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Title: Underdevelopment and Class-Formation: The Origins of Migrant Labour in Namibia, 1850-1915.

by: Richard Moorsom

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Underdevelopment and Class-Formation: the origins of migrant labour in Namibia, 1850 - 1915.

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UNDERDEVELOPMENT AND CLASS-FORMATION: THE ORIGINS OF MIGRANT LABOUR IN NAMIBIA, 1850 - 1915[1]

In Namibia the evolution of the principal stages of colonial exploitation was telescoped into a 20-year period under German rule. Only in the 1890s was over half a century of "informal colonialism", whose chief agents were intinerant traders and missionaries, reinforced by German military intervention. Yet by the outbreak of the Great War, most of the land in southern and central Namibia had been expropriated, some of it already settled with immigrant farmers, internal resistance crushed, and the Namib diamond deposits and Tsumeb copper, today still the territory's main mineral resources, put into full production by international mining capital. None of the sectors of capital which developed during this period had more than a marginal interest in the human resources of the country except as labour-power; and its recruitment, distribution and control was from the start a principal function of colonial administration. However, because of the particula historical conditions of that first phase of colonialisation, the forcible separation of subsistence agriculturalists from their means of production was never completed; and the level of recruitment from the ranks of the dispossessed consistently failed to meet the aggregate labour demand of colonial capital. The closing of this gap with contracted migrant labour, and the latter's long-term reproduction, was therefore the central motive for the conservation of the remaining areas of subsistence production by both German and South African administrations. It is with this section of the Namibian working class that I am concerned in this paper.

In the vast, sparsely-populated Kalahari basin the Ovambo-Nkhumbi cluster forms an isolated area of dense settlement. From the late 1840s, with the roughly simultaneous penetration of the interior from the base ports of Walvis Bay and Mossamedes, Ovamboland became the interface of competition between two rival trading and missionary networks. Before the turn of the century productive investment nowhere extended much beyond coastal guano workings and fish processing. Thereafter, however, the rapidly increasing scale of particularly German infra-structural investment, especially in railways, and the opening of Tsumeb (1906) and the diamond fields (1908) multiplied the demand for labour overnight far beyond the supply capacity of the population under colonial rule - the post-1905 forced labour regime nothwithstanding - particularly after the genocide of c40% of the latter in the 1904-7 war. Since these capitals were both large-scale employers and few in number, they could sustain both the costs and the necessary degree of collaboration for the systematic recruitment of migrant labour from outside the sphere of forced labour. Usually excluded from the international indentured labour market, which, when accessible, was anyway relatively costlier, both the state and the mines turned to Ovamboland as their only remaining captive resource, although not before 1915 was it subjected to either formal or indirect colonial rule. Why Ovambos should nevertheless have resorted to recurrent labour migration, and in suc large numbers, it is the task of this paper to explain.

1. PRE-COLONIAL SOCIAL FORMATIONS

The form of subsistence practised in the northern areas has been conditioned to a great extent by their ecological limitations(2). The interior is separated from the coast by both the Namib desert and the western rim of the continential plateau, which South of the Cunene broadens into a rugged desolate area capable of supporting at best a dispersed pastoralism. The plateau itself forms a vast inward-sloping bowl centering on mid-Botswana, which is covered with a layer of sand in places over 1000 ft. thick. The rainfall is entirely concentrated into a few summer months, particularly towards the South and West, and increases gradually from South to North, as do average temperatures. In such conditions the factor most crucial to subsistence is the water balance. Over a large area including N. Botswana, much of N. and NE. Namibia, and central and SE Angola, average rainfall does not exceed the actual and accumulated water deficit(3) at the height of the summer rains. As a result, there is little run-off, and only local and short-lived accumulations of surface water; and the lack of water supplies at or near the surface during the long dry season makes survival for man and stock during the long dry winter next to impossible. Stock-raising and crop cultivation are thus largely restricted to the valleys of the few perennial rivers.

Within this region the one exception is Ovamboland itself(4), comprising an area more or less equally distributed either side of the present Angola-Namibia border. Cut off to the West by the Kaokoveld and to the South, East, North and NW by waterless "omaheke", only across the Cunene River, its boundary to the NW and W, is it in direct contact with a settled peasantry. The land surface forms a perfectly flat plain, with an average gradient from N to S of no more than 1:10,000 (or 6in. to one mile), from which the accumulated summer rainfall, held by an impervious sub-soil layer in a maze of shallow channels (oshana), drains and evaporates only slowly. In normal years the rains are supplemented by the floodwaters of the Cuvelai, a wet-season river which drains an area between the Cubango (Okavango) and the Cunene through the oshana network into Etosha Pan. Although below about 20ft the groundwater becomes brackish, the sandy oshana beds usually retain a sufficient proportion of the annual supply to replenish shallow v during the dry season, and thus make possible a sedentary form of subsistence. On the other hand, the annual rainfall is highly unreliable: combined totals for the northern half of Namibia(5) for 75 of the 77 years 1883/4-1959/60 indicate no fewer than 10 years of drought (70-84% of average), 14 of severe (55-69%) and 6 of very severe drought (less than 55%), as well as 20 abnormally good (more than 115%), leaving only 25 in the normal range (85-115%). Furthermore, because it falls as showers, its distribution is often very unequal, even over short distances. Since normal rains are marginal to both crops and the survival of stock through the winter, both forms of subsistence are precarious. Cultivation is further hampered by the lack of fertile heavy soils, and stock-raising by the high concentration of salt deposits, by a pasture deficiency in phosphorous which can cause disease(6), and by endemic diseases such as lung-sickness.

These ecological conditions gave rise to two similar but separate forms of subsistence, in addition to the San hunter-gatherers of the vast dry plains. On the one hand, the perennial rivers made crop-raising possible on the rich valley soils, provided man and stock with continuous water-supplies, and also fish. The first descriptions of the Okavango valley at the turn of the century indicate a dense population settled along the North bank(7). "Werft reiht sich an Werft, am ganzen Talrande entlang sind susgedehnte Kornfelder. Der leichte, mit rotem Lehm vermischto Boden ist sehr fruchbar; obne dass gedüngt wird, werdon jährlich zwei gute Ernten erzieht"*(8). Because much of the flat valley floor

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*Werfts (Kraals) follow on one after the other; broad cornfields extend along the whole of the side of the valley. The light soil, mixed with red loam, is very fertile; without being manured it yields two good harvests a year.

was flooded annually, crops were planted mostly on the low valley sides or top, and a seasonal migration took place between villages on the river bank and on the valley rim(9). Despite the availability of rich pasture-land left by the retreatin floods, little stock appears to have been kept except by the easternmost tribe, the Kuangari, who could also make use of a few oshana on their SW flank(10).

On the other hand, the peculiar flood-system of the oshana made possible for the Ovambo a nearly equal balance between the sedentary agriculture and a semi-nomadic pastoralism(11). The accounts of early explorers in the latter half of the 19th century suggest an already dense population settled in dispersed family kraals and an intensive field agriculture. Because of the lack of dry season surface water, settlement has been concentrated almost entirely along or near the oshanas(12); the oshana network is, however, so intricate as to permit nearly continuous cultivation of the land. It would appear that the outer limits of cultivable land had already been reached by the mid-19th century(13); but it is not clear how much remained unused within the region. Each of the 7 or 8 principal tribes occupied an area of continuous and dense settlement - Galton estimated the population density of Ondonga in 1851 at 100 per sq. mile(14) - separated from each other by strips of virgin woodland of varying width(15). Arriving shortly after the harvest, Galton's first impressions(16) are typical of 19th century descriptions of the country: "Fine, dense timber trees, and innumerable palms of all sizes, were scattered over it. Part was bare of pasturage part was thickly covered in high corn stubble; palisadings, each of which enclosed a homestead, were scattered everwhere over the country. The general appearance was that of a most abundant fertility".

The wide variety in the means of subsistence point to a full exploitation of the available natural resources(17). The products of the two grain crops, meal, the staple food, from pearl millet and a nutritious beer from sorghum, were supplemented by a range of vegatables and spices, by cow's and goat's milk, eggs, and sometimes meat, by fish swept down in the floodwaters, by game, and by the fruit-bearing trees, which were protected. Given the limitations of the water supply and of an iron-age technology, such diversity in subsistence production of itself presupposed not only the full use of potentially available labour-time within the family unit of production, but also its efficient deployment in the production cycle. Towards the end of the dry season, the fields were tilled by hand and fertilized with collected cow-dung; planting began soon after the first rains, and was followed in turn by the transplanting, weeding, guarding and harvesting of the grain crops, as well as the subsidiaries. Small stock and poultry were kept at the werft, but in order to eke out dry season pasture, an annual cattle migration took place during the rains to the uninhabited "oshimpolo" to the East and North, and probably also to cattle posts on the outskirts of the tribal lands toward the end of the winter(18). These two activities absorbed the bulk of family labour, especially where drought necessitated a second or third planting or a more extensive search for pasture. Despite the fairly rigid productic sequence, some concentration of activities was inevitable, as, for instance, fruit-gathering, fishing and harvesting at the end of the rainy season. Correspondingly, the general level of activity would slacken during 3-4 months of the winter drought

With the subsistence base at so relatively advanced a stage of development, it is to be expected that the relations of production had already become fairly complex. The organisation of production depended on a sophisticated division of labour, in effect primarily sexual, within the family unit. The field area surrounding each werft extended as far as the labour-time devoted to it permitted, and was separated from its neighbours by a variable strip of common land retained for pasturage. Nearly all aspects of cultivation were the responsibility of women; with polygamy normal, each wife worked her husband's field as well as her own, which was alloted to her at the beginning of each season. Women also undertook most of the household work, an arduous task given the size and elaborate functional sub-division of the werft(19), a number of home crafts, and some of the seasonal fishing. Men were responsible for the supervision of production and the manifold

tasks associated with its organisation, for some crafts, fishing, hunting and above all for the herding of cattle. Children generally participated according to sex and age, but a considerable proportion of their time was spent in herding the small stock. The scale of production was thus closely related to functional divisions within the family, although large-scale activities such as grain-harvesti or the moving of a werft required the cooperative participation of neighbouring families, and the regulation of the seasonal production cycle depended in important respects on tribal as well as the family head's authority.

Outside the family unit, the specialisation of labour appers to have been limited. The level and diversity of normal production, together with local seasonal variations in rainfall, stimulated an active internal trade in food and home-craft artefacts(20); but trading itself was conducted mostly by the producers themselves rather than by intermediaries. On the other hand, long-distance and some inter-tribal trading, usually based on the monopoly of a particular material, was usuall controlled by specialist artisans, subject to tribal supervision(21). Ondonga, Ukwanyama and Ukwambi, for instance, sent out regular and efficiently organised caravans to collect respectively copper from Otavi, iron from S. Angola, and salt from the Etosha Pan area, and subsequently bartered the refined product or manufactured articles to tribes near and far. However, although internal trade had developed a rough scale of exchange rates and even a form of currency(22 and was to provide an important entry-point for foreign traders, only smiths and doctors had managed to form functionally independent guilds with monopolies of particular skills(23).

In general, then, it may be tentatively suggested that by the mid-19th century the forces of production in Ovamboland had developed a little in advance of the relations of production, and that the average level and content of production at times exceeded immediate subsistence needs. It is possible to discern even at this distance incipient lines of horizontal social differentiation on the tribal as well as the family level. The existence of a partially independent but restricted petty-bourgeoisie has already been noted. Of great significance was the emergence in each of the numerically largest tribes of a strong autarchival state centred on an absolute monarchy(24), and capable of devising and monopolisin methods of surplus appropriation. The state attained its most developed form in the two largest kingdoms, Ukwanyama and Ondonga, but their medium-sized neighbours to the West, Ukwambi, Ongandjora, Ukwaluthi, and Ombalantu, were for the most part evolving along similar lines. Its power existed partly in proportion to is functional utility, and not merely in the form of ritual, as the regulator of a complex seasonal cycle of production. Its ability to forecast accurately the onset of the rains was of some importance to the success of crop planting, since the first showers were often light and premature, and if followed by several weeks' drought could cause the failure of the first sowing(25) It enforced a "rough system of rotation of pasture land": "wells and cacimbas were maintained; the tunda was grazed during the rainy season...; the areas adjacent to the cacindas, talas, and rivers were reserved for the dry season when water was unavailable in the tunda"*(26). Correspondingly, subsistence farmers derived a degree of security from the maintenance of internal order and protection from external raids. Furthermore, long distance and inter-tribal trading depended on state protection, and its monopoly of distribution at least usually ensured general access to imports(27).

The power of the state, however, leant heavily on its control of instruments of coercion, and this reliance was probably already increasing. In this equation, its relation to land as a resource was basic. It will be recalled that land was by the mid-19th century, internally at least, often a "closed resource". Within the family unit, the extent of each wife's fields and the labour-time to be expended on the husband's were specified annually by the werft head, and most of

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* cacimba - small dry-season reservoir; tunda - sandveld; tala - permanent pool i stream bed

the product of their labour, from both land and stock, became their own property(28). At the level of the tribe, the standard right of every man to clear virgin land for production remained; but internally the tribal official's control over the allocation of used land enabled him to gain the right to exact tribute from "tenants" and to evict them(29). At some stage the Ukwanyama and Ondonga kings also began to grant territorial rights to their more powerful noblemen against the payment of tribute, but it is not certain to what extent the tribal "aristocracy", hereditary by matrilineal descent in the royal line, can be described as feudal lords, as there is little evidence of a hereditary accumulation of property(30). Rather, it is clear from 19th century accounts that state authority was strongly concentrated in the monarchy, and that aristocratic power and social standing was exercised through the state hierarchy. The royal kraal was very definitely the administrative, military and social centre of the kingdom; and the nightly "balls" at the Ondonga capital described by Galton in 1851(31), with their elegance and formal dance routines, are evidence of an already well-developed court life, with the occasional striking resemblance to its medieval European counterparts.

Despite the elaborate royal kraal, the large and rigidly organised household, and the maintenance costs of court subsistence, the rate of surplus appropriation was probably not great and the methods of collection routine. The general tribute was paid in kind, its size and timing depending on royal or aristocratic needs, and on the establishment of customary rights on certain products(32). The king could also require of his subjects military service and unpaid labour in his fields and on such major projects as the moving of the royal kraal(33). Finally the royal monopoly on foreign trade permitted the manipulation of the rates of barter-exchange, and the taxation of goods bartered outside the tribe, principally cattle. Since the Ovambo tribes, mostly Ondonga and Ukwanyama, exported copper and iron artefacts on a large scale to the Nama and Herero to the South, to the tribes on the Okavango and probably further East, and across the Cunene, barter-exchange was an important element in surplus appropriation by the state. The Ondonga caravan encountered by Galton near Otavi, which in 3 weeks' trading amassed a herd of over 200 cattle, was said to be but one of 4 regular expenditions to northern Hereroland each year(34). Itinerant smiths carried the trade to a much wider area. According to an American trader writing 25 years later, "parties of Ovambo smiths are to be found all over Damaraland. They bring with them a small stock of iron and copper and travel about ... making knives, arrowheads, spear-heads, beads and rings, for which they receive sheep and goats which they again trade for cows where they can; and after a year or two they go back with a small herd, most of which they are required to give to their king(35).

2. EXTERNAL TRADE AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT, 1850-1915.

Thus by the time the first explorers, traders and missionaries penetrated Ovamboland, the subsistence social formation was in the first stage of evolution towards a class-divided society whose extent and particular form was still uncertain. It is difficult in the case of Ovamboland and virtually impossible for the riverene tribes further East to differentiate between changes induced respectively by "underdevelopment" and by pre-existing tendencies. But the fact that fairly specific alterations in the rate and methods of surplus appropriation occurred simultaneously with a general decline in the productive base supports circumstantial evidence of broad causal links between the two processes.

The agents of what may be called "informal colonialmism" came from three directions. From the South, after Galton's pioneering expedition in 1851, came itinerant white traders of various nationalities, usually seeking ivory and ostrich feathers, but sometimes also bringing out cattle for the Cape market(36). The rise of wholesale monopolies in Hereroland, the first organised by Andersson in the early 1860s, the second by Ohlsson and Eriksson at the end of the decade, facilitated the dispatch of traders provisioned on credit to the far North and East(37). The course of the trade during the Nama-Herero of the 1880s and German colonial rule

is uncertain. That trading in arms continued is demonstrated by the fact that the Germans tried to prevent it, without apparent success(38). Farther East, the trade-route to Lake Ngami and the Kalahari interior, and North of it another to the mid-Okavango, became well-established in the 1870s. The second source of white interlopers was the Afrikaner republics to the SE. During the 1870s Boer trekkers began to migrate across the Kalahari, and from about 1880, when their leaders secured settlement rights on the Humpata plateau from the Portuguese, kept up an irregular two-way stream for more than 40 years(39). Their main route via Ngami and the lower Okavango skirted Ovamboland to the North(40), but numbers passed through from the South and East via Grootfontein, where several temporary settlements were started. The trekkers were still "primarily waggoners and professional hunters"(41); nevertheless the extent of their activities in Ovamboland is as yet unclear.

The third major trading thrust to penetrate Ovamboland was based on the port of Mossamedes and to a lesser degree, Bonguela and Luanda(42). The influence of the great East-West trade routes through central Angola in the 17th and 18th centuries does not seem to have touched the region either directly or indirectly. With their breakdown in the 1850s and 60s, Ovimbundu cattle-raiding and Cokwe trade and migration may well have reached the Northern tribes(43). The fact that Galton found that firearms were unknown and that trade across the Cunene was conducted by black traders and consisted in "brandy, beads and assegais"(44), indicates that Mossamedes traders had not then reached the river. They di so, however, within the next 5 years: a fort was established at Numbo (Nkhumbi) in 1857, and extensive trading in ivory, ostrich feathers and slaves by white and black intermediaries carried on until the Portuguese conquest(45).

Information on the Okavango and further East is sparse, although Seiner gives a comprehensive picture for 1905-6(46). White traders penetrated to the Okavango from central Namibia, via Ngami from southern Botswana, and from the Zambezi; Seiner found no fewer than 3 stores on its lower reaches during his journeys(47). It was also the main trek-route for migrating Boers. In addition, there appears to have been an active internal trade, augmented by artefacts brought by long-distance Ndebele and Ovambo traders. Finally, the ubiquitous half-caste slavers, "Mambari aus Benguela", had a long-established route down the Okavango at least as far as Andara(48).

It is impossible to calculate the scale of trading or its impact on the subsistence mode with any great precision. The main import was arms and ammunition, supplemented on the Portuguese side by brandy, the mainstay of the coastal sugar plantations, and horses; more generally by ornaments, particularly beads, and later by European clothes and a wider range of manufactures. The arms trade is probably the best gauge of overall trading activity. By the late 1850s the Ondonga king had already acquired a few muskets; and through the 1860s and 70s his successors built up a large arms reserve as traders, their southern markets saturated, turned North to offload their surplus stocks(49). During the 1880s, Ukwanyama began importing Portuguese arms on a large scale, as did smaller tribes such as the Ukwambi(50). Shortly after the turn of the century, Ukwanyama alone was estimated to possess 15,000 guns, 8000 of them modern; in the battle of Mufilo in 1907, the Portuguese claimed that out of the army of 20-25,000 ranged against them, 7000 were armed with guns(51). 8 years later, Pritchard reported that "almost every man in the country carries a firearm and bandolier...", the majority being up-to-date models(52). However, during the last 30-40, imports of clothing, brandy and horses, which because of their high death rate required constant replacement, also grew to considerable proportions(53).

On the other hand, no simple assessment of the rate of "unequal exchange" is possible on the commercial values of imports and exports. In the first place, the concentration of state power enabled the king to exercise as much control as over the inter-tribal barter-trading, and to establish a bargaining position of some

strength(54). No trader could enter the tribal territory without the king's prior permission, and when he did, his every activity was subject to close supervision. Indeed, in the late 19th century, the northern tribes were sufficiently powerful "to force all traders to be licensed"(55). Furthermore, the king and his officials could and did demand substantial "gifts" in appropriate commodities as the price of their cooperation. Alternatively, they would restrict the trade to those goods in which they were interested, as did the Okavango chiefs shortly after 1900 in refusing to sell their stock-piled ivory except for arms(56). Secondly, the Ovambo kings exploited the competition between the two sets of traders in order to lower exchange rates, to regulate the rate of supply of essential imports and to retain strategic political control. As early as 1858, for instance, Andersson complained that Portuguese traders were both undercutting the rates offered by their Namibian counterparts and breaking the latters' self-imposed limitation on powder sales to blacks(57). In later years, the Ovambo kings could break the German arms embargo without difficulty by turning to Portuguese suppliers, and likewise, find markets in Ovimbundu farms and coastal plantations for slaves long after slavery itself had been outlawed(58).

Thirdly, as pointed out earlier, the net value gained or lost in a particular transaction was not directly related to the exchange rates for the goods operating in world markets. Much of the early trade, for instance, was in ivory and ostrich feathers for arms, and the Ovambo, by initial barter and by requiring hunters to buy the right to shoot elephant with "gifts", rapidly cornered a share of the market themselves. Since the exchange involved neither means of production nor of subsistence, and only a relatively small amount of labour-time, the net gain, particularly in arms, was probably considerable. However, once the local elephant and ostrich populations had been decimated by two decades of intensive hunting during the 1860s and 70s(59), the Ovambo were forced to resort largely to cattle, their only exportable commodity in demand amongst traders, and a resource which was at the same time a means of production and of subsistence. Here too, the low commercial price of the small Ovambo cow and the difficulties of transporting them to the markets reduced their barter-value. When it is remembered that many thousands of guns were imported after the decline in the ivory trade from the 1880s, and that each was fetching at least 12-15 cattle in Hereroland, the drain on Ovambo cattle stocks must have been considerable. Horses too, of which Handume, the last Ukwanyama king, alone possessed about 100, were costing as much as 10-16 head each in 1910, and R60-80 (unsalted) or R120-40 (salted) in 1915(60).

That a general decline in the level of production took place between the 1880s and 1915 is probable on the evidence of contemporary descriptions of the country. The devastating continent-wide rinderpest epidemic of 1897, which destroyed nearly 90% of the huge Herero cattle-herds, must also have killed off the bulk of the Ovambo stock(61). The impact of underdevelopment, though, was not evenly distributed throughout the social formation, but was on the contrary conditioned both by pre-existing tendencies towards social differentiation and by the way in which those tendencies were modified by external trade. The state monopoly on exchange gave the king and aristocracy not only first call on incoming goods, but also a means of influencing their content, and of controlling their general distribution and the rate of exchange for those commodities whose distribution was directly controlled by the state(62). In this way, firearms and European clothes eventually entered into common ownership(63), while horses and the more expensive consumer goods remained an aristocratic privilege(64). The overall pattern of import consumption was thus distorted towards non-essentials, and their accumulation in the hands of the ruling class sharply increased the latter's demand for commodities to offer in exchange, in other words cattle and to a lesser extent, slaves. That demand was nevertheless in part "necessary"(65), and the proportion increased with time as competitive re-arming and pressures

on aristocratic legitimacy accelerated. The process was in turn to some extent circular, in that the state's ability to appropriate the required surplus was closely related to the supply of the instruments of coercion which that surplus was intended to finance. In general, it was its capacity for surplus appropriation that determined the level of ruling-class consumption.

Internally, the methods of appropriation practised were somewhat arbitrary(66). Characteristic were the more frequent resort to "judicial raids" and forms of witchcraft, from which the victim's property reverted to the king; the regularisation of tribute payments; and the imposition of a new cattle-tax (okasavu) in Ukwanyama in the 1880s, at first "voluntary" and strictly regulated, but within 20 years little more than an arbitrary exaction in the hands of the collectors and nobles. Externally, inter-tribal raiding became more frequent, not only between the Ovambo tribes themselves but also during the 1890s on tribes far distant: "the Kwanyama.....regularly raided north to Capelongo, east to the Cubango, and west into the lands of the Mbadya and Khumbi"(67). Despite the ritual with which the occasion was clothed, "war" expeditions were often no more than small-scale raids on a neighbouring tribe's cattle outposts(68). Reciprocal raiding on this pattern accelerated the expropriation of privately 'owned' cattle by the state, and the accumulation of resources by the stronger at the expense of the weaker monarchies. Inter-tribal raiding also inflated the number of war captives, who more customarily held against a ransom, but now frequently sold off to slavers.

The functional expansion of the state as a mechanism of surplus appropriation necessitated a larger apparatus of coercion. Because the growth in the rate of accumulation was externally induced, and was not matched by the development of the forces of production, it fell victim to its own inner dynamic of instability. The royal household was enlarged by an inflated court staff, by a new category of state official appointed to collect the Okasavu, and by military contingents, possibly the nucleus of a standing army; and aristocratic retinues developed similarly(69). "The subsistence and part of the "privileges" due to the additional personnel had naturally to be drawn from the surplus it was their function to appropriate. Their acquisition of the means to exercise their duties efficiently - especially horses and guns - gave particular groups a capacity for independent action which they increasingly exploited during the 30 year period before colonisation. Most notable among these were the "lenga", young men to whom the kings distributed horses and guns for "particular prowess in raids" irrespective of lineage, and who were appointed, at least in Ukwanyama, as collectors of the okasavu(70). "This new privileged group... built up large cattle herds and incorporated some of their captives into their lineages". As early as 1866-7 Andersson had encountered an organised force of young men under military discipline in Ukwambi; and in 1885 in the same area, Schinz had observed of a returning war party that "die Vornehmeren waren zu Pferde und von einem Jungen begleitet, der die Büchse....nachtrug"(71)* The ability of the lenga and the nobility progressively to monopolise particular forms of subsistence such as hunting, and surplus appropriation, such as tribute or the okasavu, was undoubtedly significant, and a direct outcome of the contradiction between the king's need to increase the rate of appropriation and his delegating the power necessary to achieve it . In the long run too the diminishing returns from the more efficient plundering of subsistence production would have brought the ruling class to crisis point. Nevertheless, while the underlying direction of change could not be reversed, except by

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* The higher ranks were on horseback, each followed by a boy carrying his rifle.

revolutionary means(73), the personality and strategic policy of the king did much to affect its rate. Of the Ukwanyama kings, Weyulu (1883-1903) attempted to clear his indebtedness, with only limited success, by increasing taxation and dispossessing many of his nobles, while curbing arbitrary exactions and promoting welfare measures; Nande (1903-11), a weak successor, could not prevent the disintegration of central authority; and Mandume (1911-17) was only able to reassert it by autocratic and violent methods(74).

Changes within tribes bordering and to the East of Ovamboland are impossible to assess owing to lack of information. The strategic position, described above, of those along the Okavango and between it and the Zambezi implies a complex and well-developed pattern of trade, and the numbers of traders and migrants, together with their relatively smaller size, made them vulnerable to political reprisals the Ovambo would have been able to resist. Indeed, McKiernan describes the destruction and dispersal of one such by a combined force of trekboers and traders, of whom he was one, in retaliation for the killing of a trader in 1878. Nevertheless, the chiefs retained control over at least part of trading activity, notably slaves, ivory and a kind of rubber collected and brought in by the San(75); and were probably able to augment their authority thereby. It is also notable that the two tribes whose power was strongest, the Batawana, who extended their overlordship North from Lake Ngami up the Okavango, using it as a source of grains(76), and the Kuangari, who frightened off even the traders and trekboers by their determined raiding(77), were both pastoralists as well as cultivators. Generally, most of the peoples in the area surrounding Ovamboland seem to have been affected during their last 30 years of freedom by more frequent inter-tribal raiding and arbitrary attacks in intermediate zones: the N. Kalahari and Okavango by the Kuangari, trekboers and the occasional band of Griqua(78); the San and northernmost Herero, previously under Ondonga overrule, by Boer incursions and predatory bands of Nama(79); those to the North and West by cattle raiding from South and North, as well as the slave trade. Even the Topnaars of Zessfontein, deep in the Kaokoveld, protested to Leutwein in 1900 about "räuberischen Jagdzugen" from across the Cunene(80).

Thus it was the ordinary subsistence farmers who bore the brunt of the under-development process. Whereas Schinz could say of Ondonga in the 1880s that "die meisten Kånner zwei Frauen besitzen, viele nur eine and wenige mehr als zwei", Nitssche noted 25 years later that "Fälle von Monogamie sind unter den Armen nicht selten",* and Hahn in 1927 that polygamy was becoming in places a privilege of the rich(81). Since a kraal's field-cultivating capacity was directly proportional to the number of its womenfolk, the fact that a family head could not afford more than one marriage reduced his family's general standard of living and in addition its ability to store reserves to survive droughts or complete a second planting if the first failed. During the famine of 1915, Chief Martin told Major Pritchard "that only rains would prevent some of the poorer sections from being wiped out by starvation"(82); and indeed, estimates of deaths during the famine and an influenza epedemic two years later range from 15,000 to 50,000(83). The reduction in an average family's field area further forced it to concentrate on millet at the expense of sorghum ("kaffir-corn"), whose beer was a valuable dietary supplement(84). Similarly, where Schinz found meat consumption from the family's own herds fairly common, 20 years later the poorer amongst them ate little meat relying on meal and milk(85). Alternative meat supplies were in effect denied to commoners by the aristocratic monopoly on hunting, and the subsequent destocking(86). It appears that there was in addition general opposition to the increasing rate of surplus appropriation, by holding back crop production

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* most men have two wifes, many only one and few more than two. Instances of monogamy amongst the poor are not uncommon.

and the size of herds, by leasing cattle to neighbours' herds to minimise the risk of losses in raids, and by direct resistance to the more arbitrary methods of expropriation(87).

Compared with the structural effects of increasing internal pressure on the productive base the impact of direct barter-exchange on subsistence producers was probably less dramatic. The possession of guns and European clothing was becoming noticeable to outsiders after 1900, and the normal range of trade-goods, such as beads and ornaments, were always likely to find a ready market, but none of these items can be classed as indispensible, and the fact that Kwanyama iron-smiths were still working their S. Angola deposits as late as the 1920s(88) indicates that the internal manufacture of means of production, such as hoes, as well as home crafts, had probably not been seriously displaced before the end of the period. The missions, so influential in the undermining of Herero and Nama pastoralism, had gained but a limited foothold by 1915, principally in Ondonga and Ukwanyama, where in 1911, after 40 years' work, the Finnish and Rhenish Missions had about 200 and 700 members respectively.(89)

By the time the first migrants began to go South shortly after 1900, the structural underdevelopment of the mode of production had already reduced a substantial proportion of family producers(90) to the margins of subsistence at an average level of production. Secondary lines of differentiation within the underclass itself reduced particular groups to a sub-marginal existence, and hence into relations of dependence. The "slavery" prevalent in Ovamboland from far back in the 19th century(91) was in practice a loose tie of obligation usually redeemable by payment of the debt or ransom which was its cause. But although fellow tribesmen were not enslaved, the increasing numbers of POWs and refugees, of those dispossessed of all means of production by raids, "judicial" or otherwise, and of those without adequate means of subsistence, seem to have formed a category of "working dependents" widely distributed amongst the tribal kraals. Some of those would have been absorbed into the expanding royal and aristocratic households; but equally, the low survival rate amongst the nobility made their retainers frequent victims of ruling-class instability. To those should be added the small circle of Christians and their associates, who were vulnerable not only to the ideology of the work ethic implicit in 19th century missionary evangelism, but also to the material demands of the church for its upkeep and the maintenance of appropriate social standards by its members. In other words, by the turn of the century alternative means of subsistence, and not simply cash earnings or consumer hardware, were becoming a necessity for many family producers even under normal conditions. The state monopoly on all external exchange relations made labour-migration the only available means of bridging the existence gap.

3. LABOUR MIGRATION AND CLASS-CONSCIOUSNESS

According to the missionary Tönjes, writing in 1910, young men had begun migrating in search of work 30 years before(92). After the turn of the century, some went North to work on the Mossamedes and Bonguola railways; while in Namibia medium- and large-scale employers, mainly in mining and construction, took on Ovambo workers in increasing numbers(93). "Schwabe gibt an", wrote Dove in 1903, "dass sie unter anderom auf den Guanofeldern am Kap Kross fast ausschlich die Arbeit verrichtet hätten"(94)*. In 1897, "about 1500 Hereros and Ovambos" were working on the Swakopmund-Windhoek railway (9/97-6/02), and later large numbers on the Otavi line (10/03-06)(95). Nevertheless, before 1908 there had never been more than about 1700 Ovambos in the Police Zone at any one time; thereafter, however, the rate of migration increased 5-fold within the space of two years:

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* Schwabe says that they had almost completely taken over the work at the guano fields amongst other places

Number of migrants passing annually through Namutoni and Okaukuejo:

(in 000s)	outgoing	returning	balance
1908	less than 1.7		
08/9	c4		
10	9.1	6.8	2.6
11	9.3	6.6	2.7
12	6.1	4.8	1.3
13	11.8	10.2	1.6
14	8.8	11.0	-2.2
1-2/15	0.8	1.6	-0.8
total 10-15	46.1	40.9	5.2

Source: Nitzsche, p133, quoting Dernburg; E.L.P. Stals, "Die Aanraking tussen Blankes en Ovambos in Suidwes-Afrika, 1850-1915", A.Y. for S.A. Hist., 31 no 2,1969, p.333, citing ZB.2065 Akton Nr. W.IV.h.3.

Despite the fact that subsistence underdevelopment was already well advanced, the German recruiting drive after 1907 was fortunate to coincide neatly with a run of bad years for subsistence production. Drought occurred in the years 1900/1-02/3, 07/8, 10/11, 12/3-15/6, with 1911 and 13 registering a mere 42 and 54% of average rainfall respectively(96); in 1907 crops were damaged by a plague of locusts, in 1909 by abnormally heavy rains(97). Yet even in the good year of 1912, migration, at 6076, was only 33% down on the 1910-15 average. Significantly, the figures show that some 11% of migrants did not return, and indeed it is during this first wave of migration that the first permanent urban Ovambo communities in the Police Zone were noted(98). It is perhaps not surprising that migrants formed a greater proportion of the total populations of the two southernmost tribes, Ondonga and Ukwambi (resp. 10.4% and 7.0% for the year to June 1911) than of their northern neighbours Ukwanyama and Ongandjera (5.0% and 2.5%); and that very few came from tribes in the NW of Ovamboland or the Okavango(99). That said, and notwithstanding the fact that contemporary population estimates were very approximate, 10% was a remarkably high proportion, and of course a much greater fraction of active men.

The "necessary" character of labour migration can therefore be established with reasonably certainty. Recurrent migration itself does, however, presuppose the articulation of two modes of production, whether the methods employed by the dominant power be direct, indirect or laissez-faire. In this the policy decisions of the German colonial regime were crucial. Contrary to later legend, the authorities took an active interest in Ovamboland both before and after the war of genocide, not least in its potential for agricultural exploitation. It was the preoccupation of the German governor Leutwein with the dispossession of the southern tribes, as he himself was careful to point out(100) that persuaded him not to intervene actively. Even so, an attempt to obtain compensation from the Ukwambi king for the robbing of two traders in his territory nearly provoked a war in 1902 when an over-confident subordinate officer set off with an armed detachment to enforce payment, and hostilities were only averted by Ovambo restraint(101). Thereafter, and more particularly from 1904 onwards, the Germans seem to have calculated that the conquest of Ovamboland was not worth the military cost: the Portuguese, after all, despite the establishment of several forts on the northern fringes in 1907 had lost an entire 500-man column in Sept.1904(102). From this time too, with the war effort at its height, the Germans became heavily dependent on Ovambo labour in stategic construction projects, and later on the lucrative copper and diamond mines. The last decade of German rule was characteri:

by a chronic and growing labour shortage and repeated attempts to find foreign sources of contract labour, none of which succeeded except in the case of S.A.(103). But even the employment of as many as 7000 from the latter source in 1911(104) did not break their strategic reliance on Ovamboland.

Thus when during the Herero uprising Nechale, king of East Ondonga, began to show increasing hostility, and labour migration was cut off altogether after an accidental attack upon a contingent of migrants, an emissary was sent North with conciliatory messages and the good offices of the long-serving missionary Rautanen invoked, apparently with some success(105). In 1908 the relationship between the main Ovambo kingdoms and the colony were formalised in a series of protection treaties, in which German suzerainty was acknowledged(106). This diplomatic coup may not have been unconnected with arrangements then being made by the government and mines to send in relief supplies of grain and rice to alleviate successive crop failures. 80,000kg (nearly 80 tons) were imported in 1908/9, and similar quantities in later years, a practice said in 1915 by the mission to be regular, to which, significantly, it was sent "for free distribution"(107). Following a visit by Hpt. Streitwolf and now ex-missionary Tönjes in 1911 to assess its labour-exporting potential, the administration enacted a regulation to guarantee free rail travel and board for migrants; and shortly before the S.A. invasion, began drilling boreholes alongside the waterless track to Namutoni, as well as the construction of a railway from Otjiwarongo to Okabakana in Ondonga(108).

It would appear therefore that the Germans were preparing, particularly during their last years, for a long period of non-intervention in Ovamboland itself. Without even the beginnings of "indirect rule", political relations remained on the diplomatic level, rather similar in a way to British-style protectorate agreements. The success of the policy, however, required at least the tacit collaboration of the indigenous ruling class, and herein lies one of the more intriguing, if still obscure factors in the power-equation. Up to 1904, the southern kings, particularly Nechale and Kambonde of Ondonga and Negumbo of Ukwambi, had shown both unremitting hostility to the German regime and an accurate appreciation of Leutwein's ultimate intentions(109). Furthermore, the drought of 1900/1-02/3 was at least as severe as that in 1908, without leading to an equivalent flood of emigration. The overwhelming demonstration of German military power and ruthlessness in the extermination of the Herero, German diplomatic overtures, and the Portuguese punitive expedition in 1907 may have persuaded them to opt for the accommodation with the German regime implied in the 1908 treaties. They may also have calculated (correctly) that they could get round the restrictions of the Ordinance of 25th Jan.1906(110), which prohibited "the importation of fire-arms, ammunition, horses and spirits into Amboland" and established a licencing system for traders and their goods, by trading or smuggling through Angola. At any rate, trade from the South was reported several years later to have ceased altogether(111), and yet the tacit alliance held. Indeed, arms were still being smuggled in as late as 1930 via the Congo and Angola(112).

Whatever their other reasons, a powerful incentive for their collaboration in the promotion of labour migration lay in the material advantages the kings could draw by controlling the operation of the system. Schlettwein, a future governor, gives us a revealing insight into the mechanism of control which already existed by 1907(113): "Der Hauptling bestimmt die Leute and sobickt sie unter einem Vormaun aus, um Kleider und sonstige Gebrauchsgegenstände zu verdienen. Der Termin, an dem celch ein Trupp Ovambos wieder zur Stelle zu sein hat, wird geuau fest gesetzt, und wehe demjenigen, der nicht zur rechter Zeit zurückkommt....Fur den verdienten Lohn müssen die Leute Waren kaufen, die sie Ihrem Häuptling sämtlich verzulegen haben. Der Häuptling wäblt sich dann das, was ibm gefällt, aus und

bestimmt über das andere ganz nach Willkür'.* Having sold slaves to the Portuguese for many years, the kings clearly regarded the export of labour as an alternative means of earning surplus, usually in the form of consumer goods.

It is doubtful whether the rate of migration between 1910 and 1914 would have allowed such personal supervision of returning migrants or their recruitment and dispatch; nor is it indicated to what extent recruitment was voluntary. Nevertheless, the fact that a similar system was found to be operating more than 20 years later suggests a basic continuity in the methods of tribal supervision: "Jede Schwarze, der aus den Minen kommt, Muss sich sofort zum Häuptling begeben und genauen Sericht über alle Ereignisse erstatten und die erwanteten Geschenke abliefern"(114). It is probably a safe conclusion that there existed a tacit division of responsibility for the regulation of each end of the cycle between the colonial and the tribal authorities. The German regulations of 1906 provided for the compulsory licencing of all labour recruitors and the registration of their recruits at the two border stations, Okaukuenjo and Wamutoni, through which, because they lay astride the only passable exit-routes, the vast majority of migrants were forced to travel. The diamond mines set up a recruiting administration in 1911 with the unofficial blessing of the government, who appointed as their recruiting officer (the only one to be licenced) and "Native Commissioner at Lüderitzbucht"(115) appropriately the former missionary Tönjes. The government thus supervised the distribution of contract workers within the territory, while delegating recruitment to the tribal monarchies. They for their part attempted to prevent permanent migration by putting migrants under their own representatives, by stipulating a short maximum period of absence, usually 6 months(116), and by sanctions against those who disobeyed tribal discipline.

Individual and collective self-activity and the development of a "worker-consciousne amongst migrant workers is not easy to determine, partly for lack of information, but partly because the range of opportunities open to them to vary their conditions, given the probable variability of tribal control, cannot be precisely stated. Monthly statistics of migration for 1910-14(117) reveal that, far from being a steady flow, the numbers of outgoing migrants varied sharply from one month to the next. The most general impression, taking the sequence as a whole, is that the rate of migration was determined more by climatic conditions than by tribal selectic although that is not to say that the organisation and dispatch of migrants was not regulated by the tribal authority. Annually, the pattern shows a characteristic double peak, closely following the start and the end of the rains, which indicates that men usually waited until after the preparation and planting of the fields or alternatively the end of the wet-season cattle migration and the harvest before setting off. Statistics for returning migrants show a definite but by no means

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* The chief chooses the men and sends them out under a foreman to earn clothes and other useful articles. The final date by which such a party has to be back is stipulated precisely, and woe betide anyone who doesn't return at the correct time....With their earnings the men must buy goods, all of which they are required to set down before their chief. The chief then takes for himself whatever he likes, and disposes of the rest quite arbitrarily.

Every black who returns from the mines must report immediately to the chief and give a detailed account of everything that happened and hand over the gifts expected of him.

rigid correlation of frequency with those for emigration at a lag of about 6 months. In other words, the tribal limitation of the period of absence was effective, but only partially so; and indeed the correlation begins progressively to break down in 1913-14. As important, perhaps, was the fact that a 5 - 7 month trip allowed many to return at the end of the dry season, when cattle pasturing and the organisation of field preparation made their heaviest demands on male labour-power, and others to be in time for the cattle trek. A comparison of 1912 with the drought years of 1911 and 13 reveals that, as one might expect, the peaks were much reduced, in expectation of good crops, but that in remaining months the levels of migration were much the same. It also suggests that in drought years men held back until crops and pasture were seen to be failing before being forced to migrate in greater than usual numbers.

The above analysis shows several general conclusions to be drawn, if only tentatively. First, labour migration was subject to the demands of the seasonal cycle of subsistence production, which was, as we saw earlier, complex and tightly integrated. Second, although for a substantial percentage of emigrants the "necessity" or involuntary nature of migration itself was determined by climatic or political forces beyond their control, for a variable number it was "optional" in the sense of not being essential for the very survival of themselves or their families. On the other hand, for a large proportion, presumably including many of those who travelled "out of season", it was structurally necessary whatever the contingent variables. Third, the migrant's timing of his departure and return and the length of his absence represented a rational attempt to integrate and align means of subsistence into the agricultural cycle of production.

If the conditions in their homeland which forced them to migrate were desparate, contract workers' experiences en route and at the point of production can hardly have left them in much better shape. Intending recruits had to make a 2-3 week journey to the Otavi railway on foot across a plain waterless for much of the year (118) - perhaps a further reason for the peaks of migration at each end of the rainy season. With many still coming South because of the famine, Pritchard noted during his journey to Ovamboland in Aug. 1915: "The condition of those we met was often pitiable - many are reported to have died in the bush through exhaustion"(119). The exigencies of bare survival and the risk of attack by robber bands made travelling in groups advantageous: the attack which provoked the ban on migration in 1904 was on "eine friedlich singende Wanderovambotruppe"*. Whether or not tribal control was effective outside Ovamboland, such an ordeal was conducive to the building of a group solidarity within the party which carried over into their period as wage-labourers. As the S.A. Administrator noted in 1921(120): "Ovambos come South in parties, and return in a similar manner". Furthermore, "they are averse to being distributed amongst individual employers, especially on farms where wages are low". The German system of distribution, despite the subjection of contract workers to the Police Zone Pass Law(121), does not seem to have established total control, and contract workers used their limited freedom to choose and bargain with employers. As one observer commented, "sie arbeiten lieber in geschlossenen Trupps und suchen deshalb die Diamantem felder den Bergbau und den Minenbetrieb"(122)**.

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* a peacefully singing party of Ovambo migrants.

** They prefer to work together in gangs and because of this make for the diamond fields, mining and mine work.

Since it became apparent that the Ovambos were deserting to the Lüderitzbucht diamond fields at a disturbingly high rate, 250 men were brought in from the Cape on one-year contracts.

Conditions and wages on farms were notorious, and it is not surprising to find them being universally avoided(123).

Equally significant, and highly suggestive, is the fact that the Tsumeb copper mine appears to have been used quite deliberately as a temporary staging-post en route to the diamond fields, with extreme variations in the size of its workforce:

Number of workers at Tsumeb, 1907-11.

	5/07-2/08	3-4/08	5/08	08/9	c4/09	09/10	10/11	12/10	early 11
extremes	250-750		600-1300			401-1014	722-964		
average		1150	950	900	600	636		416	900

Source: Nitzsche, p135-6, citing D. Kblt, 1909,10,11, "Otavi-Minen-und Eisenbahngesellschaft".

The mine management was even forced - this at a time of rapidly increasing migration from Ovamboland - to import expensive foreign contract workers during 1910: "Da sich eine starke Abwanderung der Ovambos nach den Lüderitzbuchter Diamantenfeldern störend bemerkbar machte, wurden 250 Kapleute auf einjährigen Vertrag eingeführt"(124). The reasons for the workers' preference were probably quite simple. Diamond digging was surface work, whereas copper mining had already gone underground. Further, the two biggest diamond companies, employing half the workers on the fields, operated 9½ hr. shifts, with a half hour mealbreak and Sunday off, compared with the 10-11 hours and 7 hours on Sunday generally enforced on other mines for less wages(125). That contract workers were capable of using this tactic at such an early stage presumes an active appreciation of the bargaining power of individual workers during periods of acute labour shortage(126) - they were, after all, subject to the forced labour legislation operative in the Police Zone - and also a widespread network of communication amongst themselves.

This episode had an interesting sequel in 1924-5. Before the setting up of the semi-official recruiting monopoly, SWANLA(127), in 1926, S.A. control over recruitment did not fully extend, despite a flurry of legislation and a couple of attempts to ration the supply among the largest employers, to the distribution of contract workers to the various sectors. In a situation of chronic labour shortage, migrants therefore probably retained a limited freedom to choose their employer. During 1924, no fewer than 296 workers on the diamond fields contracted scurvy, of whom 52 died. At the same time, the number of Ovambo contract workers dropped from 3648 on the 1st May to "under 2000" by the end of November. Between June and November, the company succeeded in recruiting only 334 replacements from Ovamboland, with a paltry 71 in the final 3 months of that period. It is not unlikely that returning migrants warned their comrades off this death-trap. Indeed in the following year while recruitment from northern Namibia increased by over 10%, the number actually on the mines fell by 22% and on the diamond fields themselves by 38%. Conditions at this time were so extreme that 163 Xhosa contract workers who, the Administrator complained, "had a mania for making complaints", were driven in desperation to desert and make for S.A. across the Namib, where at least 14 died(128). Despite frantic efforts to recruit abroad, C.D.M. estimated that it was still 2000 short of its requirements in Nov. 1924, when Ovambos formed a bare 54% of its total workforce(129).

The scope for such discrimination was, however, strictly limited. Conditions on the railway construction sites, the diamond fields, and in the mine compounds were often rudimentary, and occasionally a danger to life. Most sites were well away

from urban centres and without access to any locally grown produce. On the diamond fields, totally isolated from water, building materials or sources of food, living conditions for workers must have been miserable indeed. The mortality rate, at 77 per 1000 in the latter half of 1909, rose to 165 in 1910 before subsiding to 41 in the year to March 1913. At Tsumeb, in contrast, the rate stood at 30.4 for 1909 and 23.5 for the first 11 months of 1910(130). Few of the 782 dealths that occurred in that 45-month period on the diamond fields can be attributed to the work itself, which consisted in searching and sifting for stones in the Namib sands. At Tsumeb, where the standard rations, said to be an improvement on what was given before 1910, consisted of ½lb. potatoes, 1½lbs. rice and ?½lb. meat per day, it would not be surprising to find scurvy among the causes of death for the 163 workers who died in 1909 and 10. A proper compound does not appear to have been completed until 1926(131). In these circumstances, with the harsh labour discipline habitual in a forced labour economy, sheer survival must often have been the worker's first concern.

It should also be borne in mind that emigration to alternative centres of employment, such as the Witwatersrand, was virtually impossible once inside the Police Zone, and desertion sometimes highly dangerous except where an urban population was readily accessible. It is perhaps not surprising that contemporary reports mention no strikes or other forms of overt collective action by contract workers from the North. But there are a few references to either passive or direct resistance by workers from the Cape. In Oct. 1910 long-standing grievances amongst construction workers on the Wilhelmstal section of the Karibib-Windhoek railway escalated into a strike, which was suppressed with deliberate brutality by the German military(132). Significantly, this action sparked off protests in solidarity by workers on neighbouring sections of the line, and a subsequent investigation revealed that on one of them, "die Eingeborenen haben...viermal gestreikt", once in solidarity, and 3 times over working conditions. Whether these workers were all South African as well is not stated, but incidents such as this cannot have failed to make their mark on the perceptions of Ovambo fellow-workers; nor can the high level of passive resistance to the German regime within the Police Zone between 1904 and 15 (133) have completely passed them by.

By the last years of German colonial rule, the increase in the rate of surplus appropriation and the decline in the level of production within the subsistence mode had made labour migration, as the only external means generally available of meeting subsistence needs, necessary for a substantial minority of family producers. A system of labour supply and distribution was established through the tacit collaboration of the tribal ruling class with the colonial administration. Most migrants attempted to fit their period of absence into the seasonal cycle of agricultural production. To a number, however, such an integration of productive activities was already losing its importance; and some of these settled permanently in the Police Zone as wage-labourers. Whatever the balance of their class interests, once thrown upon the labour market, at this time governed by a forced labour regime of extreme brutality, migrant workers demonstrated a lively appreciation of their bargaining power in a situation of chronic, often acute labour shortages.

NOTES

1. This paper was submitted to the conference on southern Africa at Oxford, Sept. 1974.
The opening section is a bare summary of parts 1 and 2 of the original ("Introduction" and "Capital formation, labour demand and the system of labour supply"), omitted here to save space. Since I cannot read Portuguese and have not had the time for archival research, my data have been drawn primarily from secondary Namibian sources. A major study on southern Angola c1850-1915 is at present being undertaken for a PhD at SOAS by W.G. Clarence-Smith, to whom I am indebted for information and comments based on his research (see Clarence-Smith and Moorsom, "Ovamboland, 1845-1915: Underdevelopment and Class-formation", forthcoming in R.Palmer, N. Parsons & A. Seidman (eds), The Roots of rural poverty: historical essays on the development of underdevelopment in central and southern Africa (1975).

2. The following account is based on G. Borchert, Südostangola, (Hamburger Geographische Studien, 1963, Heft 17); Urquhart; J. Wellington, South West Africa and its Human Issues, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1967), ch 1-4.

3. = the amount by which potential exceeds actual evaporation + rainfall. The deficit is absolute if over a year the summer rains do not make good the previous dry season's accumulated deficit. (cf Borchert, tables 13 & 14, dgm 14)

4. cf Urquhart; Wellington; Report of the Odendaal Commission (RP 12-64); E.M. Loeb, In Feudal Africa, (supplement to Internat. J. Am. Ling., Pt II, vol. 28 no 3, 7/62).

5. Wellington, p42-3.

6. ibid, p49.

7. cf eg the detailed map of the Caprivi Strip in F. Steiner, Ergebnisse einer Bereisung des Gebiets Zwischen Okawango und Sambesi (Caprivi-Zipfel) in den Jahren 1905 und 1906, (Mitt. a. d. D. Schutzgebieten, vol. 22, I).

8. Report of Hpt. Volkmann in Deutsches Kolonialblatt, I/04, quoted in Leutwein, p204.

9. Seiner, p99-100.

10. Leutwein, p204; McKiernan, p165; W.J. Breytenbach, "Election in Kavango", Bull. Afr. Inst., no 8/73, p304.

11. Loeb, p3.

12. Urquhart, p39.

13. cf C.J. Andersson, Notes of Travel in South Africa, (Hurst & Blackett, 1875); Galton.

14. ibid, p127-8.

15. see esp. ibid; J.P.R. Wallis, Fortune My Fee. The Story of Charles John Andersson, African Explorer, 1827-67, (Cape, 1936), p384-6; McKiernan, p102-5; Pritchard, para 18; H. Schinz, Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika, 1884-7, (Oldenburg/Leipzig, Schulzesche Hof-Buchhandlung, 1891), passim.

16. p125.

17. The following is based on pre-1915 descriptions, also Urquhart, Loeb, Wellington.

18. Urquhart, p110; G. Nitzsche, Ovamboland, (Inaug.-diss., Kiel, 1913), p47-51.

19. see Appendix 3.

20. H. Tönjes, Ovamboland, (Berlin, 1911); p84; Loeb, p143.

21. cf esp. Tönjes, p144; Galton, p86-121 passim; Schinz, p293-302 passim; Urquhart, p126-7; McKiernan, p52, 74, 103.

22. H. Vedder, South West Africa in Early Times, (OUP, 1938, (trans.)), p29, 296-7.

23. ibid, (I), p154; Loeb, p122; Urquhart, p126-7; C.H.L. Hahn, "The Ovambo", in; C.H.L. Hahn, H. Vedder, L. Fourie, Native Tribes of South West Africa, (Cass, 1928), p35.

24. General descriptions in Loeb, Lebzelter, Schinz, Vedder, Hahn.

25. ibid, p4; Wellington, p32; cf eg Schinz, p142ff.

26. Urquhart, p40, 110; cf Galton, Andersson, passim.

27. eg Schinz, p299.

28. Lebzelter, p210; Loeb, p6, 151; Urquhart, p89; E.M. Wolfe, Beyond the Thirst Belt [Anglican Mission in Ovamboland], (SPG/SPCK, 1935), p26-7.

29. The latter was a royal or aristocratic prerogative. Loeb, p30, 42-3, 297-8; Lebzelter, p239.

30. see refs. previous note, also Schinz, p304. The theory was formulated by Loeb, whose work, according to Clarence-Smith, is often original and suggestive, but "erratic and prone to wild theories" (op. cit., fn.II).

31. p131.

32. although Galton states (p125) that the Ondonga levy was restricted to tobacco, and grains left untouched; cf also Loeb, p31.

33. ibid, p32; Hahn, p10-14.

34. Galton, passim.

35. McKiernan, p74, also p103; Schinz, p294, 9.

36. Wallis; McKiernan; Schinz; Vedder.

37. cf esp. Wallis; W.C. Palgrave, Report on Mission to Damaraland and Great

Namaqualand in 1876, (G.50-77), p7, 24-5, Ann.4 (letter Eriksson-Palgrave, 28/7/76); McKiernan, p42.

38. Leutwein, p92; Clarence-Smith, p3.

39. Urquhart, p131-2; G.R.J. Trümpelmann, "Die Boer in Suid-wes Afrika", A.Y. for S.A. Hist., 1948, Pt 2; McKiernan, passim; Clarence-Smith, p2-3.

40. See Seiner's map, on which the main wagon-trails are marked.

41. Urquhart, p131.

42. The following account is highly provisional in view of Clarence-Smith's researches.

43. Miller, op. cit.

44. p122-3, 33.

45. Wallis, p206-7; Urquhart, p131-3; McKiernan, p108.

46. p105-6.

47. ibid, p106, & map; cf also Schinz's map, on which is marked "Andersson's store" at the present Kuangar; & Palgrave, p48.

48. Andersson had noticed a camp in 1858.

49. Loeb, p27, quoting Hahn on his visit in 1866; Palgrave, p94.

50. Loeb, p31; Schinz, p236; Pritchard, para 37; Leutwein, p198.

51. Nitzsche, p147.

52. Report, para 39.

53. Nitzsche, p103, 26; Urquhart, p131; Schinz, p253-4, 66; McKiernan, p107; Tönjes, p46-7.

54. cf contemporary accounts, esp. Galton, Wallis (Andersson), McKiernan, Schinz.

55. Urquhart, p133. cf also Palgrave, p49; Schinz, p224-5, 29-30, 39.

56. Leutwein, p205.

57. Wallis, p206-7.

58. ibid, p358; Schinz, p252-3; McKiernan, p108; Clarence-Smith, p3.

59. Vedder, p401; Palgrave, p48-9; Urquhart, p131; McKiernan, p71, 108.

60. estimated average for 1860s-80s in J. Irle, Die Hereros, (Gütersloh, Bertelsmann, 1906), p165-71; Pritchard, para 85; Nitzsche, p103.

61. Clarence-Smith, p3.

62. Loeb, p30.

63. "The Law of the chiefs is that no native shall leave his hut unarmed" (Pritchard, para 39).

64. ibid, para 85; Schinz, p298.

65. see Arrighi, "Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective: a Study of the Proletarianisation of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia", J. Devt. Stud., vol. 6 no. 3, 4/70.

66. Loeb, p29-31; Schinz, p298; Clarence-Smith, p3.

67. Urquhart, p134; Loeb, passim; Clarence-Smith, p3.

68. cf eg McKiernan, p109; Schinz, p320.

69. cf refs to armed men at royal capitals in Wallis, McKiernan, Schinz; also Loeb, Tönjes, Hahn.

70. Clarence-Smith, p3.

71. Wallis; Schinz, p236.

72. employed by some of the smaller tribes to the NW. In 1876 the Ombalantu were reported to have "destroyed their chief and formed a republic, which is governed by a council". Significantly, "they refuse to have anything to do with whites" (McKiernan, p107; also Nitzsche, p113).

73. Loeb, p29-37 passim.

74. Leutwein, p204-5.

75. Seiner, p102-3, 6, & passim.

76. ibid, p2, 103; Leutwein, p205.

77. eg Wallis, p134.

78. Galton; Wallis; Schinz, p293, 348.

79. Leutwein, p163-4.

80. Schinz, p311; Nitzsche, p130; Hahn, p24.

81. Report, para 25. This was in August, towards the end of the dry season.

82. Wolfe; Lebzelter, p190.

83. Urquhart, p96; Schinz, p296.

84. ibid, p298-9; Tönjes, p69; Vedder, p68-9; Hahn, p34.

85. Tönjes, p69; Lebzelter, p190.

86. Schinz, p298; Dr. Gelber (1902), reported in Leutwein, p201; Urquhart, p111; Loeb, p31-2.

87. H. Tuupainen, Marriage in a Matrilineal African Tribe, (Trans. Westermarck Soc., 1970, vol. XVIII), p36; Urquhart, p126-7.

88. Memo 1915, p13; Nitzsche, quoting Streitwolf, D. Kblatt, 1911, p976; most contemporary accounts describe mission activities at length.

89. I hesitate to call them "peasants" at this stage, since that part of their average product which was appropriated as surplus accrued directly to a ruling class that was neither capitalist nor feudal, and only partially and indirectly to commercial capital.

90. Loeb, p124-5.

91. p88.

92. cf eg Leutwein, p386; Clarence-Smith, p3.

93. K. Dove, Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika, (Berlin, 1903), p186.

94. H.E. Lenssen, Chronik von Deutsch-Südwestafrika (1883-1915), (Pretoria, 1953), p171, 7; Irle, p219.

95. Statistics for the northern half of Namibia (Wellington, p43)

96. Nitzsche, p132.

97. for instance, at the railway town of Usakos in 1912 (O. Köhler, District of Karibib, South Africa, Dept. of B.A. & D., Ethnological Publications Series, 1958-9), p83.

98. Nitzsche, p134, quoting Streitwolf, "Eine Dienstreise ins Amboland", D. Kblatt, 1911.

99. Leutwein, p175-6, 92.

100. ibid, p175-7.

101. Nitzsche, p102-13.

102. C.C. Blue Book (G. 46-06), IV.2. Report on Ndabeni location, 7/04-12/05 (p70). As well as "Cape Boys" and "Transkeikaffern", the Germans recruited in or considered the Cameroons and E. Africa, India, China, and even Germany and Italy (G.B., Foreign Office, South West Africa, (F.O. Handbook no. 112, 1920), p43; Report of the Administrator for South West Africa for the Year 1924, p21 (hereafter A.R.); Leutwein, p136; Lenssen, p149; Drechsler, p263)

103. Memo 1915, p15.

104. Lenssen, p171; Leutwein, p195-6.

105. Ondonga, Ukuambi, Ongandjera, Ukualuthi, Ukuanyama (Nitzsche, p24).

106. Stals, p334; Pritchard, para 23 (meeting with Rautanen, 24/8/15).

107. Nitzsche, p24, 137 (citing "Ovambo-Anwerbe Ordnung von 15. März 1911"); Bley, (I), p273 (citing ordinance of 1/1/12); Pritchard, para 13; Memo 1915, p86; W.O. 1929, p29.

108. See Kambonde's letter to Leutwein, summarised p173; also p178 Dr. Gerber's reception late 1902.

109. reproduced in Pritchard as Ann. no. I.

110. Nitzsche, p147.

111. Lebzelter, p208.

112. C. Schlettwein, Der Farmer in Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika, (Wismar, 1907), p255.

113. Lebzelter, p219, also p209.

114. F.O. 1920, p85; Bley, (I), p198; Pritchard, para 106.

115. Nitzsche, p136.

116. See App. 1 Statistical correlations reveal little owing to the short timespan and high annual variability; my interpretations are based on the consecutive series.

117. cf App. 4.

118. Report, para 90.

119. cf Ovamboland Ordinance, 25/1/06, para 6.

120. A.R. 1921, p

121. Nitzsche, p135.

122. F.O. 1920, p43.

123. Nitzsche, p136.

124. Stals, p343; Calvert, p23.

125. On this, as on the subject of early proletarian consciousness generally, see C. van Onselen's pioneering article "Worker Consciousness in Black Miners: Southern Rhodesia, 1900-20", J.A.H., 14 no. 2, 1973.

126. South West African Native Labour Association.

127. A.R. 1925, p28.

128. A.R. 1924, p22-3.

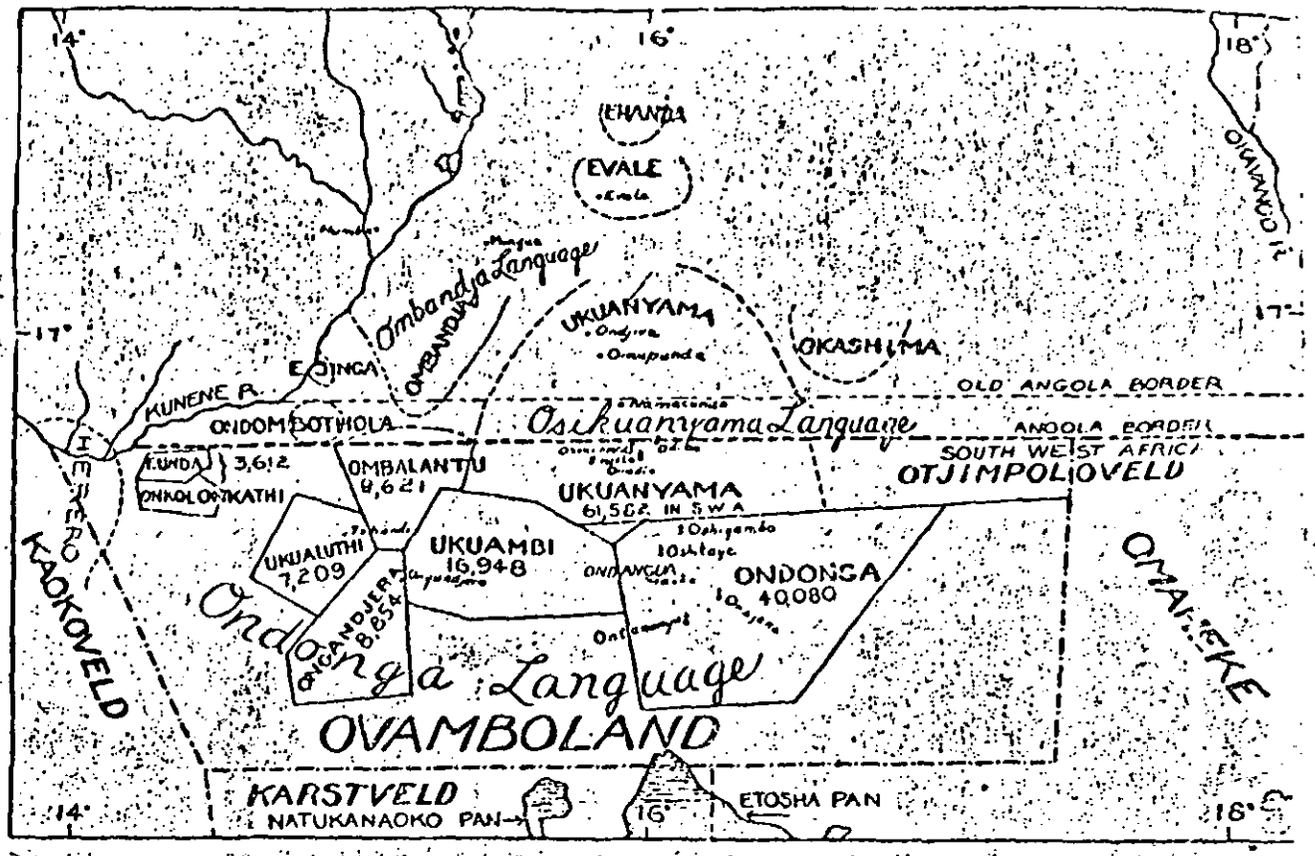
129. Stals, p338-9; H. Loth, "Zu den Anfangen des Kampfes der Arbeiter Südwestafrikas gegen den deutschen Imperialismus. Unveröffentliche Dokumente", Wiss. Zft der Karl-Marx-Univ., Gesellschafts- und Sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe, p351.

130. A.R. 1926, p91.

131. Loth, op. cit.

132. cf Bley, (2); Drechsler.

(Typist's note: As reference numbers do not agree with the text, corrections will be given by the author at the seminar).



Map 3. Ambo Tribes and Languages from: Loeb, p8

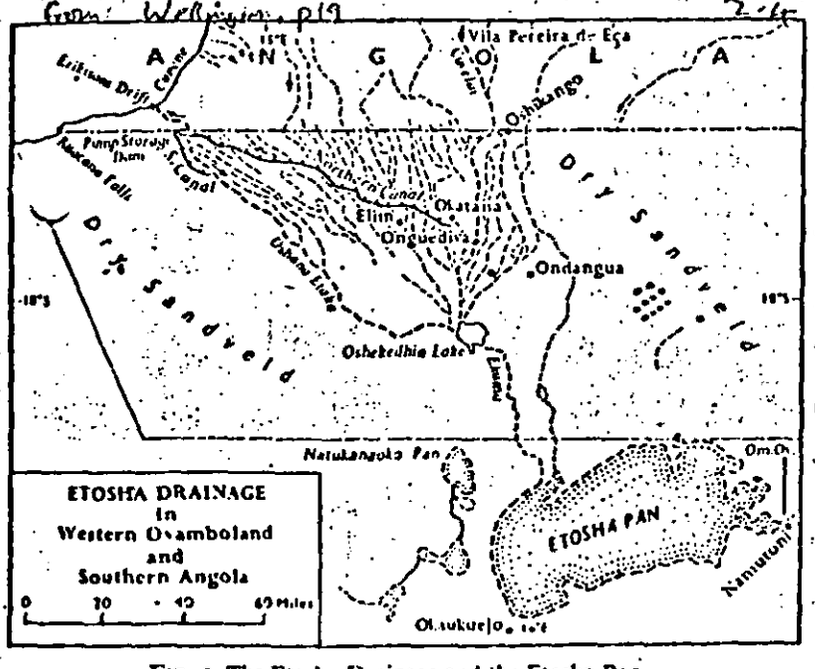
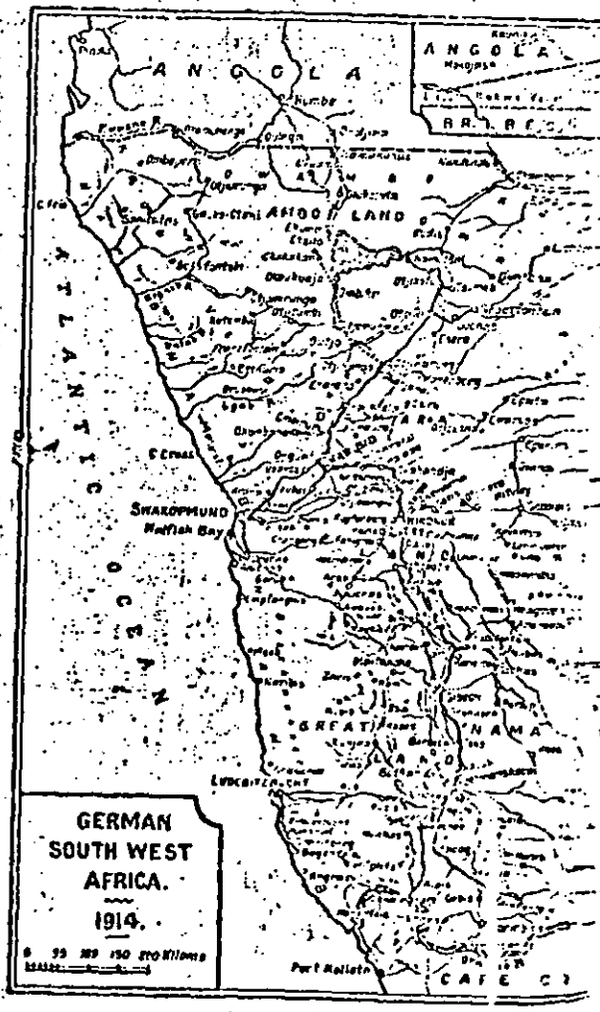


FIG. 5. The Etosha Drainage and the Etosha Pan.

The broken lines indicate *othanas* (in Ovamboland) and *mulolas* (in Angola)—flood-water channels or depressions containing water during the summer floods (*efundja*). The northern (or Okatana) canal and the southern (or Etaka) canal have been constructed as part of the Five Year Plan for the economic development of the Territory. Om. Ov. indicates the Omuramba Ovambo.

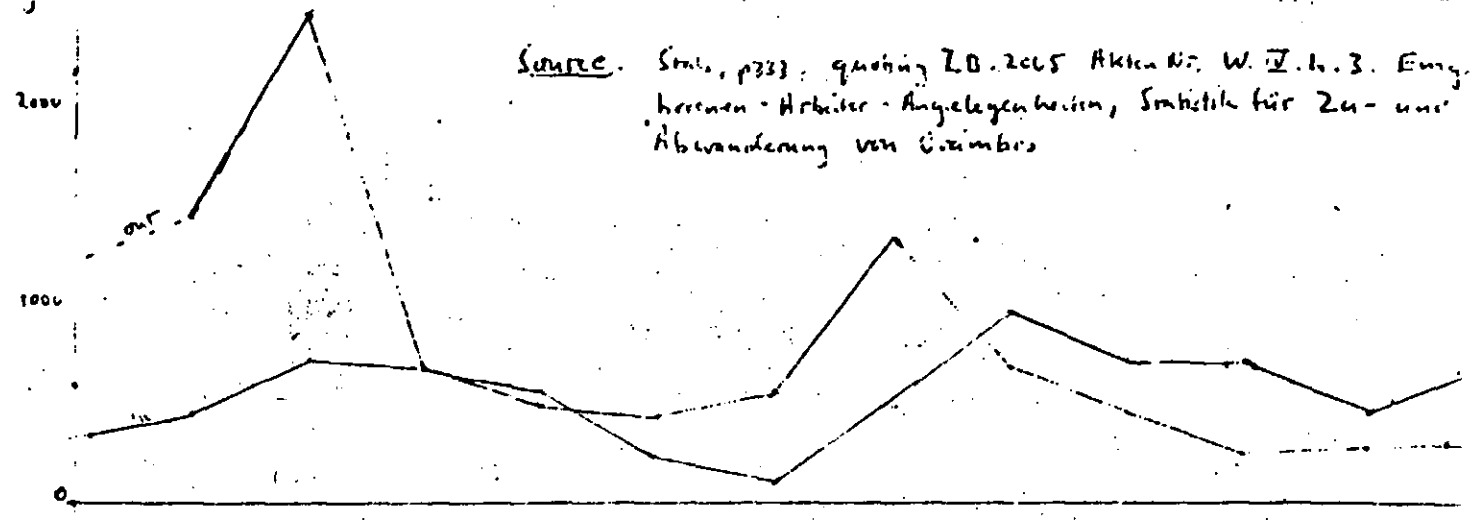


A. F. CALVERT'S MAP OF GERMAN SOUTH-WEST

Appx. I — Statistics for Chinese Migration from Newcastle to Queensland — LLC 2.15

month	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept	Oct.	Nov	Dec.
outgoing:	1436	2501	702	577	432	573	1751	674	425	215	241	7[illegible]
returning	443	127	695	589	235	134	505	991	726	692	440	62[illegible]

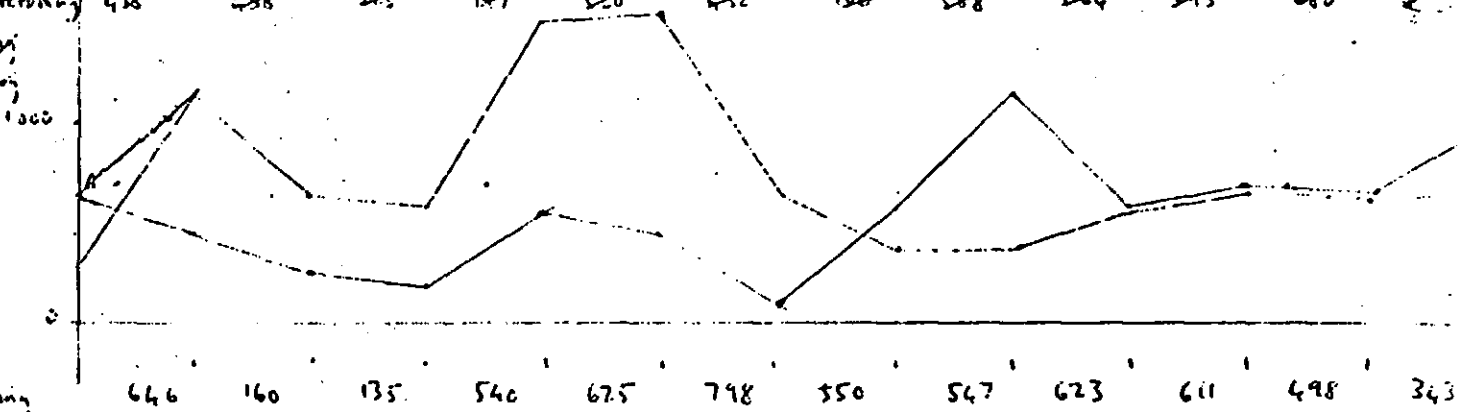
1910



Source. Stats, p333; quoting Z.D.2015 Akten Nr. W.V.h.3. Emigrationen - Arbeiter - Angelegenheiten, Statistik für Zu- und Abwanderung von Chinesen

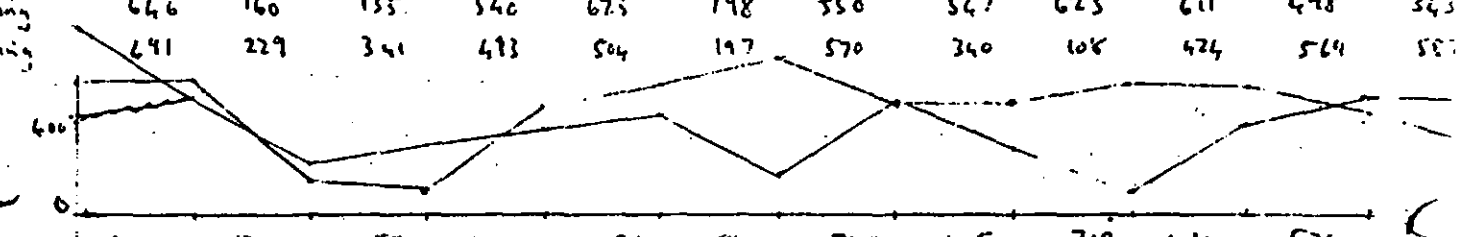
outgoing	1144	615	591	1523	1581	626	393	383	553	623	603	669
returning	435	235 [illegible]	197 [illegible]	826 [illegible]	422 [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	1166 [illegible]	593 [illegible]	826 [illegible]	667 [illegible]	[illegible]

1911



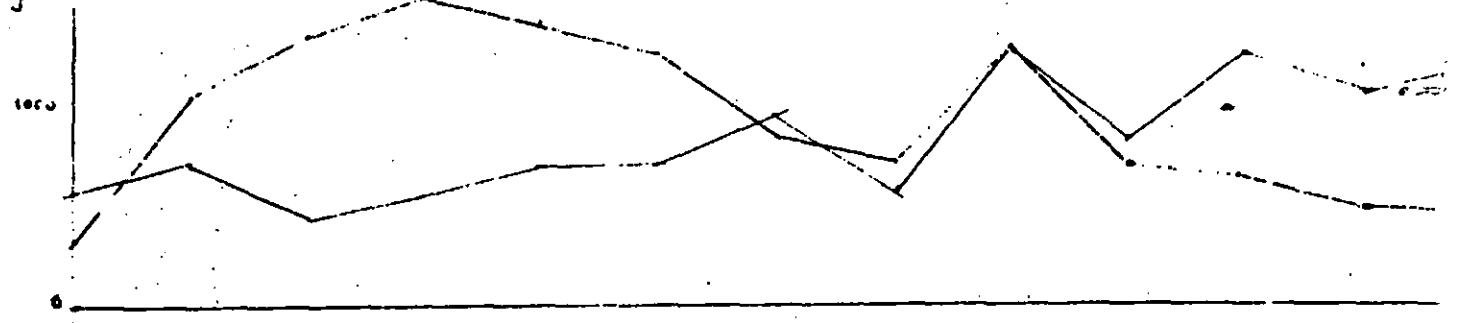
outgoing	646	160	135	540	675	798	550	547	623	611	498	343
returning	691	229	341	483	504	197	570	340	108	424	569	58[illegible]

1912



outgoing	1049	1364	1558	1404	1271	860	745	1105	719	636	538	57[illegible]
returning	736	436	572	721	737	986	589	1121	824	1275	1015	117[illegible]

1913



outgoing	1167	1046	1246	977	600	1531	1436	403	46	31	39	505
returning	560	735	910	508	875	460	664	4543	300	749	292	44[illegible]

1914

(1915)	776	49
	453	1108

