

100 years since the end of German colonial rule in Namibia, the relationship between the former colonial power and the Namibian communities who were affected by its brutal colonial policies remains problematic, and interpretations of the past are still contested.

This book examines the ongoing debates, conflicts and confrontations over the past. It scrutinises the consequences of German colonial rule, its impact on the descendants of victims of the 1904–08 genocide, Germany's historical responsibility, and ways in which post-colonial reconciliation might be achieved.

REINHART KÖSSLER is currently Director of the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute and Professor in the Politics Department of the University of Freiburg, Germany. His research includes social and development theory, political sociology and memory politics.

NAMIBIA AND GERMANY NEGOTIATING THE PAST

REINHART KÖSSLER

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‘Even in brutality the inherited dress is sacred.
The love and honour given to it
A safe haven for humanity, not a lion’s den.’

Jacqueline Tjozongoro

Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe
Leidenschaft nicht noch Verstand,
daß ein gutes Deutschland blühe
wie ein andres gutes Land;

daß die Völker nicht erleichen
wie vor einer Räuberin,
sondern uns die Hände reichen
so wie andern Völkern hin.

Bertolt Brecht

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Abbreviations

AAB	Anti-Apartheid-Bewegung (West German Anti-Apartheid Movement)
AACRLS	Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and Liberation Struggle
AGDS	Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Schulvereine (Working Group of German School Societies [in Namibia])
ATCA	Alien Tort Claims Act (U.S.A.)
AU	African Union
AZ	<i>Allgemeine Zeitung</i> , Windhoek (German Namibian Newspaper)
CDU/CSU	Christlich-Demokratische Union/Christlich-Soziale Union (Conservative party in Germany)
DED	Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst (German development volunteer service)
DELK	Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche (German Evangelical Lutheran Church, in Namibia)
DIAP	Deutsche Internationale Abiturprüfung
DTA	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance
EKD	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (German Protestant Church Federation)
ELCRN	Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia
FAZ	<i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</i>
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei (Liberal Party in Germany)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
GSWA	German South West Africa
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (now merged with other bodies into Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ)
HDI	Human Development Index
HPRC	Herero People Reparations Corporation
JSAS	Journal of Southern African Studies
MAKSA	Mainzer Arbeitskreis Südliches Afrika (Mainz Working Group on Southern Africa)
MdB	Mitglied des Bundestags (Member of the <i>Bundestag</i>)
<i>NamS</i>	<i>Namibian Sun</i> , Windhoek (Namibian newspaper in English)
NAN	National Archives of Namibia
NBC	Namibian Broadcasting Corporation
NGO	non-governmental organisation
<i>NE</i>	<i>New Era</i> , Windhoek (Namibian newspaper primarily in English)
NGSIP	Namibian German Special Initiative Programme

NGTC	Nama Genocide Technical Committee
NHDR	Namibia Human Development Report
NP	National Party (South Africa)
NPC	National Planning Commission
NPCC-04	National Preparatory Committee for the Commemoration 2004
NTLA	Nama Traditional Leadership Association
NUDO	National Unity Democratic Organisation
OCCTC	Okakarara Community Cultural and Tourism Centre
OCD-1904	Ovaherero/Ovambanderu Council for the Dialogue on the 1904 Genocide
OGC	Ovaherero Genocide Committee
ODA	Overseas Development Aid
OOGF	Ovaherero Ovambanderu Genocide Foundation
PDS	Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (Party of Democratic Socialism)
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia
POW	Prisoners of War
<i>Rep</i>	<i>Republikein</i> Windhoek (Namibian newspaper primarily in Afrikaans)
RMG	Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft (Rhenish Missionary Society)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands; Social Democratic Party of Germany
SS	Schutzstaffel (Nazi terror organisation and special army)
SWANU	South West African National Union
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation; since 1990, SWAPO Party of Namibia
<i>SZ</i>	<i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i> , Munich
<i>taz</i>	<i>die tageszeitung</i> , Berlin
<i>TN</i>	<i>The Namibian</i> , Windhoek (Namibian newspaper primarily in English)
TSÜ	Traditionsverband ehemaliger Schutz- und Überseetruppen/Freunde der früheren deutschen Schutzgebiete (Association for the Tradition of Former Protection and Overseas Troops – Friends of the Former German Protectorates)
UNAM	University of Namibia
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola
UNTAG	United Nations Transition Assistance Group
U.S.A.	United States of America
VEM/RMG	Vereinigte Evangelische Mission/Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft (United in Mission/Rhenish Missionary Society), refers here to the archives holdings.
<i>WO</i>	<i>Windhoek Observer</i> , Windhoek (Namibian newspaper primarily in English)
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union (today: ZANU-PF)

Preface and Acknowledgements

TO THE VISITOR WHO ARRIVES WITH AN INTEREST IN PEOPLE, RATHER THAN IN VACATIONING, landscapes and animals, Namibia is a fascinating country. While investigating practices and backgrounds of Nama traditional communities in southern Namibia during the 1990s, I inevitably became aware of annual commemorations observed by people there, as well as the similar practices of Ovaherero communities in the centre of the country. Within the context of my earlier 1990s research project, I made my first forays towards a better understanding of Heroes Day (*Witbooi fees*) in Gibeon, which I observed in 1995. I had the privilege of extended discussions on the subject with the late *Kaptein* Hendrik Witbooi, who was extremely forthcoming with help in all my relevant endeavours, in which he took a very keen interest.

The idea of a special research project to reach a better and also comparative understanding of these events and commemorative practices was conceived readily. However, putting this project into practice turned out to be far more difficult and long-term. Meanwhile, the arrival of 2004, the centennial year of the onset of genocide in what was then German South West Africa, alerted me that I was into something much more serious and difficult than merely observing, assembling and analysing people's memorial practices. Given the pervasive reference of the commemorations to the genocide perpetrated by the *Schutztruppe* from 1904 onwards, I was compelled to do some hard thinking (and more) on account of the obvious question people eventually did pose in various ways: 'And what are you (personally) doing on your side of this equation?' In this way, I was led to widen my perspective considerably. My project became concerned with the postcolonial and transnational constellation between Namibia and Germany, with the issue of genocide, appropriate apology and reparations at its centre.

During 2004, I became involved in some commemorative activities in the very special ways my life situation circumscribed. These included staging a photo exhibition on the genocide in cooperation with the Director of the Kyoto Museum of World Peace, Ikuro Anzai, whom I had the good fortune to meet during my stay at Ritsumeikan University, Japan, in late 2003 and early 2004. The whole venture would not have been possible without the generous help of my friend Toshiko Himeoka, then at Ritsumeikan College of International

Relations. By staging this exhibition, based on the admirable collection of pictures supplied by Joachim Zeller, it was possible to mark the beginning of the Herero–German War and convey something of this history to an audience otherwise quite unaware of issues pertaining to southern Africa. For me personally, this also became a launching pad for further activities. Later in the year, I was able to stage a German version of this exhibition jointly with my activist friend, Dagmar Wolf, in the socio-cultural centre ‘Bahnhof Langendreer’ in Bochum, where I lived at the time. At the same time, I started to map out the conceptual issues of the project, and I acknowledge in particular valuable advice by Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka.

In Namibia, I observed the central commemoration at Ohamakari on August 14, 2004, and met a number of people who were to figure in the project that was still evolving and finally resulted in the present book. I would like to mention especially the late Luther Zaire, Rudolf Hongoze, and Usiel Kandji. Besides this, interest in Germany in the country’s colonial past increased to some degree around 2004 and resulted in requests for conference appearances and publications that prompted me to delve more deeply into the subject.

A decisive turn came when André du Pisani, then at the Department of Public Administration and Political Science at UNAM, suggested I collaborate in a research-cum-capacity building project under the auspices of the ‘Knowledge for Tomorrow’ Funding Initiative of the Volkswagen Foundation. Eventually, this initiative coalesced into the project ‘Reconciliation and social conflict in the aftermath of large-scale violence in Southern Africa: the cases of Angola and Namibia’ which commenced in late 2006, under the auspices of the Arnold Bergstraesser-Institut, Freiburg i.B. and under the leadership of Heribert Weiland. The Volkswagen Foundation not only funded this project and thereby also my personal research but is particularly to be commended for this wonderful capacity building effort which, in various ways, directly bore fruit in this book.

Coordinating the scholarly side of this project proved to be an extremely enriching experience in itself. The project at last afforded me the chance to pursue my long standing research project much more vigorously and consistently than had been possible up to that point, on a more or less private basis. Moreover, cooperation especially with colleagues in the Namibia group of the project – Memory Biwa, Pam Claassen, André du Pisani, Phaniel Kaapama, the late Bill Lindeke, Napandulwe Shiweda and Volker Winterfeldt – meant a genuine boost for my own project. In particular when Memory Biwa joined our overarching ‘Reconciliation and Social Conflict . . .’ project, my own research took a new turn. Her oral history research on the Nama–German War had obvious overlap with my concerns, and she soon also turned to memory practices. Given her much superior advantage in terms of language skills and access to informants, I then focused more on comparative issues and in particular on Namibian–German relations, where over the time period discussed in the third part of this book, transnational memory politics took on particular importance.

The project brought me also to the Arnold Bergstraesser-Institut, which has since become my academic home base. The Freiburg environment turned out to be conducive in other respects. I would like in particular to mention the close cooperation that developed with Heiko Wegmann around his admirable activism focusing on postcolonial concerns, and

later, particularly in connection with his never tiring, determined search for leads in tracking down collections of human remains in Germany. He pursues, with the same determination, the repatriation of cultural goods, all with a local focus on Freiburg. This work coalesced with my own activities when I became part of the German-Swiss Committee of the Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and Liberation Struggle project. Although we could not achieve all that was and remains necessary in this field, this work generated much insight that has been incorporated into this book, and thanks are due to Helmut Bley, Dag Henrichsen, Gesine Krüger and Hans-Georg Schleicher.

The end result would have been unthinkable without the help and support of Namibian activists and friends. The list cannot be exhaustive, and I shall mention only a few. The steadfastness and acumen of Hon. Ida Hoffmann I have come to admire deeply in the course of numerous talks and consultations, as well as joint endeavours that took us across southern Namibia and also around Germany. Many encounters with Utjua Ester Muinjuangue and Festus Muundjua have been valuable in gaining information and understanding, but also in providing very enjoyable company. Ueriuka Festus Tjikua helped on various occasions by offering opinions and assessment and filling in gaps. Johanna Kahatjipara shared her knowledge of oral history and Ovaherero custom. Among these, I also found personal friends. Even more longstanding Gibeonite friends include Pauline Dempers and Hans Pieters, and very specially Talita #Ui!nuses and Tamen Uinuseb, who made me ‘family’ when I was in Namibia.

Over the years I pursued this project, and in collaboration on the overarching Volkswagen project, André du Pisani has become a treasured friend. Countless discussions with him have helped me to grapple with a number of issues addressed in this book. Whenever there was need, Werner Hillebrecht proved not only a long-standing friend, but also, in spite of his heavy duties as Chief Archivist at the National Archives of Namibia, a forthcoming and fruitful support whenever I approached him. Dag Henrichsen helped in many ways through the library of the Basler Afrika Bibliographien, as well as with discussion and reading of draft chapters. Larissa Förster, whose research interests have intersected with mine over the past decade, has been a stimulating partner in discussion and also read draft chapters. On several occasions, Cristiana Fiamingo enriched my stays at TUCSIN Guest House in Windhoek, debating memory related issues, including German and Italian deficiencies in coming to terms with each country’s colonial past, and joining me on field trips, as did Memory Biwa and Michael Akuupa. Heike Becker was a constant partner in discussion and the exchange of papers – not to forget our productive visit to Heroes’ Acre on Heritage Day 2008; she also hosted me in Cape Town and at the University of the Western Cape. Robert Gordon and Rinda Gordon hosted me in Burlington, Vermont and Bloemfontein, South Africa, provided debate and new insights, and feedback on chapters. Justine Hunter has been an important discussion partner for a long time, and she read chapters and contributed from her in-depth and critical understanding of Namibian memory politics. Anti-Apartheid veterans Markus Braun and the late Ilse Braun encouraged me in some joint action and provoked further thought and probing by their insistence on long-term complicity, in particular on the side of

German Protestantism. Henning Melber, my long term friend and frequent co-author, has been involved in a number of ways in the elaboration of the argument and also read draft chapters. Other debts of gratitude are acknowledged at appropriate places in the footnotes.

Long hauls in intellectual endeavour always are in need of and profit from exchanges with outsiders, and this project has been favoured with many opportunities to present and debate results, too many to present in detail here. Over the years since 2001, my research has been refined and enriched by 42 lectures, conferences and workshops in various formats, mainly academic but some with an activist bent. These were held by institutions in Germany, Namibia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States of America, Japan, Turkey, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway. I am grateful to all the organisers for their interest and for affording me opportunities to discuss ideas and results, as well as arguments in the making in such a large array of settings. The same appreciation extends to the students who attended a number of courses on aspects of the subject matter of this book which I taught at the Institute of Sociology, Münster University, at the Political Science Department of Freiburg University and at the History Department of the University of Zürich.

The refining, complementing, elaborating and revising of a pile of published articles into a hopefully readable book has been helped by a number of people. I would like to mention the initial interest and encouragement of the Publisher of UNAM Press, Jane Katjavivi, who also saw the book through a double blind review process and contributed in the final stages well beyond the normal duties of a publisher. Thanks are also due to two anonymous referees. In the vital copy-editing stage, Tara Elyssa was a strict, but sensitive editor who straightened out not only my linguistic pitfalls, but also the many cases where I had taken things for granted that needed specification and explanation. Her determination and steadfastness under most difficult personal circumstances I appreciate deeply. Jill Kinahan took charge of the project at UNAM Press and contributed decisively to the refinement of the text, as well as attending to a host of issues that are involved in the process of finishing a book. John Kinahan compiled maps 1, 2 and 3 using ArcGIS. Together with her colleague Naitzikile Iizyenda, Jill also helped in assembling the pictures for the book, as did a number of my colleagues mentioned above.

Books generally also involve family. In this case, the involvement is more specific than usual. During work on this project, I received particular encouragement in stimulating discussions as well as feedback on relevant chapters from my brother Gottfried Kössler, who has worked for many years at the Fritz Bauer Institut, the German centre of Holocaust studies in Frankfurt-on-Maine. On a little reflection, we found that this intersection of concerns and the resulting synergies did not come by accident. Our mother Doris Kössler, née Ewald, was, as a secondary school teacher, an early pioneer in teaching history and political studies with intense reference to the Nazi past, at a time when in many quarters this past was still shrouded in silence. In her teaching, as well as in communication with her three sons, she did not leave out her own adolescent entanglement in Nazism. In this way, our late mother has always been a role model of how to confront Germany's dire past in an honest and truthful way. For such reasons, this book owes a lot to her. As always,

my partner Ilse Lenz has, besides enduring my absences while involved in researching in Namibia and in commuting to Freiburg, supported and encouraged me in this project from the beginning and consistently strengthened my resolve whenever necessary. She also has contributed her unmistakably critical gaze on what I have been doing and writing in bringing this book into being.

All these thanks cannot be exhaustive, and they cannot and should not devolve responsibility for any faults and shortcomings that remain – and remain my sole responsibility, as do the translations from languages other than English.

BERLIN & FREIBURG, MARCH 21, 2015



MAP 1 Map of Namibia showing places, regions, historical and geographic features.

Introduction: A Special Postcolonial and Transnational Relationship

EVER SINCE NAMIBIA ATTAINED INDEPENDENCE IN 1990, HER RELATIONS WITH GERMANY have been marked by intensity, close cooperation and heated debate. The latter revolves largely around the 30 year period from 1884 up to 1915, when today's Namibia was known as the colony of German South West Africa. For the last decade, an asymmetrical debate on colonial mass crime has been a prominent feature of memory politics. In this debate, the first genocide of the 20th Century, committed by German colonial troops during the Namibian War of 1903–08¹, forms the central axis.

The debate about the genocide and the consequences of German colonialism is asymmetrical in various ways. First, it relates to the colonial relationship of violence and domination and to a racist ideology that denied acknowledgement of true humanness to the colonised – an ideological prerequisite for denying them the right to exist and for pursuing exterminatory measures against them. Asymmetry also prevails in the underlying power relations in the present. The means available to the descendants of the genocide victims to give voice to their cause are seriously inferior to the possibilities open to the German Government simply to ignore the victims or deal superficially with their demands. Namibia musters much less attention within the German public sphere than issues relating to Germany receive in the Namibian media. The issue is confounded further by the presence of a small, but economically powerful and vociferous community of German speakers in Namibia.

1 This term refers to the complex process of interrelated wars of anti-colonial resistance during that period, waged notably by Ovaherero and Nama (see Wallace 2011: 155, 353). The time period indicates the beginning of the war, with the killing of Bondelswarts *Kaptein* Abraham Christiaan in Warmbad on October 25, 1903 by the resident German officer, Lieutenant Jobst, and the end of the war with the closing of the concentration camps on May 28, 1908. There is an obvious divergence with the onset of genocidal action on the part of the German *Schutztruppe*, which coincides with the aftermath of the battle at Ohamakari (Waterberg) on August 11, 1904. The adopted terminology notwithstanding, main components of the Namibian War are referred to subsequently also as 'Herero–German war' and 'Nama–German war'. Older literature quoted in the text refers to these wars as 'risings'.

Thus, not only Namibia's past as a German colony is evoked here but also its present status, which remains marked by deep traces of settler colonialism. This particularly intrusive form of colonial rule was effectively imposed during the course and as a consequence of the Namibian War.

Those who argue that after more than a century too much time has passed to seriously address issues connected with the colonial past must be reminded that at the centennial of World War I, one rarely heard claims that relevant debates were dated or anachronistic. Rather, particularly in Germany, debate raged about ostensibly re-opening the case concerning the specific responsibility of Emperor William II's government for this centennial catastrophe. It is not much of a surprise, then, that over a century after the Namibian genocide, and a hundred years after the close of German rule in Namibia in 1915, these historical events remain of great importance to many Namibians. Such relevance stems both from material circumstances and from persistent trauma transmitted through the generations.²

As will be argued at some length in this book, for Germany as well as for German citizens, the current relevance of the consequences of German colonial rule and of the atrocities committed historically in Namibia implies a responsibility which remains insufficiently attended to and as yet unresolved. At the same time, lack of public awareness in Germany, and related insolence and complacency on the part of official German politics, does not change the need for addressing these issues. Much of this book, therefore, will address the debate on ways closure might be achieved and also will explore the reasons why, so far, it remains forestalled.

The debate about the Namibian–German past covers a considerable range of aspects. The most important and pressing of these concerns postcolonial reconciliation. In Namibia in particular, the latter term involves a worn out rhetoric, where quite frequently claims against another group are couched in terms that have become enshrined by the process of transition to independence in 1989–90. In the following chapters, I argue and exemplify that such reconciliation – at least in the particular postcolonial setting – is predicated on reaching a modicum of agreement about a dire past that has to be addressed openly, at least as long as one of the parties concerned sees a need for such open articulation.

This need is even stronger given the prevailing asymmetrical relationship. In the dimension of memory politics, asymmetry exists between those who find themselves in the position of victim and those in the position of perpetrator. Of course neither direct victims nor survivors of the genocide nor active perpetrators are alive today. Still, even more than a century after the event, actors find themselves in the *positions* of victims and perpetrators.

Such positioning means different things on each side. Namibians from the southern and central regions of the country may have transgenerational memories about the suffering meted out to their forebears. They are reminded of the consequences of the genocide in their daily lives, for example, by the prevailing patterns of land distribution and land use. In contradistinction, Germans may relate to these events in much more indirect ways.

2 Generally on trans-generational transmission of trauma and remembrance, see e.g. Volkan 2006: 128–9.

While some personal linkages may exist with family members who emigrated to Namibia at some stage (or returned from there), very few of the roughly 82 million inhabitants of Germany have an ancestor among the 20,000 soldiers who were deployed in the *Schutztruppe* between 1903–08. Indeed, about a fourth of present-day German citizens look back to the immigration of family or of themselves during the time after World War II. However, regardless of such distances, Germans are confronted with an historical responsibility for actions that were planned and sanctioned by the Imperial State of which the Federal Republic today claims rightful succession. These issues will be detailed in various chapters below.

Concerns and claims that are, in part at least, countervailing and contradictory raise the issue of whether and how to reach a common understanding – of negotiating the past in at least two senses of this word:

1. In the sense of charting ways to deal with a past which addresses harsh and painful issues. Unlike negotiating a cliff or a narrow passage, when dealing with a dire past it usually will not do to avoid or steer clear of the difficulties. In particular, the long and intense debate concerning the Holocaust has demonstrated to many – not only in Germany – the importance and even the necessity of ‘working through’ (*aufarbeiten*, Adorno 1963) such a past rather than merely forgetting it, or repressing it from active or articulated memory.
2. In a transnational and postcolonial setting in particular, the image of the past also needs to be negotiated in the sense of reaching at least a modicum of agreement among various concerned groups and institutions, including state governments. This may entail various forms of dialogue. This dialogue hinges on the readiness of all parties concerned to enter into such a process. In the closing chapters of this book, a situation will be addressed where this is not the case, or at least the way towards such dialogue is fraught with considerable difficulty. Such denial may be considered a possible feature of the negotiating process in question and thus may point to the very real difficulties involved.

The common understanding that needs to exist at the start entails a minimal agreement and recognition of what happened and therefore needs to be addressed and ‘worked through’. Thus, even though a full recognition that is satisfactory to all sides may eventually be attained only as an outcome of dialogue, a preliminary form is prerequisite for its beginning. This precondition of preliminary common ground appears to be lacking to a large extent in the case under discussion.

In dealing with these issues, we encounter a situation where matters that are of great, even fundamental and vital importance to one party may be of only marginal interest to the other. In particular, there is stark divergence and tension between vivid and active memory of atrocious deeds on the one hand and virtual amnesia on the other. Differences in perceptions of the past among social groups of whatever kind are nothing exceptional or even remarkable. Memory is precisely a process through which groups constitute their visions of the past (Halbwachs 1925, 1950). Given the limited ability of the human mind to process the plethora of data presented by the outside world (Gehlen 1940: 36–46; Luhmann 1984:

291–2), it is inevitable that events or people will be filtered out and excluded from memory. Further filtering creates a differentiation between functional memory that is momentarily available to actors and storage memory that is retrieved only by special effort and under specific circumstances (A. Assmann 1999: ch. 6). Without going into the complexities of this matter, suffice it to say that memory is not only inherently social, in the sense that it does not exist properly speaking outside the social nexus, but it is also socially malleable. This is of particular importance once group or communicative memory, which hinges on the physical presence of the members and their communication, has expired by the natural passing away of those members, and – once again, only in certain parts – is transferred into a cultural memory that relates to a larger societal nexus (J. Assmann 1992: ch. 2).

Much of the relevant debate revolves around written documents and books as the prime storage media from which people draw to reproduce and reconstruct such cultural memory in the sense of a widely accepted vision of the past. However, as will be shown in some of the following chapters, such a slant all too often results in a bias towards so-called ‘high culture’ and a disregard of other modes of transmitting and reproducing memory (see also Connerton 2002). African historians are well aware that oral tradition can help to reach far beyond the few generations generally assumed to convey oral history, back into times for which no written records exist. Often, such oral traditions are linked to performance, be it in epics or stories, or by ceremonies or rituals.

Another important dimension addressed in this book is the representation of past events, and of claims connected to such events, by the built environment. This includes the lay-out of cities as well as monuments and meaning attached to features in the landscape, which here refers, most importantly, to the Waterberg. In the following discussions, this complex of forms in which memory contents are preserved, reproduced and represented, is referred to as *mnemoscape*.

The issues and conflicts addressed in this book suggest that various modes of reproducing memory are closely related to aspects of social structure. Such social aspects include the extent to which people are able to muster the means to make their voices heard. In this way, the seemingly low technology of oral speech and performance – where nothing is required but human bodies and brains, and the cooperation of humans – may also be associated with the dearth of means at their disposal. This lack of available means relates to the systematic or relative denial of access to other technologies – print or digital media – imposed by colonialism and by the postcolonial situation of gross inequality. In addition, the problem of inequality has a bearing on the routines and competencies in communication that are available to the various actor groups and that become institutionalised amongst them. In this book we will encounter unequal access to means of communication such as newspapers, but also to greatly divergent past and present opportunities for education which then may be employed in a politics of memory. The list will grow longer as we progress.

The brief remarks above should have made clear that what follows is not a book of history in any strict sense. I refer to historical material, and at some points I offer interpretations. The main focus, however, is on political processes at various levels that deal with and draw

on that historical material. For this reason, I am not in the first instance aiming at new insight about what happened, or even about how to understand those events. Rather, my concern is about how groups, individuals and also institutions such as governments and states relate to events that overall are well-known – or indeed, how they refuse to do so.

In the politics of memory that have evolved between Namibia and Germany since Namibia's independence, with ever greater intensity since the centennial year of 2004, a number of trajectories may be detected which criss-cross and intersect. It would be preposterous to pretend to capture all this complexity here. However, some of these lines need to be drawn and followed over the century that has evolved since the genocide. These concern the formation of Namibian nationalism during the period of South African rule (1915–90) and the processes of resurgence and reassembly of those traditional communities that had fallen victim to the genocide. Furthermore, we need to consider the various narratives that pretend to represent Namibia's national past. Despite the country's small population, these narratives show exceptional diversity across regions. After independence in particular, the dominant narrative tended to marginalise the contribution of groups who had undertaken the primary resistance to colonialism in the south and centre of the country.

Moreover, colonial rule, as long as it lasted, barred the way for constructive and active engagement with the past by victim groups who now actively assert their claims. Again, in Germany, memory politics concerning the country's enmeshment in colonialism is still closely linked to wider and more painful developments, particularly of the first half of the 20th Century. These memory practices passed from an active assertion of a supposedly exemplary record by colonial revisionists during the interwar years to the virtual amnesia regarding the German colonial past which could be observed by the 1990s. As will be detailed later, collective excision from memory was considerably modified by the centennial commemorations in 2004. This rise in awareness apparently helped to bring to the fore a current of denial. Such denial is not about consequences of the asymmetries mentioned above, but of active efforts to 'whitewash' colonial war and above all, to contest the classification of what happened as genocide.

In this way, five dimensions or modes of public memory as a postcolonial practice will concern us in this book: assertion, commemoration, denial, amnesia and lastly, recognition. Of these, assertion can be seen as a pro-active approach that advocates public recognition of the memory contents in question, such as gross human rights violations or genocide. It is obviously driven by the victim rather than found from the perpetrator. Commemoration refers to a potentially more inward-looking form of jointly and systematically reproducing memory, in our cases mostly within a communal nexus; however, as will be shown, this mode is of strategic importance in keeping memory contents alive and can serve as a launching pad for assertion.

If assertion and commemoration may be seen as positive modes of treating memory contents, denial and amnesia are obviously negative approaches. In the case of denial, we observe an active, frequently confrontational attitude that contests even the facts connected

with a dire past, or in milder forms, the relevance of such a past to the present. In such cases, a 'final stroke' is advocated that supposedly will foreclose further engagement with the past. All this is not even necessary in the case of amnesia which points to a lack of awareness or outright forgetting. However, it should be noted that this way of dealing with the past is clearly different from forgetting. By implicitly or explicitly banning or downplaying any public engagement with past events, these can be relegated effectively to silence. Yet such silence is not conterminous with complete oblivion. Rather, amnesia relating to past atrocities implies a silent or outspoken decision of not talking about them, of not addressing them. Recognition often results from actively engaging with and confronting the last two modes mentioned. It refers to how groups in the perpetrator position actively engage the past they have inherited, in confrontation with denialists and against the resistance of the dead weight of established amnesia.

As will emerge from the following chapters, these dimensions, while present, are not distributed evenly between Namibia and Germany or indeed within Namibia. However, it is precisely in the ways these dimensions, approaches and attitudes play out between the considerable array of actors (to be found in these transnational fields of memory politics), that important features emerge that characterise the postcolonial relationship between Namibia and Germany.

My main objective in this book is to contribute towards an understanding of the constellation of actors and their backgrounds and motivation within the field of memory politics. This field reflects the entangled history which has evolved between the two countries since the days of German colonial rule. While an array of quite fundamental concepts from a fairly wide range of theoretical debates has been used in the course of my argument, I have not burdened this account by motivating them all. This would have made for elaborate argument about issues such as social memory, ethnicity, the colonial and postcolonial state, entangled modernity, postcolonial and subaltern studies. The book therefore does not contain a chapter setting out a theory which readers then might be asked to skip if found too tedious. Rather, I try to refer with appropriate brevity to the broader conceptual contexts wherever they present themselves in the course of the account.

As we shall see, the postcolonial relationship that exists between Namibia and Germany is specific not least on account of its dimension of memory politics, which has emerged on an increasing scale since 1990 and in particular, since 2004. This is a far cry from saying memory politics is the only dimension of Namibian–German relations. Others include the routinely invoked fact that Namibia is the recipient of the highest per capita quota of German ODA worldwide, even though in absolute numbers, given a rather small Namibian population, this figure would appear more modest. Furthermore, the presence of German speakers in Namibia deserves mention, some coming from families who established themselves as early as the mid-19th Century, while others arrived at various times after World War II. While small German settler communities exist in parts of Latin America or in South Africa as well, Namibia is the only former German colony with such a presence. Along with this, one should take into account a number of personal linkages as well as a

specific role played by German foreign cultural policy in Namibia, with the Goethe Centre in Windhoek as its main instrument.

All of this harks back to the colonial past and the genocide, given that the high ODA is motivated on Germany's part by pointing to an ill-defined 'special responsibility', linked rather vaguely to the colonial past. In addition, linkages between German speakers in Namibia and counterparts in Germany are activated in debates concerning the genocide. Such features may help to explain why the German colonial past is much more of a presence in Namibia than it is in other former German colonies. These issues inevitably relate to memory politics and accordingly will be treated here. It is not my intention or claim here to make an exhaustive study of Namibian–German relations. In the same way, the chapters on the specifically German forms of communicating the genocide or repressing it from public awareness will inevitably touch on significant issues of the German history of violence, particularly in the first half of the 20th Century. Today, part of this history, namely the mass crimes committed under Nazi rule, is deeply related to constructions of German national identity. To an extent, these issues will have to be touched upon, but they cannot be treated in any exhaustive or authoritative manner. As will be shown, however, especially in the closing chapters of this book, the observations on specific, postcolonial linkages between both countries and societies are not merely academic but of direct relevance to the politics of memory, couched in terms of the reconciliation, apology and reparation, that in recent years has evolved between Namibia and Germany.



The book falls into three broad parts. At the outset, the 'burden of history' is explored both from German and various Namibian perspectives. From the perspective of understanding actor constellations, this part explores the conceptual registers available to and employed by various groups of actors. The second part takes a closer look at Namibian memory practices that have worked and still do work as ways to preserve and reproduce memory content, in particular related to the genocide of 1904–08. Against the backdrop of these two parts, the third addresses the current transnational memory politics that since 1990 has evolved between Namibia and Germany, particularly the interrelated issues of apology and reparation.

To set the scene, chapter 1 presents a broad sketch of the relevant events from a Namibian perspective. Inevitably, this includes the ways the events of the early 20th Century have shaped later trajectories, in particular emergent Namibian nationalism. The chapter explores the way a hegemonic historical narrative was constructed in which many people from southern and central Namibia today say the historical experience of their own groups has been marginalised. The chapter includes a discussion of how the hegemonic narrative is currently represented in Namibia, particularly evident in representative architecture. Finally, I broach the different opportunities and means available in Namibia for groups to make their voices heard in a context of gross social inequality. In this way, I attempt to

survey not only historical material but also existing opportunities of conveying divergent views on such material.

This is followed in chapter 2 by a broadly parallel account of German colonialism, the impact of the genocide on Germany and the trajectory of colonial amnesia in Germany after World War II. In this context – as in many others – 1945 represents a clear rupture. Up to that point, in official accounts, the crimes of the *Schutztruppe* were celebrated as heroic achievements; later they were shrouded in silence. Colonial amnesia is set against the process in which the public mind in (West) Germany engaged the issue of the Holocaust over the post-war decades. The contrast that exists at first sight between official and public dealings with both issues diminishes when one considers the halting and recalcitrant attitude that characterised the drawn-out process of recognising the need to face up to the Holocaust and its various dimensions. In this way, present-day controversies about German responsibility for colonial crime are given a specific dimension, demonstrated with reference to the Namibian case. This gives the background for a closer look at the ‘special responsibility’ which Germany has assumed vis-à-vis Namibia, and which is held up as a kind of mantra in German official pronouncements.

The relationship between the genocide and the Holocaust is explored more directly in chapter 3. The main argument refers to the astounding publicity the genocide received in the contemporary German public. This may very well have contributed towards lowering the thresholds of what was considered as permissible deeds committed against adversaries in war or against members of what were considered subject or enemy peoples. Such a consideration complements arguments that show structural commonalities between the quest for a settlement colony pursued in Namibia and the strategies aimed at a German colonial sphere in Eastern Europe that were drawn up and pursued during the later phases of World War I and put into force with unprecedented systematic ruthlessness during World War II in the occupied Soviet territories. Here, I hope to help advance the debate, as it has suffered to an extent from coarse argument, as well as from the difficulty of giving a hearing to positions that may not be as mutually exclusive as some protagonists suppose.

As will emerge in the first two chapters, the notion of ‘Germany’ is important in Namibia and for Namibian memory politics. In chapter 4, I take a closer look at the construction of ‘Germany’ both by non-German speakers and by German speakers in Namibia. This involves complex identifications and differentiations with Germany and between Germany and German speakers in Namibia. The latter relationship is rehearsed in some historic depth, including some apparently long-term effects of Nazi influence during the 1930s, and interactions between German speakers and black Namibians. The chapter then deals with persistent German nationalist and also Nazi sentiments amongst German speaking Namibians. While such sentiments, at least in their more explicit forms, may be voiced by only small minorities, they can count on the indulgence of much of the community.

A specific strain of such underlying sentiments is taken up by exploring ‘the Namibian connection in denialism’. Chapter 5 lays bare the ways in which efforts to assail not only the interpretation, but also the historical facticity of the genocide, resonate between Namibia

and Germany through an array of websites as well as through letters to the editor of the Windhoek German daily, *Allgemeine Zeitung (AZ)*. Arguments that are invoked in this connection are examined paradigmatically with reference to Hinrich Schneider-Waterberg, who is shown to treat sources highly selectively to suit his purposes. The rationale of this exercise is given in the chapter's motto, taken from Theodor W. Adorno: 'The idiocy of all this actually signifies something not come to terms with, a wound, even though the thought of wounds should rather refer to victims'. The closing sections of the chapter demonstrate how denialist sentiments are replicated in parts of German academia and especially resonate in the pages of the *AZ*, as shown by an analysis for the period of late 2011 and early 2012.

Chapter 6 rounds off the first part of the book with an account of the meaning and fate of the Windhoek Rider (*Reiterdenkmal*). Up to late December 2013, this statue constituted a memorial to German colonialism, a present-day tourist attraction and a contested site in the Windhoek cityscape. The account shows the ambiguous and contradictory dimensions both of the Rider and of its position before it was removed to make place for the Independence Museum. In this way, the chapter draws together some of the threads laid out in preceding sections. Addressing the removal of the Rider in late 2013, the chapter contains references to the memory politics pursued by the Namibian government, which is treated more extensively in later chapters.

The second part of the book focuses on commemorative practices of groups affected by the genocide in Namibia. The background to these practices is given in chapter 7 which deals with the processes of communal reconstruction in the wake of the genocide and beyond. Briefly, various forms of this reconstitution are traced, taking examples from Ovaherero and Nama communities. This account touches on practices which until the present day feature prominently in commemorations. For example, the *oturupa* parades now form an essential component of any relevant event staged by Ovaherero.³ In closing, the chapter also notes the serious constraints that communal reconstruction faced under South African colonial rule.

Chapter 8 then gives close-up accounts of four annual commemorations observed by traditional communities in central and southern Namibia: Zeraeua Day in Omaruru, Herero Day in Okahandja, Heroes Day in Gibeon and the commemoration at Vaalgras. Based on personal observation, the proceedings are reported in detail, mainly as manifestations as well as reproduction of historical awareness and tradition. This entails the political dimension of each community asserting its rightful place in the history of anti-colonial struggle in Namibia. Pervasive features of the events reviewed are references to a warlike past, symbolised in the prominent role of horses possibly more than in the uniforms of the *oturupa*. These traits are linked especially to assertions of spatial claims that play out in quite distinct ways in all four cases reviewed. Such claims relate closely to the core rituals that take place around the gravesides of important leaders and, although in varying degrees and modalities, therefore refer to the Namibian War and the genocide.

3 To avoid inappropriate essentialisation, the definite article is omitted with ethnonyms at numerous points throughout the text. This usage is meant to denote that we usually cannot speak of a clearly bounded community, but that much more fuzzy identity processes prevail.

In chapter 9, the issue of a fragmented history is taken up against the backdrop of the preceding exposition. Presenting an array of quite diverse examples, I sketch out efforts by various actors and groups to shape and influence an image of national history in Namibia. Inevitably, such efforts point to constraints and exigencies, which have been the main focus of the review of the communal commemorations.

The final part of the book then brings the preceding issues and motives together in an account of the difficulties in transnational communication over a dire past within a postcolonial setting. This topic is pursued by looking into the diverse and changing constellations of concerns, interests and actors on the various sides involved. Inevitably, this leads to a rather sombre picture of the current situation, precisely on account of communication breaks or refusals to reach an understanding, or indeed, to 'negotiate'. These issues are raised first in the review of the 'mute conversation' (chapter 10) between high ranking representatives of the German state and Namibian, mostly Ovaherero, spokespersons, during the first few years of Namibian independence. This interaction was marked by gruff rebuffs from the German side, which form the background of a lawsuit filed by Ovaherero in the U.S. in 2001, initially directed against both the German Government and German corporations. However, up to the centennial year of 2004, the official German position remained unchanged.

Chapter 11 revolves around a much debated turn of events, the speech by the German Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development at the centennial commemoration at Ohamakari in 2004. The apology seemingly contained in this speech is critically analysed, and ensuing developments are recounted. After almost a decade, one can note considerable changes in the alignment of affected groups in Namibia and in the attitude of the Namibian Government, but also in civil society activism in Germany, along with very limited changes in German formal politics.

All these concerns and initiatives coalesced in 2011 with the dramatic events surrounding the return of 20 human skulls that had been deported from Namibia under German colonial rule. Chapter 12 contextualises the problem of human remains and then recounts the long story of this first restitution. By following this process, a painful one to many Namibian participants, one can see the persistent problems of Namibian–German memory politics in particularly sharp focus. To this picture a new dimension has been added by the internal Namibian controversy that was occasioned by the second repatriation of human remains from Germany in March 2014. In this way, the journey yet to be travelled is still a long one, and fraught with contradictions and pitfalls. In the very best of cases, resourceful and committed pilots are needed to negotiate the dangerous turns that have arisen from recent experience. As will emerge from the concluding remarks, the interrelated issues of truth seeking and telling, as well as of studied and imposed silence, remain relevant in charting such a journey.