

Namibia

under South African Rule

Mobility & Containment

1915–46



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'Trees Never Meet'

Mobility & Containment: An Overview
1915–1946

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'Trees Never Meet' — But People Do

'Trees never meet' is a proverb used widely in Namibia.¹ It implies that trees rooted in the ground cannot move, but that people by contrast move constantly and inevitably. It would be impossible to trace or date the origin of this proverb, but it is an appropriate motif for the years of heightened mobility in Namibia between 1915 and 1946. It takes on a fresh power and poignancy in relation to South Africa's determined attempts to fix people in a new colonial landscape. The proverb is a metaphor for the myriad ways in which Namibians undermined the colonial constraints that impinged on them, and the ways in which they took advantage of the new forms of movement that accompanied colonialism. Embedded in it is the perception that stasis only applies to 'nature', not humans — that the latter will inevitably move and connect with one another. This suggestion is profoundly humanising in a colonial world under South African rule which many Namibians were in danger of experiencing as more and more immobilising and alienating. It encapsulates the movements and meetings of humans, as well as ideas.

This book is about the mobility of indigenous polities and communities in Namibia, and colonial efforts at containment, during the first three decades of South African colonisation. This followed the transition from German colonial rule in 1915. Numerous peoples in central and southern Namibia had already undergone processes of fragmentation and regrouping under German rule.² Others, mainly beyond the Police Zone,³ were not formally colonised until 1915, but prior to this had undergone various levels of social and economic

¹ *Omiti kavi hakaene, omundu na mundu vehakaena* (Otjiherero), *!Homkha /guikha ge /hao tama hã* (Nama/Damara). In southern Namibia, Nama-speakers talk of mountains never meeting.

² German colonial rule of Namibia, begun in 1884, was only consolidated after an intense and prolonged military struggle (1904–7), directed particularly against the indigenous communities of southern and central Namibia.

³ The 'Police Zone' came into existence from 1906 under German rule. It comprised the central and southern area of Namibia and it was prohibited to trade in guns, horses and alcohol beyond its northern border. The Police Zone was under direct colonial control and whites were permitted to settle there (theoretically under police protection). Under South African martial law, Proclamation 15 of 1919 decreed that no person could cross the line marking the Police Zone without official permission and this became known as the Red Line. This boundary shifted numerous times during the period of South African rule as white land holdings in the north-central areas

reorientation through their incorporation of the commodities of merchant capitalism and their adoption and reworking of its symbols and relations.⁴ Namibia is striking for the unevenness in the timing and spread of new capitalist and colonial relations. At the beginning of the period covered by this book (1915–1946) the colonial state in Namibia was ill-formed and weak; by the end of it, the state had consolidated itself to a considerable degree. The papers published here suggest that, in this transition from colonial weakness to consolidation, the geographic space of the country was demarcated, dominated and defined, and the contract labour system which linked north and south had begun to entrench itself. This process was paralleled, particularly from the mid-1930s, by an increasing tendency on the part of the state to intervene in social and cultural matters. This increased colonial control over indigenous mobility also meant that social and cultural spaces became the site of intensifying struggles (which continued in the period after 1946).

In this introduction, we shall both explore and contextualise this largely inter-war period in Namibia and attempt to outline some of the shifts mentioned above. We do not follow the convention in edited collections of summarising each chapter in the book at this stage. Instead, we rely on a system of cross-referencing as we raise the main themes and conclusions arising from this collaborative research on mobility and control. We begin by looking at a sample of 'movements of the imagination' in a variety of changing Namibian landscapes, provoked by encounters with the new colonialism following South African occupation. We then discuss historiography and method, trace the main patterns of movement and their increasing control under colonialism, and follow this with a careful periodisation of such processes. The second half of this introduction then sketches out the economic paradigms of the inter-war period, the machinery of state and divisions among white settlers, and the course and political effects of Christianisation. We conclude with an overview of the ethnographies that were produced in this period and their purposes. Interwoven throughout this text, of course, are the implicit and explicit questions of resistance that inevitably arise when dealing with colonialism.

Histories, Symbols & 'Nations'

The movement of people in an intense period of change became historically charged and invested with symbolism, closely connected to the formation or re-formation of group identities. Thus the retreat and defeat of German forces in 1915 opened the way for different Herero- and Nama-speaking communities in central and southern Namibia to accelerate the processes of cultural and symbolic reconstruction. The removal of German colonial power, which had repressed specific symbols and caused particular leaders to be imprisoned or go into exile, meant that space now opened up for their return. Edward Fredericks, for example, returned to Bethanie from his confinement in Damaraland.⁵ Isaac Witbooi, son of the famous Hendrik Witbooi, was one of the few

survivors of a group deported by the Germans to the Cameroons, and returned to Gibeon in 1915.⁶ Neither carried the same potency or threat for South Africa at the dawn of its colonial adventure as they had for Germany. Other leaders, such as Samuel Maharero⁷ of the Herero and Jacobus Christian of the Bondelzwarts,⁸ had made their own way into exile with a nucleus of supporters. They had struggled to construct an alternative economic base in their new locations and were more cautious about returning, initially remaining in exile in Botswana and South Africa respectively.

Isaac Witbooi's honeymoon with the new colonial administration, however, was soon ended. In some ways his drive to re-establish authority resembled the efforts of leaders further north in Ovamboland, such as Mandume ya Ndemufayo in 1915–17 and Martin ka Dikwa in the early 1940s, to recentralise judicial power in their own hands. In Witbooi's case there was a most interesting intrusion of black authority into settled white space, because he appointed lieutenants on white farms to send cases of offenders (mainly adulterers) to his court in Gibeon.⁹ As in the case of Iipumbu ya Tshilongo discussed here in Wolfram Hartmann's chapter, indigenous authority was reasserted in a highly gendered way through claims of control over women's sexuality.¹⁰ The local Military Magistrate refused to countenance this reclamation of authority and Witbooi and some of his leading councillors were arrested in 1918. Men in the Gibeon community expressed their support for their imprisoned leader by reviving the headgear of Isaac's father Hendrik, who had effectively fought the Germans for many years prior to his death in 1905.¹¹ A local white farmer named Lohr viewed the wearing of white cloths on hats as both an 'impudent ovation for Witbooi' and an act of 'defiant insubordination'.¹² This incident, however, as well as the wearing of top hats by church-going groups (discussed

⁶ Hendrik Witbooi (!Nanseb /Gâbembab) had been born in South Africa around 1830, but travelled to Namibia with his community, which established itself at Gibeon in 1863. During the 1880s Witbooi became the dominant leader in southern Namibia before eventually dying of wounds received whilst fighting German troops in 1905. Isaac served as the leader at Gibeon until 1928. Annemarie Heywood and Eben Maasdorp (trans.), *The Hendrik Witbooi Papers* (Windhoek, 1989); NAN SWAA 1851 A396/8, Lohr to Col. de Jager, Windhoek, 28 July 1918; NAN 'Programme. Heroes Day. 1990. 2–4 November 1990'.

⁷ Samuel Maharero, son of the nineteenth-century Herero leader, Maharero, succeeded his father in 1890. He signed a treaty with the Germans in 1894, but in 1904 led the anti-colonial rebellion. After the Herero defeat he went into exile in Botswana.

⁸ The Bondelzwarts or !Kamîzûn were a Nama-speaking community based on the area north of the Orange River. By the 1830s they had established a permanent settlement at Warmbad and were employed by the Cape Colony authorities to help police the northern frontier zone. They rebelled against German rule in 1903, with the last Bondelzwart rebels only being executed by the Germans in 1909. Jacobus Christian, son of the Bondelzwart leader Willem Christian, was one of around 600 Bondelzwarts to move to the Cape following their defeat by the Germans in 1907. He returned in 1919 and was convicted as one of the leaders of the Bondelzwarts Rebellion of 1922. After serving two years in prison he was released and served as Headman of the Bondelzwarts Reserve until his death in 1943.

⁹ A full list of names of the members of Isaac Witbooi's Court can be found in NAN SWAA 1851 A396/8, Schrader to O.C. Police, Gibeon, 30 June 1918.

¹⁰ Although here it was constructed as a question of imposing moral discipline, unlike Iipumbu's assertion of *droits de seigneur*.

¹¹ The original identifying white bandanna is visible in photographs of Hendrik Witbooi and his followers. See Heywood and Maasdorp, *Hendrik Witbooi Papers*, photographs following p. 84.

¹² NAN SWAA 1851 A396/8. Lohr to Col. de Jager, Windhoek, 28 July 1918.

⁴ The Caprivi was an exception. From 1914 until 1931 it was administered by British Bechuanaland, at which date it was passed over to South African administration.

⁵ Edward was the second son of Joseph Fredericks. Joseph had been the accepted leader of the people living in the Bethanie region from 1868 to 1893. Joseph's eldest son, Paul, had succeeded him, but perished in the notorious prison camp on Shark Island at Luderitz during the 1904–7 war. NAN ADM Assist. Mil. Mag. Bethany to Sec. Prot., 19 Feb. 1916.

elsewhere by Philipp Prein¹³) and the Herero adoption of uniforms, should remind us that there may have been differences between what Namibians meant by adopting particular clothing and how this was read by colonisers and missionaries. The fashioning of symbols worn on the body may initially have been more part of an internal and self-reflexive process than directly aimed at making white people uncomfortable. But the nervous and politicised response of whites would have increased self-consciousness over the wearing of these signs, for these were often the 'unintended consequences of the colonial gaze'.¹⁴

In another process in the development of cultural symbols in the south, the whereabouts of the grave of Hendrik Witbooi was consistently kept secret from the South African authorities, as it had been from the Germans.¹⁵ The bodies of heroic Namibian figures from different colonial confrontations were 'sacralised' in a number of cases, and it is striking that the most effective symbols for the political mobilisation and unification of communities were those that could not be touched or contaminated by colonial power, either because they were exiled or because they were dead.¹⁶ Knowledge such as that concerning Witbooi's body was hoarded and kept within the bounds of a limited community that identified with him.

Samuel Maharero became an important symbolic figure while still in exile, but even more effectively so after his death. Gesine Krüger and Dag Henrichsen in this collection, as well as Anne Hendrickson elsewhere, have demonstrated how the return of Samuel Maharero's body to Namibia and his funeral in Okahandja reclaimed an important symbolic space and gave birth to a new movement for a Herero 'nation' and Herero unity from 1923. Drilling in uniforms became viewable public acts with authoritative meaning; by doing so, Hendrickson argues, people 'became' Herero.¹⁷ The uniformity and discipline gave the impression that the critical disjunctions in society and history were smoothed over, that a connection with past forms of social authority existed despite the destruction of Herero political organisation by the Germans from 1904. These new Herero histories and anthropologies argue for the importance of non-verbal symbolic forms in colonial power struggles. The fact that Herero began to perform these commemorations in Okahandja and elsewhere after 1923 in a physical reoccupation of historical space, in full view of colonialism, attests to the relative strength and self-confidence of this emerging movement. The penning of many Herero in reserves in central Namibia did not stop them 'dreaming' of *ejuru*, that sky or heaven in which they envisaged a 'historical landscape' ideal for grazing and settlement.¹⁸

But there were radically different ideas of nationhood coming into place from

¹³ Philipp Prein, 'Guns and Top Hats: African Resistance in German South West Africa, 1907-1915', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20, no. 1 (1994).

¹⁴ Anne Hendrickson, 'Historical Idioms of Identity Representation among the Ovaherero in Southern Africa' (PhD Thesis, New York University, 1992), vol. 1, p. 16.

¹⁵ Personal communication, George Eiseb to Ben Fuller, Blouwes, February 1995.

¹⁶ The Damara, however, represented a group with no central symbolic figure who successfully constructed a distinct identity.

¹⁷ Hendrickson, 'Historical Idioms', vol. 1, p. 15.

¹⁸ This fed the growing *otjiserandu* (Red Flag) movement, which caused South African officials great unease and confusion. See the chapter by Gesine Krüger and Dag Henrichsen in this collection.



1. Seven women in colonial high fashion. Dress was one non-verbal form of self-expression amongst Herero-speakers

Source: National Archives of Namibia

elsewhere that we should juxtapose here. An intriguing question is to ask how a sense of itself as a *colonial* nation might have been created by South Africa in its 'Cinderella' colony¹⁹ from 1915. It is doubtful that a fully conscious imperial policy existed at this date, and the territory was probably desired more as an expansion into what was perceived as rightfully the Union's 'backyard'. The Union of South Africa was, after all, still a semi-colony itself. But the territory and concept of 'South West Africa' were of considerable importance in the shaping of white South African (colonial) identity. The invasion of Namibia occurred only five years after the Act of Union and only thirteen years after the South African War, and war has always been formidable in the forging of identities.

Indeed, it is pertinent to ask how a sense of itself as a *sovereign* nation was created through both the invasion of Namibia and its prelude, the bloody suppression of the Boer Rebellion led by Maritz. It is unsurprising that the cleavages in South African society and politics should be apparent as colonialism in Namibia played itself out. At the least, 1915 represented another and very symbolic 'Act of Union'. The invasion was led by the famous Boer generals Smuts and Botha, in the name of supporting the British and Allied war effort against Germany. In many senses, therefore, it was a case of South African whiteness projecting its own tensions externally and, in doing so, attempting

¹⁹ The term is borrowed from Rex Hardinge, *South African Cinderella: A Trek through Ex-German West Africa* (London, 1937).



2. South African forces in SWA in 1915. The Native Commissioner of Ovamboland (Hahn) wrote later to a former comrade-in-arms: 'I remember . . . all our doings in the I.L.H. [Imperial Light Horse]. Your mentioning the good old E Squadron and our chase after Maritz, Kemp and Co. during the Rebellion, and later our sorties into the desert from Swakop and Walvis, brought back very pleasant memories'. (NAN A450 vol. 4 1/41, Hahn to Devenish, Ondangwa, 29 Dec. 1943)

Source: Basler Afrika Bibliographien

to dissipate them.²⁰ As one contemporary source put it, 'Young South Africa has gone to the battlefields, and . . . will come back a nation'.²¹ Moreover, Namibia's 'spaciousness' represented a potential resource for the resolution of some very concrete South African problems. Once the mandate was awarded, the territory became the object of an ambitious Land Settlement Programme for poor white (although not destitute) Afrikaners from the rural north-western Cape.

Namibia, as a colonial entity, was the focus of South Africa's early campaigns to assert itself not only as a nation, but as a regional power in the sub-continent. The Union Government entered the prestigious adult world of colonial power with assurances that the territory would be well administered and Germany's colonial record bettered. But Namibia, conquered largely by Afrikaans-speaking troops and soon to become the settlement area for poor whites, soon shrank in perspective, given the larger context in which ruling elements wanted to see South Africa. When it came to public commemoration of the defining events of South African participation in the First World War, much more attention was given to actions in Europe. The debates around the construction of the Dellville Wood Memorial in France clearly demonstrated a Eurocentric yearning and an anglophone identification with western 'civilisation'. Those who did not fight in Europe were relatively marginal. This was expressed by veterans of the South West African and East African campaigns. When a group of the latter visited France, and were asked by a Canadian journalist if they were 'the Anzacs', one is reported to have summed it all up with the reply: 'No, we're the *Voetsacs*'.²²

²⁰ See Bill Nasson, 'War Opinion in South Africa, 1914', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 23, no. 2 (1995), for an overview of the divisions of opinion amongst the different communities in South Africa about going to war against Germany.

²¹ *South African College Magazine*, 16, no. 1 (1915), p. 4 (cited in Nasson, 'War Opinion', p. 255). See also the preface to Dorothea Fairbridge, *A History of South Africa* (London, 1918).

²² Bill Nasson, 'Jock of the Somme: Dellville Wood and Great War Memory in South Africa' (paper presented at the 'Varieties of History' Symposium, Australian National University, 2-3 Dec. 1994). The term *voetsacs* alludes to a colloquialism (*voetsek*) whose polite meaning is 'go away'.



3. The reburial of South African soldiers killed in 1917 in Ovamboland, whose bodies were disinterred from the former Neutral Zone (now Angola) and reburied at Odibo in 1928

Source: National Archives of Namibia, Hahn Collection

But these veterans and their fallen comrades were not totally forgotten by their government. A monument was erected in the colonial capital Windhoek to commemorate the South African troops who lost their lives in the 1917 campaign against the Kwanyama king Mandume. The north had not previously undergone direct colonial occupation, and Mandume was the leader of the largest Ovambo kingdom in the north, which, as Randolph Vigne and Petrus Ndongo explain in this volume, was now divided between 'Angola' and 'South West Africa' with a Neutral Zone in between. After being defeated by Portuguese forces in 1915, Mandume had increasingly defied the terms of South African 'protection', providing Pretoria with a justification for the military expedition of 1917.

The shifting of the boundary with Angola seven miles to the south in 1926-8 left the former Neutral Zone, where white troops had fallen in battle in 1917, now technically in foreign soil. In 1928, their bodies were disinterred and then reinterred at Odibo, the Anglican mission in Oukwanyama on the Namibian side of the boundary. Great ceremony and symbolism accompanied the reburial of their bodily remains, attended by important dignitaries from both the South African and the Portuguese administrations. The memorial service was conducted by the Anglican Bishop of Damaraland.²³ The symbols present on this occasion — as revealed in photographs — were the two flags of the Union. The Portuguese presence signalled the Union of South Africa's new diplomatic standing as a colonial power, with the authority to sign international treaties for the first time in its own right, and also represented a cementing of the

²³ There were interesting parallels here with the 1907 burial and religious commemoration of Portuguese soldiers in Ombanja (Cuamato Pequeno) after the massacre of Vau de Pembe in 1904, the worst military disaster suffered by Portugal in Africa. 'Damaraland' is a nineteenth century designation for central and southern Namibia.

colonial bond between two countries who had lost men in the process of subjugating the Ovambo.

The colonial soil, arbitrarily fixed by cartography, was thus newly demarcated by the public reburial of the bodies of white soldiers. Black bodies were not ascribed the same value. South African officials attending this ceremony overlooked the important fact that Mandume's body now lay buried in Angola. Virtually no whites knew of the Kwanyama belief that his head had been cut off and buried under the very monument they had erected to white soldiers in Windhoek. The literal and symbolic bisection of Oukwanyama²⁴ through the establishment of a grid line of a border, cutting off Mandume's head from his body anew, was referred to by the Kwanyama as *onhaululi* — separation. The polity was no longer self-contained; the Kwanyama memory of separation and violation was always going to be a source of volatility and creativity.²⁵

The monument to fallen South African soldiers (and to Mandume's head) was placed in a small park at the entrance to the Windhoek railway station, a centre through which many contract workers passed *en route* to their southern labour centres and a place familiar to many urbanised Ovambo. In 1937 and 1938, the attention of the administration in Windhoek was drawn to the existence of a 'Mandume Memorial Committee', composed of Christianised Oshiwambo-speakers living in the location. In 1937 they obtained permission to lay a wreath at the memorial, but when they reapplied in 1938 a whole series of questions emerged. When the Committee's spokesman, Titus Namuyo, asked if they could lay a wreath at the monument 'in memory of the death of Chief Mandume', the Location Superintendent Bowker²⁶ argued (in ignorance of the Ovambo belief) that it was not a suitable place because 'it stands as remembrance of the British troops who fell in the war with Mandume'.²⁷

Up to this point, and until the Native Commissioner of Ovamboland²⁸ enlightened him in a letter shortly afterwards, Bowker had known nothing of the 'absurd' Kwanyama belief surrounding Mandume's decapitation. This went side by side with the conviction shared by many Ovambo that Mandume had committed suicide after being wounded in battle, in direct contradiction of the official South African history of his death by Maxim-gunfire. This reconstruction of the Kwanyama past through the body of Mandume was consistent among many Oshiwambo-speakers and was propagated through oral history,

²⁴ Oukwanyama = the Kwanyama Kingdom. In Oshiwambo the prefix Ou- or Uu- indicates a kingdom/territory and Oshi- a language.

²⁵ Patricia Hayes, 'Death and the King's Historians: Mandume, South Africa and the Kwanyama, 1915-1994' (paper presented at International Conference on Oral History, New York, 17-22 Oct. 1994); Brenda Danilowitz, 'John Muafangejo: Picturing History', *African Arts*, 26, no. 2 (April 1993).

²⁶ Octavus George Bowker arrived in Windhoek with the occupation forces, headed the administration's Native Affairs Department between 1915 and 1920, and ran Windhoek's locations for the municipality from 1922 to the late 1940s. He was married to Sybil Bowker, who carried out welfare work in the locations.

²⁷ NAN MWI 36/1/37 vol. 14, 'Interview with Titus Namuya', 2 Feb. 1938.

²⁸ The Native Commissioner of Ovamboland was Carl Hugo Linsingen Hahn, grandson of the missionary Hugo Hahn, who grew up in Paarl in the Cape. Known widely as 'Cocky' Hahn, he played rugby for the Springboks and joined the Imperial Light Horse in 1914. Hahn initially served as Intelligence Officer in Ovamboland, and then succeeded Manning (first Resident Commissioner) as Native Commissioner, until his retirement in 1946. He was a keen photographer and hunter, as well as being an amateur ethnographer, botanist and zoologist.

in a process of remembering the body politic through a narrative of dismemberment and commemoration which was as powerful as, if different from, that being enacted by Herero. This had come to constitute a whole body of what Mudimbe calls 'subjugated, local knowledges',²⁹ but which in this case, we would argue, were more submerged than subjugated. The sudden surfacing of this history in Windhoek represented a collision with colonial history and a competing claim to the public space. The Mandume Committee's request in 1938 for permission for a public commemoration of the king's death at a site claimed by South African colonialism was, in the end, refused.

The Mandume Memorial Committee was careful to distinguish its movement from the *Otjiserandu* (also called the *Otruppa* or *Truppenspieler*), composed mainly of Herero. This was not only because the administration was nervous of 'military discipline' spreading among African groups. Marking difference from other identities was a means of circumscribing one's own identity.³⁰ In doing so, and in trying to reclaim a monumental space to commemorate Mandume, urbanised Ovambo were drawing on 'tradition' to mobilise some form of self-constituting unity, which they could present not only to the colonial authorities, but also to other emerging ethnic identities in Windhoek such as 'the Herero'.

All groups in Namibia found that they were confronted with constructions of themselves — by each other and by the colonial state, settlers, officials and missionaries. Ethnic categories were in a continual process of formation. From the eighteenth century, they were formulated by traders, explorers and missionaries on the basis of their partial observations of differentiated indigenous societies. These categories were appropriated, sanctioned and popularised through different avenues. In a parallel fashion already outlined above, Namibian groups, most notably élites looking for new bases of power, began their own processes of appropriation, sanction and popularisation. Frequently groups were lumped together to become an ethnicity: numerous kingdoms and two or three decentralised polities in the Cuvelai floodplain became the Ovambos; at least three competing paramount chiefs in central and eastern Namibia plus two distinct groups in the Kaokoland became the Hereros;³¹ as many as eight or nine different groups ranging from Warmbad to Sesfontein became the Namas; two major factions in the Windhoek location (which already masked another twelve indigenous divisions or autonomous polities) became the Damaras; 'the Coloureds' began to be manufactured from the mixed race children of settlers, one nineteenth-century grouping of 'mixed blood' (the Rehoboth Basters) and a few 'Cape Coloureds'.

The forging of white identities in Namibia was no less complex. Shortly after South Africa reburied its dead in Ovamboland in 1928, a whole set of images was mobilised on the Cunene River as the Angola Boers prepared to enter Namibia with their ox wagons. These 'trekboers' were the descendants of one of the treks originating in South Africa in the nineteenth century, and had farmed, hunted and traded in Angola, as well as serving as transport riders

²⁹ Valentin Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington, IN, 1988).

³⁰ Denis-Constant Martin, 'The Choices of Identity', *Social Identities*, 1, no. 1 (1995), p. 6.

³¹ On the Kaokoland, see Michael Bollig's chapter in this collection.

and auxiliaries in Portuguese military campaigns alongside other mercenary groups (which are discussed in Michael Bollig's chapter on Kaokoland). The continued reluctance of the Portuguese government to grant land titles after numerous decades of Boer settlement and renewed efforts to assimilate the Boers into Portuguese colonial culture precipitated their South African-sponsored immigration in 1929.

Prime Minister Hertzog negotiated their return through church mediators.³² There was a sense in which the God-chosen people were seen to be trekking from their Roman Catholic exile back into the Calvinist bosom. But the Angola Boers could not be settled in South Africa, already perceived as full of landless people. In this particular elaboration of the colonial relationship, South West Africa had the land, and South Africa was prepared to pay. The *Cape Times* coverage of the Angola Boers crossing the Cunene reads like a mirror of white South Africans looking at their fictive selves and their fictive past. As they were pulled out of their time-freeze of Portuguese colonialism, this apparition of the *voortrekkers* in wagons and nineteenth-century dress revived and romanticised a lost history (a 'remembered dream'³³), while simultaneously bringing South Africa's own modernity into sharp relief. Such images glossed over their internal divisions (most were *bywoners* and some were destitute) and the tensions their relocation caused in the white Namibian communities among whom they were placed.

Historiographies

The point of the foregoing narratives is that they suggest competing and contested productions of the past, varying from Herero public performance to Kwanyama oral history to the constructions of Angola Boer history in the South African popular press. These were structured around different notions of temporality and varied ideas of selfhood, 'nation' and greatness, from which coherent histories could be built. They represented different periodisations and different historical narratives which came into closer dialogue with each other through the span of the 'colonial moment' in Namibia, although they never became a single history.

Other historiographical dialogues need to be mentioned here. In this project, interactions have taken place between different intellectuals — popular and expert, literate and oral, vocal and visual (and all the hybrids created by these 'opposites') — over the production of the texts in this collection, mainly during the Windhoek 'Trees Never Meet' conference in 1994. One of the most striking encounters occurred when a panel discussion on migrant labour was convened. After a review of the substantial existing literature and the presentation of the findings of the academic collaborators in the project, two panelists made lengthy representations and analyses of the migrant labour system based on the experience of their working lives. When David Haufiku³⁴ and Peter Katangalo³⁵

³² The prime movers were the *Gereformeerde* and *Hervormde* Churches.

³³ *Cape Times*, 12 Oct. 1929.

³⁴ David Haufiku is a former migrant worker and ex-serviceman who pioneered a route through Bechuanaland to South Africa after the Second World War; he worked in various capacities in Cape Town and returned to Ovamboland in the 1960s to engage in business and politics.

³⁵ Peter Katangalo formerly worked in Grootfontein for the South West Africa Native Labour Association (SWANLA) which was the central recruiting organisation for Ovambo contract labour; he later became headmaster of Mandume Primary School in Katutura and is now retired.

had finished, many in the audience were emboldened to offer their own insights and to speak publicly from layers of knowledge stored away for many years. These representations both engaged with and tore down the paradigms of the academics' discourse as authority shifted away from them. This occurred not so much because the 'evidence of experience' was in that moment held to be paramount;³⁶ rather, we were reminded that memory and language arise from physically being-in-the-world, that embodiment makes possible the existence of culture and the self.³⁷ We were confronted both with historical interpretation, and, very palpably in the conference hall, with the forces *underlying* interpretation — those emotions, contentions and struggles that give rise to historical texts.³⁸ We were confronted with the fact that former migrant workers had undergone physical and mental struggles which made them desire to produce history in this way and in this public forum.

This brush with subjects and their bright freight of personal and collective memory — historically articulated — made academic history seem disembodied and dry. Above all, it was a refusal of interested Namibians to be fixed like trees in the text of a new history book. It acted literally to brush history against the grain.

This was a salutary reminder that the production of academic history is prone to hierarchies and separations, and it benefits when these are challenged. It is only since decolonisation in 1989–90 that Namibian historiography, of the type that is published in journals and books, has begun to expand from the foundations laid by a few notable scholars in the 1970s and 1980s. For researchers taking part in this growth in Namibian studies, there has been the excitement of being the new generation to push back the boundaries of historical knowledge, to tackle its chronic 'dearth' in the South African period and to undermine the, at times, slavish assumptions that Namibia simply followed the patterns laid out in South African social historiography.³⁹ Such encounters at the conference were therefore, for the academics, both humbling and illuminating. Nobody can claim to be the sole representative of Namibian history.

But for those who do pursue academic research, what approaches exist

³⁶ Joan Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience', *Critical Enquiry*, 17 (1991).

³⁷ Thomas Csordas (ed), *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 12.

³⁸ This sentence is a partial paraphrase of Cohen and Odhiambo's argument, but we wish to go further in our assertions of the ability of 'popular' (as opposed to 'expert') intellectuals to interpret history than these authors do. Cohen and Odhiambo imply that it is in the interstices between the two forms of history that we can locate 'critical junctures' and 'fissures'. We argue in contrast that in the heart of the text produced by those historians, implicitly constructed as 'non-expert' by Cohen and Odhiambo, lies interpretation and analysis, not simply the raw material from which the origins of 'representations' can be traced. See David William Cohen and Atieno Odhiambo, *Burying SM: The Politics of Knowledge and the Sociology of Power in Africa* (Portsmouth, NH and London, 1992), p. 20; but also transcripts of proceedings from the 'Trees Never Meet: Mobility and Containment in Namibia, 1915–1945' Conference, Windhoek, 1994 (transcribed by Jacqui Pickering), and Ciraj Rassool, "'For the Father of the Children": The Production of History in Namibia', *South African Historical Journal*, 32 (May 1995).

³⁹ Numerous assumptions are engaged with throughout this introduction, but for the sake of clarity, probably the most important one to mention here is that which presents Namibia as a settler colony dominated by an experience of land dispossession — when over half the population (in the north) has a history much closer to that of British tropical Africa, with few or no settlers and a peasant or subsistence population remaining in possession of the land. See below.

which can register — if not sustain — these dissonances? Most of the contributors in this project, initially versed in structuralist traditions, have had to move beyond these into (at the very least) a familiarity with the revisionist 'social history' school.⁴⁰ A number have been persuaded by more recent arguments of deconstruction and post-structuralism, particularly where these allow repressed categories of analysis to erupt. But, generally, this book has been influenced by recent examples of expanded and sensitised social and cultural histories. This is not to say that all contributors in this project agree with these approaches. But, for those in favour, the irony is that deconstruction and its like thrive on large bodies of empiricist or materialist history, and in Namibia's academic historiography there is little to deconstruct.⁴¹ Thus most contributors here have had to do enormous initial spadework before they could even begin to think about what the politics and poetics of their historiographical areas might be.

If we enter into dialogue with the different forms of history,⁴² much 'missing' knowledge can be found. But during the writing and exchanges over the histories in this book, it has become increasingly clear that the issues are not just about filling in 'gaps'. History is not a whole which has to be filled. Where marginal subjects are invisible, especially in the more academic forms of history, we have come increasingly to understand that it is insufficient merely to make them visible in a positivist sense. As argued in the chapter by Patricia Hayes, empirical gaps are a symptom rather than a disease: they exist for reasons which have to be theorised.

The need for the latter has arisen particularly where the invisibility of women bedevils the task of researchers. The study of mobility involves an examination of laws promulgated to control it, and it often seems as if women did not exist. It appears that women were not included in the general legislative definition of 'native'.⁴³ The pass laws did not encompass women, but officials were advised to behave as if they did;⁴⁴ it is likely too that women were subjected to the Masters and Servants Law. It would seem that the Native Commissioner in Ovamboland, Cocky Hahn, mobilised 'customary law' in an effort to stop women leaving this region for the south. But the vagueness surrounding women's legal status, their excision from language itself, cannot be explained by mere 'androcentrism'. Their repression as a category implied a wide range of discursive and regulatory practices in which they were marginalised, and their exclusion allowed for a number of purposes to be achieved. But the opposite of repression is volatility: many examples of unpredicted mobility by women have emerged in this research. Efforts at controlling these (be it through

⁴⁰ See Belinda Bozzoli and Peter Delius, 'Radical History and South African Society', *Radical History Review*, 46, 7 (1990).

⁴¹ Several areas do enjoy a significant scholarly historiography, however. Labour history is one, as are some aspects of German colonial history. Scholars of Herero history, for example, can draw on a body of 'nationalist' historiography about German rule and a substantial recent socio-economic history. For the latter, see Wolfgang Werner, 'An Economic and Social History of the Herero of Namibia, 1915–1946' (PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1989).

⁴² Acknowledgement must go to Ciraj Rassool for his conceptualisation of 'different forms of history' in the southern African context, put forward on the *Good Morning South Africa* television show, 23 May 1994, and at the Windhoek conference, Aug. 1994.

⁴³ See Robert Gordon's chapter on vagrancy in this collection.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

compulsory medical examinations in towns or beatings of runaway rural women⁴⁵) gave the illusion of constructing and consolidating power.

This corresponds with the wider methodological approach the editors have encouraged in this collaborative project. We have been persuaded that social power, especially that of the state, should not be seen as coherent, unified and homogeneous. It might be said, instead, to consist of 'dispersed constellations of unequal relationships, discursively constituted in social "fields of force"'.⁴⁶ Central to our understanding of this project, which engages with the crucial first three decades of South African rule in Namibia, is that the colonial state was in a process of construction. We have tried to argue that the 'fields of force' in question, whether they fall within the category of gender, class, race, ethnicity, generation or sexuality, are all located at the heart of politics, where there is a 'mutual constitution in the historical process'.⁴⁷

We suggest that the state might, for example, project portrayals and policies concerned with race, as part of its own process of construction. At the same time, it steeps these in gender and sexual constructs and becomes profoundly marked by these constructs in its turn. In a related argument, Anne McClintock has described race, gender and class as 'articulated categories', which 'come into existence in and through relation to each other — if in contradictory and conflictual ways'.⁴⁸ It seems from the emerging Namibian research that it is especially race and gender that work in a peculiar dynamic together. The chapters by Marion Wallace, Jeremy Silvester, Wolfram Hartmann and Patricia Hayes all suggest this in different contexts. Wallace shows the singling out of unmarried black women for venereal examination in Windhoek; Silvester describes the economic prohibitions on interracial marriage in southern Namibia; the gendering of Ovambo migrant labour in the white economy is central to Hartmann's chapter, and Hayes discusses the efforts to stop Ovambo women moving out of the north into possible interracial relations further south.

In sum, we find the colonial state to be far from monolithic. Such a conclusion avoids, in turn, a nationalist paradigm, where the 'roots and manifestations' of history from below are (usually) 'unproblematically found in the logic of colonialism and capitalism and in the experience of oppression and resistance'.⁴⁹ In the ensuing nationalist logic, the 'prior "great men" are replaced

⁴⁵ On these two issues, see the chapters by Marion Wallace and Patricia Hayes respectively.

⁴⁶ Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1988), p. 42. See also Linzi Manicom, 'Ruling Relations: Rethinking State and Gender in South African History', *Journal of African History*, 33, no. 3 (1992), p. 445.

⁴⁷ This quotation is borrowed from Linzi Manicom, who in this case refers to the category of gender. See Manicom, 'Ruling Relations', p. 445.

⁴⁸ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London, 1995), p. 5. We prefer McClintock's formulation of 'articulations' of class, race and other categories, rather than the much-used notion of 'intersection', which Belinda Bozzoli (with Mmantho Nkotsae) in particular has criticised as vacuous. See Belinda Bozzoli with Mmantho Nkotsae, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900–1983* (Portsmouth, NH and London, 1991), p. 239.

⁴⁹ Gary Minkley, 'First Born Rulers', *Southern African Review of Books*, 35 (1995), p. 21. The issues are also dealt with in Nicolene Rousseau, 'Popular History in South Africa in the 1980s: The Politics of Production' (MA Thesis, University of the Western Cape, 1994), and Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool, 'Oral History in South Africa: Some Critical Questions' (Paper presented at the Africa Seminar, University of Cape Town, March 1995).

by "great" universal social agents and their equally masculine representatives'.⁵⁰ We have therefore been critical of crude dichotomies between resistance and collaboration and preferred to frame incidents of overt resistance into more complex paradigms, rather than a series of set pieces in a staged historical battle between the forces of colonialism and proto-nationalism. The relationship between the emerging colonial state and Namibia's increasingly intermingling communities shows both spectacular bouts of confrontation and, more often, long periods of uneasy coexistence, which were unsensational but crucial in terms of contesting power relations. Violence which took place, mainly on the side of the state, was only one extreme of a whole continuum of responses to local agency. As McClintock has suggested, it is wise to 'open notions of power and resistance to a more diverse politics of agency, involving the dense web of relations between coercion, negotiation, complicity, refusal, dissembling, mimicry, compromise, affiliation and revolt'.⁵¹

The conceptual paradigm of mobility and containment is enabling in this context. Movement and all it entails is an expression of human agency that goes beyond words. If colonisation is about controlling space and time, as Robert Gordon (following Frederick Cooper) suggests, then the entry into and occupation of public colonial spaces by the Herero (for example), as well as the 'idleness-in-time' of the vagrant, constituted pervasive challenges to colonial power.⁵² Moreover, the paradigm allows for a cyclical dimension to histories under colonialism. For, if mobile Namibians were contained in one area, then new forms of mobility with new actors were certain to arise in others. The move of the younger generation in the north towards Christianisation is a good example.⁵³

In nationalist historiography, the repressive capacity and aim of the state in South West Africa have too often been widely assumed,⁵⁴ and the expressed intention of the law too often equated with its effects. But the agents of South African colonialism encountered people enmeshed in pre-existing regimes of power undergoing their own processes of change. Any increase in South Africa's authority in the inter-war years needs to be carefully periodised and cross-referenced with other periodisations. Such relationships are crucial, because African initiatives and reactions, however understood, affected and triggered the processes of government. The power of officials to enforce the law was also frequently limited and we would argue that this was especially the case in the early phases of South African colonial rule.

Mobility & Containment from 1915

When South African forces invaded Namibia in 1915, they entered a colony in which much of the black population had already been defeated and dispossessed. The piecemeal establishment of German supremacy in South West

⁵⁰ Minkley, 'First Born Rulers', p. 21.

⁵¹ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 15.

⁵² See Robert Gordon's chapter in this collection.

⁵³ See the chapter by Meredith McKittrick in this regard.

⁵⁴ See, for instance, SWAPO of Namibia, Dept. of Information and Publicity, *To Be Born a Nation: The Liberation Struggle for Namibia* (London, 1981), pp. 162–166; Peter Katjavivi, *A History of Resistance in Namibia* (London, Addis Ababa and Paris, 1988), p. 15.

Africa from 1884 had been briefly interrupted in 1904, when Herero and Nama uprisings swept the territory. The colonial response was massive and brutal, and served to ensure a new degree of security for white rule as well as general dispossession from the land of the black population, under the Native Ordinances of 1907, within the Police Zone (the central and southern areas of the country). Recent work has, however, challenged the image of the 'peace of the graveyard'⁵⁵ by which older historiography characterised the situation after the end of the wars, questioning the extent to which the German colonial state apparatus was actually able to police the movement of people and animals. Gesine Krüger and Dag Henrichsen argue in this collection that in the central and northern Police Zone a process of black pastoral recovery was well underway by 1915, and they emphasise a continuity that spans the transfer of colonial power.⁵⁶ Thus, for this part of the country, 1915 had little practical significance. In the south of the Police Zone, however, the process of land alienation had been less marked. Here the impact of the South African invasion and the wave of white stock-owners that followed in its wake were more important.

Northern Namibia raises even more questions about the variety of effects of the South African colonial entry. There, 1915 heralded the establishment of direct colonial control in Ovamboland — albeit later to be elaborated as 'indirect control' and albeit unevenly spread across the floodplain. This occurred peacefully, on the whole, except for the military expedition to remove Mandume in 1917 and the Iipumbu affair of 1932. It must be stressed that huge differences existed between the polities which were collectively referred to as 'Ovambo', and the more centralised a society was, the easier it was for South African officials to construct policy because, although in some cases they removed certain leaders, in general they could interlock with existing structures.

The eastern polities of Oukwanyama and Ondonga were the most populous centralised kingships, and it was noticeable to the South Africans upon their arrival that there was strong central control over judicial, military, production and religious practices (the latter included royal permission to plant and harvest crops and royal supervision of rain ceremonies and initiation).⁵⁷ Polities in the centre of the floodplain (Uukwambi in Namibia and Ombandja in Angola) were also centralised, though smaller in scale. Processes of centralisation in these polities had a history of contestation, most overtly expressed through dynastic politics which at different times in Ondonga and Ombandja, for example, had resulted in fission. But further west, specifically in Ombalantu, power was more decentralised and dispersed. Prior to occupation and during the era of merchant capital, the west had been raided by the east and rendered defensive. But because it was decentralised, Ombalantu became an ideal repository of diffused and alternative forms of power — particularly those religious, ritual and medical discourses and practices which had been repressed in eastern polities under royal centralisation (a repression continued under later Christianisation and

⁵⁵ Horst Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting* (London, 1980), p. 231.

⁵⁶ See also the important work by Prein, 'Guns and Top Hats', pp. 102–112.

⁵⁷ Patricia Hayes, 'Order Out of Chaos: Mandume ya Ndemufavo and Oral History' *Journal of*

to some extent by colonial rule).⁵⁸ From 1915 colonial officials focussed their interactions on the eastern polities and located their offices in Ondonga and Oukwanyama, indicating how important pre-existing centralisation was for the construction of colonial authority. Indeed, centralisation under its traditional forms such as 'kingship' became an important metaphor of governance, integral to the legitimisation of ruling policy under colonialism which by the early 1930s was being formulated as 'indirect rule'. It also implied the reinforcement of the regional weight of these polities and the further marginalisation of areas such as Ombalantu, where, as McKittrick shows, colonialism was far less visible, and where, as Hayes mentions, 'leaders' had to be invented.⁵⁹ Thus the colonial presence was differentiated across the Ovambo floodplain, and, further west in Kaokoland, Bollig's chapter suggests an even greater degree of remoteness between colonisers and colonised.

Across northern Namibia (Kaokoland, Ovamboland, Kavango and Caprivi) therefore, though boundaries were imposed and outer edges of territory shaved away, history in the inter-war period is not one of land dispossession. This fact, and the very great differences between the north and the Police Zone, should alert us to the problems of transplanting any South African grand narratives of 'dispossession' on to Namibian soil. This tendency has been encouraged by the problems of a sparse academic historiography of Namibia, and one of the most serious distortions to which it has led is the envisaging of the whole country as a 'settler state', characterised definitively by land losses.

The Namibian case posits a further difference. Where dispossession did take place on a wide scale, particularly in southern Namibia, those dispossessed were pastoralists, for whom land loss did not have the same meaning as it did for sedentary peoples. As long as Herero and Nama stock farmers could still gain access to land, its transfer to white farmers did not produce an immediate impact of stasis and impoverishment, placing these communities at the mercy of the settler economy. What is striking is how little impact the land dispossession measures had in the Police Zone in the initial stages of colonial settlement, as Jeremy Silvester's chapter on southern Namibia demonstrates. The mechanics of ownership also need to be distinguished from those in South Africa. No Natives Land Act was passed in Namibia, and black farmers were prevented from purchasing commercial farms not by legislation, but by local white mobilisation.

The tendency to characterise Namibia according to the settler-state model is linked to an even more familiar narrative, that of 'historical transition'. As

⁵⁸ Male initiation had been halted in eastern polities in the nineteenth century but only ceased in Ombalantu in the 1920s, although it probably continued secretly; missionaries sought to end female initiation throughout the floodplain, but Ombalantu in fact only seems to have become more important as an initiation centre for the west. Finally, the Native Commissioner Hahn sought to eradicate abortion practices, a policy seemingly more effective in the east than in the west, because Ombalantu kept its renown as a site of expertise.

⁵⁹ See Hayes's chapter in this collection; also Hayes, 'A History of the Ovambo, ca 1880–1930' (PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1992), pp. 245–50. Comparison with northern Nigeria seems appropriate here, with its centralised northern emirates in proximity to the very different groups on the Jos plateau. The latter's decentralised character posed similar challenges, both to the emirs and to indirect rule. See C. Orr, *The Making of Northern Nigeria* (London, 1971), and R. Huesler, *The British in Northern Nigeria* (London, 1968). Thanks to Monday Mangvwat for these references.

Chakrabarty argues, 'most modern third-world histories are written within the problematics posed by this transition narrative, of which the overriding (if often implicit) themes are those of development, modernization, capitalism.'⁶⁰ In southern African historiographies, white settlement and dispossession are usually a necessary corollary to these themes. Our purpose in this section is to suggest how such a model splinters when transposed to Namibian soil, to raise questions about the intrinsic value of such approaches and to follow this up (in the next section) by carefully periodising the uneven processes of state construction in the colony.

The new government's 'native policy' after 1921 — involving control of both land and movement — developed both on the basis of South African precedent and in response to the specific local problems of black mobility. The Native Reserves Commission of 1921 and the barrage of legislation which followed it⁶¹ set up clearly demarcated reserves for the black population in the Police Zone and delineated the conditions under which black people might live in and move between reserves, farms and urban areas. Reserves were set up in each of the principal farming districts of the territory. Although the continued mobility of the black population within the Police Zone demonstrated the limitations of colonial rule, movement when it was not chosen could hold radically different connotations. The movement which migrant labour represented was intended to be a very controlled one (see below), and forced movement was an integral part of colonial containment strategies. Thus, for instance, occupants of crown land were forcibly removed to reserves in the first half of the 1920s (and thus were again dispossessed of land reoccupied during the late German and early South African periods, and in the later 1930s large numbers of residents were deported from the Windhoek location.⁶² While reserves provided a basis for black stock-owning and the reconstruction of identity, their resources were inadequate for their population, as indicated in the chapters of Gesine Krüger and Dag Henrichsen, and of Ben Fuller. In tandem with the reserves policy went the settlement of large numbers of white farmers in SWA, mainly under the Land Settlement Programme of the early 1920s. During the first period of this scheme, 1920–30, 1,519 white families were granted holdings in Namibia.⁶³ In South Africa, where the 1920s were characterised as a decade in which there was a significant movement of the poorer whites from farming to urban areas, it is interesting that those in the north-west Cape were offered a rural alternative through the possibility of access to land in Namibia.⁶⁴

Maps produced during the German and early South African periods provide a powerful representation of the blocking in of Namibian spaces which was apparently accomplished by these colonial land policies. Each carefully drawn farm seemed to assert the exclusive rights of an individual to the use of the

⁶⁰ Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for "Indian" Pasts?', in *The New Historicism Reader*, ed. H. Aram Veeseer (New York and London, 1994), p. 345. With thanks to Gary Minkley for pointing us in this direction.

⁶¹ Robert Gordon surveys this legislation in some detail in his chapter.

⁶² On deportations, see Werner, 'Economic and Social History', pp. 170–72; also, on the removal of Damara from the Windhoek Location in 1939, see the chapter by Marion Wallace in this collection.

⁶³ South Africa, *Annual Report on South West Africa to the League of Nations*, 1930, p. 37.

⁶⁴ See Jeremy Silvester's chapter in this collection.

resources within its boundaries and enabled a variety of Afrikaans, English and German labels to be applied to the landscape. The static notion of ownership epitomised by these maps was asserted through actual law and economic power, which enabled an expanding pattern of white possession. This conflicted sharply with the more fluid and unbounded interpretations and uses of territory amongst black pastoralists generally in the Police Zone. The latter emphasised the importance of maintaining the uninterrupted movement of stock between a recognised series of water-holes in response to changing rainfall patterns. In their terms, freedom of access and use was crucial, rather than occupation.⁶⁵

The mobility of black pastoralists was viewed in colonial texts as the antithesis of civilisation: 'This nomadic instinct is so strong with him [*sic*] that even when he lives under civilised conditions . . . it is found that from time to time he still insists on making a change for no apparent reason.'⁶⁶ This depiction of the 'native' was an important strand in the construction of his⁶⁷ 'otherness' — and hence difference and distance between ruler and subject — in Namibia at this period.⁶⁸ This process stood in close relationship to the state's reserves policy, the explicit aim of which was to stabilise the population and 'remedy' the innate 'wanderlust' of 'the black pastoralist'.⁶⁹ This was true despite the fact that, had containment in reserves led to the increased 'civilisation', defined here as sedentariness, of the black population, the difference so carefully engineered between black and white would have been undermined: such contradictions were integral to the process of stereotyping. The white half of the stereotype, too, had to be carefully nurtured. The Land Settlement Programme was directed at white pastoralists of the north-west Cape. While some praised their frugality and patience, Macmillan warned that they had got into the 'habit of roving for roving's sake' which was resulting in 'ignorance' and 'laziness'.⁷⁰ State policy clearly intended to provide a place for these poor

⁶⁵ Erno Gauerke, *The Population Groups of South West Africa*, vol. 1 (Windhoek, 1978), p. 24; Winifred Hoernlé, 'The Social Organisation of the Nama Hottentots of Southwest Africa', *American Anthropologist* 27 (1925); Werner, 'Economic and Social History', pp. 22–23.

⁶⁶ South Africa, *Annual Report*, 1926, p. 59. It was argued in the same *Annual Report* (p. 29) that 'Progress amongst such a [pastoral] population has always been much slower than in the case of agriculturalists and it is only to be expected that there would be little evidence of any real progress.' (Thanks to Robert Gordon for this reference.) Missionary Vedder also argued that 'to make such a tribe amenable to civilisation, means solving the gigantic problem of getting a nomadic tribe to settle down permanently'. See Carl Hahn, Heinrich Vedder and Louis Fourie, *The Native Tribes of South West Africa* (London, 1966. 1st ed. 1928), p. 147.

⁶⁷ The term 'his' is used advisedly. Construction of the 'native' as male (and repression of the category 'female') was a feature of much colonial stereotyping in Africa. See Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 19–23.

⁶⁸ In this context, Vaughan has examined the shifting constructions of 'difference' between coloniser and colonised in Africa. 'The distancing afforded by racism served colonialism well through most of its history, and "differences" between Africans . . . were continually subordinated to the overriding "difference" of race'. Although Vaughan deals primarily with medical knowledge, her concerns are relevant here. Vaughan, *Curing their Ills*, p. 11 and *passim*.

⁶⁹ South Africa, *Annual Report*, 1926, p. 59.

⁷⁰ W. M. Macmillan, *The South African Agrarian Problem and its Historical Development* (Johannesburg, 1919), p. 38. We are grateful to Christo Botha for bringing the more positive viewpoint of the Lands Department on these settlers to our attention. It must also be noted that although many were virtually destitute, about ten per cent of settlers coming from South Africa at this time were fairly well financed.

whites, and included a generous allowance towards the building of a decent 'dwelling place'.⁷¹

It was the arrival of these poor whites that lent such urgency to emphasising difference over similarity. On one level, Namibia was an arena where attempts were made to forge 'white Afrikanerness', as a new migration of trekkers from the Cape literally confronted their shadows. White trekkers faced the challenge of confronting black Afrikaners, the descendants of the 'Oorlam'⁷² migrations into Namibia from the Cape hinterland during the nineteenth century, Christians who also spoke the same language. Because poor whites replicated the activities of blacks, pastoralism transcended racial barriers and was dangerous to settler power. This was especially the case where black pastoralists were familiar with aspects of modernity: it clashed with their ethnographical construction as 'Hottentots', akin to 'Bushmen', close to the primitive.⁷³

On the ground, the elaboration of difference was gradual and contested. Fencing may have been the ink with which settlers inscribed their authority onto what they saw as the 'blank page' of the countryside,⁷⁴ but in the early years of the land settlement programme many white farmers were unable to afford it and had to make do with more mobile boundary markers, such as cairns. African pastoralists, who were largely non-literate, found these actual marks on the landscape far more powerful symbolic representations than maps, but the cairns were very much open to contestation. Even without solid boundaries, however, borders between white farms and reserves gained more meaning as farms were occupied and the movement of livestock across their perimeters more effectively policed by farmers. But the image of fixed white settlement created by laws and represented in the maps was largely an illusion. Despite official concern about 'white nomads', the creation of a clearer economic distinction between them and black pastoralists depended on their continuing ability to move their stock beyond the boundaries of their farms in periods of drought. It was common for white stock-owners to be absent from their houses and farms for months or even years as they travelled with their animals in search of grazing.

It was, however, the continued vibrancy of the black pastoral economy which was most powerful in undermining the vanities of the white cartographical division of land. Black pastoral recovery⁷⁵ clearly continued during the early years of South African rule, and largely took place beyond the borders of the

⁷¹ NAN LAN 7 9/3, 'Memorandum on Land Settlement in South West Africa', Ap. 1924.

⁷² The term 'Oorlam' was applied to a number of black communities who migrated from the Cape to Namibia during the mid-eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries. They played an important role in spreading commerce and the use of firearms and were, both economically and politically, the most influential communities in Namibia for much of the nineteenth century. See Brigitte Lau, *Namibia in Jonker Afrikaner's Time* (Windhoek, 1987).

⁷³ See Isaac Schapera, *The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa: Bushmen and Hottentots* (London, 1930), pp. 62–64; also Robert Gordon, *The Bushman Myth: The Making of a Namibian Underclass* (Boulder, CO and Oxford, 1992). On ethnographic constructions in Namibia in the inter-war years, see below.

⁷⁴ Isabel Hofmeyr, *We Spend Our Years as a Tale That is Told: Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chiefdom* (Johannesburg, London and Portsmouth, NH, 1993), p. 72.

⁷⁵ The recovery was in terms of numbers of stock owned, rather than large-scale involvement in the market, as had been the case in the precolonial and early German periods.

reserves, within the spaces set aside as white farms.⁷⁶ Jeremy Silvester argues that this reflected the initial ability of black stock-owners to gain grazing rights on white-controlled farms on relatively generous terms in exchange for their labour. The reversal of this process of recovery only came with the drought and depression that slowly strangled the territory during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

One reason why black farmers were able to regenerate their herds was that, as Robert Gordon shows here, the state's ability to police the vast territory of SWA was very limited. The evidence on this is somewhat contradictory, however. Pass laws were clearly intended to fix workers on farms and mines, and in some areas and periods were stringently applied, both by farmers and magistrates. Farm workers prosecuted for 'desertion' were often sentenced to extend their stay on the very farm that they had left — in order to work off fines paid by their employers. On the other hand, the pass laws do not seem to have been used systematically to keep black people out of towns.⁷⁷ A battery of controls to facilitate the regulation of urbanisation was being put into place in the 1920s and 1930s, but these were often underutilised. With, on the whole, only gradual black urbanisation during the inter-war years (in direct contrast to South Africa), the impetus for doing so from urban local authorities was small. Oral evidence also indicates that there was still a very flexible pattern of movement and settlement at this period between and within reserves, farms and towns.⁷⁸

Questions of Periodisation

The use of the concepts of mobility and containment amongst diverse groups has enabled many chapters in this collection generally to avoid the narrowness of a 'transition narrative' approach. We recognise the need, none the less, to periodise very carefully our narratives involving the state, given that they impinge on, and are affected by, the trajectories of other histories.

During the initial years of South African rule (1915–20) martial law was imposed on Namibia. As Tony Emmett first argued, and as other studies have corroborated, the martial law period was one of 'tentative liberalism' on the part of the authorities, although we find 'paternalism' a more appropriate description.⁷⁹ The South African Government, in setting out its claim to the territory, had to present itself as a mature, responsible and civilised power. A further motive for restraining repression was the fact that, having defeated the Germans, South Africa had to tack between two potentially hostile groups, one

⁷⁶ In 1923, officials calculated that only 184,446 of the 602,877 small stock held by black stock-owners were actually in the reserves, and just 30,659 of the 84,385 large stock. South West Africa, *Report of the Financial Depression Commission* (Windhoek, 1923), p. 7.

⁷⁷ Black entry into Windhoek was banned in 1932, but this was the product of exceptional circumstances. Marion Wallace, 'The Process of Urbanisation' (Paper presented at the 'Trees Never Meet' Conference, Windhoek, Aug. 1994), pp. 4–5, 8–10.

⁷⁸ Life histories confirm this pattern. Marion Wallace, interviews with Charlotte //Hoeses, Windhoek, 14 Mar. 1995; Ellie Xames, Windhoek, 4 June 1992.

⁷⁹ Anthony Emmett, 'Popular Resistance in Namibia,' in Brian Wood, ed, *Namibia 1884–1984: Readings on Namibia's History and Society* (London, 1988), pp. 224–258. We prefer to use a more general notion of 'paternalism' here, because we see it as contingent upon temporary circumstances, constituting a short-term stopgap approach, rather than developing out of Cape liberal ideology.

German and one African.⁸⁰ The hopes of many Namibians in the Police Zone between 1915 and 1921 were fostered by administrative and legal changes which, though minimal, included provisions for greater justice in the labour market and legal system. South Africa's ideological attack on the atrocities of German colonialism also kindled hopes of regaining land from the German losers in the war.⁸¹ This limited reformism of the military period, more generally, opened the doors to increasing acts of defiance such as desertion, the withholding of labour and stock theft.⁸² In the spaces created by these circumstances, black pastoralists were able to regenerate their flocks and herds on reoccupied farms and crown land.

After the award of the mandate in 1920, however, the administration of SWA moved to crush black expectations by importing a body of new laws from South Africa to regulate the flow of labour and to control the indigenous population more efficiently. An important feature of this policy was the creation of the reserves noted above (see Map 1). This second phase of South African colonial rule, following the introduction of civil administration, generally saw a sharpened sense of purpose over labour, movement and the reservation policy, and meant growing pressures on land and labour in the Police Zone.

The origins of the serious confrontations of the 1920s lay in widespread African resentment at colonial attempts to introduce closer bureaucratic control. Taxation measures precipitated protests by the Bondelzwarts in 1922, whilst efforts to brand African cattle generated widespread opposition (most prominently at Rehoboth in 1925). Both conflicts escalated into overt instances of resistance as they were met with overwhelming military force by aircraft from the Union Defence Force. The latter drew heavy criticisms from the League of Nations, and this probably explains why further instances of aerial bombardment did not occur again until the 1932 Iipumbu affair. Aerial intimidation, however, was strategically scheduled in both Herero and Ovambo areas in the mid-1920s to induce a 'proper' sense of fear of South African power.⁸³ These events took place in a context of lively settler and official fears of disorder and revolt, which led the Administrator to comment, after three years of civil administration in the territory, 'unrest generally is an ever present factor constantly to be guarded against.'⁸⁴

In Windhoek, new location regulations of 1921 attempted to enforce the payment of hut tax and to impose passes on most black adults, excluding married women. These measures sparked a series of protests and evasion of the tax; the courts, unusually in the history of SWA, prevented enforcement of either tax or passes owing to various legal loopholes. In response the

⁸⁰ 'The endeavour to secure the establishment of better relations between white and black has been uphill work indeed'. United Kingdom, *Report on the Natives of South West Africa and their Treatment by Germany* (London, 1918), p. 6 and *passim*.

⁸¹ Freda Troup, *In Face of Fear: Michael Scott's Challenge to South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1948), p. 37.

⁸² Emmett, 'Popular Resistance', pp. 230–231; Wolfgang Werner, 'Struggles in the Namibian countryside, 1915–1950: Some Preliminary Notes', in Wood, *Namibia, 1884–1984*.

⁸³ Fear of South African aerial power was undermined in one area which suffered from it directly. A tenacious oral history continues to propound that the Bondelzwarts shot down one aeroplane which crashed in the barren hills, a fallen symbol of modern technological might. Jeremy Silvester, interview with Jan Laberloth, Karasburg, 28 Oct. 1990.

⁸⁴ South Africa, *Annual Report*, 1923, p. 22.

municipality tightened up the law, doubled hut tax and hit out against African mobility, imposing a tax on visitors to the location and banning the issue of travelling passes (necessary in order to leave Windhoek) to those in arrears with their taxes.⁸⁵ Defiance of the new laws had reached such a level by December 1924 that Bowker, the Location Superintendent, was forced to admit: 'such control as I have hitherto been able to exercise has now entirely ceased to exist'.⁸⁶ The implementation of the Natives (Urban Areas) Proclamation in Windhoek in February 1925 was crucial at this time, because it swung the full weight of the administration behind the controls, particularly pass laws, which the municipality was attempting to put into effect.

Circumstantial evidence strongly indicates that these protests in Windhoek were connected to the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which was founded in 1920.⁸⁷ Colonial anxieties over African unrest were also triggered by other new political organisations which had been springing up in urban centres.⁸⁸ These included the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU, 1921), the African People's Organisation (APO) and finally the South West Africa National Congress (SWANC, 1922). Although the beginning of civilian rule in the early 1920s had signalled a phase of greater state assertiveness, this was also a time of insecurity and speculation about the future, coinciding with the emergence of these organisations and debates about possible land redistribution.

Officials read into these political developments the work of outsiders and 'agitators'. Nowhere was this refusal to acknowledge changes in political thinking as internally motivated more striking than in the case of labour migrants carrying ideas back to the north. The sealing off of the north was intended to exclude the region from the political developments further south, as was the design of the migrant labour and compound systems, which sought to keep the low-paid northern contract workers separated from the other ethnic categories and political 'agitators'. Of course, it did not work this way. Labour migrancy was inevitably responsible, *inter alia*, for the percolation of ideas and thoughts from south to north and vice versa. This showed in the 1920s and

⁸⁵ Govt Notice 45/1921, South West Africa, *Official Gazette of SWA*, 11 May 1921, pp. 172–182; NAN MWI 36/1/37 vol. 2, Sup. of Locations to Town Clerk, 11 Oct. 1922; MWI 36/1/37 vol. 3, Bowker, 'Control of Urban Area Natives', 5 Oct. 1923; Extract, Council Minutes, 4 Jan. 1923; Sup. of Locations to Town Clerk, 28 Mar. 1924; Govt. Notice 70/1924, South West Africa, *Official Gazette*, 16 June 1924; MWI 36/1/37 vol. 4, Town Clerk to Sup. of Locations, 21 July 1924.

⁸⁶ NAN MWI 36/1/37 vol. 4, Sup. of Locations to Town Clerk, n.d., c. early Dec. 1924.

⁸⁷ While there was no direct link between the protests in Windhoek and Garveyism, figures such as Hosea Kutako (who was prominent in the Universal Negro Improvement Association and who led the 1924 protests) show that indirectly these connections certainly existed. On Garveyism in the early 1920s see Gregory Pirio, 'The role of Garveyism in the making of Namibian Nationalism', in Wood, *Namibia. 1884–1984*, p. 262; Lothar Engel, *Kolonialismus und Nationalismus im deutschen Protestantismus in Namibia 1907– bis 1945* (Bern & Frankfurt, 1976), pp. 196–201; VEM-RMG C/h 50b, Meier, 'Zweiter Quartalbericht', 2 Nov. 1922 and 'Halbjahresbericht', 30 Ap. 1923; Poennighaus, 'Halbjahresbericht', Ap.–Sept. 1924. On Kutako see Emmett, 'Popular Resistance', p. 238; NAN MWI 36/1/37 vol. 4, Sup. of Locations to Town Clerk, 4 Dec. 1924.

⁸⁸ See Emmett, 'Popular Resistance'; Werner, 'Struggles'; Pirio, 'Garveyism', all in Wood, *Namibia. 1884–1984*. Some whites even considered it necessary to pay UNIA representatives to obtain reassurance that they would be allowed to keep their land after Marcus Garvey and his black fleet arrived in Namibia. NAN KSW 2, p. 1122. Evidence of Dr Olpp, Swakopmund, 28 Aug. 1935.

early 1930s with the flare-up of problems between Iipumbu and the administration in Ovamboland. As Wolfram Hartmann shows, the Kwambi king incorporated aspects of Garveyism in his anti-colonial discourse, while simultaneously drawing on notions of the past and attempting to revive and expand a highly gendered central royal power in the north.⁸⁹

While we accept the general arguments concerning the shift towards greater control with the award of the mandate, we do not see 1921 as heralding the onset of *efficient* repression. Rather, the conclusions of this study indicate the emergence of a third phase, beginning in the late 1920s and continuing through the 1930s, in which the state showed a degree of consolidation. At the turn of the decade, drought, coupled with the effects of the world depression and famine in the north, allowed the authorities a moment in which to take advantage of relative weakness on its 'peripheries'. This third phase is doubly important in that it also applied to the north, deepening the incorporation of Ovamboland into the rest of the economy and increasing the effects of participation in the external capitalist economy on Ovambo lives. In contrast, the shifts of state policies in 1920–1921 had little relevance to the north since, as argued above, the onset of South African rule was the first direct intervention this region experienced, and its initial impact had not been as firm as South Africa would have liked.⁹⁰

From the late 1920s, then, drought and famine combined with widespread social changes in Ovamboland to increase dependence on migrant labour. Moreover, this coincided with disadvantages for migrants, who, from the mid-1930s, were less able to choose mine over farm labour and were channelled quite strikingly through the contract system into the new growth industry of karakul sheep farming.⁹¹ It is instructive, too, that the punitive bombing which ended Iipumbu's rebellion and dissolved the Kwambi kingship in 1932 coincided with the beginnings of the third and more consolidated phase of colonialism identified above. The last piece of aerial policing to take place in the inter-war years was in the early 1940s, to discipline the Ndonga king Martin ka Dikwa, who after a long career of cooperation had finally come to flout colonial authority by reclaiming the right to try murder cases in his customary court. The fly-pasts were a warning rather than an exercise in destruction, but clearly demonstrated an intolerance for any revival of African power in the north.

In the south, too, the depression and drought brought far-reaching social changes. While both white and black stock-owners developed strategies to obtain access to grazing beyond the bounded spaces provided for them, this period saw decisive state intervention in favour of the settlers. The majority of white stock-owners were able to remain on their farms, while relief work was provided in urban areas for the relatively small numbers of unemployed whites.

⁸⁹ NAN A 450 vol. 7 2/12, Confidential Memorandum, 28 Jan. 1932; Pirio, 'Garveyism', pp. 237–238.

⁹⁰ For example, officers based in the north successfully opposed proposals from Windhoek to introduce immediate taxation and effect disarmament, arguing that the politics were still too strong to make these measures advisable.

⁹¹ Ovambo women, however, from the mid-1930s gave the administration an increased headache over control, as they migrated in increasing numbers to the south. Patricia Hayes (in this volume) suggests this was connected to the experience of colonial famine labour, 'a market of sorts', during 1929–1930 in eastern Ovamboland.

Meanwhile, as Jeremy Silvester argues, black farm workers experienced widespread expulsion from farms during the drought and increasingly found that they, with their animals, were crammed within the narrow and increasingly defined confines of the reserves. When they renegotiated their access to farms after the drought, the terms of admission had fundamentally changed.⁹²

In the urban areas black populations were subjected to increasing control (the Windhoek location was reorganised to allow greater regulation) and, as the 1930s progressed, repressive policies were developed. These included the forcible medical examinations discussed by Marion Wallace in this volume, and deportations to reserves. When it came to the Second World War, those recruited into the Native Military Corps went from labour compound to military compound in regimented fashion, and the few combat situations were short-lived.⁹³ Though Gordon implies that the war was not a politicising experience, as it was elsewhere for Africans, the later emergence of figures such as Toivo ya Toivo and several Herero leaders certainly owed something to war service.⁹⁴

Through the 1930s and certainly by the end of the Second World War, South Africa's position with regard to black mobility was more secure than in the 1920s. Conversely, its position *vis-à-vis* certain white sections in the colony (discussed later in this introduction) had become insecure in the 1930s. The white Legislative Assembly, however, endorsed Smuts's efforts to effect an incorporation of Namibia into South Africa as a fifth province in 1946, a move defended at the United Nations as 'acting in the name of and on behalf of the people of South West Africa'.⁹⁵ Du Pisani surmises that South African anxiety about pressure from the new international body to decolonise lay at the root of Smuts's determination to incorporate.⁹⁶ We have therefore fixed 1946 as our date of closure, the point at which South Africa began its withdrawal from international supervision of the territory mandated to it after the First World War, after its attempts to annex Namibia legally had been opposed.⁹⁷

The Economic Paradigms

While new efforts were made to control and contain the participation of the black population in the market, there was generally an ambiguity about the extension of South African economic power within the territory. Private capital struggled to displace German enterprises in key areas, fuelling conflict between

⁹² Jeremy Silvester, 'Black Pastoralists, White Farmers: The Dynamics of Land Dispossession and Labour Recruitment in Southern Namibia, 1915–1955' (PhD Thesis, University of London, 1994) pp. 331–340.

⁹³ Patricia Hayes, interview with David Haufiku, Ongwediva, 28 Dec. 1989. For a discussion of Namibian participation in the Second World War, see Robert Gordon, 'The Impact of the Second World War on Namibia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19, no. 1 (March 1993).

⁹⁴ Gordon, 'Impact', p. 147 and *passim*.

⁹⁵ United Nations General Assembly Official Records, 3rd Part, 1st Session, 4th Committee, 1946, pp. 199–235. Document A/123, Annex 13.

⁹⁶ André du Pisani, *SWA/Namibia. The Politics of Continuity and Change* (Johannesburg, 1986), pp. 108–119.

⁹⁷ For accounts surrounding the beginning of the international dispute over Namibia, see *inter alia* Du Pisani, *SWA/Namibia*; Ronald Dreyer, *Namibia and Southern Africa. Regional Dynamics of Decolonisation, 1945–1990* (London and New York, 1994). A constructive discussion of the latter appears in Lauren Dobell, 'Review Article — Namibia's Transition Under the Microscope: Six Lenses', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21, no. 3 (1995).

ethnic factions of the white community.⁹⁸ The South African state also raised capital in support of the political aims of the Land Settlement Programme. Yet uncertainty about the future of the territory and the fragility of its economy acted as a brake on private investment. No composite economic history has, as yet, been produced for Namibia, but most existing literature holds that the overarching concern of the period was that Namibian economic development be subordinated to that of South Africa.⁹⁹ The precise questions of how and how far Namibia fuelled the development of the sub-metropolitan economy¹⁰⁰ require serious and extended research. For present purposes, however, it is safe to argue that Namibia's economy was regarded by the new colonial power as an adjunct to its own 'transition narrative' of modernisation, whose importance to South Africa varied at different times.

During the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries much of Namibia had been affected by the complex dynamics of expanding merchant capitalism. As Michael Bollig's chapter in this collection reminds us, these had generated substantial movements of goods and people within and beyond the colonial borders which were later laid out in the Berlin Agreements. The colonial and missionary diatribe on precolonial 'intertribal' warfare owed some of its origin to the dynamism, and at times destruction, unleashed within Namibian communities as they engaged in external trade and competed for resources that had become commoditised.¹⁰¹ Initially the economic activity of the new colonial occupants was limited to an active engagement in the existing stock trade; there were few early returns to European investors. Significant white settlement in rural areas only took place within the final five to ten years of German rule, following the defeat of the Nama and Herero forces by 1907.¹⁰² The damage done to the black pastoral economy by stock losses suffered during the conflict was compounded by the fragmentation of herds and flocks and the severing of links between black stock-owners and the stock market.¹⁰³ The mineral resour-

⁹⁸ The acquisition of many of the diamond fields by CDM was the most important example. The part played by the South African state in this transfer is a topic that requires further research. Duncan Innes, *Anglo-American and the Rise of Modern South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1984), pp. 98–101.

⁹⁹ Amongst the most recent published work which supports this view are Brigitte Lau and Peter Reiner, *100 Years of Agricultural Development in Colonial Namibia* (Windhoek, 1993), and Christel Stern and Brigitte Lau, *Namibian Water Resources and their Management. A Preliminary History* (Windhoek, 1990). However, we question these authors' argument that German colonial development policy was more 'progressive' than that of South Africa. Such comparisons are not meaningful until they take into account the exclusion of the vast majority of the Namibian population from development under colonialism. Equally problematic are the assertions concerning 'the knowledge accumulated by one of the world's oldest surviving civilisations, that of Germany' (Stern and Lau, *Namibian Water Resources*, p. 2), which make it seem as if Germany's acquisition of 'civilisation' and accumulation of 'knowledge' in the Wilhelmine era were divorced from any question of power.

¹⁰⁰ The notion of 'sub-imperial' utilised here is based on the related concept of South Africa's emergence as a sub-metropole, set out in Barry Munslow, *Mozambique. The Revolution and its Origins* (New York, 1983), chs 2 and 3.

¹⁰¹ Brigitte Lau, *Namibia in Jonker Afrikaner's Time* (Windhoek, 1987); Hayes, 'History of the Ovambo', vol. 1, ch. 3; Alvin Kienetz, 'The Key Role of the Orlam Migrations in the Early Europeanization of South West Africa (Namibia)', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 10, no. 4 (1977).

¹⁰² Guido Weigend, 'German Settlement Patterns in Namibia', *The Geographical Review*, 75, no. 2 (1985), pp. 156–169.

¹⁰³ Helmut Bley, *South-West Africa under German Rule, 1894–1914* (London and Evanston, IL, 1971), pp. 171–172.

ces of the territory were also only developed in the latter years of German rule, diamonds from 1908 and copper from 1906.¹⁰⁴

The conquest of Namibia by South African forces in 1915 resulted in a literal redirection of the economy. The construction of a railway connection between Kalkfontein (now Karasburg) and De Aar, as part of the logistical operation in support of the military invasion, immediately ensured that South Africa replaced Germany as the dominant market for Namibian exports. Significantly, one of the first acts of institutional incorporation of the territory within the South African bureaucratic apparatus was the transfer of control over Namibia's rail network to the South African Railways and Harbours Administration. The 'parallel' port of Swakopmund also withered as its neighbour, Walvis Bay, became an integral part of the economy.¹⁰⁵ Wolfgang Werner has argued convincingly that within a few years the introduction of a sophisticated combination of railway rates and customs duties facilitated the introduction of South African goods and investment into Namibia far more than it assisted the expansion of Namibia's own export market.¹⁰⁶ While German capital retained control of the Otavi Minen- und Eisenbahngesellschaft (OMEG) copper mine at Tsumeb, the interests of the German diamond-mining companies were consolidated and largely taken over by the South African-controlled firm Consolidated Diamond Mines of South West Africa (CDM).¹⁰⁷

Although mining promised to provide the hub from which the spokes of capitalist expansion might grow, the first thirty years of the South African occupation confounded these expectations. While mining contributed an impressive 58 per cent of Namibia's gross domestic product (GDP) in 1921, the first year of South Africa's mandate, the value of this contribution was not achieved again until 1948. The period 1920–35 proved a difficult one, as mines opened and shut in response to the volatile world market in minerals and the farming community struggled with debt and the difficulties of penetrating the distant South African market. The following decade saw a period of sustained economic growth, but one that rested heavily upon agriculture, rather than mining.¹⁰⁸ These developments should warn us against the dangers of 'reading back' the dominance of the Namibian economy by the mining sector after the

¹⁰⁴ Richard Moorsom, 'The Formation of the Contract Labour System in Namibia, 1900–1926', in Abebe Zegeye and Shubi Ishemo, eds, *Forced Labour and Migration. Patterns of Movement within Africa* (London, 1989), p. 61.

¹⁰⁵ The German development of Swakopmund as a harbour was dictated by the British occupation of the better site, just 30 km from Swakopmund, at Walvis Bay.

¹⁰⁶ For example, the cost of sugar rose dramatically as cheaper overseas imports were banned and merchants forced to buy sugar from Natal. Restrictions on the sale of livestock overseas were a common cause of complaint by farmers throughout this period. NAN KSW 2, Evidence of R. Blank, Swakopmund, 28 Aug. 1935; Evidence of E. Ecker, Otjiwarongo, 22 Aug. 1935; Werner, 'Economic and Social History', pp. 144–149.

¹⁰⁷ In 1913 there had been seventy-nine registered companies involved in diamond mining. United Kingdom Foreign Office, *German African Possessions (Late): No. 112, South-West Africa* (London, 1920), p. 77. It should be noted, however, that, while CDM did acquire control of the diamond mines in Namibia, the relatively high German tax regime was maintained, and the percentage of CDM's gross profits extracted in taxation was significantly higher than in South Africa. See Colin Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867–1947* (Oxford, 1989), p. 242.

¹⁰⁸ Figures for GDP do not, of course, reflect the relative scale of investment in agriculture and this does qualify the picture somewhat. D. Krogh, 'The National Income and Expenditure of South West Africa (1920–1950)', *South African Journal of Economics*, 28 (1960), p. 5.

Second World War to an earlier period.¹⁰⁹

The efforts made to encourage white settlement in rural areas, and the absence of the processes of rapid urbanisation and industrial growth that were taking place in South Africa during this period, meant that the territory failed to provide a large domestic market for agricultural products. The expansion of settler livestock production relied heavily on the demands of the South African market and was thus vulnerable to its fluctuations and dictates.¹¹⁰ It also meant that the first three decades of South African rule saw the expansion of a white settler community that was predominantly rural.¹¹¹ In the absence of manufacturing industry, towns were predominantly centres for services, trade and administration, and they remained small. Windhoek was the exception, and, as the centre of government, was by far the largest urban centre in the territory throughout the period.¹¹²

Although the uncertain international status of Namibia restricted private investment from outside, large amounts of state capital flowed into it to sponsor the advance of a package of South Africa's colonial projects within the territory. The central feature of this colonial package was the Land Settlement Programme and this was generously subsidised by the South African state.¹¹³ Initial land settlement patterns were closely related to the position of the railway network, necessary to carry animals to the markets in Johannesburg. The final link in the railway system that linked Gobabis to South Africa in 1929 was followed by a wave of land settlement in the surrounding district.¹¹⁴

In the Police Zone, state support for white farmers was not matched by any corresponding support for black pastoralism. Those reserves defined during the 1920s in central Namibia which carried cattle were located far from the railway line, and the movement of stock by black stock-owners through the white farming area was difficult. The sale of black-owned stock from the reserves

¹⁰⁹ Similar conclusions on the relative unimportance of mining in this period have been reached in the Zimbabwean case. See Ian Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe* (New York, 1988).

¹¹⁰ After farmers had chartered a steamer and exported livestock 'on the hoof' very profitably, in 1922 a proclamation was passed prohibiting such ventures and channelling all overseas livestock exports through the South African-based Imperial Cold Storage Company. Farmers perceived this as a direct attempt to limit their access to foreign markets. NAN KSW 2, Evidence of E. Ecker, Otjiwarongo, 22 Aug. 1935.

¹¹¹ While the majority of the white population in South Africa had become urbanised by the turn of the century, as late as 1926 almost 60 per cent of the white community in Namibia still lived in rural areas.

¹¹² Wallace, 'Process of Urbanisation'. She suggests that Namibian urban centres did not follow the South African trend of urban growth in the 1920s and 1930s, but argues that, while they may not have been economically important, they were important numerically.

¹¹³ By 1927, 1,012 farms had been established and £284,000 paid in advances to settlers to help them build a house and purchase stock and equipment. At the time, critics questioned the economic merits of such large scale state investment and subsequent analysis has strongly argued that many, if not all, of the farms established were economically unviable without the security of state assistance. Wolfe Schmokel, 'The Myth of the White Farmer: Commercial Agriculture in Namibia, 1900–1983', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 18, no. 1 (1985); Ben Fuller, 'Institutional Appropriation and Social Change among Agropastoralists in Central Namibia, 1916–1988' (PhD Thesis, Boston University, 1993), p. 28.

¹¹⁴ This stump of railway track terminating at Gobabis invites speculation as to the agendas of competing factions of capital. The original scheme was to push the line through to Zimbabwe and provide a track that would service eastern Botswana. See Ronald Hyam, *The Failure of South African Expansion, 1908–1948* (London, 1972). Arguably the abandonment of this line's continuation as 'uneconomic' reveals, at least in part, the concern over tariff differentials and the potentially reduced importance of Cape Town as a port of call.

and on white farms was controlled by tight local 'rings' of storekeepers and farmers. The opportunities available for black pastoralists to participate in the trade in livestock remained restricted.

Beyond the Police Zone, the absence of the market created a different set of conditions and restrictions. As Michael Bollig's paper shows for Kaokoland, no movement of cattle was allowed south into the Police Zone. The ostensible reason was to stop the spread of animal disease, but this policy also had the effect of blocking access to the territory's cattle markets. Further east, Ovambo-land had a peculiar peripherality in the overall economy. Capitalism entered the region as a thin stream, via the migrant labour connection, rather than a spate of subversions undermining the signs and practices of the precapitalist economy.¹¹⁵ Strategies of accumulation within existing matrilineal practices may have been affected, but were not necessarily restricted, by capitalism. Not enough is yet known about matrilineal inheritance norms and their history in this region, but in this period there was no sign of pressure to shift towards the type of accumulation that could be passed from fathers to sons.¹¹⁶

The potential development of commercial trade was frustrated here, too, by South African policy. After 1915 the authorities did not follow through German plans for an extension of the railway network to Ondonga in Ovambo-land, and refused white traders the permits necessary to enter the region.¹¹⁷ When a store was finally permitted to open, it was run by the mining company, CDM, and its stated aim was to stimulate the flow of migrant labour. The comparative isolation of Ovambo-land thus meant that a cash economy was only established on a fragile basis. Neither livestock nor crops were marketed on the Namibian side of the border, although there was an active exchange of goods in southern Angola. The only source of cash entering the local economy was therefore the earnings of migrant workers.¹¹⁸

The long, arduous journeys of the migrant workers provided a human and economic chain linking the Police Zone to the areas beyond. The interaction and movement of people between these two recently defined spaces was, of course, nothing new. However, the opening of the mines provided a new focus for the journey south and encouraged the movement of people. During the final years of German rule a substantial Oshiwambo-speaking community developed

¹¹⁵ There are many contrasts in southern Africa with the Ovambo case. For a concise elaboration of one example, the Tshidi, see John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, 'Goodly Beasts and Beastly Goods', in their *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder, CO, and Oxford, 1992). A reading of this material on the Tshidi suggests that their conversion to cash crops, in conjunction with migrant labour, resulted in capitalism sweeping, rather than seeping, into this locale.

¹¹⁶ This judgement is made with great caution, given the lack of specific research here and the diversity of outcomes shown by other research when matrilineal societies are affected by capitalist relations. For a useful recent discussion of the complex debates around matrilineality, see Pauline Peters, 'Revisiting Matrilineality: Land and Gender in Southern Malawi' (Paper presented at the African Studies Association 37th Annual Meeting, Toronto, Nov. 1994). What is interesting in the Ovambo case is that it is only very recently (the 1980s and 1990s) that bridewealth payments have become slightly inflated, and changes in matrilineal inheritance practices have been demanded to protect widows and children of deceased men. It could be argued that the redistribution of wealth through matrilineages had remained dominant, resisting reorientation, until the debates and changes of recent years.

¹¹⁷ Hayes, 'History of the Ovambo', p. 5; NAN NAO, vol. 18 11/1 v. 1, Officer in Charge NAO to Sec, SWA, AR, 1927.

¹¹⁸ Most of this money was usually spent by migrants on purchases in the stores in Grootfontein or Tsumeb, the towns through which they passed on their long journeys to the north.

in Tsumeb, as people responded to the new economic opportunities presented in and around the mine. Yet this movement of people was largely uncontrolled, a fact which caused immediate concern to the new occupying power after 1915. Action was immediately taken to explore ways in which the movement of labour might be systemised and gendered.¹¹⁹ Efforts to mobilise male labour were in contrast to attempts to arrest the movement of Ovambo women, particularly to the south.

One of the greatest institutional presences the new administration assumed was through the facilitation of migrant labour.¹²⁰ The flow of male migrants increased, mainly to the mines, but clearly fluctuated in response to changing perceptions of the risks and opportunities involved.¹²¹ The administration was keen to establish a more efficient system of recruitment, but unwilling to meet the costs. Pressure put on the mining companies to establish and finance their own recruiting organisation was unable to overcome divisions within the white capitalist sector. The relationship between the German-owned copper mine in Tsumeb and the coastal diamond mines, owned by British/South African capital, was characterised by ethnic and economic rivalry. Eventually, in 1926, not one, but two, recruiting organisations were formed, the Northern and Southern Labour Organisations (NLO and SLO), which primarily supplied the labour requirements of the copper and diamond mines respectively. A single amalgamated organisation, the South West Africa Native Labour Association (SWANLA), was not established until 1943.¹²²

Richard Moorsom has stressed the importance of the movement and 'distribution' of migrants between the mining and farming sectors of the economy, and he has raised initial questions about the ways in which the labour recruitment system was subverted by those contained within it.¹²³ We need to explore the implications of a migrant workforce that has been institutionally

¹¹⁹ The first South African officer to be sent to the north to meet local kings and leaders was Colonel Pritchard, an experienced recruiter of mineworkers from the Transkei. See William Beinart, *The Political Economy of Pondoland, 1860 to 1930* (Johannesburg, 1982), p. 74.

¹²⁰ Other examples of close connections between labour recruitment and administration were frequent. The recruiter in Ovambo-land, Cope, was formerly in native administration in Windhoek, and became the brother-in-law of the Native Commissioner of Ovambo-land.

¹²¹ A dramatic drop in the flow of recruits, for example, followed a fatal outbreak of influenza on the CDM mines at Luderitz in 1923. South Africa, *Annual Report*, 1923, p. 58.

¹²² The assets of Otavi Minen- und Eisenbahngesellschaft (OMEG), the German-financed company running the Tsumeb mine, were frozen during the Second World War. So the final establishment of a unitary recruiting organisation, SWANLA, might have reflected the relative weakness of German mining capital. After the war the mine was not returned to its previous owners, but sold by the administration to a new company, the Tsumeb Corporation. Perhaps this reflected a heightened postwar determination to complete the economic and political incorporation of the territory. South Africa, *Annual Report*, 1946, p. 11.

¹²³ See Richard Moorsom, 'Colonisation and Proletarianisation: An Exploratory Investigation of the Formation of the Working Class in Namibia under German and South African Rule to 1945' (MA Thesis, University of Sussex, 1973); Gervase Clarence-Smith and Richard Moorsom, 'Underdevelopment and Class Formation in Ovambo-land, 1844-1917' in Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons, eds, *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa* (London, 1977), pp. 96-112; Richard Moorsom, 'Underdevelopment, Contract Labour and Worker Consciousness in Namibia 1915-1972', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 4, no. 1 (1977); Richard Moorsom, 'Migrant Workers and the Formation of SWANLA, 1900-1926', *South African Labour Bulletin*, 4, nos 1 and 2 (1978); Richard Moorsom, 'Underdevelopment and Class Formation: The Birth of the Contract Labour System in Namibia' in *Collected Papers* (Centre for Southern African Studies), vol. 5 (York, 1980); Moorsom, 'Formation of Contract Labour System in Namibia', p. 55.

constructed in terms of ethnicity, race, generation, gender and sexuality. Some of these new directions are represented in this volume. Wolfram Hartmann's study of Iipumbu builds on an emerging field of sexuality in southern African studies and offers a distinctly new approach. He argues that one of the forms of control exercised by the Kwambi king over returning migrants involved their 'heterosexualisation'¹²⁴ in the rural social context. Meredith McKittrick takes generation as an important category of analysis, and explores the motivations of young migrants for entering the new worlds of labour migrancy, commodities and Christianity.

Most migrant labour came from Ovamboland in northern Namibia and southern Angola. These migrants were more numerous prior to 1915 than at any time over the next thirty years; and only after the Second World War did the system become more effective and the supply improve. In the inter-war years, the recruiting system in the north was consistently unable to meet the demands from the south for labour, except during the depression when labour demand dropped. Like other institutional presences, therefore, this labour policy suggests a colonial ineffectiveness.¹²⁵ It also probably explains why male labour was still encouraged to leave famine-hit Ovamboland during the depression in 1929–30, as the chapter by Patricia Hayes suggests, when functionalist economic explanations can hardly be applied. Neither land dispossession nor taxation in cash were used to induce Ovambo men to travel to southern labour centres. However, gradual confinement within 'tribal' and national boundaries, growing ecological pressure and taxation in kind (from 1930) increased their dependence on earnings from migrant labour over time. The degeneration into a 'labour reserve' was therefore far from straightforward, and the impact of male absence not dramatic, except in the longer term.

The reason why Ovamboland was targeted as a labour source — apart from labour recruiters, as much as missionaries, favouring sedentary peoples — was its demography. Roughly half of the colony's total population resided in this region in the inter-war years, even though considerable numbers (and the best grazing) were lost in the Angolan boundary agreements, discussed in Randolph Vigne's chapter. A gradual loss of the area's economic self-sufficiency can be seen during the period under study. In cases such as Ovamboland, where little land dispossession took place, explanation for the onset of decline under colonialism must be sought elsewhere. In these areas, farmers were less able to resist the impact of environmental problems such as deforestation and over-grazing, as their actions were restricted by colonial policies and boundaries. These limited access to markets, undermined the exercise of older coping mechanisms and controlled and limited the expansion of settlement. Above all, the impact of demographic increase must be examined carefully. The beginnings of a demographic study of Ovamboland have been included, therefore, in this

¹²⁴ Hartmann argues that the construction of heterosexuality in Kwambi society through the 'othering' of homosexuals emerged with the spread of Christianity. This has led to some debate among the editors of this volume since, while this view may be accurate, it remains speculative at this stage. More work is thus needed around sexuality as a western paradigm *per se* and its introduction through colonial and missionary agents into Namibian society.

¹²⁵ For a study of this shortfall in labour supply, see Patricia Hayes, 'The Failure to Realise "Human Capital": Ovambo Migrant Labour and the Early South African State, 1915–1930', *Collected Seminar Papers*, vol. 19 (Institute of Commonwealth Studies) (London, 1992).

collection. Harri Siiskonen's analysis of parish records from Lutheran missions traces internal movement between parishes by early Ovambo converts, and suggests how mobility was affected by famine. While these sources are limited in many respects, his findings represent a beginning and raise important new questions. Not the least of these is how the long-existing Scandinavian methods of demographic record-keeping by Finnish missionaries have created an archive which can be used by Siiskonen, while South Africa in this period had no means of enumerating its colonial population, and any attempt to produce a 'secular' demographic history suffers accordingly.

In conclusion, migrant labour from Ovamboland has a particular place within the framework of mobility and containment discussed so far. The movement of males was sought by colonialism, but so was its utter control. The rigid institutionalised canals of the migrant labour system attempted to integrate male labour from the north into the larger economy, while maintaining Ovamboland's isolation from that economy. Discourse among policy-makers constructed people from the north as a component of the economy (as 'native labour'), rather than participants within it. The entry into the southern economy provided an initiation into a racially hierarchised world in which people were dehumanised and objectified as labour units subject to 'white power'.

The first experience of a migrant worker was often a contract as a teenager to work on a farm. The humiliation of the crude medical inspection and the hardship of the journey left painful scars on the memory and these were often compounded as the young men spent lonely nights as cattle herders or shepherds at isolated grazing posts. The dislocation that accompanied this sudden confrontation with alien laws, language and landscape was certainly traumatic and the anxiety of those about to embark on their first journey was heightened by the tales of terror that many workers bore with them upon their return.¹²⁶ There were, of course, frequent challenges to the layers of subjection applied during this process. Group solidarity existed and information about wages and conditions was shared, while individuals often stood up to their exploiters where they could. Even headmen in Ovamboland, who added to the migrant's burdens by insisting on gifts or taxes on his return, ran the risk of being defied. As one worker put it in a letter to his headman, 'Would you ask this of your father and your mother?' In the same letter, and in the same counter-discourse of embodied subjectivity, he promised the headman: 'You will excrete something from your anus'.

Migrant workers were not the only Namibians to turn the power of language against figures of authority.¹²⁷ Oshiwambo nicknames for white people, for example, distilled a range of emotions, experiences and judgements about white officials and in the process objectified them. The Native Commissioner in Ovamboland, Lt. Hahn, known by the nickname of 'Cocky' from the German *hahn* for a cock, was also referred to as 'Shongola', meaning 'the Whip'; his wife

¹²⁶ Jeremy Silvester, 'The Role of Migrant Labour on Namibian Farms, 1927–1947' (Paper presented to the Africa Studies Association, Toronto, 1994); John ya Otto, *Battlefront Namibia* (London, 1982), pp. 7, 59.

¹²⁷ Johanna Mweshida, 'Nicknames' (History Research Papers No.2, Windhoek, 1997). She argues that, in Ovamboland, 'factors like language problems, illiteracy and the relationship between the whites and Aawambo blocked the Aawambo's opportunity of learning the whites' first names.

Alcyce was ironically dubbed 'Nakatalala' — 'Being Cool' — because she had a habit of shooting any goats that strayed into her garden; the officer Webber was called 'Gwepa', an onomatopoeic word derived from the verb 'to thrash'; and the Ondangwa storekeeper Grobler (*sic*) had his own insulting appellation for all his customers turned back on him by being named 'Makaku' ('Baboon').¹²⁸ In Windhoek, too, African constables were referred to simply as 'Bowkers'.¹²⁹ The mockery inherent in nicknames certainly prevented the aura of colonial authority from becoming too overwhelming, but it also provided a way of remembering the past.

The oral histories of former migrant workers are, as we have suggested, profoundly about the body. The journey south is another dominant and recurring component of these histories. A humiliating medical examination was followed by a classification process, before male workers were transported in cattle and coal trucks and 'distributed'.¹³⁰ In a colony where the state was weak but where the economy depended on the trafficking of these bodies, the role of the railway during long (sometimes fifteen-day) journeys through the Police Zone was particularly important. While migrants were being moved in these railway trucks, the state probably had its moment of greatest control. The security with which these 'contained workers' were transported would have addressed, for one thing, the type of sexual anxieties expressed by whites about groups of 'tramping' migrants walking through Natal in the late nineteenth century.¹³¹ But not only this: the very circulation of these northern men to the southern workplaces and back, through both the railway and the motor lorry between the railhead and Ovamboland, effected a union of the territory that was deeply imprinted in the bodies of these black men. In hindsight, it made the nation.¹³²

State Mechanics & White Settler Divisions

We stated earlier that the South African state in Namibia was far from being monolithic. It is appropriate here to take 'the state' apart as it were: to question the origins of policy formulation and the mechanics of government, as well as their effectiveness. The fissures amongst white settlers also warrant closer inspection at this juncture, for these divisions further complicated the nature of colonialism in Namibia.

It is true that much of the policy made in South Africa was simply imported

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Bowker was the Location Superintendent for many years in Windhoek, an official of notoriously testy character and acerbic tongue (see footnote 26). We are grateful to the Bricks Community Theatre Group for imparting this knowledge about nicknaming in Windhoek to us, and for agreeing to work with the minutes of Advisory Board meetings in this period to produce their play 'Locusts on the Sidewalk', performed at the Space Theatre, University of Namibia, 27 Aug. 1994.

¹³⁰ Oshiwambo-speaking historians frequently present the history of migrant labour in terms of a history of the body. See transcripts of 'Trees Never Meet'; Jeremy Silvester, interviews with Vaino Frans, Eheke, 17 Nov. 1990; Abed Ashipala, Eheke, 17 Nov. 1990; Jasordu Nime, Olulogo, 21 Nov. 1990.

¹³¹ Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity: Migrant Labourers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860–1910* (London, 1994), p. 23.

¹³² We thank Ciraj Rassool for helping to make some of these connections. Robert Gordon, too, has stressed the crucial importance of road-building for much of the territory in the inter-war period.



4. Returning and initiate Ovambo migrant workers tramping to the south with provisions

Source: National Archives of Namibia

into the mandated territory without regard for local conditions. The ideological framework in which policy-makers operated, too, was transplanted from South Africa with the constant changeover of officials. Yet this is not the whole story. The formulation of some policies reflected conditions peculiar to Namibia. The most important example of this was the segregatory legislation which was passed in South Africa in the first three decades of the twentieth century. In Namibia the reserves policy, implemented so soon after the beginning of civilian rule, reflected the direct application to Namibia of perhaps the most important aspect of segregation, and the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 was introduced into Namibia in 1924.¹³³ Yet major pieces of segregatory legislation, including the Natives Land Act and laws introducing the colour bar into employment, were not extended to Namibia. There is explicit evidence (concerning a proposed clause in the SWA Dairy Ordinance of 1931) that the surveillance of the League of Nations prevented the South Africans enshrining open racial discrimination in law in their colony. Significantly, it was Hertzog, one of the main architects of segregation in South Africa, who insisted on restraint.¹³⁴

¹³³ Segregatory legislation was also introduced through the Native Administration Proclamation of 1922 (which set up the reserves) and the Proclamation of the same name of 1928 which gave the Administrator powers over 'chiefs' in the reserves. See J. Kozonguizi, 'The Legal Apparatus of Apartheid' in Ronald Segal and Ruth First, eds, *South West Africa: Travesty of Trust* (London, 1967), pp. 118–119.

¹³⁴ CADP GG 406 7/4559, Hertzog to Prime Minister, 27 April 1931. Certain laws in SWA were, of course, directed specifically at the black population. The South Africans seem to have feared the censure of the League of Nations in cases where law applied to both white and black and involved open discrimination against black people; further research on this area is needed before definite conclusions can be drawn, however. We acknowledge with thanks the research in progress of Christo Botha here, which confirms that official correspondence emphasized that

The absence of legal mechanisms of racial discrimination did not, however, prevent it occurring. Lord Hailey noted during his visit in 1946 that segregation operated informally in SWA, through 'a general understanding that employment is not given to Natives in cases where European personnel either is or might be expected to be available'.¹³⁵ Similarly, state-aided hospitals treated only whites, despite the fact that the legislation did not specify that they should be thus segregated. In the rural areas, the exercise of violence and, as Ben Fuller shows in this volume, political manoeuvring on the part of white settlers combined to prevent black ownership of land originally granted to whites. It appears that in many areas the state was overstepping its legal rights, exercising what might be called a 'shadow power'. The latter existed through the normalisation of daily practice, the withholding of knowledge from the colonised and an underlying awareness of which group would be favoured by central power. This conclusion stands in direct contrast, although not contradiction, to the erection of a body of underused law described by Robert Gordon. It also reveals the extent of the weakness of the institutions of civil society in SWA, since the state was rarely subjected to legal challenges — which could have been so much more effective here than in South Africa. One explanation for this is that a black bourgeoisie, educated, Christianised and with the confidence to manipulate colonial systems, had hardly begun to develop; there was also barely a liberal voice among the settlers. The effectiveness of such protest would in any case have been mitigated by the colonial nature of the state itself, which was much less accountable even to settlers than the government of South Africa.

The central authorities ran their administration on a shoestring, with one officer taking the place of what would have been a whole department in the Union in many cases,¹³⁶ indicating a serious shortage of personnel and making incompetence unsurprising. Often officials recruited from South Africa were hardly at the top of their fields. Lord Hailey was heavily critical of the economies made in Native Administration, and particularly of the shortcomings of the Welfare Officers who ran the reserves. Magistrates, too, who doubled up as Native Commissioners, were often on short tours of duty from South Africa and were hardly in a position to acquire much local knowledge.¹³⁷

Yet it was not just the lack of resources and South Africa's cavalier attitude which hindered the authorities' stated target of 'complete control' over the black population in Namibia between 1915 and 1946.¹³⁸ Settlers themselves were highly fragmented. The division of the white population into German and South African 'sections' has been emphasised in existing historiography to the almost complete exclusion of gender, class, age and race.¹³⁹ While such approaches only tell part of the story, 'national' difference among whites is a theme which cannot be ignored. Thus, during the period of martial law, although there was

¹³⁵ Lord Hailey, 'A Survey of Native Affairs in South West Africa' (unpublished manuscript, Rhodes House Library, 627.s.14).

¹³⁶ For instance, the Medical Officer to the Administration did a job whose equivalent in the Union was that of the Minister and Department of Public Health.

¹³⁷ South Africa, *Annual Report*, 1928, pp. 6–7; Hailey, 'Survey of Native Affairs'.

¹³⁸ NAN SWAA A50/119, 'Report of Additional Native Commissioner on Venereal Disease: Control of Women in Urban Areas', 16 May 1938.

¹³⁹ Du Pisani, *SWA/Namibia*, pp. 68–88; Zedekia Ngavirue, 'Political Parties and Interest Groups in South West Africa. A Study of a Plural Society' (PhD Thesis, Oxford University, 1972), p. 165.

little open rebellion on the part of the conquered Germans, many of their men were interned and great bitterness against the South Africans was evident.¹⁴⁰ After the First World War Germany (in an agreement made with Smuts in 1923) effectively gave up its formal connection with its citizens in Namibia,¹⁴¹ an understanding which allowed the automatic naturalisation as British subjects of most German men¹⁴² under an Act of 1924; this, in turn, made it possible for the South African government to grant white South West Africans limited constitutional rights, principally a legislative assembly, in 1925.¹⁴³

Despite periods of *rapprochement* between the two sections, the political scene was frequently characterised by conflict. These divisions were not confined to politics but were diffused throughout society. Patterns of white settlement in rural areas tended to reinforce ethnic distinctions,¹⁴⁴ and, in Windhoek, the 'sections' had separate hospitals and educational facilities.¹⁴⁵ These conflicts were heightened after Hitler's victory in 1933. Nazism was very actively and coercively propagated in Namibia, and generated a struggle for control of the social and political organs of the German-speaking community. It also agitated the authorities who, even before the outbreak of the Second World War, when most German men were again interned, were alarmed enough to conclude that these developments were likely to make 'the smooth functioning of the Mandate system . . . practically impossible'.¹⁴⁶

If we look beyond the ethnic struggles for deeper layers of division, class differences within settler society possessed the potential both to fragment ethnic 'sections' and to transcend ethnic boundaries. German attitudes to Nazism, for instance, were not conditioned simply by patriotism and coercion. Some wealthy, long-standing settlers with much to lose, such as Albert Voigts, were less than enthusiastic about the new creed. Probably Nazism held the greatest attraction for poorer Germans in the country, whether they had arrived before 1915 or had left an economically devastated Germany after the First World War.¹⁴⁷

The 'Union section', too, was deeply divided, although here ethnic and class divisions tended to mirror each other. The majority of settlers from South Africa were Afrikaans-speaking, many of them from poor backgrounds, who were in general unable to better their economic position until karakul sheep farming

¹⁴⁰ R. Henning, *Deutsch-Süd West im Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 1920), pp. 309–310.

¹⁴¹ The 1923 agreement was ambiguous enough to make it possible for the German Government and Germans in South West Africa to claim that the latter had not abandoned their German citizenship. Thanks to Christo Botha for his reminder on this point.

¹⁴² South Africa, *Report of South West Africa Commission* (Pretoria, 1936), p. 11, refers only to the naturalisation of German men. It is unclear what the arrangements were for women and children.

¹⁴³ This had been preceded in 1922 by a request for self-government (for whites) by the Advisory Council of SWA. This had been turned down because South Africa was not prepared to grant this to German citizens.

¹⁴⁴ For an overview of the periodisation of settlement, see Weigend, 'German Settlement Patterns'.

¹⁴⁵ For instance, NAN SWAA A307/7 vol. 1, Legislative Assembly Minutes, extract, Statement of Chairman, 6 Dec. 1937.

¹⁴⁶ South Africa, *Report of South West Africa Commission*, pp. 10–15 and 56–64; Negley Farson, *Behind God's Back* (London, 1940), pp. 44–50; Du Pisani, *SWA/Namibia*; Gordon, 'Impact', p. 150; Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber, *Die abhängigen Herren. Deutsche Identität in Namibia* (Münster and Hamburg, 1993), pp. 74–81.

¹⁴⁷ On Voigts and the Deutscher Bund see G. Steer, *Judgement on German Africa* (London, 1939), pp. 123–125.

began to boom in the mid-1930s. In contrast, political power, particularly as exercised through official positions, was more or less monopolised by English-speaking South Africans. English was the normal language of government until the 1940s, and governmental circles were dominated by a small coterie of English-speaking officials, of whom Cocky Hahn is one of the most outstanding examples.¹⁴⁸ In the late 1920s and 1930s in particular, Afrikaner nationalism was gaining momentum in South Africa, and it would certainly have had an impact in Namibia, especially in view of the economic divisions described above.¹⁴⁹

The reaction of other white settlers to poor white immigration illustrated the complexities of class and ethnic divisions. Thus, the return of the Angola Boers, and the generosity of Union government grants provided for them, was bitterly resented by many Afrikaans-speaking farmers. Yet the arrival of the Angola Boers also helped to solidify existing ethnic tensions: Germans in the northern settler districts believed that the administration intended the incomers to counter German influence locally.¹⁵⁰

The division of the white population into German, British and Afrikaner was, of course, elaborated within the overarching category of 'white'. It is hardly necessary to say that colonial control rested on racial domination, but it must be stressed that race, like other social categories, is made, not given. The difference between 'white settlers' and 'black nomads', for example, had to be carefully constructed within colonial discourse. The preservation of white as white — and the control of sexual relations — was also carefully engineered during our period. German land settlement, while signalling the extension of white, male authority over rural spaces, had led to widespread sexual transgression of racial boundaries, in a context in which male colonists vastly outnumbered female. While in the late German period various schemes aimed to 'preserve the race' through encouraging female immigration from Germany, it was under South African rule that racial barriers were restored and solidified in both rural and urban areas. The Land Settlement Programme favoured the granting of land to families rather than individuals, and specified that farms would be confiscated should interracial sex occur. In 1934 the Immorality Proclamation provided a further bulwark to 'racial purity'.

The processes of the invention of race were, like state construction in Namibia in general, significantly gendered. The gendering of the state was a complex process which was both constituted by, and exerted a strong influence on, wider social relations. Thus, the ideology of colonial officials about masculinity and femininity had a great impact on colonial constructions of, and policy towards, black women and men. These processes, however, were not only imposed from above, but also reinforced through temporary alliances with black male leaders, who in turn drew upon certain aspects of African ideas about

¹⁴⁸ Although Hahn came from a German family, he had been thoroughly anglicised.

¹⁴⁹ Dan O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme. Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934-1948* (Johannesburg, 1983), pp. 67-77; Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom. Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1975), pp. 96-115.

¹⁵⁰ Wolfram Hartmann, pers. comm., 22 Ap. 1995. Farson, *Behind God's Back*, p. 12, confirms that 'There was violent opposition [to the settlement of Angola Boers], principally from the German settlers in the Mandate, who declared that the 301 Boer families were being brought down from Angola to swamp the German vote.'

gender. Several papers in this collection explore the links between men of different races over the business of controlling the movement and sexuality of African women (see Wallace and Hayes). On a different level, white women were excluded from most formal politics and did not get the vote in national (white) elections until 1939, nine years after South Africa.¹⁵¹ This means that the ways in which they acted to reinforce (or, in exceptional instances, to undermine) the power of the dominant élite must be sought in other domains. These include everyday interaction in the household, and their work in 'benevolent' organisations such as the Council of Women of South West Africa.¹⁵²

Missions & Christianisation

Christianity preceded colonialism in Namibia, but expanded rapidly during our period, particularly in the north. Conversion to the new faith, and the process of church-building, generated another set of contests. Further cleavages in white society emerged, this time between missionaries and officials, who held differing views on how to control Africans. The very establishment of these churches could be hotly contested by and within African communities, which were often divided along lines of gender and age, as Meredith McKittrick shows in her chapter on generational struggles in western Ovamboland. Control over the symbols and resources of the more established mission churches was also contested, particularly in the centre and south of the country.

For Namibia (like much of Africa), the coming of Christianity was an important precursor of direct colonialism. Jean and John Comaroff have suggested the multiplicity of ways in which missionaries communicated the concepts and symbols of a religion which had come to incorporate the values of western capitalism, such as individualism, the importance of work, and domesticity.¹⁵³ But Christianisation was hardly a smooth process of attrition, undermining the integrity of African polities. Namibians frequently made Christianity their own, recasting their polities as the new religion cut across social categories and created new ones. While African interpretations of Christianity have barely been researched or understood, many Africans adapted Christian ideas within broader epistemological frameworks of culture, religion and history, thus gaining the wherewithal to make sense of colonial existence and, frequently, to challenge it.

The level of Christianisation among Nama-Oorlam groups by the end of the nineteenth century was illustrated by the piety of one of their most famous sons, Hendrik Witbooi.¹⁵⁴ By 1915, the Rhenish Missionary Society (RMS) had

¹⁵¹ Du Pisani, *SWA/Namibia*, p. 83. White women's political interests were sacrificed to ethnic conflict, as German leaders blocked female voting in order to restrict the numbers of the 'Union section' electorate.

¹⁵² Interesting directions appear to be emerging in the literature on white women in the context of German imperialism, a field which could very fruitfully be extended to the South African period. See, for example, Lora Wildenthal, 'Colonizers and Citizens: Bourgeois Women and the Woman Question in the German Colonial Movement, 1886-1914' (PhD Thesis, University of Michigan, 1994).

¹⁵³ Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, vol. 1 (Chicago, 1991).

¹⁵⁴ The emergence of Nama-Oorlam groups in the south of the country during the nineteenth century was an early impetus to the establishment of Christianity, since a community's acquisition of a missionary (usually Rhenish or Wesleyan) not only offered a vital link with external networks of commodities and information, but often became an important component of the making of its

stations and large numbers of converts all over the Police Zone. A key factor in the success of the RMS was the opportunity for intervention during and after the 1904–7 rebellions: it was only after this that a Herero congregation in Windhoek, for instance, was formally established.¹⁵⁵ Catholic missionaries, who had made a much later start than those of the RMS, were also freed to compete with them at this time (in 1905).¹⁵⁶

Although the two German missions were bitter rivals and frequently spoke of each other in the most murderous terms, they shared a common 'German-ness'. Most of the missionaries were German, and the social services which the Catholics provided for whites in Windhoek, Otjiwarongo and Swakopmund were directed at the German-speaking community. The missions were thus one of the most potentially potent mediums of continuing German influence after 1915, and there was an undeniable tension between them and the administration. The authorities tended to suspect that the educational package provided by the mission churches was in itself subversive of the colonial racial order. A police officer in one southern district complained that the 'church-going community' were the least responsive to 'discipline' and blamed this on the fact that 'they equalise themselves with Europeans'.¹⁵⁷ These worries connected both with fears about the resurgence of German nationalism during the 1930s and with claims that German missionaries were supporting and even encouraging the protests of black communities against the administration.¹⁵⁸

Although there were significant tensions between mission and state, in general terms missions as institutions and missionaries themselves operated comfortably in the context of racial domination and backed up many individual government policies. This showed, for example, during the expulsion of 'undesirables' from the Windhoek location in 1938, when the RMS backed the administrative clampdown.¹⁵⁹ Moreover the Rhenish Mission, perhaps particularly in South West Africa, was extremely conservative in the number and timing of black ordinations they permitted.¹⁶⁰

The evangelising project of the missions may have been intended to create God-fearing, quiescent African communities exhibiting the basics of 'civilisation' (settlement, square houses, literacy, industry, clothes and sewing), but

¹⁵⁵ VEM-RMG C/h50c, Kùhhirt, '25 jähriges Jubiläum der Herero-Ovambogemeinde Windhuk', May 1933.

¹⁵⁶ The state had previously prevented the Catholics from evangelising amongst the black population in places where the Rhenish missionaries already had stations. Numbers of black Catholics remained much smaller than those of Lutherans in the Police Zone throughout the period, and the early conditions of the Catholic mission's operations encouraged and were used to justify the concentration of many of its resources (particularly medical and educational) on its white members. The white population was also served by the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK), Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Kirche (DELK), the Methodists and the Anglicans.

¹⁵⁷ NAN LMG 3/1/29 2/5/2, ARNA, 1932; SWAP, Gibeon to Mag. Mariental, 3 Jan. 1933.

¹⁵⁸ When a meeting to recruit volunteers for the Native Military Corps from Berseba and Tses reserves had to be aborted, due to protests from the floor, this was 'explained' as a pernicious consequence of the continuing strength of German influence over the reserves. NAN LKE 3/1/51 2/7/11 WO, Tses and Berseba to NC Keetmanshoop, 5 Aug. 1942.

¹⁵⁹ VEM-RMG C/h 50c, Werner, 'Bericht der Gemeinde Windhoek-Nama', 1938.

¹⁶⁰ Conservatism also showed in 1934, when proposals from the mission in Germany that black women should be trained as nursing auxiliaries, as had been done elsewhere in the mission 'field', were strongly opposed by both the Rhenish Mission nurse in Windhoek and her senior colleagues. The missionaries' attitudes in this respect were a huge stimulus to debate over issues of control in the churches. VEM-RMG B/c66, Köhler to Warneck, 27 Jan. 1935; VEM-RMG C/p38, Olpp to Warneck and Johannsen, 1 Nov. 1934.

by 1915 black Christians were well on the way to constructing new identities, using the resources they found in Christianity. The 1920s and to some extent the 1930s were a period of emphatic rejection of the Rhenish Mission by the Herero, who did not, however, completely reject Christianity itself. The missionaries struggled constantly, too, against what they saw as immorality, for Christianised populations, without leaving the church, constantly ignored its strictures on their behaviour.

Education was an area of particularly intense conflict between the missionaries and their targets. Schooling for black children both within the Police Zone and in the north was almost entirely in the hands of missionaries (although funded by the administration) throughout the inter-war period, and the Rhenish Mission explicitly intended that the education it provided should produce good labourers and good Christians. Herero, at the same time as their general rejection of the church, refused to be satisfied with the education offered. A combination of school boycotts and political moves on the part of the leadership eventually resulted in the opening of the first black state school in Namibia, in Aminuis reserve in 1935.¹⁶¹

Christianisation in the north — mainly targeting Ovamboland — came considerably later than in the south. Agents of Christianisation tended to follow the agents of merchant capital (both black and white) in the nineteenth century, and the unevenness in the timing of mission activity around Namibia underlines once again its geographical divisions. While the black population in the Police Zone had been subject to long-standing and fairly successful missionary campaigns by 1915, the number of converts in Ovamboland was still very small at this date.¹⁶² But the Lutheran (Finnish and Rhenish) missions which had moved into the north by the late nineteenth century had high hopes of the Ovambo. For, unlike the nomadic Nama and Herero, this was 'a numerous and sedentary population'.¹⁶³

Finnish missionaries were allowed to continue and expand their work after South African occupation of the north, although German Rhenish missionaries in Oukwanyama were expelled. In 1924 the administration allowed two more denominations into Ovamboland, Anglicans and Catholics. Finnish missionaries contested the terms of this, resenting the loss of part of their Kwanyama field to the Anglicans and the division of their Kwambi field with the Catholics, who were also allowed to 'open up' Ombalantu to mission work. Intense rivalry developed between the mission organisations, and new regulations were applied in 1928 to set standards for conversion and improve relations between them. By the 1930s, the rate of conversions recorded by the FMS, while thought by officials to be artificially high, was considered extremely dangerous to the

¹⁶¹ Werner, 'Economic and Social History', pp. 189–194; Cynthia Cohen, *Administering Education in Namibia. The Colonial Period to the Present* (Windhoek, 1994), p. 86, fn. 1.

¹⁶² The missionary trajectory in the north was indeed rather different. After visits in 1857 and 1866 by Hugo Hahn of the Rhenish Mission, the latter's sister church, the Finnish Missionary Society (FMS), began its work in Ovamboland in 1870. A French order, the *Congrégation du Saint Esprit*, operated briefly in Oukwanyama until expelled in 1885.

¹⁶³ Extract from Duparquet correspondence, *Bulletin Général de la Congrégation du Saint Esprit*, 11 (1880), p. 551 (translation by Patricia Hayes). The Rhenish Mission also reported favourably on the sedentary nature of the Ovambo. See *Berichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* (1890), p. 175.

putative stability of indirect rule because it threatened to cause a 'thorough disintegration of tribal institutions'.¹⁶⁴

The growth of Christianisation in the north can be linked specifically to the impact of famines; after famines in 1908, 1915 and 1929–1931, rates of conversion increased. Crucial survival strategies surrounding healing, fertility and famines, aside from the more instrumental desire for education, were important in turning people towards Christianity. In this collection McKittrick argues that young people who joined churches were responding to the promise of greater opportunities for social mobility than those held out by the local economies dominated by their elders. Migrancy and Christianisation certainly went hand in hand for many young men; Christianisation alone held out a narrower range of promise for young women, but their numbers increased steadily through the 1930s. Young women became the target of increasingly heated disputes between the missions and the administration, who allied with non-Christian parents, for all the missions in the north adamantly opposed the female initiation ceremony, the *efundula*.¹⁶⁵ Hahn described the latter as 'the most important of all Ovambo rites'.¹⁶⁶ These conflicts over the preservation of Ovambo culture as against Christianisation showed the growing irreconcilability of the associated contradictions produced by indirect rule and migrant labour. By the time of Hahn's retirement in 1946, it must be said that the Native Commissioner was losing the battle on this score. The numbers of Christian converts continued to grow, despite slight declines experienced in the 1930s in at least one mission (again based on discontent at slow ordination of black pastors)¹⁶⁷ and ongoing missionary complaints about lapses from grace.

In the Police Zone, the opportunity for local black members of the RMS to adopt leadership positions and assert greater control over the institutions of the mission came with the internment of German missionaries at the outbreak of the Second World War. Yet the removal of the German ministers also provided the opportunity for the further institutional incorporation of Namibia within South Africa. Black RMS leaders read in a South African newspaper at the end of the war that their churches would be taken over by an Afrikaner church. There had been no consultation. The planned ecclesiastical incorporation paralleled the staging of a 'referendum' by the administration, seeking a mandate for the political incorporation of the territory itself within South Africa as a fifth province.¹⁶⁸ Following clandestine meetings in the hills near Tseiblaagte, however, many of the black preachers and teachers at RMS stations in southern

¹⁶⁴ NAN NAO vol 11 6/1/1, Hahn (?), c. 1936. The FMS claimed a mere 837 converts in 1900, after three decades of evangelisation. Yet their figures for congregations then increased rapidly, reaching nearly 3,000 by 1910, 7,000 in 1920 and over 23,000 in 1929.

¹⁶⁵ This term is used by Ovakwanyama, but in Ondonga *ohango* is the correct term and in western Ovamboland *olufuko* is used for female initiation.

¹⁶⁶ NAN A450, C.H.L. Hahn papers, vol. 4, Minute No 32/5, Hahn, 17 April 1947.

¹⁶⁷ See for example Charles Mallory, 'Some Aspects of the Mission Policy and Practice of the Church of the Province of South Africa in Ovamboland, 1924–1960' (MA Thesis, Rhodes University, 1971).

¹⁶⁸ The 'referendum' was clearly organised in such a manner as to obtain a positive vote for incorporation, and yet, despite this, the leaders of the southern reserves predominantly voted against the proposal. The RMS churches were to be handed over to the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK). *Die Burger*, 7 Sept. 1945, 31 Oct. 1945.

Namibia decided to leave the mission and join the African Methodist Episcopal church (AME). The decision to affiliate to a denomination noted for its black leadership emphasised the point that local leaders were rejecting the presumptions of racial hierarchy that they perceived as a common feature of both the RMS and the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK).¹⁶⁹

Ethnographic Knowledge

One thing missionaries and colonial officials in Africa often had in common was their shared interest in the growing field of ethnography. Exercised through the production of knowledge on 'the native', thus raising the non-native to the status of expert and (ideally) feeding into colonial policy, ethnography has been represented in a growing literature as an important form of colonial and mission control. The Namibian material on this question, however, does not simply pay homage to a fashionable new debate on constructing and owning knowledge.¹⁷⁰ Quite to the contrary, Robert Gordon in this collection argues against Foucault and Giddens and posits that 'ignorance rather than knowledge is power'. He raises Albert Memmi's point that 'for the colonizer to think about the contradictions inherent in colonialism was to undermine it'. His study of the Police Zone settlers and officials asserts that these whites absolved themselves from the necessity for thinking, that they rejected 'deep or dense knowledge' and relied instead on their 'inborn' shadow-knowledge of the native. His argument is profound and challenging. It raises questions about whether Namibians might have benefited from this lack of produced knowledge, in terms of escaping a more invidious array of controls; it may be connected to the prominence of violence in colonial relations in Namibia. But while his theory is a seductive one, there are good reasons for thinking that it does not apply uniformly across colonial Namibia, that knowledge about 'the native' was both produced and harnessed to the business of control, and that aspects of modernity were evident in South Africa's fragmented approach to colonial rule.¹⁷¹

While it is accurate to say (as Gordon does) that many whites in Namibia had an ingrained confidence in their 'knowledge of the native', the potential of ethnographic research for facilitating control over the black population was not quite lost on the administration. The latter provided financial sponsorship for several expeditions from the South African Museum in Cape Town and practical support for anthropologists such as Winifred Hoernlé. This echoed contemporary government support in South Africa for the budding discipline

¹⁶⁹ The AME had been started by black Americans in the USA and been established in Namibia from 1930. The position of those joining the AME was clear — 'Een vir allemal wil ons nie van die NGK enige ander onder blanke leiding staande kerkgenootskap gelei word, en ons wys dit van die hand, as ons oorhandig sal word'. NAN A23, Letter from 'Evangelists en Onderwyserbond Namaland', 12 January 1946.

¹⁷⁰ Our comments here are confined to the South African period. Amateur ethnography in the German period is a subject broached in John Noyes, 'The Natives in their Places: "Ethnographic Cartography" and the Representation of Autonomous Spaces in Ovamboland, German South West Africa', *History and Anthropology*, 8, nos. 1–4 (1994), pp. 237–264.

¹⁷¹ For a study of the development of science in relation to race and its importance to a self-conscious projection of 'modernity' in South Africa, see Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern*

of ethnography,¹⁷² but also emphasised the weak autonomous development of this field of knowledge in Namibia and the latter's dependence on South African institutions. Research carried out in South Africa's colony both used the resources of the mandatory power and fed the creativity of its academic institutions: skulls, skeletons and possibly corpses, mainly of San people, were sent to the South African Museum and the University of the Witwatersrand.¹⁷³

In Namibia itself, the significant developments in ethnography during this period were the publication in 1928, for League of Nations consumption, of *The Native Tribes of South West Africa*, the foundation of the SWA Scientific Society in 1925 and the steady stream of work by the Rhenish missionary Heinrich Vedder, whose most influential publication was *Das alte Südwestafrika*. Three authors produced *Native Tribes*: C.H.L. Hahn, Louis Fourie and Heinrich Vedder. These, the most committed ethnographers in the territory, were all amateurs. Nevertheless, their social and political weight — and the links between Fourie and Hahn in particular — gave great significance to the implications of their scientific studies.¹⁷⁴

The ethnographic interests of these three men had, in particular, huge implications for the objectification of black subjects and the shaping of ethnic constructions in Namibia. Vedder's work was probably at once the least academically respectable and the most influential in terms of defining the boundaries of ethnicity and the gradations of 'civilisation' within Namibia.¹⁷⁵ For German-speakers in particular, Vedder's treatment of the precolonial period supported white settler myths (as Brigitte Lau has argued), especially through his now much-contested history of 'the Damara'. Lau points to his 'combination of strictly racist assumptions and implicit glorification of German colonialism',¹⁷⁶ and corroborates Lothar Engel's analysis of the growing military-nationalist feeling among Germans in the first half of the twentieth century in which Vedder's work was an important integrating factor.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Museum Africa, Johannesburg, Fourie Collection, file F, Fourie to Dr Gill, South African Museum, 17 May 1926; NAN SWAA A.198/3/4, Hoernlé to Sec. SWA, 14 Ap. 1923, also published in Peter Carstens, Gerald Klinghardt and Martin West (eds), *Trails in the Thirstland: The Anthropological Field Diaries of Winifred Hoernlé* (Cape Town, 1987), pp. 174–183; Paul Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience: Racial Segregation and South African Liberalism* (Braamfontein, 1984).

¹⁷³ Museum Africa, Fourie Collection, file G, Lebzelter to Fourie, 29 Mar. 1929; file F, Director SA Museum to Sec. SWA, 14 Oct. 1925 and Dart, Professor of Anatomy, University of the Witwatersrand to Fourie, 16 June 1923 and 7 Aug. 1924. Such items were also sent to the University of Cape Town.

¹⁷⁴ Hahn, Fourie and Vedder, *Native Tribes*; NAN MWI 36/16/37, Address to Fourie from Windhoek Municipality, Nov. 1929; Heinrich Vedder, *Das alte Südwestafrika. Südwestafrikas Geschichte bis zum Tod Mahareros 1890* (Berlin, 1934; Windhoek, 1981); NAN A450, 1/29, Fourie to Hahn, 27 Ap. 1928.

¹⁷⁵ NAN LWI 13/8/21, Fourie for Sec. SWA to Mag. Windhoek, 19 Sept. 1921; Fuller, 'Institutional Appropriation', pp. 171–75. Vedder came to Namibia as a missionary in 1903 and soon gained fluency in the main Namibian languages. He headed the Augustineum seminary in Okahandja from 1922 and was later appointed senatorial representative of Namibia's Africans in the South African parliament (1950–1958), besides holding several important church positions. Apart from his *magnum opus* (*Das alte Südwestafrika*), Vedder published prolifically on subjects ranging from African languages to biblical interpretations, hymns, history, philology and ethnology. John J. Gropeter, *Historical Dictionary of Namibia*, (Metuchen, NJ and London, 1994), pp. 552–553; Dag Henrichsen, pers. comm.

¹⁷⁶ Brigitte Lau, 'Pre-colonial' Namibian Historiography: What Is to Be Done?, in Wood, *Namibia, 1884–1984*, pp. 93–94.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 94; Engel, *Kolonialismus und Nationalismus*, pp. 292–311, 479–482.

If Vedder was responsible for lumping together diverse Namibian groups as 'tribes', and depicting and popularising them as locked in internecine warfare until 'Thank God the Germans Came',¹⁷⁸ South African amateur ethnography incorporated techniques that were mathematical — weighing, measuring — their purpose being to define and classify their subjects into primeval races manifesting set characteristics. The work of Louis Fourie, Medical Officer to the Administration between 1920 and 1929, while patiently observed, illustrated the complete objectification of the black body through his collection of bones and possibly even corpses. There are direct connections to be drawn here, too, between the construction of medical and ethnographic knowledge. His is also a good example of the particular emphasis of anthropological studies on 'the Bushmen', which served both to lump together a variety of discrete kin-based groups and to mark off the San as different from and lower in the scale of evolutionary hierarchy than all other black 'tribes'.

Hahn's work, given the authority and longevity of his position as Native Commissioner in Ovamboland (1921–46), made him in a sense the most interesting of the three. His exposure to and absorption of certain facets of the cultural practices of rule he researched in the centralised politics of eastern Ovamboland exemplify that process which has been so suggestively put across in the Zulu case by Carolyn Hamilton.¹⁷⁹ In this process, far from the agents of westernisation simply either imposing cultural change or 'inventing Africa', they in fact internalised strong aspects of both form and content of African practices and epistemologies and often reproduced these powerfully (albeit in new forms) as documented histories, customs and genealogies. In Hahn's case, the resulting construction of 'the Ovambo' was for consumption by the colonial state, by anthropologists and ethnographers in the region, by the League of Nations and by the public at exhibitions and in journals (in the latter mainly through his photographs), and was intimately linked to the construction of colonial state power in Ovamboland. After 1929 he elaborated his policies as 'indirect rule'; they continually reinforced local structures of chiefly and elderly authority (Hahn's main informants), which as Meredith McKittrick, Patricia Hayes and Emmanuel Kreike¹⁸⁰ all argue, were necessarily represented as 'traditional' in order to gain legitimacy and to facilitate the workings of Ovambo customary law. Hahn became a cultural conservative who opposed changes introduced by missions such as monogamy, because he argued that these were detrimental to a thriving subsistence rurality in which he sought to fix Ovambo women. Though in a different manner from Fourie, the body lay at the heart of Hahn's ethnographic purpose. For one thing, he opposed for many years

¹⁷⁸ Probably the most sustained critique of Vedder can be found in Lau, 'Pre-colonial' Namibian Historiography', pp. 90–101; Brigitte Lau, 'Thank God the Germans Came'. Vedder and Namibian historiography' in Keith Gottschalk and Christopher Saunders, eds, *Africa Seminar: Collected Papers*, (Cape Town, 1981); Brigitte Lau, 'A Critique of the Historical Sources and Historiography Relating to the "Damaras" of Pre-colonial Namibia' (BA (Hons) Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1979), ch. 4; Lau, *Namibia in Jonker Afrikaner's Time*, chs 4 and 5.

¹⁷⁹ See Carolyn Hamilton, *The Mfecane Aftermath: Reconstructive Debates in South African History* (Pietermaritzburg, 1994); Carolyn Hamilton 'History, Anthropology and the Limits on the Invention of Africa' (Paper presented at the Art in Africa Seminar Series, Michaelis School of Fine Art, Cape Town, 3 May 1994).

¹⁸⁰ Emmanuel Kreike, 'Marrying the Land: Women and Land in Ovamboland, 1920–1945' (Paper presented at the 'Trees Never Meet' Conference, Windhoek, 1994).

the wearing of western clothes, advocating 'nakedness' as closer to the 'raw native', male and female, which he essentialised in his writings and photographs as 'the Ovambo'.¹⁸¹

In conclusion, there was at times a direct relationship between ethnic constructions peddled by those with power and influence and state policies of divide and rule. The reinforcement of constructions of Africans as 'tribal' was again demonstrated by the attempted division of urban locations into ethnic sections. But there were definite limits to the use of this instrument of control on the part of the state during the inter-war years. Apart from a few piecemeal exceptions,¹⁸² rural reserves were not intended to be confined to particular ethnic groups until the Odendaal Plan was tabled in the early 1960s.¹⁸³

Conclusion

In 1915, Namibia was — as seen through colonial eyes — a vast expanse of land both literally and figuratively unsettled. Both its own recently turbulent past and the disruptions of the First World War had left its future uncertain. But in 1920, the League of Nations mandate was granted and South Africa began its period of 'trusteeship' of the territory — a period which became one of contrasting and competing dreams.

For South Africa, these dreams were of expansion and nationhood. To South African leaders, Namibia would be the first stage in the creation of a greater South Africa. This fantasy was epitomised by Smuts's suggestion that this new territory should be called 'Bothaland', in memory of the Union's first Prime Minister.¹⁸⁴ It would also signal South Africa's progress towards independence from Britain, to the extent that negotiations concerning the territory would be handled by South Africa on its own behalf.

But these ambitions were in direct conflict with the dreams of the indigenous inhabitants. Within the Police Zone, their hopes were directed at the reconstruction of the pastoral ranges that had preceded the German occupation.

¹⁸¹ See Patricia Hayes, "'Cocky' Hahn and the Black Venus: The Making of a Native Commissioner in South West Africa, 1915–1946' (Paper presented at the South African and Contemporary History Seminar, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, July 1994). It is interesting to see how Hahn chose to photograph particular subjects: he produced a plethora of images of different Ovambo in their distinguishing 'tribal' dress, but seemed reluctant to photograph Christian subjects, which he preferred to leave to missionaries to photograph themselves. The difference between their respective photographs of the 1929–30 famine is marked by this (see photos accompanying chapters by Patricia Hayes and Harri Siiskonen).

¹⁸² After the Rehoboth Rebellion of 1925, attempts were made to remove the Herero-speaking residents of the reserve and keep it purely for Baster settlement. See Patrick Pearson, 'The Rehoboth Rebellion' in Phil Bonner, ed, *Working Papers in Southern African Studies*, vol. 2, (Johannesburg, 1981).

¹⁸³ The Odendaal Plan, which remains to be researched in depth, generally signalled the application of the principles of *apartheid* to Namibia, with the designation of existing African reserves as bantustans or homelands. The formal creation of the latter, complete with elections for homeland governments, followed in the later 1960s and early 1970s. See *inter alia* Gerhard Töttemeyer, *Namibia Old and New: Traditional and Modern Leaders in Ovamboland* (London, 1978), pp. 49–53; Sandra Brown, "'A haven of tribalism": Reflections on Ethnicity and Politics in Okombahe — A "Labour Reserve" in Western Namibia' (unpublished report, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Edinburgh, c. 1990); South Africa, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs* (Pretoria, 1963).

¹⁸⁴ NAN ADM 145 C254, Telegram, Smuts to Administrator Hofmeyr, 26 Oct. 1920.

Beyond it, kings sought to preserve their autonomy under the new colonial dispensation. These hopes had to be curtailed, and colonial subjects had to opt to 'escape the dominant order without leaving it'.¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, for the colonial masters, a sense of security remained elusive. Particularly in the northern areas, and especially at the beginning of the period, colonial control was more often absent than absolute.

In the first few decades of colonial rule, then, interaction between the state and societies in Namibia was absolutely crucial in shaping both. During the period considered here, however, the balance tipped gradually in favour of the authorities. The early 1930s proved a turning point in the state's ability to intervene in African social and political relations, and after this time it retained this increased control. By 1946, South Africa's fantasies seemed to be achieving reality when the territory apparently voted to be incorporated as a fifth province of the Union.¹⁸⁶ But economic fragility and Namibia's problematic international status meant that the future remained uncertain. Internally, too, control still remained illusory in many respects. The inability of the authorities to track and recover labour deserters, for example, particularly beyond the Police Zone, provided a tangible reminder of the frailty of the state.

In this book we argue against two, often intertwined, assumptions frequently made by nationalist and sympathetic commentators on Namibia. Firstly, the period between 1915 and 1946 must be understood in its own right, and not simply as a prelude to the automatic imposition of *apartheid* after 1948. Secondly, Namibia cannot be seen simply as a blank space on which fully developed South African policy could be imposed. The processes of interaction and mutual constitution — of policy, of social relations — are explored throughout the book.

In the period covered here South Africa consolidated its hold over Namibia and white settlers entrenched themselves on the land. The decades to follow saw further interventions intended to reshape society in accordance with the development of *apartheid* policies within South Africa. An exploration of the dynamic processes of this post-1946 period is beyond the scope of this book, but it is urgently required.

SWAPO guerrillas first engaged with South African forces at Ongulumbashe in northern Namibia in 1966, and this date is popularly accepted as marking the opening of overt, armed nationalist struggle. But the two decades prior to this were crucial. In this period, Namibia's populations became increasingly polarised, as efforts at containment and control reached new peaks and provoked new oppositions. On the one side, interventionist measures such as urban removals and the nurturing of political forums based on ethnic, rather than geographic, constituencies culminated in the publication of the report of the Odendaal Commission in 1964. This report provided a blueprint for the creation of a series of 'tribal homelands', largely scattered around the periphery of the central white farming areas.

But on the other side, the prospect of new forms of land division fuelled debate and political mobilisation, and the threat of relocation generated new

¹⁸⁵ For this quotation, see Krüger and Henrichsen in this volume.

¹⁸⁶ Black leaders were consulted in this referendum, but this was done in such a way as to influence their answers unfairly. Troup, *In Face of Fear*, pp. 101–120.

forms of urban organisation and protest. The latter gave rise to the demonstrations and shootings in Windhoek's Old Location in 1959. Indeed, the continued struggles over mobility and containment in this period are symbolised most effectively in the very naming of the black township which replaced the Old Locations. 'Katutura', first uttered to signal a protest, eventually became the township's official name. It means 'the place where we do not feel settled'.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ NAN MWI 48/31, meeting of Town Council with Location Advisory Board, April 1956. Quoted in Brigitte Lau, 'Introduction', in Dawn Ridgway, Milly Jafta, Nicky Kautja, Magda Oliphant and Shipingana Kapofi, *An Investigation of the Shooting at the Old Location on 10 December 1959* (Windhoek, 1991), p.5. *Katutura* in Otjiherero literally means 'we do not stay'.

Construction of People Construction of the State
