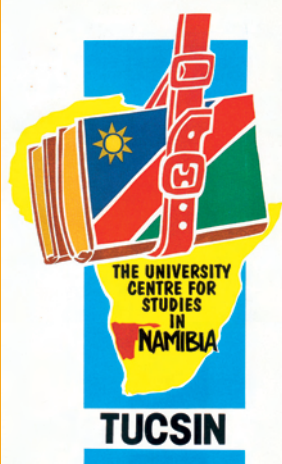


Heritage and Cultures in Modern Namibia – In-depth Views of the Country

A TUCSIN Festschrift



Cornelia Limpricht & Megan Bieseke (Eds.)

Klaus Hess Publishers

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Klaus Hess Publishers
Windhoek – Goettingen

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Klaus Hess Publishers/Verlag
Windhoek – Goettingen
www.k-hess-verlag.de

ISBN Namibia 978-99916-57-27-1

ISBN Europe 978-3-933117-39-7

Content

Preface	5
<i>Issues concerning the whole country</i>	
Wade Pendleton	
Migration and Urban Governance in Windhoek	9
Michael Bollig	
Beyond Development – Global Visions and Local Adaptations of a Contested Concept	23
Jürgen Richter & Ralf Vogelsang	
Rock Art in North-Western Central Namibia – its Age and Cultural Background	37
<i>Issues arranged along a regional approach from north to south</i>	
Eileen Kose	
“We are not Looking for Diamonds – We are Looking for Red Stones”	
Archaeology of Iron in Kavango	47
Michael Pröpper	
Trust, Sharing and Cooperation in the Central Kavango Region, North-East Namibia.	
Linking the Results of Experimental Economics with Ethnographic Research	64
Wilhelm J.G. Möhlig	
Naming Modern Concepts in RuManyo (Bantu Language of the Kavango)	78
Hildi Hendrickson	
Toward a Cross-Cultural Analysis of Dress in 19 th and 20 th Century in Namibia	88
Glenn C. Conroy	
The Discovery of <i>Otavipithecus</i> , Southern Africa’s First Fossil Ape	103
Julia Pauli & Michael Schnegg	
Living Together, Writing Together: An Ethnographic Project	
on Culture and History in Fransfontein	109
Megan Biesele	
The Nyae Nyae Village Schools Project of the Ju/’Hoan San:	
A Community-Based Education Programme in Namibia	116
Richard B. Lee	
A Brief history of the TUCSIN-Based UNAM-Toronto Programme	
on Social and Cultural Aspects of HIV/AIDS	127
Jason Owens & Monica Nambelela	
Can’t Namibia’s Ex-GDR (Ex-)Kids be Called Adults in this,	
the Year Namibia Itself Turned 18 Years Old?	132
Cornelia Limpricht & Hartmut Lang	
Farms and Families – Land Tenure in Rehoboth	141
Allan G. Morris	
The Cairns of Rehoboth, Central Namibia	155
Duncan Miller	
Searching for the Source of the Oanob Copper	170
Sabine Klocke-Daffa	
The Modernity of Traditionalists. Culture Change, Identity	
and the Impact of the State among the Namibian Khoekhoen	174
Ralf Vogelsang	
The Rock-Shelter “Apollo 11” – Evidence of Early Modern Humans	
in South-Western Namibia	183
List of Authors	194

Farms and Families – Land Tenure in Rehoboth

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The former Rehoboth *Gebiet* contains about 1.3 million hectares (13,000 square kilometers) of privately used farmland, representing 1.9 per cent of Namibia's farming area.¹ Although the "Rehoboth *Gebiet*" ceased to exist with independence, we still favour this name for several reasons:

The Basters have their own culture due to their peculiar history. Their exodus from the Cape and their peaceful settling in the area in 1870 has to be mentioned.² They developed political institutions even before colonial times and drew up a constitution.³ Thus, they perceive their own iden-

tity and heritage (Britz 1970). A certain territory was unanimously given to them which was later contested in wars and reduced by two colonial regimes, but they managed to retain a major part thereof until Namibia became independent.⁴ They are the only indigenous group in Namibia who had developed land tenure of privately owned farms and plots by the end of the 19th century after more than 20 years of communal farming. Even today this distinguishes the Rehoboth *Gebiet* and its Baster farmers from other Namibian indigenous groups and their traditional communal farming system (fig.1).

Fig. 1: The rainy season of 2008 – a view of Rehoboth seen from the south.





Fig. 2: A colonial map from 1909 showing ownership of land
(German Besitzstandskarte, Courtesy of National Archives, Windhoek)

Distribution of farms to families

No exact date of the decision to distribute farms to individuals can be given (Lang 1999: 322). From the earliest land register in Rehoboth, dated 1906, it can be concluded that distribution was a silent process undertaken in more or less closed session started by the leaders of Rehoboth, the *Kaptein* Hermanus van Wyk and his Council, as early as 1890.⁵ This process gained some speed only from 1895 onwards, when nearly 80 farms⁶ were granted to Baster families. Even Missionary Friedrich Heidmann (Britz 1999: 12, 21), loyal spiritual leader of the community who had joined the Basters when they departed from the Northern Cape, was not aware of this privatization process of land in the beginning. Writing regularly reports to mission headquarters in Barmen (Wuppertal, Germany) he mentioned the privatization of land for the first time in April 1898:

*“Quite a time ago the Basters made the decision to divide their Gebiet into individually-owned farms. As right as this decision might have been in improving the standard of their territory, the consequences still might be fatal for some individual owners, and in the end, for the whole community. (...) Several folks face awful difficulties at the moment, since their debts [with white traders / CL] are not covered by their livestock. A few have already expressed the idea of mortgaging or selling their farms in order to save their livestock if possible.”*⁷

Heidmann was right to argue especially about the disadvantages of farm distribution since registered farms could be easy targets of compensation of debts of Baster farmers. By 1905 the Basters had already lost one sixth of their territory to German traders.⁸

The concept of privately owned farms was well known to the Basters. Already in the mid-19th century – still farming communally in the Northern Cape – the Basters faced its negative effects when white *voortrekkers* succeeded in pushing them out of the area around De Tuin (Britz 1999: 10). By the end of the 19th century – now in Rehoboth – the Baster *Gebiet* became increasingly surrounded by German settlers and their surveyed farms (fig. 2). In addition the German colonial administration contested the bor-

ders of the Baster territory tending to decrease its area.⁹ These various experiences definitely contributed to the idea to distribute farms to individuals as a measure of protection.

Who could apply for a farm?

Every ordinary (Baster) citizen and head of household, as well as widows, were entitled to apply to the *Kaptein* and his council for 7,000 hectares. Members of the *Kaptein's* council received 10,000 hectares. The Council and *Kaptein* then issued the ownership deed, the so-called *Plaaspapier* (Afrikaans, title of property). This document certified that if the farm were to be measured and the size of the farm proved to be smaller than specified, the owner had to settle for fewer hectares, and that the owner of the farm was not allowed to sell his farm without the consent of *Kaptein* and Council.¹⁰ The farms were not surveyed and had vague boundaries, a situation maintained by the Basters intentionally until the end of the 1930s (van den Heuvel 1985).

Which families applied?

Out of the land register of 1906 it can be seen that until 1894 the *Kaptein's* family, van Wyk, got a grant of six farms and the Beukes- and Koopman families one farm each (fig. 3). By the end of the 19th century most of the old families who had come on the trek, had applied for a farm. It is obvious that the largest family-groups, like the van Wyk's and Beukes' got the majority of farms. But the different dates of granting a farm probably reflect two different kinds of reasons: Perhaps some families hesitated to apply because they opposed the idea of owning land individually, since they feared possible land compensations, i.e. expropriations for debts. It could also reflect the fact that the whole community was not well-informed in public about the distribution, which thus was noticed only in course of time.

However, private landholding developed to be a common pattern within the community of Rehoboth, institutionally laid down in the amendment of the constitution of Rehoboth in 1917.¹¹ Private land tenure became part of the Baster self-image and led them to cling even to small pieces of land, as we will see.

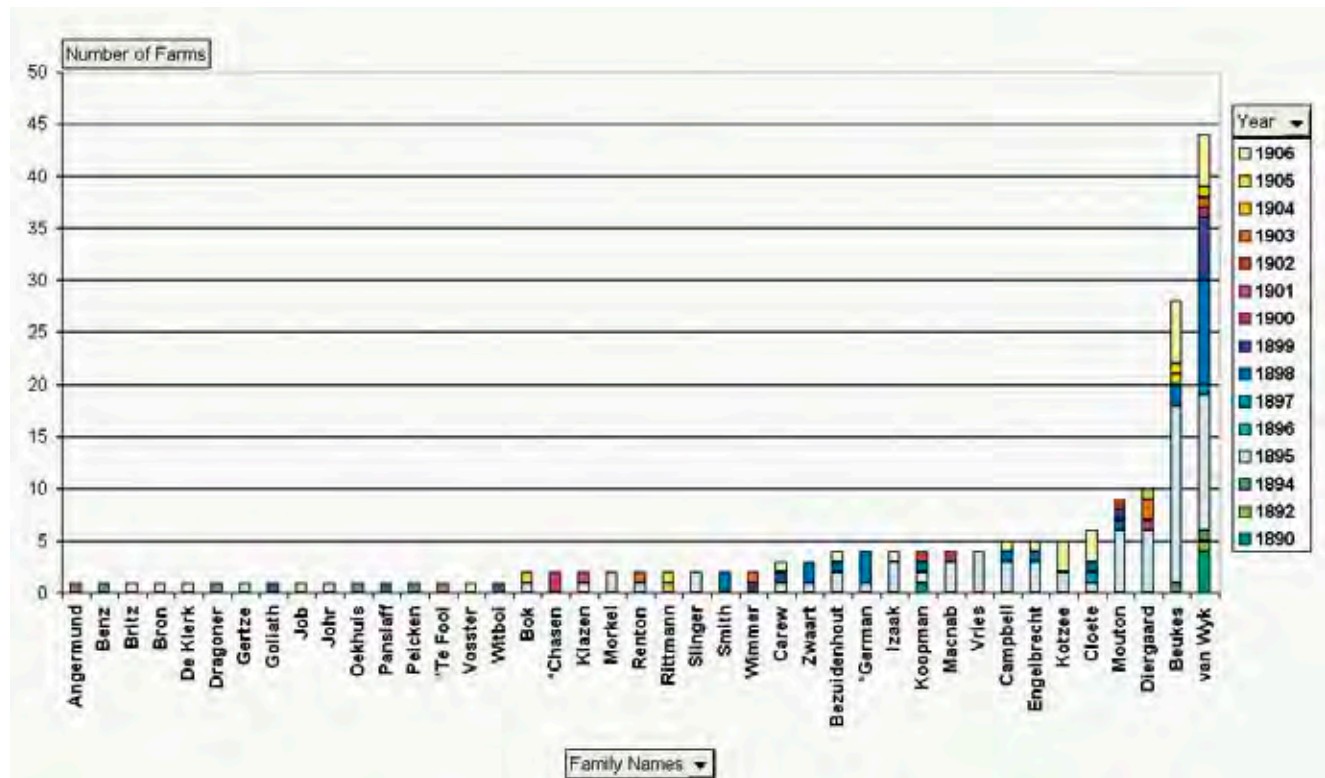


Fig. 3: 176 Farms were distributed to Baster-families between 1890 and 1906

Note: The list consists of two sources: 1) The Memorial-Book (Register of Lands), Deeds Office Rehoboth, from 1906 with 163 entries until 1906, 2) Nat. Archive Windhoek: Voss & Scott KRT – “Boek Nr. 5” – additional entries with dates until 1906.

* Te Fooi = DeToit / De Tooi; * Chasen = probably Clasen / Claasen; * German = probably Jarman

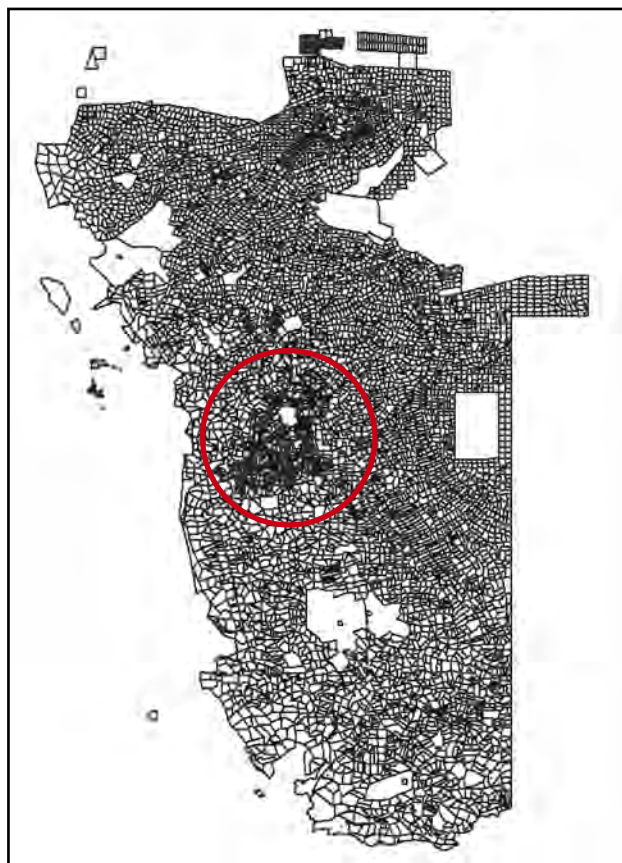


Fig. 4: Density of Farms of Rehoboth Area
(Map of Namibian Farms, Courtesy of Ministry of Agriculture, Namibia, 2005)

The Rehoboth farm system and its typology today

On a farm map of Namibia, the Rehoboth *Gebiet* is easily identified due to the fact that the farms are heavily fragmented and subdivided (fig. 4). What caused this density?

By the end of the 19th century, the Basters had enough space to grant every Baster applicant a farm of 7,000 ha. Twenty-five years later, with a population growth rate of 3%, the limits were reached, all farmland had been distributed (Lang 1998). Combined with rules of inheritance giving each child an equal share of the farm, the farms became heavily subdivided within three generations. This process could continue for up to five generations (Limpricht 2002). During apartheid even wealthier Basters were not allowed to buy land outside the *Gebiet* and thus political constraints added to land scarcity. These driving forces, fertility, inheritance rules and political constraints brought about two types of farms – leading to a third type:¹²

- 1 – Estate farms under multiple ownership.
- 2 – Small farms under single ownership
- 3 – And a few fairly large consolidated farms under single ownership

Type 1 – So-called estate farms under multiple ownership are inherited farms, where all owners are related by blood or marriage. If several owners share a farm, whether surveyed or not, they each possess a portion of the total. Their individually-inherited hectares are evaluated and registered even today as *undivided shares*, which seems to be a peculiarity of land holdings in Rehoboth. Consequently the individual has no right to a specific piece of land. For example, ten owners with undivided shares of an 800-hectare farm would not be able to identify their own 80 hectares. This explains a broad potential for conflicts, as there are farms with more than 50 owners. The farm has to be used jointly, as a whole with negative effects on grazing.

Type 2 – Small farms – smaller than 4,000 ha under single ownership, managed usually on a part-time basis: These are farms fragmented by inheritance but one single owner managed to buy out co-owners and register the farm. They face ecological and economical problems. Registration by a single owner counteracts fragmentation.

The Basters have felt this negative economic effect of fragmentation from the 1950s and 1960s onward:

Type 3 – The rather large consolidated farm, run by a single owner, sometimes full-time, with a size of more than 4,000 ha developed only rarely. These are farms which started as estate farms but one heir managed to buy out other relatives and even succeeded in purchasing or exchanging neighbouring parcels of land in order to fuse all the parcels into a new farm, registered under a new number.

These three types of farms not only impact on biodiversity but also on the quality and quantity of economic output.

How are these three types of farms being spread over the Rehoboth area and how representative is this grouping?



Fig. 5: The Rehoboth Gebiet: Survey-2000-Farms and Odendaal-Farms

red = Estate farm with many owners
yellow = Farm, run part-time by a single owner ($\leq 4,000\text{ha}$)
green = Large (consolidated) farm, run full-time by a single owner ($> 4,000\text{ha}$)
blue hatching = Odendaal farms (mean size 2,400 ha)

Data gained from our survey conducted in 2000 give a clear indication of these three main types of farms (fig. 5). The survey concludes that farm size and ownership structure – single versus multiple ownership – are independent factors. Thus one finds farms larger than 4,000 ha with multiple owners as well as smaller ones. But in our survey sample single ownership dominates the farm system while multiple ownership is found on a quarter of farms.

In the Rehoboth area, 4,000 ha can be seen as a potential threshold of farm size for starting as a full time farmer. This depends, of course, on individual aspirations related to the standard of living. This threshold is vague because there are full-time farmers on farms of 2,500 ha and the biggest farm of 11,000 ha was run part-time by a shop owner.

The most dramatic result was that fragmentation, although halted, is still part of the system since roughly 80% of the Rehoboth Gebiet is used by farms smaller than 4,000 ha.¹³ Only 20% of the Gebiet comprises farms of more than 4,000 ha.¹⁴

Farms up to a size of 4,000 ha and their owners

Single and multiple owners of farms smaller than 4,000 have attributes in common, they also have different problems which require different solutions.

Looking first at the similarities we prefer to describe “tendencies” and have to be careful with generalisations, as there are exceptions. In both cases it is difficult to farm viably; the smaller the farm, the lower its output. The input costs are high, especially investments like water installations. There is a tendency to overuse the natural resources. We estimate that part-time farmers, whether single or multiple owner, have limited knowledge of pasture management. The less time spent on the farm, the less experience about changing pastures. The social networks and flow of information are a reflection of the Rehoboth (farmer) community, which is very individualistic. The whole society is split into different groups according to political and church-related issues as well as to those who commute daily or weekly e.g. to Windhoek, those who work permanently outside Rehoboth, and those who stay in town. Although this pattern is typical of small and modern communities, it actually hampers joint efforts of the local Farmer Associations or the main institutional stakeholder in Rehoboth, the Ministry of Agriculture, to reach the farmers.

Certain “transaction costs” are high: Transaction costs are not limited to the currently affordable costs of transferring or registering a farm at the Rehoboth Deeds Office,¹⁵ but include the expenses involved in wanting to consolidate a piece of land. Endless negotiations, even quarrels with neighbours or relatives and high hectare-prices are involved. These takes time, sometimes years or even decades.

What different types of farmers do we find?

To begin with single owners of farms up to 4,000 ha, mostly managed on a part-time basis, we find three groups of farmers: the farming pensioner, the well-trained employee or craftsman, and often highly trained self-employed individuals.

The farming pensioner, who quite often gets an additional pension, usually represents the only type of single owner who lives on his farm permanently. The trained employee, maybe of public services, or entrepreneur or craftsman, belongs to a second group who seeks to increase his family’s income, as a weekend farmer: He has loved farming since childhood and would prefer to live as a full-time farmer if he had sufficient land. Businessmen or -women, shop owners and doctors form a third group of owners, who often use the farm to reduce their income tax return. Here the farm has to be seen as luxury item or as a hobby. The output is probably smaller than

Differences of farms up to 4,000 ha under single and under multiple ownership:

Single-Owner Farms	Multiple-Owner Farms
One boss = decision maker Highly valued by the farmers: “die eie baas wees”	Many bosses = decision makers All owners are related by blood or marriage and can trace their ancestry to the original owner. The oldest family members (main heirs) make the decisions.
One sort of pasture management	They use the farm together (as best they can manage). This can be done in a separate way or jointly.
Carrying the full risk of decisions.	Ruthless or careless relatives are able to put off their own risk of overstocking on the shoulders of co-owners. ¹
Less tendency to overuse pastures More palatable grasses and higher biomass ²	Higher tendency to overuse pastures Less palatable grasses and less biomass
More farm installations / more investments	Less farm installations / less investments
More output	Less output – closer to subsistence farming
High tendency to pass the farm as a whole to one child, either by will or by selling it to one child.	Because of inheritance the farm is fragmented further.

the input. He or she visits the farm once or twice a month.

Looking in comparison at types of multiple owners of farms up to 4,000 ha and even larger, we also could distinguish among three similar groups, but all of them share a poorer background. These are firstly groups of elderly people and subsistence farmers, often poorly educated and depending on state pensions. They live under rather poor conditions without having alternatives. People of working age can be split into two fractions, lower and average trained people: Lower-qualified people of working age tend to work as migrant workers. Poorly educated, they worked for South African mines in the past or as farm workers, and are nowadays seen as handymen in the building business. They visit the farms sometimes on weekends and especially during holidays. Most of them would not consider selling their share, which they see as their home and a place to stay or to leave to their children. Last but not least is the average trained employee, small entrepreneur or craftsman, who gains nearly no income from his strip of land, but hesitates to sell it. He keeps some livestock

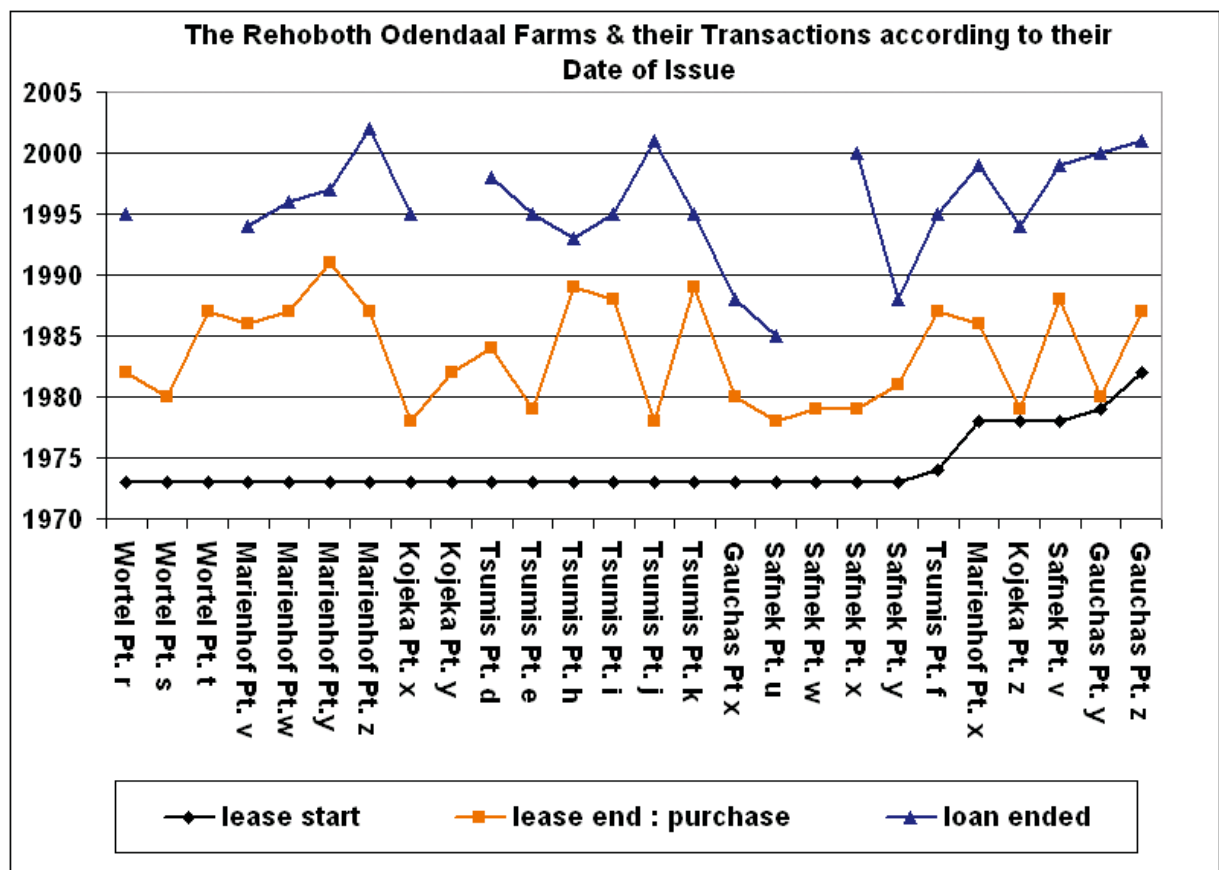
for his own consumption. He values his piece of land as a retreat in case of unemployment or retirement. He rarely visits the farm.

The Rehoboth Odendaal-farms – A good example in land re-distribution?

The so-called Odendaal-farms can also be included in the group mentioned above: farms with less than 4,000 ha, today, all except one, run by single owners. Since all of them share a common origin, they can be seen as a separate subgroup with a mean size of 2,400 ha each. This makes them valuable for comparative research, of which some first results are here described (fig. 5 & 6).

During the late 1960s, the South African Government purchased six¹⁸ white owned farms – the so-called white islands of the Baster *Ge-biet* – comprising more than seventy thousand hectares.¹⁹ They were subdivided into twenty-six units, which were leased and later sold to Baster farmers. The idea to incorporate these farms into the Baster homeland came from the South African official F.H. Odendaal in 1964.²⁰ Within the

Fig. 6



framework of South African apartheid ideology and its racist goal of separate development, the Baster homeland was consolidated, meaning vacated by whites. “Deserving Basters” could apply for these units.²¹

How did these *white islands* come into being?

Originally these farms belonged to Basters. Although all but one were sold during German colonial times, there are different reasons to be found for the sale of the farms concerned:

There is the case where all the heirs decided to sell the farm Safnek in 1901; or a single heir, Groot Gill Diergaardt, decided in 1910 to sell his inherited farm Marienhof to Franz Lisse in order to develop his second farm.²² Quite typical is the situation of Mina Britz, who was forced to sell her farm Gauchas to the trader Berger in 1905 to pay off her debts. At least – and this is untypical – she got a relatively fair price after taking Berger to court to examine not only his book-keeping regarding her debts but also those of her new husband W. Lucas, a British national. The court did not support Berger’s assertion that she should be responsible for debts her husband had incurred before their marriage.²³ Another common case involved so-called gift-farms (*geskenkplase*). Foreigners or Germans who had worked e.g. for the German *Schutztruppe* (army of protection) were allowed, according to the Baster tradition, to apply for Rehoboth *Burgerskap* (residency and citizenship) and, in case of marriage with a Baster woman, the Baster-German couple received a farm as a gift. This happened with the farm Tsumis in 1903:

*“Kaptein and Council hand over the place Tsumis, approximately 7,000 ha large, into the property of the settler G. Wahl due to his marriage with the Baster girl Susanna Mouton.”*²⁴

An unusual case of an exchange of two farms happened in 1952. The white owner of farm Niep, B. Henkert, and M. Dentlinger, owner of Kojeka, got permission from the South African Administration to exchange their farms. Henkert received the undeveloped 7,000 ha-farm Kojeka and Dentlinger the fully-equipped farm Niep of half the size and 2,000 £. In addition, farm Niep had to be included in the Baster territory.

Until 1965 the farms Gauchas, Safnek, Kojeka and Wortel remained in „white hands“, whereas Tsumis was purchased in 1968 and Marienhof in 1970 as part of the above-mentioned Odendaal Plan’s implementation. After sometimes long and hard negotiations over prices and the soft pressure of possible expropriation, the farms were transferred to the property of the Government of South West Africa, institutionally controlled by the South African Administration and its Department of Coloured, Rehoboth and Nama Relations until the late 1970s.²⁵ In 1978/1979 the newly installed Rehoboth (Homeland) Government under Hans Diergaardt took over the administrative responsibility.²⁶

The Realisation of the Odendaal Plan

The South African Administration and later the Rehoboth Government and its director of agriculture implemented the Odendaal Plan’s allotment of farms to Basters. REKOR (Rehoboth Investment Corporation), founded in 1969 with South African capital funds, provided among other things grants to purchase the farms as well as technical assistance in agricultural management.²⁷ The first step was the subdivision of these rather large and mainly well-developed farms into smaller surveyed parcels, which ranged from little more than 2,000 to nearly 2,800 ha. The distribution of fences – camps and borders – had to be reorganised. Each unit had to get access to a water point. Existing dams, reservoirs and boreholes had to be distributed equally as far as possible. On paper, a detailed planned infrastructure with camps and water points was made available for each unit by end of the 1970s. The single units were advertised by the Magistrate of Rehoboth, until 1978 acting for the Department of Coloured, Rehoboth and Nama Relations, at all schools in the Rehoboth *Gebiet* and in newspapers like ‘*Die Suidwester*’. Within two months time Rehoboth Burgers, male and female, could apply for these new farms. The Baster community showed great interest, leading to per farm lists having more than 30 applicants. The Magistrate and the Baster Advisory Council held discussions and by voting reduced the list to up to 10 applicants. There are cases in which the Magistrate afterwards changed the rankings on lists

or cut them to four applicants. He argued that the Advisory Council was not free of bias. The final decision about the applicant chosen was made by the Department of Agricultural Credit and Land Tenure, SWA Branch, in Windhoek.²⁸

Within nine years at most the South African Administration managed to purchase and to subdivide the *white islands*. Nearly all farms were allotted with a five-year lease and an option-to-buy-contract to Baster farmers in 1973, after they had successfully got over a one year period of a lease-on-probation (fig. 6, black line).²⁹ Five farms were given up by the first lessee for different reasons and the farms were distributed again: 3 in 1978, 1 in 1979, 1 in 1982.

Main Rules and Regulations for the Allotment of Odendaal Farms

Most of the rules were applicable both for the one year probationary-lease-contract as well as for the five-year lease-with-option-to-buy-contract. Even after the applicant had purchased the farm, probably all³⁰ of them with a mortgage bond by REKOR, he or she had to accept the following:

- The leaseholder/prospective buyer was obliged to build a house within the first six months after his allotment and stay on his farm 11 months per year. Part-time farming was not allowed nor were additional jobs or professions that necessitated absence from the farm. He or she was not permitted to sublet his farm or parts of it nor could the lessee take in stock from third parties. Workers and *bywoners*³¹ needed to sign a work contract which had to be approved. An attached *grondbewaringsplan* (plan to conserve the land) made sure that certain stocking rates were used for each unit. At any time the lessee and his farm could be inspected
- The lessee had to prove successful farming activities; otherwise the allotment could be cancelled in the worst case, or in uncertain cases the lease could be extended up to 10 years to give the lessee a second chance. Investments and improvements of installations had to be implemented continuously, even by force at leaseholder's expense.³² Dry wood could be used as firewood or for farm installations like fences but not for additional income strategies, which had to be approved in advance.

- The various fees for the lease contracts were moderate, even cheap: For the probation phase of one year "2,00 R" had to be paid while the payments for the five-year lease-with-option-to-buy escalated; the first year was free of charge, until the end of the third year 2%, until the end of the fifth 3.5%, and thereafter up to 10 years 4% of the respective purchase sum had to be paid.³³
- The earliest a successful lessee could give notice to use his option to purchase was shortly before his first five-year contract expired. In this case, the investments made on the farm were not be less than 800 R; a quarter of the respective purchase sum would be better. But the lessee was also free to opt for a further five-year lease and could then at any time give notice to exercise the option to buy. The next step was to apply for a title of property and a simultaneous registration of a mortgage bond in favour of the state, and later regular loan payments.³⁴

On paper the rules sound rather strict. The Odendaal-graph, figure 6, portrays per unit as well as when the option to buy the allotment was exercised (red line); amazingly there is a difference of 13 years between the earliest and the latest date of purchase. At the moment we are unable to decide whether this interval describes a certain freedom to exercise this right, and could therefore be a reflection of personal strategies of an individual owner, or could it be a sign of constraint, meaning that the South African Administration and later the Government of Rehoboth did not allow an earlier purchase. Ten of 26 Odendaal-farmers managed to start the purchase process in 1980 or earlier, i.e. within a maximum of seven years, but only three farmers from the Southern Rehoboth *Gebiet* had paid off their farms before independence (fig. 6, blue line).³⁵ The blue line of the graph is based on uncertain data, in that not only the pay-off dates for 4 farms are missing, but also due to the fact that these are only registration dates of erased mortgage bonds and the loan could even have been paid off earlier, but the owner had not been interested in having it erased earlier. Thus, these data should not be overestimated, but after independence there must have been a majority of farms with unpaid

loans from REKOR since the new Government of Namibia passed the Rehoboth Bill in 1996 in order to accommodate indebted farmers within the structure of the newly founded Land Bank.³⁶ In the case of two farmers of Kojeka Portion “z” and Gauchas Portion “y”, obviously, the South African Administration deviated from the rule of a five-year lease and allowed the purchase after one year’s probation. Thirteen Farmers bought late; probably they were hit by the drought of the early 1980s.

What becomes clear is that during the process of allotment the Basters were not lumped all together but treated with individual solutions; otherwise we might have found a correlation of the different transactions of leasehold, purchase and pay off (fig. 6).

Did and does the reality reflect rules and regulations of the Odendaal-allotments?

After a first screening of all Odendaal farm- and deed-files and in interviewing some of the original owners we focus here on some preliminary results of aspects like farm planning, subsidies and survival strategies of the Odendaal-owners, using mainly the case of Farm Marienhof.

Originally 11,099 ha, Marienhof was divided up into five pieces (portions) in 1971. Today three of the original Odendaal-owners are more or less active, but rather old; one unit was sold to a third party, while one unit was passed as gift to the son. This leads to an ownership structure which is quite typical for Odendaal farms: 2005; 65% of the farms were owned by the first owner (2008 46%). Little more than a third of these farms were transferred to family members of the first owner by 2008, a gain of 15% between 2005 and 2008;³⁷ up to 2008 22% were sold to unrelated third parties.

In 1973 all Marienhof units were allotted to Baster farmers with a five-year lease contract with option-to-buy. Two years later, one female lessee had to dissolve the contract due to severe illness, hoping that the daughter could carry on. Since the daughter was not a registered Baster woman, the farm was advertised in 1976 and allotted again in 1978.³⁸

Regarding farm planning, the Odendaal rules are stricter on paper than in reality: Some owners

followed the envisaged detailed farm-plans made by the local agricultural department which made provision for the location of camps, boreholes, water distribution, and rotational pasture management, while others did so only partly or did next to nothing. There is at the moment no case to be found where farm planning was enforced, but out of the archival material it has become clear that whenever subsidies were claimed, e.g. for farm investments like camp fences, owners had to stick to the plans and also to certain stocking rates. All farm investments had to be pre-financed by owners either with their own funds or loans from REKOR that made provision for long-term loans up to 25 years on an interest rate of 3.5%.³⁹ Quite surprisingly the system of subsidies seems to be grading, but cannot yet fully be described:

There are cases where the invested sum, especially for camp fences and water installations, was completely subsidised. The full amount was paid to the owner or to REKOR. But other times only a percentage of the sum was paid or it was stated that due to limited available funds the owner could only expect amount “x”. The two latter cases can probably explain why not all owners applied for subsidies as they could not handle risk having to accept greater regulation. One Odendaal-owner is proud even today of having managed to develop his farm without subsidies. Others regret not having invested more e.g. in jackal-proof interior fences where the small stock could move without being guarded by a herdsman.

The survival strategies of the Odendaal farmers

In the 1970s all farmers were lucky to participate in the still-booming karakul sheep pelt market. All of them had a strong focus on karakul breeding. The 1980s brought about a change with declining karakul prices and they were hit by the drought of the early 1980s.⁴⁰ Some, especially from southern farms, lost all their livestock and had to start again, in a more diversified manner, most of them additionally in the direction of meat production.⁴¹ Overstocking the farm developed nevertheless into a survival strategy. Archival records show several instances of owners being criticized for 100%-overstocking. They

received a written reminder or warning that subsidies could only be paid out if the owner proved an additional contract of lease of a separate farm, which could explain the high animal numbers, otherwise he had to reduce his livestock.

Stock inspections were held, but obviously not with full authority by the local agricultural department, as we can see in the following case. Only one of the Marienhof farms still has the full records of stock numbers for the last 30 years. During this period the owner met the prescribed stocking rate of 3 ha per small stock unit (SSU) only six times, although this stocking rate was not even high (fig. 7).⁴² In comparison with the stocking rate of Farm Duruchaus (fig. 8), a 4,000 ha farm, it becomes clear that the size of the Marienhof farms, containing 2,000 to 2,700 ha, is too small to farm ecologically and to survive at the same time. It is irrelevant that climatically Duruchaus is situated a bit more favourably; the recommended small stock numbers per hectare are in both cases (too) low – the size of the farm makes the difference when stocking at the limits. These limits can also be watched with respect to the pastures: Both farms show signs of degradation in an increased number of annual grasses, while on Duruchaus the proportion of palatable dwarf shrubs is slightly higher and certain camps of Marienhof are dominated by unfavourable *Acacia*-shrubs. But interestingly, despite this long period of heavy overstocking and corresponding degradation, the farm is still feasible for livestock production.⁴³

Most of the farmers of the southern Odendaal-farms indicated that they had to rent additional farms in order to survive.

The Rehoboth Government turned a blind eye to the rule that the owner should live and work on his farm without an additional job. Quite a few farmers needed additional income and were allowed to work from about the mid-1980s. They went for agricultural-related jobs (stock inspecting, pest control), for the Government or became shop owners. Their wives took over their role and ran the farms. Rarely, well trained wives started to commute between farm and job to earn additional income. Still, the majority of the farmers tried to give their farm undivided attention.

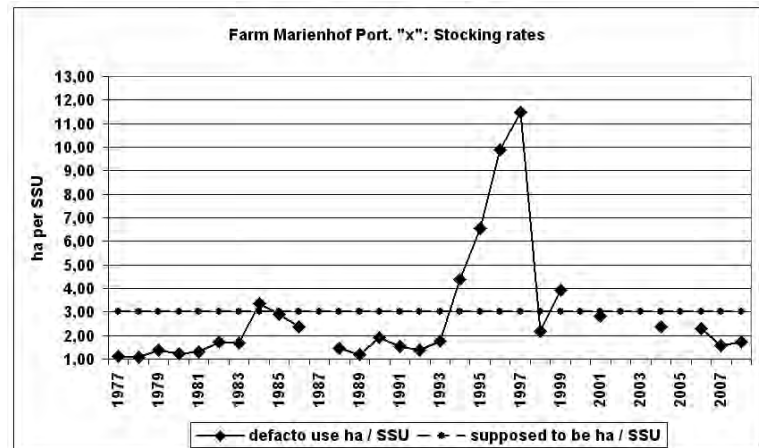


Fig. 7

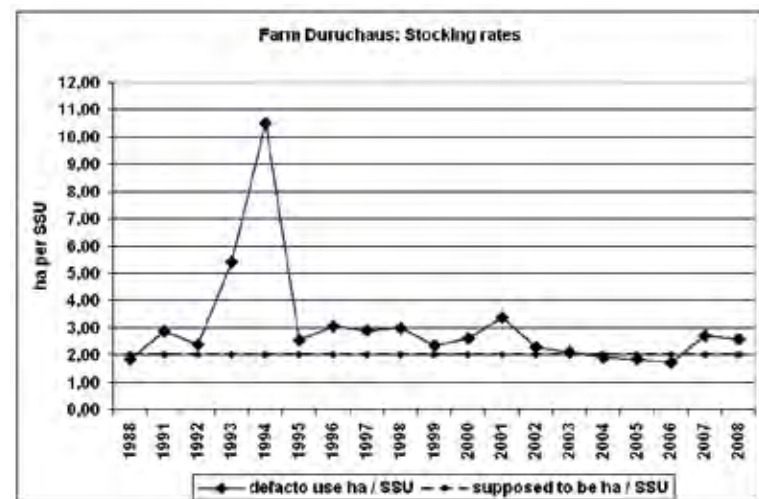


Fig. 8

All interviewed farmers confirmed that the Odendaal allotment was the only chance for landless Basters, although it became clear quite early that the farms were rather small. In these days they could make a modest living, raise between three to ten children, and send them to school and sometimes university.

Conclusion

While the land-use pattern in the Rehoboth *Ge-biet* differs from the rest of the country, it also reflects various problems in Namibia, some even related to biodiversity, on a smaller scale. It indicates what should be avoided or what could be useful for the whole country.

By describing three types of farms, we hope to enable different stakeholders⁴⁴ to use various

common denominators to start improving and broadening farmers' knowledge: They might target farms with multiple ownership or later farms with single owners with less than 2,000 ha etc. A regional approach could also be a common denominator since the *Gebiet* has three different vegetation zones. Small farms and multiple-owner farms quite often suffer from incoherent and inconsistent pasture and stock management. Until Independence in 1990, farm planning was one of the major tasks of the Rehoboth-extension of agricultural departments, – today it happens very rarely. Farms of multiple owners and small farms get hardly any attention. A change of this attitude would be an improvement. Since farm consolidation is a time-consuming effort and not always successful, farmers and stakeholders could consider developing mechanisms for farming jointly, be it within family structures or by including neighbouring small farms. This could stimulate thinking about new cooperative structures, smaller types of conservancies or forms of informal consolidation.

With regard to the sample of Odendaal-farms in the Gebiet we have to state that the whole process of re-distribution was inspired by an objectionable political system (apartheid), but nevertheless it can be seen as an intervention experiment by a state to change property rights. This re-distribution from private to private land provides results and sheds light on aspects of the economical and ecological viability of this process, resulting from historic intervention.

The reconstruction of farm histories and land use patterns indicates that the Odendaal farms can serve as a not always ecologically positive but politically necessary, exemplary basis for re-distributing land today.⁴⁵ Especially successful economically were those Odendaal-farmers who accepted guidance and assistance from the local agricultural extension, if they could manage the risk of additional loans and if they joined the agricultural unions. The support of sometimes large subsidies helped a great deal. Through additional research, the possibility will arise to scrutinize these planned activities with the aim of gaining more secure knowledge of these tools for the future with regard to validity of policy instruments

and applicability of interventions for more sustainable land use. It is a multi-patch environment, but it is not a multi-patch farm system.

Actual constraints of land tenure in Rehoboth – an outlook

The independence of Namibia brought about the disappearance of the Baster territory – the *Gebiet* ceased to exist, merging with two regions: Hardap and Khomas. Consequently the Namibian Government regarded (regards) the Rehobother farms as freehold land, being not distinctive from their surrounding neighbours. As a result, the former Rehoboth *Gebiet* is open for anybody who wants to buy a piece of land. Legally, the area is treated like all other Namibian freehold tenures. Due to individualistic attitudes and almost isolated work routines on their farms, the Rehoboth farmer community nowadays faces the problem of not knowing that neighbours or farmers in the vicinity are going to sell or to lease a piece of land. A board or commission, established under the auspices of the Rehoboth Extension Office of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Unions of Rehoboth, could serve as an information collecting point, through which everyone who wants to sell or to purchase a farm, a portion or shares of it has to work. Neighbouring farmers and established farmers of the area should have first choice to buy in order to get a chance to enlarge their farming activities toward more ecological and economical viable farming.⁴⁶



Fig. 9 “*Ek se moenie my so kyk. Wat kyk jy as ek so sukkeel.*” (I say, don’t look at me like that. What are you staring at when I have such a hard time?)

Graffiti on a gate at a stock post of a small farm to the north-west of Rehoboth.

Endnotes

- ¹ Kassier & Harrison: 1983: 6; Lang 2005: 231
- ² Britz 1999: 12; Limpricht 1997
- ³ Lang & Denk in Britz 1999: 60; Viall 1959
- ⁴ Britz 1999: 14: Shortly after the Peace Conference in Okahandja 1870, all relevant groups gave their approval allowing the Basters in Rehoboth and its vicinity.
- ⁵ Land Register of Rehoboth „Memorial-Book“ 1906, Deeds Office Rehoboth: The farms of Wellem Koopman (Dubis), Cornelius van Wyk, son of Hermanus van Wyk (Garies), Stoffel van Wyk, brother of Hermanus van Wyk (!Kaibes) and also H. Carew (Gurumanas) were distributed on 8/4/1890. Nicolaus van Wyk (/Usmzwas) got his farm on 30/3/1890. Windhoek, National Archive: Voss & Scott 1930 / KRT – “Boek Nr. 5”, p. 7 (43): “Estate Hermanus van Wyk – Duruchaus 9/1/1890”.
- ⁶ See fig. 1 of Bollig’s article
- ⁷ Heidmann Letter / Report 20/4/1898: „Die Bastards kamen nämlich schon vor längerer Zeit zu dem Entschluss, ihr Gebiet untereinander in Farmen zu verteilen. So richtig dieser Entschluss nun auch in Bezug auf Hebung und Verbesserung ihres Landes gewesen sein mag, so kann jetzt die Teilung doch für manche und schließlich das Gemeinwesen verhängnisvoll werden. (...) Mehrere Leute befinden sich augenblicklich in einer furchtbaren Kalamität, da ihr Viehbestand ihre Schulden [bei weißen Händlern / CL] vielfach nicht deckt, und einzelne haben sich schon dahin geäußert, ihre Farmen zu verpfänden oder zu verkaufen, um, wenn möglich, doch ihren Viehbestand zu retten.“
- ⁸ Captain and Chief of the Rehoboth District Böttlin in a letter from 15/7/1905 to the Governor of DSWA; BA, Zentralbureau R151F W.II.c.3 Bd.2-4, p.152, National Archives, Windhoek
- ⁹ De Villiers 1927: 135, translation of a letter from “acting Imperial Governor von Lindequist” to “the Council of Rehoboth Basters”, dated 14 October 1897, regarding definition of borders.
- ¹⁰ Lang, 1999: 325; Voss & Scott 1930: 374
- ¹¹ Lang & Denk in Britz 1999: 81
- ¹² This description is based on results of Lang 2004 + 2005
- ¹³ 40% of the Gebiet is been used by farms up to 2,000 ha (Lang 2005: 233)
- ¹⁴ This result indicates clearly that the process of fragmentation is slowly reversing, compared with a list of the mid 1990s from the Ministry of Agriculture Rehoboth: This list of 22 owners with farms larger than 4,000 ha comprised a total of 200,000 ha or 17% of the *Gebiet*. The Ministry of Agriculture considered only these farms as fit for farming.
- ¹⁵ Van den Heuvel, 1985: 17: As part of the 1976 legislation for Rehoboth self-determination (Law No. 56), statute No. 93, 1976 was passed requiring land registration which led to the relocation of all deeds files and farm files for Rehoboth farms from Windhoek to Rehoboth in February of 1977. Since that time Rehoboth has its own scale of charges for all types of transactions. These are much more affordable than in the rest of the country.
- ¹⁶ This is part of the „tragedy of commons“ – here degradation of pastures – on private land. For the broader context: Ostrom 1990
- ¹⁷ Lang, H. & D. Wesuls: Perception and Measurements – The Assessment of Pasture States in a Semi-arid Area of Namibia, paper in submission
- ¹⁸ Britz (1999: 46) mentions 12 Odendaalfarms. This is true according to Odendaal (1964: 101), but we here excluded in our counting 4 smaller portions of farms (3 of them got incorporated to farm Wortel = each Port. 1 of Kudis, of Noukomab & of Nauas; one tiny portion was included to Groot Aub) and we added up the hectares of the 4 portions of farms Tsumis und Marienhof to two, therefore we speak about six farms.
- ¹⁹ The Baster Homeland, which became a reality in 1979 (Act 56 of 1976; election of Hans Diergaardt 1979; Britz 1999: 49), got 73,000 ha incorporated, about 61,000 ha were distributed as Odendaal-farms to Basters, 13,000 ha of Tsumis were reserved for the agricultural training college, founded in 1969.
- ²⁰ RSA RP 1970-1971: p. 11; Odendaal 1964: 101
- ²¹ RSA RP 1970-1971: p. 11
- ²² This was always done with the necessary consent of *Kaptein* and Council. Archival files of these farms are stored in the National Archives, Windhoek, registered according their names.
- ²³ Farm Gauchas, Windhoek National Archives: BRE89/UVg47 Dist.1721, p.1-26
- ²⁴ Windhoek, National Archives ZBU/1970/UV+15, Farm Tsumis, 25/7/1903, contract of purchase: „§1 Kapitän und Rat der Bastards zu Rehoboth übergeben dem Ansiedler G. Wahl aus Anlass dessen Verheiratung mit dem Bastardmädchen Susanna Matton den Platz Tsumis in einer Größe v. ca. 7000 ha zum Eigentum.“
- ²⁵ An earlier name was: Department of Coloured Relations and Rehoboth Affairs, headed by a minister, who was based in Cape Town; RSA RP 1970-1971: 21: Regional office opened in Windhoek on 1st of April 1969; on the same page short description about the founding and funding of REKOR. Since 1st of Oct. 1970 a regional office in Rehoboth was opened, where the local (white) magistrate acted as Department’s representative (RSA RP (1970-1971: p. 10).
- ²⁶ File Marienhof M11, p. 35, Ministry of Agriculture, Rehoboth: Letter of the secretary of the Department of Coloured, Rehoboth and Nama Relations to the chief director of Rehoboth from 18/4/1978: Since 1st of April 1978 all authority of decisions regarding agriculture is transferred to the Rehoboth Government. 1977-1978 Ben Africa was the *Kaptein* of the Basters. Hans Diergaardt disputed his election successfully and won the new elections in 1979. He remained in office, twice re-elected, until June 1989. De Klerk 1983: 97; Britz 1999: 49
- ²⁷ Britz 1999:46; Du Marais 1981: 34, Tab. 3.4: Between 1977 and 1980 REKOR handed out 92 loans, valuing little more than 700,000 R.
- ²⁸ File Marienhof M11, p. 96-102, Ministry of Agriculture, Rehoboth
- ²⁹ Tsumis Portion “f” was leased out in 1974. RSA 1973-1974: 18
- ³⁰ This has to be checked at a later stage.
- ³¹ *Bywoner* must not be related by blood to the owner of a farm. Normally they just stay with the owner, without having a formal contract, and deliver occasionally and voluntarily a service to the owner.
- ³² Farm File Marienhof Nr.577 Port. “y”, Rehoboth Deeds Office: Lease contract §4.4
- ³³ Ministry of Agriculture, Rehoboth Farm File Marienhof M11, p. 131, and attached newspaper clippings: All sources, be it Afrikaans or English, speak about “2,00R”for the one-year phase of probation.
- ³⁴ This description is confined to the most important conditions of the contracts.
- ³⁵ Safnek Port. “y” + Safnek Port. “u” and Gauchas Port. “x”
- ³⁶ Rehoboth Investment and Development Repeal Bill, New Era 30/5/-5/6/1996, p.3; Namibian 30/5/1996; Republikein 29/5/1996: loans of 4.78 million
- ³⁷ All beside one registered in single ownership
- ³⁸ File Marienhof M11, p. 12-40, Ministry of Agriculture, Rehoboth
- ³⁹ Du Marais 1981: 34 and 36: 46.5% of REKOR loans is used to purchase livestock, while 21.7% is used to purchase land.
- ⁴⁰ Bravenboer 2007: 365-366, 1980 nearly 2.8 million Pelts produced in SWA, valuing nearly 40 million R, while in 1981 1.9 million pelts had the value of 20 million R.
- ⁴¹ Two of the interviewed Odendaal-farmers had to start again 3 times with farming activities. See also Bravenboer 2007: 235 – Karakul farming in 1982
- ⁴² Both graphs give a rough idea about sticking to prescribed stocking rates. We used only the numbers of adult animals as the numbers of lambs and calves were incomplete.

⁴³ This will be discussed later by Dirk Wesuls, an ecologist and botanist of the University of Hamburg. He is part of the BIOTA project in the Rehoboth area (www.biota.org).

⁴⁴ It would be highly appreciated if developing agencies in case of training programmes rely on local Namibian NGOs and their experts; to name a few: Habitat & Research Centre, Agrifutura, Namibia Centre for Holistic Management, TUCSIN, DRFN-Gobabeb and as well on the local extension office of the Ministry of Agriculture in Rehoboth.

⁴⁵ A summary of this discussion is to be found in Odendaal 2006; see also: Hunter 2004

⁴⁶ Acknowledgements: The Rehoboth Deeds Office and the Rehoboth Extension Ministry of Agriculture and its dedicated staff members; Mr. G. Olivier, former head of Deeds Office; the interviewed Odendaal farmers and other members of the community; the family of Rynault van Wyk for their friendship and hospitality; TUCSIN for its institutional support; Dr Beatrice Sandelowsky who made us aware about research possibilities in Rehoboth in the early 1990s; Beatrice S. and Wend Ewest for their friendship & hospitality; Mr W. Hillebrecht, National Archives in Windhoek, Dr Willem Odendaal, LAC, Windhoek and Dirk Wesuls & Jens Oldeland, ecologists, University of Hamburg, Germany – for their cooperation; and Prof Jason Owens (South Dakota State University) for his efforts in proofreading the text.

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