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'Vermin': Predator Eradication as an Expression of White Supremacy in Colonial Namibia, 1921–1952

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In the first half of the 20th century, the racialised policies of apartheid affected not only the people of South West Africa but the predator population as well. This article explores how South West Africa's colonial administration enabled the destruction of predators on white settler farmland while frustrating African efforts to combat livestock depredation by predators in 'native' reserves. Drawing upon archival sources and published government documents, the persecution of predators is shown to be an expression of white supremacist policies founded primarily in economic concerns. In particular, the cases of African wild dogs on settler farmland and African lions on 'native' reserves are contrasted. The effects of predator eradication policies from this era are still visible in the geography of these two species within Namibia. This article deepens historical understanding of the more-than-human effects of apartheid and of social policies in general. It also contributes to scholarly understanding of historical human–animal relationships in non-urban spaces.

Keywords: Namibia; predators; vermin; apartheid; lions; wild dogs; more-than-human

Introduction

Ideologies of racial supremacy touch all aspects of public life within a society. Apartheid in South Africa is among the most well-known expressions of white supremacy, whereby a minority population of 'white' descendants of primarily English, Dutch and French colonists attempted to exercise absolute supremacy over 'black' and 'coloured' Africans and a poly-ethnic non-white immigrant community. Less well-known are South Africa's policies of white supremacy in colonial Namibia. Mandated to control the Territory of 'South West Africa' by the League of Nations in 1919, the Union of South Africa built a white supremacist colonial state upon German colonial policies in force since the end of the Herero–German War (1904–1907).[1]

Flush with victory following the First World War, the South African government viewed this extensive Territory and its inhabitants as effectively annexed to the Union.[2] As part of the burgeoning South African empire, South West Africa could serve as a useful release-valve for the political challenge of South Africa's growing poor white population. To

1 See J. Gewald, *Herero Heroes: A Socio-Political History of the Herero of Namibia 1890–1923* (Oxford, James Currey, 1999).
2 C. Botha, 'The Politics of Land Settlement in Namibia, 1890–1960', *South African Historical Journal*, 42, 1 (2000), p. 238.

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support the immigration of white, mostly impoverished, Afrikaans-speaking farmers from South Africa, the newly minted territorial government embarked upon a series of policies entrenching white supremacy within South West Africa, laying the foundation for 'native' exclusion and poverty.[3] This was primarily achieved through land policies privileging white farmers and the contributions they could make to the South West African and South African economies through intensive livestock husbandry – mostly of cattle (*Bos taurus*) and sheep (*Ovis aries*).

These policies were frustrated by an environment that proved less than hospitable to livestock husbandry as practised by white settlers. While landed pastoral prospects were marginal, the relatively successful methods of transhumant pastoralism long practised by Namibians such as the ovaHereros[4] were well adapted to the Territory's arid and semi-arid landscape, where vegetation can be both meagre and unappetising for livestock. Colonial administrators and white settler farmers sought to replace Africans' communal land systems with a regime founded upon private land ownership. Yet, even with generous government support, settlers struggled to make ends meet.

Within this challenging environment, predators such as lions and wild dogs were seen by officials and settlers as further threats to settler livelihoods, which were deemed so critical to socio-economic prospects. In retaliation, the colonial administration empowered rural white settlers to eradicate so-called 'vermin' on settler land. The Territory's African population suffered financially and physically in their own right at the teeth and claws of predators, but they were effectively prohibited from engaging in similar predator persecution. The justifications for this policy difference were primarily socio-economic but with racial valences: while predation of white-owned livestock threatened the Territory's economic prospects, predation of African-owned livestock compromised African livelihoods. This forced Africans to find alternative economic opportunities within the Territory's cash economy, which supported the administration's economic goals.

This article examines how South West Africa's predators, and the policies surrounding their eradication, mediated and reinforced, but ultimately could not be contained by, white supremacist policies during the early years of South African colonialism. Understanding this process extends the ability of scholars and policy makers to account for the non-human cost of social policies and deepens the toolkit for assessing the effects of political and socio-economic arrangements upon landscapes. Some may argue that animal welfare concerns are rendered unimportant in the face of grave social injustice. I disagree. In this case, social (human) injustice not only affected the geography and survival of particular predator species in Namibia, but predators *also* were unwitting agents of government-desired socio-economic and political outcomes. This shows that politics and predators were deeply entangled with one another. Much has been written about the human cost of the apartheid system. Less is known about its more-than-human valences.

I begin by reviewing the pertinent historical and political background to this case study, including how the 'land question' was integrally related to human–predator relationships. The contrasting focuses, on white settlers on private farmland and ovaHereros in Kaokoveld, highlight the experiences of racialised colonial-era policies. OvaHerero experiences during this era stand in stark contrast to white settler experiences. To mobilise predators in the

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3 R. First, *South West Africa* (Baltimore, Penguin, 1963), p. 106. P. Hayes *et al.* (eds), *Namibia under South African Rule: Mobility and Containment, 1915–1946* (Oxford, James Currey, 1998).

4 I use the umbrella term ovaHerero for the related group identities that in 20th-century Namibia became concretised as the Herero, Himba and Tjimba. These identities-cum-categories have been dynamic throughout the colonial and independence eras. Where appropriate, I refer specifically to Herero or Himba groups. Historically and contemporarily, the overwhelming majority of Herero, Himba and Tjimba view themselves as part of a unified ovaHerero/Herero nationality that stretches across Namibia, southern Angola and eastern Botswana. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this difficulty.

landscape, I examine the history of two species indicative of the human–predator tensions during the period: the African wild dog (*Lycaon pictus*) and the African lion (*Panthera leo*). How these two species interacted with and were targeted by people across differing political and geographic designations deepens our understanding of the relationship between politics and the more-than-human world that we inhabit. The near-total eradication of wild dogs, a fate unique among Namibia's predator species, when contrasted with the persistence of lions, is revealed to be an outcome of interwoven species' ecology and geography as well as racialised government policies.

Through a critical reading of archival and published sources, this article explicitly engages two historiographical themes: the central role of livestock in colonial Namibia and historical human–predator relationships. These themes are interwoven throughout and also illuminate other topics familiar to environmental historians, such as the history of veterinary science, rural history, frontier spaces and questions surrounding environmental justice. The perspectives taken are undergirded by more than four years of biological and ethnographic conservation field work in north-west Namibia and South Africa's Western Cape. This research is part of a broader scholarly and practical conservation project of mediating ongoing human–lion conflict within communal land in Namibia's Kunene region (encompassing the area formerly known as Kaokoveld). The inclusion of historical multi-species and ovaHerero-centred perspectives is an important part of negotiating the interplay between ovaHereros, their livestock and lions, and finding solutions to human–lion conflict in the Kunene region of north-west Namibia (present-day Kaokoveld).

Livestock and the 'Land Question'

Between the 1300s and 1800s, groups of Otjiherero-speaking Bantu pastoralists entered present-day Namibia through the north-west extent of the Territory, called Kaokoveld. By the early 1800s, segments of ovaHerero society were settled in the centre of the Territory, while many of their kin remained in Kaokoveld.[5] The ovaHerero came to dominate land use through their extensive livestock herds. In particular, control of grazing and access to water, managed through highly structured social classes and extensive kin networks, were of pre-eminent importance to ovaHerero pastoralists, who considered the acquisition and growth of cattle herds to be the main goal of ovaHerero life.[6] In the 1830s, ovaHerero hegemony came under attack by the Oorlams, a poly-ethnic group of Khoisan, Nama, Cape Coloured and Malays, and their Nama allies, who were recently displaced from the Cape by Dutch-speaking farmers. The Oorlams employed a form of mounted combat adopted from the Dutch farmers, known as the commando system, and brought along their own extensive livestock herds, which they sought to install upon the ovaHerero lands. Through violent raids, the Oorlams took control of the Territory's desirable grazing and water sources.[7] Into this political arena, white colonists from Germany and the Cape began permeating. As the Germans took control of the Territory through treaties and trade, Oorlam power waned. This created a political and geographic space for ovaHereros in central and southern Namibia to rebuild their herds, though they continued to be constrained by German colonial policies and private European concession companies, which attained rights to the vast majority of

5 G. Borg and M. Jacobsohn, 'Ladies in Red – Mining and Use of Red Pigment by Himba Women in Northwestern Namibia', *Tangungen Des Landesmuseums Fur Vorgeschichte Halle*, 10 (2013), pp. 43–51.

6 T. Shithigona, 'Trends in the Development of Property Relations in Namibia before 1884', in B.Wood (ed.), *Namibia 1884–1984: Readings on Namibia's History and Society* (London, Namibia Support Committee, 1988), pp. 131–7; H. Vedder, *South West Africa in Early Times: Being the Story of South West Africa up to the Date of Mahareo's Death in 1890* (Windhoek, Namibia Scientific Society, 1934), p. 134.

7 B. Lau, *Namibia in Jonker Afrikaner's Time* (Windhoek, Windhoek Archives Publication Series, 1987).

pastoral land in the central and southern areas. In 1885, Germany took formal control of the Territory.[8]

In 1897–98, an epidemic of rinderpest – cattle plague – swept through the Territory. Still coping with the challenges of the Oorlam commandos and recent German ascendancy, an emerging but fragile, increasingly centralised, Herero[9] political structure collapsed within a matter of months. Namibian historian Jan-Bart Gewald writes that '[f]ollowing rinderpest, Herero society lost its land, people, and cattle … It became dependent on the goodwill of the colonial state for its very existence. It became dependent on the colonial state for land, in the form of reserves, and food, in the form of employment'.[10] The complicated effects of this collapse led to escalating Herero–German tensions culminating in the Herero–German War (1904–7) and the genocide of the Herero people. Remaining Hereros were either enclosed upon reserves as a colonial labour pool or retreated deep into the mountains of Kaokoveld with their ovaHerero kin.[11]

The rinderpest epidemic motivated colonial authorities to craft policies separating settler livestock from 'unhealthy' African-owned livestock. The primary mechanism for achieving this separation was a veterinary cordon splitting the Territory in two, termed the 'Red Line' for how it appeared on colonial maps. Erecting a series of police posts from east to west, German administrators confined most Africans and their livestock to what became known as the 'northern reserves'. This process effectively severed the ongoing livestock trade between settlers and Africans.[12] Only 'native' Africans were permitted within this vast hinterland north of the Red Line, where livestock diseases were thought to originate. To the south of this cordon lay the 'Police Zone', so-called because it delimited the extent of colonial power. Land within the Police Zone was set aside for white settler farms and colonial use. Land beyond the cordon was *terra incognita* for whites. Though livestock health, and by extension economic well-being, was the stated purpose for implementing the veterinary cordon, this Territory-wide internal boundary gradually became a fixed border through which Africans and settlers could pass only with official permission. Historian Giorgio Miescher details how German and South African colonial administrators used livestock health concerns along this boundary/border to entrench white supremacy in the Territory.[13]

To protect settler livestock from the veterinary threats of African-owned stock, ovaHerero and Nama land in the Police Zone was expropriated by the German colonial state.[14] The Germans then began a widespread German-oriented land settlement programme. Failures, however, were common: both the brevity of German rule and limited state support kept farmer numbers low. In 1913, settler farms in the Territory totalled 1,331, occupied by 1,587 farmers, with 193 farms standing empty.[15] This history of conflict and transformation pivoting upon cattle and livestock ownership is the foundation on which South African

8 W. Werner, 'A Brief History of Land Dispossession in Namibia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19, 1 (1993), p. 138.

9 The political centralisation of ovaHerero groups in response to Oorlam incursions is one of the initial factors leading to the differentiation between Hereros in central and southern Namibia and their ovaHerero kin in Kaokoveld. See Gewald, *Herero Heroes*; M. Wallace, *A History of Namibia: From the Beginning to 1990* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2011).

10 Gewald, *Herero Heroes*, p. 139.

11 W. Hailey, 'A Survey of Native Affairs in South West Africa' (unpublished, Center for Research Libaries, 1946); M. Bollig, 'The Colonial Encapsulation of the North-Western Namibian Pastoral Economy', *Africa*, 68, 4 (1998), pp. 506–36.

12 Lorena Rizzo, *Gender and Colonialism: A History of Kaoko in North-Western Namibia, 1870s–1950s* (Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2012).

13 G. Miescher, *Namibia's Red Line: The History of a Veterinary and Settlement Border* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

14 F. Adams, W. Werner and P. Vale, 'The Land Issue in Namibia: An Inquiry' (Windhoek, Namibia Institute for Social and Economic Research, 1990), pp. 11–12.

15 Botha, 'The Politics of Land Settlement in Namibia', pp. 235–36.

colonial land policy was built. Land appropriation driven by livestock concerns set the tone for how white supremacy was experienced by the Territory's humans and predators during the South African era.

South West Africa's Settlers

During the First World War, the Territory fell under South African control and was renamed South West Africa. The efficient disposal of available land was the paramount concern of South Africa's Union government for the new Territory. In 1920, the Union's Land Settlement Act was adapted to the Territory with minimal alterations. With this action, South West African administrators were encouraging a hoped-for influx of poor white settlers while entrenching German colonial policies that kept wealth concentrated in white hands.[16] While 14,830 white settlers in 1913 owned some 11,490,000 hectares of farmland, in 1920 8,394 Africans occupied 317,243 hectares within designated 'native' reserves in the Police Zone. This imperfect comparison indicates that whites already occupied at least 20 times as much land within the Police Zone as did the native population when South Africa took over the Territory.[17] Confining Police Zone 'natives' to reserves and imposing limitations on their livestock ownership was an important part of supporting white landownership and creating an exploitable labour pool to staff white farms. Such policies of 'native control' were aimed at driving Africans into the Territory's cash economy. During this period, the requirements placed upon Africans, such as the imposition of *dienstbuchs* (pass books) and the compulsion to sign employment contracts, were increasingly enforced.[18]

From 1920 to 1930, South West Africa was being transformed into a space primarily for immigrating South African 'whites'. During this decade, an additional 1,261 white farms were allocated within the Police Zone, almost doubling the number in existence before the First World War. This 10-year period accounted for just under half of all farms distributed in South West Africa through to 1960.[19] To support white South African settlers, the administration replaced the German approach of intensive small-scale farms centred around watercourses with a policy encouraging ownership of large plots focused primarily on livestock husbandry. While the German administration insisted upon minimum capital requirements and provided limited assistance to settler farmers, during the 1920s the South West African administration did away with minimum requirements and provided aid packages to settlers that were considered among the most generous in the world, including substantial cash advances, debt-forbearance and forgiveness, loans for infrastructure development and the founding of an administration-backed Land Bank.[20] Aid recipients were primarily poor whites from the Union, who received encouragement to immigrate from the Union prime minister, Jan Smuts, and South African war hero General Louis Botha, who

16 B.B. Fuller, *Institutional Appropriation and Social Change Among Agropastoralists in Central Namibia, 1916–1988* (Boston, Boston University, 1993); J. Silvester, M. Wallace and P. Hayes, '"Trees Never Meet", Mobility and Containment: An Overview, 1915–1946,' in Hayes *et al.* (eds), *Namibia under South African Rule*, p. 8.

17 White settler figures from First, *South West Africa*, p. 248. Native reserve figures from Government of South West Africa, 'Report of the Native Reserves Commission' (Windhoek, 1921), p. 8. Land set aside for native reserves grew markedly during in 1923–24; see Adams, Werner and Vale, 'The Land Issue in Namibia: An Inquiry', p. 29. It is unclear how many thousands of Africans were confined to the 'northern reserves' beyond the Police Zone.

18 Government of South West Africa, 'Report of the Native Reserves Commission'.

19 Botha, 'The Politics of Land Settlement in Namibia', p. 244.

20 C. Botha, B. Lau and P. Reiner, *100 Years of Agricultural Development in Colonial Namibia: A Historical Overview of Visions and Experiments* (Windhoek, Archeia 17, 1993), p. 3; Government of South West Africa, *Report of the Land Settlement Commission* (Windhoek, 1927), pp. 17–18.

remarked 'Wes Afrika bested is vir arme blanken die geen grond heeft' ('West Africa was meant for poor white[s] who had no land').[21] Yet, even as the Union and Territorial governments oriented South West Africa's economy towards the benefit of whites, conditions for many settlers were described as 'bad … suffering from a lack of markets … and financial depression'.[22] Certain predators, called 'vermin' by settlers, were seen as further endangering settlers' – and, by extension, the Territory's – fragile financial prospects. If the government could not solve the problem of rainfall, poor soil or livestock diseases, at least it could help settlers with the scourge of vermin.

Settler Farmland – the Problem of Wild Dogs

Humans and predators have long shared space in southern Africa. Pre-colonial Africans and early European explorers each had their not necessarily dissimilar perspectives on how predators affected human lives and livestock. African wild dogs, particularly, aroused the ire of white settlers in South West Africa. In the not so distant past, there were hundreds of thousands of wild dogs in sub-Saharan Africa occupying every manner of habitat save the driest of deserts and the moistest of forests, up to the top of Kilimanjaro.[23] Also known as the 'Cape hunting dog', '*wildehonde*' in Afrikaans, or '*ohakane*' in Otjiherero, these highly social canids were never comprehensively accounted for in the Territory until G.C. Shortridge surveyed South West Africa's mammals in 1934.[24] He found wild dogs to be 'widely distributed … hunting packs may be met with periodically almost everywhere except in the extreme south'.

In many ways, the African wild dog was the perfect foil for livestock owners. They were reputed to be fearsome hunters, and one San (Bushmen) tradition has hunters spreading wild dog bodily fluids on their feet to achieve boldness and agility in pursuit of game.[25] Because they hunt in large packs at regular times of day, almost never making two meals of a single kill, and tire prey by running it down or fighting it to exhaustion, it is likely that wild dog hunts and kills were more frequently witnessed by Africans and settlers than were those of nocturnal hunters such as leopards (*Panthera pardus)* or lions, or predators that capture and kill prey quickly, such as cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*). This, combined with the near-bedlam that attends the first moments of the prey's demise, may partially explain wild dogs' long-standing fearsome reputation across Africa.

Yet wild dogs are also intensely social and can be highly devoted to other pack members. Greg Rasmussen, a long-serving biologist in Zimbabwe's Hwange national park, recalls one instance when a vet recommended that a recently injured wild dog be euthanised. 'The pack knew better than the vet … [they] looked after it for three months'. Even 'appoint[ing]' one pack member 'to act like a medic, constantly licking the wound and making sure the injured dog got food after the pack returned from a kill'. The dog survived to partake once again in group hunts. Rasmussen, however, is of a new generation of conservationists. Like the

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21 National Archives of Namibia (NAN), A 3 12, 9, item 25, letter to Administrator, 24 May 1921; cited in Botha, 'The Politics of Land Settlement in Namibia, 1890–1960', p. 249n57.

22 Report of the Commission on the Economic and Financial Relations between the Union of South Africa and the Mandated Territory of South West Africa (Pretoria, 1935), U.G. No 16 – 1935, p. 151, cited in Adams, Werner and Vale, 'The Land Issue in Namibia: An Inquiry', p. 21.

23 P. Raffaele, 'Curse of the Devil's Dogs', *Smithsonian Magazine*, 2007, available at https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/curse-of-the-devils-dogs-151075828/; J. Fanshawe, L. Frame and J. Ginsberg, 'The Wild Dog – Africa's Vanishing Carnivore', *Oryx*, 25, 3 (1991), pp. 137–46.

24 G. Shortridge, *The Mammals of South West Africa: A Biological Account of the Forms Occuring in that Region, Vols 1–2* (London, Heinemann, 1934).

25 A. Reinhart, 'African Wild Dog', Legacy Hotels, 12 March 2015, available at https://legacyhotelsblog.wordpress.com/2015/03/12/african-wild-dog/, retrieved 1 October 2018.

coyote and wolf in North America or the dingo in Australia, only very recently has anyone seemed to have a nice word for wild dogs.[26]

Predators are not ahistorical actors. Historians of human–predator relations provide important tools for understanding the effects of colonial environmental transformations on predators. Historian Peter Boomgaard asks whether tigers (*Panthera tigris*) adapted their behaviour in proximity to humans and in response to changes in human social behaviour during the colonisation of the Malay world. Focusing upon the subject of eating humans, Boomgaard finds that tigers adopted this trait as a coping mechanism in response to particular human–environmental incursions. Anthropologist Marcus Baynes-Rock examines how spotted hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*) and their human neighbours within the walled city of Harar, Ethiopia, engage in a mutual 'co-shaping', where the hyenas of the city, the city's human residents and their livestock have each taken on their present aspect in relation to one another. Within north-west Namibia, relationships between the Himba and spotted hyena reveal how predator actions and physiology influence the way that predators are interpreted in human moral systems. In Crandall's examination, Himba render hyena physiology and ecology as anomalous, which in turn affects Himba natural and moral classification of hyenas. Finally, human and predatory co-becoming is evident in the history of the thylacine (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*), which became extinct from Australia and Tasmania following the region's 19th-century transformation into a colonial reservoir of timber and wool resources. Even in extinction, thylacines continue to affect human society, reminding many Australians of humanity's destructive powers, suggesting the possibility of 'de-extinction' through cloning and serving as motivating quarry for those seeking to find and protect, rather than destroy, a hoped-for remnant thylacine population.[27]

In his book on human–wolf relations in colonial North America, historian Jon Coleman examines the process by which European settlers and wolves (*Canis lupus*) became enemies. He shows that settler violence against wolves was perpetrated not because of inborn fear, but rather because of the mediation of livestock, which were settlers' property. As settlers moved deeper into North America's interior, they replaced game with livestock, changing wolves' prey options. As Coleman notes, '[t]he colonization of North America was a profoundly zoological event'. A 'battle of reproduction' between wolves and settlers pitted wolf survival against livestock survival.[28] Each of these colonial and post-colonial human–predator histories indicates that human behaviour and society shape and are shaped by the predators that we encounter and the socio-economic and political circumstances under which we encounter them.

As with wolves in North America, settler incursion into the Cape and South West Africa radically transformed the region's landscape and zoology. Herds of springbok (*Antidorcas marsupialis*), zebra (*Equus zebra* and *Equus quagga*), gemsbok (*Oryx gazelle*) and kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*) were replaced by intensively farmed Sanga and Afrikaner cattle, sheep, goats (*Capra aegagrus*) and donkeys (*Equus africanus*) likely to lead to a temporary predator population boom. The scales tipped against wild dogs when concerted human efforts and improved weapons technology turned towards their destruction.

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26 See Raffaele, 'Curse of the Devil's Dogs'; W. Adams, *Against Extinction: The Story of Conservation* (London and Sterling, Earthscan, 2004), p. 128.

27 P. Boomgaard, *Frontiers of Fear: Tigers and People in the Malay World, 1600–1950* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2001); M. Baynes-Rock, 'Hyenas like Us: Social Relations with an Urban Carnivore in Harar, Ethiopia' (Sydney, Macquarie University, 2012); D. Crandall, 'Himba Animal Classification and the Strange Case of the Hyena', *Africa*, 72, 2 (2002), pp. 293–311; D. Owen, *Thylacine: The Tragic Tale of the Tasmanian Tiger* (Crows Nest, Allen and Unwin, 2003).

28 J. Coleman, *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2004), p. 196.

Though they speak in different registers from us,[29] predators too have histories, and wild dogs were not passive agents in how human (inter)actions reconfigured wild dog geographies. Wild dog individual and group traits were the product of thousands of years of evolutionary pressures, which were altered by widespread European colonialism. Relatively high historical numbers of wild dogs may belie a sensitivity to external stress. The highly social, even communal, form of pack living makes wild dogs susceptible to diseases such as canine distemper, which has periodically broken out across Africa during the past 100 years, probably repeatedly spilling over from domestic dogs (*Canis familiaris*). Though he could not explain why, renowned carnivore scientist George Schaller, in observing wild dogs in the Serengeti, noted an unusually high predominance of young within packs, suggesting high juvenile mortality rates, even within a protected area.[30]

Although long recognised as particularly difficult quarry for human hunters, wild dogs may have been ill-suited to persisting in the face of weapons technology developments. When people hunted with snares, traps, plant-based poisons, assegais, bow and arrow or even smoothbore muskets, wild dogs must have been difficult to kill or capture in large numbers. Because they travel in packs ranging from two to thirty-two,[31] wild dogs are difficult to corner in a den or ambush in the field, like solitary predators. Because they will not return to a kill, as lions do, they are difficult to poison, though, being willing scavengers, this can occur. However, their highly social nature and regularity of habits may have made wild dogs particularly susceptible to extermination as increasingly accurate long-range rifles became commonplace. It was no great feat for even a solitary farmer to shoot down a third or more of a pack at a time.[32] Already farming at the margins of empire and struggling against recurrent drought, disease outbreaks and relatively unproductive soils, settlers and administrators sought to control what environmental variables they could. Because they were a highly visible, clearly destructive threat to fragile settler livelihoods, wild dogs appeared to be a problem that settlers and the administration could combine to solve.

Extermination

Long before predators threatened Union financial interests, the policies and practices of 'vermin' persecution were imported to the Cape by the earliest European settlers. As had long been the case in European countries, 'vermin' was a legal category of animals that, as historian Mary Fissell points out, 'threatened the always tenuous balance between ease and hardship'. Since the early days of Cape colonisation, 'wild carnivora' received particular attention as vermin needing to be destroyed.[33] Around the beginning of the 20th century, the Cape government frequently enacted policies to combat the depredations of leopards, wild dogs, caracals (*Caracal caracal*), 'jackals' and baboons (*Papio ursinus*), lions having been destroyed at the Cape by the 1820s. The Dutch word '*ongedierte*', which translates as 'un-animal' or 'non-animal', is common in 19th-century South African and early 20th-century

29 Juno Salazar Parreñas, 'Multispecies Ethnography and Social Hierarchy', *Engagement*, 2015, available at https://aesengagement.wordpress.com/2015/09/15/multispecies-ethnography-and-social-hierarchy/, retrieved 12 December 2019; Baynes-Rock, 'Hyenas like Us'.

30 A. McCarthy, M. Shaw and S. Goodman, 'Pathogen Evolution and Disease Emergence in Carnivores', *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 274, 1629 (2007), pp. 3165–74; G. Schaller, *The Serengeti Lion: A Study in Predator–Prey Relations* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1972); NAN South West Africa Administration (SWAA) 2328, 'Letter from Peter Muller, Farmer, to Secretary of the Protectorate, 3 May'. (Windhoek, 1916).

31 The mean figure is 9.9, cited in Schaller, *The Serengeti Lion*.

32 NAN SWAA 2332, 'Wild Dogs. Official Correspondence: District Commandant and Deputy Commissioner, South West Africa Police' (Windhoek, 1920).

33 M. Fissell, 'Imagining Vermin in Early Modern England', *History Workshop Journal*, 47 (1999), p. 2; W. Adams, *Against Extinction*, pp. 21–2.

Namibian documents concerning the eradication of wild carnivora. *Ongedierte* appropriately conveys the treatment of these species; that is, they were unworthy of the consideration extended to game and more charismatic creatures.[34] By the late 19th century, many of the more imposing predators, including wild dogs, had been extirpated from the Cape. The primary concern of farmers and administrators were 'jackals', particularly the so-called '*rooi*' or red jackal (*Canis mesomelas*). Reviewing 19th-century Cape jackal extermination policies, environmental historian Lance van Sittert traces how harassment and the depredations of jackals upon livestock were thought not only to destroy valuable property but adversely to affect the health and well-being of all of a farmer's stock. Because jackals and similar predators are primarily nocturnal, livestock had to be kraaled at night. In the morning, stock would be moved to the field and back to the kraal before sunset. This increased stock's caloric output, diminishing body condition, and had the knock-on effect of trampling grasses. Furthermore, the close confines of kraals were thought to heighten risks of livestock disease. These adverse effects were viewed through the lens of the Cape's economically important karakul sheep industry.[35] What van Sittert terms the 'genocidal' exterminations of predators also had adverse downstream ecological effects such as explosions in rodent populations, niche replacement of large predators by small ones, and unintended mortalities of other wild species from improperly placed poisons. Even so, vermin eradication had by 1917 become compulsory within the Cape province. Van Sittert hypothesises that the compulsion to eradicate vermin coincided with a social crisis among the Cape's rural population, who were suffering acute economic and social stress.[36]

As was true of policy in other arenas, South West Africa administrators sought to apply Union vermin policy where they could.[37] Complaints surrounding vermin depredations appear in Namibia's National Archives from the beginning of the 20th century. By 1913, vermin were considered a sufficient problem within the Territory to warrant government bounties. However, the South African administration did not have the resources to continue the German programme.[38] During the First World War, the South African military constabulary controlling the Territory refused to issue civilian licenses for firearms and carefully managed ammunition availability. During this period, livestock losses to predators were considered prodigious in some areas. In one eastern community, 26 members of the local farmers' association claimed losses of 29 large stock, 186 small stock, and 7 calves to wild dogs over a period of 'six or twelve months'. Two southern Namibian farmers estimated losing 20 per cent of their herds to vermin – though this was probably an overestimate. In each case, access to firearms and ammunition was the favoured remedy. Another farmer who had recently lost three cows, two oxen, and one calf to wild dogs found it 'almost impossible to catch these animals in traps, the only way to extinguish them is by shooting'.[39] In response, the constabulary deployed military police as needed to destroy

34 B.C. Moore points this out in 'Killing for Sheep: Locating "Vermin" in the Namibian Archives', *AHA Today*, 4 August 2017, available at https://www.bernardcmoore.com/2017/08/04/vermin/, retrieved 20 October 2018.

35 L. van Sittert, '"Keeping the Enemy at Bay": The Extermination of Wild Carnivora in the Cape Colony, 1889–1910', *Environmental History*, 3, 3 (1998), pp. 333–56; W. Beinart, 'The Night of the Jackal: Sheep, Pastures and Predators in the Cape', *Past & Present*, 158, 1 (1998), pp. 172–206; C.W. de Kiewet, *A History of South Africa – Social and Economic* (London, Oxford University Press, 1941).

36 L. van Sittert, 'Routinising Genocide: The Politics and Practice of Vermin Extermination in the Cape Province c.1889–1994', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 34, 1 (2016), pp. 111–28.

37 Silvester, Wallace and Hayes, '"Trees Never Meet"', p. 35.

38 Government of the Cape of Good Hope, 'Report of the Select Committee on Wild Carnivora' (Cape Town, 1896); L. van Sittert, '"Keeping the Enemy at Bay"', p. 346; NAN SWAA 2328, 'Reward for the Destruction of Vermin. Official Correspondence: Military Magistrate Maltahoehe to Secretary for the Protectorate. 16 March' (Windhoek, 1917).

39 NAN SWAA 2328, 'Destruction of Vermin, Office of the Military Magistrate, Gobabais to the Secretary for the Protectorate' (Windhoek, 1919); NAN SWAA 2328, 'Issue of Arms and Ammunition to Farmers –

these vermin and 'other Carnivora', and authorised police to shoot wild dogs at will within the Police Zone. When military rule of the Territory was ending, officials pushed for settlers to take greater responsibility for vermin eradication. Restrictions on firearm licenses and ammunition were rescinded soon after the war.[40]

Many white farmers still pleaded for assistance in destroying predators, requesting government-supplied rifles, ammunition and poisons either free or at a nominal charge.[41] Within the Union, policies differed. In the Cape, rewards were given for pelts turned in to officials, subsidies for hunting dogs were provided and strychnine was supplied to farmers at cost price. In contrast, the Transvaal and Orange Free State made no provision for vermin destruction.[42] Settlers in South West Africa pursued assistance more akin to the Cape's policies, which the administration felt unable to support for financial reasons.[43] Time and again, bounties were sought for destroying predators, and each time the administration excused itself for lack of funds.[44] For white settlers, the main difference between Cape policy and its application in the Territory was the relative poverty of the South West African administration.

The application of Union policies had vastly different effects for white settlers and for the African population. Near-replication of Union policy meant not only that 'natives' had to fend for themselves, but that Africans were precluded from taking many of the anti-vermin measures available to settlers. Since the mid 19th-century, poisons, particularly strychnine, were made widely available to white farmers in the Cape. By the mid 1920s, the South West African administration was providing settlers even along the remote edges of the Police Zone with supplies of strychnine, at cost price, to be applied upon farmers' land at their own discretion. In contrast, Africans, now confined to reserves or living upon their employers' farms, were not trusted to apply strychnine safely without white supervision.[45] The availability of arms and ammunition for Africans was also carefully controlled. When arms were occasionally distributed individually to African traditional authorities within reserves, only marginal amounts of ammunition – sometimes as little as five to ten rounds – were provided.[46] In both white-owned farmland and African reserves, regulations around predator persecution operated within and reinforced racial ideologies.

Confidential; Malthahohoe Magistrate to Secretary for the Protectorate, January' (Windhoek, 1919); NAN SWAA 2328, 'Personal Letter, Farm Okonjati to Military Magistrate, Omaruru. 25 December'. (Windhoek, 1918).

40 NAN SWAA 2332, 'Wild Dogs. Official Correspondence: District Commandant and Deputy Commissioner, South West Africa Police'.

41 NAN SWAA 2328, 'Letter, Farmers in Gobabis to the Magistrate, Gobabis, March' (Windhoek, 1921); NAN SWAA 2328, 'Supply of Poison for Destruction of Vermin. Magistrate Omaruru to Secretary for South West Africa. 30 September' (Windhoek, 1921).

42 NAN SWAA 2328, 'South West African Administration: Supply of Strychnine for Destruction of Vermin. Administrator, Cape Town to Secretary South West Africa; 10 November' (Windhoek, 1921); NAN SWAA 2328, 'Vermin Destruction. Official Correspondence: Secretary Agriculture to Secretary South West Africa. 30 June' (Windhoek, 1921).

43 NAN SWAA 2328, 'Destruction of Jackals. Official Correspondence: Provincial Secretary Cape Town to Secretary for South West Africa. 30 November' (Windhoek, 1922).

44 For example, NAN SWAA 2328, 'Premium for Killing Vermin. Secretary for South West Africa to Outjo Magistrate, 21 June' (Windhoek, 1925). NAN SWAA 2328, 'Premium for Killing Vermin. Outjo Magistrate to Secretary for South West Africa' (Windhoek, 1925).

45 NAN SWAA 2328, 'Destruction of Vermin: Sale of Strychnine. Secretary for South West Africa. 2 March' (Windhoek, 1923); NAN SWAA 2328, 'Wild Dogs: Aminuis Reserve; Superintendent Aminuis Native Reserve to Magistrate, Gobabis' (Windhoek, 1931).

46 NAN SWAA 1187, 'Report on Zessfontein Native Reserve. Station Commander South West Africa Police, Outjo to Magistrate, Outjo. 7 August' (Windhoek, 1936); NAN Native Affaris Office (NAO) 031, 'Zessfontein Native Reserve: Application by Natives for Strychnine. Officer in Charge of Native Affairs, Kaokoveld to Chief Native Commissioner, Windhoek. 14 December 1943' (Windhoek, 1943).

Vermin Clubs

With administration support, settlers destroyed predators as much as they could. One of the more effective and visible approaches was the organisation and official recognition of vermin hunt associations and clubs. Enshrined in Territorial law in 1927, so-called 'vermin clubs' mimicked similar organisations on the books in the Cape since 1917 and implemented in the Transvaal in 1925. Handwritten notes on copies of the Transvaal Provincial Vermin Destruction Ordinance, retrieved from the Namibian National Archives, suggest that high-ranking South West African administrators sought to apply the Transvaal ordinance with only minimal cosmetic changes.[47] Vermin clubs came into effect as part of the Dog Tax Ordinance (no. 14 of 1927) which registered and levied fees upon all dogs within the Territory. Historian Bernard Moore, who examines economic and labour history in southern Namibia, writes that this tax was not explicitly about generating state revenue but was primarily aimed at coercing Africans to enter the labour population as farm workers by taxing the dogs needed to protect livestock herds.[48] This makes sense in the light of the fact that a key aspect of vermin club membership was the exemption that members received from the Dog Tax for up to two dogs. Beyond receiving tax relief, club members were empowered to go on co-ordinated extermination campaigns in search of leopards, hyenas (both *Crocuta crocuta* and *Hyaena brunnea*), jackals, wild dogs, caracals, baboons and lions. This included laying traps and poisons, shooting, and even forcibly entering farmland where owners had abdicated their responsibility to keep vermin numbers down. Each club was meant to hold meetings, go on group hunts, elect officers and be composed of at least 10 landowners. This final requirement was questioned in 1930: was it required that all members be landowners, or simply an initial 10 (additional members being free of this requirement)? In August 1930, the Territory Attorney-General interpreted the law to mean that only an initial 10 members must be landowners. By October, the law was amended to clarify what must have been the original intention: only owners or lessees of land could be registered as club members. Even if the language adopted from the Transvaal ordinance was initially unclear, the racial undertones were unmistakable in South West Africa: since Africans were effectively prohibited from owning or leasing land, vermin clubs were for whites only.[49]

The toll of vermin clubs upon predators was immense. In 1934 alone, 38 clubs from across the Territory reported a total 10,221 predators destroyed, most of which (6,071) were jackals. Topping the scales for wild dogs that year was the Gobabis district, where 206 wild dogs were reported destroyed. The Outjo district, bordering Kaokoveld in the extreme north-west of the Police Zone, counted in 1934 alone 756 vermin destroyed, including 45 wild dogs and 5 lions. There was no financial incentive to over-report, and the numbers for 1934 appear typical for the early 1930s.[50] Clearly, the predators of South West Africa could no longer safely rely upon the relative caloric bonanza that settler livestock represented. At the same time, a boom in karakul sheep farming provided economic respite for the settler

47 NAN SWAA 2328, 'Compilation of Transvaal Vermin Destruction Ordinances, 1925–1930' (1930). The document's marginalia and position in the archive suggest that the handwriting is that of F.P. Courtney-Clarke, Secretary for South West Africa at the time.

48 B.C. Moore, 'Stock Theft and Taxes in Namibia', *The Namibian*, Windhoek, 2016. Note that Moore's work treats of vermin too, though of a slightly different kind – jackals rather than wild dogs.

49 NAN SWAA 2328, 'Qualifications of Membership of Vermin Clubs. Official Correspondence: Magistrate Okhandja and South West Africa Attorney-General'. (Windhoek, 1930); Government of South West Africa, 'Regulations for the Recognition of Vermin Associations and Clubs', Pub. L. No. 210 (1930).

50 NAN SWAA 2230, 'Vermin Killed, Statistical Year 1934' (Windhoek, 1934). For example, Outjiwasandu Vermin Club Records: 1931 – 302 (total); 1934 – 239; 1935 – 233. Otjokondo Jackal Club: 1931 – 504; 1934 – 696; 1936 – 823. Oostelike Vermin Club: 1933 – 86; 1934 – 77. The Grootfontein District destroyed more lions than anyone else in 1934 – 22.

population.[51] Between the organisation of vermin clubs and the generous administration subsidies to ensure settler success in securing livestock, predators dwindled on white farmland. This almost sounded the death knell for wild dogs in Namibia. Though no population estimates for predator species across the Territory are available for the period, 1934 is the same year in which Shortridge found wild dogs 'widely distributed in South-West Africa'. By the end of the 1940s, the wild dog population was 'severely depleted'. Within a generation, nature conservation administrators could write that wild dogs were 'virtually eradicated from farmland'.[52] Never numerous within reserves north of the Red Line and unable to persist on the limited 'black islands' that were native reserves in the Police Zone, remnant populations of wild dogs survive only in Namibia's eastern conservancies and national parks. In contrast, native reserves north of the Red Line and one of Africa's largest national parks became something of a safe haven for Africa's most famous predator, the lion. Focusing on Kaokoveld, we turn now to the problems that Africans inhabiting northern reserves faced in dealing with predators, particularly lions. The lack of colonial government support for Africans stands in stark contrast to the support provided to white settlers in the Police Zone. This asymmetry enabled predators effectively to reinforce official goals and entrenched a new geography of predator populations in Namibia.

Native Reserves – the Problem of Lions

While racially exclusive vermin clubs were eradicating predators south of the Red Line, Africans in the northern reserves sought predator solutions, largely without administration assistance. Kaokoveld, lying just over the Police Zone border of the Outjo district, shared many of that farming area's environmental challenges: erratic rainfall, limited grazing, poor (basaltic) soil conditions and great distance from markets. The difference for African pastoralists in Kaokoveld was not only that they received little government support but that they were effectively constrained by administration policies from protecting their livestock against predators. Lions –'*leeus*' in Afrikaans, '*ongeama*' in Otjiherero – stood out as a particular threat to Kaokoveld residents, not only for their depredations of livestock but for the danger that they were seen to pose to humans.

That lions are dangerous to people is a well-accepted part of African culture from Cape Town to Mombasa. Stories of man-eaters in Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique are legion. In pre-colonial Namibia also, lions were a terror to the ovaHerero within the country's rugged western expanse. In the mid 19th century, Swedish explorer C.J. Andersson travelled overland from the mouth of the Swakop river towards Lake Ngami and the Okavango delta. Andersson was well-acquainted with local fears of lions, recording that the ovaHereros would fall to 'cursing and vilifying the lions most lustily'. Andersson shares numerous harrowing tales of lions threatening, injuring and even killing his porters and local Africans. Upon hearing lions near camp one evening, Andersson's porters 'rushed about like maniacs lamenting most piteously … They seemed fully convinced that their last hour had come and that they should perish miserably by the fangs of the wild beasts'. On a separate trip, Andersson recalls 'a death-like groan … Two lions had entered the enclosures, and succeeded in carrying away a poor fellow, whom they tore to pieces and devoured within

51 Silvester, Wallace and Hayes, '"Trees Never Meet"', pp. 37–8.

52 Shortridge, *The Mammals of South West Africa*, pp. 180–86. C. Hines, 'Past and Present Distribution and Status of the Wild Dog Lycaon Pictus in Namibia', *Madoqua*, 17, 1 (1990), pp. 31, 33. E. Joubert and P. Mostert, 'Distribution Patterns and Status of Some Mammals in South West Africa', *Madoqua*, 9, 1 (1975), p. 20.

a short distance of our camp'.[53] For the Himba of Kaokoveld, encounters with lions were common enough to speak of the predators with familiarity and specificity, but also with empathy.

> Those of us who have lived with lion know that, like all animals, and indeed like people, each lion is different. Most lions cannot be allowed to remain near stock. They are killers of cattle and must die. Others who do not know cattle may be timid and leave cattle to graze in peace. But in the old days, our people did not slaughter indiscriminately … Why go out of your way to kill a lion if it causes you no pain?[54]

The natural history, folklore and records of human–lion conflict across Africa have been extensively recorded. The latter is a growing topic especially of conservation scholarship. Lion behaviour and ecology is most authoritatively set down in George Schaller's *The Serengeti Lion: A Study in Predator–Prey Relations* and in the ongoing work of Craig Packer.[55] However, little has been written about the desert-adapted lions of north-west Namibia.

Inhabiting a unique environment across extant African lion range, desert-adapted lions exhibit grouping patterns, behaviour and ecology differ from Serengeti, savanna or forest lions. How differences in desert lion behaviour are manifested in human–lion relationships, in particular human–lion conflict, is little understood. Available and forthcoming scholarship suggests that, as with other desert-adapted species, lion predation upon livestock in north-west Namibia is greatly affected by periods of drought, when game is depleted and pastoralists may search widely for water and grazing.[56] Desert-adapted lions appear to be longer-living and less susceptible to disease than other lions, perhaps due to the pernicious effects of the environment's heat and aridity upon micro-organisms. Cub mortality is lower and social organisation appears to be less rigid than for savanna lions. Since 2000, 89 per cent of adult desert lion mortalities have been at the hands of humans, suggesting that, in the absence of human–lion conflict, the historical population could have been much larger than the current estimate of 112–139 individuals. As with wild dogs, lion populations in Namibia were never extensively accounted for until Shortridge in 1934, who believed lions to be plentiful within the north-west.[57] There have been no known lion-caused human mortalities in north-west Namibia since 1982.

Lion complaints among Africans and administration officials within Kaokoveld in the 1930s and 1940s were numerous. During this period, Kaokoveld was governed by the Native Commissioner for Ovamboland, assisted by a skeleton crew of white officials and government-recognised traditional authorities. From 1926 to 1939, a small detachment of colonial police officers maintained a border post at Swartbooisdrift on the Kunene river. These officers were charged with monitoring African livestock and prohibiting its movement

53 C.J. Andersson, *The Okavango River: A Narrative of Travel, Exploration, and Adventure* (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1861), pp. 63, 109; C.J. Andersson, *Lake Ngami; Or, Explorations and Discoveries during Four Years' Wanderings in the Wilds of Southwestern Africa* (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1856), p. 53.

54 M. Jacobsohn, *Himba: Nomads of Namibia* (Cape Town, Struik, 1998), p. 47.

55 Schaller, *The Serengeti Lion: A Study in Predator–Prey Relations*. For example, C. Packer, *Into Africa* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994); C. Packer, *Lions in the Balance: Man-Eaters, Manes, and Men with Guns* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2015).

56 J.M. Heydinger, C. Packer and J. Tsaneb, 'Desert-Adapted Lions on Communal Land: Surveying the Costs Incurred By, and Perspectives Of, Communal-Area Livestock Owners in Northwest Namibia', *Biological Conservation*, 236 (2019) pp. 496–504; Government of Namibia, 'Human–Lion Conflict Management Plan for North West Namibia' (Windhoek, 2017).

57 P.E. Stander, *Vanishing Kings: Lions of the Namib Desert* (Johannesburg, HPH Publishing, 2018); Government of Namibia, 'Human–Lion Conflict Management Plan for North West Namibia' (Windhoek, 2017).

across the river into Portuguese Angola. Relatively isolated at the furthest reaches of the South African empire, these border officials also contended periodically with the local lion population. 'Lions seem to favour [Swartbooisdrift] for their hunting grounds. Practically every morning and every evening, they can be heard roaring all around and quite close to the station. During the early hours of 24/2/39, three lions passed right in front and 60 yards from the station'.[58] The month before, lions had injured a policeman's mule and had to be chased away into the bush at the risk of the African assistant's life. Periodic meetings with traditional authorities and quarterly reports from administrators frequently returned complaints of the damage that lions were causing to cattle and donkeys, with various ovaHerero groups insisting that they 'sustained very heavy losses'.[59] Though administrators were satisfied that lions, as well as other predators, were a real problem in Kaokoveld, they also editorialised that 'the natives are inclined to exaggerate their losses, and that a high percentage of these losses are due to the carelessness of their herd[er]s, also to the neglect of adequate kraaling at night'.[60] Administration officials often recorded African complaints about lions, but rarely did such complaints generate an effective government response. When livestock losses around the village of Sesfontein became serious enough to warrant a special communication to the Chief Native Commissioner in Windhoek, it was editorialised that such losses were 'largely due to the rank carelessness of herd[er]s'. The official response was that the traditional authorities at Sesfontein 'be supplied with ammunition … say 5 to 10 rounds could be issued – for a limited period – together with a rifle'. In contrast to the settler population, Africans in Kaokoveld had been disarmed as a matter of policy at the beginning of the South African colonial era. Because Africans were not permitted to hunt wildlife without official permission and because the administration sought to exercise control over the Kaokoveld population, there was no reason why Africans should be allowed to keep firearms and ammunition.[61] Kaokoveld herders in the 1930s and 1940s may have been less able to fight off predators than their predecessors. Though the native inhabitants also requested access to effective poisons such as strychnine, the Commissioner for Kaokoveld thought it unwise to issue poison to Africans.[62] Only whites were entrusted to use strychnine,[63] and no officials were convinced that the problem in Kaokoveld warranted the direct involvement of white staff. What became of the requisitioned ammunition and the problem lions is unknown. Kaokoveld inhabitants continued to defend their herds and persecute lions as they could. Three years later, there were numerous reports of Himba men killing lions with assegais. A largely predictable result was that one man was treated at the administration station for an arm wound caused by a lion, while 'two of his less fortunate comrades were laid up with more serious wounds at their [homesteads]'.[64]

The administration's seeming lack of interest stands in clear contrast to the support provided to settler farmers, both earlier and throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The disparity

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58 NAN SWAA 2513, 'Monthly Report: Kaokoveld: February 1939. Station Commander SWA Police, Tshimaka' (Windhoek, 1939).

59 For example, NAN NAO 029, 'Annual Report of Native Affairs, 1942. Officer in Charge of Native Affairs, Kaokoveld to Chief Native Commissioner, Windhoek' (Windhoek, 1942), p. 4; NAN NAO 029, 'Kaokoveld Annual Report: 1944. Officer in Charge of Native Affairs, Kaokoveld to Chief Native Commissioner, Windhoek. 20 December' (Windhoek, 1944).

60 NAN NAO 061, 'Kaokoveld Annual Report, 1946. Officer in Charge, Native Affairs, Kaokoveld to Chief Native Commissioner, Windhoek' (Windhoek, 1946), p. 12.

61 L. Rizzo, 'The Elephant Shooting: Colonial Law and Indirect Rule in Kaoko, Northwestern Nambia, in the 1920s and 1930s', *Journal of African History*, 48, 2 (2007), pp. 245–66.

62 NAN NAO 031, 'Zessfontein Native Reserve: Application by Natives for Strychnine. Officer in Charge of Native Affairs, Kaokoveld to Chief Native Commissioner, Windhoek. 14 December 1943'.

63 NAN SWAA 2328, 'Destruction of Vermin: Otjohorongo Reserve, Native Commissioner Omaruru to Chief Native Commissioner' (Windhoek, 1945).

64 NAN NAO 061, 'Kaokoveld Annual Report, 1946. Officer in Charge, Native Affairs, Kaokoveld to Chief Native Commissioner, Windhoek', pp. 13–14.

was in accordance with official goals in the Territory. White supremacist policies, exercised through access to weapons technology to combat predators, shows that the administration would not protect and defend African livestock as it did settler livestock. Because African livestock was thought to present a veterinary threat to the health of settler livestock, an internal border was erected across the Territory to keep the herds separate. In the Police Zone, officially imposed limitations on the keeping of livestock adapted from the German colonial era made it nearly impossible for Africans to build personal or family wealth. Furthermore, the Territorial administration sought to bring all Africans into the formal economy as low-wage employees on white farms. These policies accorded with the interrelated socio-economic goals of the administration, which sought to buttress settler economic opportunity by ensuring a pool of workers for white farms and by protecting livestock health.[65] There was, therefore, no need to persecute predators in the northern reserves, which were unwittingly assisting the administration in achieving its economic goals.

Even though livestock concerns were the primary cause for isolating Africans in northern reserves, administration officials could not successfully control African livestock beyond the Police Zone. Crucially, an asymmetry existed between how administrators and Kaokoveld's ovaHereros viewed livestock ownership. Because African-owned stock was thought to harbour disease and allow Africans a measure of economic independence, it was seen by administrators to play a negative role in the Territory's economy. For the ovaHerero of Kaokoveld, struggles over livestock well-being, particularly cattle, touched not just economic but spiritual, familial and political concerns. Anthropological work among self-identified Himba shows that certain sacred cattle forged the links between generations within a patriclan (*oruzo*), while other cattle were exchanged to reinforce links across a matriclan (*eanda*). An *oruzo*'s sacred cattle were the means by which a family tangibly linked itself to its ancestors and descendants. Loss of livestock, whether to predation or to government policies, can therefore be understood as not just an economic loss but an assault upon a family's identity and sense of continuity. Livestock loss had gendered components as well. Small stock – goats and sheep – were traditionally women's responsibility, which provided them with a measure of autonomy from their fathers, brothers and husbands and served as a source of insurance should cattle succumb to drought or predators. When men lost cattle, they could usurp women's rights over small stock. Finally, political alliances and kin networks flowed through livestock exchanges and could be interpreted in regard to the composition of a family's herds.[66] For Kaokoveld ovaHereros to abandon pastoralism would have been tantamount to abandoning a whole way of living and their connections with their past and future. Understanding how these additional arenas were interwoven with the control of livestock, particularly cattle, is necessary for understanding not only the contours of disagreements over predator policies but also how they were freighted with meaning by different groups.[67] Though Kaokoveld possessed a cash-poor economy into the 1950s, administrative efforts at labour recruitment remained ineffectual.[68] Purposefully disengaged

65 M. Bollig, 'Power and Trade in Precolonial and Early Colonial Northern Kaokoland, 1860s–1940s', in Hayes *et al.* (eds.) *Namibia under South African Rule*, pp. 175–93.

66 D. Crandall, 'The Role of Time in Himba Valuations of Cattle', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 4, 1 (1998), pp. 101–14; Jacobsohn, *Himba: Nomads of Namibia*; M. Jacobsohn, 'Negotiating Meaning and Change in Space and Material Culture: An Ethno-Archaeological Study among Semi-Nomadic Himba and Herero Herders in North-Western Namibia' (PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 1995).

67 M. Wallace, *A History of Namibia: From the Beginning to 1990* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 218; S. van Wolputte, 'Power to Da Cattle: Counterworks in Himbaland, Northern Namibia', in S. van Wolputte and G. Verswijver (eds), *At the Fringes of Modernity: People, Animals, Transitions* (Tervuren, Royal Museum for Central Africa, 2004), pp. 201–31.

68 Rizzo, *Gender and Colonialism*.

from the territorial economy, the 'subsistence' pastoral economy that emerged in Kaokoveld during the early South African colonial era served as a form of ovaHerero resistance to the area's limited governmental control, which enabled the population to maintain a measure of autonomy and cohesion. Anthropologist Michael Bollig details how these societies were well-adapted, even resilient, to factors adversely affecting their livestock and financial well-being.[69] In the face of this opposition, colonial administrators reported that a wealth of livestock still existed in Kaokoveld.[70]

Some Kaokoveld residents made their understanding of the connection between official policy and African economic autonomy explicit, believing that the territorial government of the 1930s and 1940s was purposely attempting to eliminate African-owned stock. Administrators' willingness to destroy Kaokoveld livestock that was suspected of harbouring disease supports this conclusion.[71]

Conclusion: The Mobility of Vermin

Across South West Africa, land allocation made with an eye to socio-economic outcomes affected the population distribution of the Territory's predators. Though still subject to persecution, the resources arrayed against predators in the northern reserves were quantitatively and qualitatively less. As a result, the Territory north of the Red Line became a relatively safe haven for lions and other predators. This outcome was reinforced by the establishment of Etosha Pan game reserve (later Etosha national park) within Kaokoveld, just north of the Red Line in 1947. Among other things, Etosha became a space where predator persecution was prohibited. As the South West Africa Game Reserve Commission wrote in 1948, '[within the reserve] no game and no bird or wild animal of any sort (whether regarded outside the Reserve as vermin or not) may be killed or captured without the knowledge and consent of the warden in charge'.[72] Because veterinary concerns had rendered land north of the Red Line unsafe for settler livestock, the area could be repurposed as a reserve where even 'vermin' were protected. The forced removal of the San and ovaHerero communities inhabiting Etosha, and the separation of the game reserve from neighbouring Kaokoveld and Ovamboland, introduced a third type of land use that the Territory's predators now adapted to – one bereft of livestock and of formal or informal (sanctioned) persecution. Once again, a space had been set aside for the benefits of the whites (in this case domestic tourists) at the expense of dispossessed African inhabitants.[73]

For lions and other predators, political changes again altered the geography of survival within the Territory. Though Etosha was home to game species in numbers no longer present within white-owned farms, predators in Etosha were unfenced and unencumbered from moving on to adjacent white farmland along the reserve's southern border. As the

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69 M. Bollig, 'Unmaking a Market: The Encapsulation of a Regional Trade Network. Northwestern Namibia between the 1860s and 1950s', in W.J.G. Möhlig (ed.) Frühe Kolonialgeschichte Namibias 1880–1930 (Köln, Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2000); S. van Wolputte, 'Subject Disobedience: The Colonial Narrative and Native Counterworks in Northwestern Namibia, c.1920–1975', *History and Anthropology*, 15, 2 (2004), pp. 151–73.

70 NAN NAO 061, 'Re: Annual Report Period 1/1/50 to 31/12/50 Your Mintue Dated 17/10/50. Manager, Ondangua Store to Native Commissioner, Ovamboland' (Windhoek, 1951); NAN NAO 061, 'Annual Report on Native Affairs, 1952. Officer in Charge of Native Affairs, Kaokoveld to Chief Native Commissioner, Windhoek' (Windhoek, 1952).

71 Fuller, 'Institutional Appropriation and Social Change Among Agropastoralists in Central Namibia, 1916–1988', p. 136. For example, NAN SWAA 2513, 'Tshimaka Police; Monthly Report, July 1926' (Windhoek, 1926); NAN SWAA 2513, 'Monthly Report: June & July, 1940. Officer in Charge of Native Affairs, Kaokoveld to Chief Native Commissioner, Windhoek' (Windhoek, 1940).

72 'Report of the SWA Game Preservation Commission' (Windhoek, 1948), p. 9.

73 U. Dieckmann, *Hai||om in the Etosha Region: A History of Colonial Settlement, Ethnicity and Nature Conservation* (Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2007).

1940s gave way to the 1950s, the northern reserves remained a relative population source for predators, and predator problems persisted upon settler farms along the border of the Police Zone. One Grootfontein farmer, a Mr Rudolph Böhme, grew particularly irate during 1952 at what he saw as the uncontrolled growth of the lion population within the reserve, and the consequent dangers that this posed to him, his neighbours and their livestock. Claiming losses of 42 cattle within a year, including '1 very valuable bull, 1 horse, 1 work oxen … [with] another cow severely mauled', Böhme demanded the right to exterminate the offending lions within his farm and to pursue them back into the reserve if necessary.[74] Citing numerous encounters that he and his neighbours had had with lions, including two attacks and one fatality, Böhme claimed to have shot four lions and pressed the administration at least to provide him with compensation for his livestock losses. Stating that because the lions existed '*ferae naturae*' and therefore beyond administration control, officials saw no cause for compensating Böhme and refused his request to persecute the lions further. Though the Grootfontein magistrate felt that the 'interests of farmers should be placed above the sightseers', other officials demurred: the economic interests (and perhaps safety concerns) of white settler farmers were insufficient cause to exterminate lions within the reserve.[75] Tourism was now becoming a lens through which to view farmer–predator conflict, and tourists seemed particularly interested in seeing lions within Etosha.[76]

Problems with predators, particularly lions, also continued to bedevil Africans confined to reserves, with little relief in sight.[77] Not until the war for independence (1966–89) would Africans in the northern reserves gain widespread access to firearms. In 1949, one Kaokoveld traditional authority put forth a typical complaint:

> [h]ere in the Kaokoveld we live only on our livestock. The borders are closed … We thank [the Native Commissioner] for the guns we have received. They are not enough. The Kaokoveld is very big. The cartridges are also too few. We have trouble with lions, hyaenas and wild dogs. Vermin has destroyed a lot of our stock.[78]

In his examination of tigers in the Malay world, Boomgaard finds the colonial state to have been 'anti-tiger'. In South West Africa, the colonial state was less anti-vermin than it was pro-settler. The policies of protecting white settler livelihoods were manifest in the different opportunities for settlers and Africans to persecute predators. Policies to alleviate the 'poor white' problem within the Union combined with policies to support a financially constrained Territorial economy. This included the administration doing what it could to extirpate predators on settler land. The goal was to strengthen South West African settlers and, by extension, the finances of the Union. Because the lens through which Union finances were interpreted was highly racialised, the administration saw sufficient cause to limit African livestock ownership whenever possible, whether north or south of the Red Line. African livestock beyond the Police Zone was deemed unfit for mixing with settler livestock

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74 NAN SWAA 2329, 'Letter from Rudolph Böhme to the Administrator, Windhoek; 23 June' (Windhoek, 1952).

75 Even within Etosha, wild dogs remained unacceptable. In 1930, the Native Commissioner stated that, in the Game Reserve 'wild dogs be excepted from protection due to their roving destructive habits … The toll on game levied by their packs outweighs other interests which they provide'. The territorial Secretary agreed. From NAN SWAA 2328, 'Protection of Vermin and Wild Life in Namutoni Game Reserve. Secretary South West Africa. 30 August' (Windhoek, 1938).

76 NAN NAO 066, 'Game Control. Official Correspondence, South African Police, Namutoni to Native Commissioner, Ovamboland. 12 December' (Windhoek, 1947).

77 For example, NAN SWAA 2328, 'Destruction of Vermin: Otjohorongo Reserve, Native Commissioner Omaruru to Chief Native Commissioner'; NAN SWAA 2328, 'Destruction of Vermin: Waterburg Reserve. Welfare Officer Waterburg East Native Reserve to Magistrate Otjiwarongo. 26 February' (Windhoek, 1944).

78 NAN NAO 061, 'Inspection Report: Kaokoveld Native Reserve: September–October, 1949. Native Commissioner, Ovamboland to Chief Native Commissioner, Windhoek' (Windhoek, 1949).

further south. Within the Police Zone, the primary contribution of Africans to the economy was seen to be as low-wage labourers for white-owned farms and industry.

Because the survival and reproduction of predators touched the socio-economics of a highly racialised South West Africa, the prospects of predators in the Territory were transformed. Coleman notes that predator eradication in North America drove different societies apart.[79] In South West Africa, colonial ideologies of white supremacy separated settler and African livestock-owning inhabitants and thereby transformed the geography of predator populations. Though it is easier to recover human social and political histories than to perform historical predator ethnographies, the ecological effects of colonial white supremacy in the South African empire are seen to be both social and ecological.[80] Particularly on white-owned farmland, Namibia's predators suffered as a result of governmental aims to secure a strong, white-dominated territorial economy. However, as noted by British colonial ecologist E.B. Worthington, 'nature rarely if ever stands still'.[81] While wild dogs largely disappeared, lion and other predators persisted, albeit in reduced numbers, primarily on communal African lands. Ongoing human–lion conflict challenges in the Kunene region of north-west Namibia[82] are, among other things, expressions of a more-than-human history. The geography of racialised separation imposed upon people failed to contain Namibia's predators, which endured colonialism and continued to be political and ecological actors, vexing white and black livestock owners alike.

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79 Coleman, *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America*, p. 53.
80 S.E. Kirksey and S. Helmreich, 'The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography', *Cultural Anthropology*, 25, 4 (2010), pp. 545–76.
81 Adams, *Against Extinction*, p. 108.
82 A. Hartmann, 'Kunene Lions Kill Another 171 Small Livestock', *The Namibian*, 16 November 2017.