

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
LAND REFORM
AND LAND QUESTION

CONTRIBUTION ON
BEHALF OF THE DAMARA
SPEAKING NAMIBIANS

PRESENTED BY:

CHIEF JUSTUS //GAROEB
THE ACTING PARAMOUNT CHIEF
OF THE DAMARAS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

YOUR EXCELLENCIES
COMRADES AND FRIENDS

I am Chief Garoëb the Acting Paramount Chief of the Damara speaking Namibians. I am hereby representing the Damara Chief's Council who prepared the document I am going to present to you on behalf of the the Damaras in Namibia.

This main Conference Document which is handed in for distribution is in itself a summary of historic events which we deem very necessary for the purposes of this Conference.

It's so unfortunate that I cannot present the whole document but only extracts thereof because my time is so limited. However I am urging you all to kindly make time to read it through as I believe that it has enough detail for further research.

In the introduction we are dealing with the historic background by alluding on the distortions in the Namibian history especially when it comes to the Damara speaking Namibians.

Then we make it categorically clear that if there is, at all, an indigenous group in Namibia who can make a valid and rightful claim on the entire Namibia with its vast pastures and limited water resources, then it is the Damara next to the yellow Bushmen.

We further substantiate this contention by extracting some loose traits of history of the Damara leaders starting from the !A !A /Nanub dynasty during the early 14th century up till today.

We even go beyond the 14th century and give an Evolution Tree of the Damaras as illustrated on the map on ANNEXURE A1 in the main document.

The we come to the SECOND PHASE of historical development and give very brief comments on the first time contact with:

The Hottentots;
The Hereros;
The Ovambos;
The Germans.

The we come to the actual phase were land theft was committed grossly by the Germans Settlers after the Land Alienation Policy was introduced in 1890 by the Colonial Government.

We then attempted to comment on the Native Reserve phase; the Native Homeland phase. And now I am going to handle the Damaraland in more detail and conclude by making few recommendations.

DAMARALAND (North Western Region)

The area of 4,8 million ha. known as the present Damaraland was set apart for the sole use and occupation of the ±100 000 Damara speaking Namibians.

About 2,4 million ha. of the said area is however not suitable for normal commercial farming purposes and is presently known as the unproclaimed Nature Conservation Area.

Even so, the present Damaraland comprises of the ancestral land of only four (4) groups namely the !OE#GAN, the NAMIDAMAN, the DSUREDAMAN, and the #AODAMAN, while the TSOAXAUDAMAN also retain part of their ancestral land namely ATS&B (OTJIMBINGWE). The rest of about nine (9) other Damara Tribes lost their ancestral land on the hands of the successive colonial regimes.

At present 31 400 Namibians are living in Damaraland while about 1 500 families are registered as subsistence farmers representing the national groups of Namibia as follows:

Damaras	848
Hereros	436
Namas	81
Ovambos	83
Coloureds	41
Others	11.

From the above evidence it would appear that there is at present a considerable influx of all indigenous groups either from rural areas e.g. (Private commercial Farms as well as other Home areas) as well as urban areas, despite the fact that there are insufficient avenues of farming or employment for them in the said Damaraland area.

This influx is stimulated inter alia by well-ordered structures and facilities created under difficult circumstances, as well as the more human and unbiased approach of the traditional leadership in this area for the upliftment of the underprivileged Namibians in spite of their tribal, religious or political affiliation. This in itself is a product of political awareness.

We are, however, greatly upset by the fact that though we are so accommodative on our part, there is absolutely no room for the Damara speaking Namibians in other traditional home areas. There is no such a thing like a registered Damara farmer in Ovambo, Kavango, Caprivi, Hereroland or Kaokoland.

This being the historic background of the Damara speaking Namibians, its only human that we look forward to getting a fair share of our undisputed ancestral land.

Article 16 of the Namibian Constitution cannot be interpreted to read "Yours is also ours but mine is my own" and thereby offering some Namibians dual or more settlement rights in Home areas.

It is our believe that Article 16 is stating a unique situation and is surely not an attempt to create lawlessness whereby people may settle at random.

As reasonable people we believe that should the Damaras really claim all their ancestral land, it would never be in the interest of our fellow Namibians. We are therefore very accommodative in our approach because we are genuinely helping to embark on an acceptable solution on the whole land question.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

It is our fervent believe that Namibia is big enough for all Namibians to live in harmony and peace and to make a decent living.

ON MUNICIPAL LAND

1. Here we are pleading for complete changes with immediate effect. The Affirmative Action for the majority together with Article 16 of Namibian Constitution must take their rightful course on proclaimed Municipal land and property and must be accomplished to its logical conclusion.
2. The approach towards alienation of surveyed lots and improvements should be free market orientated while the Government should endeavour to alleviate the burden of those underprivileged by colonial neglect, by establishing means to render soft loans.
3. The current Housing Alienation Scheme should be accomplished and should be extended to all towns, as well as to growth-points on Communal Land.
4. Residents of a given town or region should enjoy preference on all leased property.

ON COMMERCIAL LAND

Same approach as on Municipal land should apply where applicable. We further recommend that aggressive taxation be levied as from the third farm owned by the same owner, so as to curb monopoly.

ON COMMUNAL LAND

Let the present communal land remain the way it is.

To redress the whole situation in an attempt to satisfy every interest will only land our young and fragile democracy in jeopardy.

It will also create tension and friction should the Government now confiscate all ancestral land and terminate the authority of Traditional leaders as trustees of the said ancestral land.

The ancestral land is deeply rooted with the tradition and culture of various national groups and interests and should be handled with utmost circumspection.

The traditional structures should not be disturbed abruptly but evolutionary changes should rather be allowed to come gradually and smoothly.

It is true that not all communal land as known today, is ancestral land but it does compensate to a greater extent in absence of such ancestral land confiscated.

A special Commission of Investigation should, however, be set up to establish valid claims on small portions of ancestral land upon which specific interests have a burning desire for redress for example:

- Augeikas (!Ao //Aexas) and Hueses for the Sorri-Sorris Damara.
- Waterberg for Herero, etc.

LAND USAGE ON COMMUNAL LAND

The Traditional leadership should manage the Communal land according to their tradition and culture in close consultation with the Government Administrative machinery.

The Ministry of Local Government and Housing should monitor the duties and functions of all traditional leadership so as to curb mismanagements and unbecoming tribal customs.

The Communal land will be the resort of the subsistence farmers and the small farmers while the Government should encourage and facilitate means to remove qualifying big farmers on the Communal land to buy commercial farms with soft loans and by so doing make more room for the small man on the grass root level.

This, in short, is our humble submission and we sincerely hope that it will contribute to the final decision-making process.

We thank you,

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
LAND REFORM
AND THE LAND QUESTION**

Your Excellencies
Honourable Members of Cabinet
Honourable Members of National Assembly
Fellow Namibians
Comrades and Friends.

STATEMENT REGARDING THE RESTITUTION OF HISTORIC LAND RIGHTS AND THE REDISTRIBUTION OF RIGHTS IN LAND FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE FROM WHOM SUCH RIGHTS WERE TAKEN BY FORCE.

YOUR ADDRESSEES are we, the Chiefs, Headmen and Councillors in our capacity as traditional and elected leaders of our distinctive tribal groups and as such the spokesmen of and responsible for our people who represent about 08% of the total local population of Namibia. We are collectively referred to as the Chief's Council for the Damara speaking Namibians.

YOUR ADDRESSEES:-

HEREBY EXPRESS our highest regard towards the most honoured father of the Nation and the symbol of unity, His Excellency Sam Nujoma, the President of the Republic of Namibia as well as the honourable members of the National Assembly and the Cabinet of the Republic of Namibia.

HEREBY CONFIRM our firm commitment to pursue a free, democratic and independent Namibia in which all Namibians will take their rightful stand in peaceful coexistence and national unity in the international community as a free and independent nation.

HEREBY EMPHASISE that "the land question in Namibia is one of the most burning issues facing the new nation. Many years of colonialism have resulted in the present situation where the vast majority of the population has access to a fraction of all agricultural land. This highly unequal distribution of land in turn laid the foundation for the structures of apartheid and labour exploitation, and thus urban and rural poverty. One of the principal challenges facing the Government is therefore to redress this imbalance and widen access to the land".

WELCOME this well-founded Land Conference initiated by our highly honoured Prime Minister aimed at redressing the ills and wrongs of the colonial past.

NOW GLADLY REFER this Conference to the past history of the Damara speaking Namibians - their coexistence with other indigenous national groups, their distribution and land usage on various stages of development of Namibia.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The entire history of the Damara speaking Namibians is so distorted that even ridiculous theories of fame hungry historians like "the Damaras have lost their original language and are using the Nama language" and "all the Damaras were enslaved by the Hereros, Namas and for that matter even the Bushmen and were brought to Namibia by such masters" are today a common believe.

The Damara speaking Namibians reject these theories with the contempt they deserve and fervently believe that indigenous researchers will, now that Namibia is independent, embark upon the true history by doing research on the history past on from one traditional leader to his successor; from father to the son; from language, songs and tribal custom; from distinct characteristics, excavations or by other viable means. The true history of the Damara speaking Namibians is not get completely extinct.

If there is, at all, an indigenous group in Namibia who can make a rightful and valid claim on the entire Namibia with its vast pastures and limited water resources then it is the Damara, next to the yellow Bushmen.

The question as to which of the two groups, Damara or the Bushmen was the first in Namibia, creates a situation similar to that of the egg and the chicken, which was the first.

Authentic archaeological data with numerous excavations still to be made will definitely change the face of the history.

For the purpose of this Conference, however, it is enough to concur that Damara speaking Namibians are the aborigines of Namibia. They co-habited Namibia with the yellow Bushmen long before the Saan and the Hottentots and the the other groups came on the scene.

If we were not under such pressure of time we would gladly touch at various loose traits of history starting from the !A-!a-/Nanub dynasty during early 14th century ±1390; Sâub, Gei-/Garub and #Khari /Garub - towards the end of 14th century; !Haukarib, !Owos-sâub and Uru-ge-//heib - during 15th century; Goseb, !kudeb, //Aruseb and /Narirab - during 16th century; Gariseb, Tsowaseb, /Nawabeb and Tsaoseb - during 17th century; !Gauseb, //Hoeseb, //Guruseb and Abraham Seibeb - during 18th century; and would then come back to the Goreseb-kingdom during the 19th century.

We will now gladly go even beyond the above history and briefly outline the evolution tree of the Damara.

According to the ancient memories the movement of the Damara speaking Namibians started on a spot south from Gobabis. It is not yet established beyond any reasonable doubt how and from where these people happened to be there.

From the said spot with only leaving the /GOWANIN-group (!URO!GAOBEN) behind, the main stream moved slightly to the south and then to the west just above Rehoboth to the Khomashochland.

A smaller group branched down to the south to form the following groups, namely the AU-O-DAMAN near TSARAXA AIBES (Mariental), NAMADAMAN in #NQ #GOAES (Keetmanshoop) area and the !GARIDAMAN further south to the Orange river. Very much later, during the German wars another small group branched off to the northern Cape and later settled near GA-GOMAS, today's KAKAMAS. This group is known as !H&U-//N&IN (RIEMVASMAKERS).

The main stream left the /KHOMANIN in the /KHOMAS (Khomashochland), which group again spitted into three distinct smaller groups namely the H&KODAMAN slightly to the south towards Rehoboth; the !KUISEDAMAN along the !KUISEB (Kuisseb river) and a larger group which left the TSOAXAUDAMAN along the TSOAXAUB (Swakop river) with the main centre at ATS&B (Otjimbingwe).

This group moved further north west at the west end of the !OE #G&B (Erongo mountains), leaving the !OE#G&N at the northern side thereof. This group then moved on north east and left the #AODAMAN on the Parasis mountains.

The last group then moved on and settled at !HOB and GOMAXAS (Waterberg proper and plateau). They roamed the area between the Parasis and Waterberg and further north to NOMTSOUB or TSJUMBEB where they melt copier and later made first contact with the Ovambo speaking Namibians further north. This group is known as /GAIO-DAMAN. Also the #AODAMAN later made contact with the Ovambo speaking Namibians while both were collecting salt at the Etosha lakes.

A faction of the /GAIODAMAN moved further south of the Waterberg and #KHANUBES (OKANJANTE) and settled within the Kalkveld, Omaruru and Okahandja triangle. This group was known as the !OMEN or !UMEN.

Another faction of the !KUISEDAMAN moved along the !Kuisieb (Kuisieb river) down to the !GUMEN //GAMS (Walvisbay) and further north along the coast. Here they met a faction who moved down the TSOAXAUB (Swakop river) at Swakopmund and together they moved further north. This group was commonly known as NAMIDAMAN.

A faction of this main group split to the DŠURES (Brandberg) and are known as DŠUREDAMAN. The main stream moved eastwards towards the area of Fransfontein and further northwards towards !NANI /AUS (Sesfontein) and even further north towards the !GARIB (Cunene river).

The above mentioned distribution of the Damaras is said to have taken place within a very long span of time and happened long before any other group except the yellow Bushmen came on the scene.

This assessment is reasonably accurate because it is known that almost all national groups which came into this country subsequently were shown the water springs, Wholes and green pastures by the Damara.

ANNEXURE A1 attached hereto is a map which shows the movements and land usage of the Damara speaking Namibians.

It is against this back ground that the entire Namibia was initially called Damaraland. ANNEXURE A2 attached hereto is an ancient map though not specific at least closely related to the situation referred to in the history.

YOUR ADDRESSEES:-

GLADLY REFER this conference to what we call the second phase of development and here we are talking of the time frame round and about the eighteenth century.

THE HOTTENTOTS

During these times various notorious Hottentot groups especially the Africaner group came across the Orange river. These groups were fully armed with fire arms, not known to people on this side of the Orange river. These groups were warring among themselves and also killed the Damaras on sight.

Under these circumstances the Damaras were pressed northwards while those that remained were either killed or enslaved. ANNEXURE A3 is an ancient map depicting the land usage of the Damara during the said point in time.

THE HEREROS

It was also during this century that the Herero came on the scene. Like the Hottentots, also the Herero were very hostile to the Damara. When ever their organised raiders came across a small and idle settlement of the Damara people, they either killed them or enslaved them.

These unforeseeable circumstances caught the naturally peaceful Damara people off guard, broke down their traditional structures and forced them to more inaccessible mountainous areas for better protection.

While we are depicting and concentrating only on the events which brought about a complete change in the face of the history, we must also admit that there were intervals of peaceful coexistence and harmony among the indigenous groups even to the extent of intermarriage even on high levels and spontaneous support during battles and war.

THE OVAMBO

In contrast to what happened between the Damara on the one hand and the Hottentot or Herero on the other it is worth mentioning that there were a greater harmony in the far north among the Ovambo, the /GAIODAMAN, the =AODAMAN and the HEI-//OMN.

According to ancient memories the first black group with whom the Damara made first contact was the Ovambo in the far north while most of them were still living on the Angolan side of the boarder. There were numerous battles and a war in which the Damara leader /NARIRAB fell and the Damaras driven to the far south only to come back again and settle at =KANUBES (OKANJANDE) but these did not have the dimensions of destruction in the central and south.

THE GERMANS

The Germans were the fourth organized group to come to Namibia during these times. Caught-up between the two warring Hottentot- and Herero factions they elevated the said two factions to dictatorships according to German believe and style and only commented on other groups in passing. By so doing the Germans not only waged a physical but also a psychological warfare against the Damara by simply ignoring their historic achievements, distortion of their true history and by degradation of their human dignity almost to the level of a nonentity.

THE SETTLERS

The third phase of development is the actual phase where land theft was grossly committed.

It was during the year 1890 that the Colonial Government introduced the Land Alienation Policy. In 1892 the first German Settlers were brought in to occupy land which formerly belonged to the indigenous people.

The German Settlers then increased periodically. In 1896 there was a large influx of Boer families from the defunct Upingtonia Republic in Angola.

Towards the end of 1903 the land was divided between four main groups, as follows:

1. Natives	31 400 000 ha.
2. Concession Companies	29 175 500 ha.
3. Government (Crown land)	19 250 000 ha.
4. Settlers	<u>3 684 500 ha.</u>
TOTAL	<u>83 500 000 ha.</u>

By January 1904 the Government decided to confiscate land from the Natives and sold and leased it together with portions of crown land to the settlers at random. This enraged the indigenous peoples and on 12 January 1904 the Hereros led the rebellion. The other groups soon follow suit.

In 1905 another mass emigration of Boers arrived in the then SWA and after the war (1907 - 1909) German Settlers increased from 8 200 to 14 000.

From then on the successive colonial regimes almost followed the same pattern with land theft.

The fourth phase represents the establishment of Native Reserves by the colonial Governments.

Land theft concentrated much in the Central and Southern parts of Namibia and as a result the Damaras, Hereros, Namas and the Basters were ruthlessly stripped of their fertile land and also lost their property.

In an attempt to compensate for that stolen land the Government of the day created some Native Reserves as Home areas for the indigenous groups.

We are hereby only dealing with Native Reserves set apart for collective use of the Damaras and others and those set apart for the sole use and occupation of the Damara speaking Namibians.

GOVERNMENT NOTICE	NAME	MODE OF OCCUPATION	SIZE
GN 21/1926	Otjimbingwe Native Reserve	Collective	91 196 ha
GN 44/1924	Krantzplatz Native Reserve	Collective	39 190 ha
GN 77/1932	Aukeigas Native Reserve	Sole	10 862 ha
-	deproclaimed in terms of Act 44 of 1945		
GN 122/1923	Berseba Native Reserve	Collective	586 779 ha
GN 122/1923	Fransfontein Native Reserve	Collective	57 739 ha
GN 122/1923	Nuehof Native Reserve	Collective	20 034 ha
GN 122/1923	Okombahe Native Reserve	Sole	446 024 ha
GN 122/1923	Ovitoto Native Reserve	Collective	61 192 ha
GN 122/1923	Sesfontein Native Reserve	Collective	31 416 ha
GN 122/1923	Tses Native Reserve	Collective	229 925 ha
	Goreses Native Reserve near Otjinene	Sole	

THE FIFTH PHASE represents Native Homelands which the South African Government established in accordance with its policy on separate development. ANNEXURE A4.

Homelands were created and the indigenous groups were repatriated forcibly to the said Homelands.

The Namibians in the far north namely Caprivi, Kavango, Ovambo and Kaokoland as well as the Basters were lucky enough to retain most of their ancestral land.

The Damara, Herero and Nama were not so lucky and lost almost all their fertile land and even their property.

DAMARALAND (North Western Region)

The area of 4,8 million ha. known as the present Damaraland was set apart for the sole use and occupation of the about 100 000 Damara speaking Namibians.

About 2,4 million ha. of the said area is however not suitable for normal commercial farming purposes and is presently known as the unproclaimed Nature Conservation Area.

Even so, the present Damaraland comprises of the ancestral land of only four (4) groups namely the !OE#GAN, the NAMIDAMAN, the DÄUREDAMAN, and the #AODAMAN, while the TSOAXAUDAMAN also retain part of their ancestral land namely ATS&B (OTJIMBINGWE). The rest of about nine (9) other Damara Tribes lost their ancestral land on the hands of the successive colonial regimes.

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1. Here we are pleading for complete changes with immediate effect. The Affirmative Action for the majority together with Article 16 of Namibian Constitution must take their rightful course on proclaimed Municipal land and property and must be accomplished to its logical conclusion.
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