Otjiherero praises
and the genesis and structure of knowledge on Wikipedia

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Chapter Outline

1. Knowledge
   - Overview
   - Indigenous Knowledge

2. Memory
   - Wikipedia
   - Praises
Knowledge Operations

1. Creation (a.k.a. research)
   - Western method: readup, conjecture, experiment, writeup, revision
   - Indigenous method: commemoration, contemplation, adaptation, consensus–finding, narration

2. Transfer (a.k.a. education)
   - Western method: formal, scheduled, summative assessment
   - Indigenous method: informal, needs–driven, normative assessment

3. Storage and retrieval (a.k.a. memory)

4. Summary (a.k.a. epistemology)
   - Western method: axiomatic, deductive–nomological, on paper
   - Indigenous method: spiritual, inductive, personal
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Indigenous Knowledge

- **Indigenous**: originating in, and characteristic of, a particular human group and biophysical environment (Purcell)

- **Knowledge**: justified, true belief (Plato)

- Indigenous knowledge (IK): “the body of historically constituted (emic) knowledge instrumental in the long–term adaptation of human groups to the biophysical environment” (Purcell)
  - not codified in writing but in stories, dances, customs, artefacts
  - practical rather than abstract
  - deduced from spiritual rather than scientific patterns of thought

- ⇒ Not easily conserved by writing
- Better: audio, video, maps and images
- ‘Say it to my face’
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The 21st century encyclopaedia

- Started 2001, open source, content licensed under CC-BY-SA
- 2005: accuracy comparable to *Encyclopædia Britannica*
- 40 million articles, 294 languages
- Largest edition: English, 5.9 million articles, 10 billion page views
- Written by about 90,000 volunteers
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Wikipedia’s relevance for Namibia

- Useful encyclopaedia: ≥ 5,000 articles
- available in English, German, Afrikaans, Chinese, Portuguese
  - ... the native tongues of former and current colonial masters
  - Three editors actively writing about Namibia—two Germans, one Australian
  - Namibian narrative again told from an alien perspective

- Namibian languages?
  - Setswana: 603 articles
  - Otjiherero: 80 articles
  - Oshindonga: 54 articles
  - Khoekhoegowab: 1 article
  - Silozi, Rukwangali, Ju’Hoansi, Oshikwanyama, Taa, Thimbukushu... zero articles

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Praises

- Oral performances acknowledging events, people, objects, places
- Known to many indigenous peoples, including Namibian
- Example: Otjiherero praises (Omitandu)
  - Well–known stanzas can be used as names
  - For instance: Metundu maZerumburuka. Rongutirwa yaKatjikwa ekondo . . . The former homestead of Zemburuka, the striped trek oxen of Katjikwa
  - Performed: Praise song, remembered: praise skeleton
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Praise structure

Headline 1
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit,
sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.

Headline 2
Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco
consectetur adipiscing elit,
laboris nisi ut aliquip ex.

1 Not just an art form or a performance
2 Knowledge vessel
Value Clash

- Western Values: Individuality, effectiveness, self-fulfilment
- Indigenous values: Deferece, pride, stability, courtesy, ubuntu
- Software enshrines values
- **Western software** enshrines Western values.

Example Wikipedia:

- Congregate as a group? ⇒ Not easy
- Work from home, or from the common meeting area? ⇒ Rarely possible
- See what other group members are doing at the moment? ⇒ Very difficult
- Check what people at [place and time] did last week? ⇒ Impossible

Value: Individuality

Common value: Freely sharing knowledge
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Value: Individuality

Common value: Freely sharing knowledge
“Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge. That’s what we’re doing.”

—Jimbo Wales

Any questions?

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