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Smuggled Sheep, Smuggled Shepherds: Farm Labour Transformations in Namibia and the Question of Southern Angola, 1933–1975

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This article considers the history of labour relations within Namibia's agricultural sector, with specific emphasis on the karakul sheep industry. It examines debates concerning shortages of shepherds and the increasing efforts on the part of (white) sheep farmers in southern Namibia to import contract labourers from northern Namibia and southern Angola. The ability of local Nama labourers in southern Namibia to desert abusive employers and return to reserves (albeit overcrowded) caused farmers to rely increasingly, from the late 1930s, on migrant shepherds, with illegally recruited Angolans rising in importance – making up over 40 per cent of total recruits throughout the mid 20th century. The reopening of Namibia's mines and industries after the Second World War, alongside increased Portuguese recruitment of Angolans from Cunene province for their own karakul industry (founded with smuggled rams), caused white farmers to change strategy abruptly from the mid 1950s. With heavy subsidies from the South West Africa Administration, farmers invested in labour-saving technological improvements on the sheep farms themselves, particularly jackal-proof fencing, transforming a shepherd-intensive industry into a near shepherdless one in less than a decade. This, along with the development of homeland structures, gave white farmers the leverage to reinvigorate informal, ad hoc labour hire. Using Namibian, Angolan and South African sources, this article reconstructs the transnational political economy of labour in Namibia's sheep-farming sector, and it considers how transformations in agricultural technology restructures labour hire, often away from 'formal' contract waged labour towards other forms of exploitative labour relations.

Keywords: Namibia; Angola; farm labour; labour migration; karakul sheep; fencing; homelands

The 1950s were a time of intense uncertainty among southern Namibia's white sheep farmers. Both the individual landowners themselves and their representative associations were increasingly worried about two seemingly divergent, unrelated issues. Locally, sheep farmers intensively sought out the best means to eradicate 'vermin' – predators, especially the black-backed jackal and other undesirable non-carnivorous species – and they lobbied the white administration for financial and logistical support. The same farmers also expressed deep concern regarding the fast-changing economic and infrastructural developments occurring in southern Angola, at that time a Portuguese colony located well over 1,000 kilometres from the majority of commercial karakul sheep farmers in Namibia

(then known as South West Africa [SWA]).¹ Labour demand and labour insecurity linked these disparate concerns.

After years of neglect and closure during the Second World War, Namibia's mining sector was rapidly expanding, as were urban industries and coastal fishing. For white sheep farmers in arid southern Namibia, obtaining 'native labour', particularly shepherds, was becoming more and more difficult. Yorck von Schütz, a prominent sheep farmer from Maltahöhe district and member of the Karakul Industry Advisory Board, warned his fellow farmers that if working conditions and wages were not improved, the agricultural sector would continue to lose black labourers to the mines and towns. This was not an unusual plea, and it was commonly made by so-called 'progressive' farmers. Surprisingly, von Schütz added an additional point for southern Namibian sheep farmers to consider: the fate of their labour supply had less to do with developments concerning the South African economic behemoth; rather, it had more to do with Angola. With the transferral of Namibian workers to mines and towns in search of higher wages, sheep farmers found themselves more and more reliant on Angolan migrant workers, and they felt that colonial economic developments in the south of Angola threatened this labour flow. Ultimately, von Schütz did not believe this was a fight that they could win and he thus implored white Namibian sheep farmers to construct labour-saving jackal-proof fencing and to increase farm mechanisation as rapidly as possible.²

Marcel van der Linden has argued that global labour historians should focus on 'comparing commodified labour relations and on reconstructing their global interconnections and their consequences'.³ A global labour history (GLH) of a given sector or industry necessitates a holistic engagement with various forms of labour within a given production space, often mobilised with different levels of commodification and/or coercion, and with the role of extra-economic forces, such as the state or even environmental phenomena. In African historiography, many global and transnational studies inspired by labour history have focused on the most visible or most mobile economic sectors, such as mining, maritime or transport workers, often resulting in lacunae regarding agricultural labour, seen as less commodified than industrial or mining labour.⁴

A study of Namibia's karakul industry must consider the complex political, economic, ideological and technological factors affecting labour hire and labour relations on the farms themselves. The same economic processes shaping 'commodified' migrant contract labour also structured local, more 'informal' labour relations. This article, therefore, considers migrant and non-migrant labourers through the same analytical lens. Furthermore, a GLH of Namibia's sheep-farming sector contests a teleological progression from non-waged, paternalist relations towards 'formal' proletarianisation; 'double-free' waged labour is but one manner whereby surplus is extracted from labourers under capitalism.⁵ By the 1970s,

1 Unless I am referring to a specific institutional or governmental body, I will, in this article, use the present-day national term Namibia to refer to the historical territory of South West Africa. This is a common practice among historians of Namibia, as emphasised in, for example, L. Lenggenghager, 'Circulating Nature: From North-Eastern Namibia to South Africa and Back, 1960–1990', and in M. Ramutsindela, G. Miescher and M. Boehi (eds), *The Politics of Nature and Science in Southern Africa* (Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2016), pp. 87–105.

2 Y. von Schütz, 'Die Arbeitsvraagstuk op Plase', *Die SWA Boer* (January 1957), p. 5.

3 M. van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labour History* (Leiden, Brill, 2008), pp. 373–5.

4 S.J. Rockel, *Carriers of Culture: Labor on the Road in Nineteenth-Century East Africa* (Portsmouth, Heinemann, 2006). L. Schler, *Nation on Board: Becoming Nigerian at Sea* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2016). See also J. Tischler, 'Agriculture', in S. Bellucci and A. Eckert (eds), *General Labour History of Africa: Workers, Employers and Governments, 20th–21st Centuries* (Geneva, ILO, 2019), pp. 119–49.

5 Workers who are both free proprietors of labour power and free of substantive property. K. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (New York, Vintage, 1977 [1867]), pp. 873–6.

the development of fixed capital infrastructure on karakul farms themselves facilitated a transition away from formal contract-mediated labour hire towards more ad hoc, paternalist arrangements within homeland political structures. This also reflects broader global trends in labour relations in an increasingly mechanised production space.⁶

This study considers the entangled political economy of agricultural labour, agricultural technology and Angola/Namibia intercolonial rivalry from the 1930s – when the karakul sheep industry in Namibia took off – until the mid 1970s, when Angola won its independence from Portugal. The expansion of the white-settler-dominated karakul sheep industry in southern Namibia alongside growth in other sectors raised doubts concerning farmers' abilities to recruit migrant Ovambo and Kavango workers, increasing their demand for local Nama workers and distant Angolans. While most farmers in these southern districts had not fully converted to migrant labour hire,⁷ the ability of Namas to desert abusive employers and return to local reserves augmented white farmers' desires to hire migrants to take up shepherding work, eventually enhancing their perception that Angolans (technically illegally recruited) were the future of the shepherding workforce. Between 1926 and 1970, at least 225,000 labour contracts were signed by Angolans entering Namibia.

The emergence of colonial Angola's own karakul industry after the Second World War, intended both to mimic the successes of Namibia's sheep-farming sector and to kickstart further settler colonialism in southern Angola, petrified white karakul farmers in southern Namibia, who feared that their desired labour supply would dry up. Beyond conflict over illegally recruited shepherds, karakul farmers feared that the unlawful smuggling of karakul sheep across Namibia's northern border would inhibit their ability to dominate the global lambskin pelt industry.

This article shows that increased uncertainty relating to Angolan labour directly led white Namibian farmers to intensify fixed capital investment on their farms, reducing labour demands by replacing up to 70 per cent of shepherds with jackal-proof fencing, camp construction and pipelines. After all, the main task of shepherds was to lead karakul sheep to grazing sites and water points unharmed by southern Namibia's omnipresent black-backed jackal, returning them to the farmstead for shearing and lambing. While migrant workers from northern Namibia and Angola were sometimes redirected into other sectors, many local Nama workers were, by the 1970s, 'fenced out' of formal agricultural employment, transformed into piece rate shearers and per diem 'camp walkers', tending fences rather than sheep. This article argues that migrant and non-migrant forms of agricultural labour in Namibia must be considered in the same (transnational) analytical frame, enabling deeper understanding of labour transformations more broadly.

The Birth of the Karakul Industry in Namibia

Throughout the first few decades of the 20th century, many white settlers in southern Africa held the opinion that the region's pastures were drying out and that rains would continue to

6 See K. Marx, *Grundrisse* (New York, Penguin, 1993 [1973]), pp. 604–7, 767–70. M. Denning, 'Wageless Life', *New Left Review*, 66 (2010), pp. 79–97.

7 The heartland of Namibia's karakul sheep industry are its southern districts, namely: Lüderitz, Karasburg/Warmbad, Bethanie, Keetmanshoop, Maltahöhe and Mariental. These districts make up the modern-day ||Karas and Hardap regions. Due to the distant, isolated locales of these farms, often far from both communal areas (formerly termed 'native reserves') and migrant labour sending areas, I consider southern Namibia's karakul farms as an agricultural labour zone distinct from the cattle-farming areas of central and northern Namibia and the maize farms of Grootfontein and Tsumeb districts. This is discussed more extensively in my pending PhD thesis at Michigan State University, provisionally titled 'Protecting the Flock: Breeding and Building Apartheid in Southern Namibia, 1915–1990'.

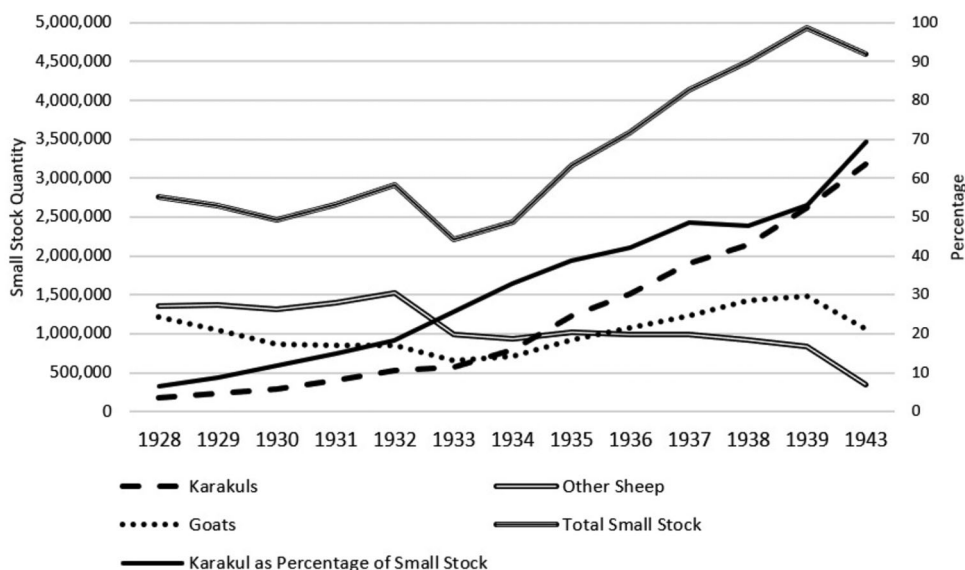


Figure 1. Small stock in Namibia, 1928–43. (Data from SWA Administration, *Report of the Long Term Agricultural Policy Commission* [Windhoek, 1950], Table VI. NB. Statistics were not taken during 1939–42, owing to the Second World War.)

fall less and less.⁸ To investigate these fears, the South African government held a drought commission in 1923 and Namibia did the same a year later.⁹ Some of the major concerns of these investigations were ways in which farming *methods* could be improved, and in the aftermath of the 1928–33 drought in southern Africa, economic viability was an imperative. In Namibia, the changing from merino sheep to karakul sheep was crucial. Once the drought subsided after 1933, farmers in southern Namibia observed that those farms stocked with karakuls lost far fewer sheep than those with merinos or Cape fat-tails. Nearly all monetary advances given to white settlers immediately after 1934 were for the purchase of karakul rams and ewes.¹⁰ After sheep numbers were drastically reduced by the drought, the regional flock was effectively rebuilt as a completely different breed (see Figure 1).

Karakuls were originally imported from Central Asia in 1907 by German colonial farmers and investors because they believed that the sheep would survive southern Namibia's frequent droughts, just as the sheep survived the harsh weather of the Asian steppes. This proved correct, and many farmers made small fortunes in the karakul pelt industry. Karakuls are bred not for wool or meat but rather for lambskins, which were sold by international fur merchants, such as Hudson's Bay & Annings, to auction houses abroad.¹¹ In order to maintain the softness and lustre of the pelt, lambs must be slaughtered within the first 24 hours of life. The pelts are de-fleshed by hand (eventually with a

8 W. Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, Livestock and the Environment, 1770–1950* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 235–65. M. McKittrick, 'An Empire of Rivers: The Scheme to Flood the Kalahari', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41, 3 (2015), pp. 485–504.

9 National Archives of Namibia (NAN) Archives of the SWA Administration: Secretariat, A-Series (SWAA) 1968 File A.413/1: *Interim Report of the Drought Investigation Commission of South West Africa, 1924*.

10 B. Bravenboer, *Karakul: Gift from the Arid Land* (Windhoek, Karakul Breeders' Association, 2007), pp. 83–5.

11 On the karakul industry, consult L. Neubert, *The Karakul Industry: Policy Options for Independent Namibia* (Lusaka, UN Institute for Namibia, 1989). A.D. Thompson, *Karakul Sheep: Government Flock and the Industry in South West Africa* (Windhoek, SWA Agricultural Branch, 1938). K.W. Spitzner and H. Schäfer, *Die Karakulzucht in Südwestafrika und das Haus Thorer* (Cape Town, ABC Druckerei, 1962).

rudimentary machine) and then washed in a sodium arsenite solution.¹² After disinfecting, the pelts are dried on burlap frames away from sunlight for 3–4 days (see Figure 2), at which point they can be stored until they are brought to auction. Approximately 30 lambskins are used in the manufacture of one expensive Swakara ladies' coat.¹³

From quite early on, the Department of Agriculture and the Karakul Industry Advisory Board (KIAB) took steps to promote the industry and to protect sheep farmers from foreign competition. There were fears that South Africa's agricultural behemoth would overtake Namibia's main agricultural industry. After all, as of 1950, pelts made up the largest component of agricultural exports, which was not exceeded by mining exports until 1951. In fact, throughout the early 1940s, agriculture and fishing contributed between five and ten times mining's share of gross domestic product.¹⁴ The nearly 30-fold increase in agricultural profits in Namibia during the years 1933–51 can be attributed to karakul pelts entirely. From 1939, a levy of sixpence was placed on each pelt exported to European auctions; these funds were eventually used to engage in breeding research and techniques at Neudam Experimental Farm near Windhoek, and in marketing and advertising efforts (see Figure 3). By 1946, karakul represented nearly 74 per cent of Namibia's small stock population.¹⁵

In 1930, the SWA Administration put into law a protection ordinance to prohibit the export of karakul sheep outside the borders of the mandated territory.¹⁶ The law was applicable to any sheep with *any* documented or observed karakul ancestry; this was not merely about pure-bred stud stock. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the Department of Agriculture received numerous requests from arid regions abroad, attempting to obtain breeding stock. Besides Namibia's neighbours South Africa, Bechuanaland and Angola, the Administration received requests from the French colonial administration in Chad and, surprisingly, from British India's North-West Frontier Province – one of the ancestral homes of the karakul sheep.¹⁷

The export ban was a constant grievance for the South African administration in Pretoria, who felt that, as holder of the League of Nations mandate for Namibia, South Africa should have access to the territory both for the settlement of white farmers within its borders and for the exploitation of its natural resources. Some, such as the South African secretary of agriculture and forestry, viewed the issue through an economic lens: many sheep farmers in South Africa's arid Northern Cape also wished to participate in the profitable karakul pelt industry.¹⁸ Supporters of the export ban argued, however, that, during the drought of the early 1930s, the karakul industry was the only 'bright spot' in Namibia's agricultural sector. Since the environs of the territory were 'peculiarly suited to' karakul production, the often poor settler farmers should receive industry protection.¹⁹

12 NAN Archives of the Division of Agricultural and Veterinary Services (AGV) 13 File C.C. A.2/4: A.D. Thompson, Manager of Neudam Experimental Farm 'Curing Karakul Lamb Pelts for Market' – undated (1933?). The drying process has changed in recent years, moving away from the arsenite solution.

13 SWA Administration, *Report of the Long Term Agricultural Policy Commission* (hereafter *LTAPC*) (Windhoek, 1950), p. 140.

14 D.C. Krogh, 'The National Income and Expenditure of South West Africa, 1920–1956', *South African Journal of Economics*, 28, 1 (1960), p. 5.

15 *LTAPC*, p. 95.

16 *Karakoelskaapboerdery-nywerheid Beskerming Proklamasie*, no. 31 (1930).

17 NAN SWAA 1102 File A.140/4/24: Mission Afrique Française Libre, Johannesburg to Secretary for S.W.A. – 17 September 1941. NAN SWAA 1102 File A.140/4/24: Secretary to the High Commissioner, British India to Secretary for SWA – 8 March 1944.

18 National Archives of South Africa (NASA) Argiewe van die Sektretaris van Buitelandse Sake (BTS) 1/18/29 (v. 1): Secretary for Agriculture and Forestry, Pretoria to Secretary for External Affairs, Pretoria 'Importation of Karakul Sheep from SWA' – 18 January 1936.

19 NASA BTS 1/18/29 (v. 1): Memo from Government Economic Adviser, Cape Town – 31 January 1936. Archives of the Karakul Board of Namibia (KBN), General Correspondence, 1937–44: letter to *Allgemeine Zeitung* (12 January 1937).



Figure 2. A farm worker affixes a karakul pelt to a burlap drying frame, about 1963. (Basler Afrika Bibliographien Archives [BAB] Hans and Trudi Jenny Accession [PA.25]: Photo 049_062. Farm Neue Haribes, Mariental district.)



Figure 3. E.R. Scherz and colleague arrange hundreds of pelt consignments at Karakul Centrale, Windhoek, about 1955. (BAB Ernst and Annaliese Scherz Accession [PA.4] Photo S30_0042.)



Figure 4. Shepherd near the homestead. (BAB Ilse Steinhoff Accession [PA. 138] Photo 076_001. Maguams farm, Maltahöhe district, 1963.)

In addition, the SWA Administration and the KIAB sought to maintain the ban as a way to ensure that South Africans would not sell karakul sheep to Angola and elsewhere, which, according to the legislation, was legal at that point south of the Orange river.²⁰ Members of the KIAB acknowledged that, throughout the 1930s into the 1940s, many low-grade karakul rams were smuggled into South Africa,²¹ leading to breeders in South Africa who were less sophisticated in their treatment of pelts and in understanding quality karakul genetic lineage, potentially giving 'South West Africa Persian Lamb' (known after 1966 by the trademark *Swakara*) a bad name among international furriers.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the ban was not lifted. The few white farmers in Namibia who received permission to take up emergency grazing in the Northern Cape during the 1945–46 drought had to account for every single karakul sheep as they returned over the Orange river.²² Only in late 1957 was the export ban to South Africa repealed, allowing Namibian farmers to sell karakul sheep to the Union. This finally occurred because Pretoria itself passed an export ban on karakul sheep, effectively creating a single veterinary space comprising Namibia and South Africa, each with legislation to prevent the sale of karakuls to Angola, Bechuanaland and further abroad.²³

20 NASA BTS 1/18/29 (v. 1): Secretary for SWA to Secretary to the Prime Minister, Pretoria 'Request for Uplifting Embargo' – 2 July 1937.

21 NAN Archives of the SWA Agricultural Branch (AGR) 602, unnumbered file: KIAB: Minutes of Meeting at Windhoek – 14 July 1941.

22 Bravenboer, *Karakul*, pp. 104–5. For a further example of the permit system, consult NAN AGR 480 File 68/3: Permit vir die Uitvoer van Karakoelskape, no. 43/46: R. le Riche – 12 June 1946.

23 Bravenboer, *Karakul*, pp. 97–8. NAN AGR 605 File 76/5: Uitvoerende Komitee Besluit: Uitvoer van Karakoelskape na die Unie – 16 October 1958.

Namibia's Karakul Industry: Labour Context, 1915–1943

To understand the karakul industry in Namibia fully, we must consider those who worked on the farms. Through the 1950s, the industry was a very labour-intensive form of sheep farming. Even though the wool is of poor quality – suitable only for carpets – karakuls must be sheared twice annually. The lambing season is stressful, as new-borns must be slaughtered quickly if the pelts are to have any value. Furthermore, the drying process is complicated and, if done incorrectly, can make the pelt worthless. But, most importantly, the karakul industry required a large number of shepherds (see Figure 4).

Shepherding was a very difficult and lonely form of labour, requiring constant attention to flocks of often several hundred ewes. Shepherds constantly worried about losing sheep – to predators, the elements or simply ovine intransigence – as returning to the farmer with ewes missing would lead to corporal punishment or significant docking of pay.²⁴ In the aftermath of the First World War, local workers on sheep farms in southern Namibia, overwhelmingly ethnic Namas, exerted a surprising degree of leverage in negotiating terms of employment; Nama labourers agreed to take on shepherding work only if grazing rights for the labourer's family were guaranteed.²⁵ Wages were low, but grazing access away from overcrowded, overgrazed reserves was essential. For cash-poor, undercapitalised white farmers in the pre-karakul era, this was a mutually agreeable relationship, as few farmers had stock numbers large enough to exploit the entirety of southern Namibia's massive farm sizes. Furthermore, as court records from the early South African period show, if grazing rights were rescinded or if corporal punishment was inflicted, local Nama workers spoke with their feet, contravening masters and servants legislation by deserting abusive employers.²⁶

From the late 1930s, farmers throughout Namibia began increasingly to take advantage of the migrant labour system, bringing workers from northern Namibia and southern Angola for 18-month contracts. While contract labour was originally the domain of coastal industries and mines, farmers saw opportunity in participating. Not only would northern labourers have less opportunity to desert, but wages were also standardised for contract workers, allowing the farm owners to consider labourers as migrant bachelors rather than heads of tenant families: in the long run, a cheaper solution. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, with settler flocks increasingly made up of valuable karakul sheep, genetic contamination through mixing with a tenant labourer's resident flocks was seen to threaten the quality of pelt exports.²⁷ Migrant workers had no opportunity to keep livestock on the farm. White farmers in southern Namibia increasingly sought to use Nama workers for seasonal and piece-rate labour and utilise migrant workers as shepherds.²⁸

From 1925 to 1943, there were two recruiting agencies operating in northern Namibia with interest in bringing Ovambo, Kavango, and Angolan workers to Namibian mines, farms and urban industries. Collectively, these labourers were officially termed Extra-Territorial and Northern (ET&N) workers. At a labour policy conference in Windhoek in 1925,

24 NAN SWAA 2412 File A.521/13/3: Chief Native Commissioner Windhoek to All Magistrates – 'Farm Labour Commission' – 30 August 1939. E. Kreike, *Re-Creating Eden: Land Use, Environment, and Society in Southern Angola and Northern Namibia* (Portsmouth, Heinemann, 2004), p. 94.

25 J. Silvester, 'Black Pastoralists, White Farmers: The Dynamics of Land Dispossession and Labour Recruitment in Southern Namibia, 1915–1955', (PhD thesis, University of London, 1993), pp. 300–305.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 307. NAN Archives of the Farming Industry Commission (KFI) Box 1 Folder 2: Minutes of Farming Industry Commission – (14 December 1926). Among other cases, see NAN LKW 1/1/1: Hendrik Josephs. Case no. 37 of 1916.

27 NAN Archives of the Long-Term Agricultural Policy Commission (KAP) Box 1 File AC.6/1: LTAPC: Meeting with Native Commissioner J.H. Allen – 3 December 1948.

28 NAN Amptelike Publikasies (AP) 5/7/5: *Report of the South West Africa Native Labourers Commission, 1945–1948* (hereafter cited as *SWANLC*). See also Bravenboer, *Karakul*, p. 128.

boundaries were drawn whereby the Northern Labour Organisation (NLO) would be permitted to recruit workers for farms and northern mines and set up stores in Okavango, Caprivi and northwards into Angola.²⁹ Ovamboland was the exclusive domain of the Lüderitz Chamber of Mines (LCM), widely referred to informally – and in much Namibian historiography – as the Southern Labour Organisation,³⁰ which focused entirely on bringing Ovambo men to the diamond mines in the south-west of Namibia.³¹

In contrast, the NLO had many interested parties and stakeholders. While they provided recruits to mines in the northern districts of the Police Zone, the majority of NLO recruits, especially after 1935, were destined for farms.³² In 1937, for example, the Südwest Persianer Verkaufsgesellschaft, representing karakul farmers, became one of their largest shareholders.³³ Importantly, the NLO also handled redistribution to farms of LCM recruits from Ovamboland who were deemed too young or unfit for the diamond mines. Over time, this would become a growing share of the NLO recruiting base, as they could not meet farm labour demands with only recruits from Kavango.³⁴ When the NLO and LCM met with the SWA Administration in 1942 to attempt a merger of recruiting operations, two major observations became clear. First, farmers were becoming the largest employers of ET&N workers. Second, Angolans were becoming an essential cog in the entire migrant farm labour machine. In order to streamline the recruitment process and end excessive competition between the organisations, the NLO's and the LCM's recruiting agencies merged on 1 January 1943 into the South West Africa Native Labour Association (SWANLA).³⁵

Smuggled Shepherds? Angolan Recruits and the 'Class C' Worker

J.J.E. Vlok, the long-time manager of SWANLA, took an exploratory journey to Kaoko, north-western Namibia, in 1951 with hopes of increasing the flow of migrant workers from this remote region to ease farm labour shortages throughout the territory. SWANLA had started formally recruiting in Kaoko only earlier that year, with mixed results. Interestingly, for all the time Vlok spent trying to convince Himba headmen to encourage their subjects to migrate, he spent an equal amount arranging for 'recruiting runners' to trek into Angola's Moçâmedes district to recruit Angolans informally to join SWANLA. He estimated that, if the 'runners' were adequately compensated, they could bring in 500 or more additional Angolans into SWANLA through Kaoko.³⁶

Vlok's strategy was not new, as SWANLA's predecessor, the NLO, had regularly arranged for 'native runners' to venture into Angola to increase the number of recruits from the Portuguese-controlled territory.³⁷ From the earliest days of migrant labour in Namibia

29 NAN SWAA 2426 file A.521/26 (v. 5): 'Resumé of Operations to Date of the Northern Labour Organisation' – undated, probably 1928.

30 According to W. McHardy, one of the LCM recruiters, there was technically no such thing as the Southern Labour Organisation, and this title was a misnomer. NAN SWAA 2426 File A.521/26 (v. 5): Minutes of Conference: NLO and LCM – 24 April 1942.

31 While Ovambos were the majority of workers at the diamond mines, a fair number of Tswana and Zambians were also recruited via Francistown, and there was some ethnic division of labour within the industry. NAN SWAA 2450 File A.521/60: Native Labour: Strikes, 1924–1939.

32 Part of the reason for this was the downturn in the mining sector during the Second World War.

33 NAN SWAA 2426 File A.521/26 (v. 5): Secretary, Northern Labour Organisation, Ltd. to Chief Native Commissioner, Windhoek – 'Review: 1925 Recruiting Agreement' – 19 March 1942.

34 NAN SWAA 2427 File A.521/26: Resolution of Windhoek Native Labour Conference – 7–8 December 1925.

35 NAN SWAA 2426 File A.521/26 (v. 5): SWANLA Annual Report, 1943.

36 NAN NAO 90 File 35/24: Manager, SWANLA 'Report on Visit to the Kaokoveld' – 6 January 1952.

37 NAN SWAA 2426 file A.521/26 (v. 5): 'Resumé of Operations to Date of the Northern Labour Organisation, Ltd'. – undated, probably 1928.

until 1973, private and parastatal entities like the NLO, LCM and SWANLA were not permitted to recruit in Angola.³⁸ They employed men who voluntarily showed up in Rundu or Ondangwa, but official recruiting activities in Angola were illegal, hence the importance of ‘runners’, who were paid per head for each Angolan brought unlawfully across the border to work in Namibia. Likuwa and Shiweda noted that these ‘native recruiters’ and local fixers were the norm rather than the exception.³⁹ As the demand for migrant labour increased, especially on farms, so did the demand for Angolans.

Angolans had a plethora of reasons to migrate to Namibia for contract labour. Prior to changes in the late 1940s, much of Portuguese labour policy was immensely coercive; forced and corvée labour were the norm throughout Angola.⁴⁰ Colonial officials were routinely paid a piece wage based on the number of recruits brought to private employers, leading to large-scale migration of Angolans to neighbouring colonies, fleeing Portuguese labour laws.⁴¹ In southern Angola specifically, these coercive labour relations took shape through punishment of ‘vagrants’ and ‘tax defaulters’, who were assigned to ‘volunteer’ for white settlers in the Huambo or Lubango areas in order to pay the fines.⁴² Indeed, migration to Namibia – whether for permanent settlement or short-term labour migration – was, according to Keese, ‘an efficient response to comparably brutal conditions of life under forced labour obligations’.⁴³ Furthermore, the availability of western consumer goods in NLO and LCM (and later SWANLA) trading stores also drew Angolans into labour migrancy.⁴⁴ Most who went to Namibia for work came from Angola’s Cunene and Huíla districts, and most also identified as Kwanyama, the largest of the Ovambo kingdoms, whose politics exist on both sides of the international border.⁴⁵

It was difficult to convince Namibian Ovambo and Kavango recruits to join the ranks of contract farm labourers. Not only was the pay lower on farms than mines but living conditions for shepherds were also poor. Most farmers did not provide adequate housing; many simply instructed their workers to build a hut in the bush, perhaps providing corrugated iron.⁴⁶ While legislation mandated that employers provide rations for workers, most white farmers failed to uphold these standards.⁴⁷ Angolans were more likely to accept the 18-month shepherding contract than Namibian ET&N labourers, as their alternative prospects were much bleaker. By the time the NLO and LCM merged in 1943, Angolans made up about 60 per cent of all recruiting at Rundu and 37 per cent at Ondangwa.⁴⁸ Up to 1970, Angolans averaged more than 40 per cent of the annual recruitment for SWANLA as a whole (see Figure 5).

38 NAN Archives of the Magistrate at Maltahöhe (LMA) 3/3/3 File N.3/11/2: Hoofbantoesaakekommissaris van SWA to Landdroos Maltahöhe ‘Bantoe van Angola: Indiensneming en Paspootbeheer’ – 1 October 1973.

39 K. Likuwa and N. Shiweda, “‘Native Recruiters’ Activities along the Kavango River Boundary in North-East Namibia, 1925–1943”, *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 23 (2018), pp. 87–100.

40 J. Ball, ‘Colonial Labor in Twentieth Century Angola’, *History Compass*, 3 (2005), pp. 1–9.

41 *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

42 A. Keese, ‘Why Stay? Forced Labor, the Correia Report, and Portuguese–South African Competition at the Angola–Namibia Border, 1917–1939’, *History in Africa*, 42 (2015), pp. 86–7.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 96. G. Dobler, *Traders and Trade in Colonial Ovamboland: Elite Formation and the Politics of Consumption under Indirect Rule and Apartheid, 1925–1990* (Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2014), pp. 44–5, 67–8.

45 Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo (ANTT), Serviços de Centralização e Coordenação de Informações de Angola (SCCIA), liv. 187 ref. 007/0002: *Estudos sobre Populações: Grupo Étnico Ambó* (Luanda, SCCIA, 1973), pp. 259–74.

46 SWANLC, pp. 55–6.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51.

48 NAN SWAA 2426 File A.521/26 (v. 5): Minutes of Conference held between the NLO and the Lüderitz Chamber of Mines – 24 April 1942.

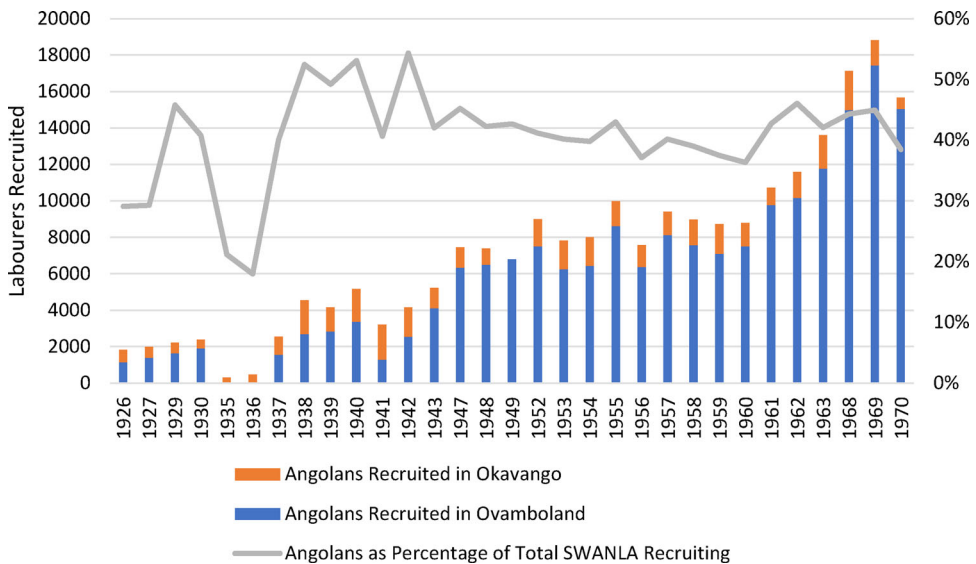


Figure 5. Recruitment of Angolans by SWANLA, 1926–70. (Chart compiled by B.C. Moore and S. Quinn. Data from: Union of South Africa, *Annual Reports for SWA*, 1926–1930. NAN SWAA 2426 File A.521/26 [v. 5]: Secretary, NLO to Chief Native Commissioner, Windhoek – ‘Review: 1925 Recruiting Agreement’ Annexure F – 19 March 1942. NAN SWAA 2426 File A.521/26 [v. 5]: SWANLA Annual Report, 1943. NAN SWAA 2426 File A.521/26 [v. 7]: SWANLA Annual Report for Year ending 30 June 1950. NAN SWAA 2427 File A.521/26 [v. 9]: SWANLA Annual Report, 1954. NAN BAC 88 File HN.3/16/2/1: SWANLA Annual Report, 1955. NAN SWAA 2429 File A.521/26/4 [v. 4]: SWANLA Annual Report, 1956. NAN BAC 88 File HN.3/16/2/1: SWANLA Annual Report, 1959. NAN BAC 88 File HN.3/16/2/1: SWANLA Annual Report, 1961. NAN BAC 88 File HN.3/16/2/1: SWANLA Annual Report, 1962. NAN A.0370 Box 12: SWANLA Annual Report, 1963. NAN OVB 14 6/2/2 [v.1], SWANLA Annual Report, 1970. Please note that in pre-SWANLA years, data are agglomerated from NLO and LCM reporting. In the Nuwe-SWANLA era, the year is drawn from close of fiscal year. Some annual reports remain missing from the NAN.)

Owing to the poor conditions and wages on farms, the agricultural sector (especially the karakul industry in the south) could rarely compete with mines and industry for contracts. For this reason, from the very beginning of SWANLA’s existence, the agency sought to standardise a system of medical classification (see Figure 6). Doctors in Rundu and Ondangwa would classify labourers on an A, B and C scale.⁴⁹ Physically fit ‘A’ workers received the highest pay and were destined for underground mine work or occasionally industries. ‘B’ workers, considered less fit, were often destined for surface-level mine work or industry. ‘C’ workers, the lowest paid, were either in poor physical condition – though not disabled – or else they were fit but under 18 years old, which disqualified them from mines or industries. ‘C’ workers were primarily destined for agricultural labour, often shepherding.⁵⁰

Approximately 67 per cent of total SWANLA recruits in 1947 went to farms, and, of that figure, 84 per cent were ‘C’ class.⁵¹ Both Silvester and Jones correctly argue that the increased presence of ‘C’ class migrant labourers did not reflect honest medical assessments of workers’ physical conditions.⁵² They mistakenly imply, however, that the growth of ‘C’ workers as a proportion of recruits was simply an artificial demotion of workers’ capacities

49 NAN SWAA 2426 File A.521/26 (v. 6): Meeting of District Surgeons of Grootfontein, Okavango, and Ovamboland – 1 April 1948. *SWANLC*, pp. 32–40. See also H.V. Ndadi, *Breaking Contract* (Windhoek, AACRLS, 2009 [1974]), pp. 17–19.

50 There were also proposals for a class ‘D’ farm worker, aged 13–16, but this was never institutionalised.

51 *SWANLC*, p. 21.

52 Silvester, ‘Black Pastoralists, White Farmers’, pp. 339–41. D.C. Jones, ‘Facing the Epokolo: Corporal Punishment and Scandal in Twentieth Century Ovamboland’ (PhD thesis, SUNY Albany, 2014), pp. 123–5.

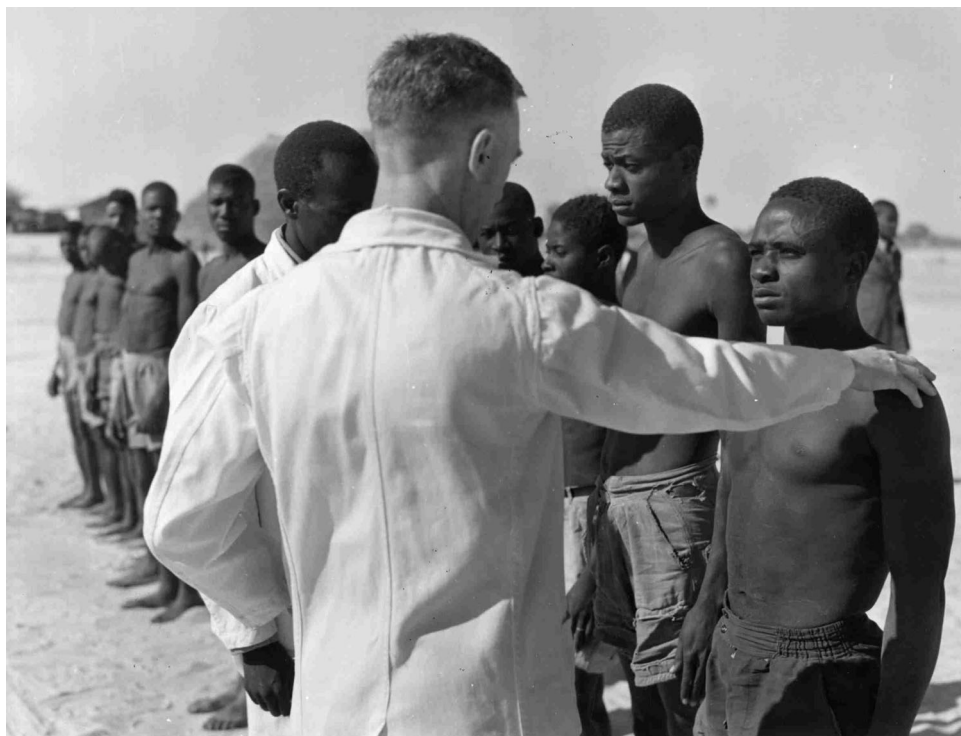


Figure 6. Medical examinations, northern Namibia, 1953. (NAN Photo Collection no. 03270.)

to meet the demands of an increasingly powerful (sheep) farming lobby in Namibia. Rather than ‘A’ and ‘B’ workers being demoted to ‘C’ status, the reverse was more often the case.⁵³ In actuality, the growth of ‘C’ class labourers as a share of migrants closely parallels the increasing share that Angolan migrant labourers held of the same workforce. Between 1937 and 1949, the recruitment of Angolans increased by nearly 6,000 annually, and this was more often than not absorbed by farms, as Namibian mines rarely faced the same labour shortages.⁵⁴

Many of these workers – Angolan or Namibian – were taking up farm labour contracts in order, in future years, to be able to move into higher-paid mine labour; farm labour was seen as temporary. To some extent, the farmers, mine owners and SWANLA recognised this as well; the recruitment fees for ‘A’ and ‘B’ class workers were significantly higher (nearly double) than those for ‘C’ workers, leading to allegations that the mines were subsidising the farm when it came to recruitment and transport.⁵⁵ There was an understanding, however, that ‘C’ class workers would attain linguistic competence in Afrikaans while working on the farms, which was deemed beneficial to mines in the long term.⁵⁶

53 NAN SWAA 2426 File A.521/26 (v. 6): Native Commissioner Ondangua to Chief Native Commissioner, Windhoek – 23 May 1945.

54 On discussions of shortages, see R.J. Gordon, ‘Mines, Migrants, and Masters: An Ethnography of Labour Turnover at a Namibian Mine’ (PhD thesis, University of Illinois, 1977), p. 46.

55 *SWANLC*, pp. 20–21.

56 NAN SWAA 2412 File A.521/13/3: *Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into Certain Aspects of the Native Labour Question in the Territory* (28 July 1939), pp. 61–2. By this era, most German farmers also used Afrikaans in communication with farm labourers. NAN ELFI 0830: Günther Wagner, ‘Ethnic Survey of Windhoek District’ (1951).

It was recognised, however, that if the existing system remained in place, labour shortages would continue to rise alongside growth in the karakul sector. After all, even with the large numbers of Angolan and Namibian workers coming out for farm labour with 'C' class status, most of the 794 applications for shepherds and 1,240 applications for general farm workers made during February 1948 were still outstanding by the end of that year.⁵⁷ As long as 'C' class workers viewed shepherding and farm labour as a temporary position that they must take up before they could earn mine wages, farmers would continue to have a labour shortage filled only temporarily by a revolving door of teenage and/or Angolan shepherds constantly in need of training. Wages for shepherds were slightly increased in the late 1940s to encourage workers to remain with farm employers, but this strategy still failed to address the crucial issue: mining and urban/coastal industries were expanding alongside the karakul sector, providing much higher wages and better working conditions for migrant labourers.⁵⁸

By the early 1950s, mining overtook agriculture as the largest share of Namibian gross domestic product, and a number of transformations were reported by SWANLA recruiters with regard to the migration of Angolan workers to Namibia. In short, it appeared to be slowing down and, while the raw number of recruits was not decreasing, far more effort had to be exerted by 'native recruiters', as the Portuguese authorities were beginning to police their borders more closely, hoping to encourage more Angolans to work on their side of the border.⁵⁹ This deeply worried karakul farmers and their labour providers. One of SWANLA's main recruiters stated that '[m]y association feels convinced that the best chance of eliminating the deficit in farm labour in SWA lies in stimulating an enhanced flow from Angola'.⁶⁰

The importance of Angolans in filling the ranks of farm labour in Namibia cannot be overstated. A 1947 agreement between SWANLA and the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA) ensured that the WNLA would not recruit within Ovamboland or Kavango as long as a certain number of workers were contracted out by SWANLA to the Rand Gold Mines to alleviate the latter's labour shortages.⁶¹ SWANLA agreed because it was paid generously per recruit – especially after the agreement was renegotiated in 1954 – and transporting some workers allowed SWANLA to maintain control over Ovamboland and Kavango; after all, Namibian mines and farms were rarely able to recruit within South Africa. Rather than lose domestic ET&N workers to the Rand, SWANLA decided to redirect some Angolans to the WNLA, with the quantity reaching more than 5,000 workers by 1963.⁶² Angolans understood that the wages in South Africa were higher, and transferral to the WNLA was preferred. However, only workers deemed most physically fit – 'A' and 'B' classes – were transferred, again reinforcing the understanding that the predominance of 'C' class agricultural labourers working within Namibia was a result of increased recruitment of young Angolans.⁶³ This WNLA agreement necessitated an even greater increase in

57 *SWANLC*, p. 21.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 64.

59 NAN SWAA 2426 File A.521/26 (v. 7): Secretary, SWANLA to Chief Native Commissioner, Windhoek 'Meeting at Windhoek on 18 September 1950' – 4 October 1950.

60 NAN SWAA 2426 File A.521/26 (v. 7): SWANLA Annual Report for Year ending 30 June 1950.

61 M.J. Olivier, 'Inboorlingbeleid en -Administrasie in die Mandaatgebied van Suidwes-Afrika' (PhD thesis, Stellenbosch University, 1961), pp. 269–71.

62 NAN Argiewe van die S.W.A. Vereniging van Boerewerkgewers van Kontrak-Inboorlinge (A.0370) Box 12: SWANLA Annual Report, 1963.

63 NAN Archives of the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Windhoek (BAC) 79 File HN.3/11/2: Streekswerkverskaffingskommissaris, Windhoek 'Verslag van Algemene Sake en Onderwerpe in verband met Arbeidsaangeleenthede wat op 'n Vergadering van Boereverenigings Gewoonlik Behandel word' – undated, probably June 1956. Furthermore, some Namibian Ovambos pretended to be Angolan Ovambos in order to access WNLA contracts.

recruitment from Angola, to satisfy both Namibian labour demands and South African ones, as the labour resources of Ovamboland were exhausted. According to one SWANLA official: 'I repeat, in my opinion, the maximum number of the population of Ovamboland to be allowed out is in service in the Police Zone and that additional farm labour must be looked for beyond the boundaries of this territory'.⁶⁴

Furthermore, the Portuguese were increasing their recruitment efforts in southern Angola. One SWANLA official remarked that '[r]umours constantly reach us that the Portuguese actually impress labourers trying to come down for work in South West Africa'.⁶⁵ One of the main advantages of taking up work within Angola was the absence of medical examination, a minimum age of 14 and the fact that a married labourer was allowed to bring his wife and children along with him, providing both family comforts and the option of additional wages.⁶⁶ There were also allegations that some Ovambo from Namibia were also trekking north to Angola for work, although the numbers were much more limited than the southward migration of Angolans.⁶⁷ Indeed, historians such as Clarence-Smith and Keese have discussed the often overlooked transformations in post-Second World War Portuguese colonial policy, namely phasing out forced labour and the emergence of large-scale economic development projects (often led by foreign capital).⁶⁸ Ball has argued similarly, noting that increased rural and urban wages in Angola during this period diminished the need to migrate to places like Namibia.⁶⁹ Furthermore, cheaper consumer goods were becoming more available in southern Angola, reducing the prevalence of one of the other determinants for migration, the possibility of acquiring European commodities.⁷⁰ These transformations in southern Angola took shape first through a strategy to emulate the highly profitable karakul industry in Namibia, looking to it as a way to kickstart white settler agriculture in the region.

Smuggled Sheep? Intercolonial Conflict in the Karakul Sector

Throughout the late 1940s, a farmer and aviation enthusiast from Kamanjab, Outjo district, named Chris Brand had a little side business going on. Brand had bought a small four-seater plane, which he would fly regularly to Mariental, where he would purchase as many karakul rams as would fit into the plane, and then he would take off for Angola, where he would illegally sell the sheep at £75 profit each. Brand quickly recouped the cost of the plane and planned to continue this arrangement.⁷¹

Nicolaas J. van Rensburg was another farmer from Outjo and a descendant of the so-called 'Angola Boers' who trekked to Humpata area in the 1800s.⁷² Van Rensburg saw a

64 NAN BAC 88 File HN.3/16/2/1: SWANLA Annual Report for Year Ending 30 June 1959.

65 NAN SWAA 2427 File A.521/26 (v. 9): SWANLA Annual Report for Year Ending 30 June 1954.

66 ANTT SCCIA liv. 187 ref. 007/0002: *Estudos sobre Populações: Grupo Étnico Ambó* (Luanda: SCCIA, 1973), p. 265.

67 NAN SWAA 2429 File A.521/26/4 (v. 4): SWANLA Annual Report for Year Ending 30 June 1956.

68 W.G. Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire, 1829–1975: A Study in Economic Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 19. A. Keese, 'Developmentalist Attitudes and Old Habits: Portuguese Labour Policies, South African Rivalry, and Flight in Southern Angola, 1945–1974', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41, 2 (2015), p. 246.

69 Ball, 'Colonial Labor', p. 4.

70 On consumerism, see N. Shiwea, 'Yearning to be Modern? Dreams and Desires of Ovambo Contract Workers in Namibia', *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 22 (2017), pp. 81–98. See also M. McKittrick, *To Dwell Secure: Generation, Christianity, and Colonialism in Ovamboland* (Portsmouth, Heinemann, 2002), p. 189.

71 NAN Archives of the Native Commissioner, Ovamboland (NAO) 070 File 30/1: S.A.P. District Commandant, Omaruru to Native Commissioner, Ovamboland 'Alleged Smuggling of Karakul Rams from S.W.A. into Angola' – 18 April 1950.

72 While most of the Angola Boers moved to Namibia in the 1920s, some stayed until Angolan independence in 1975; see N. Stassen, *Boers in Angola* (Pretoria, Protea Boekhuis, 2012).

potential profit and smuggled karakul rams through the bush in Ovamboland to buyers on the Angolan side. The police constable noted, concerning the smuggling operation: '[i]t is quite evident that the Portuguese authorities are well aware of the smuggling of karakul sheep into Angola and there is reason to believe that they are assisting and encouraging the persons engaged in the smuggling of the sheep'.⁷³ After fleeing police custody, van Rensburg sold his assets in Namibia and was planning to move to Angola to take up karakul farming.⁷⁴

The smuggling of karakul sheep into Angola, in contravention of the protection ordinance of 1930, were not isolated circumstances, as they paralleled developments in the Angolan karakul industry after the Second World War. Prominent Portuguese colonial officials toured Namibia's karakul farms, identifying the industry as a means to facilitate white settlement into Angola's semi-arid Moçâmedes district.⁷⁵ This area of south-western Angola was surveyed for white settlement only in the early 1940s, after the dispossession of the pastoral Kuvale [*Mucubais*] by military means in 1941.⁷⁶ Approximately 5,000 Kuvale were stripped of their lands, assigned with rehabilitative labour on the Angolan diamond mines or else permanently exiled to São Tomé.⁷⁷ About 90 per cent of the Kuvale's cattle and sheep were distributed to incoming Portuguese ranchers in Moçâmedes district.⁷⁸

One of the first locations surveyed for settlement was a future veterinary station alongside the Moçâmedes Railway, appropriately termed Caraculo (see Figure 7). From August 1945, shipments of pure-bred karakul rams from the US government stud flock were arranged, and, later that year, the colonial administration hired Manuel dos Santos Pereira as chief veterinarian and director of the *Posto Experimental do Caracul* (hereafter *Posto*).⁷⁹ This agricultural station was intended not only to conduct research into karakul breeding but also to facilitate logistically the creation of a white settler ranching community in the south of Angola. Soon after taking over the directorship of the *Posto*, Pereira and his staff visited Namibia to speak to officials regarding purchase of karakul stud stock for the *Posto*. Facing difficulties in Windhoek, the Portuguese arranged for another shipment from America and some from the German flock at Halle.⁸⁰ Pereira would, over the years, continue to seek the importation of karakul stock from Namibia, whether by legal or illegal means. Rather than modelling settler society on Portuguese metropolitan life, southern Angola was being

73 NAN SWAA 1102 File A.140/4/39: Criminal Investigation Department, Outjo to S.A.P. Omaruru, 'Alleged Smuggling of Karakul Rams from SWA to Angola' – 17 October 1950. NAN SWAA 1102 File A.140/4/39: Deputy Commissioner, Windhoek to Secretary for SWA 'Alleged Smuggling of Karakul Rams' – 20 November 1950. Indeed, the Lubango veterinarian, Dr E.V. Martins, was long involved in Karakul smuggling from Namibia. See NAN NAO 026 File 20/3: Verklaring: Joaquim dos Santos: Outjo – 29 November 1939.

74 NAN NAO 070 File 30/1: Criminal Investigations Department, Outjo to S.A.P. Omaruru, 'Alleged Smuggling of Karakul Rams' – 16 August 1950.

75 M. dos Santos Pereira, *O que pode valer o caracul na economia e ocupação de Angola* (Lisbon, Centro de Estudos Económicos, 1955), p. 15. The expansion of Angola's karakul industry was tied to broader colonial development plans promulgated by Lisbon; see P. Stone, 'An Ambitious Portuguese Plan', *African Affairs*, 55, 221 (1956), pp. 320–25.

76 R.D. de Carvalho, 'Encapsulation, Prosperity, and Hunger among the Kuvale of Southern Angola', in M. Bollig and J.B. Gewald (eds), *People, Cattle, and Land: Transformations of a Pastoral Society in Southwestern Africa* (Köln, Rüdiger Köppe, 2000), pp. 523–36.

77 C. Castelo, 'African Knowledge and Resilience in Late Portuguese Colonial Empire: The Agro-pastoralists of Southwestern Angola', *Portuguese Studies Review*, 25, 1 (2017), p. 98.

78 C. Castelo, *Passagens para África: O Povoamento de Angola e Moçambique com Naturais da Metrópole, 1920–1974* (Porto, Edições Afrontamento, 2007), p. 322.

79 Pereira, *O que pode valer*, p. 15.

80 *Ibid.*



Figure 7. Moçâmedes railway locomotive enters Caraculo station, 1955. (Photo collection of the Estação Zootécnica do Caraculo [EJC], Angola.)

increasingly drawn into a Namibian and South African colonial and economic sphere, led by the karakul sheep.⁸¹

In October 1947, Lisbon promulgated Ordinance no. 6074, which allocated more than 8 million hectares of pasture for karakul production. Caraculo veterinary station would become a nexus for a series of sheep ranches throughout Moçâmedes district.⁸² Upon application for land in the *Reserva Pastoril do Caracul*,⁸³ settlers were each granted between 5,000 and 15,000 hectares gratis,⁸⁴ on condition that they build a European-style house, invest in 700 ewes and employ a white farm manager.⁸⁵ Pereira presumed that karakul farming and state investment into infrastructural development in the region would stimulate foreign investment into other industries in the south of Angola.⁸⁶

81 In this way, my work departs sharply from Tiago Saraiva's understandings of the development of Angolan karakul; his is the only other currently existing scholarly treatment of the experiment. Though it is not the primary focus of this article, I show that Caraculo was in more ways an extension of the 'South African Empire' than of metropolitan Portugal or Lusotropicalism. See T. Saraiva, 'Mimetismo colonial e reprodução animal: carneiros caracul no Sudoeste angolano', *Etnográfica*, 18, 1 (2014), pp. 209–27. T. Saraiva, *Fascist Pigs: Technoscientific Organisms and the History of Fascism* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2016), pp. 192–231. Concerning the South African Empire, see D. Henrichsen, G. Miescher, C. Rassool and L. Rizzo, 'Rethinking Empire in Southern Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41, 3 (2015), pp. 431–5.

82 M. dos Santos Pereira, *Plano de fomento do Karakul de Angola* (Lisbon, Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1953), p. 12.

83 See map, Figure 1 in the Editorial of this special issue.

84 NAN SWAA 1102 File A.140/4/36: Gesantskap van S.A., Lissabon to Minister van Buitelandse Sake, Pretoria 'Karakoelboerdery in Angola' – 13 July 1949.

85 Pereira, *O que pode valer*, p. 10.

86 *Ibid.*

Infrastructural development on the *Posto* began in 1947. It was necessary for a large complex to be established at Caraculo, as it was very difficult for ranchers to obtain pure-bred karakul rams; the *Posto* therefore ‘loaned’ rams and provided artificial insemination gratis. In addition, Pereira and his veterinary staff would inspect flocks and provide training seminars on breeding and pelting. According to the British consul at Luanda, who visited Caraculo in 1950, over 300,000 hectares were already allocated to approximately 30 settlers, Portuguese and foreign, and there were additional aerial surveys undertaken to prepare land for future settlers.⁸⁷

The *Posto* was also a transit centre for recruited farm labourers, many of whom were distributed among settlers. The initial shepherding labour force was the dispossessed Kuvale who were not deported, though migrant workers were to be used as well. A construction agent from Moçâmedes was contracted to build workers’ distinctive conical houses on the grounds of the *Posto* and deeper into the *Reserva*’s ranches (see Figure 8).⁸⁸ Manuel Pedro, an elderly retired employee of the *Posto*, narrated that his father was brought as a prison labourer from Luanda to Caraculo to construct the housing and other infrastructure on the farms, such as fencing.⁸⁹ While prison labour was used for the *Posto*’s construction, shepherding labour increasingly depended on migrant workers from Huíla and Cunene districts, as there were few remaining Kuvale after the war.⁹⁰ Pedro’s own mother was a Kwanyama who came to Caraculo as a domestic worker for the *Posto*. While it is hard to come by exact labour statistics for Moçâmedes district’s ranching industries, it is clear that Kwanyamas from Cunene were of growing importance to this nascent Angolan sector, often in competition with Namibian farms (see Figure 9).⁹¹

The Administration in Windhoek was following developments in Moçâmedes district closely, as the Portuguese posed a potential threat to their profitable karakul industry. While Namibia had its 1930 protection ordinance banning the export of sheep to Angola, Botswana and South Africa, Pretoria’s would not be written into law until 1957.⁹² Both the SWA Department of Agriculture and the KIAB opposed the export of karakuls to Angola and they condemned the increasing number of smugglers involved. While the Portuguese claimed to be policing the border between Namibia and Angola to stop smugglers, Windhoek had little faith in their Iberian colleagues’ diligence.⁹³

Alongside Pereira’s difficulties with obtaining karakul stud stock, Caraculo was not a forgiving environment either. From 1952 to 1958, south-western Angola faced a serious drought, bankrupting some of the early settlers,⁹⁴ such that by 1957 there were only 17 sheep ranches in the *Reserva*, and between all of them (excluding the *Posto*), they had fewer than 8,000 cross-bred karakuls, a very low stocking rate compared to Namibia. They possessed only 144 pure-bred karakuls, mostly ewes.⁹⁵ In order to obtain stock for crossing with pure-breds

87 National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK) Foreign Office (FO) File 371/80853: British Consulate Luanda to Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London ‘Angolan Karakul, or Persian Lamb’ – 27 October 1950.

88 Gaspar Madeira, interviewed by the author, Moçâmedes, July 2019.

89 Manuel Pedro, interviewed by the author, Caraculo, July 2019.

90 João Sambengi, interviewed by the author, Caraculo, July 2019.

91 ANTT SCCIA liv. 187 ref. 007/0002: *Estudos sobre Populações: Grupo Étnico Ambó* (Luanda, SCCIA, 1973).

92 NAN SWAA 1102 File A.140/4/36: Secretary for Agriculture, Pretoria to Secretary for External Affairs, Pretoria ‘Proposed Establishment of Karakul Industry in Angola’ – 12 August 1949.

93 NAN AGR 415 File 54/2 (v. 1): Director of Agriculture to Secretary for SWA, ‘Export of Livestock to Angola’ – 2 November 1951.

94 C.A. Neves Ferrão, ‘A Hidrogeologia e o Problema do Abastecimento de Água à Reserva Pastoril do Caraculo’, *Boletim dos Serviços de Geologia e Minas de Angola* (Luanda, 1962), pp. 5–34. M. Kuder, *Angola: eine geographische, soziale und wirtschaftliche Landeskunde* (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971), p. 222.

95 M. dos Santos Pereira, *Situação do Caracul de Angola* (Lisbon, Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1959), Chart 6.



Figure 8. The original workers' conical housing at Caraculo. (Photo: B.C. Moore, 2019.)



Figure 9. Shepherds with karakul sheep, Moçâmedes district. (EZC photo collection.)

and/or artificial insemination, the *Posto* and its neighbouring ranchers had to arrange to buy non-karakul fat-tailed sheep from outside Angola. While there were some indigenous Damara sheep among the Kuvale and Kwanyama to purchase, sufficient quantity simply wasn't there. Pereira and his colleagues therefore arranged for regular shipments of fat-tailed sheep from Tanganyika and Eritrea.⁹⁶ Though karakul imports were hopeless, the *Posto* regularly purchased dorper and Cape fat-tailed sheep from Namibia, transported through Ovamboland by lorry.⁹⁷

With those difficulties noted, between 1949 and 1959, the *Reserva* witnessed a large-scale installation of buildings, boreholes and more than 1,000 kilometres of graded roads.⁹⁸ Furthermore, in 1954, Pereira inaugurated an irrigation scheme at Matala Dam, growing lucerne for cattle and sheep fodder,⁹⁹ and, by 1960, it was producing more than 300 tonnes annually.¹⁰⁰ However, Pereira struggled to attract 'proper' karakul farmers and observed that, by the late 1950s, many settlers were choosing to farm cattle instead. While this was partially related to obtaining breeding stock (Windhoek's veterinary export restrictions were loosened for cattle), it was also complicated by a lack of veterinary expertise concerning karakul.¹⁰¹

Pereira was effectively running a one-man show at the *Posto*, making it very hard for veterinary knowledge to spread (see Figure 10), creating a significant barrier of entry for those interested in taking up sheep farming. In fact, most of the pure-bred karakul rams that were not based at the *Posto* were on a single farm south of Caraculo, called Capolopopo, which was owned by a German named von Larisch and managed by an Angolan Afrikaner named Prinsloo. Ernst R. Scherz, the manager of the SWA Karakul Breeders' Association (KTV), was sent by the association in 1962 on a fact-finding tour of the *Reserva Pastoril do Caracul*.¹⁰² While Scherz was somewhat impressed with the *Posto* and von Larisch's Capolopopo, he was condemnatory of most of the other ranches, which were often just cattle farms or else farms run by 'weekend farmers' who lived in Moçamedes.¹⁰³

Manuel dos Santos Pereira's difficulties in obtaining pure-bred karakuls from Namibia by legal means gradually involved the higher echelons of Portuguese colonialism. The Angolan Governor-General himself petitioned the Administrator in Windhoek to lift the export ban on karakul sheep.¹⁰⁴ The SWA Administration found itself divided over the subject. On the one hand, strengthening economic relations between the two territories was deeply desired on both sides of the border, and commercial and scientific collaboration with karakul breeding could be a way to solidify this alliance. On the other hand, apart from individuals engaging in smuggling, all white farmers, farming associations and the KIAB were against exporting karakul (pure-bred or not) to Angola.¹⁰⁵ These hesitations in collaborating with

96 *Ibid.*, pp. 65–6. NAN AGR 605 File 76/5: Director of Agriculture, Memorandum 'Uitvoer van Karakoelskape na Angola' – 2 June 1958.

97 NAN AGR 415 File 54/2 (v. 3): Directeur van Landbou to Bestuurder, FCU 'Uitvoer van Dorper Skape na Angola' – 13 March 1963.

98 Pereira, *Situação do Caracul*, p. 19.

99 NASA Argiewe van die Sekretaris van die Tesourie (TES) 5808 File 33/841: Reis van Suidwes-Afrika-Kommissie na Angola – 3–7 December 1962.

100 Kuder, *Angola*, p. 192.

101 M. dos Santos Pereira, *O Caracul* (Lisbon, Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1959), p. 16.

102 E.R. Scherz, 'Karakulzucht in Angola', *Yearbook of the SWA Karakul Breeders' Association* (1962), pp. 41–5.

103 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

104 NAN AGR 605 File 76/5: Governor-General of Angola to Secretary for SWA – 8 April 1958.

105 NAN AGR 605 File 76/5: Director of Agriculture, Memorandum 'Uitvoer van Karakoelskape na Angola' – 2 June 1958. The SWA Karakul Breeders' Association (KTV) passed two resolutions concerning the question of exporting karakuls to Angola. First, they stated categorically their resistance to the lifting of existing legislation. Second, if the Administration were to choose to 'gift' sheep to veterinary stations in Angola or Botswana, the KTV demanded rights to (1) limit the number of rams, (2) inspect these foreign agricultural stations when desired, and (3) mandate that Angola and Botswana restrict the further export of karakul sheep or semen beyond their borders. See KBN, General Correspondence, 1954–65: Besluit van die Raad van die Karakoeltelersvereniging van SWA – 30 March 1965.



Figure 10. Manuel dos Santos Pereira (holding frame) offers investors a tour of the Posto Experimental do Caracul, 1955. (EZC photo collection.)

the Portuguese in the karakul sector expressed a fear that Angolan pelts would hinder Windhoek's privileged position in the industry but also related to the increasing flow of Kwanyama workers from Cunene to the settler farms in Moçâmedes district rather than south to Namibia. Both sheep and shepherds determined veterinary policy.

Despite these troubles, the *Posto* received increased state support during the mid 1960s,¹⁰⁶ eventually culminating in a 1967 auction of Angolan karakul pelts in London, where the 7,000 pelts fetched high prices.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, while a few successful producers, such as Capolopopo and the *Posto* itself, were getting a foothold in karakul, many in the *Reserva* had almost fully switched over to cattle, the number of sheep ranches had decreased by 35 per cent, and many that remained were owned by Germans, Italians and South (West) Africans.¹⁰⁸ From 1960 to 1971, southern Angola's cattle population had tripled to nearly 3 million head, and the low cost (or free land) brought significant foreign speculation in the cattle industry, mostly by whites from South Africa and Namibia.¹⁰⁹

Despite competition over karakul, the SWA Department of Agriculture worked actively with the Portuguese throughout the 1960s to develop the cattle sector.¹¹⁰ In addition, even though it was then clear that Angola would be only a small player in karakul, the SWA Administration still resisted exporting karakuls, partially out of fear that the Angolans would sell to the Soviet Union or Afghanistan, the two global leaders in the pelt industry by

106 Kuder, *Angola*, p. 99.

107 Banco de Angola, *Economic and Financial Survey of Angola, 1969* (Luanda, Banco de Angola, 1969), p. 27.

108 Kuder, *Angola*, p. 99. KBN, International Karakul Symposium, 1967: M. dos Santos Pereira, 'Karakulzucht in Angola', Europäische Vereinigung für Tierzucht, Kommission für Schaf- und Ziegenproduktion: Internationales Karakulsymposium, Wien (September 1967).

109 J.E. Holloway, *Economic Review of Angola* (London, Standard Bank Group, 1972), pp. 4–5.

110 NAN AGR 415 File 54/2 (v. 3): Senior Vakkundige Beampte 'Verslag oor my Verblyf in Angola' – August 1963.

production quantity.¹¹¹ At this stage, southern Namibia was completely dependent upon karakul production, and it was therefore relayed to the Angolan authorities that the legislation would remain.¹¹² This did not stop Namibian and Angolan speculators from continuing to press for legislative changes.¹¹³

From the institutionalisation of large-scale Namibian karakul breeding in 1933 until the collapse of the Portuguese Empire and the independence of Angola in 1975, the SWA Department of Agriculture never once agreed to send karakul sheep to either private Angolan buyers or government agricultural stations. However, as a way to maintain intercolonial co-operation amid agricultural rivalry, the Administration consistently loosened their veterinary regulations regarding the export of non-karakul sheep breeds, cattle and horses. Intriguingly, while the *Posto* may have failed to create a mass of white settlers engaging in pelt production, it did lead to an expanded cattle industry in the south of Angola. It also contributed to an investment climate facilitating the expansion of southern Angola's labour-intensive fish processing and iron-ore mining sectors.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, the development of a settler ranching economy in southern Angola was mutually beneficial to all colonial parties, who sought to contain nascent liberation movements; many agricultural settlements, such as Chitado (north-west of Ruacana), housed military detachments.¹¹⁵ Ultimately, the dependence of SWANLA upon Angolan migrant labourers was a major factor in the *Posto*'s failure. The (often illegal) cross-boundary movements of both workers and livestock reveal the interconnectedness and inseparability of veterinary policies and labour policies.

Fencing out Labour and Vermin in Namibia's Karakul Sector

Economic developments in the south of Angola gave Angolan workers an opportunity to take up waged labour without having to migrate southwards. White karakul farmers in Namibia saw this as an additional nail in the coffin of their ability to obtain migrant workers, as they sought to move further from local Nama labour. In 1952, after lobbying from the agricultural sector, the SWA Administration agreed to institute an additional administrative layer within SWANLA. The SWA Vereniging van Boerewerkgewers van Kontrak-Inboorlinge was founded to represent all farmers who wished to receive contract labourers.¹¹⁶ Each potential employer contributed funds to enable the association to acquire sufficient shares of SWANLA to secure board representation to advance farmers' interests in the recruiting of ET&N workers.¹¹⁷ The association was also a forum for farmers facing labour issues, from both local and regional perspectives. Upon reading reports of development in Angola in the mid 1950s, the members noted that 'SWA may lose 40% of

111 NAN AGR 415 File 54/2 (v. 3): Directeur van Landbou to Sekretaris van SWA 'Karakoelskape vir Angola' – 18 September 1964. NAN AGR 415 File 54/2 (v. 4): Sekretaris van SWA to Sekretaris van die Eerste Minister, Kaapstad 'Uitvoer van Karakoelskape na Angola en Betsjoeanaland' – 4 June 1965

112 NAN AGR 415 File 54/2 (v. 4): Secretary for SWA to Secretário Provincial de Fomento Rural, Luanda – 3 September 1965.

113 NAN AGR 416 File 54/2 (v. 5): Directeur, Swangola Beleggings: 'Uitvoer van Karakoelstamboekdiere na Angola' – 30 August 1966. NAN AGR 416 File 54/2 (v. 5): Director, Portugal/SWA Trading Co. to Director of Agriculture – 15 February 1968. NAN AGR 416 File 54/2 (v. 5): Antonio Pereira Lucas Martins, Luanda to Director of Agriculture, Windhoek – 4 May 1970.

114 Kuder, *Angola*, pp. 233–5. Banco de Angola, *Economic and Financial Survey of Angola, 1960–1965* (Luanda, Banco de Angola, 1965), p. 20. M. Bandeira Jerónimo and A. Costa Pinto, 'A Modernizing Empire? Politics, Culture, and Economy in Portuguese Late Colonialism', in Bandeira Jerónimo and Costa Pinto (eds), *The Ends of European Colonial Empires: Cases and Comparisons* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 62–3.

115 G.J. Bender, *Angola under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978), p. 109.

116 NAN SWAA 2429 File A.521/26/4: *Societies of Employers of Recruited Natives Ordinance*, 1952.

117 NAN SWAA 2429 File A.521/26/4: Kennisgewing: SWA Vereniging van Boerewerkgewers van Kontrak-Inboorlinge – 25 September 1953.

its labour supply through Ovamboland should the Portuguese Authorities take active steps and succeed in stopping the present flow'.¹¹⁸

In response to such fears, the association conducted in 1957 a large-scale quantitative survey of farm labour in Namibia. This is a valuable resource for economic and labour historians of Namibia that has never been consulted by researchers before. Each member, nearly all white commercial farmers, received a blue card in the post requesting rudimentary information regarding how many workers they employed, were ET&N or local, how large the shortage was, and so on (see [Figure 11](#)). With over 5,600 farming units surveyed, this is the most complete survey of Namibian agricultural labour ever conducted prior to independence, and it provides historians with three particularly important insights.

First, we are able to calculate district-specific labour situations in Namibia. The SWANLA annual reports distinguish only between workers assigned mining, industrial or agricultural tasks; they do not contain any indication as to which districts were receiving most workers. Second, separating the data by district enables us to ascertain which farming activity was employing most of the ET&N workers and who was facing the greatest shortages. Finally, we are able to get a ratio, however estimated and potentially incomplete, of ET&N workers to local agricultural workers. Owing to the often informal means of local worker recruitment – whether of Nama, Damara, Herero or San workers – we have little data concerning how many local workers were regularly employed on farms; this survey is an important break in this trend.

[Figure 12](#) adds a great deal of complexity to the statements that karakul farmers and their representatives made concerning migrant labour and fears of Angolan economic development. Not a single sheep-farming district in Namibia actually employed even close to a majority migrant workforce. According to the 1957 survey, the vast majority of ET&N farm labourers were sent to central and northern cattle- and maize-farming districts, and – apart from Grootfontein by a narrow margin – not a single district in Namibia employed more contract labourers than local workers. The territory-wide survey revealed that white commercial farmers employed 9,819 ET&N labourers alongside 15,948 local workers.¹¹⁹ These statistics appear to show that Namibia's agricultural sector was not so dependent on migrant labour as the farmers' statements implied.

There is a threefold reason for the divergence between statistical reality and the farmers' rhetorical fearmongering. The first is simple: when nearly 40 per cent of the labour force is ET&N, that still reflects dependence upon migrant labour. In this period, farmers had fully tapped into local Police Zone labour, and, as it relates to the Herero, Nama, and Damara, well under 50 per cent (as low as 11 per cent for Damara) of their populations were resident in 'native reserves' (see [Figure 13](#)). As it relates to the Nama, whose reserves were nearer to karakul farms in southern Namibia, most already resided on white farms, and those leaving the reserves were more likely to move to growing urban centres such as Keetmanshoop and Mariental.

The second reason concerns labour shortage. While all districts reported labour shortage, sheep farming districts, especially Lüderitz, Maltahöhe, Warmbad and Keetmanshoop, reported the highest disparity (see [Figure 14](#)).¹²⁰ Sheep farmers in southern districts felt that they were competing with both mines and also with cattle-farmers in central and northern districts. The final reason concerns the growth of the karakul industry. Despite short-term fluctuations caused by drought, the 1950s and 1960s were decades of strong growth in the

118 NAN A.0370 Box 1: Minutes, 15–16 November 1956.

119 NAN A.0370 Box 12: H.L.P. Eedes, Sekretaris, 'Plaasarbeid Toestand, Suidwes-Afrika, 1957: Opsomming' – 8 February 1958.

120 As shortage was self-reported, farmers often over-reported shortages. Nevertheless, overall trends can be observed.

Naam en Voorletters van Boer W. Liebenberg
 (Hoofletters)
 Plaas se Naam Nubib West No. 109 Distrik Maltahöhe
 Hoeveel Naturelle-Arbeiders is nodig om die plaas te bewerk 7
 Aantal van plaaslike Naturellemans (Herero, Klipkaffer, Boesman, Hotnot, ens. oor 18 Jaar oud op die plaas 1
 Aantal van E.T. of N. Naturelle (Ovambos) in diens 3
BESONDERHEDE VAN OVAMBOS

No.	Identifikasie Pass No.	NAAM	Kontrak No.	Tydperk van van	Kontrak tot
1.	252372	Andonyo Toao	423370	18 ⁴ /56	18 ¹⁹ /57
2.	340784	Hishinana Haisonga	40272	16 ¹¹ /55	16 ¹¹ /57
3.	326872	Thomas Wisonga	38574	26 ⁸ /55	26 ⁸ /57
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					

Blaai om wanneer nodig.

Figure 11. SWANLA Farm Labour Card: W. Liebenberg, Nubib West, no. 109, Maltahöhe District. (NAN A.0370 Box 8.)

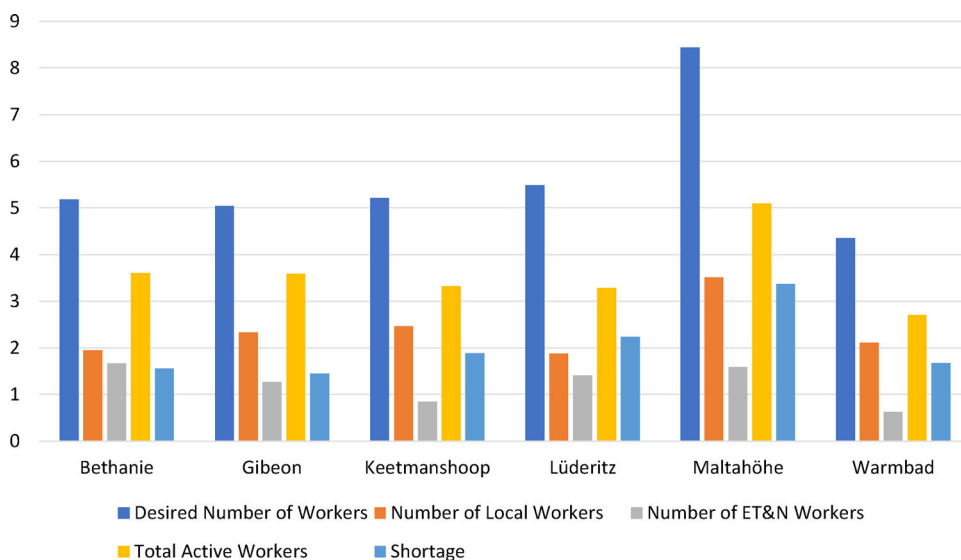


Figure 12. Average workforce per farming unit, 1957: southern sheep districts. (Data from NAN A.0370 Box 12: H.L.P. Eedes, Sekretaris, "Plaasarbeid Toestand, Suidwes-Afrika, 1957: Opsomming" – 8 February 1958.)

karakul sector, peaking in 1969 at 3.6 million pelts exported (see Figure 15). Despite their continued reliance on Nama labour, many karakul farmers believed that the labour force could grow only with Angolans.

Facing a local Nama population that was nearly fully tapped and increasingly avoiding the abusive working conditions on the farms, and with the overall failure of the SWA

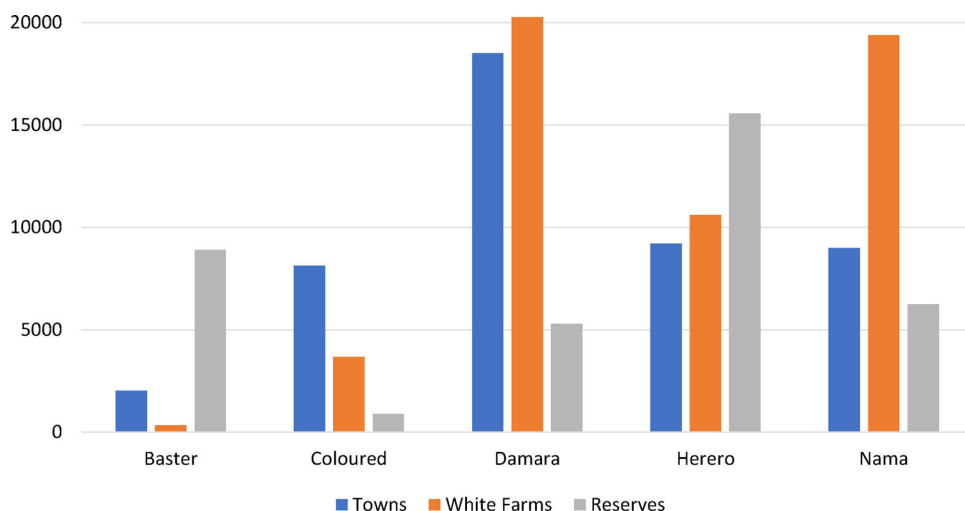


Figure 13. Places of residence: Police Zone Africans, 1960. (Data from: NAN AP 4/1/3: Report of the Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs, 1962–63 [1964], p. 41.)

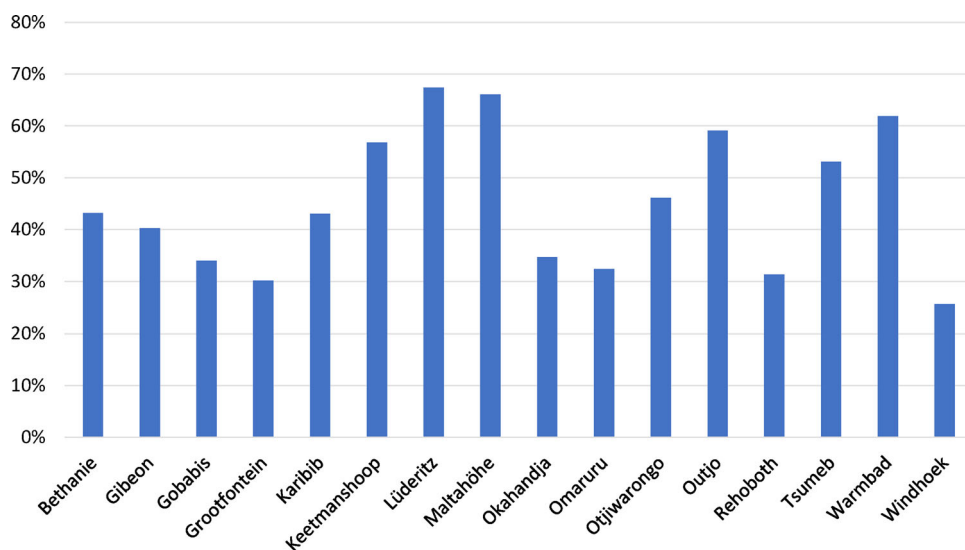


Figure 14. Farm labour shortage as percentage of employed workforce, 1957. (Data from NAN A.0370 Box 12: H.L.P. Eedes, Sekretaris, 'Plaasarbeid Toestand, Suidwes-Afrika, 1957: Opsomming' – 8 February 1958.)

Vereniging van Boerewerkgewers successfully to increase migrant labour to farms, the karakul sheep industry quickly changed strategy. It was decided that the solution to the labour question was no longer one of increasing the quantity of recruits, but rather decreasing labour demands on karakul farms. Thus, from the early–mid 1950s, the SWA Administration and its Department of Agriculture prioritised fixed capital and technological investment on white farms throughout southern Namibia.

This took shape primarily in the form of fencing legislation and subsidies. Herding karakul sheep was labour intensive, and shepherds were required not only to guide sheep from kraal to grazing site but also (along with his dogs) to protect the sheep from predators,

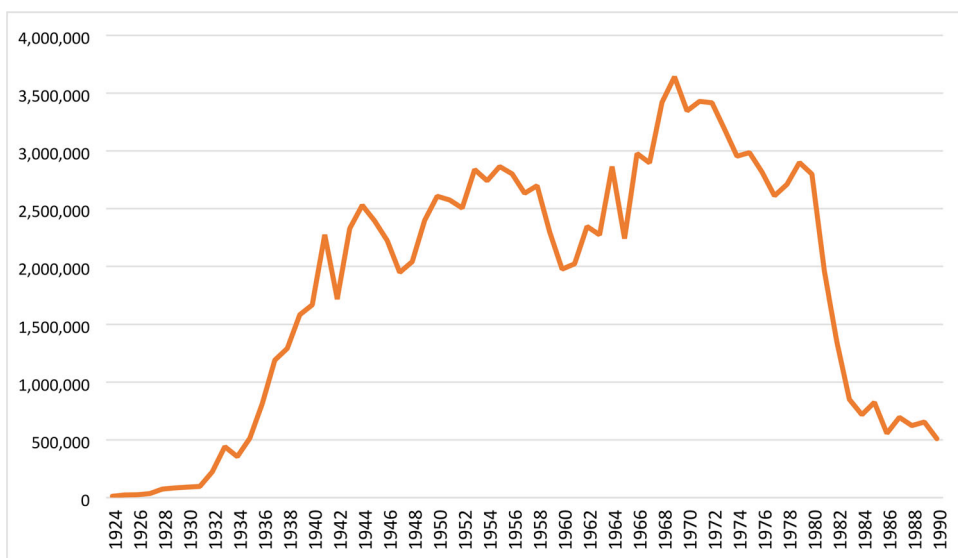


Figure 15. Karakul pelts exported from Namibia, 1924–90. (Data from: L. Neubert, *The Karakul Industry: Policy Options for Independent Namibia* [Lusaka, United Nations Institute for Namibia, 1989]; B. Bravenboer, *Karakul: Gift from the Arid Land, 1907–2007* [Windhoek, Karakul Board of Namibia, 2007].)

especially jackals.¹²¹ With the founding of the *Boerderybelangeraad* (Farming Interests Board) in 1952, subsidies were quickly put in place to enable landowners to improve farm infrastructure.¹²² Special emphases were placed on jackal-proof fencing, stock-proof fencing and pipeline – the three forms of technology most responsible for decreasing the demand for shepherds. While there was an interest among farmers in eliminating predation, applications for loans and subsidies in order to construct jackal-proof fencing increasingly mentioned that the main reason was labour shortage.¹²³

A commission of inquiry was held throughout southern Namibia to investigate the possibility of making jackal-proof fencing mandatory on grounds of predator elimination and labour-shortage relief.¹²⁴ Upon hearing that farmers who had privately jackal-proofed were able to release 30–70 per cent of shepherds, most other karakul farmers within southern Namibia got on board, resulting in the formation of ‘jackal-proof’ districts, where

121 See B.C. Moore, “‘Dogs Were Our Defenders!’ Canines, Carnivores, and Colonialism in Namibia”, *AHA Today* (American Historical Association), 16 June 2017, available at <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/summer-2017/dogs-were-our-defenders-canines-carnivores-and-colonialism-in-namibia>, retrieved 28 September 2020. I discuss shepherding in more detail in my forthcoming thesis, provisionally titled ‘Protecting the Flock: Breeding and Building Apartheid in Southern Namibia, 1915–1990’.

122 NAN SWAA 1071 File A.138/25 (v. 2): *Promotion of Farming Interests Ordinance, 1952*.

123 NAN Argiewe van die Boerderybelangeraad (RBB) 5 File BB.84/53: S.W.J. van der Merwe: Rusticana No. 77 – Rehoboth District. NAN RBB 6 File BB.97/53: D.D. Bassingthwaighe: Uhlenhorst no. 114 (rem.) – Rehoboth district. According to Pfeifer’s investigation for the Karakul Breeders’ Association (KTV), the construction of jackal-proof fencing was a means to alleviate the labour shortages throughout southern Namibia to the extent that farmers would not need to convert to cattle production, as was sometimes occurring in areas with mixed farming potential (such as western Windhoek and eastern Mariental districts), cementing the region as karakul territory. See KBN, Board Meetings, 1952–54: SWA Karakoeltelersvereniging, Jaarverslag, 1952.

124 NAN AP 5/7/8: Verslag van Kommissie van Ondersoek: Wenslikheid van Verpligte Jakkalsproefomheining (1956). J.G.H. van der Wath, *Johannes van der Wath van Suidwes-Afrika: Outobiografie* (Windhoek, Auas Uitgewers, 1983), pp. 131–2.

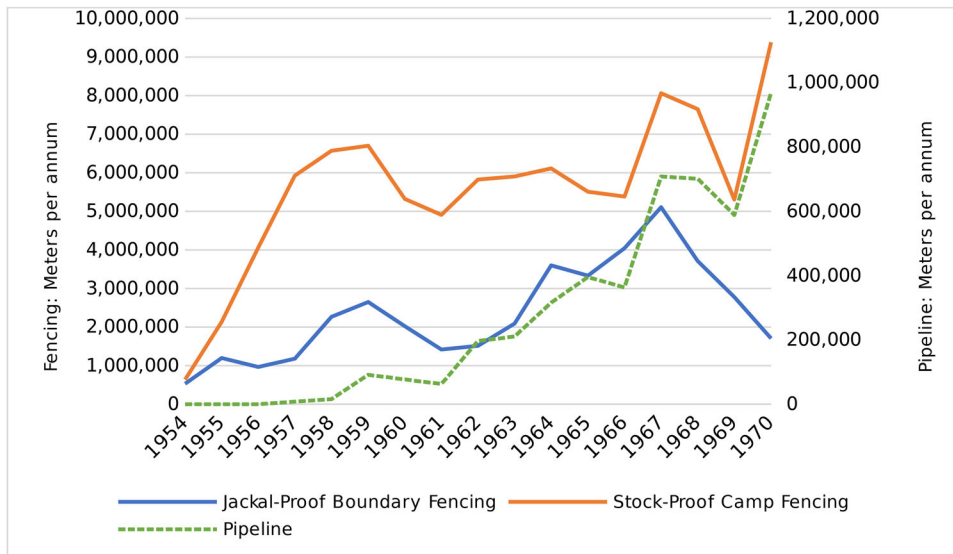


Figure 16. Subsidised fencing and pipeline, 1954–70. (Data from NAN AGR 512–514 File 68/6/1/7 [vols. 1–4]: Jaarverslae van die Grondbewaringsraad: 1954–1970.)

construction and maintenance of the fence was mandatory.¹²⁵ This included all sheep farming districts within the south.¹²⁶ Between 1954 and 1970, over 40,000 kilometres of jackal-proof and 95,000 kilometres of ordinary stock-proof fencing was built throughout the territory at subsidised rates: enough fencing to circumnavigate the Earth three times (see Figure 16).

Upon jackal-proofing farm boundaries, white farmers formed *Distriksjagverenigings* (District Hunting Associations), which laid traps and poisons and conducted hunting operations against jackals and other legally classified ‘vermin’.¹²⁷ After all, fencing doesn’t actually kill jackals: it merely makes extermination easier.¹²⁸ With predator numbers reduced, farmers could then lay off a large portion of the shepherding workforce or convert them into informally recruited day labourers – the latter’s final task was building additional rotational grazing camps and pipeline within the jackal-proofed boundary.¹²⁹ These per diem fence builders [*kampers*] became ‘camp walkers’, following the perimeter of the jackal-proof boundary looking for breaks in the wire or holes dug underneath by aardwolves. Low-

125 NAN AGR 500 File 68/6/1/1/1 (v. 1): Kommissie van Ondersoek: Jakkalsproefomheining, 1956 – all meetings.

126 NAN Argiewe van die Afdeling van Waterwese (WWA) 128 File WW.11/6: Direkteur van Landbou ‘Memorandum: Jakkalsdraad in Beesareas’ (with map) – 4 January 1968.

127 NAN AGR 859 File 110/1 (v1): *Vermin Extermination Ordinance*, 1964.

128 See J. Swanepoel, ‘Habits of the Hunters: The Biopolitics of Combatting Predation among Small-Stock Farmers in Southern Namibia’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 34, 1 (2016), pp. 129–46.

129 NAN PA/0346: W. Knoesen, ‘Fisiese Ontwikkeling van Plase in die Helmeringhausen Omgewing’, in *Helmeringhausen Boerevereniging, 1925–1975* (Windhoek, John Meinert, 1975), pp. 40–42. For more on jackal-proofing and shepherding, see J. Bähr, *Kulturgeographische Wandlungen in der Farmzone Südwestafrikas* (Bonn, Bonner Geographische Abhandlungen, 1968), pp. 73–82; NAN BB/0368: R. Eisler, ‘Der Zaun als Mittel zur Intensivierung der Karakulzucht durch Verbesserung der Einzäunungssysteme in Südwestafrika’ (Diplomarbeit, Universität Hohenheim, 1983), p. 47.



Figure 17. The western-most line of jackal-proof fencing, Lüderitz district, Namib desert D707 road. (Photo: B.C. Moore, 2018.)

pay camp walkers – ex-shepherds who tend fences rather than sheep – became one of the more common forms of farm labour in southern Namibia up to the present day.¹³⁰

‘Unemployment is Now Being Exploited’: Homelands and Economic Change

By the mid 1960s, as jackal-proofing was approaching completion (see Figure 17), the labour shortage was becoming a labour surplus, especially as it related to the Angolan workers. As early as 1959, this was becoming clear, as 1,202 ET&N workers who arrived at recruiting stations hoping to be re-engaged by previous employers found that they were no longer needed. SWANLA officials concluded that the agricultural labour shortage had eased.¹³¹ Ironically, the farmers’ and officials’ fears never came true; even though larger numbers of Angolans were indeed taking up waged labour within Angola itself, this did not stop the flow of Angolan recruits offering themselves at Rundu and Ondangwa. When the anti-colonial war in Angola erupted in 1961, one SWANLA recruiter reported that ‘[q]uite a number of recruits from this area [Angola] have mentioned that they have come down to work to escape doing military service in the north of Angola’.¹³² While some of these

130 See R.J. Gordon, J. Swanepoel and B.C. Moore, ‘Complicating Histories of Carnivores in Namibia: Past to Present’, *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 24 (2018), pp. 131–46. In other contexts, see F. Lilja, *The Golden Fleece of the Cape: Capitalist Expansion and Labour Relations in the Periphery of Transnational Wool Production, c. 1860–1950* (Uppsala, Studia Historica Upsaliensia, 2013), pp. 141, 153.

131 NAN BAC 88 File HN.3/16/2/1: SWANLA Annual Report for Year Ending 30 June 1959.

132 NAN BAC 88 File HN.3/16/2/1: SWANLA Annual Report for Year Ending 30 June 1961. Black Angolans were regularly conscripted into the Portuguese colonial forces during the liberation war. See S.L. Weigert, *Angola: A Modern Military History, 1961–2002* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 46–51.

Angolan workers were redirected into mining and secondary industry jobs in Namibia and South Africa, decreased labour demands alongside increasing violence within Angola itself led to large numbers of unemployed Angolans gathering near recruitment depots in Ondangwa, reaching more than 3,000 by 1971.¹³³ With the independence of Angola in 1975, local magistrates were permitted to approve extensions to Angolan labour contracts without requiring the worker to return to Ondangwa or Rundu, but renewal was becoming far rarer for farm labour in the south as the demand for shepherds was reduced.¹³⁴ The growing number of Angolans avoiding military service who crossed the border seeking increasingly scarce work opportunities or who completed a contract which would not be renewed often became prey to military recruiters from the South African Defence Force and its local territorial entities, the South West Africa Territorial Force and Koevoet.¹³⁵

As it relates to non-migrant, local labour on karakul farms – especially the Nama – we must understand these economic and labour transformations in the context of the development of apartheid homeland structures in Namibia.¹³⁶ Inspired by South Africa's 1954 Tomlinson Report – which laid much of the groundwork for South Africa's homeland system – Pretoria initiated in September 1962 the Commission of Enquiry into South West African affairs (the Odendaal Commission) in order to outline procedures for 'accelerated development of the various non-white groups' in Namibia.¹³⁷ Like the Tomlinson Commission before it, the Odendaal Commission held from the start that the most effective way to implement developmental schemes, broadly defined, was through separate development in the form of ethnic homelands.¹³⁸

In the light of increasing political conflict within the UN over the question of Namibia, the Odendaal Commission was also partially intended as a response to decolonisation pressures across the African continent.¹³⁹ However, the Odendaal Commission's plan for Namibia – namely the creation of ten homelands – was ultimately a political response to deeper socio-economic challenges.¹⁴⁰ Its report (published in 1964) proposed the purchase of 165, 229, 22 and 118 white-owned farms (or hired government lands) to connect disparate existing 'native reserves' into amalgamated Police Zone homelands of Namaland,

133 NAN Argiewe van die Afdeling van Natuurbewaring (NTB) 2/111 File N.22/2/1 (vol. 3): Departement van Bantoe-Administrasie en -Ontwikkeling 'Owambo: Verslag en Aanbevelings van die Beplanningskomitee' – 1971.

134 NAN LMA 3/3/3 File N.3/11/2: Hoofbantoesakekommissaris, Windhoek to Magistraat, Maltahöhe 'Verdere Indienshouding van Angolese Werkers' – 17 November 1975.

135 L. Bolliger, 'Apartheid's African Soldiers: A History of Black Namibian and Angolan Members of South Africa's Former Security Forces, 1975 to the Present' (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2019), p. 146.

136 Unfortunately, the history of Namibia's homelands is woefully neglected in the historiography of apartheid. I engage in a more sustained discussion in my forthcoming PhD dissertation, 'Protecting the Flock'.

137 NASA TES 5808 File 33/841: Sekretaris van die Eerste Minister, Pretoria to Sekretaris van die Tesourie, Pretoria 'Kommissie van Onderzoek na Aangeleenthede van Suidwes-Afrika' – 22 September 1962. On the intellectual heritage of the Odendaal Commission, see M. McCullers, 'Lines in the Sand: The Global Politics of Local Development in Apartheid-era Namibia, 1950–1980', (PhD thesis, Emory University, 2012), pp. 128–65.

138 NAN AP 4/1/13: Report of the Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs, 1962–1963 (1964), pp. 59, 81 [hereafter cited as *Odendaal Report*].

139 J.W. de Villiers, 'Die Lewe van F.H. Odendaal, 1898–1966', (PhD thesis, UNISA, 1992), pp. 296–9. Indeed, South Africanists are increasingly analysing the homeland project within the context of African decolonisation. L. Evans, 'South African Bantustans and the Dynamics of "Decolonisation": Reflections on Writing Histories of Homelands', *South African Historical Journal*, 64, 1 (2012), pp. 117–37. C. Marx, 'Verwoerdian Apartheid and African Political Elites in South Africa, 1950–1968', in J. Dülffer and M. Frey (eds), *Elites and Decolonisation in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 138–56.

140 See, C. Botha, 'Constraints on the Development of Liberal Ideas and Practices in Colonial Namibia', *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 13 (2013), pp. 7–31.

Damaraland, Tswanaland and Hereroland, respectively.¹⁴¹ Those homelands proposed for outside of the Police Zone simply maintained nearly the same reserve boundaries as in the pre-apartheid period. The plan for the homelands envisaged a gradual progression to political independence [*politieke onafhanklikheid*] while maintaining a strict economic dependence [*ekonomiese afhanklikheid*] upon the white capitalist sector, where industry, mines and commercial farms would be located.¹⁴²

While the Tomlinson Report advocated a system of ‘border industries’ within the homelands and/or along the boundary with white areas – intended to absorb and capture some of the labour which was removed to the homelands from urban areas and farm tenancy arrangements¹⁴³ – this was much more muted within the Odendaal Report. Border industries and large-scale agricultural development schemes were seriously attempted only in the politically significant northern homelands of Owambo and Kavango. While the improvement of water, educational and health facilities were emphasised by Odendaal’s implementers across the board – including certain targeted interventions to create an elite agricultural class within the homelands – the primary economic role of most of Namibia’s Police Zone homelands functioned much closer to Legassick and Wolpe’s understanding of homelands as reservoirs of a surplus population which would not necessarily be immediately or easily absorbed by urban industries, mining or manufacturing.¹⁴⁴

It is no coincidence that the decreasing demand for full-time agricultural labour on sheep farms coincided with the rise of Namibia’s homeland system. Indeed, many residents of Namaland fenced out of shepherding work on karakul farms became a rural precariat in southern Namibia’s homeland. While gathering testimonies to inform their proposals, the members of the Odendaal Commission recognised the decreasing need for farm labourers in southern Namibia, as statements from white farmers emphasised the role of jackal-proof fencing in transforming farm labour relations.¹⁴⁵ While most farmers still desired a local supply of Nama nearby to engage in short-term circular migration between the reserves or homeland and white farms for specific tasks such as shearing, camp construction/maintenance, and slaughtering lambs, they recognised that the days of contract migrant labourers from Ovamboland and Angola were numbered.¹⁴⁶

In Namaland, despite the state’s purchase of 163 white-owned farms in Mariental, Keetmanshoop and Bethanie districts, Nama farmers still faced overcrowding, as the large Nama population resident on farms was not accounted for in planning the homeland.¹⁴⁷ Conflict arose over which captaincy would gain access to so-called ‘Odendaal Farms’, as the expansion of the homeland was partially conceived to accommodate for the fact that several Nama captaincies (particularly the Bondelswarts, Topnaar and Neuhoof groups) were to be evicted from their communal lands and removed to Namaland.¹⁴⁸ By the 1970s, the flow of Nama from vermin-free white farms, evicted explicitly because a jackal-proofed farm needs

141 NAN SWAS 439 File AS.65/5/1: Reservation of State Lands for Natives Amendment Ordinance, 1974.

142 *Odendaal Report*, p. 107.

143 Wits Historical Papers Research Archive (WHPRA), Digital Collection ref. ZA-HPRA-A1906: Summary of the Report for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bantu Areas within the Union of South Africa (Pretoria, Government Printer, 1955), pp. 143–4, 180–83.

144 M. Legassick and H. Wolpe, ‘The Bantustans and Capital Accumulation in South Africa’, *Review of African Political Economy*, 3, 7 (1976), pp. 87–107.

145 NASA KC SWA 72/35: Odendaal Commission: Minutes of Public Hearings – Karasburg: Testimony of J.A. van Wyk (Karasburg Boerevereniging) – 19 March 1963.

146 NASA KC SWA 72/35: Odendaal Commission: Minutes of Public Hearings – Karasburg: Testimony of J. van der Merwe (Afrikaanse Sakekamer van SWA) – 19 March 1963.

147 NAN BB/0537: Departement van Kleurlingbetrekkinge en Rehoboth-aangeleenthede (KbRa), ‘Landboukundige Beplanningsverslag: Krantzplatz’ – September 1971.

148 For a brief engagement with this conflict, see R. Kössler, *In Search of Survival and Dignity: Two Traditional Communities in Southern Namibia under South African Rule* (Windhoek, Gamsberg Macmillan, 2005), pp. 86–105.

fewer shepherds, transformed Namaland into a homeland of the underemployed and the precarious: surplus people.¹⁴⁹

Only about 31 per cent of ethnic Namas within Namibia were able to maintain themselves as stable permanent residents within Namaland, which was envisaged to hold the majority; most of these were dependent on subsistence sheep farming and/or government pensions for the elderly.¹⁵⁰ For the remaining 69 per cent – particularly those who could not access urban work – underemployment became the norm. With few opportunities for full-time farm labour or tenancy, and facing influx control restrictions preventing most from easily working in nearby urban areas of Keetmanshoop, Mariental and Bethanie, many Nama men found themselves trapped in a cycle of piece-rate shearing and per diem camp walking.¹⁵¹

For several decades, shearing was often a desirable option for subsistence farmers within the Nama reserves to earn some supplementary cash income, adding up to approximately two months of waged labour per year; this was a common arrangement throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and the piece rate levels were negotiated between regional farmers' associations and reserve superintendents.¹⁵² From the early 1970s, however, a combination of decreased agricultural labour demands, urban influx control legislation and overcrowding and overgrazing within Namaland itself transformed shearing from a supplementary activity to one of the few opportunities available to Nama men. Wages from shearing moved from supplement to necessity, and shearing work represented a large proportion of formal engagement that Nama men had with the homeland labour bureaux, as legislation mandated a specific piece rate per hundred sheep shorn (see Figure 18).¹⁵³ For those Nama who obtained formal, contracted wage labour on (white) commercial sheep farms performing camp walking, shepherding or general farm work (*algemene plaaswerk*), the contracts became shorter – averaging 2–6 months – or else the remuneration was rearranged into a piece rate manner, such as metres of camp fencing constructed. Under the labour bureaux regulations, rations were no longer a requirement for employers, further diminishing the Nama's already meagre wages.¹⁵⁴

However, the majority of Namaland residents' engagement with the waged labour economy came through informal, ad hoc arrangements away from the bureaucratic labour bureaux. White farmers would drive to Nama villages and homesteads, request a number of workers for a specific task and load the vehicle with men, as un(der)employment meant that the farmer was likely to find workers. Upon arriving at the farm or work site, the salary was often reduced; those who complained were simply instructed to walk back to Namaland. The Nama Representative Authority – the non-self-governing homeland legislative entity – recognised this system and criticised the SWA Administration for allowing its continuation. Its chairman, Cornelius Cloete, reflected in 1982 that the dying out of the formal contract,

149 NAN Archives of the Department of Coloured, Rehoboth, and Nama Relations (CRN) 104 File 26/2/1/3 (vol. 1): Streekverteenwoordiger, KbRa to Sekretaris, KbRa 'Oortreders in die Ou Bondelsreservaat' – 23 March 1973.

150 NAN Argiewe van die Kantoer van die Administrateur-Generaal (AGA) File AG.18/1 (vol. 12): Eerste Nasionale Ontwikkelingskorporasie van SWA, 'n Streekstudie van Namaland en Aangrensende Gebiede' – November 1979.

151 NAN Argiewe van die Administrasie vir Namas (ANA) 64 File 7/15/2/1: Notule van die Stamvergadering te Berseba – 8 March 1973.

152 See, as a start, NASA KC SWA 72/35: Odendaal Commission: Minutes of Public Hearings – Karasburg: Testimony of Johannes Frederick (Bondelswarte Raadslid for Warmbad) – 18 March 1963. NAN BAC 80 File HN.3/11/2: Landdros Karasburg to Hoofbantoesakekommissaris, Windhoek 'Organisasie van Skeerspanne: Bondels en Warmbad Reserve' – 1 August 1963. NAN CRN 106 File 32/2: Bethanie Distrik Landbou-Unie, 'Skeerreglement' – 1 July 1969.

153 As an example, NAN ANA 65 File 7/15/3: Bylaag: Miscellaneous Labour Bureaux contracts between Kwagga Boerevereniging and Nama shearers, 1978.

154 NAN ANA 65 File 7/15/3 (vol. 2): Miscellaneous camp-building contracts, Bethanie district, 1978–79.



Figure 18. Throughout the 1940s–1960s, Erwin Serrer, owner of Maguams farm (Maltahöhe district), had the largest flock (623) of registered pure-bred karakul ewes in Namibia – apart from government and corporate farms. Maguams was also one of the most capitalised farms in the region; it was among the first to install labour-saving electric shearing machines. (See KBN: Board Meetings, 1957–60: Karakoeltelersvereniging van SWA, ‘Aantal van Geregistreerde Volbloedooie op Grond van die Bestandopgawe by die KTV’, – 1 October 1959.) (Photo: BAB PA.138 Photo 078_005: Maguams, 1963.)

whether for migrants or the local Nama employment bureaux, recreated a rural paternalism characterised by per diem employment on an ad hoc basis. He noted, ‘[t]he employers are making misuse of this very high offer of labour. If one man goes [to recruit workers], then twelve people come there, possibly fifty people apply for that post and then misuse is made of it. Unemployment is now being exploited’.¹⁵⁵

Conclusion: Labour Transformations and Capital Accumulation

Anthropologist Claude Meillassoux has shown that waged labour in the formal ‘double free’ sense is only one manner whereby workers are exploited by capital. There need not be a teleological pathway inevitably ending in a formalised, stable, wage-labour working class.¹⁵⁶ Meillassoux and others offered a Marxist understanding of capitalist encapsulation and entrenchment without overemphasising Marx’s theory of primitive accumulation: ‘the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production’.¹⁵⁷ While most

155 NAN AP 20/1/1 (v. 2): *Fourth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Nama Representative Authority*, Keetmanshoop (23–30 March 1982), p. 144.

156 C. Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal, and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981 [1975]), pp. 100–102, 133–42.

157 Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 874–5.

Marxian theorists have long forsaken any understandings of primitive accumulation as a singular historical event – rather, a process repeatable throughout the history of capitalism – few have radically changed our understanding of its operation or the assumption that classic proletarians are an inevitable outcome.¹⁵⁸ Those who proposed the ‘articulation of modes of production’ were not just arguing for a longer *durée* process of proletarianisation, they were questioning whether or not full proletarianisation is possible, necessary or even desired by capital. Surplus extraction need not depend upon full dispossession and proletarianisation. While global labour history has abandoned Meillassoux’s structuralist language, these foci form a central aspect of its research agenda. If ‘part-time proletarians’ are universally cheaper – because capitalists consider wages as a ‘supplement’ to subsistence production in the sending areas¹⁵⁹ – we must historically investigate the local, regional and global pressures that give rise both to ‘partial proletarianisation’ and its ‘full-time’ counterpart.¹⁶⁰ In southern African studies, long-term migrant contract labour – such as from Angola, Malawi or distant homelands – has been viewed as ‘articulation’ par excellence, as workers can be paid as bachelors, transferring social costs and social reproduction to the sending area.¹⁶¹ We must also consider non-migrant forms of labour through the same lens, as ad hoc recruitment within Namaland functioned in a similar fashion.

Labour relations in Namibia’s karakul industry were shaped by global, regional and local pressures. Lambskin pelt production was a cash crop bred by white settler farmers for overseas exports, dependent on the purchasing power and fickle fashion tastes of European middle-class women. Namibia’s karakul industry was further shaped by intercolonial co-operation and conflict in a southern African labour zone. Migrant labour – from Ovamboland, Kavango or Angola – was a means to combat the disdain that local Nama workers within southern Namibia exhibited at the working conditions and pay on sheep farms. In the early years of karakul, white farmers did not yet hold full control over the labour power of local African communities, so they sought relief in formal labour contracts and the employment of a migrant worker who could not easily desert service.

Labour relations in Namibia’s karakul industry were also shaped by ecological forces specific to southern Namibia, namely the omnipresence of the black-backed jackal. As shepherding was about both herd mobility and vermin control, management of vermin through subsidised infrastructural investment in jackal-proof boundary fencing and internal camp fencing proved to be the trump card that white farmers needed. A shepherd-intensive industry became nearly a shepherdless one, allowing white farmers the leverage to reinvigorate local informal labour hire. The entrenchment of apartheid governance structures further aided white farmers’ ability to evict remaining tenant populations to the homelands yet still tap into these communities for ad hoc recruitment.

Exploring the interconnected, entangled labour and agricultural histories of Namibia and Angola allows us to contextualise both the contingencies of labour history and deep structural trends. While the issue of Angolan migrant workers has been briefly addressed in previous works by historians of Namibia, most of these have been of a cursory nature, especially as the chronology moves toward the mid 20th century.¹⁶² Furthermore, few

158 See D. Harvey, *The Limits to Capital* (London, Verso, 1999 [1982]), pp. 436–9; see also J.W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (New York, Verso, 2015), p. 98.

159 E. Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London, New Left Books, 1975 [1972]), pp. 181–2.

160 M. van der Linden, *Transnational Labour History: Explorations* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2003), p. 201.

161 H. Wolpe, ‘Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid’, *Economy and Society*, 1, 4 (1972), pp. 425–56. J. McCulloch, *South Africa’s Gold Mines and the Politics of Silicosis* (Oxford, James Currey, 2012).

162 Kreike, *Re-Creating Eden*, pp. 82–4, 90–93. P. Hayes, ‘A History of the Ovambo of Namibia c.1880–1935’, (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1992), p. 333. T. Emmett, *Popular Resistance and the Roots of Nationalism in Namibia, 1915–1966* (Basel, P. Schlettwein, 1999), pp. 171–95.

studies adequately place these regional migrant labour flows in engagement with local, non-migrant forms. This article has shown that the same structural transformations in rural capitalist development conditioned both streams simultaneously.

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