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Eserewondo Rozongombe: Livestock as Sites of Power and Resistance in Kaokoveld, Namibia

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ABSTRACT

This article details how the ovaHerero of Kaokoveld (north-west Namibia) experienced the precolonial and colonial eras as mediated through their cattle culture. While histories of Namibia rarely use non-Western lenses to interpret processes during the colonial era, this article examines ovaHerero colonial experiences as one episode within a broader history. It draws together archival and published sources to tell the little-known history of a people living in a remote and rugged rural area that nevertheless is of considerable contemporary interest because of wildlife conservation. Yet the ovaHerero of Kaokoveld remain little understood outside exoticised tourism material. Their history holds important lessons for the role of non-human actors in the precolonial and colonial eras, and for how environments, racialised social policies and power politics interacted to help construct contemporary north-west Namibia. Recentring ovaHerero experiences of these eras contributes to postcolonial studies of subaltern groups, the field of human–animal studies and the historiography of Namibia and Southern Africa.

KEYWORDS

Cattle culture, colonialism, ovaHerero, Namibia, human–animal history

OMUTENGA (FIRST)

Resistance to colonial rule in Southern Africa had many expressions. While militant resistance has received much attention, environmental historians

have shown how forms of everyday resistance were often more pervasive.¹ Postcolonial scholars have written extensively about how colonial subjects resisted and reappropriated state power structures to achieve their own ends.² When the ovaHerero Tribal Council of Kaokoveld, in north-west Namibia, ceded authority over livestock movements to the South West African administration in February 1942, they were acting in light of a decades-long process of political marginalisation and the erosion of autonomy. Prior to South African rule, ovaHerero residents of Kaokoveld lost much of their wealth to livestock raiders from the south. This set the stage for Kaokoveld ovaHerero experiences during the early South African era. Throughout the 1920s, government-recognised ovaHerero 'chiefs' in Kaokoveld competed against one another for control of grazing land in opposition to government dictates. During the 1930s, pastoralists defied the government-recognised council, which replaced the chiefs when they died. By the 1940s, councillors requested that the South West African administration implement a permit system to control all movements of African-owned livestock. Yet, this seeming acquiescence to colonial rule was itself another – successful – form of resistance, whereby Kaokoveld ovaHerero sought to secure control over their livestock.

While the ovaHerero recognised certain benefits of colonial rule, their resistance focused on maintaining autonomy over their livestock: its movement and well-being. As historian Steven van Wolputte has shown of later eras, resistance to colonial rule in Kaokoveld took on everyday forms. What political scientist James Scott calls 'passive noncompliance, subtle sabotage, evasion, and deception' were methods employed to survive the colonial system to ovaHerero's 'minimum disadvantage'. In other parts of Africa, environmental coping strategies formed an important part of everyday resistance to colonialism.³ In Kaokoveld, livestock were a key means of resistance.

1. J. Carruthers, 'Environmental history in Africa', in J. McNeill and E. Mauldin (eds), *A Companion to Global Environmental History* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 96–115; S. Dovers, R. Edgecombe and B. Guest (eds), *South Africa's Environmental History: Cases and Comparisons* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003); W. Beinart, 'African history and environmental history', *African Affairs* 99 (395) (2000): 269–302.
2. See e.g. J. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985); P. Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); W. Storey, *Guns, Race, and Power in Colonial South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); K. Jacoby, *Crimes against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
3. S. van Wolputte, 'Subject disobedience: The Colonial narrative and native counterworks in northwestern Namibia, c.1920–1975', *History and Anthropology* 15 (2) (2004): 151–173; Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 31, 301; P. McAllister, 'Resistance to "betterment" in the Transkei: A case study from Willowvale District', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15 (2) (1989): 346–368; J. Carruthers, 'Creating a national park, 1910–1926', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15 (2) (1989): 188–216; R. Neumann, *Imposing Wilderness: Struggles over Livelihood and Nature Preservation in Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

The Kaokoveld Tribal Council sought state support to control the mobility of livestock in ways that it otherwise could not. This approach was built upon experiences forged throughout the precolonial and early colonial era. I refer to the hundred or so years in Kaokoveld, from the 1850s to 1942/3, as *Eserewondo Rozongombe*, which in Otjiherero means ‘the Century of Cattle’. This article focuses on the latter part of that period: the 1920s to the early 1940s. The central role of cattle during *Eserewondo Rozongombe* was an active one: the needs of cattle and other livestock, in terms of access to grazing, water and, later, veterinary care, shaped expressions of individual and group autonomy. Unable to wield historical forms of power based upon kinship, charisma or coercion, the actions taken by the Tribal Council in 1942 were an attempt to exercise a new form of governance adapted to and realised within political realities interweaving livestock and people. Paradoxically, the closer alignment of ovaHerero leaders with the colonial government led to colonial administrators abandoning attempts to govern livestock movements in Kaokoveld.

Using archival and published sources, this ovaHerero-centred, human–animal history examines how strategies of resistance centred around livestock proved useful in the face of changing political forces. Though there are no written records among the Kaokoveld ovaHerero from this period, colonial archives record certain stories, concerns and topics of governmental and ovaHerero interest.⁴ These archives tangibly demonstrate power over memory and identity, and are therefore imperfect records.⁵ However, practices of ‘reading against the grain’, whereby sources are examined for alternate, covert or implicit meanings, enable scholars to recover marginalised voices, as well as uncover the politics surrounding silence.⁶ Recentring ovaHerero perspectives allows for a new periodisation aligned with ovaHerero experiences. The emphasis on livestock accords with historian Luise White’s position that African-centred histories must place historicised subjects in relation to dynamic interests, selves and embodiments specific to them.⁷ To emphasise ovaHerero perspectives I incorporate Otjiherero words and explain the meaning behind them. Translations taken from anthropologists Margaret Jacobsohn and D.P. Crandall are noted. Otherwise translations are my own, based upon

4. Resources limited archival research to documents available at the Namibia National Archives in Windhoek. Additional primary sources collected elsewhere, such as missionary records, may provide an interesting counterpoint to ovaHerero perspectives on livestock control and resistance.
5. Most strikingly is the gendered nature of these records: there are no female voices at all. This is itself telling. Redirecting power from scattered ovaHerero homesteads, colonial officials gathered designated elites in centralised locations. This removed leaders from their homesteads and their family members – though they were likely accompanied by certain kin.
6. G. Spivak, ‘Can the subaltern speak?’, in — (ed.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 24–28; J. Schwartz and T. Cook, ‘Archives, records, and power: The making of modern memory’, *Archival Science* 2 (1/2) (2002): 1–19.
7. L. White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

Viljoen and Kamupingene's *Otjiherero Dictionary* and in consultation with Otjiherero speakers in Kaokoveld. Himba chronologies are adapted from anthropologist Gordon Gibson.⁸

KAOKOVELD

Kaokoveld is located in north-west Namibia. Historically, Kaokoveld was bounded by the Omaruru river in the south (though that boundary shifted to the Hoanib during the 1920s), the Kunene river in the north, the Skeleton Coast to the west and Ovamboland to the east. Following independence in 1990, the area was redesignated as Kunene Region. Kaokoveld's heterogeneous environments are dominated by mountains, gravel plains and sandy dunes bisected by ephemeral riverbeds. The basaltic soil is shallow, rocky and generally unproductive for agriculture. The Namib Desert runs the length of western Namibia. It receives little moisture from the Atlantic, and ocean-driven air currents keep moist tropical air inland. Intermittent and low levels of rainfall mean that north-west Namibia is sparsely vegetated, though the further east one goes, the denser the vegetation becomes. Rainfall is low (50 to 250 millimetres per year) and erratic. The desert's boom-and-bust nature means water and grazing availability widely fluctuates. Drought is periodic and extreme, and can have multi-generational effects. The landscape veritably teems with livestock and wildlife when rain is relatively plentiful, yet perennial grasses disappear entirely in hard years. During the wet season (January to May) rains may come in brief, localised downpours. Sometimes they do not come at all. Prey species migrate with the rains in search of fresh grass and often congregate in ephemeral riverbeds during the dry season (June to December). In addition to the ovaHerero, historical Kaokoveld was home to the Damara as well as members of the Oorlam>Nama group.⁹

Before the 1910s, the area was largely unknown to Europeans, save small numbers of miners, traders and hunters moving goods and animal paraphernalia between the Cape, the port of Mossamedes in modern-day Angola and populous Ovamboland to the east. Throughout the nineteenth century, the region was never extensively penetrated by missionaries and no important trading stations were established there.¹⁰ In 1907, the German colonial government proclaimed Kaokoveld part of Game Reserve No. 2. During the First

8. J.J. Viljoen and T.K. Kamupingene, *Otjiherero Dictionary* (Paarl: Gamsberg Macmillan, 2006); G. Gibson, 'Himba epochs', *History in Africa* 4 (1977): 67–121. I thank Mr. U. Muzuma for his assistance with Otjiherero translations.

9. J. Mendelsohn et al., *Atlas of Namibia: A Portrait of the Land and Its People* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2003).

10. D. Henrichsen, 'Pastoral modernity, territoriality and transformations in central Namibia, 1860s–1904', in P. Limb, N. Etherington and P. Midgley (eds), *Grappling with the Beast: Indigenous Southern African Responses to Colonialism* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 88, map.

World War, South Africa took control of German South West Africa, and in 1920 the colony was declared a League of Nations Class C mandated territory, with the Union of South Africa responsible for its administration. In 1922, three separate 'tribal' reserves were designated in the north-west, and the area became formally known as Kaokoveld. From 1922 to 1947, much of the region had a dual designation as both a game and 'native' reserve. During this period the area was physically and economically isolated by the colonial government as a matter of policy.

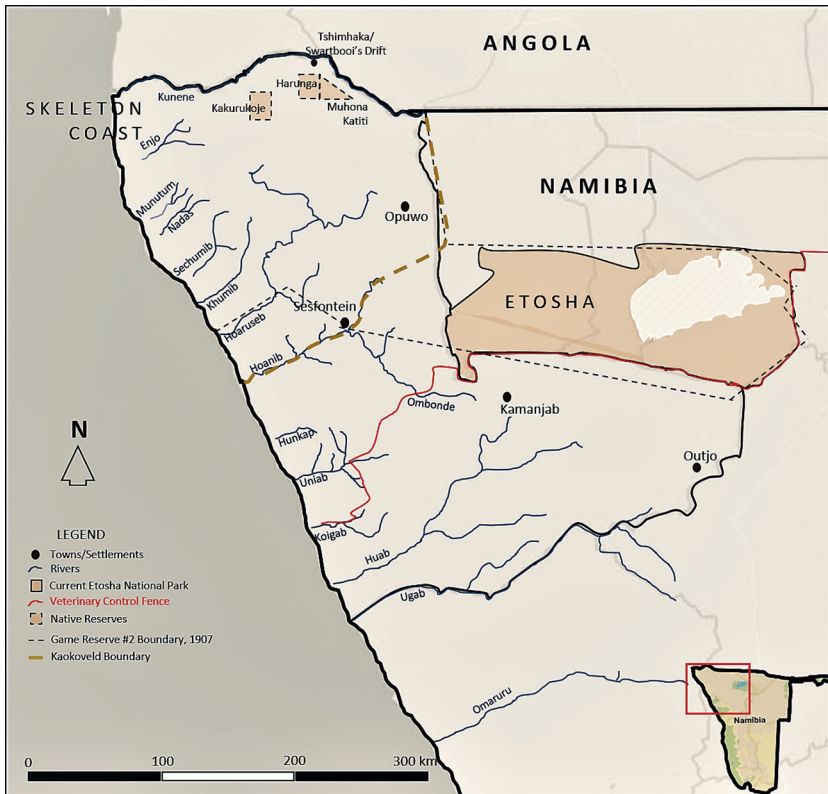


Figure 1. Map of north-west Namibia. Created by the Author.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF KAOKOVELD, HUMAN-ANIMAL STUDIES
AND AFRICAN ENVIRONMENTS

This article contributes to a growing corpus of scholarship on the ovaHerero of Kaokoveld. Historian Lorena Rizzo places peasant mobility at the centre of her examination of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Kaokoveld. Her

insight, echoing Scott, is that marginality can be a position of power. During this period, different forces constrained Kaokoveld residents. In response, the ovaHerero employed a variety of resistance tactics. Whereas Rizzo finds colonial administration 'fractured, ambivalent, and at times contradictory', my reading of the archives is that Kaokoveld residents rendered colonial administrators' designs largely ineffective. Though Kaokoveld was 'encapsulated', it was largely inaccessible to the colonial administration, which struggled to govern the region. Giorgio Miescher's history of Namibia's 'Red Line' reveals the formative role of colonial veterinary science in shaping northern Namibia. His emphasis on shifting physical and conceptual boundaries in response to changing colonial priorities are adopted here. Miescher's contention that the Red Line – separating the northern 'native areas' from the white-controlled 'Police Zone' to the south – functioned as an internal border, is central to my treating Kaokoveld as a space distinctly separate from areas controlled by the colonial government. Whereas Miescher emphasises how colonial control was negotiated and enforced along the Red Line, as an internal borderland, I examine human–livestock relationships as vectors of colonial rule and resistance within the Kaokoveld interior. Van Wolputte has examined resistance among Kaokoveld residents focusing primarily on inversions of colonial discourse. His insight that resistance during the years of the Border War (1966–1989) took on everyday forms is an important refiguration of the role ovaHerero played during that period.¹¹ I have extended his examination of everyday resistance to the earlier colonial era and found that ovaHerero employed livestock as vectors for resisting colonial rule.

Anthropological works by Michael Bollig, Crandall and Jacobsohn are central to reframing Kaokoveld history around ovaHerero perspectives. Bollig's integration of Himba culture and history within the physical landscape has shaped this work. By reframing colonial-era isolation as the result of South African official policy and practice, he emphasises the interrelated contingency of people, livestock and the environment within north-west Namibia. Bollig's oral history project has helped give voice to ovaHerero experiences. Crandall's work connecting Himba secular and spiritual worlds has been central to reframing politics around livestock. Jacobsohn's ethnographic work adds rich detail to historical outlines. A common thread among these works is

11. L. Rizzo, *Gender and Colonialism: A History of Kaoko in North-Western Namibia, 1870s–1950s* (Basle: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2012), p. 17; Rizzo, 'The elephant shooting: Colonial law and indirect rule in Kaoko, northwestern Namibia, in the 1920s and 1930s', *Journal of African History* 48 (2) (2007): 245–266; M. Bollig, 'The colonial encapsulation of the north-western Namibian pastoral economy', *Africa* 68 (4) (1998): 506–536; G. Miescher, *Namibia's Red Line: The History of a Veterinary and Settlement Border* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); S. van Wolputte, 'Cattle works: Livestock policy, apartheid and development in northwest Namibia, c. 1920–1980', *African Studies* 66 (1) (2007): 103–128; van Wolputte, 'Subject disobedience'.

their emphasis on materiality and commitment to environmental and human–animal evidence.¹²

Cattle are central to ovaHerero lives. Human–animal scholarship takes seriously the proposition that humans and animals share the world. Some useful introductions to this field include works by Tim Ingold, Susan Jones and Donna Haraway. Human–animal scholars ask conceptual questions of human–animal relationships. Works focusing on livestock have helped build scholars’ toolkits for decentring human agency in these relationships. Key findings have shown that human becoming occurs alongside non-humans; that domestication is a two-way street; and that livestock remade colonial environments. In colonial-era Kaokoveld, livestock, particularly cattle, served as mediators of autonomy, as guarantors of livelihoods and were also sites of power and resistance.¹³

Examining conflicts and alliances surrounding human–livestock relationships contributes to environmental histories of Namibia and of colonialism in Southern Africa. Works by Christo Botha help place the Kaokoveld experience within Namibian environmental history. Botha examines European attempts to secure land tenure and support a white-dominated economy during the colonial era. While Botha’s work emphasises European experiences, this article is part of a broader project examining human–animal experiences during the colonial and postcolonial eras.¹⁴ Dag Henrichsen and Jan-Bart Gewald’s work provide counterpoints to this history. Whereas Henrichsen argues that Herero society in central Namibia developed within frameworks of mercantile capitalism and early colonialism, pastoralists in Kaokoveld were affected by, but unable to directly avail themselves of, these frameworks.¹⁵ Initially this relative economic

12. M. Bollig, *Risk Management in a Hazardous Environment: A Comparative Study of Two Pastoral Societies* (Springer, 2006), pp.19–64; Michael Bollig, *When War Came the Cattle Slept: Himba Oral Traditions* (Cologne: Koppe, 1997); D. Crandall, ‘The role of time in Himba valuations of cattle’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4 (1) (1998): 101–114; 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).
13. T. Ingold, *What Is an Animal?* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988); S. Jones, *Valuing Animals: Veterinarians and Their Patients in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); D. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); V. Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); E. Fudge, ‘What was it like to be a cow?’ in L. Kolof (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 1–37; E. Melville, *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); T. van Dooren, E. Kirksey and U. Münster, ‘Multispecies studies: Cultivating arts of attentiveness’, *Environmental Humanities* 8 (1) (2016): 1–23; W. Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).
14. C. Botha, ‘The politics of land settlement in Namibia, 1890–1960’, *South African Historical Journal* 42 (1) (2000): 232–276; C. Botha, ‘People and the environment in colonial Namibia’, *South African Historical Journal* 52 (1) (2005): 170–190. See also J. Heydinger, ‘Humans, livestock, and lions in northwest Namibia’ (PhD thesis, University of Minnesota, 2019).
15. Henrichsen, ‘Pastoral modernity’.

isolation was due to geography, then conflict. Finally, Kaokoveld pastoralists were economically isolated as a matter of colonial policy. This highlights the different experiences of colonialism within the territory, particularly between the 'native reserves' and 'police zone', underscoring that fact that national territories are neither uniformly incorporated within economies nor uniformly controlled by governments. Many themes that Gewald examines, such as the effect of missionaries and labour recruitment, were marginal within Kaokoveld. Yet I show that in common with Herero further south, Kaokoveld ovaHerero responded to colonial-era pressures by alternately appropriating and redirecting power structures and resisting imposed regulations around human and livestock movement.¹⁶

How colonial regimes misinterpreted and maladministered African environments is a recurring theme in African environmental history. This work adds to existing scholarship, such as William Beinart's examination of South African agrarian history through the lens of rural political economy. As Namibia fell within the reach of the 'South African empire', accounting for the diversity of experiences and environmental contexts within that empire is an important part of recounting Namibian and South African political economy. By focusing on the semi-arid Kaokoveld, this study addresses Beinart's call for further examinations of the effects of scarcity on the politics and land use of African environments. Kate Showers has suggested that peasant approaches to agriculture were reconceptualised through coloniser's lenses. Reading against the grain of colonial archives, I recover African experiences of navigating the colonial era. Jane Carruthers provides a recent, useful introduction to the field of African environmental history, and James McCann provides an overview of African environments. Together, these enable one to put the Namibian and South African experience in a continental context.¹⁷

16. See e.g. J. Gewald, *Herero Heroes: A Socio-Political History of the Herero of Namibia 1890–1923* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999); J. Gewald, 'Missionaries, Hereros, and motorcars: Mobility and the Impact of motor vehicles in Namibia before 1940', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35 (2/3) (2002): 275–285.

17. W. Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, Livestock and the Environment, 1770–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); J. Silvester, 'Forging the Fifth Province', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41 (3) (2015): 505–518; W. Beinart, 'South African environmental history in the African context', in S. Dovers, R. Edgecombe and B. Guest (eds), *South Africa's Environmental History: Cases and Comparisons* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), pp. 215–226; K. Showers, 'Soil erosion in the kingdom of Lesotho: Origins and colonial response, 1830s–1950s', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15 (2) (1989): 263–286; Carruthers, 'Environmental history in Africa'; J. McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800–1990* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999).

‘DON’T START YOUR FARMING WITH CATTLE. START IT WITH PEOPLE’¹⁸

In a region without meaningful agricultural prospects due to its aridity, the arrival of livestock in north-west Namibia was significant, but the adoption of intensive pastoralism took time. As with the introduction of new fauna and flora in the Americas beginning in the fifteenth century, livestock in south-western Africa remade the region’s ecology. This punctuated process occurred over hundreds of years, stretching back to approximately the last few centuries BCE. Early domesticates were sheep and perhaps goats. Cattle arrived in large numbers within the last one thousand years. Evidence for intensive pastoralism in north-west Namibia increases in the sixteenth century, coinciding with the arrival of migrants who brought large numbers of cattle during a period of exceptionally cool temperatures. Previously, the region was primarily inhabited by small bands of Khoe-Sān hunter-gatherers and the Damara people, who kept small numbers of goats and sheep. OvaHerero oral historians trace their origins to a mountain in Angola, Okarundu Kambeti, and it is with these migrants that historians trace the arrival of the people who would become known as the ovaHerero. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, pastoralists of still undefined ethnicity maintained large cattle herds inland, but European merchant ships passing the Skeleton Coast, seeking provisions for the ocean voyage, remained largely unaware of extensive herds within the mountainous Kaokoveld.¹⁹

How Kaokoveld ovaHerero became divided into three groups provides important insight into the different experiences of *Eserewondo Rozongombe*. The label ‘ovaHerero’ (‘those of yesterday’, or ‘the old people’) encompasses the forerunners of today’s Herero, Himba and Tjimba groups, all of whom speak variants of the Otjiherero language. Presently, an ovaHerero diaspora exists across Namibia, southern Angola and western Botswana. Currently, ovaHerero and Herero remain inclusive terms that may encompass the Himba and Tjimba. A Himba saying states it clearly: *omuHimba omuHerero*, ‘a Himba is a Herero’. I use the label ovaHerero when referring to the time before these

18. Jacobsohn, ‘Negotiating meaning and change’, 38.

19. A. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003); Beinart, *Rise of Conservation*; K. Sadr, ‘Livestock first reached Southern Africa in two separate events’, *PLoS ONE* 10 (8) (2015): e0134215; J. Kinahan, ‘Human and domestic animal tracks in an archaeological lagoon deposit on the coast of Namibia’, *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 51 (164) (1996): 94–98; J. Kinahan, ‘The origins and spread of pastoralism in Southern Africa’, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia, African History*, 2019, <https://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-678?rskey=dFkuvs&result=145> (accessed 18 September 2020); K. Holmgren et al., ‘A preliminary 3000-year regional temperature reconstruction for South Africa’, *South African Journal of Science* 97 (1/2) (2001): 49–51; K. Tjuarua, personal communication, 10 May 2018.

groups became separable, and retain it when speaking of all three groups together. The emphasis on the different groups is pertinent because it was how colonial administrators separated them and, later, how many ovaHerero self-identified. As noted by anthropologist John Friedman, history tracks differences and similarities among Otjiherero-speaking people better than more static categories such as ethnicity or culture. The historical processes differentiating the lives of Herero, Himba and Tjimba, and the South African governmental obsession with racialised divisions, made these labels relevant during *Eserewondo Rozongombe*.²⁰

Cattle (*ozongombe*, sing. *ongombe*) were and remain ‘everything’ for the ovaHerero. As noted by an elder to historian Heinrich Vedder in the early twentieth century: ‘Have not the Hereros been cattle breeders ever since God created them? ... One treks with the herd wherever water and grazing can be found and, in the meantime, the cattle increase ... That is the life of a Herero’.²¹ Small stock, goats (*ozongombo*, sing. *ongombo*) and sheep (*ozondu*, sing. *ondu*) have also been kept, but are not as culturally significant. Reviewing pre-colonial property relations, Namibian historian Tshuutheni Shithigona notes the existence of highly structured social classes and cultural activities focused upon livestock (*orutumbo*). In contrast to ethnically drawn land-tenure boundaries common among East African pastoralists, ovaHerero ‘ownership’ over grazing lands centred around access to water. This was organised through networks of kinship that managed dry- and wet-season pastures together. Private property existed but was limited to moveable property. Grazing grounds could not be alienated without broad consent; other land was deemed of little value. When grazing land became a scene of conflict in the nineteenth century, the ovaHerero ensured the safety of their cattle first, stashing them in Kaokoveld or pawning them.²²

Historically, ovaHerero cattle were of the indigenous Sanga breed. Sanga are considered the longest-tenured cattle in Southern Africa, and are only thought to have become broadly hybridised in Namibia around the 1960s. Relatively small framed, they are well adapted to semi-arid areas, which characterise the majority of north-west Namibian environments. ‘Extremely hardy through drought conditions’, Sanga can subsist on bush browse for extended

20. M. Jacobsohn, *Himba: Nomads of Namibia* (Cape Town: Struik, 1998), p. 17; J. Friedman, ‘Making politics, making history: Chiefship and the post-apartheid state in Namibia’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31 (1) (2005): 23–51.

21. H. Vedder, *South West Africa in Early Times* (Windhoek: Namibia Scientific Society, 1934), p. 145.

22. Jacobsohn, *Himba*, 23; Vedder, *South West Africa in Early Times*, 47, 145; 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), p. 132; M. Bollig, ‘Towards an arid Eden? Boundary-making, governance and benefit sharing and the political ecology of the new commons of Kunene Region, northern Namibia’, *International Journal of the Commons* 10 (2) (2016): 771–799; Gewald, *Herero Heroes*, 23.

periods while remaining able to trek over long distances, even when lacking adequate nutrition. Sanga can consume the less nutritious foliage of very young mopane trees (*Colophospermum mopane*), which grow in Kaokoveld's ephemeral riverbeds even into the advanced stages of drought – though even Sanga cannot subsist without available grazing for long. Sanga are also resilient to ticks and certain other bovine diseases. Throughout Namibia, these small-framed cattle are more productive (in terms of beef production and calving) across different stocking rates than their large-framed counterparts.²³

The scale of livestock ownership in Kaokoveld during the precolonial and early colonial era is difficult to ascertain. Relative to other pastoral African societies, Kaokoveld Herero and Himba have maintained a high proportion of cattle to small stock. However, small stock compose the numerical majority of herds, as was the case during the colonial era. Police data from 1929 put the number of cattle in Kaokoveld at just under 20,000 and small stock at roughly 38,000, while veterinary data from 1942 estimated cattle in Kaokoveld at 47,000. These numbers indicate a substantial loss relative to the precolonial era. Depressed cattle ownership points to an extended process of social and political marginalisation within ovaHerero society. Jacobsohn recounts stories of cattle loss from invaders and rinderpest towards the end of the nineteenth century. Environmental historian Emmanuel Kreike notes declining cattle numbers in neighbouring Ovamboland during the early colonial era. Bollig traces declining livestock ownership in Kaokoveld resulting from colonial policies that exacerbated environmental challenges.²⁴

23. E. Kreike, 'De-globalisation and deforestation in colonial Africa: Closed markets, the cattle complex, and environmental change in north-central Namibia, 1890–1990', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35 (1) (2009): 81–98; G. Lange, J. Barnes and D. Motinga, *Cattle Numbers, Biomass, Productivity, and Land Degradation in the Commercial Farming Sector of Namibia, 1915 to 1995* (Windhoek: Ministry of Environment and Tourism, 1997), p. 11; U. Muzuma, personal communication, 13 November 2019; 'Nguni Breeders Society of Namibia', 2017. <http://www.nguni-namibia.org/index.php/sanga>; Bollig, *Risk Management*, 59.
24. Bollig, *Risk Management*, 58–59; 'Removal of natives from the southern Kaokoveld to the north. Correspondence between officer in charge of native affairs, Ovamboland and secretary of South West Africa, Windhoek' (1929), South West Africa Administration, Namibia National Archives (SWAA) 1168; J. 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): 496–504; M. Bollig and D. Schwiager, 'Fragmentation, cooperation and power: Institutional dynamics in natural resource governance in north-western Namibia', *Human Ecology* 42 (2014): 167–181; Nguni Breeders Society of Namibia; Kreike, 'De-globalisation and deforestation'. During this period the human population of Kaokoveld was approximately 5,000.

OORLAM

During the early nineteenth century, the Oorlam, a poly-ethnic group of agropastoralists expelled from Cape Colony, took violent control of central and southern Namibia. Engaging in immense stock raids, they displaced Otjiherero-speaking pastoralists who had migrated southwards over the preceding years. During Oorlam hegemony, many Otjiherero-speaking pastoralists lost their wealth, were separated from long-standing kin networks and adopted a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, which led them to be termed ovaTjimba, 'the people who live like the ant-bear' (*tjimba*). During this process, ovaHerero society within central Namibia changed from being based on decentralised transhumant kin networks to a system that was increasingly centralised and spatially rooted, and militarily successful.²⁵ By the end of the 1860s, Oorlam forces splintered. In their place a cohesive Herero identity, coalescing around a 'paramount chief', emerged. Contact with missionaries and regional trade networks also brought exposure to a wider array of material and cultural influences. This new socio-political organisation became a distinguishing characteristic, differentiating Herero in central Namibia from their Kaokoveld kin, who were still organised in terms of decentralised kinship bonds.²⁶

OVAKWENA

In 1876, British commissioner W.C. Palgrave described Kaokoveld as 'a well-pastured country ... mountainous and full of fountains'. Formerly occupied by relatively large numbers of pastoralists, and 'held in the highest estimation by the [ovaHerero]', Kaokoveld was thought to have been largely abandoned. This puzzled Palgrave.²⁷ He was unaware that, as early as the 1850s, Oorlam commandos engaged in bloody stock raids in Kaokoveld, where the arid and rugged environment kept ovaHerero pastoralists decentralised and thus unable to mount a common defence. These raids pushed Kaokoveld ovaHerero as far north as Portuguese Angola. Among these raiders were the Swartboois, who having moved north from near present-day Swakopmund, desired access to

25. B. Lau, *Namibia in Jonker Afrikaner's Time* (Namibia: Windhoek Archives Publication Series, 1987); J. Silvester and J. Gewald, *Words Cannot Be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia – An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 65; Gewald, *Herero Heroes*, 14; Vedder, *South West Africa in Early Times*, 196; N. van Warmelo, 'Notes on the Kaokoveld (South West Africa) and Its People', Ethnological Publication No. 26 (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1951), p. 11.

26. W. Palgrave, *Mission to Damaraland and Great Namaqualand in 1876* (Cape Town: Saul Simon and Co., 1877), pp. 16–18; Gewald, *Herero Heroes*, 10–28; M. Wallace and J. Kinahan, *A History of Namibia: From the Beginning to 1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 47–104.

27. Palgrave, *Mission*, 45–46.

the large ovaHerero cattle herds. Kaokoveld residents still remember these and other Oorlam raiders as the ovaKwena.²⁸

Cattle bind ovaHerero families and kin networks. The ovaHerero trace kin relationships by dual descent, which is to say through a system of matrilineal (*omaanda*, sing. *eanda*) and patrilineal (*otuzo*, sing. *oruzo*). *Omaanda* are how ovaHerero trace family relationships. Most wealth is inherited through one's *eanda* (matrilineal). When a man dies his sister's eldest son traditionally inherits the *eanda* cattle. This diffuses status across a kin network. Such cattle are used in important ceremonies such as name-giving, marriage and ritual slaughter, and may be bartered or sold. *Otuzo* link living ovaHerero to their ancestors and are the structure through which male leadership is inherited. Yet even when *oruzo* (patrilineal) leadership is passed to a man's son, his wealth mostly will not be. However, sacred (*zera*) cattle remain tied to the holy fire (*okuruwo*), which connects the generations of an *oruzo* and can be alienated only in exceptional circumstances. Via the holy fire, the *oruzo* leader (*Ondangere poo Omupweye*) and his advisors commune with their ancestors (*ovakuru, ootate*). In this way access to certain powers remains within the *oruzo*. Regarding the Herero of eastern Namibia and western Botswana, Gibson characterises *omaanda* familial bounds as forces of 'conjunction', while *otuzo*-based political power can be a force of 'disjunction'. However, in his work with the Himba, Crandall shows that *omaanda* forces of conjunction and *otuzo* forces of disjunction co-mingle. While *omaanda* bind families across space in the present, *otuzo* bind individuals and extended kin networks across time. As historian Erica Fudge has pointed out, self-consciousness is not a prerequisite for historical agency. Cattle are an important part of ovaHerero culture and all cattle are not created equal.²⁹

The cattle raids of the late nineteenth century inaugurated an era of fear, violence and political and social disruption in Kaokoveld. Memories of women having their arms hacked off for copper bangles persisted to the end of the twentieth century. Between the 1850s and 1890s, as many as 2,000 cattle were stolen annually. Jacobsohn's ethnographic work more than ninety years later revealed the enduring magnitude of these losses.³⁰ One elder man remembered:

this land trembled under the hoofs of the oukambe (horses) of the ovaKwena [Oorlam]. After the ovaKwena drove off my grandfather's cattle, our people hid in the hills. Now they had no cows' milk but they did not die. They remembered the ways of the old people ... They ate from the trees and shrubs and knew which plants hid their edible store under the ground ... If they had not

28. Palgrave, *Mission*, 25, 76.

29. Fudge, 'What was it like to be a cow?'; G. Gibson, 'Double Descent and Its Correlates among the Herero of Ngamiland', *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 109–139; Crandall, 'The role of time'.

30. Jacobsohn, 'Negotiating meaning', 24; Bollig, *When War Came*, 15.

paid attention to their elders when they were boys and girls, the family's bones would now lie white and scattered in those hills.³¹

An *oruza* head insisted that this period dealt the Himba a more enduring blow than the difficulties of the colonial era:

Before the war the people here had lots of cattle. Then came the Ovambo and the Ovakwena [Oorlam]. They took the cattle. Our people had to chew old skins. Clever people ran away and took some of their stock. The stupid stayed here and lost all. So now only some of us have cattle. From that day we have struggled.³²

This period of violence was marked by ovaHerero accommodation to, or retreat in the face of, Oorlam threats to residents' safety and livelihoods. The tactics adopted by different groups formed the foundation of what became 'ethnic' splits among the ovaHerero, later reified by colonial governments. Additionally, such tactics, including taking livestock to inaccessible areas and crafting alliances with external forces, are recognisable as the forerunners of everyday types of resistance to colonial rule.

Those who stayed in Kaokoveld either retreated to the rugged mountains in the north, or aligned with the Oorlam. In 1895/6, Swedish explorer Peter Möller noted the use of the label Tjimba to describe the ovaHerero remaining in Kaokoveld. Those who fled to southern Angola were given the name ovaHimba by other people residing there, meaning 'those who beg' for food or land. The result was a greatly impoverished diaspora straddling the Kunene river. In Portuguese Angola, disparate groups of ovaHerero organised by powerful and charismatic leaders rebuilt their herds of Sanga cattle and small stock and made use of regional trade networks. These rulers would return to Kaokoveld during the colonial era.³³ Meanwhile, Kaokoveld pastoralists were dispersed throughout the region's mountainous areas or beyond the Kunene river.

YOTJITA TJOZONOGOMBE (CATTLE DEATH)

In 1885, the Herero paramount chief residing in central Namibia ceded control to Germany over what became known as German South West Africa. In 1886, an Oorlam 'kaptien' sold Kaokoveld to a German merchant, who resold it to the Berlin and London-based Kaoko Land and Mining Company. Initially,

31. Jacobsohn, *Himba*, 23.

32. Jacobsohn, 'Negotiating meaning', 34.

33. Wallace and Kinahan, *A History of Namibia*, 87; P. Möller, *Journey in Africa through Angola, Ovampoland and Damaraland*, ed. I. Rudner and J. Rudner (Cape Town: Struik, 1899), pp. 163–164; J. Malan, *Peoples of Namibia* (Pretoria: Rhino Publishers, 1995), p. 88; Bollig, *When War Came*, 216.

these agreements had little direct effect: Kaokoveld primarily remained a space of personal and livelihood insecurity.

Beginning in 1896 and lasting two years, an epidemic of rinderpest – a disease effecting ruminants – swept through German South West Africa. The toll on all livestock remains unknown, though in some Herero communities as much as 95 per cent of cattle holdings were lost. The disease altered power dynamics in central Namibia, where young Herero men ‘most of whom were too young to be stock owners in their own right’, slaughtered cattle and were paid an ox a day to do so.³⁴ Fifty years later, Kaokoveld residents remembered the near annihilation of herds by rinderpest and some other concurrent, unnamed disease. The ovaKwena based around Sesfontein likely possessed large herds during this period, suggesting they were hardest hit among Kaokoveld pastoralists. In contrast, an aggressive inoculation campaign among settler livestock may have saved as many as 50 to 90 per cent.³⁵ The rinderpest epidemic hastened the end of ovaKwena domination.

The colonial administration of German South West Africa believed a growing settler society required protection against Africa’s veterinary threats. Supposedly diseased African-owned livestock were increasingly destroyed, to be replaced by white-owned livestock and white land ownership.³⁶ In late 1896, officials began establishing a veterinary cordon dividing German South West Africa in two. The creation of the Red Line, dividing northern ‘native’ areas from what became known as the ‘Police Zone’ in the south, had lasting effects upon Kaokoveld’s ovaHerero. The Red Line indicated the extent of colonial control within the territory. White settler livestock were limited to the Police Zone, African livestock in the north were deemed unhealthy and could only cross the boundary following veterinary examination and quarantine. As van Wolputte notes of a later era, veterinary restrictions became a means to ‘sedentarise’ the population and livestock. This large-scale undertaking could not be actuated without local assistance, which was not forthcoming along Kaokoveld’s southern border, where ovaKwena and ovaHerero leaders resisted colonial control of livestock. At a battle in southern Kaokoveld, the ovaKwena leaders were defeated by German colonial forces. This marked the end of ovaKwena dominance in Kaokoveld. When the colonial government

34. Archival information from J. Gewald, ‘Colonization, genocide and resurgence: The Herero of Namibia 1890–1933’, in M. Bollig and J. Gewald (eds), *People, Cattle, and Land: Transformations of a Pastoral Society in Southwestern Africa* (Cologne: Koppe, 2000), p. 196.

35. Miescher, *Namibia’s Red Line*, 27; J. Irle, *Die Herero*, cited in H. Drechsler, *Let Us Die Fighting: The Struggle of the Herero and Nama against German Imperialism* (London: Zed Press, 1980); van Warmelo, ‘Notes on the Kaokoveld’, 53.

36. P. Rohrbach, *Deutsche Kolonialwirtschaft* (Berlin-Schöneberg: Buchverlag der ‘Hilfe’, 1907), cited in Silvester and Gewald, *Words Cannot Be Found*.

enforced a relative peace, ovaHerero on both sides of the Kunene river began rebuilding their herds.³⁷

Following the rinderpest outbreak, ovaHerero nomadism conflicted with increasingly scientific official approaches to veterinary health and livestock management. German colonial administrators considered cattle from Kaokoveld to be 'hardy' and resistant to periods of drought.³⁸ Beginning in 1907, colonial gerrymandering remade Kaokoveld as part of Game Reserve No. 2, which was largely peripheral to German colonial concerns. The effects of German rule were thus mixed: while the ovaKwena threat ended, new veterinary concerns gave rise to increasing state-based attempts to control livestock.³⁹

Kaokoveld thus became a political frontier. During this period a Tjimba 'chief', Kakurukouje, who may have aligned with the ovaKwena, emerged as a government ally. Presented with a gun as a token of his leadership, Kakurukouje was tasked with crossing the Kunene to retrieve his brethren. However, across the river, two men had been building their own bases of livestock wealth and attracting followers. Their return would have enduring effects on Kaokoveld politics and colonial livestock regulations to remake the region.⁴⁰ Strategies of mobility, alliance-building and reliance upon Kaokoveld's expansive and rugged environments that had helped the ovaHerero survive the violence of the OvaKwena proved similarly useful for frustrating colonial governance efforts.

OVAHONA (CHIEFS)

At the beginning of the South African era, groups of ovaHerero began returning to Kaokoveld and rebuilding their herds under the gaze of a new type of political power.⁴¹ Under South African rule, the region became subject to the native commissioner for Ovamboland, who sought to govern Kaokoveld through a system of newly installed traditional authorities. The historical processes that had split the ovaHerero now enabled the categorisation of three

37. Miescher, *Namibia's Red Line*, 33–34.

38. Resident Commissioner Ondonga, 'Cattle on Hand by Ovamboland Administn. Official Correspondence: Deputy Secretary for South West Africa to Resident Commissioner Ovamboland. 30 September 1916' (1916), Namibia National Archives (RCO) 7.

39. Miescher, *Namibia's Red Line*, 9, 65; van Wolputte, 'Cattle works', 104; Bollig, *When War Came*, 162–163.

40. Miescher, *Namibia's Red Line*, 203; H. Berry, 'Historical review of the Etosha region and its subsequent administration as a national park', *Madoqua* 20 (1) (1997): 3–12; Bollig, *When War Came*, 20–21.

41. The changes developed slowly. Neither the effective nor the official transfer of power in 1915 and 1920 respectively was recorded in Kaokoveld oral traditions. See M. Bollig, 'Power and trade in precolonial and early colonial northern Kaokoland, 1860s–1940s', in P. Hayes et al. (eds), *Namibia under South African Rule: Mobility and Containment, 1915–1946* (Oxford: James Currey, 1998), p. 185.

separate ovaHerero groups: the Herero, Himba and Tjimba. In the eyes of the South African administration, each 'tribe' should have its own 'chief', who was responsible for governance and working with the administration.⁴²

The late 1910s and 1920s in Kaokoveld were not dominated by the colonial regime but by government-recognised chiefs jockeying for pre-eminence. The first wave of returning ovaHerero fell under the leadership of Muhona Katiti, who, having profited from two decades of raiding and sometimes aligning with the Portuguese in southern Angola, entered Kaokoveld in 1910. Later, as ethnic categories became concretised, Katiti was reimagined as the 'only ... leader amongst the Himba influential enough to be regarded as a chief'. Katiti was powerful and viewed with suspicion by colonial officials. Of his appearance, one administrator remarked that Katiti was 'a real savage in sundry metal ornaments, grease, skin girdle, wool or hair bunched and bound with fine leather behind the head'.⁴³

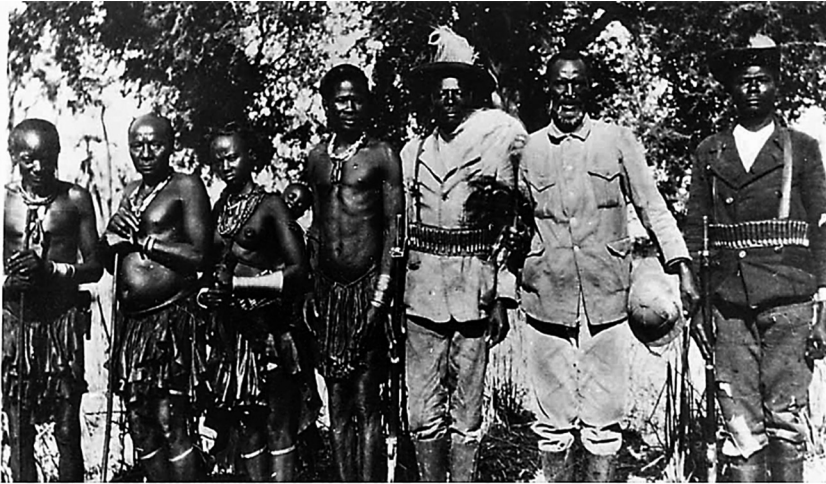


Figure 2. Muhona Katiti (second from left) and Harunga (second from right).
Courtesy of the Namibia National Archives.

During his years in Portuguese Angola, Katiti came into conflict with Oorlog (War) Tom. Known to many Kaokoveld residents as Harunga (War), he was an ovaHerero, originally from central Namibia. Harunga had been militarily aligned with the Portuguese since the 1880s but was driven, along with his followers, to Kaokoveld by Boer commandos in 1915/16. Seeking to settle

42. 'Native reserves', Government of South West Africa Notice No. 122 of 1923, 13 November 1923, Annual record of government notices, pp. 84–85, Namibia National Archives.

43. M. Bollig and H. Heinemann, 'Nomadic savages, ochre people and heroic herders: Visual Presentations of the Himba of Namibia's Kaokoland', *Visual Anthropology* 15 (3/4) (2002): 280; van Warmelo, 'Notes on the Kaokoveld', 13; Friedman, 'Making politics', 28.

in Kaokoveld, Harunga and Katiti quarrelled over grazing space. In 1917/18, Kakurukouje brokered a peace, whereby Katiti and his large herds could occupy favourable grazing lands, while Harunga and his followers occupied areas favourable for cultivation.⁴⁴ The brokered settlement was ineffective: Kakurukouje died in about 1921 and the rivalry of Harunga and Katiti became the focal point of Kaokoveld politics during the 1920s.

Harunga quickly became favoured by colonial officials as 'the dominating figure in Kaokoveld'. Normally dressed in military fatigues reminiscent of the German *Schutztruppe* and seen to be more Westernised than Katiti, Harunga was also considered more reliable. Harunga's 'fine look[s] ... [and] excellent manners and personality' carried favour with the administration and his position was consistently reinforced throughout the 1920s. However, even Harunga's power was qualified: a government-sponsored military campaign against King Mandume of the Ovambos in 1917 served as 'an object lesson to all Native Chiefs', including Kakurukouje, Katiti and Harunga. The message was clear: following his defeat, King Mandume had been decapitated.⁴⁵

In response to growing tensions between Harunga and Katiti, in 1923 South African officials subdivided Kaokoveld into four reserves, one for each of the traditional authorities in the north, far from the Red Line, along with a fourth, principally for the remnant ovaKwena, at Sesfontein. These reserves were justified on 'ethnic' grounds – namely that the followers of Harunga (the Herero), Katiti (Himba), and Kakurukouje's heir Kahewa-Nawa (Tjimba) constituted separate 'tribes'. The central responsibility of each was to ensure the livestock of 'their people' remained within each reserve to limit the spread of livestock diseases.⁴⁶ Livestock, which had long bound ovaHerero networks, now bound ovaHerero power structures to the colonial state in new ways. During the 1920s, the rule of Harunga and Katiti in particular created an intermediary space between residents and colonial administrators reminiscent of Mahmood Mamdani's bifurcated state, in which Kaokoveld residents navigated politics of chiefship and the colonial state.⁴⁷ During this period livestock continued to be both the site through which power was expressed and the means of resisting it.

True to his name, Harunga and his followers did not abide by reserve boundaries. For certain ovaHerero, the era of Harunga's dominance was likened to the violence of the ovaKwena. Livestock were taken and people were again killed. Harunga's status as an outsider reinforced tensions in the region.

44. Bollig, *When War Came*, 133.

45. J. Gewald, 'On becoming a chief in the Kaokoveld, colonial Namibia, 1916–25', *Journal of African History* 52 (2011): 23–42; Native Affairs Ovamboland, 'Annual report: Native commissioner, Ovamboland' (1929), Namibia National Archives (NAO) 018; 'Kaokoveld annual report, native commissioner, Ovamboland' (1928), NAO 018.

46. Government of South West Africa, 'Native reserves'.

47. M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

Because he fell outside local *omaanda* and *otuzo* networks, Harunga's hand in dealing with enemies was less constrained. As violence returned to Kaokoveld, ovaHerero subject to Harunga had to either recognise his leadership, move beyond his reach or rely on the colonial government to rein him in.⁴⁸ By propping up his rule, South African administrators helped concretise Harunga's power in this intra-colonial frontier.

Meanwhile, Katiti and his followers were repeatedly instructed not to move their cattle beyond their reserve. Time and again these orders were contravened, exposing the limits of colonial rule. One official reported that Katiti's stock had been moved without permission. When confronted, Katiti was evasive, stating that the stock had been moved without his knowledge. When herders were instructed to return livestock to their reserve, they would make use of Kaokoveld's rugged topography, hiding stock where officials could not retrieve them.

Trespassing livestock revealed the limits of direct rule. Unable to directly govern Kaokoveld, administrators relied on Harunga and Katiti. When a herder was caught beyond Harunga's reserve, Kaokoveld's officer-in-charge directed Harunga to fine the boy two cattle rather than do it himself.⁴⁹ During the 1920s, the peasantry continued to frustrate state rule through livestock movements. Such pastoral strategies, reminiscent of strategies of evasion used by previous generations, kept the semi-arid and arid Kaokoveld a suitable space for grazing relatively large herds, according to ovaHerero standards. In 1928, 1,633 adult ovaHerero inhabited Kaokoveld's three reserves. All told, this population owned approximately 15,000 to 23,000 cattle and 35,000 small stock. Yet, it was still estimated that a greater number of ovaHerero resided outside the designated reserves.⁵⁰

OMAKUTU (SACKS OF GRAIN)

The creation of a buffer between the Police Zone and the supposedly diseased African interior was the motivating force in Kaokoveld during the interwar period. At the time, economic and political policies were intended to secure the livelihoods of white farmers, many of whom were recent arrivals from South Africa. During the 1920s, the South African administration aided 1,261

48. K. Dierks, 'Biography of Vita Tom, Ovaherero (Ovahimba) chief', *Biographies of Namibian Personalities*, 2004, https://www.klausdierks.com/Biographies/Biographies_3.htm (accessed 28 February 2019); Gewald, 'On becoming a chief', 25; Bollig, *When War Came*, 162–163, 165.

49. 'Tshimakona Police, patrol report: June 1926; officer in charge, native affairs, Ovamboland to secretary for South West Africa' (1926), SWAA 2513; 'Monthly reports, Tshimakona, April 1927; officer in charge, native affairs Ovamboland to secretary for South West Africa' (1927), SWAA 2513.

50. 'Kaokoveld annual report, native commissioner, Ovamboland', NAO 018.

settler families. Cash advances, debt forbearance and forgiveness, loans for infrastructure-development and the administration-backed Land Bank made aid packages among the most generous in the world. During this period Kaokoveld was conceptualised as a livestock buffer between Ovamboland and Portuguese Angola, and the settler economy within the Police Zone. The veterinary paradox was that the struggling white economy relied upon livestock but settlers were prohibited from trading for sought-after African-owned livestock in the north.⁵¹

Once livestock trade from the reserves to the Police Zone was effectively disallowed, regulations on livestock movement within the reserves became a priority. Nominally Kaokoveld's ovaHerero residents were supposed to inhabit one of the three reserves. However, the lack of available water and grazing forced ovaHerero to choose between their livestock's well-being and the important social ties cattle represented, and abiding by laws founded upon alien veterinary health standards unrefined by colonial practitioners. This reinforced nomadic strategies. Whereas cattle well-being was freighted with social considerations for the ovaHerero, livestock were essentialised in the eyes of the colonial state: either healthy or unhealthy. Colonial officials recognised that livestock movements kept herders and stock beyond the reach of the state, complicating attempts to police the region, including movement to Portuguese Angola. The consistent resistance to colonial regulations, particularly among Katiti's and Kahewa-Nawa's followers, led to a tone of resignation in official communications. The rationale attributed to herders in official documents was that the region's semi-arid environments necessitated trekking between available water sources.⁵²

In subsequent years, the administration toughened its stance, turning a tone of resignation into one of action. In 1925, lungsickness broke out on Katiti's reserve. Though not dangerous to people, cattle suffering from lungsickness can sicken, become emaciated, develop internal and external lesions and die within a matter of days. In drought-prone areas, where cattle may be weakened and highly mobile, the disease can spread rapidly. By the late 1920s, the threat of lungsickness entering the Police Zone was considered grave. The slightest indication of lungsickness, no matter the distance from the Police

51. Botha, 'The politics of land settlement'; 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; 'Report of the Land Settlement Commission, SWA, 1926' (1927), pp. 17–18, Namibia Digital Repository, <http://namibia.leadr.msu.edu/items/show/259> (accessed 22 September 2020); 'Kaokoveld annual report, native commissioner, Ovamboland', NAO 018; 'Removal of natives from the southern Kaokoveld to the north. Correspondence between officer in charge of native affairs, Ovamboland and secretary of South West Africa, Windhoek' (1929), SWAA 1168.

52. S. van Wolputte, 'Vicious vets and lazy locals: Experimentation, politics and CBPP in north-west Namibia, 1925–1980', *Journal of Namibian Studies* 13 (2013): 79–100; 'Monthly report: June and July. Officer in charge, native affairs, Ovamboland to secretary for South West Africa, 11 August' (1927), NAO 018.

Zone boundary, was sufficient cause to destroy livestock as a 'precautionary measure', generally without compensating the owner. This was justified on veterinary grounds but with a clearly racial valence: officials felt that natives were unconcerned by the threats posed by livestock diseases. This took place even as certain officials recognised that lungsickness was introduced to Kaokoveld by an 'irresponsible' white stock owner in 1925. It may not have originated in Ovamboland at all.⁵³

As colonial restrictions became increasingly proscriptive, the administration became increasingly interventionist. The boundary between Ovamboland and Kaokoveld was re-designated as a closed border through which people and livestock could not pass without official permission. In 1929, the administration began creating a 60 to 80 kilometre corridor separating native and settler livestock. Administration officials forcibly relocated 1,127 men, women and children along with more than 7,500 cattle and 22,000 small stock from southern Kaokoveld further north. This effectively shifted the Kaokoveld boundary and was remembered long into the future as a terrifying event – some people fled northwards with their stock in the night to escape administration officials. This relocation strained internal Kaokoveld politics: the penchant among colonial administrators for simplifying different ovaHerero social relations in terms of preconceived ethnic categories, and subsequently attempting to spatially rearrange different 'tribes' according to these categories, exacerbated inter-group tensions, which were previously ameliorated by open spaces and transhumant practices. Certain displaced ovaHerero were wary of falling under Harunga's authority. Harunga was considered a 'traveller', insufficiently bound by *omaanda* and *otuzo* kinship ties, whose prestige was due to the assistance of the colonial state and his violent stock-raiding. One Kaokoveld leader, Langman Tjiyahura, forced northwards from western Etosha, asked that he and his followers be allowed to move on to Ovamboland. The prospect of encouraging regular human and livestock movements between Kaokoveld and Ovamboland was deemed an unacceptable veterinary risk, and the request was denied.⁵⁴

53. Miescher, *Namibia's Red Line*, 67; 'Tshimaka Police, patrol report: June, 1926; Officer in charge, native affairs, Ovamboland to secretary for South West Africa' (1926), SWAA 2513; van Wolputte, 'Vicious Vets and Lazy Locals'; 'Movement of cattle; secretary for South West Africa to native commissioner, Ovamboland' (1931), SWAA 2513; 'Monthly reports, Tshimaka Police, February 1928; officer in charge of native affairs, Ovamboland to secretary for South West Africa' (1928), SWAA 2513; 'Report on the outbreak of lungsickness at Otjuerungu; office of the post commander, S.W.A. Police, Tshimaka to officer in charge, native affairs, Ovamboland' (1929), SWAA 2513; 'Lungsickness: Ehomba and Kauapehuri. Official correspondence, native commissioner Ovamboland to secretary for South West Africa, Windhoek, June' (1931), NAO 028.

54. Numbers estimated from 1927 census of southern Kaokoveld, 'Monthly report, February, 1930; S.W.A. Police, Tshimaka' (1930), SWAA 2513; 'Monthly reports: November and December, 1930. Tshimaka; native commissioner, Ovamboland to secretary for South West Africa' (1931), SWAA 2513; U. Muzuma, personal communication, 13 November 2019;

From an administration perspective, the political difficulty between Harunga and other leaders could be partially solved by the needs of live-stock. Rangeland constraints were considered an administrative asset: due to low levels of rainfall, the ovaHerero from southern Kaokoveld would have to 'intermingle' with northern residents and fall under Harunga's leadership. This solution was short lived, and some ovaHerero contravened administration orders and returned to their place of origin. Simultaneously, groups of hired Khoe-Sān were thought to be sneaking stock across the Kaokoveld-Ovamboland border.⁵⁵ While Kaokoveld's rugged, dry environments aided administration goals of forcing ovaHerero together, an inability to control stock movements still frustrated colonial administrators, as this excerpt from a native commissioner's report shows:

The Hereros and Ovambos have been very sternly warned on many occasions and I consider it useless to waste further words. If it is found that they have moved stock without authority I would suggest that Constable Cogill be instructed to the places mentioned by him and shoot the cattle without further ado.⁵⁶

The repeated circumventing of administration-imposed boundaries highlights the different perceptions of land for the ovaHerero and administration officials. As Henrichsen has pointed out for central Namibia, Kaokoveld pastoralist's concept of territoriality was rooted in the demands of a semi-nomadic lifestyle. Within the Police Zone, capitalist concepts of private ownership delineated land boundaries and use; however, in Kaokoveld administrative boundaries were dictated by 'ethnic' categorisations associated with rival chiefs. In Kaokoveld, ethnic categorization and the subsequent spatial reorganization of people were employed to effectively limit pastoralist movement and, purportedly, the transmission of livestock diseases. The administration's willingness to enforce such regulations engendered fear and uncertainty among pastoralists. Still, it remained uncertain whether movement restrictions reduced the transmission of diseases.⁵⁷

Official intransigence and ill-suited policies exacerbated environmental pressures. From the early to mid 1930s, drought strained rangelands. In 1931,

Bollig, *When War Came*, 165; 'Extract from monthly report for May and June, post commander Tshimaka, SWA Police, Tshimaka' (1929), SWAA 1168.

55. 'Monthly report, February, 1930; S.W.A. Police, Tshimaka', SWAA 2513; 'Monthly reports: November and December, 1930. Tshimaka; native commissioner, Ovamboland to secretary for South West Africa', SWAA 2513; 'Removal of natives from the southern Kaokoveld to the north', SWAA 1168.

56. 'Monthly reports: November and December, 1930. Tshimaka; native commissioner, Ovamboland to secretary for South West Africa', SWAA 2513.

57. Henrichsen, 'Pastoral modernity'; 'Livestock and agricultural census, official correspondence: officer in charge, native affairs Ovamboland to senior veterinary surgeon, Windhoek' (1930), NAO 028; 'Official letter, concerning famine in Kaokoveld; secretary for SWA to consul for Portugal, Windhoek' (1932), SWAA 2513.

Kaokoveld was gripped with famine. Even the recently cleared stock-free corridor along the Police Zone boundary ‘was as devoid of pasturage as the rest of the Kaokoveld’ – though the effects were felt most keenly in the north.⁵⁸ Rizzo notes that during the 1930s the contravention of regulations against moving livestock ‘became a strategy of survival’.⁵⁹ The strength of favoured chiefs such as Harunga could not supersede the needs of livestock. Even the well-adapted physiology of the Sanga breed could not withstand the drought’s worst effects: cattle numbers plummeted, cows would not produce milk and people faced starvation. As Bollig notes, it was not the especially challenging environment but the limits imposed by an increasingly oppressive political regime that prevented the ovaHerero from employing time-tested strategies for mitigating drought.⁶⁰ This resembles indigenous peoples’ efforts elsewhere during the colonial era, such as in colonial India and Brazil.⁶¹ Himba chronologies reflect the memories of these years as ‘the year of seed’ (*ondjara yomekunu*) or ‘the year of one milking’ (*ondjara yekandukemwe*). Acutely suffering from the drought, some inhabitants took the extraordinary step of offering to trade cattle for grain. Unfortunately, this offer was rejected: due to veterinary restrictions, ‘the cattle received may not leave the Kaokoveld’.⁶² In the end, grain was provided and officials shot thirty zebra to feed the people.⁶³

HARUNGA TJA KOKA (DEATH OF HARUNGA)

As the colonial state shifted humans and livestock during the 1930s, ovaHerero power structures eroded. Kaokoveld was polarised between Katiti and Harunga, whose followers increasingly came into conflict. Many of Kakurukouje’s Tjimba were absorbed by Katiti’s Himba, leaving them open to Harunga’s depredations. The rest maintained a marginal hunter-gatherer-type existence in the northern mountains and largely disappear from the historical record. Harunga remained an object of fear.

58. ‘Drought in Kaokoveld. Official letter, administrator, Windhoek to native commissioner, Ovamboland’ (1932), NAO 028.

59. Rizzo, *Gender and Colonialism*, 159.

60. Bollig, ‘Colonial encapsulation’.

61. M. Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2001).

62. ‘Kaokoveld: drought. Official letter, native commissioner, Ovamboland to secretary for South West Africa, Windhoek’ (1932), NAO 028.

63. Natives were prohibited from killing game without official permission. Rizzo, *Gender and Colonialism*, 154–155, 159; ‘Drought in Kaokoveld. Official letter, native constable in charge, Kaokoveld to commandant, South West Africa Police, Windhoek’ (1932), NAO 028; Wolputte, ‘Vicious vets and lazy locals’, 154; Gibson, ‘Himba epochs’; ‘Official letter, secretary for SWA to native commissioner, Ovamboland’ (1932), NAO 028.

Chief Oorlog [Harunga], as usual, is the dreaded man in the Kaokoveld, principally because of his 'slim' ways and associates, i.e. his Oorlams followers [sic] and relatives who are always ready to make trouble with the savage Ovahimba [Himba]. Of late several of the principal Ovahimba natives have left his area and gone over to Muhona Katiti. Although Oorlog very much resents this I have given him very clearly to understand that natives will live where they receive fair treatment and are left unmolested. A feeling of dissatisfaction appears to be brewing amongst certain of his Herero followers and Oorlog is finding it more and more difficult to keep his band playing in tune.⁶⁴

Kaokoveld was further plunged into political uncertainty with the death of Muhona Katiti in 1931. Within months, Harunga's followers, using the ongoing drought as justification, began grazing within Katiti's reserve. Rather than use coercion, as the ovaKwena had, Harunga found that using livestock as a means of asserting control was more palatable to colonial overseers. Many of 'Katiti's Himba' reverted to an array of loosely organised kin networks reminiscent of the pre-ovaKwena era. Complaints about Harunga's rule exposed further rifts in the colonial system.⁶⁵ In this regard Himba residents remembered the early colonial era with mixed feelings:

Sometimes the government would hurt you ... but in many other instances it would help you. I differentiate: sometimes it caused harm, sometimes it did good things ... They divided the cattle because of diseases. They prevented somebody from here from going over there ... Later when the [government] came they introduced a law which said that everyone should keep his own belongings and nobody should take things from anybody else by force. That was one thing which was implemented by the government of the whites ... [T]his one (probably Harunga) was pacified by the law of the white people, so that he would not steal livestock anymore.⁶⁶

Many ovaHerero trusted the administration to govern in terms of the rule of law and participated in projects deemed essential by the administration, such as road-building.⁶⁷ They appreciated that, generally, a tone of peace prevailed.⁶⁸ However, the restrictions placed on livestock movement remained a source of antagonism. Forms of everyday resistance, against Harunga and against the

64. 'Monthly report: June and July. Officer in charge, native affairs, Ovamboland to secretary for South West Africa, 11 August' (1927), NAO 018.

65. 'Death of Chief Muhona Katiti; native commissioner, Ovamboland to secretary of SWA, 6 October' (1931), NAO 028; 'Monthly report: June and July. Officer in charge, native affairs, Ovamboland to secretary for South West Africa, 11 August' (1927), NAO 018; 'Removal of natives from the southern Kaokoveld to the north', SWAA 1168; 'Lungsickness: Kaokoveld; native commissioner, Ovamboland to secretary for SWA, 25 March' (1932), NAO 028.

66. Bollig, *When War Came*, 162–163, 165.

67. 'Northern Kaokoveld, official letter from native commissioner, Ovamboland to chief native commissioner, Windhoek, 22 December' (1938), NAO 031; 'Police patrols to Zessfontein native reserve ex Kamanjab; from native commissioner, Ovamboland to chief native commissioner, Windhoek, 13 October' (1944), NAO 031.

68. Bollig, *When War Came*.

state, were consistently evident in livestock movement, particularly among the Himba.

When Harunga died in 1937, his designated heir had neither the personal force nor, because Harunga had married a non-ovaHerero, the *omaanda* bonds required to consolidate his leadership.⁶⁹ This illustrates the veracity behind Crandall's claim that *eanda* (matriclan) and *oruzo* (patriclan) forces 'co-mingled': though chiefship could be inherited through the patriclan, it was ineffectual without matriclan bonds to support it.⁷⁰ Still, the government sought to rule Kaokoveld indirectly. Into this new power vacuum stepped the government-designated Tribal Council (*Ombongarero yomuhoko*) drawn from Herero, Himba and Tjimba groups. However, these new administration-backed leaders could not replace Harunga and Katiti, whose power rested on methods of violence and mobility increasingly considered anathema to South African rule.

OMBONGARERO YOMUHOKO (TRIBAL COUNCIL)

Colonial administrators and the Tribal Council struggled to govern livestock and human movements in Kaokoveld.⁷¹ Periods of low rainfall persisted, forcing pastoralists to choose between livestock well-being and colonial directives. Following an inoculation campaign in 1939 (largely regarded as a failure), it was considered 'obligatory' for natives to request permission to move stock within Kaokoveld.⁷² For twenty years, colonial officials had been urging residents to abide by colonial regulations through the system of indirect rule, yet the officer-in-charge, A.M. Barnard, believed that this had proven ineffective: 'The [Himba] have never submitted to tribal control and their headmen are faced with an impossible task ... [They could not] even persuade them to attend meetings and had to travel from place to place to discuss matters with a few at a time'.⁷³ This sentiment was shared by the councillors tasked with applying policy. They declaimed their inability to police many ovaHerero pastoralists, stating that the ovaHimba in particular 'have no respect for law and order'.⁷⁴ Unsanctioned movements of livestock remained the key point of contention. Whereas the state previously worked through Harunga and Katiti to keep livestock in place, the dissolution of their leadership made the region's

69. G. Owen-Smith, personal communication, 3 December 2018.

70. Crandall, 'The role of time'.

71. 'Holding of big meeting at Otjijanjasemo, 26 October, 1939. Reported by officer in charge of native affairs, Kaokoveld' (1939), SWAA 1168.

72. 'Monthly report, December, 1939. Officer in charge of native affairs, Kaokoveld to chief native commissioner, Windhoek' (1939), SWAA 2513.

73. 'Holding of big meeting at Otjijanjasemo, 26 October, 1939', SWAA 1168.

74. 'Minutes of a general meeting held at Ohopuho on the 31st January and the 1st and 2nd February' (1940), SWAA 1168.

inhabitants increasingly uncontrollable. On the one hand inhabitants still considered the reserves as simply too small to accommodate livestock needs. On the other, the state made strategic miscalculations concerning how traditional authorities built and maintained power.⁷⁵

As control of Kaokoveld became increasingly state sponsored, the Tribal Council faltered. The councillors needed administrative backing to exercise the authority that was supposed to replace the *otuzo*-based system of allocating rangelands, but now the colonial administration, rather than kinship networks bound together by shared descent, exchange and patronage, had become the repository of power. One councillor complained that, 'the head of every family considers himself the headman of his people and will not listen to us ... The Government must not think that the [Himba] are like the Europeans who respect their superiors. They do not listen to their headman and treat us like dogs because every stock owner is a big man'.⁷⁶ In response to such insubordination, the same councillor requested that the administration deploy 'European Police' to enforce his rule. 'Native police are no good; the [Himba] will just look at them and say: "You are just as black as I am". I want white police to help me'.⁷⁷

These difficulties led to the collapse of the Tribal Council's autonomous power, forcing them to draw the government closer. At a meeting in February 1942, the council's agenda of repurposing government power was codified:

Mr. Barnard, Officer-in-Charge of Native Affairs: 'In the Native Reserves in the South it is the law that no one may move stock without a written permit ... Here in the Kaokoveld you often quarrel about grazing. The Government has suggested that we should introduce the permit system because it will stop quarrels over grazing rights and at the same time prevent the spreading of lung sickness and other diseases.

Please tell me what you think of this suggestion'.

Sub-Headman Adrian: '[In Waterberg Reserve in the Police Zone] we were not to move large or small stock without permits ... When a man wants to move his stock for grazing, he must first ask the Headman of the area to which he wants to move. If the Headman and his people have water and grazing to spare, he accompanies the applicant to the [administrator's] Office and asks that he be allowed to move ... It is a good law and there are never any quarrels about grazing and water'.

Headman Langman Tj[iy]ahura: 'That is also the old Herero Law. In the olden days no one was allowed to move stock for grazing without the permission of

75. 'Holding of big meeting at Otjijanjesemo; chief native commissioner, Windhoek to officer-in-charge of native affairs, Ohopuho' (1939), SWAA 2513; 'Official letter, chief native commissioner to medical office to the administration, Windhoek' (1939), SWAA 2513; 'Annual report of native affairs, 1942. Officer in charge of native affairs, Kaokoveld to chief native commissioner, Windhoek' (1942), NAO 029.

76. 'Holding of Big Meeting at Otjijanjesemo, 26 October, 1939', SWAA 1168.

77. 'Holding of Big Meeting at Otjijanjesemo, 26 October, 1939', SWAA 1168.

ESEREWONDO ROZONGOMBE

the Headman of the area to which the stock is moved. We want that law in the Kaokoveld’.

Headmen Veripaka and Mariha: ‘That is a good law. We want it here’.

[The other Himba agree with Veripaka and Mariha.]

Mr. Barnard: ‘Seeing that all of you are in favour of the permit system, we’ll introduce that law from today and the Council of Headmen will punish people who move stock without permission’.⁷⁸

Livestock remained the key to political power. When councillor Tjijahura harkened back to ‘the old Herero Law’, he was appealing to the administration to enforce a modified form of traditional rule that the councillors could not. Paradoxically, requesting administrative sanction was effectively a power grab by the council. The new permit process, much of which would have transpired as a negotiation far from the administrator’s office, created an extensive, undefined political space for councillors to assert control over livestock, and therefore over people. In this case the undefined political space within which pastoralists would have to negotiate their ability to move meant compromising their own aims with councillors’ interests, or else risk state-sponsored repercussions. In the past, *oruzo* heads (*ovakuru*) would decide where their followers’ livestock could graze, but adherence to such decisions was secured through informal channels of reciprocity and kinship. Within this system, decentralised power was tenuous: pastoralists who were dissatisfied with potential alliances could move into more remote areas, or cross the Kunene river. These networks were replaced by state-sponsored jurisdiction. Power now rested with colonial administrators, who could remove councillors if they contravened administration goals. Whereas earlier generations of pastoralists persisted in the face of ovaKwena violence through alternate techniques of mobility, retreating to the mountains or Angola in the case of ovaHerero, or alliance-building in the case of those who remained behind, such as Kakurukouje, the councillors now sought to make mobility contingent upon alliances between pastoralists and councillors, and on terms favourable to the councillors. This clarifies the importance of examining livestock as an expression and site of power and resistance. Control over livestock movement was not simply about self-determination. It was also a means of wielding power over lives, livelihoods and the environment.

78. ‘Minutes of tribal meeting held at Ohopoho from the 2nd to the 14th February, 1942. Recorded by officer in charge of native affairs, Kaokoveld’ (1942), SWAA 1168.

But it was not to be. The *Ombongarero yomuhoko*, or Tribal Council, remained ineffective.⁷⁹ By 1943, the officer-in-charge confidently asserted, '[t] here are no Chiefs in Kaokoveld'.⁸⁰

OMUSENINA (LAST)

The wilful alienation of cattle control signalled the end of *Eserewondo Rozongombe*, 'the Century of Cattle'. However, the resistance to movement restrictions continued to erode the state's willingness to dictate livestock policy. At an end-of-year meeting in 1942, the newly appointed acting officer-in-charge of native affairs, L.M. de Witt, delivered important, surprising news to the Tribal Council: the administration would no longer enforce restrictions on moving livestock across the Kunene river, rather leaving Kaokoveld residents to police themselves.

If you move cattle from the Kaokoveld over the river into Angola and they contract any diseases there, you will be blamed for it, and suffer the losses. If you allow the Angolan natives to move their cattle into the Kaokoveld and you sustain losses through any disease that may break out amongst your cattle the Government will not be responsible for it. You are now your own Police, and it is up to you to guard against any disease of cattle coming from Angola.⁸¹

The assembled councillors greeted the news with enthusiasm, but did not fully trust the administration's shifting policies. Said Veripaka: 'My heart feels very happy to hear this news, but I will first let other natives take their cattle down to the river to see what happens to them'.⁸² The positive reaction suggests that councillors' attempts to govern livestock movements with administrative backing remained ineffective and may have hampered their own mobility strategies. Whether it was due to this ineffectiveness, or persuasive resistance in the form of livestock movements, in his 1942 annual report on Kaokoveld, de Witt adopted the ovaHerero's position that Kaokoveld's separate reserves were too small to accommodate the number of livestock present. By this time administrative approval to move stock beyond reserves was unnecessary: most livestock were at-large in Kaokoveld anyway. The administration then formalised what was effectively the case: it abandoned the separate reserves in favour of treating Kaokoveld as a single 'native reserve'. Though livestock

79. 'Minutes of tribal meeting held at Ohopoho from the 2nd to the 14th February, 1942', SWAA 1168.

80. 'Kaokoveld: annual report, 1943. Officer in charge, native affairs, Kaokoveld to chief native commissioner, Windhoek, 29 December' (1943), NAO 029.

81. 'Minutes of general meeting held at Ohopoho from the 17th to the 24th December' (1942), NAO 029.

82. 'Minutes of general meeting held at Ohopoho from the 17th to the 24th December' (1942), NAO 029.

still needed to remain within Kaokoveld, the administration ceded responsibility for enforcing livestock movements there. The ovaHerero did not overthrow colonial rule, but their consistent non-compliance removed illusions of administrative control.⁸³

In certain respects, the period known as *Eserewondo Rozongombe* ended as it had begun: with decentralised kin-based networks relying upon livestock mobility as a survival strategy. Precolonial cattle theft, colonial restrictions upon livestock and cattle destruction spanning the precolonial and colonial eras could be intensely personal, even familial experiences. The beginning of the colonial era in Kaokoveld was thus less a political and social rupture than it was a continuing struggle against the imposition of forces that sought to enrich themselves by controlling ovaHerero livestock. Though the administration may have found Kaokoveld 'chiefs' largely ineffective, the power of Kaokoveld residents was not eroded but strengthened by decentralised livestock governance. Livestock mobility proved to be an expression of resistance to state goals. Throughout the early South African colonial era, livestock in the northern 'native reserves' still largely fell outside the capitalist arena that dominated livestock trade in the Police Zone.⁸⁴ Consistent, seemingly apolitical non-compliance within this semi-arid and arid landscape at the boundaries of the colonial state enabled ovaHerero pastoralists to maintain their autonomy. This set the tone for how governance of livestock movements was experienced during the rest of the colonial and independence eras. Centring ovaHerero perspectives requires that, as much as possible, cattle are given the meanings ovaHerero accord them. Mobility, negotiated among pastoralists, and alliance-building, often through *omaanda* kinship ties, remain key survival strategies in north-west Namibia rangelands. Cattle remain at the fulcrum of ovaHerero lives.

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83. 'Annual report of native affairs, 1942. Officer in charge of native affairs, Kaokoveld to chief native commissioner, Windhoek' (1942), NAO 029; Wolputte, 'Vicious vets and lazy locals'.

84. D. Pankhurst, 'Similar but different? Assessing the reserve economy legacy of Namibia', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22 (3) (1996): 405–420; J. Heydinger, "'Vermin': Predator eradication as an expression of white supremacy in colonial Namibia, 1921–1952", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 46 (1) (2020): 91–108.

