The #Aonin or Topnaar are an exceptionally interesting Nama tribe of South-West Africa. Apart from other unusual features it is their annual harvesting of the melon and sea-fishing that makes them so different from any other Khoekhoe tribe.

Their present habitat is the Lower Kuiseb Valley which extends from the melon fields in the dunes of the estuary up to Genugu-/gaan or Ossewater, and includes the Kuisebmond location of Walvis Bay. In former times their tribal territory was far more extensive. It included places along the coast such as Tsauxoub-Igaos (Swakopmund), 'Nama (Paailtjies) Anixab (Sandwich Harbour) and 'Naites (Conception Bay) as well as several settlements on the Lower Swakop River, e.g. //Hunidas (Nonidas) and Khai-/gaaxab (Haigamkab). In the Kuiseb Valley, the tribe's former settlements extended far beyond Ossewater up to !Hã-exob.

The Dutch-Afrikaans term "Topnaar" may be regarded as an approximate translation of the traditional tribal name which is "Aonin". In Nama, the noun /nam means something like "extremity" and is not only applied to the top of a mountain, but also to far-away places and marginal areas of a territory. According to Neinhor (1909:31), the suffix -ni sometimes conveys a local implication. An adequate translation into English could be "people of a marginal area". From the viewpoint of other Khoekhoe tribes, the #Aonin inhabited an out-of-the-way area of Namaland situated on its north-western border.

*Private Bag 13180, Windhoek.
Another term which is still used by members of other khoe-khoe tribes to denote the #Aonin, is !Naranin or "!Nara people". !Nara is the Nama name for a kind of wild melon called Acanthosicyos horrida Vahl, by the botanists. The term !Naranin has a slightly derogatory connotation. Other khoe-khoe look down upon the #Aonin, because the latter, like the Bushmen, are dependent on weeds for a considerable part of the year. In this connection, it might be interesting to know that the Herero of former times classified the #Aonin with the Bushmen and not with the khoe-khoe, as is indicated by the term ou-kuruha used for both groups simultaneously (Brincker 1886:225).

Among the #Aonin proper live a number of !Nükhoen or Daman (also called Damara). They form an integral part of the tribe. In this respect the #Aonin are not an exception to the other khoe-khoe tribes in South-West Africa which all have some Nama members. Most of the Daman living among the #Aonin were born in the tribal area of the latter. The same applies to several generations of their ancestors. For this reason they are called !Khuise-daman or #Aoni-daman. In addition, a certain amount of intermarriage and miscegenation has taken place which further increases the degree of integration between them. In March, 1975, the #Aoni-daman were found to be 29.3% of the total tribal population.

According to a survey I made in March, 1975, the distribution of the #Aonin at the time was as indicated in the table below. Those people who were temporarily absent in the !Nara fields or elsewhere, were counted as being at their usual places of residence. Figures in brackets refer to the number of #Aonin-daman at the various settlements. The total number of tribesmen should be increased by about 15% (to 431) to include people working outside the #Aonin territory on farms in the Khomas-Hochland or in urban areas except Walvis Bay. Adding those descendants of the Jantjes family at Lüderitzbucht who still regard themselves as Topnaar, the total number of #Aonin may be estimated at 450 people. A comparison with Prof. Kohler's table of 1957 (1960:110-7) shows only a slight increase of the !Khuiseb population over an 18-year period, viz by 15 persons. Kuisebmond, the native suburb of Walvis Bay, was not included in Kohler's table. At present, more than half of the #Aonin people are concentrated at Walvis Bay. In the following table, traditional placenames have been used as far as possible, with their modern equivalents indicated in brackets. Some well-known #Aoni settlements in the !Khuiseb Valley are temporarily uninhabited, but will be occupied again whenever the need arises.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>settlement</th>
<th>men</th>
<th>women</th>
<th>children (under 16)</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>!Gomen-!gams (Walvisbani)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goi Hai-khaos (Myl 4)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/Girigu-!hoas (Myl 7)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!Nara-!hoas (Quarries)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/Aw-a-!hoas (Roobank)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamp</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armanastr</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dake-drais</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!Ubab (/!Gao-tanab)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsabihes (Uuras)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itushe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!Nükhoas (Swarthbank)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!N!-!gub (Klipneus)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breuergu-!gob</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/Ö-!-khæb (Sourrivier)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!Namaeb (Gobabeb)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!Gomagu-!gams (Osewater)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsoa-xoub!-!gaoa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During recent years, a certain group of people advocated the removal of the !Khuiseb people to either Nama- or DamaraLand.
Their main argument was that a large part of the #Aoni's traditional tribal area was a nature and game reserve. Apart from the fact that the tribesmen have never been consulted in connection with the proclamation of that reserve, their transfer to another area should be rejected on purely humanitarian grounds. In a world that has no qualms about violating long-established rights of occupation, there are only a few acceptable reasons why a responsible government should dislocate people, e.g., if their very existence is threatened by remaining in a certain area, or, if their continued occupation is detrimental to the general interest and welfare of a larger community. That is, however, not the case with the #Aoni tribe. The economy of these people is based on animal husbandry, the annual harvesting of the Inara fruit, the exploitation of oceanic resources, and work done for white employers. Other possibilities of making a livelihood within their present habitat, such as a home industry or the participation of the tribesmen in conservation activities and the tourist industry, have as yet not been encouraged.

In addition to considerations of a humanitarian nature, there are a number of factual arguments which strongly support the peoples' claim to the remnants of their traditional tribal area. By virtue of these arguments, and in its capacity as protector of the legitimate interests of the native population, the Department of Rantu Administration and Development has been unable to consent to the removal of the #Aoni tribe. The main reasons are as follows:

1. The occupation of the territory by the Topnaar for a period of several centuries.
2. The adaptation of their culture to the indigenous Inara fruit which is harvested during an annual season.
3. The peoples' dependency on the sea and its food resources.
4. The existence of legal treaties, respecting the traditional land rights of the tribe.

Prof. Kohler's paper on the #Aoni must be regarded as the first systematic presentation of their history. In connection with their origin, the author agrees with the Rhenish missionary Baumann sen. who claimed that the tribe immigrated into its present territory as late as towards the end of the 18th century (Köhler loc. cit.: 105). It is further alleged that they did not reach the Swakop River mouth before the beginning of the 19th century and spread to the south only between 1820 and 1830. I find it impossible to support these dates, but I am convinced that the ancestors of the present inhabitants lived in the area for a much longer time. However, this does not exclude the possibility of an immigration of certain ethnic elements in the beginning of the 19th century. They were possibly the NG-/In who subjugated the resident /Namixan, according to Mrs. Hoernlé (1925:12).

Some places on the central coast of South-West Africa were already occupied by Khoekhoen at least 500 years ago. The people encountered by the skipper Gerrit Ridder Myys of the hooker "Grundel" at Anixab in 1670 were in all probability Nama, as is suggested by their using the Khoi fly-whisk or /giri-/háb, and their yellow skin colour (E. Moritz 1918:36). The only possible alternative would be to regard them as "Bushmen", whatever that may mean, because the hunters and collectors of the Namib were also of Khoekhoe stock. Any doubt about the ethnic classification of these people was, however, dispelled by a diary that was written only seven years later. On March 5, 1677, the vessel "Boode", under the command of Capt. Cornelis Thomassen Wohna, cast anchor at Anixab. The local inhabitants, recognized as "Hottentots" by the crew, possessed cattle, some of which they brought down to the shore for the purpose of trading. These Khoekhoen were also Inara collectors. During a hasty retreat further inland, they left a pot behind which was full of pips "of something resembling pawpaws" (E. Moritz loc. cit.: 31; my translation, K.B.).
Subsequent to this scanty piece of information, silence fell again on the coast of South-West, lasting for more than a century. In 1793, Sebastiaan Valentijn van Rheenen undertook a voyage of discovery along the west coast in the vessel "De Meermin", commanded by Captain Duminy. In the vicinity of what is now Luderitzbucht, they met an American skipper who told them "that he had been to the Walvis Bay a few years ago and visited the kraal of Hottentots or Namangwas there and that these people possessed about one hundred head of cattle" (van Rheenen acc. to L.Moritz 1915:197; my translation, K.B.). If the American captain's assertions are true, and there is no reason to doubt their veracity, a cattle-owning Nama tribe resided in the neighbourhood of the Bay in the eighties of the 18th century. Some days after meeting the American, the "Meermin" called at the Walvis Bay and remained there from 23 January until 3 March, 1837. The natives on shore were able to muster 60 armed men, had a chief, and possessed cattle and sheep.

Considering these facts, Baumann's hypothesis is highly debatable. Moreover, the "Bood's" visit 300 years ago, indicates only the minimum time of Khoi presence at the central coast. There are indications that they have been living in the area for an even longer period. In January, 1973, near Conception Water, Dr. Beatrice Sandelowsky discovered some fragments of a Khoi clay pot with a pointed base, and without lugs. Some sherds showed traces of charcoal which were later dated by Dr. Vogel of the C.S.I.R.'s Natural Isotope Division, at approximately 650 years B.P. (oral information by Dr. Sandelowsky). This means that there is some evidence of Khoi-khoen along the west coast dating back to about 1325.

The representatives of the ancient maritime culture of the Atlantic coast have frequently been called "Strandlopers". Concerning this unfortunate term, I do not want to go into details here. It is impossible to distinguish them clearly from other Khoi-khoen, either on physical, linguistic or cultural grounds. Some of the old Aoni families, e.g. the Aaliban and the Saron, are even direct descendants from the so-called Hurum or Sea People. I agree with Dr. Rudner where he makes the following statement in the first part of a sentence: "The Walvis Bay Strandlopers originally belong to the Topnaar Hottentots ..." (1968:595). Immediately after, however, he ascribes to them a secondary primitivity, basing his assumption on Görlich who alleged that the Topnaar became "Strandlopers" only after having been robbed of their livestock by the advancing hordes. This seems to me an unfounded allegation. The maritime culture and the Inara complex show a high degree of specialization which found expression even in magic and poetry. How could all this have developed during the short period that elapsed since the Herero immigrated to the central part of South-West?

The Inara complex and its importance for the Aoni tribe has been thoroughly described in a paper by Pastor Walter Moritz. Unfortunately, this paper has not yet been published. Pastor Moritz was kind enough to let me consult his manuscript. In connection with the Inara fields, i.e. the well-defined patches of bushes owned by particular families, he listed 27 of them. This is extremely valuable for an assessment of the traditional land rights. For this reason I tried to cover all existing Inara fields and put them down on a map. With the assistance of my Topnaar friends I was able to supplement Moritz's list and identify 24 of them (see map on p. 41 and table no.3).

The Aoni display numerous traits of an "Erntevoik" (harvesting people) as defined by the late German ethnologist Prof. Julius Lips. It is true that their dependency on the Inaras has decreased under the influence of modern circumstances, but even now some individuals and whole families spend the period from November until April in the field, harvesting their staple food. During the remainder of the year they can still enjoy their favourite fare, because they know methods of preserving it. Every year they produce many bags of
roasted pips for their own use and for sale. On rare
occasions, one may still find a /pgoz-garibeh, an oval flat
cake made from iinara pulp and dried in the sun on a sloping
sand dune. This cake remains edible for months and may be
carried as provisions on a journey.

In order to give some indication of the present economic
importance of roasted iinara pips, I visited all wholesale
buyers in Walvis Bay and Swakopmund to make inquiries about
quantities and prices during the 1974/75 season. The
results have been tabulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>name of business</th>
<th>bags</th>
<th>weight (kg)</th>
<th>buying price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flamingo Furnishers</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>1260</td>
<td>R1296.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narraville Vans Supermarket</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2240</td>
<td>R2524.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oasis Restaurant</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>R1800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will-Eve Market</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>R0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Brown, Kuisebmond</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4500</td>
<td>R4500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Pieterse, Kuisebmond</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1260</td>
<td>R126.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blödorn Store, Swakopmund</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>R45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>159</td>
<td>2212</td>
<td>R2212.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Certain specialized tools and implements which facilitate
the harvesting and processing of the iinara fruit have been
developed by the tribe. There is, for example, the /taro or
iinara knife, made from the rib of an antelope or bovine
animal. Other tools are the /nubeh or twirling-stick and
the gabiras, a plaited sieve to sift out the pips. The
latter are pounded in a wooden mortar. Large clay pots
which were formerly used to cook the pulp, have now fallen
into disuse and are being replaced by 44 gallon petrol drums.

The iinara fruit is the subject of special praise songs or
gare-tsanaeti, four of which have been collected by Moritz.

I was able to record a fifth variant from my friend Fredrika
Kasper in Walvis Bay. It is quoted here as an example:

1. Gubu /fuse  You round food
2. /khuxa /khase with many thorns
3. /guuj samese you many-breasted
4. /Aoni-/pban di gai-
gai nose
5. /nuse ta ga haa even if I am far away
6. xawe ta ni feisi I will think of you
7. ti /naon /fuse you food of my ancestors
8. /urus ki tite I will never forget you
9. sas khemi go drisi there is no wet-nurse like
   khois a /khai you

In contrast to all other Khoi-Khoe tribes where the concept
of communal ownership prevails, the iinara fields of the
/Aoin are the property of individual lineages. These iinara
fields and their owners have been listed in the following
table. The numbers on the table correspond to the numbers
on the sketch map on p. 42.
The legal basis of the British occupation of the Walvis Bay Territory is a proclamation dated 12 March, 1878, by Richard Cossantine Dyer, captain of H.M.S. "Industry" (Cape of Good Hope 1898:353-354). At first glance the proclamation appears to be a unilateral declaration of annexation. The local inhabitants are never mentioned. In a petition of the 5th of January, 1883, however, which was submitted by Chief Piet Hailibe to the Cape Governor Sir Hercules Robinson, it is stated that the tribal chief had been consulted beforehand: "... in 1876 I agreed to the annexation to the Cape Colony of that portion of my country now known as Walvis Bay Territory" (State Archives, Windhoek, Walvis Bay files). The Chief further expresses his desire to have British protection extended to the whole of his tribal area, "in order that I and my people may live in peace and security under the Colonial law" (loc.cit.). The remarkable fact is that British protection was then regarded as something desirable. This can partly be explained by the general state of insecurity prevailing throughout the country at the time. On the other hand the Resident Magistrate's regime was mild and held advantages for the people, e.g. additional means of earning wages, pensions for aged and disabled persons, the improvement of fishing methods by borrowing the government's drag-net, etc. The administration never encroached upon the traditional land rights.

In the agreement of sale of the 19th of August, 1884, between Chief Hailibe and F.A.E. Lüderitz, the civil rights of the Aonin were expressly recognized. The relevant clause reads as follows: "Alle Privat Rechte der Eingeborenens bestehen wie früher fort" (Sander 1912:19). Dr. Nachtigal, the representative of the German government, later validated the agreement (23 November 1884) and declared that His Majesty the German Kaiser "das vom Kaufmann F.A.E. Lüderitz ... erworbene Gebiet den Schutz des Deutschen Reiches unterstellt und die Allehöchste Oberherrlichkeit über dasselbe übernimmt" (loc.cit.:20).

As stated by Hesse, "it is clear that no civil rights of the
Natives have been sold, but that the territorial sovereignty over the whole of the territory has merely been ceded" (190b: 94; my translation, K.B.). In my opinion the well-founded legal claim of the !Nama to their dwelling places, !nara fields, as well as their fishing and mussel grounds, remains unchanged to this day.

The maritime aspect of the !Nama culture will be discussed in more detail here. Up till now no summarized presentation of the facts has been available. Neither Prof. Kühler nor Pastor Moritz have given their attention to the subject. The South Atlantic forms the western border of the tribal area. In contrast to some Bantu people of South Africa the !Nama consider the sea an important source of food. In this they follow the tradition of the Khoi-khoi of the Cape. Coastal fishing, hunting seabirds and gathering mussels are activities which set the !Nama apart from all the other !Nama tribes of South-West Africa. Only some of the 'Aman (an "Oorlam" tribe) who had immigrated across the Orange River as recently as the beginning of the nineteenth century, did a little fishing in the vicinity of !Nama-vlei (now Luderitzbucht).

In former times the !Nama tribe consisted of two sections, the !Khuiseb or "!Khuiseb people" and the Hurin or "sea people". The latter were also called Anixab//Xa. "Those from Anixab (Sandwich Harbour)". They lived near the beach at places such as !Khiiseb//Kubus (Sandfontein), !Unixa//Us (Mortel), !Gorogos and Anixah. These Hurin were the actual bearers of the sea culture, while the !Khuiseb people lived up-river and came down to the coast only seasonally. The distinction between the two tribal sections still exists. A little while ago I had a conversation with my friend Nathan Kasper about sea fishes and their !Nama names. He is a well known fisherman and mussel gatherer who is descended from the coastal people on his mother's side. When, in spite of thinking hard, he was unable to remember a particular term, I suggested asking old

[Page 12]
(5) the !Aonin of the !Khuiseb Valley have for hundreds of years kept large and small stock which, because of water and pasture conditions, could in earlier times not be brought down to the coast, at least not near the delta and the bay.

Of the marine food sources fishing is the most important. They practice coastal fishing without the knowledge of angling lines, hooks, nets or seaworthy vessels. In some sources about the Cape Khoi there is mention of angling, for instance by Van Riebeck who says that the "Visman" tribe fished with handlines from the rocky shore (1657, in Bosman/Thom 1952,1:81), or in an illustration published by Leguit, which shows a fish on a line with an invisible angling hook (1696 acc. to Raven-Hart 1971, II:434). It has appeared, however, that such reports are either misunderstandings or that the angling tackle had been copied from the Europeans.

Up to the present the !Aonin use a lean word for the angling hook, namely hanhoen, derived from the Dutch-Afrikaans haken. It is amazing that the people, notwithstanding their knowledge of the bow and arrow, never used this weapon for fishing. Even later when they acquired rifles they never shot fish or sea mammals, as was substantiated by Oupa Hans von Broen (formerly of Anixah) from his tens of years of experience.

Neither did they fish with nets although bags of netting made from sinews (friti) were used for the transport of water fruit (cf. Alexander 1838, II:73 and Schultze-Jena 1907:243-244). The !Aonin also made carry-nets out of rushes (huru-//garut). Some inland tribes made ropes several metres in length from plaited fibres of the white thorn acacia (Schultze-Jena loc.cit.: 241-243). In the !Khuiseb river bed the !Aonin formerly used klantji, i.e. fishing baskets or rather anchored nets (or weirs) made of rushes. They were, however, never set in the open sea or in the shallow waters of the lagoons. Seaworthy vessels were unknown to the Kho-khoen according to almost all sources. Therefore it is improbable that they ever floated in "baskets" or on "rafts" over the sea, as a certain oral tradition alleges (Solomon 1855:22; Engelbrecht 1938:12). The !Aonin knew no aids to swimming in the sea, such as the wooden logs for crossing rivers inland. Their methods of catching fish were not very versatile, just as they were at the Cape during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The methods described in old reports are often parallel to those used by the Topnaar.

In connection with the fishing methods, the collecting of washed-up fish may be mentioned. According to tradition, the same applied to the Cape Khoi (Nieuhof 1654 acc. to Raven-Hart 1971,1:17; Schouten 1665 acc. to loc.cit.:84; Bogaert 1702 acc. to Raven-Hart 1971,1:486). Near Walvis Bay large numbers of drugged and dead fish are periodically washed ashore. The cause of this periodic mass killing cannot be explained fully; it is, however, connected with a phenomenon called "red-tide", about which more later. An eyewitness from the year 1884 reported to Prof. Schultze that at that time "the dead and dying fish washed up from the inner side of the Pelican Peninsula formed an unbroken bank stretching for miles along the beach in the direction of Swakopmund. The pestilential smell was allegedly still discernable at a distance of 50 km from the coast" (loc.cit.:55; my translation, K.B.). These masses of washed-up fish at times provided the !Aonin with an abundance of food and played a role similar to the appearance of locust swarms for the inland tribes.

Another method was the catching of fish with bare hands. Here there is also a parallel with the Kho-khoen of the Cape (Kolk 1719 acc. to Germann 1926:120). The !Aonin in this way not only caught the so-called "kipvisse" (various genera and species of the family Clinidae) between the rocks of the North Beach, but also many other species, when at eb-tide the fish remained helplessly behind in the mud of the big lagoon.
The IAoni fishermen waded up to their middles (or the most up to their chests) into the water of the lngoons of the Cape Khoe (Tappe 1962 acc. to Raven-Hart 1971, II:233; Kolb loc.cit.:129-130).

The IAoni fishermen waded up to their middles (or at the most up to their chests) into the water of the lagoons of !Gomen-/!gams and Anixab. Carefully feeling about with their spears they found the resting places of the sand sharks, rays and sting rays (see table no.4 for the scientific and Nama names of the different species). These are often found in shallow water where they lie buried under the sand with only their eyes showing. The IAonin did not spear haphazardly in the water, like the Cape Khoe as alleged by Tappe. They were more careful, because it is dangerous to touch some of the species with bare feet. Especially the sting ray found along the South West coast (Hynobatis aquila) can cause painful wounds with its sting, situated at the base of its tail, which is jagged and covered with a poisonous mucus. Prof. J.L.B. Smith, the well-known South African ichthyologist, emphasized the dangerous nature of the Aetobatusidae to which the sting ray belongs. He wrote: "Even the smallest cut from the spine is agonizing and deep wounds may be fatal. These fishes ... are rightly much dreaded and should be handled with the greatest care" (1965:67). Schultz mentions that the sting ray is "hated by the Native fishermen, because it frightens them with its sting, especially at night, when it gives way only right in front of the waders' feet" (1907:39; my translation, K.B.). The flat fish are speared through the head if possible. Then they are kept down to the ground until they tire. Only then can one's foot be placed on the ray, or can one stand or sit on it. Eventually the fish is seized with two fingers behind the pils (tāms) and pulled out of the water. Thomas Baines's painting of 1864, reproduced on p.11 shows the spearing of fish in the bay, the boning of sand sharks (Rhino- batidae) and the transporting of the catch with carrying-sticks.

Apart from sand sharks and rays, which are relatively easy to spear, the IAoni also killed other fish species in this way. Especially popular was the /hAna, called salmon or steenbras by the Europeans. This was probably also the case in the Cape some 500 years ago, because Van Biebeek's people in 1657 purchased no less than 10 ox loads of steenbras from the Capitian tribe. Although the fish is very mobile and fast-moving, there is a moment which is very favourable for catching it. When it burrows in the sand for a muscle and lifts it open, it stands upright for several seconds while only the tailfin moves. Then it is quickly speared by the fisherman. Often the men fish together. An eye-witness of this was Mrs Louise Koch who lived at the Bay after her marriage in 1874 and left a short but informative description of the fishing in a private letter (I am grateful to Miss Ehrenberg of the Swakopmund Museum, for telling me about the letter and giving me permission to use it). She wrote: "To the south the water in the bay becomes shallow; the corner is called the lagoon. There the men stand together in a closed line when the water flows away at the beginning of the ebb-tide. Each one has a long, pointed stick in his hand, and as soon as a fish appears, one lunges forward, spears the fish and dashes with it to the shore, while the others close their ranks again. This goes on until each one has enough fish for his family" (Koch s.c.4-5; my translation, K.B.).

The spear used originally for this purpose was made of daweb or tamarisk wood (Tamarica usneoides). This type of spear is called /hAna-hais, meaning literally "throwing stick". The point was hardened by thrusting it into hot sand under a fire, with the bark still on it. The Nama term for this
fire-heated sand is /khiirib/. If the bark had been removed first, the wood could easily have burst open, split or cracked. After the shaft had been allowed to dry properly, the hardened end was worked to a point and smeared with fat. A more developed form of the /khi-hais/ was given two or three nicks just behind the point serving as a kind of rudimentary barbed hook.

Chapman, Andersson and McKiernan mention another kind of fishing spear used by the Yaonin. Chapman reported (1855 in 1971, 1:175) that the Topmar, apart from an “assegai”, also used a gemsbok horn for the spearing of fish. The straight horn which in full-grown animals reaches an average length of 1 metre, has a very sharp point and is an effective weapon. Andersson saw this horn attached to a shaft (1856: 15). The American trader Gerald McKiernan who visited the Bay in 1874, writes in his diary about “spears which are made from Gemsbok horns ... fastened on long poles” (1954:34). Elderly people today still remember the shafted gemsbok horn. They call it //gena-lam/. Thus far an explanation of the word has not been possible. Probably it has something to do with Nama lam, meaning ‘to put together’.

After the Yaonin had acquired iron, spears were also made with iron tips. They were called //khi-paghu, i.e. ”throw-daggers” (sp. gōab, ”large knife, dagger, sword” acc. to Kröniehn 1889:107). The iron blades were later supplied with simple barbed hooks: Just behind the tip the blade was pierced and a thin iron rod put through the hole; this rod was then bent down on both sides and sharpened.

The actual harpoon, i.e. the spear with a loose tip attached to the shaft, was apparently unknown to the Yaonin before the arrival of the Whites. That is why there is no old Nama name for this weapon, but only the loan word ramping. The genuine harpoon was probably acquired from the whalers. According to Vedder who refers to an old note in Jansons' big atlas of 1657, European whalers visited the coastal
waters of South-West Africa as early as the 17th century (1934:7). The #Amuin at least knew an earlier form of the harpoon, the short throwing spear or "mbi", which remained attached to the shooter by means of a line.

Sometimes the fish were skewered to a pyramid-like structure made of sticks in the water of the lagoon, before they were brought ashore. This is called "fou-furis" and can clearly be seen in the background of Baines's painting. A stick planted in the ground on the beach, called "fais", had a similar function. It was pierced at its upper end. From there a rope hung down to a short distance from the ground. This rope was drawn through the gill-openings of the fish. A wooden cross-piece at the bottom end of the rope prevented the fish from slipping off. On Baines's painting, carrying-sticks can be seen in the right background. Two women are carrying the catch to their camping site. The name of these instruments is "jicho-haiti" ("balancing sticks"). As a last auxiliary aid in fishing and the utilization of fish, a wooden structure called "hauhb" may be mentioned. It was usually erected between shaky trees and consisted of a platform made of crossed sticks covered with grass and leaves. There the fish were laid out to dry.

Like the Cape Khoi, the #Amuin are said to have eaten fish raw, at least after they had been salted (Hogger 1938 in 1944:70). Only small quantities were eaten at the place of catching. Most of the catch was taken home. There the fish were cut open lengthwise, the entrails removed, then salted and left to dry on the platform already mentioned, or on the roofs of the huts. From the heads of the "hauhb" or salmon, fish oil was extracted by boiling. When a mackerel was caught the head would be cut off immediately and the blood left to run out, as otherwise the fish is said to become poisonous. Mackerel are very fat. It is alleged that one can get a headache from eating too much of it. For that reason mackerel are also called "tana-tsöö" or "headache". The "wings" of the rays are first boiled and then put into cold water whereupon the skin is pulled off and the flesh "wring out", often with the aid of a stick. The flesh is mixed with hot fat and the ray's liver and then eaten. In the case of the sand shark the head remains on the body. Only the entrails are removed and then the fish is put onto the roof for drying. Sometimes sand sharks are fried on the fire and then eaten with crushed "inara" pips.

The sea and sea fishing are anchored deeply in the magic-religious life of the #Amuin. Before the men started fishing, they recited a poem on the bench. This praise poem of the sea will be quoted at the end of this paper. The night before fishing is done, no man may sleep with his wife, otherwise he would only catch small fishes. This is what Oupa Moses Kasper told me: "When a few men fish together, they catch only small ones, they will soon find out who ignored the prohibition and get very angry". A man may not fish while his wife is menstruating. Any menstruating woman is strictly prohibited from approaching the sea (cf. Hoernle 1923:525). Normally the family may accompany the father to the bench, but must comply with certain rules: the wife may not tidy up the sleeping place; the cooking place must be removed from the temporary beach hut; the children may not romp around or make a noise oder enter the hut. Even when the family stay at home, certain rules must be kept: the wife may not pay visits and walk about much, because "otherwise the fish will swim around too". She must not stay in the house and the doors must not be closed. While the husband is fishing, cold water may never be thrown on the fire. Exuberance and dancing are also prohibited. Another interesting custom has to do with the death of a family head amongst the Hurfin. When he dies, the rest of the family go out fishing on the same day. They will then have a very good catch.

In drawing up the following table I have to thank Messrs. N.J. Penrith (State Museum, Windhoek) and G.E. Venter (Sea
Fisheries Branch, Walvis Bay) for the identification of some species. All the fish mentioned here were eaten by the #Aonin except the huri-xamgu or sharks, although the flesh of certain shark species is said to be digestible and very pleasant to the taste.

Table no. 4: Sea fishes known by the #Aonin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no.</th>
<th>Smith</th>
<th>Name name</th>
<th>Common name</th>
<th>Scientific name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5-15</td>
<td>xami, huri-xami</td>
<td>shark, nar-pem</td>
<td>Galeorhinidae, n. gen. &amp; spp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>fnu-xam</td>
<td>hound, bontah</td>
<td>Mustelus Nigerpungatus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>fnu-xam</td>
<td>hound, caneja</td>
<td>Mustelus canis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>orbeb</td>
<td>sand shark, viol</td>
<td>Rhinobatos blochii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>/khura paris</td>
<td>thorn ray, rgl</td>
<td>Raj sp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>/ponab paris, /ponabes</td>
<td>sting ray, pulytirst</td>
<td>Myliobatis aquila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>/incrius</td>
<td>sting ray, pulytirst</td>
<td>Myliobatis aquila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>sghes</td>
<td>sardine, pilchard</td>
<td>Sardinops ocellata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>/eteb²</td>
<td>seabel, katvis</td>
<td>Tachysurus helicops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>fnu-am-xam</td>
<td>stockfish</td>
<td>Merluccius capensis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>/gul-mus</td>
<td>sand sole, tong</td>
<td>Trujla capensis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>/khani-ams</td>
<td>horse mackerel, mooshanker</td>
<td>Trachurus Trachurus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) No. according to Smith (1965)

²) According to Shultze (1907:40), an alternative name for this species was xam-xam. This term was, however, unknown to my #Aoni informants. Sometimes the harbel is also called by its praise name, i.e. /xam-xam-paisch ("feeder of children").

In addition to the above-mentioned fish species certain sea mammals were important food for the #Aonin. First of all there were the whales. For the two groups, the toothed and the baleen whales, which in turn are divided into several genera and species, the #Aonin has the joint name /höge (sp. /höge). According to Schultze, this word is derived from the dialect of the so-called "Namib Bushmen" (1907:37) who are extinct today and have partly been absorbed by the Topnaar. While the #Aonin use this term almost exclusively, the other Khoe tribes customarily use another word, namely /xam-xam. Both terms are taken up in the Bible translation (Genesis 1,21; Psalm 125,7). At other places where the whale is mentioned in the Bible, it is called /gwe- /ou ("big fish") or by the foreign word leviatani.

In the #Aoni dialect there are distinguishing terms for the two sub-orders of the baleen (Mystacoceti) and the toothed (Odontoceti) whales. The first are called /gwe- /am-ina- /höge, i.e. "whales with much grass in the mouth" and the last-mentioned /gwe- /am-ina- /höge, i.e. "whales with many teeth in the mouth". The frontal baleen plates are soft and to the people's mind they wave like grass in the wind. The
killer whale is not considered a real whale, but is classified with the dolphins to which it is similar in many external aspects. The Aoatin call it gai-furubeb ("large dolphin"). The "Noorvakapers" are considered the typical whales. In earlier times they must have been much more common. The name was originally not meant for the species occurring in the South Atlantic, but for a close relative found in northern oceans (Eubalaena glacialis). Introduced by white whales, the term was soon applied to the southern species (Eubalaena australis) also and was later taken over by the Aoatin (norkaper). The suggestion that the anachronic form "Suukaper" be used, has thus far not been accepted. Only one single informant gave the word khârab as the old name for this species. The second group of sea mammals comprises the dolphins and porpoises. They also consist of various genera and species known by the joint term furubeb (pl. common). The last group of marine mammals occurring on the South-West coast, are the seals. They are represented here by only one species, viz. Arctocephalus pusillus.

The following table gives a survey of the most important sea mammals of the South Atlantic. Since the hunting of these animals and the utilization of stranded specimens are no longer practised, some of the names have now fallen into oblivion.

Table no.5: whales, dolphins, seals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no.</th>
<th>Name name</th>
<th>common name</th>
<th>scientific name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>gai//gûxa-am-ina-</td>
<td>balene whales</td>
<td>Mystacoceti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/hoêgû</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>gai//hoêb</td>
<td>blue whale</td>
<td>Sibbaldius musculus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>/hai//hoêb</td>
<td>finback whale</td>
<td>Balaenoptera physalus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>khû//sûb</td>
<td>humpback</td>
<td>Megaptera novae-angliae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>norkaper</td>
<td>southern right whale</td>
<td>Eubalaena australis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>khârab (?)</td>
<td>toothed whales</td>
<td>Odontoceti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With their inadequate tackle and hunting methods, the Aoatin were never able to kill whales. Only stranded specimens were available to them. According to the older people it was a feast in former times when such an animal was found on the beach. Schulte records information given by a native eye-witness about the behaviour of the "Namib nomads" at such an event: "Round a stranded whale they once danced ... as if mad and stuck themselves with sticks in ecstasy over such a rich find, which fed them for months" (1907:99; my translation, K.B.). The Cape Khoi also used stranded whales. The expedition of Corporal Willem Mullet was, for example, held up for two days when the Khoi-khoi accompanied it to a young whale, "daar sti terston nenin- gun om stukken van te snijden. Sij hidden den dag proute feest met het spek van den vis" and the journey was continued only two days afterwards (Mullet 1855 in Riebeek, 1:31, 1:49). There are further references to the eating of whales by the Cape Khoi in Van Riebeek (1654 in 1952, 1:204, 205) and Nieuhof (1656 acc. to Raven-Hart 1971,1:17).

White explorers later on mentioned the eating of whales by the coastal people of South-West. This gives a continuity of more than 300 years. Sebastian Van Riezen found a "Botentot krui" near Elizabeth Bay, whose inhabitants fed themselves "mostly with fleshed-up norkapers" (1792 acc. to E.Moritz 1913:195; my translation, K.B.). This is credible because in those times whales were much more
common than today. In addition, many animals wounded by European whale catchers came to die on the beach. The role played by the whalers is clearly indicated by Alexander (1838:11:84). In 1812 a Norwegian company founded a whale processing station at the bay. For the indigenous inhabitants this meant a regular supply of whale meat, because the workers there received it free of charge (Chronik Walvisbaai s.a.:135).

Also in connection with the preservation of whale meat there is agreement between the methods used by the #Aonin and those of their relations at the Cape. The first reference thereto known to me, is a remark in Van Riebeeck's "Dagboek", according to which some Khoi-khoi were eagerly burying whale blubber in the sand (1654 in 1952,1:204).

This is a method also used by the #Aonin. They buried whale meat and blubber in damp sand on the shore to keep them fresh longer. Another method of preservation was the making of biltong. This is still done today, as I convinced myself on a recent visit to Walvis Bay. Under the ceiling of the building of Hupa Heinrich Eron's house, wires were strung from which were hanging strips of dolphin meat to dry. At the houses of several other people the fences and washing lines were also hung with strips of meat. The biltong is eaten either raw, cooked or broiled. In earlier times it was also crushed in a mortar and mixed with vegetables.

The whale oil was chiefly used for food. The Cape Khoi drank it raw (cf. Nieuhof 1654, loc.cit.). They dunked the bread given to them by the Dutch in whale oil before eating it (Riebeek loc.cit.:205). In the first half of this century, the #Aonin still did this with pieces of dried fish. Finely pounded dried fish was made softer and more palatable that way. This was also done with the wing fins of the rays, after they had been cooked and wrung out to get rid of the moisture. Whale oil was also used for oiling the skin as protection against the sun and salt water. The statement by some informants that //sam-/giti or sea bamboo cones, called Ecklonia maxima by the botanists, were once used as containers for the storage of whale oil and blubber, at first seemed improbable to me, until I found confirmation in Van Riebeeck's diary: "Dieze Hottentooten waren wacker besicht met traen branden van de dooden walvis, die in deze Bay den strandt gedreven was, "twelcke zij herchen in gedroogde tronens ..." (loc.cit.; my italics, K.B.).

The sea bamboo cones are very suitable for this purpose. Old Mr. Hans von Bröbn had even water laid on in his garden at Anixab with these pipes. Whales also contributed to the building of huts by means of ribs and other bones. This use was first recorded in the logbook of the ship "Boode" (acc. to E.Noritz 1918:51).

The #Aonin preferred certain species of whale to others. The meat of the killer whale (Orcinus Orca) was not eaten at all, as it was alleged to be indigestible causing diarrhoea immediately afterwards. The same was said of the great sperm whale or cachalot. Both species are sometimes called derisively dwee-soab, literally "run anus". The most popular species were the humpback and the finback and especially the "Noordkaper". In contrast with the whales, the #Aonin hunt the dolphins and porpoises in the lagoons of Walvis Bay and Sandwich Harbour. At eb-tide when the water flowed back into the sea, the hunters were able to kill them with knives and lance in water waist-deep. The hunter would first try to give the animal a deep cut behind the tail fin to render it less mobile. When it lifted its head above the water to breathe, it would be stabbed in the heart. According to eye-witnesses, the Naman were brave and daring. Oupa Hans von Bronn once saw a man trying to catch a porpoise by grasping its tail, upon which he was thrown some metres away headfirst into the water.

Of a special #Aoni tradition in connection with the cutting up of dolphins, as was mentioned by Schultze (although even
at his time only known from hear-say) I found no trace. The
figurine, however, is still considered an animal "almost like
a human being" and it is very probable that when it was
killed and cut up, certain purification rites were observed.
Schultze wrote: "Even Dolphins which in the Walvis Bay come
very close to the shore, might at that time still have been
captured. The customs observed when preparing dolphins are
still well remembered today: they (i.e. the coastal Nama,
K.B.) took all their clothes off and cut up the dolphin
naked. Touching the animal with the body, except the mouth,
was considered harmful. While working, they avoided touching
themselves with their hands and if they wanted to scratch
they used a piece of wood. The flesh of the animal was
boiled in seawater, rinsed in cold seawater and wrung out.
Before putting on their clothes again, they cleaned their
bodies of any fragments adhering from the body of the animal"
(1907:185; my translation, K.B.).

Seals were also killed by the Khoekhoen of the Cape as early
as 300 years ago (Jacob Reyniers: 1635 acc. to Riebeck
1952,1:412). According to Riebeck the Cape Khoi ate seal
meat raw or half-roasted in the fire, without washing it
beforehand (1654 acc. to Raven-Hart 1871:1:17). The first
record known to me, which probably refers to the wearing of
sealskins by the #Aonin, comes from Captain Owen (1835 in
1833,11:229). Alexander mentioned the importance of seal
meat for the Namaqua between the Orange river and the Lowsie
or Buffalo river (1838,1:28,112).

Like the Cape Khoi, the #Aonin had the tradition of seal
hunting. In their tribal area the animals formerly came to
breed at various places along the shore. The present colony
at Cape Cross is only the remainder of a much bigger popula-
tion. The animals were killed with clubs (kiri in Cape
Khoi, heab in Name). As they have poor eyesight but a well-
developed sense of smell, the hunters approached them against
the wind. Then they were killed with a single blow on the
nose. According to information given by some old people, two
blows should not be given as "the nose often opened up again
after a second blow" (as the people put it) when the animal
would disappear into the sea.

European and later American seal hunters very early on came
to the South and South-West African coast. The French were
active on the islands of Saldanha Bay long before the Dutch
established their halfway station at Table Bay. Joris van
Spilbergen's companions clubbed seals on Dassen Island in
1601 (acc. to Raven-Hart 1967:26). Since then seals have
been hunted more or less regularly. The Khoekhoen at times
lived on the offal left by these white hunters. "At the
time of a seal hunt", as Schultze writes about the #Aonin
(1907:185; my translation, K.B.), "the coastal inhabitants
spare no effort to trek to the places where they can get
offal". Today the #Aonin may not kill seals themselves.

Until 1969 the business belonged to private concessionaries;
since then the Government has undertaken the catching and
processing. Formerly, mainly the meat and fat were utilized.
According to Schultze, seal meat slightly rotted was especially
popular (loc.cit.), but with the Khoekhoen this also
applies to the meat of other animals. Seal skins were made
into clothes and also into aba-/hanini (i.e. skins for
carrying infants).

In addition to the marine mammals it should be mentioned
that the #Aonin of former times also hunted turtles. They
have become very rare now. I am unable to identify the
species occurring along the west coast. But they are
probably the green turtle (Chelonia mydas), the loggerhead
turtle (Caretta caretta) and the leatherback (Dermochelys
coriacea). The #Aonin have a single name for all turtles,
i.e. krabigu. The animals used to be caught when they
came ashore to lay eggs. They were simply thrown on the
fire and roasted in their shells. The large shell (all
species mentioned reach a length of more than 1 metre and
the leatherback even 2 metres) was used as a basin, and
very much sought after.
A further important source of food was the hunting of sea birds and the collecting of birds' eggs. This form of livelihood was probably also exercised by the Cape Khoi, although I have no direct source of information. A negative remark about the catching of birds by Gijsbert Heeck in the year 1655 is unreliable, all the more so, because in the same sentence he alleges that the Cape Khoi had no knowledge of fishing whatsoever (acc. to Raven-Hart 1971,1:34). With reference to bird hunting by the #Aonin, the earliest information known to me is the sentence of Owen (1825), already quoted, in which mention is made of penguin skins as clothing. Three years later Captain Morrell made some valuable observations about the inhabitants of Walvis Bay. He first described their five-foot long bows "made of a heavy wood... this wood resembles our yellow ebony, but the grain is not quite so fine". According to my Tswana informants, the wood of the tamarisk species Tamnrix usnoeoides was used for making bow-staffs. Morrell also said that the thickness of the centre was 2 inches. He further makes mention of the reed arrow approximately 3 feet in length which was provided with a hardwood or flint point and then continues as follows: "Both sexes are equally expert with these weapons. I have frequently seen them shoot gulls on the wing at fifty yards distance; and they seldom fail of placing the arrow in the body of the bird" (1828 in 1844: 69). When Galton in 1850 shot a pelican at the Bay, it was eaten by the Topnaar (1889:13). According to Schultze (1907:185) they sometimes chased penguins and killed inexperienced young cormorants with kiris. Many sea birds were caught during the breeding season.

The flesh of certain gull species and the flamingo is supposed to be pleasant. The penguin has a very strong fish flavour and for that reason is evidently not eaten readily. It is said of the pelican that it tastes like a catfish or barbel. To neutralize the taste of fish, the bird after being killed was buried in the sand for some time. About this Morrell says the following: "When they have been successful in taking a great number of oceanic birds, which is often the case in the breeding season, they bury them in the sand, with the entrails in them, until they become quite green. This takes all the fishy taste from them, and they become very tender. They then take out the entrails, skin the birds, and dry their bodies in the sun, which will so effectually cure them in forty-eight hours, that they may be laid away for twelve months without receiving any injury" (loc.cit.:70).

In addition to the birds, the #Aonin also used the eggs. Apart from the gull eggs, those of the Caspian tern (Hydropropte caspia) were considered a great delicacy. To rob the nests the men swam to the small sandy islands in the lagoon of Anixab. It should be mentioned here that the #Aonin, contrary to other assertions, can swim well. They know that it is easier to swim in the sea. In connection with the use of eggs they prefer those that have been incubated to some extent. Morrell somewhat exaggerates when he says: "... they will not touch one until incubation is nearly perfected, protesting that fresh eggs are not fit for food" (loc.cit.).

The following table gives a summary of the sea birds which are most important to the #Aonin. With two exceptions (nos. 9 and 14) they were all hunted and eaten by them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table no. 6: sea birds.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Konig, J. 289. It is first person to mention the Cape khoe who eats mussels and used the shells for ornaments. Probably the first person to mention this was Cornelis de Houtman, who wrote in 1595 that polished mussel shells were used for ornamental purposes (acc. to Raven-Hart 1971, 1:118). The coastal dwellers living opposite Robben Island in 1638 lived on "fish, mussels, crayfish and whatever else the sea threw up ..." (Hagenah acc. to loc.cit:148). The "Strantioners" according to Van Riebeeck had "shellfish eaten als wat clipmosselen ende groente van 't land" (1652 in 1952, 1:43).

As at the Cape, various kinds of mussels were collected and used along the South-West African coast from time immemorial. The coastal strip within the Khoi tribal area biologically forms a transition zone between the Cape and the northern tropical regions. Although there is not such a diversity of mussels, the species represented are more plentiful and also larger. Many and large shell middens southeast of the Walvis Bay lagoon prove of the fact that mussels were an important source of food in pre-European days. Oupa Hans von Bronn saw similar "mussel slaughtering places" in the vicinity of Anixa and the thirties and forties. They have in the meantime been buried under the wandering dunes which are moving nearer to the lagoon. On the surface, Mr. von Bronn often found tools and implements, such as /aroti (/nara knives), /ui-khoti
The pipes looking like cigars, fragments of *Uromastyx* (clay pots) and iron and copper arm rings called *Imbati*. Pots, grinding stones and some bone tools were also found on the large middens near Walvis Bay (Rudner 1968:591). These finds suggest a connection between the !Aonin and the middens. The tribe has been in the area at least 300 years and probably much longer. In addition, there is the evidence from present-day !Aonin who claim that all mussel heap sites are old settlements of their tribe. Rudner (loc. cit.) and Garth Sampson (1974:408) concede the possibility of such a connection.

The use of sea mussel shells for ornamental purposes amongst the !Aonin was observed by Morrell already: "Both sexes dress in the same manner, the female being distinguished only by the profusion of her ornaments: these consist of shells, bones, and minerals of different kinds, and are worn about the neck and wrists; but the men have nothing of the kind" (1828 in 1844:69). Although my reproduction of Thomas Baines' painting of 1864 is not clear on this point, the shorter necklaces on the two standing women seem to be mussel ornaments.

The *mollusc* were mainly important as food. Even today they are still collected for this purpose, although collecting mussels is now more of a pleasant leisure time activity, which brings variety to the normal diet, as, for instance, mushroom hunting in Germany. Some months ago I accompanied Nathan Kasper and Bernhard Beukes to a place called !Nares or Paaljiies where there are many mussels of the species *Donax serra*. Ebb-tide was on the way when they started collecting. This is regarded as the most favourable time, as the sand is still soft and the mussels can easily be dug up by hand or naked foot. Soon afterwards the intertidal zone becomes so hard that one can drive on it with a Landrover or other heavy vehicle without sinking deep into the sand.

Also favourable for the digging of mussels is the time of the incoming tide. The work is done very fast and skillfully. On our visit to !Nares it took scarcely 15 minutes for the pockets and 2 hats to be filled. At first I found it very puzzling that Nathan and Bernhard immediately and unhesitatingly went to certain spots on the uniform sand surface and then quickly unearthed the mussels. Later I found that they looked for tiny depressions caused by small air bubbles coming up from a channel that connects *Donax serra* with the surface.

Most of the traditional !Nama names for *mollusca* have now disappeared. Only the names of the most important species are still extant. These I have included in a table. I am grateful to Mrs. E. Eichbaum, Windhoek, for the identification of the species. Except for the octopus, all were eaten.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no.</th>
<th>Name name</th>
<th>common name</th>
<th>scientific name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><em>Kuririti</em></td>
<td>limpets</td>
<td><em>Patella spp.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><em>Kuririti</em></td>
<td>limpets</td>
<td><em>Patella granatina</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><em>khu/khama</em></td>
<td>brown mussel</td>
<td><em>Patella granulosa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><em>ku/kama</em></td>
<td>brown mussel</td>
<td><em>Perna perna</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><em>kama</em></td>
<td>brown mussel</td>
<td><em>Donax serra</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td><em>/khabes</em></td>
<td>white sand mussel</td>
<td><em>Dosinia sp.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>&quot;sikas&quot;</td>
<td>octopus; suckat</td>
<td><em>Octopus regina</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The species mentioned by Prof. Schultz-Jena (1907:31), i.e. *Fischuritella australis* and *Gusah* (Helcion pectunculus), do occur in the vicinity of Luderitzbucht, but are unknown in the tribal area of the !Aonin.
find home. Elderly women who have stopped menstruating, may occasionally take part in the collecting activities. As with fishing, a menstruating woman brings luck to the mussel collectors, even when she stays at home. When the men find no mussels or only small ones, they may say to one another: "Mesa u-ha khoeb /ba khoem po ha." ("The two of us have come with an unlucky man!"). That means there is a menstruating woman in the house of one of their companions.

Unlike the sand mussels already mentioned, the most favourable time for the collecting of limpets and brown mussels is at lowest ebb-tide. Then many rocks are uncovered or only covered intermittently. For ebb and flow the !Aonin know the terms /hara-/paru ("sink water") and jaa-/jani ("full water"). Spring-tide (called inatie) and neap-tide are also known. To loosen the limpets from the rocks, a rib of an ox or a bone of a whale was formerly used. Today the people use ordinary knives. In the olden days the mussels were first put in plaited net bags made of rushes (hara-/paru). According to my !Aonin friends, the "rush mat" found by Mr. and Mrs. Meekler in 1967 (Skidow 1967:15) which is today in the Swakopmund Museum is a fragment of such a hara-/paru. When the net bags were filled they were emptied out on the higher-living beach. There only a few mussels were eaten after having been put next to a fire. The shells then opened of themselves and the flesh was roasted. In addition, the mussels were buried in the sand heated by the fire and taken out again when half or wholly roasted. Most of the find, however, was taken to the dwelling places in the net bags attached to carrying poles. This explains the existence of mussel heaps away from the beach, sometimes several kilometres away. Settlements right next to the open sea were unknown.

In connection with the collection of mussels, a called "red-tide" that occurs along the coast in the vicinity of Walvis Bay, should be mentioned. It is an unusually high concentration of unicellular algae or protozoa which cause a discoloration of the sea-water and in some cases are responsible for a mass mortality of fish and other marine organisms (Pieterse et al.v.d. Post 1967:6). Along the Cape coast certain mussel species become poisonous after the occurrence of red-tide. As red-tide in the Walvis Bay area only appears between December and May, and especially in December and January, one should assume that experienced mussel collectors such as the !Aonin would leave off eating mussels or at least take some precautions during this time. That is, however, not the case. Mussels are eaten throughout the year. My informants never observed any cases of poisoning and never heard about them. This also applies to vertebrates and sea birds. In a series of experiments conducted by Pieterse and Van der Post it was found that 21 dinoflagellates occurring in the Bay area seemed not to be poisonous (loc.cit.:120). Be that as it may, on the coast of the !Aonin area there have thus far been no signs of a temporary inedibility of certain mussels, such as seems to be the case in the Western Cape (Parkington 1972:232).

In earlier times the !Aonin had some knowledge about certain medicines coming from the sea. The eggs of the fish louse of /Erythalemis (Anilocra capensis) were pressed out and then smeared on the papulas of bed-wetters. The sea bamboo (especially Ecklonia maxima, but also Laminaria schinzii) served as a powder for wounds after the stems were dried and pulvterised. It is rich in iodine. Against skin diseases and ulcers, also of a syphilitic nature, the yolks of the eggs of the Joseph or Callorhynchus capensis were used. The brown spindleformed casing was pressed out like a tube of toothpaste and the yolk used as a salve.
As there are songs for the lmaras, so there are also
songs for the sea. The following praise poem was formerly
recited by the fishermen on the beach, before they
started fishing. For knowledge of this poem I am grateful
to Fredika Kasper of Walvis Bay.

Hirib di garis

(1) Huritse, huritse, gai-//gamtese

(2) Sida #Aonida //gamtese

(3) Care re huriba, #Aoni-//esado

(4) Sada ge //Bba xu gai-ha.

(5) #Neruti tsil //haniti

(6) #NG-//eun tsina

(7) Du ge //Bhu xu ge//u.

(8) Gai-huritse, gai-//gamtese

(9) #Aoni- //esada //gamtese

(10) D#u re, #N-domtese

(11) //Banda gaisetse!

(12) #Naerusa me te re

(13) //Eteba me te re

(14) //Hoeba me te re

(15) Orobeba me-te re

(16) //Hanisa me te re

(17) #NG-am!naba me te re

(18) D#u re //nutse

(19) D#u re //ganxa ina //gamtese!

Praise of the sea

(1) Sea, oh sea, you
great water

(2) Water of our #Aoni
people

(3) Praise the sea, you:
#Aoni children

(4) Through him we have
raised

(5) Stingrays and
steenbras

(6) And galjoen

(7) From him we have
eaten

(8) You great sea, oh
great water

(9) Water of our #Aoni
children

(10) Flow, you black
precipice

(11) Feeder of our child-
ren

(12) Please give me the
stingray

(13) Give me the barbel

(14) Give me the whole

(15) Give me the sand
shark

(16) Give me the steen-
bras

(17) Give me the stock-
fish

(18) Flow, oh fat

(19) Flow, you flesh-
rich water

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