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## Germans and Rehoboth Basters in the German Southwest Africa

The small community of Rehoboth Basters, the offspring of Boer or German men and Nama women, was very specific. The group did not form any officially recognised ethnicity and was not defined legally during the existence of the German Southwest Africa, but it was still perceived to be different from the rest of native population. The “mixed-race” offspring of Boer men and native woman were not uncommon since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The fathers were mostly Trekboers, farmers who left the well-explored territories to explore the frontier. The offspring tended to be marginalised – refused by European community (a minor, but dominant group). Their positions in the ethnics of their mothers were also insecure and inclined to rejection.<sup>1</sup> They formed several groups, e.g. the Orlams, Griquas, Koranas, Bastaards, and Basters. The last of the mentioned groups, Basters, moved northwards to the territory that later became the German Southwest Africa and settled in Rehoboth.

As a minority, they interacted with the external environment in manifold ways. The paper will focus on the analysis of their interaction with German colonists, German colonial administration and their position within racial research. These points will be taken into deeper considerations, with regard to their position as a “mixed-race” community:

- the 19<sup>th</sup> century constitution written by Rehoboth Basters, its acceptance by colonial administration and their more or less autonomous position in society;
- the protection agreements (*Schutzvertrags*) of colonial administration with Rehoboth Basters, compared to those signed with other groups, e.g. with ethnics of Hereros;
- the way Rehoboth Basters were perceived by German colonial administration in case of mixed marriages. In 1905, the ban on mixed marriages was

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<sup>1</sup> H.J. van Aswegen, *History of South Africa to 1854* (Pretoria: L van Schaik Publishers, 1990), 116.

- issued in the German Southwest Africa. The applications for the exceptions submitted by German men who wished to recognise their marriages to women from Rehoboth included the arguments about the special position of Rehoboth Basters who, according to the application, should be considered differently from the native population;
- the position of Rehoboth Basters as objects of racial research. In the year 1908, anthropologist Eugen Fischer arrived to Rehoboth to study the population. Eugen Fischer, a biological anthropologist, elaborated also on the topics of ethnology and psychology. He did not use any proper methodology in those chapters of his books and the conclusions he introduced were strongly biased against the studied population and subsequently, legitimised the ban on mixed marriages.

The territory of southwest Africa was in the focus of several states. One of the first states that started to focus on the territory was the Netherlands. Dutch mariners entered the rival relationship with domineering Portugal and established two trade companies. One of them, East India Company, sailed along the shores of western Africa and triggered the first round of interest in the territory. The first Dutch attempts to colonise the area came after the year 1650. The settlers were led by Captain Jan van Riebeeck (1619–1677). They built Fortress of Good Hope (*Fort de Goede Hoop*) at the place where later Cape Town rose. The fortress and the town were not directed from the mother country, it was managed from Jakarta, where a centre of Dutch East India Company worked.<sup>2</sup> The directives from Jakarta were strict – they forbid settlers any contacts with other trade companies and they also regulated contacts with locals. Settlers were instructed not to get in such relationships with Africans that would exceed the contacts necessary to maintaining trade relations.<sup>3</sup> Dutch interest in the territory north of the river Oranje soon came to the end as it was confirmed the country did not offer natural wealth or trade commodities. Still, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century new settlers arrived – they were the offspring of Boer men and Khoi-khoi (mostly Nama) women. After arrival to the town of Rehoboth, they formed a community known as Rehoboth Basters.

German expansion needs to be considered in the context of long-term interest in colonial area. Although a unified German state was established only on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1871 and it did not show any interest in colonial sphere during its first years of existence, the wave of colonial enthusiasm began to spread in the nation in the 1840's, i.e. a few decades before the start of German colonial activities.

<sup>2</sup> Dutch East India Company was established especially as a trading company importing spices from the Moluccas and therefore, Jakarta was chosen as the seat of company.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Bertaux, *Afrika. Von der Vorgeschichte bis zu den Staaten der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1966), 144.

The attention was turned to eventual colonies by liberals and democrats who perceived the colonial gains as a way to support their trade interests and also to keep German states among prosperous nations. These ambitions worked in the context of technical and industrial revolution, which provided Germany and other European states with the financial means for the faster progress in exploration of unknown territories. The appropriate combination of factors supporting the German colonial efforts incited the first steps towards German colonies. A milestone in the process of development of colonial idea in Germany was formed by establishing of the unified state. After the initial phase of state consolidation, a precolonial agitation began to rise in its power. It is necessary to note the German Southwest Africa did not belong to the territories where a prominent German settlement was established but still belonged to more settler–popular colonies than some of the others.

Table 1. German population in German selected colonies<sup>4</sup>

Colony	Population
German Southwest Africa	14 000 <sup>a</sup>
German East Africa	4107 <sup>b</sup>
Cameroon	1643 <sup>c</sup>
Togo	288 <sup>d</sup>
Samoa	300 <sup>e</sup>

Explanations to the table:

<sup>a</sup> Helmut Bley, *Namibia under German Rule* (Münster: LIT Verlag Münster, 1996), 73; <sup>b</sup> Otto Wiliam Henderson, *Studies in German Colonial History* (London: Routledge, 1962), 34; <sup>c</sup> *Ibidem*; <sup>d</sup> Katharina Stornig, *Sisters Crossing Boundaries. German Missionary Nuns in Colonial Togo and New Guinea* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 14; <sup>e</sup> Prem Poddar, Rajeev Shridhar Pathke and Lars Jensen, *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures. Continental Europe and its Empires* (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 233.

German traders and missionaries were among the first Germans to enter the territory of southwest Africa. Missionaries initially approached the Namas who had been Christianised by British missionaries. British missionaries worked mostly with the group Orlam, which, similarly to Basters, consisted of the offspring of Boer men and Nama women. The chief of Orlams, Jonker Afrikaner, moved Orlams to central Namibia and asked German Rheinisch missionary society to send a permanent mission to the region. After the session in 1841, the missionary society decided to send their representatives to southwest Africa. The same year, missionaries

<sup>4</sup> The data are valid for the year 1913. The only exception is Togo because the sources provide only the information on number of German men in the territory for the year 1913. Therefore, the information on the year 1907 is presented.

Carl Hugo Hahn, Heinrich Kleinschmidt and Hans Christian Knudsen arrived to southwest Africa and began the work with Orlams. They established contact also with rival ethnic – Hereros. Those contacts were the reason for the split with Orlams and their forced departure from Windhouk in the year 1844. A year later, Heinrich Kleinschmidt established a new mission post and named it Rehoboth.<sup>5</sup>

## Paternal Laws – the constitution of Rehoboth Basters

Rehoboth was abandoned by its original inhabitants, Namas, in the year 1864 after the attack from Orlams. In the meantime, a community of Basters attempted to settle permanently in the town of De Tuin in the Northern Cape. However, their attempts to get the legal possession of the territory failed and in the year 1868, they made decision on moving north of the Orange River with their missionary Johann Heidmann. At that time, one of them – Hermanus van Wyk started to be referred to as a “Kaptein”.<sup>6</sup> In 1870, they continued to Berseba. They stayed in Berseba for four months and sent scouts to explore other places to settle. In this year a treaty between Hereros and Orlams (subgroup of Nama ethnic) was signed in Okahandja. It was one of the series of treaties that were signed between warring native ethnics. On this occasion, Hermanus van Wyk accompanied by two elders, announced Basters were seeking for a place to settle. Rehoboth was originally inhabited by Namas who were forced to leave after the attack from the Orlams. In 1870, a chief of Namas, Abraham Swartbooi granted Basters the permission to stay in Rehoboth. The stay was meant to be temporary, merely until the Namas agreed.<sup>7</sup> Basters settled in Rehoboth. They were granted a permanent stay after several years of negotiation.

Thus, Basters settled in the empty town and started to live an agricultural way of life. The population was estimated to 800 in the year 1874. They kept very precise church registrars that enabled to study the development of the community. They entered into marriages mostly within their own community or with Boers. The marital unions with members of native ethnics were scarce.<sup>8</sup> They sometimes got married also to Germans after the 1890’s when German colonists began to settle in the area.<sup>9</sup>

The Rehoboth Basters were specific because they created a sort of constitution that provided for the rules of their self-governance and based on this constitution,

<sup>5</sup> Rudolf G. Britz, Lang Hartmut and Cornelia Limpricht, *A Concise History of the Rehoboth Basters until 1990* (Göttingen: Klaus Hess, 1999), 11.

<sup>6</sup> Shiremo Shampapi, Hermanus van Wyk: The ‘Biblical Moses’ of the Rehoboth Baster Community. In New era. 26.5.2011. Available online: <http://milton-louw.blogspot.sk/2011/05/hermanus-van-wyk-biblical-moses-of.html>, access: 11 VI 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Shampapi, Hermanus van Wyk: The ‘Biblical Moses’ of the Rehoboth Baster Community.

<sup>8</sup> Hartmut Lang, “The Population Development of the Rehoboth Basters”, *Anthropos* 4–6 (1998): 281.

<sup>9</sup> Jarmila Svihranová, “The Fight for Mixed Marriages”, *Asian and African Studies* 2 (2014): 288–314.

they were really considered autonomous into considerable extent by colonial administration. The constitution was called Paternal Laws (*Vaterlike Wette*) and it installed Hermanus van Wyk as a Captain officially. It also described the rights and duties of the citizens of Rehoboth. The theory expounded by some of the authors is, the existence of Paternal Laws made the Rehoboth Basters so distinguished they were preferred by German and later by British administration over other groups in the society.<sup>10</sup> There is also a view that points out their partially European origin that was supposed to make them preferred by both German and British colonial administration (South African mandate over the territory).<sup>11</sup> The situation with Basters is, however, much more complicated at least in case of German administration, which period is in the focus of this paper.

Without any doubt, the Paternal Laws seem to make Rehoboth Basters a service of being perceived as more Europeanised than other native communities. However, the case of their status of “coloured people” (*farbige Stämme*) is much more problematic. As we will see in the part on mixed marriages and on anthropologist Eugen Fischer, the colonial empires developed analogically with the development of so called Scientific racism. The ideas of Scientific racism were characteristic with the fear of people of mixed descent even more than of those of pure native origin. Therefore, the Rehoboth Basters were not evaluated exclusively in a positive way.

Nevertheless, their position was still special. The Paternal Laws kept their importance into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and were incorporated into modern administration of the territory. Even on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1976 the Paternal laws were used as an argumentation instrument for obtaining self-governance and the Rehoboth Basters were granted it based on their Paternal laws by means of an Act of South African Parliament Act 56 of 1976. The Paternal Laws are no longer in use. In 1989, the counsel of Rehoboth Basters relinquished their legislative rights and executive powers and transferred them into the person of the Administrator – General of Southwest Africa. The power of Captain and counsel was restored by a resolution issued on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 1990, a day before Namibia became independent.<sup>12</sup> The new state however, did not recognise the resolution seeking to restore the power of Rehoboth representatives and Rehoboth Basters have not obtained recognition of their independence within Namibia until these days. They also are not counted independently in population censuses and therefore, their number is merely estimated – to 35,000.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Felix Mukwiza Ndahinda, “Indigenoussness in Africa”, in *The Interrelation between the Right to Identity of Minorities and their Socio-Economic Participation*, ed. Krisitin Henrard (Leiden–Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2013), 346.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> Sarah Joseph and Melissa Castan, *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 729.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph and Castan, *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 729.

## Protection treaty with Rehoboth Basters

In the midst of the 1880's, following the start of German colonial era, the protection treaties were signed with the native ethnics. The treaty with Rehoboth Basters is special in giving an immense autonomy to the community. There were more treaties that were signed in those years, but the paper will explore the one signed with Rehoboth Basters and the other that was signed with Hereros. There is a good reason to choose Hereros as a counterpart to comparison. They were numerous and formed an important ethnic. At least since the 1880's, but even sooner, they dominated the region. They also occupied an important position in European racial imagination even in pre-German times.

Their customs were studied by early missionaries, and one of them, Josaphat Hahn, left a record on how Hereros were perceived by Europeans in those times. Hahn started the stereotype for future interpretations of Hereros in his work *Die Ovaherero* (1869). He described them in a mostly positive manner, but his ideas turned to form an interpretative frame that was later misused. Hereros were described as people characteristic with their dominance, racial pride and beauty.<sup>14</sup> Another missionary, Heinrich Vedder, later elaborated an idea Hereros as noble savages and a local superior ethnic.<sup>15</sup> These representations caused the Hereros were considered to be especially dangerous because of their "bellicose nature" – the fact that might have added to the strong reaction of Germans in the war 1904 – 1907 that started after Herero uprising and led to the genocide.

Both treaties were signed in a short period of the year 1885. The treaty signed with Rehoboth Basters is dated to 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1885 and the treaty with Hereros to 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1885.<sup>16</sup> The treaty between Rehoboths and Germans was signed by Hermanus van Wyk and German plenipotentiary Carl von Büttner that represented German emperor. Hereros were represented by main chief Maherero and German empire was represented by a commissary Heinrich Ernst Göring. The treaty with Basters contains two more paragraphs which are crucial in defining their position within the colonial territory.

Both treaties start with the representatives of native ethnics officially asking the German emperor for protection (paragraph 1). They also both contain paragraphs where Rehoboth captain and Herero chief oblige not to permit the land possession to any other nation (Basters § 3, Hereros § 2). They further oblige to protect the

<sup>14</sup> Michael Bollig and Jan-Bart Gewald, *People, Cattle and Land. Transformations of a Pastoral Society in Southwestern Africa (History, Cultural Traditions and Innovations in Southern Africa)*, vol. 13, eds. Michael Bollig and Jan-Bart Gewald (Cologne: Rüdiger Koeppel, 2001), 9.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> Text of the treaties is available online as the Appendix to the sessions of German Parliament: Aktenstück Nr. 277 (Schutz- und Freundschaftsverträge), in *Reichstagsprotokolle* 6 (1885/1886): 1388–1389; [http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt3\\_k6\\_bsb00018461\\_00237.html](http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt3_k6_bsb00018461_00237.html), access: 11 VI 2017.

lives and well-being of German citizens and the subjects under German protection at their territories. The people coming to Namaland or Hereroland are however, asked to follow their customs. The formulation “laws and manners” – “*Gesetze und Gebräuche*” was used in the Baster treaty, whereas the formulation “customs and manners” – “*Sitte und Gebräuche*” can be found in the treaty with Hereros (Basters § 4, Hereros § 3). Both a Rehoboth captain and a Herero chief are entitled to collect taxes that existed on their territories before the treaties (Ibid). They were also supposed to keep piece in Namaland and Hereroland (Basters § 6, Hereros § 5).

The first matter that brings forward an inconspicuous but important difference in the approach to the ethnics is included in the paragraphs that deal with the personal jurisdiction. Dealings related to the Basters are solved by a captain and those related to Hereros by their chief. However, if any Rehoboth Baster got into the dealing with a German or a subject under German protection, a mixed court would be established (§ 5). The situation was not firmly defined if the same case rose up with Hereros and a German or a subject under German protection. The treaty stated the treatment of those cases will be negotiated later and until the time an agreement is reached, the cases belong under the jurisdiction of a German commissary (Heinrich Ernst Göring at that time) or another representative of German power (§ 4).

The crucial paragraphs delineating the position of Rehoboth Basters and making it different were the paragraphs two and seven in the treaty signed on the 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1885. The second paragraph recognised the rights and freedoms of Rehoboth Basters and, even more importantly, recognised all the treaties with other nations and ethnics as valid (§ 2). This recognition, in fact, granted Rehoboth Basters a sort of independence in their dealings with the others. They were supposed to consult the German opinion in the future disagreements or other questions (§ 6).

The seventh paragraph touched the future arrangements of other, undefined, things. It was stated those matters would be negotiated between two governments. The formulation is extremely important because it accepts the Rehoboth leaders as representatives of a governing body: “When still other things need to be decided on between the German Empire and the Captain of Rehoboth, those will be confirmed later through an agreement between two governments” (§ 7).

## Rehoboth Basters in the light of ban on mixed marriages

The topic of mixed marriages stirred many emotions and became a popularly discussed issue in newspapers of during the sessions of Reichstag and it became an important concept of wilhelmine racial policies, even if the real number of marriages was not significant. In 1905, mixed marriages were banned in German Southwest Africa. The topic is approached from different positions.

The ban on mixed marriages might be interpreted as the result of the situation that arose in German Southwest Africa – on 12<sup>th</sup> January, 1904 the uprising of Hereros started and it was followed by the uprising of Nama in the autumn. One of the views is, the German authorities overreacted and it resulted in the ban. This argument is not fully valid, as the marriages were banned also in Samoa (1912), which was a peaceful colony.<sup>17</sup> Gender studies point out the conflict between a “white man’s right” of sexual privilege and the ban. The suggestion is that because the ban related only to the marital unions, it actually formed a compromise between the pressure for keeping “German morals”, “racial purity” and also keeping this privilege at the same time.<sup>18</sup> The phenomenon was interpreted also as an attempt to reinforce racial segregation – this issue was approached thoroughly by Helmut Stocker for the first time.<sup>19</sup> While it is expectable all of those factors may have played their roles, this direction seems to be really significant, as the ban was issued in the intellectual atmosphere when the racial and racist ideas succeeded in getting importance. The racial terminology had already been established at the point the German colonial era began and those ideas got an intellectual support from authors like Arthur Gobineau (1816–1882) or Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927) who added the theoretical frame and introduced the topic of “racial purity” in pseudo-academic frame.

The topic of mixed marriages reaches a special importance in the relation to Rehoboth Basters because German settlers who entered into marital unions with native women, married typically women from Rehoboth. Those men who tried to reach the recognition of their marriages were almost exclusively married to women from the community of Rehoboth Basters. The number of the mixed marriages was very small – 20 cases existed at the time of the ban. The agenda to those cases when men sought for the recognition of their marriages is preserved in the archives in Berlin Lichterfelde – archival funds of Imperial Colonial Office (*Reichskolonialamt*) contain also the collections of documents that belonged to its predecessor Colonial Department (*Kolonial-Abteilung*).<sup>20</sup> Only one case of marriage that is described in the funds was between a German and a woman of Herero – Canadian origin. All of the other cases were those when men married women from Rehoboth. They applied to the governor’s office, courts or submitted applications to German institutions (Colonial Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Chancellor – at that time Bernhard von Bülow). The argumentation of those men revolved also around

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Helmut Bley, *Kolonialherrschaft und Sozialstruktur in Deutsch Südwestafrika* (Hamburg: Leibniz Verlag, 1968), 252.

<sup>18</sup> Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884–1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 82.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Helmut Stoecker, “The Position of Africans in the German Colonies”, in *Germans in the Tropics. Essays in German Colonial History*, eds. Arthur J. Knoll and Lewis H. Gann (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 126.

<sup>20</sup> The Imperial Colonial Office was established in the year 1907 and it replaced Colonial Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.



the lack of white women in the colony and the mixed origin of their wives that were therefore to be considered an appropriate “substitute” for a European wife.

Another stray of argumentation was related to the military services of their fathers-in law for German colonial army. Army in the German Southwest Africa was solely German at the beginning. Paid volunteers or the men who preferred to spend their obligatory military service in a colony formed the army of German Southwest Africa. The army was initially formed by Curt von Francois. In this colony, Germans did not conscript any native ethnics. The only exception was a military troop consisting of Rehoboth Basters. *Landeshauptmann* and later governor Friedrich von Lindequist signed a treaty on the conscription of Rehoboth Basters with captain Hermanus van Wyk in the year 1895. According to the treaty, Rehoboth Basters were obliged to provide the army with forty to fifty men in the year the treaty commenced and fifteen to twenty men annually thereafter.<sup>21</sup>

At the time before the ban, Theodor Leutwein was a governor of the colony. As it has been already mentioned, the Herero uprising broke out in the year 1904. The uprising started to draw the interest of mother country relatively early and ceased to be considered a local matter. The responsibilities for the developments were soon assumed by Alfred von Schlieffen, chief of the General Staff. The usual procedure asked to employ the Ministry of War, but emperor Wilhelm II turned to General Staff and thus, included his own person even more deeply in the events in the colony and in the methods of war.<sup>22</sup> The military operations in German Southwest Africa did not bring an immediate effect and therefore, the voices for the change emerged. Leutwein’s moderate efforts to calm down the uprising were considered to be unsuccessful and general Lothar von Trotha was sent to the colony. Leutwein remained a highest civil official but without many powers. He could not get on with Trotha who started a rough military campaign, which lead to genocide. Finally, Leutwein left the colony after many disagreements, in the autumn of the year 1905. This introduction was important to explain the way another civil official, Hans Tecklenburg came to the power. Hans Tecklenburg was a deputy of governor and in the period between Leutwein’s departure and the arrival of a new governor, Tecklenburg assumed the civil responsibilities. Hans Tecklenburg spoke up against mixed marriages even before the year 1905. His attitude is especially interesting as he was one of the first officials in German Southwest Africa who opposed the mixed marriages in the terms of “racial purity” and spoke of the “dangers of race-mixing”.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The text of the treaty, which was signed on the 26th July, 1885 is published in: Arthur J. Knoll and Hermann J. Hiery, *The German Colonial Experience. Selected Documents on German-Rule in Africa, China and the Pacific 1884–1914* (Lanham: America University Press, 2010), 83.

<sup>22</sup> Jeremy Sarkin, *Germany’s Genocide of the Herero. Kaiser Wilhelm II, His General, His General, His Settler, His Soldiers* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), 188.

<sup>23</sup> Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire*, 93.

The discussion on mixed marriages was very closely intertwined with the definition of a “native person” – *Eingeborene*. Until that time, the administration tended to treat Rehoboth Basters slightly different because of their European ancestry, but the time came to re-evaluate the older attitudes in the year 1905. In order to follow the ban it was necessary to define more precisely who is to be considered “native”, especially in the light of fact that at least those men who asked for the recognition of their marriages, were married to women from Rehoboth.

On 23rd September 1905, an instruction not to register marriages between persons from the categories of *Eingeborene* and *Nicheingeborene* was issued. Tecklenburg’s original plan was for the instruction to enter into the validity on 1st January, 1906, but after the arrival of a new governor, Friedrich von Lindequist in November, the ban on mixed marriages was confirmed and its validity was extended retrospectively to 1st October, 1905.

Before Lindequist’s arrival to the colony, Hans Tecklenburg informed the Colonial Department on the prohibition of mixed marriages. The report he prepared on the 23rd October illuminates the turn of attitude towards the mixed race persons, which touched also Rehoboth Basters. In the past, the administration tended to consider Basters as more Europeanised and thus more cultured because of their European ancestry – an attitude inherently xenophobic, but based on the simple idea of likeness and otherness. Hans Tecklenburg represents a new approach that is formed by the theories of race and racism which see person as a biologically determined entity and therefore, being “a half-European” does not secure the position in the society. On the contrary, this approach described mixed-race people as more dangerous because they were understood as elements destabilising the society and trespassing the borders on national and racial bodies.

In his report, Hans Tecklenburg elaborated both moral and legal considerations related to mixed marriages and used racial and racist argumentation.<sup>24</sup> The administrator was motivated ideologically – concerned about the conscription of the offspring of such unions into regular army, obtaining the right to vote or other rights. The reason was, as a legitimate child, the person would be entitled to German citizenship. Tecklenburg operated with the notions of the “purity of German race” and keeping German morals: “Male mongrels will be conscripted, they will obtain the possibility to apply for public offices and the future can bring them the right to vote and other rights related to state citizenship. The woman from the native population and her children will be excepted from special legislation for the natives, e.g. related to the consummation of alcoholic beverages, obligation to carry a passport, special regulations on keeping guns. These consequences should be carefully considered because they hide an immense danger: the purity

<sup>24</sup> Tecklenburg to the Colonial Department. Bericht, betreffend Zulässigkeit von Eheschließungen zwischen Nicheingeborenen und Eingeborenen, 23 X 1905, Bundesarchiv Berlin – Lichterfelde (BAB), Reichskolonialamt (R) 1001 1001/5423, pp. 67–72.

of the German race and German manners, as well as the powerful position of the white man will be endangered through these consequences".<sup>25</sup>

Modern intellectual racism can be exemplified at the works of Arthur Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Gobineau was the first who did not interpret the race from the biological viewpoint – he began to see the notion as a “spiritual matrix”.<sup>26</sup> The most significant elements of his work *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*, which was first published in the years 1853 (vol. 1–2) and 1855 (vol. 3–4), are the crossbreeding of races and the degeneration related to this process. Gobineau used the term degeneration for the cases when blood “ran too far” from its original composition as a result of “miscegenation”.<sup>27</sup> Race is, for Gobineau, a key to the understanding of history and its purity keeps the civilizations alive and the “racial degeneration” is the reason of biological, cultural and moral decline. The race in Chamberlain’s work is also related to history. It is explained at the background of the racial fight and the notion of race is much more dynamic than in *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*.

The rejection and fear of “racial crossbreeding” and of a “mongrel”, so typical for the theoreticians of racism, are to be found in Tecklenburg’s report in many places. He wrote also specifically about the Rehoboth Bastards and refused to treat them differently. Tecklenburg describes that the fact they were Christians for a long period of time and their traditions were mostly European some of his contemporaries suggested a different approach to this community. He thought of those arguments as insignificant and presented precisely opposite view – he saw this religious and cultural argumentation as aggravating: “Bastards<sup>28</sup> are the offspring of Europeans and Hottentot women. However, all of the reasons for inadmissibility of matrimonies between natives and non-natives are also valid for them, only to a larger or smaller extent – depending on the mixing of their blood. It is especially true because their bad character features outweigh those good ones”.<sup>29</sup> The solution suggested and also executed by Hans Tecklenburg included the prohibition of civil marriages between Germans and natives. The children of marriages not solemnised by states would be illegitimate, the fact which would restrain the

<sup>25</sup> Hans Tecklenburg to Colonial Department, 23 X 1905, BAB, R 1001/5423, p. 68.

<sup>26</sup> Milan Hrabovský, *Rasová mytológia* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2011), 112.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Arthur Gobineau, *Versuch über die Ungleichheit der Menschenrassen I-IV* (Stuttgart: Frommanns, 1922), 31–32.

<sup>28</sup> The word „Bastard” is left in the translation from German. It is a terminological question how to treat the name of the community. They themselves use the term Baster of Baaster (Afrikaans) which is used standardly also in English discourse, obviously because the word Bastard carries negative connotation. German use of the word also carried an ambiguous meaning even at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the word was still used in this form – also in a book *Die Rehobother Bastards und das Bastardierungsproblem beim Menschen* by Eugen Fischer that will be discussed later. The term Bastard will be used in the transcriptions of archivalia and other primary sources, to keep the authenticity.

<sup>29</sup> Tecklenburg to the Colonial Department, 23 X 1905, BAB, R 1001/5423, p. 71.

rights of children born in such unions. They would not be also entitled to their father's property. Tecklenburg considered and subsequently refused also the compromise that would give the children at least the right to inherit the property.

The archival sources reveal several cases when the men decided to reach validity of their marriages. These cases were always motivated by the efforts to provide the children with the right to inherit the property. The sources show the cases when the institutions located in Germany entered the interaction. One of those cases was the one started by farmer Martin Wede. He came to the colony as a soldier (*Schutztruppe*) in 1893 and in 1897, he married a woman from Rehoboth named Sophie Diergaadt. The ceremony was religious. They had three children: Elisabeth (1898), Ida (1901) and Martin (1904). It seems that Wede realised in 1905 that the religious ceremony would not be valid in the view of state and a civil marriage was necessary. The news on the prepared prohibition probably spread in 1905 because several other settlers asked for a state solemnization of their marriages<sup>30</sup> (but according the sources, Wede seems to be the only one who continued to fight for the recognition of his marriage after 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1905).

Wede asked for the civil registration in August or September 1905<sup>31</sup> and after not being successful, he continued to act in the year 1907. He sent a letter to chancellor von Bülow. The letter is dated to 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1907. There are two most important lines in his argumentation – the lack of white women in the colony and the ancestry of his wife. He put emphasis on the fact there were almost no white women in the colony and he did not want to live in concubinate, therefore he got married by a missionary priest.<sup>32</sup> The second line of his argumentation was built on the fact his wife is of Baster origin – Martin Wede described the military merits of his father-in-law who fell in the battle on the German side.<sup>33</sup> The answer to the letter has not been found yet and the case with the highest probability remained unsolved.

Another case of a man trying to solemnise the marriage with a Rehoboth Baster was that of Rudolf Brühshaver. The settler died after he began to solve the legitimate status of his children and it was necessary to deal with the question of his property. He was married twice – the first marriage was to Rehoboth Baster Emma Williams. They had two children named Emma Else Magdalene (1896) and Hermann Ernst Heinrich (1901).<sup>34</sup> After the death of his wife, Brühshaver married again with

<sup>30</sup> Wolfram Hartmann, "Making South West Africa German? Attempting imperial, juridical, colonial, conjugal and moral order", *Journal of Namibian Studies* 1 (2007): 73.

<sup>31</sup> There is an uncertainty in the date – Martin Wede states September, but Wolfram Hartmann worked with the original of the application in the archives in Namibia and he states August; Martin Wede to von Bülow, 25 VI 1907; BAB, R1001/5423, p. 98; Hartmann, "Making South West Africa German?": 73.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Wede to von Bülow, 25 VI 1907, BAB, R1001/5423, p. 99.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 98.

<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Justice to the Imperial Colonial Office, 26 II 1909, BAB, f. R 1001/5423, p. 122.

a German and had other two children. His German widow and two children were now entitled to the property. Brūshaver did not register his children in time and tried to do so in 1902, after the death of his wife. The late registration was refused by authorities and he did not continue his efforts.<sup>35</sup> After his death in 1908, the problem arose again. The children were present in German boarding school at the time of their father's death. Their presence in Germany might be the reason the case got more attention from the German institutions. Children were assigned official legal custodians by a local court (*Amtsgericht*). Emma's custodian, attorney Lüdicke, began the activities aimed to secure her rights – applied to the District Court in Windhouk and asked to recognise the legitimacy of both children. His application was based on Brūshaver's application from 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 1902.<sup>36</sup> The application got to the Imperial Colonial Office and further to the Ministry of Justice. State secretary Rudolf Nieberding refused the exception in the case of Rudolf Brūshaver's children.<sup>37</sup> The attorney further addressed chancellor's office.<sup>38</sup> It seems also this case remained without any solution.

Another case of a marriage with a Rehoboth Baster was that of farmer Hermann Guthke. He got married a few days before the ban and the ceremony was performed in Walvis Bay, which was the territory belonging to the Cape colony (i.e. British territory). The authorities in German Southwest Africa refused to recognise the validity of this marriage and to register Guthke's son Walter as a legitimate offspring.<sup>39</sup> The recognition of marriage was refused also by Imperial Colonial Office and by the District Court in German Southwest Africa.<sup>40</sup>

The case of Hans Denk (an activist and promotor of NSDAP in the region in the 1930's<sup>41</sup>) and Cornelia Johanna Beukes belongs to those cases which reveal the conflict of old and new approaches toward Rehoboth Basters (cultural closeness due to partially European origin vs. unwanted mixed race). Hans Denk acted through his attorney Hugo Skopnik who applied to Colonial Imperial Office in 1910.<sup>42</sup> The attorney Skopnik expounded the argumentation line that was based on the relativity and imprecise definition of the notion of "coloured tribes" (*farbige Stämme*). He suggested Rehoboth Basters were not to be considered members of "coloured tribes" and therefore the marriage was valid.<sup>43</sup> He tried to build analogy with Japanese who were as a rule excepted from being categorised differently than Europeans

<sup>35</sup> Brūshaver to Leutwein, 22 VIII 1902, BAB R 1001/5423, pp. 112–113.

<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Justice to the Imperial Colonial Office, 26 II 1909, BAB, R 1001/5423, p. 122.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>38</sup> Lüdicke to the chancellor, 10 VII 1909, BAB, R 1001/5423, p. 124.

<sup>39</sup> Wehle to Schuckmann, 1 IX 1908, BAB, R 1001/5423, p. 104.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>41</sup> Linné Tore Eriksen and Richard Moorsom, *The Political Economy of Namibia. An Annotated Critical Bibliography* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 1989), 160.

<sup>42</sup> Skopnik to the Imperial Colonial Office, 1 XI 1910, BAB, R 1001/5423, p. 137.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 138.

and if this exception was possible also the exception for Rehoboth Basters who even shared European ancestry was possible.<sup>44</sup>

The Colonial Imperial Office did not solve Skopnik's question and later, the District Court in Windhouk proclaimed the marriage to be void and Cornelia Beukes appealed against the judgment.<sup>45</sup> The Higher Imperial Court (*Kaiserliches Obergericht*) surprisingly decided the ban on mixed marriages did not exist at all (the officials were only instructed, not ordered not to register the marriages).<sup>46</sup> The marriage between Hans Denk and Cornelia Beukes was recognised as valid but the attitude was not applied in other cases and the registration of marriage with a member of the native ethnic was further being refused.

## The position of Rehoboth Basters in racial research

The Rehoboth Basters got into the focus of research of early geneticist, eugenicist and eugenicist Eugen Fischer. Fischer's work serves as an illustration of the transition from biological racial research – Rassenkunde to so called scientific racism. Fischer is a representative of the approach that was illustrated also in case of mixed marriages. His worldview was racist and he admitted ideological inspiration in authors like Arthur Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain.<sup>47</sup>

Eugen Fischer travelled to the town of Rehoboth to do research on its inhabitants. He expected to provide the science with the illustration of Mendelian laws and also to illustrate the consequences of "miscegenation". He had been interested in Mendelian laws of heredity since the years of his study at the Albert Ludwig's University in Freiburg. He got to know professor August Weismann there. The professor awakened his interest in genetics. He lectured on the Mendelian laws of heredity, which were not widely acknowledged at that time. Fischer became an enthusiast of this new knowledge on the transition of features without the influence of environment.<sup>48</sup> He obtained doctoral degree at the same university and initiated his teaching career.<sup>49</sup> The Institute of anatomy where he started his job owned a collection of human skulls created by a former leader of the institute Alexander Ecker. The collection was not being used at the time

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>45</sup> Decision of the Higher Imperial Court in Windhouk in the case of the void marriage of Cornelia Beukes and Hans Denk, BAB, R 1001/2124, p. 144.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 161.

<sup>47</sup> More e.g. in Jarmila Švihranová, *Od ideológie k politike rasizmu* (Sládkovičovo: Vysoká škola Danubius, 2015).

<sup>48</sup> Eugen Fischer, Autobiography (manuscript), part 1, 13 VI 1900, Archiv der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft (AMPG), Department III, fund 94/ 20, unpaginated.

<sup>49</sup> Freiburg University: Confirmation of employment, 28 V 1938, Universitätsarchiv der Humboldt-Universität (UHU), fund Personalakte Fischer, p. 88.

he noticed it.<sup>50</sup> The research of human skull played an important role in racial research and Fischer's anthropological interest in the topic might have incited also his interest in the questions of race. After the years of troubles with securing a stabile position, he finally became an extraordinary professor in the year 1904. However, his career made an important reach after the year 1908 when he travelled to the German Southwest Africa to conduct the research in Rehoboth.

As Fischer's interest began to turn to racial research it was only the matter of time when his attention would focus on the colonies. It was probably accelerated by so called *Hottentotenwahl*<sup>51</sup> – the elections at the beginning of the year 1907 that followed the fall of the government because of immense costs inflicted on the state by the war in the German Southwest Africa. To get knowledge on the colony, Eugen Fischer started to read Maximilian's Bayer brochure called *Die Nation des Bastards* on Rehoboth Bastards. Bayer himself had noticed the people from Rehoboth would be the ideal "material" to illustrate the Mendelian laws of heredity.<sup>52</sup>

The scientists working on spread on knowledge on laws of heredity had a significant share in developing early genetic teachings. Eugen Fischer also gets the merits in this sense because he immensely added to the popularisation of the knowledge on genotype and phenotype.<sup>53</sup> The problematic part of Fischer's work published from his stay in the German Southwest Africa – *The Rehoboth Bastards and the Problem of Miscegenation among Humans* (*Die Rehobother Bastards und das Bastardierungsproblem beim Menschen*, 1913), is the one where he used no methodology and elaborated the psychological and ethnological conclusions on Bastards that were racist and supported the idea on the dangers of "miscegenation". The work is another illustration on how the approach to Baster's shifted during the years.

After the arrival to the German Southwest Africa, Eugen Fischer met with the rejection to participate in research from the Rehoboth Bastards. Later on, he started friendship with the translator of Gobineau's works Ludwig Schemann. Their correspondence reaches the time span of several decades and is to be found in the archives of the University library of University of Freiburg. In one of his letters, Eugen Fischer writes about the cons of anthropological and eugenic work – he stated the work of anthropologist was very difficult because of the fact it means working with "the blacks" and the work of eugenist in Germany is plagued by spread of alcoholism.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Bernhard Gessler, *Eugen Fischer (1874–1967). Leben und Werk des Freiburger Anatomen, Anthropologen und Rassehygienikers bis 1927* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), 14.

<sup>51</sup> Niels C. Löscher, *Rasse als Konstrukt. Leben und Werk Eugen Fischers* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997), 53.

<sup>52</sup> Christopher Hutton, *Race and the Third Reich. Linguistics, Racial Anthropology and Genetics in the Dialectic of Volk* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 69.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, 65.

<sup>54</sup> Eugen Fischer, Letter to Ludwig Schemann, 11 III 1912, Universitätsbibliothek Freiburg (BF), fund NL 12/1803, letter no. 4.

Eugen Fischer wrote in his book the Rehoboth Basters were against the participation in research because they felt becoming objects of research would have positioned them at the level of the black Africans – *Eingeborene*. According to Fischer, it was especially difficult to obtain the trust from women who were afraid of sexual abuse and moreover, they suspected he was in the service of colonial administration or the traders.<sup>55</sup> He still managed to collect anthropometric data from 310 people and photographed more than 300 of the Rehoboth Basters. The pictures he made can be found in found as the appendix of his book and full collection is available in the archives of Max Planck Society in Berlin. Fischer elaborated also 23 family trees – the task was possible because of the church registries, which were preserved in Rehoboth and contained the records on several generations of inhabitants.

The book *The Rehoboth Bastards and the Problem of Miscegenation among Humans* consists of four parts and is based on the methods of the analysis of somatic data, categorisation of physical attributes and compiling genealogies. It is not necessary to mention the first three parts of the book. The crucial part is the last one that touches the life, material culture and people in Rehoboth. The author of the book considered his work to be a part of the field of racial hygiene and interpreted the research on mixed race as a new task of anthropology.<sup>56</sup> The work (or its last part) is an attempt to find the explanation for the decline of civilisation. Eugen Fischer called the conditions in Rehoboth “the clash of advanced European (Boer) culture” and “lower positioned Hottentot culture”.<sup>57</sup> The supposed decline of culture was, in Fischer’s words, caused by the “miscegenation”. He described the people of Rehoboth as carrying the characteristics of “racial decline” and their culture (both material and spiritual) as degenerated and decadent.<sup>58</sup>

The most important goal of the book was to illustrate the Mendelian laws. It concluded they were valid as far as the somatic features were concerned. However, Fischer expounded the theory, mental qualities were inherited randomly and therefore, the author advised avoiding unions between the members of two races: “[...] mixing of eminently different races often forms individuals typical with disharmonic mental features; something of a courage, energy and at the same time, the lack of intelligence, self-control and foresight”.<sup>59</sup> The worsened position of Basters was thus further cemented by the pseudo-science.

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<sup>55</sup> Eugen Fischer, *Die Rehobother Bastards und das Bastardierungsproblem beim Menschen* (Graz: Akademische Druck, 1961), 57.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, 137.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, 228.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, 297.



Jarmila Brezinová Švihranová  
**Germans and Rehoboth Basters in the German Southwest Africa**

Summary

The article focuses on the dynamics of relationship between majority and minority in the German Southwest Africa. It pays attention especially to the relationship between Germans and Rehoboth Basters, the offspring of Boers and native women. They settled in the town of Rehoboth in the year 1870. They lived in the territories southern to the river Orange before their arrival to Rehoboth. The paper focuses on the analysis of their interaction with German colonists, German colonial administration and their position as objects of racial research. The 19<sup>th</sup> century constitution, called Paternal Laws helped them initially to improve their stand in the colonised society. They were considered to be Europeanised and therefore, valued more than the African ethnics in the hierarchy of the society. It was further reflected in the protection agreement (*Schutzvertrag*) that granted their “rights and liberties” and was more generous than analogous treaty signed with the native ethnic of Hereros. The shift to different position in the society that was influenced by racist stereotypes can be exemplified at the case of the ban on mixed marriages. In 1905, the ban on mixed marriages was issued in the German Southwest Africa. The applications for the exceptions submitted by German men who wished to recognise their marriages to women from Rehoboth included the arguments about the special position of Rehoboth Basters who, according to the application, should be considered differently from the native population. Their applications encountered ignorance or refusal because the society started to be permeated by the racist idea a mixed-race people were even more dangerous for the society than those of fully native origin. This argumentation was legitimised by pseudo-science when the Rehoboth Basters became objects of racial research conducted by anthropologist and eugenicist Eugen Fischer.