



Euphorbia otjipembana* subsp. *okakoraensis* (Euphorbiaceae), a new subspecies from the Kaokoveld, Namibia, with an amplified description of *Euphorbia otjipembana

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Abstract

Euphorbia otjipembana was hitherto only known from the type locality within the Kaokoveld Centre of Endemism, northwestern Namibia. Subsequently several additional populations were discovered, allowing for an amplified description of the species and the recognition of two subspecies. *Euphorbia otjipembana* subsp. *okakoraensis*, here described as a new subspecies, is only known from a small area within the Kaokoveld Centre. Diagnostic characters for subsp. *okakoraensis* include a shrubby habit and medium (up to 1 m) height, 5–7-angled, scarcely constricted branches with two pairs of spines per node and single cymes comprising of three horizontally arranged cyathia. A key as well as a comparative table with diagnostic morphological characters to distinguish between the two subspecies of *E. otjipembana* is provided.

Introduction

At present three described species of medium-sized (up to 1 m tall), shrubby succulent *Euphorbia* Linnaeus (1753: 450), belonging to subgenus *Euphorbia* section *Euphorbia*, are known from the Namibian part of the Kaokoveld (Leach 1976, Bruyns 2006). *Euphorbia kaokoensis* (White, Dyer & Sloane 1941: 965) Leach (1976: 33) occurs from the eastern Kaokoveld (Kamanjab area) to the northern and northwestern parts (Etengwa and Onjuva respectively). *Euphorbia subsalsa* subsp. *fluvialis* Leach (1976: 29) is widespread in the Kunene River Valley, from the Ruacana Falls to Epupa. *Euphorbia otjipembana* Leach (1976: 29) was hitherto only known from the type locality near Otjipemba in the northern Kaokoveld (Leach 1976, Craven 1999, Germishuizen & Meyer 2003). In this contribution a new subspecies of *E. otjipembana* is described and an amplified description of the species is provided.

During a botanical expedition to the Otjihipa Mountains in the far northwestern corner of Namibia in April 2006, the author encountered an unusual, succulent *Euphorbia* at the foot of the Okakora Mountains, 9 km to the northwest of Otjipemba, the type locality of *E. otjipembana*. During subsequent expeditions to the same general area, additional populations of *E. otjipembana* were found in the Otjihipa and Omavanda Mountains, which are situated to the west and east of Otjipemba respectively. While the Otjihipa and Omavanda plants could at once be recognized as belonging to *E. otjipembana*, this was not the case with the Okakora plants which had, inter alia, taller branches with a different colour. Close examination, however, revealed many similarities with *E. otjipembana*. The Okakora plants are here proposed as representing a distinct new subspecies of *E. otjipembana*. A study of the *Euphorbia* holdings in PRE and WIND revealed only one other collection of the new subspecies (*Leistner, Oliver, Steenkamp & Vorster 155*) in PRE, filed under *E. otjipembana*.

Live material of the new species was studied in the field. Morphological characters in the following descriptions were all determined from live specimens and from fresh flowering material and ripe fruit.