

**People, Cattle and Land –
Transformations of Pastoral Society**

Michael Bollig and Jan-Bart Gewald

Everybody living in Namibia, travelling to the country or working in it has an idea as to who the Herero are. In Germany, where most of this book has been compiled and edited, the Herero have entered the public lore of German colonialism alongside the East African *askari* of German imperial songs. However, what is remembered about the Herero is the alleged racial pride and conservatism of the Herero, cherished in the mythico-histories of the German colonial experiment, but not the atrocities committed by German forces against Herero in a vicious genocidal war. Notions of Herero, their tradition and their identity abound. These are solid and ostensibly more homogeneous than visions of other groups. No travel guide without photographs of Herero women displaying their out-of-time victorian dresses and Herero men wearing highly decorated uniforms and proudly riding their horses at parades. These images leave little doubt that Herero identity can be captured in photography, in contrast to other population groups in Namibia. Without a doubt, the sight of massed ranks of marching Herero men and women dressed in scarlet and khaki, make for excellent photographic opportunities. Indeed, the popular image of the Herero at present appears to depend entirely upon these impressive displays. Yet obviously there is more to the Herero than mere picture post-cards. Herero have not been passive targets of colonial and present-day global image-creators. They contributed actively to the formulation of these images and have played on them in order to achieve political aims and create internal conformity and cohesion.¹

¹ See in this regard particularly the work of Hendrickson, Hildi 1992. *Historical Idioms of Identity Representation Among the Ovaherero in Southern Africa*. PhD, New York University; Hendrickson, H. (ed.) 1996. *Clothing and Difference*. London; Hartmann, W. 1998. *Funerary Photographs: the Funeral of a Chief*, in: Hartmann, W., P. Hayes and J. Silvester (eds.) 1998. *The Colonizing Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History*. Windhoek.

The Himba of northwestern Namibia appear to be moving in the same direction. It is as if they too can be captured, defined and identified in a series of snap shots. Linguistically and culturally very close to the main group of *Otjiherero* speakers they were confined, constricted and controlled within the South African reserve system. After decades of intensive interaction with traders, commercial hunters and large-scale farmers of European descent they were forced to depend entirely upon subsistence livestock husbandry between 1920 and 1980.² In northwest Namibia's Kaokoland they retained and in part re-created a lifestyle which presently qualifies them as a major target for tourists seeking authenticity, darkest Africa, and adventure. As with the photo-genic Bushmen of the 1980s and early 1990s, the Himba have come to be portrayed as the primordial primitives, in touch with nature: the noble savage. While the production of images and counter-images of the Herero is as old as the interaction of *Otjiherero* speakers with white missionaries and traders, visions of the 'Himba' were invented more recently. While they were described as stubbornly conservative, recalcitrant and isolate by early colonial administrators, it is only recently that they have been re-discovered as an indigenous group, in which attributes previously described solely in negative terms are now seen as a picturesque survival of the Old Africa.³ Until the end of the colonial period they were registered and described as an odd traditional offshoot of the Herero community. Only in the 1990s did the popular image of them come to be painted in fuller colors, an image which conveniently forgets and side steps Himba involvement on both sides in the bush war of the 1980s, let alone the global trade system at the beginning of the colonial period. Towards the end of the millennium there is virtually no brochure or popular book on Namibia which will do without photographs of

² On the transformation of the Himba from people involved in the world system to subsistence pastoralists, see the work of Bollig, M. 1998. *Framing Kaokoland*, in: Hartmann, Hayes and Silvester (eds.). *Colonizing Camera*, and Bollig, M. 1998. *Power and Trade in Precolonial and Early Colonial Northern Kaokoland 1860s-1940s*, in: Hayes, P. et al. *Namibia Under South African Rule, Mobility & Containment 1915-46*. Cape Town.

³ It is fair to say that until the early 1990s the noble savages of southern Africa were the Bushmen. Indeed, a fair number of tourist companies in Namibia, South Africa and Botswana continue to advertise their portion of an ancient and unchanging Africa on the basis of Bushmen. However, following the independence of Namibia and the improved accessibility of the Kaokoland on account of the roads built during the bush war, the Himba became the new shining examples of southern Africa's primordial primitive.

ochre-painted Himba women and adorned Himba herders.⁴ If Herero are cherished as remnants of the simple, not yet globalized world of the colonial days, the Himba are taken as representatives of an unspoiled pre-colonial past in which ideas on ecologically sound environmental management, of highly cohesive tribes and patriarchal governance merge. The recent and widely publicized debate on the effects of the contested Epupa Hydro-Electric dam scheme, which may inundate parts of Himba land in the future, has brought these images clearly to the fore.

While there is no doubt about Herero and Himba prominence in various discourses the idea of focussing an entire conference and later a volume on one cultural group may appear outdated. Historians obviously prefer the organization of their data along chronological sequences (e.g. the inter-war period)⁵, around specific problems (labor migration, reserve policy)⁶ or categories of data (e.g. photography, oral traditions).⁷ While anthropologists effectively still see cultures as appropriate units to talk and publish about they would rarely have entire conferences or edited volumes dealing with one specific group.⁸ They would rather treat a region and thereby focus on regional diversity and interaction across ethnic borders or focus on a theoretical problem which is then treated in a comparative way. Particularly in the southern African scene the focus on one culture appears to be conservative and reconfirm ideas of the *Volkekunde* school which cherished the idea of ethnic primordialism and bounded cultures. There is little doubt today that it was the *Volkekunde* tradition which provided the White

⁴ Even to the extent of postcards in Lufthansa.

⁵ A case in point being the "Trees Never Meet Project", initiated in 1992 by P. Hayes, J. Silvester and M. Wallace, and which culminated in Hayes et al 1998. *Namibia Under South African Rule*. Further chronological work conducted in Namibia being that of Gewald, J.B. 1996. *Towards Redemption: A Socio-Political History of the Herero of Namibia 1890-1920*. Leiden; Hayes, P. 1992. *A History of the Ovambo of Namibia, ca. 1880-1935*. PhD, University of Cambridge, and McKittrick, M. 1995. *Conflict and Social Change in Northern Namibia, 1850-1954*. PhD, Stanford University.

⁶ Silvester, J. 1994. *Black Pastoralists, White Farmers: The Dynamics of Land Dispossession and Labour Recruitment in Southern Namibia*. PhD, University of London, and Werner, Wolfgang 1998. "No one will become Rich": *Economy and Society in the Herero Reserves in Namibia, 1915-1946*. Basel.

⁷ Hartmann, W. et al. 1998. *Colonizing Camera*, and Hayes, P. and D. Haiping (eds.) 1997. "Healing the Land": *Kaulinge's History of Kwanyama*. Köln.

⁸ A notable exception is Spear, Thomas and Richard Waller 1993. *The Maasai. Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*. Oxford.

Apartheid governments of South Africa with a scientific blueprint which justified and advocated the racist segregationist policies being implemented at the time. Cultures were interpreted as being almost timeless entities which ideally moved through history without being contaminated by external influences. Where this did appear to be happening, as in the urban areas of South Africa and Namibia, the moral implication implicit within the *Volkekunde* school was that cultures should be separated and purged of their contaminants. Perversely this held true specifically for 'bound' African cultures in contrast to the unbound, developed and open White cultures.⁹

What then justifies the focus of an entire volume on just one cultural group? Does not rather such an approach cement existing notions of ethnic identity and separateness? The results of the symposium at Siegburg encouraged us to consider such criticism seriously. The editors are very much aware of the slippery nature of the term "Cultural Group", and could very well be pilloried for using the term merely as a euphemism for the discredited concept of "Tribe". However, the contributions to the volume show that the focus on one cultural group can in fact contribute to the deconstruction of monolithic images on ethnic identity, perhaps in an even more concise way than a book concentrating on different cultural groups could. The contributors concentrated on interaction and the fluidity of identities, dealt with changing economic strategies beyond pastoralism and treated the confrontation between an oppressive colonial state and colonial subjects. In so doing they were able to show how institutions deemed typical for Herero came into being and were weltered and reshaped according to contemporary demands. They dealt with the invention of tradition, the creation of identities (Lenssen-Erz, Henrichsen, Hendrickson, Gewald), as well as the emergence and transformation of economic, social and political formations in interaction with pre-colonial mercantile trade systems (Henrichsen), with colonial administrations (Gewald, Werner, Bollig, Carvalho) and the world system (Miescher, Henrichsen). It is in this context that the strength of an approach focussed on one cultural group comes to the fore. In contrast to volumes representing a broader region, and thereby showing variety and interaction, this book, in presenting a number of different perspectives on one cultural group, has the benefit of deciphering culture as a constructive process in a more detailed and yet historically

⁹ On the *Volkekunde* school see Gordon, Robert J. 1988. *Apartheid's Anthropologists: On the Genealogy of Afrikaner Anthropology*, in: *American Ethnologist*, 15, no. 3.

embedded way. At the same time, physical and economic constraints upon cultural construction as well as recurrent themes (re-stocking, clothing, graves) within this process have been identified. Mobile livestock husbandry offers a number of advantages in a highly arid area plagued by frequent droughts, and yet it has its specific constraints (Bollig, Stahl). Land is needed in large quantities to be used as pasture and labor is required to guard herds. Pastoral populations can only live on the products of their herds for a limited amount of time. They need to acquire cereals or other food stuffs offering them a good supply of carbohydrates and vitamins not to be found in milk or meat. It is in these aspects that pastoral populations are volatile. Limited access to land almost by necessity leads to overgrazing and environmental degradation. A shortage of labor will bring about sub-optimal herd management or necessitate other forms of control such as fencing (Stahl, Werner). Restrictions on exchange with other food producers easily leads to famine and malnutrition.¹⁰ A volume concentrating on one cultural unit is better able to follow up how a culture develops and transforms itself through innovation and external pressure and yet is able to retain and rework crucial traditions and reassert itself (Gewald, Henrichsen, Hendrickson, Lenssen-Erz, Möhlig, Wärmlöf and van Wolputte).

While diversity and flexibility of cultural expressions in the southern African context is astounding, the maintenance of a cultural memory is also worth considerate analysis. A focus on transformation and maintenance can show how cultural and ethnic boundaries have been established and why they were maintained and occasionally given up (Silvester, Widlok), how elites established their patron-client networks and why economic strategies hinged around herds and land. It can treat the recurrent re-adaptation of economic strategies due to changing external pressures and internal developments and show how modes of production gradually expand in diversity and yet remain with focal elements for a protracted period of time (Bollig, Stahl, Werner). People, cattle and land have truly been recurrent themes for the *Otjiherero* speakers of southwestern Africa – more so than for other groups of the region who did not share their pastoral orientation and their need for extensive pastures, nor their way of expressing kinship

¹⁰ See in this regard particularly Bollig's contribution to *Namibia Under South African Rule*, which describes the results and implications of the trade restrictions placed upon Himba in the Kaokoveld in the 1920s.

and power relations between people by means of transactions involving livestock.¹¹

1. Constructing 'the Herero': Images and Counter-images

Images of the Herero have been around for more than 150 years. They have become myths in their own right presenting visions on early migrations, pastoralism, violent conflicts, and racial hegemony. Josaphat Hahn, son of Carl Hugo Hahn, the first German missionary to work amongst the Herero¹², set the tone by stating, "about one hundred years ago a mighty and beautiful Negro people, rich in measureless herds of cattle and small stock, came from the North and occupied the [...] present land of the Ovaherero".¹³ Hahn introduced several themes which have been expounded upon again and again in colonial literature. The first dealt with by Hahn was the concept of *Völkerwanderung*. In line with contemporary German historians, who were developing ideas on German identity, the concept of *Völkerwanderung* was crucial to Hahn's understanding of the Herero. The concept embodied the idea of the long distance movement of solid tribal groups. Examples used at the time were those of the East and West Goths, the Vandals, and the Langobards who moved into and established suzerainty

¹¹ The volume does not contain a contribution on Herero living in Botswana. We would like to refer readers interested in this aspect to the following publications: Almagor, Uri 1980. *Pastoral Identity and Reluctance to Change. The Mbanderu of Ngamiland*, in: *The Journal of African Law*, 24, 1; Alnaes, K. 1981. *Oral Tradition and Identity. The Herero in Botswana*, in: *The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 11, and 1989. *Living with the Past: The Songs of the Herero in Botswana*, in: *Africa*, 59 (3); furthermore Durham, Deborah. *Greetings in Another Key: Playing with Language and Identity in Botswana*. Paper presented at the 1994 annual meeting of the African Studies Association Toronto, and 1993. *Images of Culture: Being Herero in a Liberal Democracy (Botswana)*. PhD thesis, University of Chicago. In addition to this see Gewald, Jan-Bart 1999. "The Road of the Man Called Love and the Sack of Zero": *The Herero-German War and the Export of Herero Labour to the South African Rand*, in: *Journal of African History*, vol. 40, no. 1, and "I was afraid of Samuel, therefore I Came to Sekgoma": *Herero Refugees and Patronage Politics in Ngamiland, Bechuanaland Protectorate 1890-1914*, forthcoming in: *Journal of African History*, 42 (2001), as well as Vivelo, F.R. 1977. *The Herero of Western Botswana*. New York.

¹² For more on Carl Hugo Hahn see Lau, B. (ed.) 1985. *Tagebücher 1837-1860; Diaries Parts I-V, A Missionary in Nama- and Damaraland*. Windhoek.

¹³ Hahn, Josaphat 1869. *Die Ovaherero*, in: *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, No. 19, vierter Band. Berlin, p. 227 [author's translation].

over areas previously occupied by others. Had not the Israelites wandered under the guidance of Jehovah between Egypt and Palestine? The migration motive obviously had appeal for both missionaries and academics conversant with contemporary discussions on nationality. Within these histories of the nineteenth century economic motives and political pressures remained dim and unanalyzed. Instead, the historians of the time analyzed, believed and categorized history in terms of the sheer will of racially dominant warrior societies. It was believed that this "will" was sufficient to make people migrate over thousands of kilometers and dominate sedentary populations almost at will. Underlying these histories, and in part presented as an additional driving force, was the belief that conflict and tribal antagonisms dominate all contacts between cultures.¹⁴ With Hahn, as a child of his time, clashes of culture were the rule of the day, and powerful races would always succeed in this struggle for land.

Hahn invented the Herero as a racial category and described them as a "beautiful black Negro people" – a motive which is extended by his successors – a pastoral people rich in measureless herds of cattle and smallstock. While some of Hahn's colleagues writing at the turn of the century were more cautious with ascribing migratory routes,¹⁵ they did accept and build upon the stereotypes of 'racial pride', 'preoccupation with cattle husbandry' and 'dominance'. However, it is to the missionary Heinrich Vedder that full credit must be given for developing and fleshing

¹⁴ "It is known that amongst the Negro tribes of inner Africa a continual war, an eternal movement of peoples, one would say that a *Völkerwanderung* is continually taking place." Hahn 1869. *Ovaherero*, p. 226 [author's translation].

¹⁵ Viehe assumes that the Herero entered southwestern Africa about 300 years ago but refers to the fact that early missionary reports have little to justify this assumption. "In the sagas and myths, a large number of which were already collected by the missionaries 50 years ago, and some of which are truly old, no reference whatsoever is made to immigration. Everywhere they claim to have the same relations with the same neighbouring peoples as they had existed in the past" [author's translation]; Viehe, G. 1902. *Die Omaanda und Otuzo der Ovaherero*. Mittheilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin. Dritte Abtheilung 5, pp. 109-117. Brincker reported that "A long time ago (about 200 years ago) the Herero moving from the North travelled along the Kunene which they crossed downstream and thus first wandered into the Northwestern corner of the Kaokoland." (Brincker, P.H. 1899. *Die Eingeborenen Deutsch-Südwest-Afrikas nach Geschichte, Charakter, Sitten, Gebräuchen und Sprachen*. Mittheilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin. Dritte Abtheilung. *Afrikanische Studien* Bd. 2, pp. 125-139.

out the image of the Herero such as it exists in most of the academic literature of the present-day.¹⁶ He assumed that the Herero were of Hamitic ancestry and had migrated from the region of the Great Lakes towards southern Angola only to be held up by the insurmountable barrier of the Atlantic Ocean, afterwards crossing the Kunene and entering southwestern Africa.¹⁷ It is Vedder who inscribes a melange of physical features and racial dominance upon the Herero:

The Herero are usually tall, have well developed body forms, chocolate brown skin color, black curly hair and an imposing predilection: a true master race (*Herrenvolk*).¹⁸

Vedder's notion of the Herero as a *Herrenvolk* clearly indicates the political message which underlay Vedder's ethnography.¹⁹ As a *Herrenvolk*, Vedder and his compatriots believed that, the Herero had swept all before them and claimed Southwestern Africa as their own. Similarly the German colonizers thought of themselves as a *Herrenvolk*, a worldview which justified their colonization of South West Africa, and in the Herero they

¹⁶ The exception prior to 1990 being the work of Werner, Wolfgang 1989. *An Economic and Social History of the Herero of Namibia, 1915-1946*. PhD, University of Cape Town. The most glaring example of the present time being the work of Malan, J.S. 1995. *Peoples of Namibia*. Pretoria.

¹⁷ Herero origins in the Great Lakes are based on the racist hypothesis of Hamitic migrations to Africa. In the early decades of this century africanists (see Meinhof, K. 1912. *Afrikanische Religionen*. Berlin.) believed to have found evidence for a major migration of peoples from the Near East to all parts of Africa. Allegedly they brought with them ideas about monotheism, about political hierarchies and livestock husbandry and on their way south founded kingdoms like Bunyoro, Ankole, and Ruanda. Vedder suggests that the Herero "... differ too much from the Negro-type to warrant our including them in the negro-race without further investigation": Vedder, H. 1928. *The Herero*, in: Hahn, C.H., L. Fourie, and H. Vedder (eds.). *The Native Tribes of South West Africa*. Cape Town, p. 156. For a thorough critique of this approach see Köhler, O. 1960. *Sprachkritische Aspekte zur Hamitentheorie über die Herkunft der Hottentotten*, in: *Sociologus* 10, pp. 69-77, as well as: Greenland, Jeremy 1973. *Black Racism in Burundi in New Black Friars*. Oxford, pp. 443-51, and Curtin, Philip, Steven Feierman, Leonard Thompson, and Jan Vansina 1978. *African History*. Essex, pp. 121; 167-71.

¹⁸ Vedder, H. 1934. *Das Alte Südwest*. Berlin, p. 44 [author's translation].

¹⁹ As regards Vedder, see in particular Lau, B. 1981. "Thank God the Germans Came": *Vedder and Namibian Historiography*, in: Gottschalk, K. and C. Saunders (eds.). *Africa Seminar collected papers*, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, Volume 2, pp. 24-53.

found a worthy opponent to their activities in their colony. Vedder portrays the Herero as being a thoroughly pastoralist group, in which cattle are not only the mainstay of the economy but also the core of their worldview. Vedder claimed, "For his cattle the Herero used to give all his body, time, power and life."²⁰ Later constructions of the Herero took up themes which had been brought to the fore in early colonial literature.

2. Emergence and Transformations of Herero Cultures

While images of early Herero migrations are many there is little established information on early pastoral formations. The clear and detailed origins and migration routes described by Vedder, and subsequently taken up by successive authors, do not in any way correspond with the established information available. That which we can garner from oral traditions, linguistic analysis and snippets of archaeological evidence simply does not correspond with Vedder's impressive imagery. Without a doubt Vedder's powerful imagery and excellent literary skills have served, and continue to serve, to hold up academic research.

Early Pastro-foragers in Southwestern Africa

Northern Namibia and adjoining parts of southern Angola are characterized by a dearth of archaeological data (Frank). In order to scrutinize the state of research on early Herero history it is useful to pinpoint the major lines of argument as they exist in the earlier literature:

Herero came from the North and are assumed to have entered Southwest Africa through the Kaokoland. A second migrational route which is taken into consideration leads from the Okavango swamps of present day Botswana into north central Namibia. These migrations allegedly took place around 1700.

The Herero entered the scene as a cohesive group with distinctive physical characteristics and cultural institutions. These traits set them apart from other populations in the region.²¹

²⁰ Vedder 1934. *Südwest*, p. 46 [author's translation].

²¹ These traits being those of the Hamites. Interestingly this idea has entered into mainstream Herero discourse, with Herero leaders claiming that the Herero originated in Babylon. On the incorporation of the Hamitic myth into everyday discourse in present day Africa see: Malkki, Liisa H 1995. *Purity and Exile*:

The invasion of the Herero as a tribe is packaged together with livestock herding as a mode of production. The Herero entered the region as specialized livestock herders and they were the first to introduce this production system to southwestern Africa.

It is only in recent years that the archaeology of early food production in northern and central Namibia has made some advances (Smith, Frank this volume). As such it is possible to present a more complex, even if still preliminary idea as to the development of forager and pasto-forager economies in the region.

Early forms of livestock husbandry are traceable in southwestern Africa to the early first millennium (between 2,000 BP and 1,500 BP). In this volume Smith points out that it is most likely that livestock was integrated into forager societies as an additional asset. Excavations in northwestern Namibia, at Geduld near Outjo, northern Botswana and the Western Cape of South Africa suggest that foragers relying on a lithic technology gained access to ceramics and domestic stock. Nowhere do the remains justify the assumption that early livestock keepers are to be addressed as pastoralists. Whether these foragers traded in smallstock for goods and services or whether they stole goats and sheep is as unclear as is the source of the livestock. Furthermore the data does not allow for assumptions as to the extent in which early livestock keeping transformed local economies. However, comparative data collected on San livestock keepers in the central Kalahari suggests that a limited amount of small stock does not substantially change household organization, labor or nutrition.²² In particular, the institutions of egalitarian resource distribution, communal ownership and consensus based decision-making are not affected by the integration of smallstock into a forager economy. In their separate contributions to this volume, both Lenssen-Erz and Frank, whose work is based on two totally different sets of data, underscore the assumptions and arguments of Smith and Reid et al. Lenssen-Erz finds very little evidence of livestock husbandry in the rock paintings at the Brandberg. The few paintings of sheep or goats that do exist, he relates to a very late period of rock painting at the Brandberg and points out that domesticates are not at all salient topics of

Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania. Chicago.

²² Ikeya, K. 1993. *Goat Raising among the San in the Central Kalahari*, in: African Studies Monographs 14 (1), pp. 39-52; Kent, S. 1993. *Sharing in an Egalitarian Kalahari Community*, in: *Man* 28, pp. 479-514.

rock art in the area.²³ Frank finds bones of domesticates in his excavation in the central Kaokoland. However, the dominance of bones of non-domesticates over domesticates leads him to conclude that pastoral strategies were only subsidiary to Kaokoland's hunter-gatherers during the first and probably during most of the second millennium.

While in northwestern Botswana an obvious change in economic orientation took place in the 6th to 8th century, with an increasing focus on food production, it seems apparent that northern and central Namibia remained a stronghold for pasto-foragers far into the second millennium.²⁴ In a personal communication Smith reported that despite concerted efforts he could not find early traces which could testify beyond doubt to the existence of a cattle based economy.

The Advent of Pastoralism

While the basic techniques of livestock husbandry have been known in southern Africa for two millennia, the development of pastoralism as the major mode of existence and the emergence of a pastoral society is rather late.

In sharp contrast to archaeology which has not yet been able to produce conclusive evidence on how this transition took place, linguistic evidence, such as that provided by Möhlig in this volume, would appear to lead to a

²³ This is in contrast to the earlier work of John Kinahan who argues that the archaeological evidence indicates the development of increasing centralisation within forager communities with power coming to be centred upon shaman who concentrate their wealth and power in livestock, leading to the development of a fully fledged pastoral economy in the Namib prior to the arrival of the first European sailors in the fifteenth century: Kinahan, John 1990. *Pastoral Nomads of the Central Namib Desert: The People History Forgot*. Windhoek.

²⁴ Reid, A., K. Sadr and N. Hanson-James 1998. *Herding Traditions*, in: Lane, P., A. Reid and A. Segobye (eds.). *Ditswa Mmung. The Archaeology of Botswana*. Gaborone, p. 88. At Divuyu in the Tsodilo hills of northwestern Botswana in excavations dated to the 6th to 8th century sheep and goat remains form 60 per cent of the faunal assemblage. In Nqoma, another site in the Tsodilo hills dated between the 9th and 11th century, cattle started to outnumber in faunal remains. East of the Kavango delta the rise of the Toutswe tradition by the 10th century is a first instance of more centralized patterns of settlement and probably indicates the emergence of centralized societies.

rather concise hypothesis.²⁵ Phonological evidence suggests that speakers of the language, which has come to be standardized as *Otjiherero*, may have originally lived in the littoral of Lake Malawi. Loan words from Portuguese suggest that they were still living in the region when Portuguese trade goods, in particular iron wire, first entered the region. Further phonological evidence suggests that these speakers then moved and settled on the southwestern Angolan plateau for some time, where a number of loan-words were picked up from the Nyaneka groups living there. Hereafter it seems that the speakers left to move into the foothills of south-western Angola and north-western Namibia. Based on the evidence of phonology (e.g. sound-shifts), morphology (e.g. the class-system) and loan words a clear-cut idea on the migrations of Herero speakers emerges. However, due to the dearth of archaeological data on the regions in question this migrational hypothesis has to be taken as a hypothesis. Nonetheless, it has the advantage of fitting nicely with oral traditions collected. Vedder assumed that the Herero entered Kaokoland from south-western Angola around 1700 or as he claimed in a later publication around 1550.²⁶ In his varying accounts, the fabled cradle of the Herero, a place called *Mbandwa*, was to be found in the Kavango swamps, and the East African Lakes alternatively.²⁷ However, oral traditions gathered in the Kaokoland suggest migrations from the middle reaches of the Kunene into Kaokoland. South African anthropologist, Van Warmelo, subscribed to Vedder's ideas asserting that there had been two distinct moves into Kaokoland, in which the first wave of pastoralists were soon impoverished and had to lead a life as pastro-foragers while the later migrants, the Herero, succeeded in maintaining their cattle.²⁸ Estermann, who as a missionary had worked in southern Angola, and had a deeper insight into old Portuguese documents, asserted that pastoralists were living in the hinterland of Benguela around 1600. These pastoralists then slowly

²⁵ Spear and Waller 1993. *The Maasai*, asserts in his introduction that the image given of the migrations of Maa-Speakers by the linguists Vossen and Sommer are much more concise and clear cut than the images produced by historians and archaeologists.

²⁶ For a thorough critique of Vedder's approach see Lau 1981. *Thank God*. Vedder visited Kaokoland only once in 1914 for about two months. He stayed mainly at Kaoko Otavi and had contact with some pastro-foragers there. Contact with the Himba settled along the Kunene river was at most spurious.

²⁷ Vedder 1934. *Südwest*, p. 135, and Vedder, 1928. *Native Tribes*, p. 156 respectively.

²⁸ Van Warmelo, N.J. 1951. *Kaokoland*. Pretoria 1951, p. 9.

migrated from south-western Angola towards the more arid savannahs of the Kaokoland.²⁹ His views are in harmony with the ideas of Baumann who rejected grandstyle migration models and argued that a group of specialized pastoralists developed slowly on the fringes of the south-western Angolan highlands. Due to their specialization, and to the pressure from the Nyaneka polities which became ever more centralized in the course of the 17th century, they descended from the highlands and populated the semi-arid plains on both sides of the Kunene.³⁰

Although Baumann's methods of the comparison of cultural traits are outdated, his historical assumption that the Herero migrations and the development of a specialized livestock economy were caused by political centralization and violent conflict in southern Angola have been confirmed by recent historical research. Miller assumed that major dry periods between 1620 and 1640 and again in the 1720s sparked off political unrest all over southern Angola.³¹ Clarence-Smith and Miller describe the emergence of centralized political systems in the Huila highlands as reactions to slave raiding and the penetration of merchant capital in the 18th century.³² Williams relates early Herero migrations to the expansion of the Imbangala around 1600 in central Angola as a by-product of the slave-trade.³³ In the 1760s the south-western Angolan highlands, the area around present day

²⁹ Estermann, Carlos 1981. *The Herero People*, in: Gibson, G.D. *The Ethnography of South-Western Angola* (ed. and transl.). Vol. 3. New York.

³⁰ Baumann, Hermann 1975. *Die Südwest-Bantu-Provinz*, in: Baumann, H. (ed.). *Die Völker Afrikas und ihre traditionellen Kulturen*. Wiesbaden, p. 487 f., claims: "The Herero have to be seen as a group of highly specialized pastoralists who developed only fairly recently from agro-pastoralism, comparable to Nilotic culture, to mobile livestock husbandry." [Translation by J.B. Gewald, German: "Wir müssen in den Herero einen relativ spät im ariden Gebiet Südwest Afrikas zum reinen Hirtentum spezialisierten älteren Pflanzer-Hirtentyp erkennen, wie er für die nilotische Kultur bezeichnend ist."]

³¹ Miller, J. 1988. *Way of Death. Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830*. London, p. 21.

³² Clarence-Smith, W.G. 1979. *Capitalist Penetration Among the Nyaneka of Southern Angola, 1760s to 1920s*, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 5 (1979), pp. 163-176, and Clarence-Smith, W.G. 1978. *The Myth of Uneconomic Imperialism. The Portuguese in Angola, 1836-1926*, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 4 (1978), pp. 165-223., and Miller 1988. *Death*, p. 222.

³³ Williams, Frieda-Nela 1991. *Precolonial Communities of Southwestern Africa. A History of Owambo Kingdoms 1600-1920*. Windhoek, National Archives of Namibia.

Lubango, first came into direct contact with the expansion of mercantile capitalism and came to be drawn into the Atlantic slave trade bringing about a significant increase in warfare and social disruption³⁴ (see also Duarte, this volume). These pointers, drawn from the analysis of Portuguese sources and relating to the possible migrations of *Otjiherero*-speakers, appear to confirm Möhlig's assumptions. Although they do not establish any links to East Africa, they do support the assumption that speakers of *Otjiherero* (and not *the Herero*) moved from the neighborhood of the Nyaneka to the arid lowlands of northern Namibia. Oral traditions taken from the Himba, which report migrations from Okarundu Kambeti, a hill north of Ruacana, about seven to nine generations ago, support this thesis.³⁵

Still, what we know is much less than what was proposed in the older grand style migrational images of Vedder and the like. There is some evidence, that a migration of specialized livestock herders into north-western Namibia took place between 1700 and 1800. While Himba traditions point at the significance of hunting and gathering and the use of the extremely nutritious nuts of *Hyphena petersiana*, the economy of the immigrants seems to have been to a large extent livestock based. There is little doubt that the double descent clan system was operative and that livestock property was inherited within the matrilineal line. Status was achieved through extensive livestock holdings. The dating of these migrations and the parallel developments of slave-raiding and political centralization suggests that there is a causal link between the two events. This is borne out most clearly in a report cited by Estermann on a raid by Portuguese soldiers on livestock herders called Mataman in the hinterlands of Benguela in the 1620s.³⁶ Herero migrations from southern Angola were apparently set off by direct violence resulting from raids.³⁷ The question as to how and why *Otjiherero* speakers specialized in livestock husbandry, is as unresolved as is the issue as to where the *Otjiherero* speakers came from before they settled in the Nyaneka highlands. While only the piecing together of a plethora of archaeological and linguistic data will help to solve

³⁴ Clarence-Smith 1979. *Capitalist Penetration*, pp. 165–6.

³⁵ See the interviews with Katjira Muniombara in: Bollig, Michael 1997. "When War Came the Cattle Slept ...". *Himba Oral Traditions*. Köln.

³⁶ Estermann 1981. *Herero People*, p. 8.

³⁷ However, direct evidence is still lacking. Migration myths, whether they start off with Mbandwa or Okarundu Kambeti, do not contain any reports on raids. Early settlers in the Kaokoland however were harassed by raids of Ovahuahua – people of the shields, see Katjira Muniombara in Bollig 1997. *When war came*.

the second question, archaeological data from northern Namibia, an extensive analysis of oral traditions and models from economic anthropology may help to solve the first issue.

Pastoral Consolidation and Ethnicization

At the beginning of the nineteenth century *Otjiherero* speakers had reached central Namibia and were advancing to use pastures in the southern parts of the country. Their economy was clearly livestock centered but hunting and gathering remained highly relevant, especially during dry seasons and droughts. Since the advent of Herero herds on the central Namibian plateau the conflict between them and Nama and Oorlam has been formative for the history of the region. From the late 1820s onwards the commandoes of Oorlam war lords raided deep into regions held by Bantu pastoralists (for this passage see Henrichsen this volume). Due to the effectiveness of their raids and the constant demand for their loot on the markets of the Cape Colony, central Namibia was thoroughly plundered. Many erstwhile herders reverted to hunting and gathering. By the 1850s most *Otjiherero* speakers of central Namibia had lost their cattle, and raiding had shifted its focus to northern Namibia. Here the herds of Kaokoland's pastoralists fell prey to commandoes. By the 1870s the Kaokoland had been virtually cleared of cattle and many of its inhabitants had sought refuge in southern Angola while others roamed the inaccessible mountainous areas to the west as foragers (*ovatjimba*).

While communities of Bantu hunter-gatherers had probably existed previously in small pockets alongside Khoisan speaking foragers all over central and northwestern Namibia, their numbers throughout the 1840s to 1860s rose steadily. It were these groups which sought refuge and material protection with missionaries, and who opted for small-scale agriculture or employment with traders. Livestock holdings of these communities were minimal and did not suffice to lead a pastoral existence. Many adopted agriculture and quite a number took up tobacco cultivation in order to procure marketable trade goods which at a later stage could provide for the capital to re-enter pastoralism.

Only when Oorlam power was finally broken, by the armament of Herero through missionaries and traders eager to cast off the near monopoly on trade of several Oorlam groups, did Herero engage in a process of rapid repastoralization (Henrichsen, Gewald and Duarte this volume). The restocking of herds took place in a new context. Large scale raiding was

used by the elite to amass their herds. Trade could equally be used to boost livestock holdings. Herero now partially took on the commando strategy of the Oorlam and in the 1860s extended raiding activities to southern Namibia. Henrichsen (this volume) describes the 1870s as a period of consolidation of the livestock economy. Herero leaders then owned several thousand heads of cattle. The richest managed herds of more than 10,000 animals in several livestock camps through dependent herders, kinsmen but also Damara, San and Ovambo shepherds. The structures of a stratified pastoral society came into being in close contact with the Cape trade network and missionary aspirations. When authors at the turn of the century talked about Herero pastoralism and Herero chiefdoms they thought of this period.

In the early 1880's, at the advent of German colonialism, there were essentially four highly centralized Herero polities in existence in what is today central Namibia.³⁸ Based and to a large degree dependent upon trade with the Cape Colony the re-emergence of structured and united political units amongst the Nama along the trade routes leading south to the Cape colony signaled the end of the Herero time of plenty. Under the leadership of the Nama visionary, Hendrik Witbooi, Nama societies in southern Namibia began once again to assert control over the watering points and grazing that lay within their territories.³⁹ Herero attempts at eliminating Hendrik Witbooi in 1880 ended in dismal failure and plunged central Namibia into a protracted series of raiding and skirmishing in which the Herero increasingly lost more and more ground to Witbooi and his allies.

In this situation Maharero sought to turn the tide by seeking support from the incoming German colonial forces in his struggle against the forces of Hendrik Witbooi. What started out as a small detachment of German colonial troops expanded and grew bit by bit, particularly under the leadership of Theodor Leutwein, until imperial Germany gained control over the territories of the Herero. German involvement in the succession

³⁸ For an overview of socio-political developments in Herero society in the period 1880–1923, see Gewald, J. B. 1999. *Herero Heroes. A Socio-Political History of the Herero of Namibia 1890–1923*, Oxford.

³⁹ See biographies of Hendrik Witbooi: Menzel, Gustav 2000. *Widerstand und Gottesfurcht. Hendrik Witbooi – Eine Biographie in zeitgenössischen Quellen*, Köln, and Reeh, G. 2000. *Hendrik Witbooi – Ein Leben für die Freiheit. Zwischen Glaube und Zweifel*, Köln; as well as his published diary: Maasdorp, Eben (ed. and transl.) 1991. *The Hendrik Witbooi Papers*. Windhoek.

dispute following the death of Maharero Tjamuaha, and their support for his son and eventual victor Samuel Maharero, ensured that by 1896 German forces were stationed in all the major settlements of Hereroland.

The Herero and German Colonialism

In 1896, the rinderpest epidemic which had spread through Africa like wildfire from the Horn of Africa arrived in Hereroland. Within a matter of months no less than two thirds of Herero cattle herds had been killed by the disease. The German colonial administration enforced a selective culling and inoculation campaign, in which diseased cattle were killed for the production of vaccine. The campaign was open to abuse, and Herero cattle producers either lost their cattle or became indebted to the colonial administration for vaccine which seldom worked. Undoubtedly, the rinderpest epidemic effectively broke the economic underpinnings of Herero society existent within Namibia at the time. The economic destruction wrought by the rinderpest ensured that Herero chiefs, in seeking to maintain their people and power, were forced into selling ever greater swathes of land to German colonial traders and settlers. In addition large numbers of impoverished young men were forced into seeking employment beyond the borders of Hereroland.⁴⁰

By the beginning of the twentieth century Herero chiefs, in particular Samuel Maharero, depended upon the sale of land and the commission gathered on labor supplies, for the maintenance of their power. In early 1904 tensions and mistrust between German settlers and Herero had risen to such an extent that skirmishes and eventually full-scale war broke out. In part, the introduction of metropolitan German Imperial troops and officers ensured that the combatants had no common ground or shared experience with the Herero, and this allowed for the perpetration of genocide. German soldiers bludgeoned, killed, hung and raped Herero men, women and children. Herero survivors, predominantly women and children, were placed into a series of concentration camps scattered across the country, and put to work as forced labor on civil and military projects. In 1908 the camps were eventually abolished, but not before legislation had been put into place by the colonial administration which sought to control all aspects of Herero daily life. Thus, all Herero over the age of eight were obliged to wear a

⁴⁰ Gewald, J.B. 1999. *Man Called Love*.

metal disc, embossed with a registration number and the German imperial crown, around their necks.

An intriguing aspect of studies conducted on Herero societies in Namibia in the twentieth century is the scant attention paid to the position of Herero within Namibia in the final years of German colonial administration. Until recently, in the light of the findings presented by Drechsler, the remaining years of German colonial rule, following the ending of the Herero and Nama wars, were treated as a single undifferentiated whole in which German colonial control was total. Recent work conducted by Philipp Prein, Gesine Krüger and others⁴¹ has indicated that in the final years of German colonial rule, substantial social changes were underway within colonial Herero society. For a start, substantial numbers of Herero, be they women, men or children were in close day to day contact with German colonial forces in positions other than that of being victims. As such Herero women lived as concubines and servants with German soldiers, Herero boys lived as *Bambusen* (Batmen) with German soldiers, and Herero men served as auxiliary policemen and soldiers to the German colonial forces. Secondly as time went on Herero and Nama developed ways in which to circumvent the multitude of pass and property laws that had been imposed upon them. Indeed, German settler farmer, anxious to retain the services of scarce laborers actively broke the law in allowing Herero families to live on their farms with cattle and goats in contravention of colonial law. This is not to deny that state repression was consistently harsh and extreme. However, it is clear from the evidence that by 1914, the last year of formal German colonial government, Herero were far more than mere victims, instead it is apparent that Herero, often in collusion with German settlers, were consistently testing the boundaries of social and economic life as it had been imposed by the colonial government.

The Resurgence of Tradition after 1915

In 1915, following a short and sharp military campaign in which South African army units routed the German colonial forces, German colonial rule

⁴¹ Prein, Phillip 1994. *Guns and Top Hats: African Resistance in German South West Africa, 1907-1915*, in: *Journal of South African Studies*, 20 (1), and Krüger, Gesine. *A Pass Token in the Archives. Traces of the History of Every Day Life after the German-Herero War*. Unpublished paper presented at the Symposium *Writing History. Identity and Society in Namibia*, held at the Department of History, University of Hannover, 5-7 May 1994.

ended in Namibia. Henceforth Namibia came to be administered as an integral part of the Union of South Africa. In the aftermath of the war Herero abandoned their German employers and places of employment, and settled with newly acquired stock on the lands which had previously been theirs. Within five years of the ending of the war, Herero herds had increased to such an extent that the South African administration, anxious to maintain Namibia as a settler colony, found itself pressurized into establishing reserves beyond the immediate environs of central Namibia.

It was on the reserves, beyond the immediate influence of the mission and colonial administration, that the Herero began with a conscious attempt to re-model and re-establish Herero society. Beginning in the early 1920's Herero re-introduced a number of elements into their society which had been either prohibited or abandoned in the past (see Gewald this volume). In conscious opposition to the mission and colonial state the Herero re-introduced for example polygamy, circumcision and ancestor worship. Nowhere else did this resurgence become as apparent as in the establishment of the Herero *Otruppe* regiments.

The Herero *Otruppe*, or *Truppenspieler* (Soldier players) as they were known to the colonial state, is one of the most distinctive aspects of Herero society to have developed in the twentieth century. Herero men, and at times women, marched in massed ranks dressed in uniforms which were modeled on those of the German colonial armies. Initially the *Otruppe* were a form of self-help support organization, which later developed into a movement dedicated to the maintenance of norms, values, and ideals believed to be in the interest of Herero society as a whole.⁴²

It was from within the ranks of Herero society that the first movements and calls for an ending of the colonial situation came about. In the early 1920s the Namibian branches of the international United Negro Improvement Association were dominated by Herero leaders. Similarly in the 1940s, when nationalist sentiment stirred all across the African continent, these were echoed from within the Herero community. Indeed, the first truly nationalist movement to be established in Namibia, the South

⁴² Clearly these ideals and sentiments vary substantially over time, and have led to a number of splits and divisions over time. For a good introduction to the origins of the *Otruppe*, see Werner, Wolfgang 1990. "Playing Soldiers". *The Truppenspieler Movement among the Herero of Namibia*, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16, pp. 476-502.

West African National Union (SWANU), was established by leading members of the Herero community living in Windhoek at the time. In the waning days of South African colonial rule in Namibia, the South African government made concerted and largely successful efforts to acquire support from within the Herero communities; a condition which continues to taint relations between the state and Herero communities in post-colonial Namibia.⁴³

3. Cattle and Land: Transformations of the Pastoral Mode of Production

Despite tremendous changes from subsistence herding to commoditized livestock husbandry and from egalitarian, lineage based production to centralized, chiefly resource control three factors have been of continued importance: land, cattle and people. The control over land eventually became the key to the other two resources.

Land

After the genocidal war against imperial Germany and the settlement of the remaining Herero in camps, the process of reclaiming land started in 1910 and accelerated after the Germans had left in 1915. Entire Herero groups left their employers and settled in small communities on deserted farms and unoccupied Crown Land in central parts of Namibia (see Werner and Gewald this volume). From the early 1920s onwards the South African Government sought to enforce a Reserve policy. As a result, Herero communities were resettled in reserves in the East and the West of the country in order to institute segregation and prevent *kaffir*-farming which was seen as a main hindrance to the modernization of the white farming sector by the specialists of the time. Last but not least, reserves were meant to increase the efficiency of control over the native population. While Herero leaders first opted for this move, as they saw the reserves as pastures on which they would have permanent tenure, they soon came to realize that the Administration had parceled out areas of lesser value. Gewald describes in his contribution how Herero herds in Aminuis reserve dwindled in the 1920s and 1930s. While the traditional authorities held some authority over

⁴³ See in this regard, Gewald, J.B. 1999. *Remembering Genocide to Forget Divisions: Herero Identity in Post-colonial Namibia*, paper presented at Studium Generale, University of Utrecht, 26 October 1999.

these lands, factual control lay with the white superintendents of the reserves. They controlled rights of access and largely determined rights to water and grazing.

Table 1: Herero Reserves in 1929⁴⁴

Name	No. Of People	No. of Cattle	No. of Smallstock	TLU	Square kilometers
Aminuis	2,445 ¹	11,588	25,826	14,816	2,300
Epukiro	1,390 ²	6,806	4,009	7,307	1,780
Waterberg	2,347 ³	11,610	13,757	13,330	3,353
Ovitoto	1,355 ⁴	7,509	5,223	8,162	499
Otjituuo	1,322 ⁵	5,886	4,586	6,459	1,058
Otjohorong	1,394 ⁶	6,931	41,890	12,167	1,022
Otjimbingwe	950 ⁷	2,965	16,023	4,968	1,150
Kaoko I (Oorlog)	829	in total:		in total:	
Kaoko II (Katiti)	426	20,000 Cattle		ca. 48,000	
Kaoko III (Kahewa)	378	35,000 Smallstock were			
Kaoko: non-gazetted as reserve	2,676	estimated			

¹ SWAA 1159/A158/29 Vol. 3, data for Nov. 1929, men at work 286, c. 30 per cent of all males and 38 women.

² SWAA 1143/A 158/21 Vol. 2., data for Dec. 1929, of these men 215 (40.7%) and some 55 women were at work.

³ SWAA 1147 A 158/23, data for June 1929, men at work were not counted separately in the document,

⁴ SWAA 1137 A158/16 Vol. 2, data for June 1929, men at work were not separately counted in this document

⁵ SWAA 1129/ A 158/ 10 Vol. 3, data for Dec. 1929, 51.7 per cent of all men at work,

⁶ SWAA 1143/ A 158/21 Vol. 2, data for June 1929, men at work not separately counted,

⁷ SWAA 1135/ A158/ 13, data for Dec. 1929, men at work were not separately counted.

⁴⁴ Data for Table 1 was derived from Werner 1998. *No one will become rich*, pp. 97, 150, 151, and Bollig, Michael and Hartmut Lang. *Demographic Growth and Resource Exploitation in Two Pastoral Communities*, in: *Nomadic Peoples* NS 4 (in print).

Land tenure in the reserves remained communal by law, private ownership of land and/or fencing of pastures was prohibited. Rights to graze and water livestock were allotted under Herero customary law by the communities themselves. Hence, a farmer wishing to shift his cattle herds from one place to the other (within the reserve) had first to seek consent from his future neighbors.

The policy towards the pastoralists of Kaokoland differed greatly from the administrative strategies followed in central Namibia. The livestock owners of Kaokoland had not suffered from war or dispossession. In fact, many Himba had enlarged their herds when staying in southern Angola and working for the Portuguese army or white commercial farmers in the region. Between 1910 and 1920 many left southern Angola after the Portuguese government changed its policy towards native populations. These were now severely taxed and their leaders were impounded in court cases. In Kaokoland they found abundant pastures which, at least until 1917, were not under the control of any government. However, the South African Government soon made clear its wish and intent to administer Kaokoland much more closely than the Germans had ever done. International boundaries were enforced and national boundaries (towards the commercial ranching area and towards Ovamboland) were instituted. Trade across these boundaries was prohibited (see Bollig this volume). In the late 1920s more than 1,200 Herero and several thousand head of livestock were forcefully removed to central Kaokoland. Officially it was declared that this move was needed to ensure that no livestock diseases would be transmitted by straying native cattle to the white ranches in northern Namibia. However, other considerations may have mattered too. In the late 1930s plans were made to settle white farmers in the newly created no man's land. In the middle of the 1940s the administration considered to move all Herero from central and eastern Namibia to the Kaokoland to create one great Herero reserve. However, all these plans were abandoned after a while. A practical result of the extremely restricted trade regulations was, that white livestock owners did not have to fear competition from rather wealthy black livestock farmers.

In 1964 during the heyday of Grand Apartheid, the Odendaal commission and subsequent report aimed at a reformation of the organization of lands and planned to provide the basis for the transformation of parts of the reserve peasantry into a group of capitalized livestock farmers. As a consequence the smaller reserves were amalgamated into tribally based Bantustans. In 1980 the Representative Authority of the Herero

Proclamation provided the powers for an executive committee consisting of a specific chief of an area and six elected members to transfer communal land to individuals who were able to "register a title deed over such land after a period of 15 years" (Werner this volume).

From the late 1960s onwards development efforts were set in place, starting with extensive borehole drilling in hitherto sparsely occupied areas and improvements of marketing structures. In the late 1970s the administration inaugurated a water supply scheme bringing water from Berg Aukas via a pipeline to Okamatapati and Okakarara, thereby opening up 2750 km² of new pastures.⁴⁵ Soon Herero farmers began requesting the government for permission to fence off pastures to warrant the usufruct of investments in borehole-development.⁴⁶ In particular it appears to have been the elite which was in favor of fencing, which they saw both as a means to enhance individual control over land, as well as an indicator of modernization of the livestock sector. The Okamatapati region became a focus of these developments. The division of communal lands began there in 1979. Farming units of 7 by 7 kilometers were allocated to individuals. As a result farmers on communal pastures were severely limited in their freedom to move livestock herds. Overgrazing and increased stock losses during droughts were the result. In 1989 fenced farms were to be found in Otjinene (32), Epukiro (12) and Okamatapati (56).⁴⁷

In northwestern Namibia the quasi-homeland Kaokoland was formed. As in other areas designated as being "Native Areas" a tribal council was appointed to conduct the politics and economics of the area. Needless to say, this turned out to be a fiction. In the early 1960s the Kaokoland had undergone a severe drought. In order to avert famine the government had to

⁴⁵ Adams, F. and W. Werner 1990. *The Land Issue in Namibia: An Inquiry*. Windhoek, p. 161.

⁴⁶ The privatization of communal lands is clearly not limited to Namibia. For similar developments elsewhere in Africa see: Hitchcock, Robert 1990. "Water, Land, and Livestock: The Evolution of Tenure and Administration in the Grazing Areas of Botswana", in: Galaty, John and Douglas Johnson (eds.). *The World of Pastoralism: Herding Systems in Comparative Perspective*. London, pp. 194–215. In Kenya: Galaty, John 1994. "Rangeland Tenure and Pastoralism in Africa", in: Fratkin, E., K. Galvin and E.A. Roth (eds.). *African Pastoralist Systems*. Boulder, pp. 185–204. In Somalia: Stern, Werner 1991. "Mobile Viehhaltung als Hauptwirtschaftsfaktor – Der Fall Somalia", in: Scholz, F. (ed.). *Nomaden: Mobile Viehhaltung*. Berlin, pp. 113–130.

⁴⁷ Adams and Werner 1990. *Land Issue*, p. 163.

supply maize. The relief food was formally bought on debt by the Tribal Council. The obligations of the Kaokoland Tribal Council rose throughout the 1960s rendering all efforts to achieve semi-independence a mere charade. Thereafter, throughout the 1970s and 1980s the civil war dominated the fate of Kaokoland. South African military units were stationed at Opuwo which grew into a town of several thousand inhabitants (in 1995 c. 4,000). Probably due to the war, no efforts were made at the individualization of property rights. Fencing which has dominated the land tenure debate in the communal lands of central and eastern Namibia is not a topic in northwestern Namibia.

Following independence in 1990 and especially after the reorganization of the regional administrations of Namibia, the former Bantustans lost their peculiar status. However, a reform on the law pertaining to communal lands is still under consideration. As a result, due to the lack of clear cut provisions by the legislative, a variety of co-existing land tenure forms have developed. Stahl (this volume) reports that in the region of Okakarara fenced parts of land under private ownership are to be found far away from established settlements. Each settlement regards a certain amount of pasture around the village as its own and juxtaposes it to the grazing land of other villages. Within these village lands there are smaller fenced areas in the immediate vicinity of the village. These are used by specific households. In fact frequently these fenced areas start at the back of each household. Currently these fenced areas are used as calf pastures or as a dry season grazing resort. Stahl points out that the privately owned pastures away from the settlements are owned by highly commercialized livestock farmers, who frequently rely on employed shepherds, whereas the much smaller fenced areas within the village land are owned by the ordinary villager. Privately owned and fenced land is thus coexisting, with privately owned and provisionally fenced land, with village land and with open-access pastures beyond the margins of the village. The Herero case contradicts the assumption that privatization is the only solution to the so-called commons dilemma. Next to securing individual land titles to pastures which is a prerogative for rich commercial farmers, the communities seek to find solutions that turn open access-resources into communally owned pastures.

Whereas the former communal areas of central and eastern Namibia are involved in discussions regarding the future of communal land rights, discussions in Kaokoland are set towards other agendas. Since the inception of plans for a giant hydro-electric power plant at Epupa, which would necessitate the inundation of the Kunene river valley, the issue here has

been primarily one of confrontation between the state versus the regional community with regard to land. The Epupa debate has acted as a catalyst for Kaokolander identity vis à vis the state (Miescher this volume). In several workshops Herero and Himba leaders pointed out that the “land grabbing state” has been the consistent problem for Kaokolanders since colonial times. As such they cite, not only current state interventions, but also the forced relocations of 1929, the prohibition of Himba settlement along the Kunene in the 1930s, as well as the loss of substantial lands to the Etosha game reserve in the 1960s.

Livestock Husbandry

The practice of livestock husbandry has changed greatly in some areas while it has remained fairly static in other areas. The fields of change relate to the breeds used, the goals of livestock production (milk vs. meat), the herd structures (milk cow dominated herds vs. herds with a high percentage of oxen), the diversification of the household herd (the changing ratio of cattle towards smallstock), the patterns of mobility, and the organization of work to do with the herd.

Herds

In the last century and throughout the early decades of this century Herero herders made use mainly of the African Sanga (*Bos taurus*). In Kaokoland the Sanga is still the dominant species. The Sanga is a very hardy species able to manage drawn out dry seasons. It is a light race and produces only little milk. Since the 1930s Herero farmers set on commercializing their farms have integrated cross breeds; preferably Simmenthaler and Afrikander cattle into their herds in order to increase both milk and meat yield. Cattle herds in the past had a high percentage of oxen. Early missionary ethnographers referred frequently to the enormous oxen herds of the Herero elite (see contribution Henrichsen). Oxen were a repository of wealth, and contributed to the status and fame of their owner. In contrast to the rather light weight bulls and cows, oxen were a good trade item. Traders were mainly after beef-cattle and not that interested in cows. Hence a numerous oxen-herd was not only prestigious but also an asset to enter into bartering for guns, clothes, oxen wagons etc. In the present Kaokoland oxen herds still make up for about 20 per cent of the herd. In central Namibia, however, herd structures have changed. Male livestock are

While in northwestern Namibia milk production remained subsistence orientated, in central and eastern Namibia milk marketing started early on. From the 1930s onwards milk and cream became commercial products in the Herero reserves. The first dairies were set up in Waterberg and Aminuis in 1934. By the 1940s a significant amount of income could be raised from selling cream to white traders who toured the area on a regular basis.⁵¹ The administration largely encouraged this development as it was hoped that the commercialization of livestock husbandry could help Herero herd owners to procure grazing fees which had to be paid to the government on a regular basis.⁵² Up into the present day, there is no opportunity to sell milk in the whole of the Kaokoland.

Meat is the second major produce procured from livestock husbandry. The Southwest African Sanga is a very light cattle breed. While oxen may reach a weight of up to 500 to 600 kilos the average live weight of adult cattle is probably between 200 and 250 kilos. Bollig (this volume) presents data on the frequency of slaughter of cattle in a subsistence oriented economy. He points out that it is mainly the rich and political influential hosting celebrations for their descent groups and their communities who slaughter cattle. The slaughter of cattle is necessary at funerals and commemoration ceremonies. Up to 30 head of oxen may be slaughtered at a single funeral. For day to day meat procurement it is preferred to slaughter goats and sheep. In the commoditized ranching systems of central and eastern Namibia, cattle are mainly reared for sale. Since the 1940s the commercial off-take has grown consistently. Wolfgang Werner reports that between the 1940s and the 1990s the off-take of cattle rose from 4.1 per cent per annum to about 20 per cent in the Ovitoto and Okakarara areas.⁵³ One reason for the continued increase in commercial off-take has been the favorable market conditions for meat in the Republic of South Africa. Since the 1940s Namibia has constantly exported meat to South Africa. In recent

⁵¹ Wagner, Günter 1952. *Aspects of Conservatism and Adaptation in the Economic Life of the Herero*, in: *Sociologus* 2, 1952, pp. 1–25, reports “in several reserves the natives have now been running their cream business either quite independently or semi-independently for several years with ‘highly successful results’. In 1950 Herero in Aminuis earned some 9,556 Pounds, in Epukiro 7,122 Pounds, in Otjimbingue 1,928 Pounds, in Otjituo 3,599 and in Waterberg East 8,796 Pounds.”

⁵² Werner 1998. *No-one will become rich*, p. 191.

⁵³ Ibid.

years the export boom for livestock has been bolstered by agreements with the EU which provide advantaged access to the European meat market.

Many rural Herero households largely depend on the sale of livestock nowadays. In one sample of farmers in the Okakarara region, 84 per cent of all households were reported to be largely dependent on livestock sales. Throughout the colonial period, farmers had to sell their livestock at officially gazetted auctions of parastatals (MeatCo). Private sales were prohibited. Following independence, these racist regulations have been discarded and Herero farmers may now engage in transactions with private customers. New forms of co-operation between farms in communal areas and commercial ranching enterprises are tested. In some areas, farmers on communal lands specialize in rearing bull calves and selling them to commercial farmers at the age of two years. Then the bullocks are fattened up on commercial farms for another year or two and finally sold off to meat auctioneers in Windhoek or South Africa.

The communal ranching areas of northwestern Namibia which have not been fully incorporated into the livestock marketing system may eventually follow this trend. However, in all areas north of the cordon fence, which cuts through northern Namibia and for most of the time has been the border between communal areas and commercial farming areas, livestock exports are severely regulated. Basically the abattoir at Oshakati is still the only institution where cattle and goats can be traded. Himba and Herero herders of the Kaokoland may either sell their livestock at officially gazetted MeatCo auctions or may barter their livestock with intermediate traders. They do so at very unfavorable rates. An oxen which would procure money worth about 20 sacks of maize meal is bartered for 12 sacks of maize and a goat worth about 3 sacks of maize is bartered for just one goat. Seventy years of exclusion from livestock markets and heavy-handed regulations by the colonial government have their long lasting impact. While there are definite trends to more commercialized forms of livestock husbandry here too, commercial off-takes are a far cry from what we find in eastern and central Namibia.

Differentiation

The commercialization of livestock production has accelerated differentiation in pastoral communities in all parts of Namibia. Differentiation has been strongest in those areas which were close to livestock marketing centers. A growing percentage of households owns just

a nominal number of beasts. This allows them to regard themselves as herders but does not enable them to add any significant income to their budgets from their herds. While there is an increase of rural poor a minority accumulates huge herds of cattle. The colonial government welcomed this development. Since the 1950s development programs were set upon facilitating the rise of a middle-peasantry. From these farmers a great percentage of revenues from the reserves was procured as they had to pay annual grazing fees according to the number of cattle they herded. Wolfgang Werner (1998:188)⁵⁴ shows how in Epukiro the number of rich households decreased while the number of rich households increased. While in 1933 2.4 per cent of the households held more than 50 cattle, in 1950 only 1 per cent held more than 50 cattle. At the same time the number of poorer households increased in absolute numbers. While in 1933 some 264 households owned 20 cattle and less in 1950 605 sample households owned 20 cattle and less.

Table 2: Distribution of Cattle in Epukiro 1933-1950

Stock numbers per household	1933	1950
5 and less	74	130
6-20	190	565
21-50	90	295
51-80	8	10
Total	362	1,000

(note: Werner 1998:188)

These processes of differentiation and growing stratification took place in all the Herero reserves of central Namibia and continued at an accelerated pace in the 1970s and 1980s under the Odendaal report based jurisdiction. On the one hand impoverishment forced many people into migrating to farms and urban areas in order to look for salaried work. On the other hand growing stratification apparently led to an increase in trade and high levels of consumption. Wagner reports that in the late 1940s many Herero were very well dressed, invested heavily into garments and housing but also into the veterinary care of their animals.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Werner 1998. *No-one will become rich*, p. 188.

⁵⁵ Wagner 1952. *Conservatism and Adaptation*, p. 18.

Amongst the Himba of northwestern Namibia (see contribution Bollig, Ohta, Wärlöf) the size of livestock herds vary considerably too. Rich herd-owners have their cattle spread over many livestock camps on both sides of the Kunene river. The wealthy herd owners of Kaokoland tend to own anything between 300 and 600 cattle. However, numerous herd owners are poor and do not own more than 20 head of cattle. Inequalities in livestock ownership are masked by the fact that many poorer households draw extensively on cattle loans. Others herd rich people's herds and hardly own any cattle themselves in the herd they manage. While in central Namibia livestock loaning on the basis of kinship obligations has become rare, in northwestern Namibia livestock loans are still a major form of transaction. The institution is fully embedded in considerations of kinship and inheritance (see contribution Bollig). Differences in smallstock herds are not as pronounced in Kaokoland: smallstock herds usually range between one hundred and four hundred head of goats and sheep.

Wealth differences amongst the Himba did not yet lead to a differentiation of the society into rich commercialized livestock enterprises and pastoral peasants. Rich herd owners have similar selling strategies and marketing venues than poor farmers have.

The Transmission of Livestock Herds: Livestock Loans and Inheritance

Amongst the Himba and probably amongst the pre-colonial Herero as well the transmission of livestock herds from generation to generation was an effective break to unlimited accumulation of livestock herds and a hindrance for a close nexus between wealth in livestock and political power. Each time a rich herd owner died the status of his herds was renegotiated. Sometimes his herds were divided and given to several heirs. As only a minor portion of the inheritance went to the sons the inheritance of a herd habitually implicated a relocation of herds from one place to another. At inheritance the respective descent groups demonstrated to what extent they had control over the herds of their members.

Amongst the Himba property rights in cattle are held by the head of a homestead. The household herd is only divided after his death. Rules of inheritance guarantee a coordinated and unambiguous transmission of property from the testator to one heir. This results in the concentration of property rights in livestock in the hands of a few. In most Herero groups and, in fact, among the western Himba too, all sacred cattle are inherited

patrilineally while non-sacred cattle – usually making up the bulk of cattle – were transferred within the matriline⁵⁶. However, among the Angolan Himba and the Himba in the northwestern-most parts of Namibia all animals are inherited matrilineally, first from the deceased to a brother (of one mother) and then to a sisters' son (ZS), or any equivalent in the matriline (like ZDS or ZDDS). As matrilineal relatives tend not to live together, inheritance usually implies a major shift of the entire household.

Only in recent decades did an elite succeed in diminishing the effectiveness of this mechanism of diffusing power. They diminished the importance of matrilineal inheritance in favor of patrilineal transmission of wealth given that the residence pattern was predominantly patrilocal. Patrilineal transmission precludes a dispersal of herds and keeps the power-base of one household stable over generations. Vivelo, writing on Herero living in north-western Botswana, reported that Herero succession had moved in the direction of Batawana law, whereby all livestock are inherited along the patrilineal line. Interestingly, his informants denied that there was any inheritance within the matriline, and remarked that sister's sons would only receive a token share in the animals.⁵⁷ Vivelo connected these changes to the increased trend toward commoditization in livestock production. He found a "shift in orientation from cattle as sacred trusts to cattle as sale items. Cattle are considered to be primarily privately owned".⁵⁸ Very similar processes have taken place amongst the Herero of central Namibia. Most of the livestock is inherited from father to son. Matrilineal nephews just obtain minor parts of the inheritance. Undoubtedly the change of the inheritance system was a major precondition for the growing stratification within Herero society.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Gibson, G. D. 1956. *Double Descent and Its Correlates Among the Herero of Namiland*, in: *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 58, No. 1, p. 132.; see also Viehe, 1902. *Omaanda und Otuzo*; Irle, Jakob 1906. *Die Herero*. Gütersloh; Crandall, D. 1992. *The Ovahimba of Namibia. A Study of Dual Descent and Values*. PhD. Thesis, University of Oxford.

⁵⁷ Vivelo 1977. *Herero*, p. 176

⁵⁸ Vivelo 1977 *ibid.*, p. 107

⁵⁹ Unfortunately as yet no anthropologist or historian has dealt with this issue in detail. How did individuals seeking for a continuity of livestock ownership within their household succeed in changing the inheritance system to their advantage?

Diversification of the Pastoral Economy

In the past a large number of Herero, though being bound to cattle in ritual and social exchange, were not dependent upon cattle for their livelihood. Indeed, as Henrichsen argues in his contribution, prior to 1860 the majority of those who would later be defined as Herero pastoralists were engaged in a number of economic activities of which pastoralism was but one. During the heyday of Herero as pastoralists in the 1870s there were always a number of Herero who derived their livelihood from other activities. Bollig (this volume) reports on the various subsidiary foods Himba herders gather in the *veld*.

Far from cattle being the sole means of subsistence for Herero, historical studies indicate that economic diversification has been the norm, as opposed to the exception. The work of Henrichsen indicates that in the 1840s, when a substantial number of the Herero had lost their cattle stocks to the Oorlam raids of Jonker Afrikaner and Amraal Lambert, Herero were engaged in a variety of economic pursuits that ranged from horticulture to hunting. Horticulture, specifically the growing of crops in watered gardens, has been practiced wherever this was possible throughout central Namibia. The first missionary reports detail the growing of cash crops, such as tobacco and marihuana, at sites of permanent water, such as the valley of what would later become Klein Windhoek. Other crops grown at these sites included beans, pumpkin and greens. Occasionally stands of millet and sorghum were planted. With the arrival of Oorlam and missionaries in central Namibia wheat, and later maize, were introduced and grown in or immediately adjacent to the Khan, Swakop, Khuseb, Nossob, Omaruru and Okahandja river beds by Herero.

Herero chiefs sought to maintain areas within which horticulture was practiced. The chief of Omaruru, Manasse Tjisisseta, had gardens and stands of wheat in the Omaruru river bed. But, more importantly, he allowed the settlement of people at Okombahe in exchange for a substantial portion of their agricultural production. By the early 1890s Okombahe had become one of the major sources of tobacco for Omaruru proper, as well as the trade route that led northwards through Omaruru.⁶⁰ The chiefs of Okahandja similarly attempted to maintain a horticultural settlement at the Waterberg. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century they attempted to

⁶⁰ Regarding the agricultural production of Omaruru, see de Vries, Joris 1999. *Manasse Tjisisseta*. Köln.

settle people at the Waterberg who would owe allegiance to Okahandja and who would provide proof of this allegiance through the payment of horticultural products to the chiefs of Okahandja.⁶¹

Throughout the first seventy years of the twentieth century colonial administrations in Namibia sought to ensure that Herero would enter into wage labor. Similarly Duarte's contribution indicates how the Angolan colonial administration sought to force the Kuvale into wage labor and how they in turn sought to invest wages earned into cattle in such a manner that they could be freed from wage labor. In the nineteenth century, and in the present, wage labor has been one of the means by which Herero without cattle could gain access to capital with which to purchase cattle. However, particularly following the South African occupation of Namibia in 1915, a number of Herero invested their capital not in cattle, but in establishing trading stores. Wagner reports in the early 1950s that about 50 per cent of all Herero lived on farms or urban areas living of their wages or wages of close relatives. By the 1950s many Herero in urban areas had opened bank accounts and many had only vague interests in livestock husbandry. Very little substantial work has been done on Herero trading in the twentieth century, but all sources indicate that prior to 1959 the wealthiest businessmen of the Black community in central Namibia were Herero.⁶² Within the urban setting that developed in central Namibia Herero women were driven into domestic labor, but also took the lead in the provision of illegal alcohol.

Associated with the development of mercantile capitalism in Namibia in the nineteenth century was the development of Herero waggoneers and waggon drivers. As trade and hunting increased in central Namibia from the 1860s onwards, a number of Herero became intricately tied up in, not only the provision of water, grazing and oxen necessary for ox transport, but also in the provision of waggon drivers, waggons and wheelwrights. By the early

⁶¹ In the early 1880s Maharero Tjamuaha sought to have Tswana settlers from Kuruman settled at the Waterberg for the express purpose of grain production. Gewald, J.B. 1999. *From Kuruman to Gobabis: Barolong Bathlaro Traders, Trade Routes and Trade Strategies 1880–1904*. Paper presented to the 42nd ASA meeting in Philadelphia.

⁶² See in this regard the Schimming, Kapuuo and Mungunda families. Wagner 1952. *Conservatism and Adaptation*, pp. 20–21, and Werner 1998. *No-one will become rich*, p. 178.

1890s all the major chiefs of central Namibia owned waggons, which were primarily engaged in transport.

The first written reports dealing with central Namibia describe enormous hunting structures, which consisted of trenches and barriers, up to a kilometer in length, which were constructed of thornbushes. Hunters would seek to drive game through the funnels created by barriers and into trenches and nooses where the animals could be dispatched. The introduction of fire arms and horses served to make hunting an easier occupation. As transport to and from the Cape Colony became easier, there was a development in central Namibia of a small group of specialized mounted and fire arm bearing hunters. These men sold their services to the traders who outfitted hunting expeditions from Otjimbingwe, Okahandja and Omaruru. Primarily Herero hunters hunted for ivory, though ostrich feathers, pelts and skins were also in demand.⁶³ In the 1890s the sons and daughters of European traders with Herero women came to form an important segment of central Namibian Herero society. Not necessarily in that they were the descendants of traders and Herero elites, but rather in that they came to be linked to the incipient German settler society of the 1890s. This was particularly true of the women, who prior to the German colonial race laws of 1906, came to be linked through marriage with German settlers. At the same time Himba herders found a major income with commercial hunters based in southern Angolan coastal towns.⁶⁴ In the 1920s, when the Herero were driven into the reserves of eastern Namibia and numerous cattle died of disease, trapping and hunting once again became an important way by which Herero could seek to supplement their income.

3. Descent and Power: Clans, Bigmen and Chiefs

Amazed by the complexity of the double descent system early ethnographers described the kinship system at length. They dealt with clans, their myth of origin, their taboos and clearly identified the close link between kinship and political organization. However, they failed to realize the dynamic aspect inherent in the relation between kinship and political. While big men (*ovahona*) who based their dominance on livestock wealth and personal leadership qualities may have been present in *Otjiherero*

⁶³ The Kaokoveld chief Vita Tom was the son of one of these hunters, as well as being a hunter in his own right.

⁶⁴ Bollig, Michael 1999. *The Encapsulation of Pastoral Economies in Southwestern Africa*. Paper presented at the 42nd annual meeting of the ASA in Philadelphia.

speaking societies for some time, the emergence of chieftaincies is rather recent. Dag Henrichsen (in this volume) gives an intriguing account on the emergence of powerful chieftaincies among the Herero of central Namibia in the second part of the last century. While local big men had never succeeded in casting off the confinements kinship obligations towards patriline and matriline, the chiefs of the late 19th century effectively broke these chains and wielded influence over wide territories. The big men of the Himba, even if they call themselves chiefs today, still have to weigh carefully the interests of their kin groups towards the interests of their polity. Usually they have to cope with competition from within their kinship group where there are usually several contestants to succeed them.

The Descent System

The double descent system of the Herero and the Himba has found a wide coverage in anthropological literature.⁶⁵ The system rests on (a) matrilineal descent groups (sing. *eanda*) and (b) patrilineal descent groups (sing. *oruzo*). Most ethnographic literature emphasized the constraints these social structures have on decision making (i.e. numerous taboos, prescriptive marriage rules). However, it cannot be overemphasized that the overarching structure of double descent provides each and every individual (men and women alike) with a widespread social support network.⁶⁶

The Matriclan

The matrilineal clans are named, non-totemic, non-residential and unranked descent groups. Due to the rule of patrilocal residence after marriage members of matriclans are constantly dispersed. Individuals obtain membership to matriclans by birth. Newborns are members of the clan of their mother. There are very few cases of adoption. Malan distinguishes

⁶⁵ Viehe 1902. *Omaanda und Otuzo*, pp. 109–117; Irlé 1906. *Die Herero*; Vedder 1928. *Native Tribes*; Gibson 1956. *Double Descent*; Malan, S. 1972. *Dubbele Afkomsberekennings van die Himba, 'n Hererosprekende volk in die Suidwes Afrika*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Johannesburg, and Malan, S. 1973. *Double Descent Among the Himba of South West Africa*, in: *Cimbasia* B 2, pp. 81–112; Crandall, David 1991. *The Strength of the Ovahimba patrilineage*, in: *Cimbasia* 13, pp. 45–51.

⁶⁶ Although there are named age-groups (*otjiwondo*), they do not feature importantly in Himba or Herero social organization. They are not considered here in detail.

seven major matriclans and for some of them distinguishes sublines.⁶⁷ The very same clans are found amongst the Herero.

Figure 3: Himba Matriclans

- | |
|---|
| <p>(1) Omukweyuva:
 (i) Omukweyuva Woyamuzi or Woktenda
 (ii) Omukweyuva Woyahawari
 (iii) Omukweyuva Woyapera
 (iv) Omukweyuva Woyamutati</p> <p>(2) Omukwendjandje</p> <p>(3) Omukwendata
 (i) Omukwendata wondjuwo onene, or Omukwendata wozongombe or Omukwaruvara
 (ii) Omukwendata wondjuwo onditi, or Omukwatjitupa</p> <p>(4) Omukwenambura</p> <p>(5) Omukwandongo or Omukwauti</p> <p>(6) Omkwatjivi</p> <p>(7) Omukwenatja</p> |
|---|

In northern Namibia and southwestern Angola matriclans 'overlap' into other ethnic groups, i.e. a man from the Ovakwenatja *eanda* will find support not only with other Ovakwenatja within Himba society but also with Ovakwenatja clan members in neighboring Ngambwe, Zemba and Hakaona societies. Matriclans are unranked.

Clans are subdivided into segments. Members of these segments trace their descent to a common ancestress who may be rated some three to five generations ago. These segments are unnamed but one may refer to a unit by naming it 'the house of the ancestress X within the matriclan Y'. These matrilineal clan-segments control the bulk of the livestock. Amongst the Himba matrilineal relatives (sing. *omuhoko*, pl. *ovahoko*) constitute a densely knit support network. To borrow livestock to an unrelated person is highly unusual and even livestock loans to members of the patrilineage sometimes need additional comments. Each segment has one acknowledged leader, a senior male member. Without him no major rituals concerning members of the segment may be conducted. Although he does not infringe upon day to day decision making he has an important say in the timing of

⁶⁷ Malan 1973. *Double Descent*, p. 84

rituals and together with his peers in the allocation of livestock in inheritance transfers.

There is clear evidence that the relevance of the matrilineans is fading amongst the Herero. Effectively the Herero patrilineans dominate in the sphere of economic transactions and political liaising. Matrilineans have been relegated into the realm of folklore. Elderly people may talk about matrilineans and their specific rules, but for everyday decision making they have virtually gone into oblivion.⁶⁸

Patrilineal Groupings

Membership in a patrilinean is guaranteed by birth. But women change their patrilinean membership at marriage and become members of the patrilineans of their husbands. The Himba patrilinean is a named, non-totemic group which traces its ancestry to a remote and unknown person. Members of patrilineans share a set of taboos, favorite colors in cattle, and specific earmarks for cattle and goats.

Like matrilineans, patrilineans are unranked although one clan or rather lineage may be regarded as dominant in a specific area: the Kapika lineage of the Ohorongo clan is dominant on the Namibian and the Angolan side of the Kunene basin and the Tjambiru lineage of the Oherero clan is dominant in western Kaokoland. The dominance of the Ohorongo (kudu) patrilinean amongst the Okahandja Herero has been commented upon by various authors. Nowadays the red flag showing the kudu is proudly carried at parades of the *Truppenspieler* at the annual commemoration festivals. The kudu totem has grown into an emblem representing regional identity. Like in matrilinean affairs, acknowledged leaders are found on the lineage level. The patrilineages derive their moral justification as corporate groups reckoning and worshipping one ancestor line. The oldest member of the lineage is in charge of the holy fire (*okuruwo*) which symbolizes the presence of ancestors. At this fire he conducts healing sessions (*okuhuhura*) for clan members who feel sick. Fissions of lineages take place after three to five generations.

While matrilineality has ceased to be of major importance, patrilineal groupings still feature importantly. Last but not least patrilineal inheritance

⁶⁸ Vivello 1977. *Herero*, p. 63, remarks: "The de-emphasis of the matrilineal side of the double descent system is consonant with this shift in economic orientation ... the claim to authority over the matrilinean has been eroded."

still holds together a group of people who are related through their fathers. However, patrilineans also have lost in importance. While patrilineans were previously seen as the repositories of ritual knowledge nowadays religious beliefs are disconnected from patrilineans.

Chiefs and the Emergent State: The Accumulation of Herds and Clients

A striking aspect of Herero society is the fact that the *Otjiherero* word for chief, *Omuhona*, is a loan word derived from the Nama word */honkhoeb*, meaning master (see also Möhlig this volume)⁶⁹ – an aspect which indicates that chieftaincy as it exists in the present is a relatively recent development. Indeed, a characteristic of pre-colonial Herero societies was their strong decentralization, a characteristic which was shared with the pastoralist societies of East Africa.⁷⁰ Prior to the last quarter of the nineteenth century no centralized leadership, beyond that of a patrilinean head, the *Omukuru*, who was seen to be the living embodiment of the clan's ancestor, existed amongst Herero groups. Association with a specific patrilinean head was by virtue of his stock wealth, personality, and both his secular and religious ability. This association was tempered by environmental circumstances as well as by the activities of the patrilinean head. If the *Omukuru* failed to provide either secular or religious services, or if he was seen to have wronged a follower, there was nothing to stop followers from voting with their feet and leaving. Allied to this was the transhumant pastoralism which was necessary for survival. *Ozonganda*, settlements under the leadership of an *Omukuru*, were arranged around ecologically advantageous points, and tended to shift with the changing seasons. During the course of the nineteenth century this strong socio-political decentralization changed.

⁶⁹ Ohly, R. 1997. *The Destabilization of the Herero Language*. Windhoek, p. 7, and Lehmann, Rudolf 1951. *Die Häuptlingserfolgeordnung der Herero*, in: *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 76, pp. 94–102. In a later article, Lehmann discusses the various terms that exist within *Otjiherero* for leadership and leaders. Lehmann describes the term *omasa*, which can be glossed as power, strength, vitality, etc., as being crucial for an adequate understanding of leadership in Herero society: Lehmann, Rudolf 1955. *Das Häuptlingstum der Herero in Südwestafrika*, in: *Sociologus* 1955, pp. 28–42.

⁷⁰ Smith, A.B. 1992. *Pastoralism in Africa: Origins and Development Ecology*. Johannesburg, p. 187.

The Oorlam raids for cattle and people resulted in the impoverishment of numerous Herero who sought protection and support from Jonker Afrikaner or his lieges Tjamuaha and Kahitjene. The arrival of missionaries in central Namibia meant that henceforth Herero could seek support from the Rhenish missionaries, who were seen, by both the Oorlam and the Herero, as chiefs. As Henrichsen clearly indicates in his contribution there was an increasing centralization of power amongst those Herero associated with the mission, particularly after 1863 when Oorlam power was broken. By the time German colonial administration started in central Namibia there were four major Herero chieftaincies, each one founded upon earlier association with either the Oorlam or missionaries. Samuel Maharero, the son of Maharero Tjamuaha, used the advent of German colonialism to consolidate his power. Through co-operating with the German colonial administration, Samuel Maharero was able to ensure his installment as paramount chief of all of the Herero, a position which had not existed before.⁷¹

Following the Herero German war, the German colonial administration sought to abolish all forms of chieftaincy amongst the Herero. However, following the defeat of German forces in Namibia in 1915 by South Africa, new Herero leaders sprung to the fore almost immediately. Within the first year of the South African occupation, Hosea Kutako came to the fore as the most important leader of Herero living in Namibia. The South African administration appointed him as headman. In 1923, following the funeral of Samuel Maharero, Frederick Maharero appointed Hosea Kutako as regent. In effect Hosea Kutako, who was recognized as chief by the South African administration, ruled as paramount chief of the Herero until his death in 1970. In the 1970s, the South African Apartheid regime sought to gain the support of the Herero. As such, following the assassination of Clemens Kapuuu in 1978, the South African administration oversaw the installation of Riaruako as paramount chief of the Herero. Riaruako's position has been consistently questioned, and following the independence of Namibia in 1990, no less than four other Herero leaders have come to the fore claiming to be the rightful chiefs of particular sections of the Herero.

⁷¹ See J.B. Gewald's contribution as well as Gewald 1999. *Herero Heroes*, pp. 29–109.

4. Ancestors and Independent Churches

Since the earliest days of Herero ethnography Herero religion has been another focus of interest. The fact that most early ethnographers were missionaries in their main profession largely contributed to this overwhelming interest in religion.⁷² While traditional religious beliefs of the Herero were vividly described by numerous missionary ethnographers, factually their religion gave way to the missionary assault within fifty years. By about 1900 most Herero in central Namibia had denounced their traditional belief system. Ancestral fires and graves had gone into oblivion. The genocide of 1904–1906 completed the elimination of the traditional belief system. Only in the 1920s with the resurgence of Herero ethnicity was the 'traditional religion' rekindled. Gewald (this volume) describes how missionaries of the traditional religion moved about in the 1920s to show fellow Herero how to run the ancestral rites and how to set up the ancestral fire. Herero churches which sought for a syncretist version of traditional and modern beliefs developed since the 1930s. Today most Herero belong either to the Lutheran or the *Oruano*-Church.

The Pre-missionary Belief System

The reconstruction of religious ideas on the basis of missionary ethnography is problematic. However, due to the cruel interruption of the Herero tradition through German troops no recent oral traditions shed a light on pre-Christian beliefs and missionary reports remain the only source on pre-1900 religious beliefs. Missionary ethnographers interpreted ancestor worship as a degradation of monotheistic beliefs (Irle 1906:73).⁷³ Conventionally they started their presentations with concepts of a divine being and only then continued to talk about concepts of ancestors, while they conceded that for religious practice ancestral veneration was of much more importance.

⁷² It is of some interest that missionary ethnographers frequently treated Herero religion as something special and separate from Ovambo or Damara religious beliefs. Comparative evidence however, shows that there were broad similarities: in all groups ancestral veneration, graves and fires are of importance: see for example Vedder 1928: *Native Tribes*, pp. 61ff. on Damara, and Hahn *ibid.*, pp. 2ff. on Ovambo religion

⁷³ Irle 1906. *Die Herero*, p. 73.

Ancestral Worship

Central to the southwestern Bantu belief system is the veneration of ancestors. The belief in the power of ancestors has an impact on various fields of everyday life. Steven van Wolputte (this volume) shows how concepts of ancestral veneration among the Himba impact on the outlay of the homestead. The ancestral fire, frequently dubbed 'sacred fire', is the spiritual and ritual center of the dwelling. All other buildings and structures are oriented towards the ancestral fire. In particular Vedder and Irle are responsible for fleshing out European ideas on the sacredness of the ancestral fire. In a manner typical of him Vedder emphasizes the strict standards of traditional religious life when describing the ritual practice of the fire: "under no circumstances is it [i.e. the fire] allowed to die down as its extinction would be identical with that of the tribe."⁷⁴ Jacobson has shown in a fine-grained ethno-archaeological analysis that fire, main hut and cattle enclosure are the basic axis of the homestead.⁷⁵ Patrilineal and matrilineal relatives built their houses either on the left (matriline) or right (patriline) side of this axis. The ancestral fire is placed in most instances at the eastern end of the homestead. Only two clans revert this order and place their fires to the west (see van Wolputte for the complex spatial orientation of homestead structures). While the sacred fire is the place to address the ancestors the sacred objects related to ancestral veneration were stored in the main hut. Irle describes the sacred objects (i.e. *ozondume*, *otjiya*, *ozohongwe*) related to ancestral veneration in much more detail.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Vedder 1928. *Native Tribes*, p. 167, see also Irle, *Die Herero*, p. 78, which shares a similar analysis but with less emphasis on the alleged law-like character of tradition.

⁷⁵ Jacobson 1988. *Preliminary Notes*.

⁷⁶ Irle 1906. *Die Herero*, pp. 77ff. asserts that the sacred objects represent the ancestors "[...] so versinnbildlichen die heiligen Stöcke, die ozohongwe, Zweige des Omuvapuu (Rosinenstrauches), die Ahnen, [...] jeder Stab präsentiert einen Vorfahren, finden bei jeder Opferhandlung Verwendung, sobald ein Häuptling stirbt, wird ein neues Stäbchen dem Bündel hinzugefügt." Irle also describes the *otjiya*, another object used in ritual as consisting of the roots of a sacred bush (*omupandurura*). Irle got to see the *otjiya* finally when Kukuri in 1902 shortly before his death delivers these "pagan objects" to the missionary to become a Christian. The third category of important sacred objects to be stored in the central hut were also the sacred firesticks (*ozondume*) which were to be used to kindle the sacred fire.

At the ancestral fire the men of the homestead gather habitually in the evening and in the morning. The milk pails are brought here and a first tasting of the milk (*okumakera*) by the head of the homestead takes place at the fire. If one of the household members or any descendant of the patriline embodied in the ancestral fire should fall sick, a ritual is conducted at the fire (*okuhuhura*). Spatially, ritual activities always relate to the fire, they either take place on the left or on the right side depending on the kinship status of the group addressing the ancestors. The guests to the ritual are introduced to the ancestors at the bottom end of the holy fire and in the late afternoon of such a ceremony the final blessings are spoken in front of the fire.

The graves of the ancestors are another important focus in the ritual landscape of a Himba village. Bollig has shown how the outlay of Himba graves changed during this century – however, the graves always had crucial importance to the religious life of the people.⁷⁷ Amongst the Herero the graves of commoners seem to be of limited ritual importance. The graves of late famous chiefs like Maharero, Samuel and Zerauua have absorbed that function and today they have become eponymous ancestors of the Herero nation. While ancestral worship has been nationalized amongst the Herero since the early 1920s it has remained very much related to the clan among the Himba.

Wärnlöf (this volume) shows how the Himba make a dead person into an ancestor. The funeral itself is a ritual lasting several weeks. Amidst the praises for the dead and the ritualized wailing many oxen are sacrificed. They are solely slaughtered for their horns which are later put up at the grave. The person is dead – but not an ancestor yet. After a year of mourning a first commemoration ritual is conducted which will make the dead into an ancestor. During a complex ritual of several weeks the dead person is 'announced' to the ancestors. Then the grave is 'washed' with fat and milk from the 'scared cows' of the homestead. Tobacco is scattered over the grave and finally the gravestones are anointed with red ochre. At the end of this process the mourning period is formally ended and the lengthy negotiations on inheritance start. From now on the 'new' ancestor next to a number of other ancestors guarantees the well being of his living descendants and their herds. In case of need ancestors may be addressed as a

⁷⁷ Bollig, Michael 1997. *Contested Places, Graves and Graveyards in Himba Culture*, in: *Anthropos*, 92, pp. 35–50.

collective or as single ancestors. However, in case of neglect and disrespect ancestors may also bring disease over cattle and kin. Then they have to be consoled with offerings at the ancestral fire or at the graves.

Beliefs in a Supreme Being

The debate about the *Gottesbegriff* of the Herero concerned several missionaries at the turn of the century. Missionary Irle had 'discovered' that the term *Mukuru* which was conventionally used in church circles, did not have the meaning missionaries hoped it would have. Irle's discovery was that senior guardians of the sacred fire could also be named *Mukuru* and that the proper Herero term for God was *Ndjambi Karunga*. The debate did not change much and in the end it was decided not to adopt the more appropriate term in order 'not to confuse recent converts'. However, the debate sparked a number of accounts on Herero concepts of divinity. Early ethnographic accounts of the Herero belief system obviously had a use value for missionaries. They believed that only if they understood 'pagan beliefs' to some extent they could effectively convert people.

Most early accounts (Irle, Vedder) make a sharp divide between concepts of a deity (or sky-God) and ancestral worship. Luttig is the first ethnographer to hint at the relatedness of religious categories but also points out the vagueness and incompleteness of missionary statements.⁷⁸ The supreme being is usually rendered as a positive entity, Vedder even circumscribes Herero expressions with "heavenly kindness"⁷⁹. Many early ethnographers reported that there was a vague belief that *Ndjambi Karunga* was the giver of rain, and hence a guarantee for continued life on earth. Among the Himba beliefs in a divine being are less articulated than amongst the Herero, if we can believe early Herero missionaries. Himba rarely evoke their God in their prayers or in ritual practice. God (*Mukuru*, *Karunga* or *Ndjambi-Karunga*)⁸⁰ does not interfere much with affairs on earth and

⁷⁸ Luttig, H. G. 1933. *The Religious System and Social Organization of the Herero*. Utrecht, p. 7: "Mukuru is then according to the Herero some divinity other than Ndjambi Karunga; but as yet, as we shall presently see, Mukuru is essentially a part of their religious conception and does not exist independently of the divinity Ndambi Karunga."

⁷⁹ Vedder 1928. *Native Tribes*, p. 164.

⁸⁰ In ethnographic literature on the Herero several translations are given. Vedder 1928. *Native Tribes*, p. 165, and Estermann 1981. *Herero People*, pp. 144ff hold that only *Ndjambi Karunga* is the right term for the divine being and that *Mukuru*

people spend little time on theorizing if he created the world or not (Estermann 1981:144).⁸¹

The Missionary Assault

Initially the first Christian missionaries in central Namibia had no interest in attempting to deal with the Herero, let alone attempt to convert them. It was only through force of circumstances, namely the expulsion from the territories of the Oorlam chief Jonker Afrikaner, that initiated their interest in the Herero proper. In 1844 Rhenish missionaries Hahn and Kleinschmidt, expelled from Windhoek (Ai Gams), settled at Otjikango (Gross Barmen) and Otjimbingwe. Here, in a process mirrored and well documented in other parts of Africa, the missionaries gathered around them bands of followers. Effectively the settlements, became a haven for refugees, the destitute and the outcasts of the societies impacted upon by the activities of Jonker Afrikaner. Given that the missionaries first Herero conversion took place fifteen years after their establishment at Otjikango, it is debatable to what extent the Herero, who gathered to the settlements, were actually interested in the gospel being proclaimed by the missionaries. Instead, it is clear that the missionaries and their settlements, blessed by missionary alms, arms and ammunition, as well as access to trade routes and contacts independent of Jonker Afrikaner, became centers attracting all those opposed and rejected by the accepted authorities of the land. In effect missionaries took on the roles of chiefs in their own right.

Extensive missionary involvement in the trade wars of the 1850s, which culminated in the destruction of the Afrikaner polity in 1862, strengthened missionary relations with Herero who had been allied to the traders and furthered their status within the territory. By the 1860s the missionaries, instead of being merely surrounded by destitute dependants, found that a number of their former dependants had risen to positions of power within Herero society. Continued missionary association with these people, and in particular their children ensured that missionary teachings became evermore widespread within Herero society. The establishment of missionary schools as institutions of formal education had a profound impact on Herero society

denotes a venerated ancestor. Amongst the Himba I found little differentiation between both terms. While the Himba from Angola used the term *Njamb Karunga* or *Karunga*, Kaokolanders preferred the term *Mukuru*.

⁸¹ Estermann 1981. *Herero People*, p. 144.

Herero royals, faced as they were by the ever-increasing expansion of their power and trading links with the Cape Colony following 1862, were anxious to have their children literate and well versed in the ways of the wider world. In the 1860's children and relatives of the Herero royals attended the elite school, the *Augustineum*. By the 1870s settlements in southern Hereroland could be divided into two sections, Christian and Herero, and missionaries played an important role within the politics of society. Herero royals, such as Manasse Tjisisseta⁸², who would later be chief of Omaruru, or Wilhelm Maharero, son of Maharero Tjamuaha chief of Okahandja, were missionary evangelists.

During the course of the 1880s the greatness of Herero society as it had emerged in the 1860s and developed in the 1870s came under increasing pressure. Sustained raiding by the forces of Hendrik Witbooi, recurrent droughts, the continuing degradation of environmental conditions, coupled to the ever more prominent presence of German settlers and colonial administration, meant that Herero society came under increasing pressure. The devastating effect of the rinderpest epidemic on Herero cattle herds, was mirrored by a massive impact on Herero belief systems at the time. The rinderpest epidemic effectively broke the economic basis of Herero society, and when, in the aftermath of the epidemic, Hereroland was visited upon by drought and successive waves of disease that took away both man and beast, Herero faith in the beliefs of their ancestors became evermore tenuous. The conversion to Christianity of chief Andreas Kukuri in 1902, was feted by the missionaries as a victory and highpoint in their struggle. Kukuri's conversion to Christianity, did little to save the Herero from cataclysm. Following the outbreak of the Herero-German war, Kukuri became one of the thousands of Herero captured, abused and hung.

In the aftermath of the war Rhenish missionaries were faced with an unprecedented wave of conversions. Literally thousands of Herero survivors, predominantly women and children confined in concentration camps converted to Christianity and to save some measure of identity beyond the control of the German colonial and military administration.

Himba in northern Namibia hardly got influenced by missionary efforts until the 1970s. The South African Native Affairs administration inhibited several attempts by the Finnish Lutheran church to extend their missionary efforts from western Ovamboland to Kaokoland. In the early 1960s yet

⁸² de Vries 1999. *Manasse Tjisisseta*.

another appeal was turned down by the administration. However, it was conceded that the church might run a small hospital in the remote region. In the 1970s the Gereformeerde Kerk established itself in Opuwo mainly servicing the soldiers which had been placed in Opuwo and the few converts in the township. Lately numerous fundamentalist protestant churches (Adventist, Pentecostal etc.) have stepped up their efforts in Opuwo and a Catholic mission station started servicing mainly the many Angolar refugees in the area. However, in the 1990s most Himba still adhered to their ancestral beliefs first of all and most Herero of southern Kaokoland followed the principles of the Oruano church.

Religious Syncretism

When South African forces overran the German colonial army in 1915, the majority of Herero living in Namibia were professing Christians attached to the Rhenish missionary society. Eight years later, when Samuel Maharero was buried in Okahandja in 1923, most Herero abandoned the mission church, but not their faith. As the German forces were driven out of central Namibia, Herero absconded from their employers and streamed back into the lands of their ancestors. In so doing they moved beyond the control and immediate influence of the mission. In addition, under the new political dispensation, the Herero were no longer dependant upon the mission for protection or for some form of identity beyond the control of the German colonial administration.

Settled again on the lands of their ancestors, Herero turned to the past. In the run up to the funeral of Samuel Maharero many Herero leaders argued that the reasons for their downfall were to be found in their rejection of the ways of their ancestors and their embrace of the ways of the mission. However, in seeking to re-institute the ways of their ancestors, most Herero who had been converted to Christianity were unable to reject their conversion outright. Instead, guided by a large number of former Herero mission evangelists, Herero retained elements of Christianity and explicitly justified their beliefs on the basis of Old Testament texts. In so doing Herero could justify the re-introduction of circumcision, polygamy, the *Okuruo* and a host of other matters.

Nominally a large number of Herero remained members of the Rhenish mission church. However, the ever present demands of the church for funding from within the community, as well as the Churches' perceived indifference to Herero suffering at the hands of colonists and colonial rule,

led to ever-increasing dissatisfaction on the part of the Herero, vis-a-vis the Rhenish mission.⁸³ Following World War Two, things came to a head. As the Rhenish mission called for support for Germans in war ravaged Germany, the leader of the Rhenish mission in Namibia, Dr. Heinrich Vedder, was appointed to the South African senate, ostensibly to represent the interests of Black Namibians. In the face of ever more draconian Apartheid legislation and Dr. Vedder's move, the Herero abandoned the mission church en masse and established their own *Oruano* church. Within *Oruano* Herero could worship the God and Jesus Christ through the ancestral fire and practice what they believed to be the correct ways of living as indicated by their ancestors and the Old Testament books of Leviticus and Isaiah.

At present the activities of pentecostalist preachers, with their narrow emphasis on the nuclear family and the New Testament, as well as the activities of the Zionist Christian Church, are making inroads into Herero society; particularly those who are totally urbanized and have no direct links or claims to a rural settlement. In the ever-increasing social confusion brought about by post-independence political marginalization, job discrimination, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and other factors, the messages of the pentecostalists and the ZCC appear to hold the solutions to the problems confronting the urban Herero in the 1990s.⁸⁴

⁸³ There was a strong belief within the Herero community that this funding was used for Germans in Germany, particularly during the Great Depression and the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. As a consequence missionaries were often asked: "Where is the money?"

⁸⁴ The ZCC, southern Africa's biggest independent church, is characterised by its penchant for having its male members dress and march in military styled uniforms, as well as its strict moral code of no alcohol, cigarettes, pre-marital sex and so forth.

II. The Emergence of Pastoral Strategies and Social Developments in Southwestern Africa