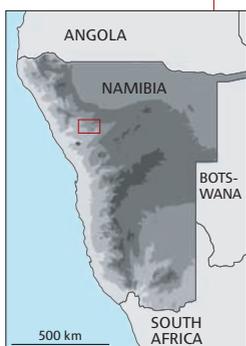


The European¹ agricultural appropriation of the Outjo district in northern central Namibia



This article outlines the expansion of European settlement in the Outjo district in northern central Namibia during the colonial period. During the German period, the settlement occurred mainly along the main traffic routes (from Outjo to Okaukuejo, to Franzfontein or via Otjitambi to Zesfontein). During the South African period the expansion was – by and large – from south to north. Although there are manifold documents available for the various phases, a systematic and detailed analysis of the development of European agriculture in this region has not been undertaken before. However, such an analysis forms the indispensable framework for further research and analysis, without which many contemporary issues, such as specific natural conditions on individual farms and the diverse degrees of bush encroachment as well as past processes, such as changing economic strategies of farmers in the region (cf. DIECKMANN, this section) cannot be thoroughly understood.

The settlement under German colonial rule

Before the onset of German colonial rule, mainly Khoekhoegowab and Oshihero speaking groups, living a nomadic lifestyle, inhabited the region. A few white people from the Cape and Transvaal in South Africa had migrated to the area and lived a rather unsettled lifestyle as well (KRUGER n.d.: 15). When the Germans arrived (Fig. 1), they imported ideals of land ownership and agriculture to the land, which had evolved in the European context, namely the notion of demarcated farms with well defined borders and incontestable proprietors. Still, they didn't have the power to impose these concepts on the Southwest African landscape on a permanent basis (see e.g. SILVESTER 1998: 99).

In 1896, Outjo was founded as a military post. The Outjo district constituted one of the first six districts of the territory. At that time, it covered a large area including the Kaokoveld (ZIMMERER 2000: 27).

For 1901, nine 'farms' in the whole Outjo district were reported to be occupied by about 39 settlers, originating from Germany, Transvaal, Cape, and England. Settlement must have been rather informal. The immigrants gathered with their livestock around available water supplies and the number of occupants of the 'farms' varied from year to year, most probably mainly dependent mainly on the particular grazing conditions at the specific locations (cf. KRUGER n.d.: 15, 37). Significant white settlement did not take place in the entire territory until the end of the wars of 1904 to 1907. Indeed the war and the regulations introduced afterwards (including the expropriation of former 'tribal' land) laid the groundmark for the establishment of white settler agriculture (SCHMOKEL 1985: 96). A more systematic settlement policy was introduced and between 1909 and 1913 the numbers of white settlers in the Outjo District almost doubled (Tab. 1):

Year	White Inhabitants		Farms	
	1909 ²	1913 ³	1909	1913
Outjo	137	269	36 (6 uninhabited)	63 (10 uninhabited)

Tab. 1 Increasing settlement in the Outjo District between 1909 and 1913.

At the end of the German colonial era in 1915, around 67 farms were allotted in the Outjo District (see Fig. 2). In the perspective of the incoming settlers the land was almost empty albeit the fact that about 2,700 'Natives' were estimated to live in the area (KÜLZ 1909: 112). This

interpretation of 'the empty land' might be explained by the significant differences between the land tenure and land use practices of these inhabitants and the immigrants' ideas of private land ownership.

The South African period

Between 1915 and 1920, when Namibia was under martial law, the settlement of the country was put on hold. With the establishment of the South African Mandate in 1921 a rapid programme of settlement by white Union citizens began. In the beginning only very poor people ventured into the uncertainties of farming in Namibia but already in 1926 the Advisory Council of the Land Settlement Programme decided to prohibit the entrance of poor whites, as they were considered a drain on resources and tended to be constantly on the move, without ever settling down. By the beginning of the 1930s it became official policy to give preference to applicants from within Namibia – grazing license holders and other prospective farmers – when farms were allocated (for details see e.g. BOTHA 2000: 240f).

In 1928 about 1,900 Afrikaners, who had earlier trekked from South Africa to Angola were offered the possibility to return to Namibia. The majority of them were first resettled in the so-called Osire Block, east of Otjiwarongo. By then, the farming conditions were far from what was required to build up successful farms, and the effects of drought and recession in the early 1930s put additional stress on the immigrants. Although supported with extra expenditure by the government, their situation did not improve considerably and it was later decided to resettle them. In the second half of the 1930s the administration made land available in the northwest of the Outjo district for a number of these so-called Angola Boers.

During the Second World War, the allotment or purchase of farms in the whole territory was put on hold, but after the war extensive provision was made to support war veterans. Ex-soldiers were given land and could qualify – on recommendation of the Discharged Soldiers' Assistance Board – for additional loans, e.g. for building houses and purchasing stock-breeding (BOTHA 2000: 257). A large amount of land in the western part of the Outjo district – formerly one enormous farm called Aruchab (247, 346 ha), was surveyed, divided into around forty farms; most of which were allotted after Second World War. Additionally, part of the Etosha game reserve, which was situated on the district's northern border, was made available for settlement, boreholes were drilled and grazing licenses could be obtained by interested settlers. Apart from the ex-soldiers, settlers from the southern regions of Namibia moved temporarily or permanently to the district since the southern region had suffered from enduring drought.



Fig. 1 First housing of settlers ('Bildarchiv der deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft, Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main').

The progressive settlement continued during the 1950s. Mainly former landless grazing license holders and farmers who were sharing a piece of land with male kin received their own farms during these years. 60 farms in the Outjo district were gazetted in 1951, and 57 farms were gazetted in 1955, most of them in the very northwestern part, the so-called Kaross Block. In 1960, 740 surveyed farms were situated in the Outjo district⁴. It appears that – by and large – the settlement process in the Outjo district was completed by the end of the 1950s. Later changes mainly entailed the division or consolidation of already existing farming units.

Conclusion

Apart from forming the background for further studies, the systematic exploration of the settlement expansion in one Namibian district furthermore reveals, that the settlement did not progress continuously but rather transpired in surges, dependent on natural conditions, the expansion of the necessary infrastructure but most of all on political developments. Thus, the patterns of the settlement reflect political priority decisions such as the hesitation of the German Colonial Government to invest in a systematic settler policy from the very beginning and the shift after the wars of 1904-1907 to a more systematic settlement policy in order to improve control within the territory. The settlement patterns mirror the value of the country for South Africa in implementing a settler policy which made it easy initially for poor whites to settle down in Namibia, in welcoming and support of the Angola trekkers in the South African sphere of influence without inviting them

back to the Union itself or in offering extensive aid for the ex-soldiers after the Second World War. Owing to space limitations, this article could just point out a few aspects reflected in the expansion of European settlement without offering an extensive analysis.

Figure 2 (p. 166-167), compiled from data for every farm from the Deeds Office in Windhoek reflects the advancement of registered farm ownership. The map shows the settlement according to title deeds holdings. However, this does not represent actual settlement practices. Nearly all of the farms were first allotted under grazing licences for several years before the land was purchased by the government. For instance, farms which were first allotted in 1936 were registered up to twelve years later. Thus, official transactions often took place a decade after the first allotment and the first allottee wasn't always the first title deeds holder. Furthermore, the title deeds were sometimes registered much later than the actual transaction took place. Additionally, for the early years of settlement, it is realistic to assume that grazing was often exploited without official allotment, since the existence of unfenced boundaries made trekking rather unproblematic.

¹ In this context, European refers to people of European descent, including those who have come to South Africa since the 17th century.

² KÜLZ 1909: 112, 117.

³ OELHAFEN VON SCHÖLLENBACH 1926: 113, 126.

⁴ LAN 1436, 4293, Vol III, IV.

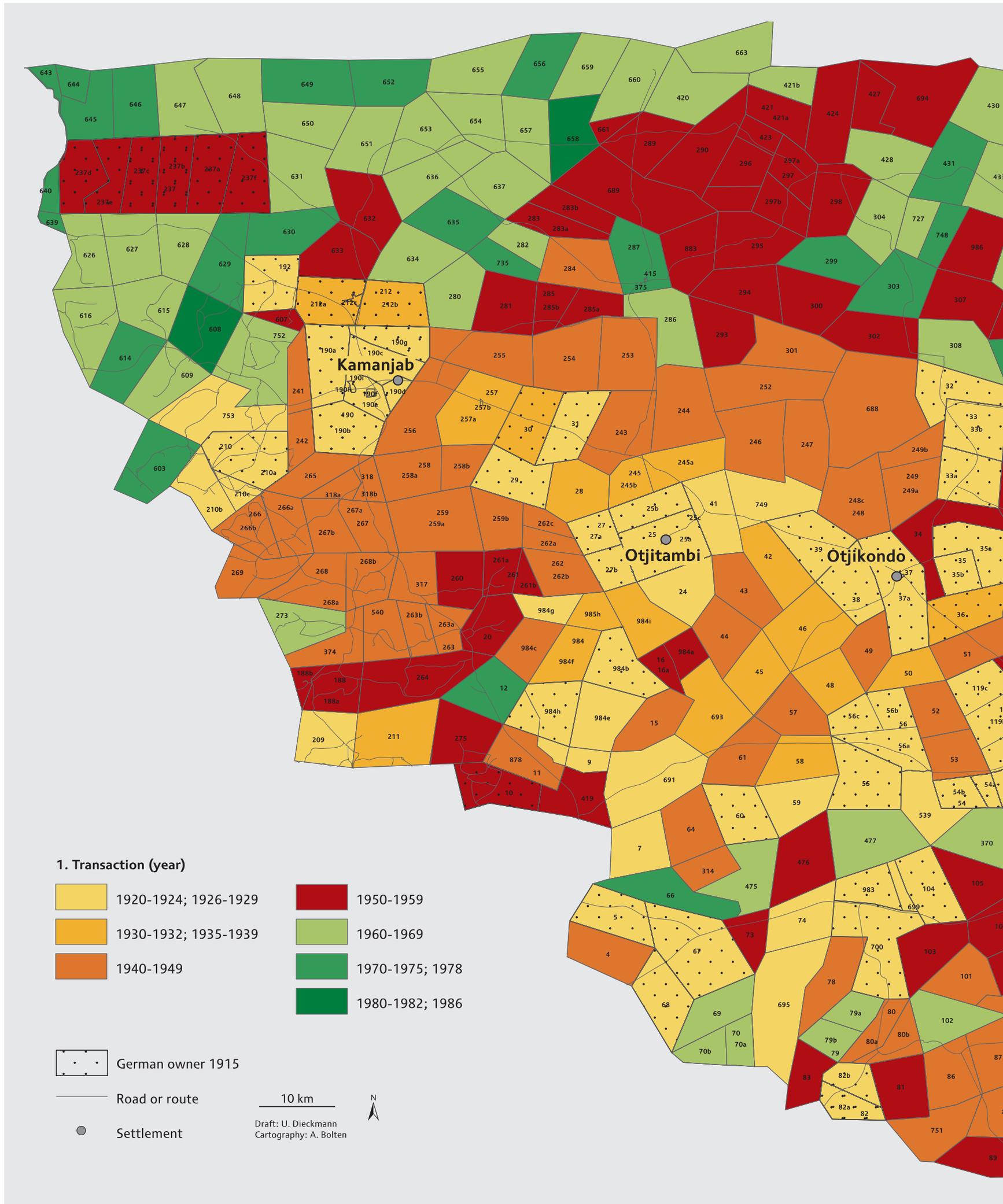


Fig. 2 Map of Outjo district showing the first transaction of farm ground and German owner in 1915.

