gobabeb.
 24. ≠*Ôabeb* (≡ Clay road) 23° 32½' S; 15° 01½' E. Abandoned village site on the outer margin of the floodplain, on the northeast (right) side of the Kuiseb. This place is not well known and is generally included in the area known as !*Gu-doâs*.
 25. /*Ū //Khaeb* (≡ Soutrivier or Salt River) 23° 32' S; 15° 01½' E. This village, on the north (right) bank is occupied. The name is derived from a north bank tributary which has a very high salt content.
 26. ≠*Khari !Gû doâs* (≡ Small sandy road) 23° 32½' S; 15° 01' E. This is a route on the south (left) bank of the Kuiseb opposite the /*Ū //Khaeb* (Soutrivier). Still used today to reach the !*nara* fields downstream of the village.
 27. *Gai !Gû-doâs* 23° 32½' S; 15° 01' E. This is a short-cut across the neck of a meander in the Kuiseb. It is mentioned by Alexander (1837) who used it on his return trip to the Kuiseb. There are a few !*nara* hummocks on the east side of this route which are harvested.
 28. !*Khomabes* 23° 32½' S; 14° 59½' E. A !*nara* field some 1.5 to 2 km south of the Kuiseb. The !*nara* hummocks are relatively isolated in the centre of the interdune valley which is mostly sand-free. There are a number of *Acacia erioloba* trees growing in association with these !*nara* clumps.
 29. !*Khūbab* or //*Ōbab* (≡ Legs) 23° 32' S; 14° 59' E. A !*nara* field on the south (left) side of the river. The !*nara*-colonised sand dune hummocks are large, some 5 - 7 m high.
 30. !*Kharob* or !*Narob* 23° 31' S; 14° 59' E. Old village site amongst low granite outcrops on the northeast (right) side of the Kuiseb. The wooden enclosures, as well as a grave and coffin-carrier (made from a large *Acacia albida* trunk) are still to be seen upstream of the weir constructed by the Department of Water Affairs.
 31. !*Khaisdaxus* 23° 30½' S; 14° 58' E. Apparently the area incorporating the northern tip of the dune with a few !*nara* plants, in the vicinity immediately downstream of the above-mentioned weir.
 32. !*Kharusubes* (≡ one horn) 23° 30½' S; 14° 58' E. A relatively small !*nara* field on the south (left) bank.
 33. *Sōbeb* (≡ Offal, specifically the lungs, liver and heart) 23° 31' S; 14° 57½' E. A large !*nara* field in an interdune valley on the south side of the river. Temporary shelters used during !*nara* season may still be seen on both left and right banks in the vicinity of this interdune valley, which is known locally at the Namib Research Institute as Nara Valley.
 34. *Auses* (≡ Bitter) 23° 29' S; 14° 57½' E. An old dwelling site on the northeast (right) side of the Kuiseb and on the banks of a large tributary, the //*Khārabeb* near its confluence with the Kuiseb.
 35. //*Khārabeb* (≡ Gravel) The longest tributary (rising just east of the Tumasberg near Ganab) of the Kuiseb River within the Namib Desert. This river has been referred to as the Aussinanis on the Trig. Survey maps.
 36. *Khoi-kha!as* 23° 28½' S; 14° 58' E. Apparently the general area of an early battle between the Topnaar and Hereros.
 37. *Sambrelku //kab* 23° 26½' S; 14° 57½' E. A general place name pertaining to a prominent but low ridge of black schist which has the beacon DW 320A on part of it.
 38. ≠*Arecha !nanis* 23° 27' S; 14° 57' E. An abandoned village site on the southwest (left) bank near a large fig tree.
 39. *Dibēreb* 23° 26½-28½' S; 14° 56½' E. A relatively extensive !*nara* field, with large hummocks, in an interdune valley extending south of the Kuiseb at borehole, Bg 21890.
 40. //*Gam-//Kharabeb* (≡ Water gravel) 23° 26' S; 14° 56' E. An abandoned village on the northeast (right) side of the river.
 41. *Breuergu-!goab* 23° 25½' S; 14° 55½' E. A presently occupied village site on the northeast (right) bank. This place has also been called "Klein Klipneus" (or Small Rock Nose).
 42. ≠*Nī ≠gūib* (≡ Klipneus; Rock Nose) 23° 23' S; 14° 54' E. A presently occupied village on the northeast (right) bank. The name applies to a nose-shaped ridge of schist, with intercalated thin marble bands, which juts into the Kuiseb just downstream of the village.
 43. !*Khari ≠gūib* (≡ Klein Klip; Small Rock) 23° 22½' S; 14° 53' E. A small ridge of schist which juts, nose-like into the Kuiseb, with beacon R 53 on it.
 44. *Bubuses* 23° 22' S; 14° 52' E. A large, almost circular hollow in the dunes on the southwest (left) side of the river. An *Acacia erioloba* thicket forms a prominent feature in the base of the hollow which is colonised on the northeast and east sides by *Typha* sp. (bullrush) *Cyperus* sp. (sedge), *Acanthosicyos horrida* (!*nara*) and *Stipagrostis sabulicola* (grass). After a good flood, ground water levels may rise to the surface forming a pool.
 45. /*Hāi !Homs* (≡ grey bank or wall) 23° 21' S; 14° 52' E. An almost circular, domed outcrop of greyish Nossob quartzite in the Kuiseb bed forming an island to the right of its present main course. An old, abandoned village site and graves are situated on the outcrop.
 46. ≠*Nū !hoas* (≡ Swartbank; Black slope or river bank) 23° 20½' S; 14° 51½' E. The name given to the left bank of the Kuiseb River

FIG. 1
LOCAL TOPNAAR
(≠ AONIN)
PLACE NAMES
ALONG THE LOWER
!KUISEB RIVER,
CENTRAL NAMIB
DESERT

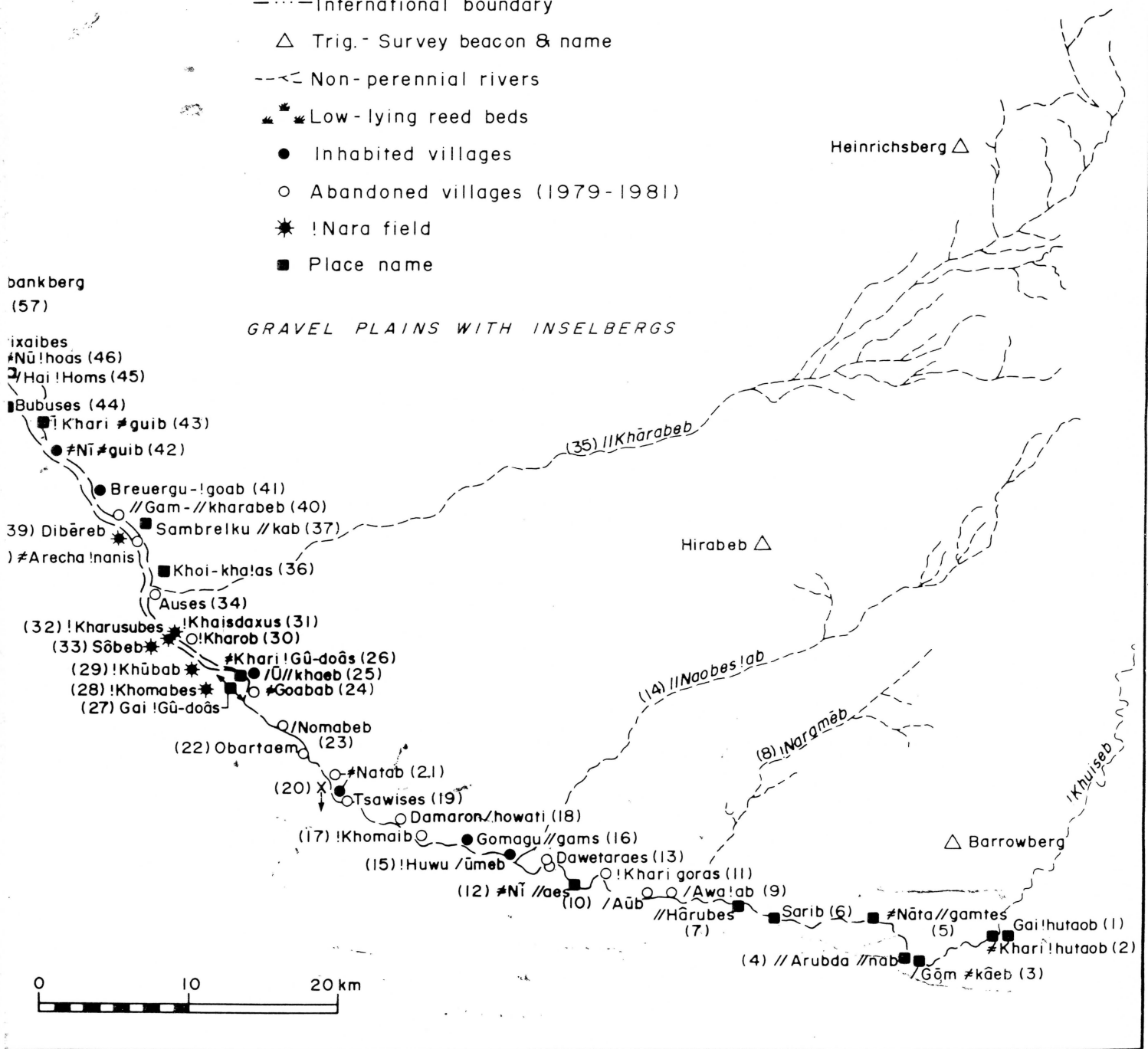






LEGEND

- International boundary
- △ Trig. - Survey beacon & name
- - - Non-perennial rivers
- ✻ Low-lying reed beds
- Inhabited villages
- Abandoned villages (1979-1981)
- ✳ !Nara field
- Place name



where a prominent section through a dolerite dyke is exposed. The beacon DW 326B is located on top of it. The large village on the north (right) bank is named after this distinctive outcrop.

47. /Hâi /khowab (≡ Grey Dune) 23° 21-22' S; 14° 50½-51' E. The prominent ridge of grey Nossob quartzite, with cross-cutting dolerite dykes, lying southwest of Swartbank (≠ Nu !hoas). Although referred to as a "dune" (≡ /Khowab), it is the largest exposure of rock along the left bank of the Kuiseb within the main Namib Sand Sea zone.
48. *Tsaraxaibes* (≡ Stofneus; Dusty Nose) 23° 20½' S; 14° 50½' E. A recently re-occupied village site, on the right bank, near the "Swartbank Weir" built by the Department of Water Affairs.
49. *Si-gorab* 23° 21' S; 14° 50' E. A !nara field on the south (left) side of the Kuiseb, amongst low dunes on the outer fringe of the floodplain below the "Swartbank Weir".
50. *Khagas* 23° 21' S; 14° 48½' E. A !nara field on the south (left) side of the Kuiseb in the interdune valley. Numerous *Acacia eribola* trees associated with !nara hummocks.
51. *Xoās* (≡ Pick, e.g. fruit; name given to Swartbank Mountain) 23° 18½-20' S; 14° 48½-49½' E. Predominantly marble inselberg, with prominent cross-cutting dolerite dykes. Swartbank Trig. beacon located on top.
52. *Matoab* 23° 21½' S; 14° 47' E. A temporary waterhole approximately 1.5 km south of the Kuiseb. Several *Acacia albida* trees are growing in the vicinity.
53. !Uri /uib (≡ White Rock) 23° 20' S; 14° 47' E. A low marble prominence extending into the sandy bed of the Kuiseb and constituting the southern extremity of the Hamilton Range. The beacon Kuiseb II is located on it.
54. !Nōsa !haoti (≡ Stillebank; Quiet slope or low rise) 23° 19' S; 14° 47' E. Low, but distinctive, granite domes on the north side of the Water Affairs road between the !Uri /uib marble ridge and the Edoseb (Ituseb) reservoir.
55. *Ituseb* 23° 17' S; 14° 45½' E. A presently occupied village on the northeast (right) side of the Kuiseb.
56. *Ururas* 23° 13½' S; 14° 43½' E. Several presently occupied village sites on the northeast (right) bank, in the vicinity of the large storage reservoir. According to Godfried Gauseb and Johannes Bees, there is an old village, !Khāo-ururas (≡ Ururas bank), in the vicinity of the Water Affairs pump No. 24. However, this site was not checked in the field.
57. !Ūwas (≡ Shin of the leg) 23° 12' S; 14° 42' E. Old dwelling site and general place name on the northeast (right) side of the river.
58. *Mūres* (≡ Look) 23° 12' S; 14° 40' E. A vegetated dune hummock area on the southwest (left) bank with some !nara. The presence of *Acacia albida*, *Phragmites australis* and several sedge species implies high water table conditions.
59. /Goātanab 23° 11½' S; 14° 41' E. A dwelling site, more commonly called *Dawedraais*, which is sited on the northeast (right) bank.
60. *Armstraat* 23° 11½' S; 14° 40½' E. A village on the northeast (right) bank.
61. /Awa !hoās (≡ Rooibank; Red Rise or Red River Bank) 23° 11' S; 14° 39' E. Name given to the red outcrops of Nossob quartzite which have, in part, been granitized on the northeast (right) bank of the Kuiseb.
62. //Khāeroos (≡ "Fine sand with small grains") 23° 11' S; 14° 38½' E. The !nara hummocks directly opposite /Awa !hoas (Rooibank) in the vicinity of borehole Bg 21906.

63. *Goāntageises* (≡ "The children are growing up") 23° 10½' S; 14° 36½' E. The !nara hummocks and low dunes on the southwest (left) margin of the Kuiseb.
64. !Hāob (≡ Afraid) 23° 09' S; 14° 36' E. The upper reaches of the sandy Kuiseb "Delta". The bedrock (Nossob quartzite) juts out prominently into the present main course in a southwesterly direction on the upstream side of !Hāob.
65. /Awa !nanis (≡ Red side) 23° 09' S; 14° 35' E. A !nara field on the southwest (left) side with abundant vegetation in the interdune area close to the river.
66. /Awa //gamtes (≡ Red water) 23° 07' S; 14° 30-32' E. The section of the present course of the Kuiseb, with numerous !nara hummocks, from about B-area Reservoir downstream to the western edge of the dune field in the vicinity of borehole Bg 2/77.

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