History through biography

The turmoils of the late 19th and the 20th centuries touched the lives of Fransfontein men, women and children in many and at times inconceivable ways. The Berlin conference of 1884/1885, the two world wars and the end of the Cold War all affected the fates and life chances of the inhabitants of Fransfontein, regardless of the town's geographic remoteness. As early as 1844, the Rhenish Mission Society commenced its work in Namibia, first in the southern parts of the country and then expanding to the central region. With the Berlin Conference, the formal colonization of Namibia began.[1]

Very quickly thereafter, indigenous Namibians of southern and central Namibia lost the basis of their livelihoods: their land. Both the needs of the white settler community with its demand for land and labor and the strategies and aims of the Rhenish Mission Society shaped and reshaped Fransfontein's geographic appearance. In 1905, Fransfontein became one of the first reserves of Germany's colony of "Southwest Africa". In 1915, in the midst of the First World War, Germany succumbed to South Africa's expeditionary forces. After a brief intermittent period (1915-1920), the League of Nations granted South Africa mandatory power over Namibia in 1920. The consolidation of South Africa's colonial power implied further cuts to the freedoms of indigenous Namibians. After the Second World War, South Africa submitted a petition to the newly formed United Nations (UN) for permission to integrate Namibia into South Africa. This petition was rejected. However, with the victory of the National Party in South Africa in 1948, the country illegally annexed Namibia, ruling it as its "fifth province". In this manner, Namibia was included in the National Party's racist apartheid policy. In 1966, this step led the UN to revoke South Africa's League of Nation mandate to rule Namibia. The International Court of Justice confirmed in 1971 that South Africa's continued occupation of Namibia was illegal. Despite this,

1 For further information on the history of Namibia, see Wallace (2011), Lau (1986), Hayes et al. (1998).

South Africa went ahead to establish almost a dozen "homelands" on Namibian territory. "Damaraland" was created, which enclosed the Fransfontein reserve, one among several remote reserves. Two decades later, it was the gradual decline of the Cold War era that had a significant impact on the lives of Fransfontein people. Cuba's withdrawal of its forces from Angola in 1988 led South Africa to accept UN Resolution 435 from 1978, which led to Namibia's independence in 1990.

Of course, the fact that Fransfontein's fate was locked into national and global events was comparable to the situation of other regions in Namibia. Yet each community and each region experienced, suffered through and resisted these changes in their own unique ways. Although much historical work remains to be done, several excellent political-economic histories of communities neighboring Fransfontein have been published.[2] Bennet Fuller (1993, 1998) has written an ethnography on the development of Otjimbingwe and Sesfontein. Much of the following has profited from his insights. Equally, Richard Rohde's (1994, 1997) historically grounded ethnography of Okombahe has been central for my understanding of the local reactions to the Odendaal plan, which led to the implementation of homelands, and the introduction of apartheid in Namibia (see also Rohde/Hoffman/Cousins 2000). These two publications are, to my knowledge, the most in-depth treatments of communities of the former Damaraland. Other historic and ethnographic work on communities within former Damaraland does not explicitly focus on the social and political history of the region but remains valuable for insight into specific aspects, such as its environmental history and its forms of natural resource management (Botha n.d.; Linke 2017; Schnegg 2016b, 2018; Sullivan 1996, 2000, 2003), its mining towns (Kuper 1995), its migration history (Greiner 2008, 2011), its pre-contact and early colonial history (Gockel-Frank 1998; Lau 1986, 1987) and everyday life under apartheid (Gordon 1971, 1972).

Fransfontein is and has always been multiethnic. Since the community's establishment in the 1890s, both Damara and Nama people have lived together in the region. Most everyday practices transcended ethnic boundaries (Dawids et al. 2007), though a sense of ethnic belonging continues to exist. Thus, work on Nama history has also provided insights, even though it focuses on southern Namibia, especially Reinhart Kössler's (2005) detailed history of two southern Namibian Nama communities, Adelheid Iken's (1999) ethnography on Nama female-headed households and Sabine Klocke-Daffa's (2001) ethnographic work on reciprocity and sharing in the

2 Because of Namibia's large geographical range, "neighboring" communities can be removed from each other by tens to hundreds of kilometers. Fransfontein's closest neighbors are the communities of Okombahe (approximately 2 hours by car), Sesfontein (2 ½ hours) and Otjimbingwe (3 ½ hours).

southern Namibian community of Berseba. The third largest ethnic group that has lived in the Fransfontein area for several decades is made up of speakers of Bantu languages, who migrated into this area in the 1930s. Giorgio Miescher (2006) provides a historic account of their life prior to their move to Fransfontein and their migration, with further information provided by Michael Schnegg (2007a) and Clemens Greiner (2008). Schnegg's (2007a) analysis of the antecedents and consequences of an early colonial war in the Fransfontein area explicitly focuses on the multiethnic history of Fransfontein and is thus another central source for my discussion.

My objective is not to write a history of the social, political and economic developments of Fransfontein in the late 19th and the 20th centuries. To achieve my general aim, an understanding of the transformations of marriage, reproduction and class, I rather discuss historic processes as that which frames individual lives and sets the limits and opportunities for individual actors. Of course, structure is not possible without agency and vice versa (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984; Schnegg/Pauli 2010; Sewell 1992, 2005). The life stories I gathered show the interdependency of structure and agency, making visible the "complex nexus of individual responses to the political, environmental and economic circumstances" (Rohde 1997: 273). I use the concepts of generation and cohort, introduced in the previous chapter, as analytic devices. Cohort and generational analyses, thus what Ryder (1965: 859) has called "macro-biographies", connect individual life experiences with larger historical forces. My concern here is thus neither with a general historic description of the community nor with an exclusive focus on individual lives. I am rather concerned to understand history through biography, by integrating an analysis of periodic events with that of generations and cohorts.

The previous chapter, "Fransfontein Fieldwork", introduced three generations of women. Other classifications might also be possible. Chris Tapscott (1995: 154), for example, has suggested a division into a formative period up to 1974, the intensive years of war from 1974 until the onset of independence in 1989, and the postindependence era. His classification, however, is based on historical developments in the northern parts of the country, which differ quite substantially from those in central and southern Namibia (Pankhurst 1996; Silvester/Wallace/Hayes 1998). Unlike Namibians in the north, only few people in Fransfontein had direct contact with the warfare of the 1970s and 1980s. Inversely, the northern territories did not experience the trauma of massive land dispossession that all southern and central Namibian communities (including Fransfontein) experienced. Similarly, where only few women in the north worked on white settler farms, numerous women and couples from central and southern Namibian communities like Fransfontein made this experience.

For many Fransfontein women that I classified as belonging to the older generation (born between 1915 and 1944), working and living on white commercial farms

was the central experience during most of their productive and reproductive lives. I begin my diachronic analysis with their lives. Previous events and circumstances, like the colonial formation of the "Damara" ethnic group or pastoralist pre-colonial livelihoods of inhabitants of the area, will not be discussed (Fuller 1993; Gockel-Frank 1998; Riechmann 1899; Rohde 1997; Schnegg 2007a). The establishment of homelands in the 1960s and 1970s greatly changed the livelihoods of the Fransfontein people and ushered in the next generation that I look at. In this period, the living conditions of many deteriorated even further while for a small emerging elite new opportunities arose. The women who reached their productive and reproductive prime during this period I have labeled as "middle generation" (born between 1945 and 1964). Following Rosaldo's (1980: 111) approach to distinguish generations, the life chances of these women were "terribly different in appearance from those of their elders and their juniors". The youngest generation of women, born between 1965 and 1994, came of age after Namibia gained independence. Although class formation in Namibia has strong antecedents in the pre-independence era (Abrahams 1982; Jauch 1998; Tapscott 1993, 1995), for the majority of the population independence has meant a significant change in their lives. This is clearly expressed in the life stories of the younger women who described increasing individual liberties and less racist discrimination. But they also mentioned new threats, especially the fear of an HIV infection. The discussion below, of history through biography, is structured by the central experience of each of the three generations of Fransfontein women: life on white commercial farms, apartheid, and independence, respectively.

THE OLDER GENERATION: A LIFE ON COMMERCIAL FARMS AND RESERVES

When I meet Rose for the very first time in 2004, she is sitting in front of her house, cooking on an open fire. At that time she is 78 years old. All her life she has been working hard, as a worker on commercial farms of white farmers and as a farmer herself in the communal area. Both her hands and her face express years of struggle and pain; they are very dry, with many wrinkles.

Rose was born in the 1920s, in one of the settlements surrounding the Fransfontein community. When she was a young child, her parents started working on the German farm "Ritterstall" (stable of the knights). For most of the time, Rose remained in the Fransfontein reserve, separated from her parents. In her teens she also started working at "Ritterstall". There she met her future husband, Jacob. Jacob was born in 1919 and grew up in the Okombahe reserve which the Germans had established in 1905. Neither Rose nor Jacob received any formal education. For a while,

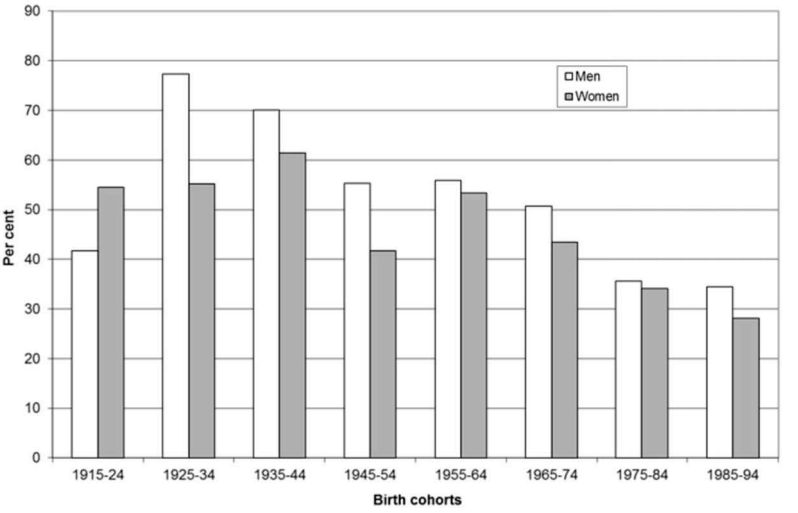
Rose, Jacob and Rose's parents all worked at "Ritterstall". But when a conflict arose between Rose's parents and the farmer, all four of them left the farm. The following years were very challenging for Rose. Jacob and Rose worked on different farms, but everywhere the conditions were bad. Workers were treated in humiliating ways, physically abused and undernourished. During this period Rose and Jacob lost the first two of their children shortly after birth. Through Jacob's parents, who had found work with an Afrikaner farmer by the name of van Zyl on the farm "Twyfel", Jacob and Rose also found employment. In 1942, while working for van Zyl, Rose gave birth to Olga. Olga survived early childhood and grew up in the Fransfontein reserve. Here, the elderly members of the family were taking care of the family's livestock and the children, while the productive family members worked on white commercial farms.

Several more children were born to Rose and Jacob. In this situation, the couple decided that they wanted to get married. Van Zyl agreed to support them with some clothes. He preferred married couples as workers and paid them better. Rose says that it was much easier for a worker to become a foreman on the farm when he was married. During the week of their wedding, Jacob received a note from his relatives in the reserve asking him to come as several of Jacob and Rose's livestock had disappeared. For several days Jacob searched the reserve for the animals. Rose was unable to accompany him because she was very advanced in pregnancy. Upon Jacob's return the farmer was angry at his protracted absence and the wedding was cancelled. Despite many conflicts with van Zyl, Rose and Jacob continued working for him.

For several decades, Rose and Jacob had to work on white commercial farms. They were forced into this because there was never enough food and not sufficient grazing for their livestock in the Fransfontein reserve. Labor migration on white commercial farms has thus been a very common experience in the family. All of Rose and Jacob's 12 children were born on white farms. In the mid-1980s, Jacob and Rose retired and started living permanently at one of the settlements in the Fransfontein area. Their house in the settlement has four multipurpose rooms all made out of local materials. There is no electricity and the water is retrieved from a borehole. The household's main source of income is the pension money that Rose and Jacob receive. In 1988, and several decades after their first attempt, Rose and Jacob finally got married. They were among the elderly and long-term couples whom the local pastor visited on their farms and married in a very inexpensive and brief ceremony. The lived experiences of Rose and Jacob are exemplary for the older generation, as Figure 3 demonstrates.

Forty-four per cent (172 of 387) of all women and 49 per cent (178 of 362) of all men of 15 years and older have worked on white commercial farms. Thus, almost half of the population has been drawn directly into the white settler economy. Yet,

Figure 3: Working experiences on commercial farms



working experiences on commercial farms vary strongly between the cohorts, as Figure 3 demonstrates. In the cohort of men born between 1925 and 1934, almost eight out of ten men worked for white farmers. In the following cohort, seven out of ten men had to make the experience. Then, the percentages gradually decline, indicating the rise of other income opportunities besides communal farming and working on commercial farms. This process starts with the birth cohorts I have classified as the middle generation, thus the cohorts born between 1945 and 1964. The only exception to this process is the female birth cohort of 1945-1954 with remarkable low percentages. Below I will explain this deviation. The low percentage for the first cohort of men born between 1915 and 1924 can be explained with the then still existing option of independent communal farming; many of these older men were still able to survive as communal farmers. This independence vanished for the following cohorts. Other employment options besides communal farming (which became increasingly untenable as a mode of survival because of continuous land dispossession) and labor migration on commercial farms were virtually non-existent, including mining, an option that only arose later.[3]

3 Pastor Eliphas Eiseb is an exception to this rule. He was born in 1918 and became an ELCRN pastor. In the 1980s he served as acting king for the Damara Council. He lived in Fransfontein from the late 1980s onwards, and passed away in 2007.Together with Professor Haacke from the African languages department at the University of Namibia, Pastor

As Figure 3 shows, the percentages for women with working experiences on white commercial farms are in general lower than those for men. This can be explained by the fact that several couples did not stay and work together on commercial farms. In these cases, the men were engaged in labor migration while the women stayed in the reserve and kept the farm household running. Still, significant numbers of women left the reserve and worked for white commercial farmers.[4] The percentages are highest for the first three cohorts, those cohorts I have classified as being part of the older generation. More than half to two thirds of these women have lived and worked on white commercial farms. The first cohort of the middle generation, women born between 1945 and 1964, clearly differs from this pattern. Where the preceding cohort (1935-1944) had more than 60 per cent of women with experiences of working on commercial farms, only 40 per cent of the women born between 1945 and 1954 made these experiences. The reason for this decline is a new income alternative besides commercial farm work that arose at this time: twenty-five per cent of the women of this cohort found employment as domestic workers. In 1964, the Frans Frederik Primary School and its hostel were inaugurated in Fransfontein. In the following years, several women in their twenties found employment as domestic cleaners at the school and hostel. For women and men of the youngest generation, born between 1965 and 1994, work on commercial farms has become only one option among others. Especially young men have been able to find temporary employment on one of the surrounding commercial and today also safari farms, for example as guides for hunting expeditions.

Not only do the percentages of women and men with working experiences on white commercial farms vary between cohorts. The length of time spent on commercial farms also varies between cohorts. While men and women of the eldest generation have, on average, spent more than a decade of their lives as workers on white commercial farms, the number of years spent on commercial farms declines for the middle generation (1945-1964). Fransfontein women and men of all generations have tried to reduce their time on white commercial farms. Relations between white settlers and indigenous Namibians were often problematic and tense.

From the time of the German colonization of then South West Africa, the economy was geared primarily to the demands of two groups: foreign capital controlling

Eiseb wrote the first (and only) comprehensive dictionary of Khoekhoegowab (Haacke 2007; Haacke/Eiseb 2002).

4 In this respect, southern and central Namibia clearly differ from northern Namibia. The contract labor system in north Namibia forced only men into waged employment, not women. Men in southern and central Namibia were also forced into waged labor, but they were allowed, and sometimes even encouraged, to bring their families with them (Iken 1999: 4).

the lucrative mining industry, and the white settler community (Simon/Moorsom 1987; Tapscott 1995: 154). Both sectors demanded cheap labor and were interested in the indigenous population only as unskilled workers and not as consumers (Tapscott 1995: 154). Local production was virtually absent and the import of consumer goods was oriented towards the needs of the colonial elite. The white settler demand for land meant a massive dispossession of land for the indigenous population of southern and central Namibia. From the beginning of land appropriation in 1883 by the German trader Franz Adolf Eduard Lüderitz, who bought large areas of land in southern Namibia from the local Nama chief Joseph Fredericks, there were different types of appropriation by white settlers, traders and officials, ranging from illegal appropriation to "deals" with local leaders (Schnegg 2007a; Werner 2004: 293). With the end of German colonialism in 1915, indigenous Namibians in the central and southern parts of Namibia, the so-called police zone, had lost much of their land and livestock (Jauch 1998: 27).[5]

The arrival of white settlers also meant a gradual end of the transhumance system with its high level of adaptation to ecologic variations (Botha n.d.; Rohde 1997; Rohde/Hoffman/Cousins 2000; Fuller 1998: 194). White farm owners started drawing boundaries around parcels of land, marking them with fences. Thus, privately-owned land (and the expression of such in the fixation of borders through fences) stood in contrast to how Damara, Nama, Herero and Baster communites of southern and central Namibia, divided into small mobile groups with low levels of political centralization, used land and water communally in the pre-colonial period (Rohde 1997; Werner 2004).

The history of land dispossession in Fransfontein corresponds closely to the above description. According to oral traditions of the Swartbooi Nama (*//Khau-/goan*), they were herders from south and central Namibia who arrived in the area around Fransfontein in the 1890s.[6] Searching for water, the Swartbooi encountered the Fransfontein fountain and named the place after one of them, Frans Swartbooi. However, as Damara oral histories narrate, they were already settled in the area around the fountain, a place they had named *Anipira a he* (the place where the birds drink). This is confirmed in the writings by missionary Heinrich Riechmann of the Rhenish Mission

5 The "police zone" was created under German colonial rule in 1906 when the north of the country was formally separated from the central and southern parts. Within this central and southern "police zone", whites were permitted to settle (theoretically under police protection). Under South African martial law (Proclamation 15 of 1919), no person could cross the border of the "police zone" without permission. The line also became known as the "red line" (see Silvester/Wallace/Hayes 1998: 3).

6 For more details, see Schnegg (2007a) and Riechmann (1899).

Society of Wuppertal, Germany, who settled in Fransfontein in 1891. With the establishment of Fransfontein by Riechmann and the Swartbooi, the Damara were moved to Tsumamas, a spring about 25 kilometers east of Fransfontein (Riechmann 1899; Schnegg 2007a). In 1905, the Germans turned Fransfontein into a reserve (RSA 1964; Werner 2004: 295) while Tsumamas was declared white commercial farm land. Some of the Damara families continued to stay on the newly established white farms as workers, building fences, dams and roads; others migrated to the reserve area. Yet these events of 1905 were not the first Fransfontein experiences of land dispossession through white colonizers. A war in 1897/1898 between the Swartbooi and their Herero-speaking allies and the German *Schutztruppe* at Grootberg, close to Fransfontein, is an example of the conflicts that grew out of land "deals" between local leaders and German officials. At the time, the Swartbooi not only lost a significant amount of land but had to surrender to the German *Schutztruppe* with half of the population of Fransfontein being imprisoned in Windhoek (Riechmann 1899; Schnegg 2007a). The manner in which the Swartbooi fought against the Germans is only one example of resistance against land dispossession and German colonialism of this period.[7]

During the South African occupation from 1915 onwards, land dispossession continued. From the 1930s to the 1950s, an especially generous Land Settlement Program – described as one of the most generous settlement schemes on the planet (Fuller 1993: 50) – tried to attract white farmers, mainly from South Africa, to Namibia (Fuller 1993; Kambatuku 1996; Moorsom 1982: 32; Rohde 1997: 252-253; Sullivan 1996). One consequence of this in-migration was the creation of "large blocks of economically disadvantaged voters able to extract concessions from the government" (Fuller 1993: 48), concessions that generally went to the cost of the indigenous population. However, partly because of its peripheral location and partly because of its vulnerability to drought, the area that later became classified as "Damaraland" was one of the last areas to be settled by white farmers (Rohde 1997: 253).[8] The majority of surveyed farms in the north-west Damaraland were not settled until 1954 (Kambatuku 1996). At that time land speculation by white settlers was booming and the value of the surveyed farmland was at its height (Fuller 1993: 52-56; Sullivan 1996: 15, 17).

7 Another example is the uprising of Hendrik Witbooi at Hornkrantz in 1894. Of course, the war of 1904-1907 and the subsequent genocide of the Herero (with an estimated 75 to 80 per cent of the population killed), including tremendous losses for Nama (with an estimated 50 per cent of the population killed) and Damara people (Fuller 1993: 27), is the most well-known instance of resistance against German colonialism in Namibia.

8 This excluded the not-inhabited coastal strip.

From the perspective of the Fransfontein population, the robbery of their land was thus a gradual process, a "creeping occupation" (Schnegg 2007a: Figure 2). By the end of the process in the 1950s, the Fransfontein reserve was a small island in a sea of white commercial farms (see maps in Schnegg 2007a). White settler demand for land led to a strong need for cheap labor. In the 1920s, over 60 per cent of the non-white population within the so-called police zone worked on white farms in rural areas (Botha n.d.; Rohde 1997: 247). During that and the following decades, the western Namibian reserves of Okombahe, Fransfontein and Otjohorongo functioned as labor reserves for the surrounding settler farms (Rohde 1997: 261). This is also clearly expressed in the high percentages of Fransfonteiners from the oldest generation who worked on white commercial farms (see Figure 3).[9] For the eldest generation of Fransfonteiners, occupational opportunities other than labor migration or communal farming were virtually non-existent. Similarly, educational possibilities were very limited for indigenous Namibians and, just as in South Africa, upward mobility was strongly constrained by a job color bar (Tapscott 1995: 154).

There was a strong connection between the massive land dispossession of indigenous Namibians, the white economy's labor needs and the establishment of "native" reserves (Werner 2004). Reserves were first established by the German colonial administration: after the 1904-1907 war, it set up six small reserves, including the Fransfontein reserve with an area of 36.188 hectares (Werner 2004: 295). After Germany surrendered to the Union of South Africa in 1915, South Africa adopted this policy. Its Native Land Act of 1913 served as a "prototype" for "separate development" within Namibia in the first years of its colonial rule (Fuller 1993: 25; Werner 2004: 296). In the 1920s, there were three reserves inhabited primarily by Damara/ Nama speakers in western Namibia: Fransfontein, Okombahe and Sesfontein. The "Herero" reserve of Otjohorongo, which was later incorporated into "Damaraland", was created in 1925 (Sullivan 1996). The establishment of the reserves alongside the growing of "white" commercial farms heralded the beginning of the dichotomy between "communal" and "commercial" land, one that still applies today. A restricted access to land by the indigenous population thus also determined their high availability and low cost to the colonial economy (Werner 2004: 292): the reserves allowed white farmers and the government to shift responsibility of all social costs (such as old age pensions or health care) to the communities on the reserves and thus to the workers

9 Until the uprising of 1904-1907, it was mainly indigenous Namibians from southern and central Namibia who were exploited as cheap sources of labor (Tapscott 1995; Jauch 1998). After the genocide, a system of recruiting migrant contract labor from northern Namibia was established (Tapscott 1995).

themselves (see Fuller 1993: 55). But because of the limited value of the land given to the indigenous population, the people were not able to accumulate enough assets to survive independently of the "white economy" and were forced to work for the settlers and to tolerate dismal working conditions (Werner 2004: 292). Additionally, heavy taxes on grazing were imposed to extract indigenous labor from the reserves (Fuller 1993: 55).

Because of the difficult working conditions on commercial farms, many Fransfonteiners tried to work as rarely as possible for white commercial farmers. Many other indigenous Namibians tried avoiding the farming sector altogether and preferred working on the mines. However, no one of the eldest generation of Fransfonteiners worked for the mines – most likely because there were no active networks linking them up with the mining areas. Working conditions on white commercial farms were bad and cruel mistreatment was common (Fuller 1993: 57), including both physical mistreatment and starvation: "Physical abuse was a possibility and hunger a certainty". (ibid: 58) The diet consisted of a ration of white corn meal and sugar, which by itself is not a nutritious diet (ibid). However, workers were earning too little to supplement this meager diet and many suffered from malnutrition and diseases associated with a weakened condition. In these situations, many women of the eldest generation endured miscarriages and the loss of one or several children while working on commercial farms, as Rosalie's story above illustrates.

Given the racist conditions under which the reserves were created, life in the "native" reserves was often not much better. They were administered by so-called Reserve Boards, responsible for managing the Reserve Administration Trust Funds in which a reserve's revenues, mainly from taxes, were deposited (Sullivan 1996: 21). Although these boards were set up to administer the internal affairs of the reserves, they "were in effect institutions designed to ensure that the economic development of these areas was in line with the interests of White farmers" (Rohde/Hoffman/Cousins 2000: 327). Thus, these "native reserves" established by the South Africans from 1915 onwards were not created to foster a sustainable livelihood for indigenous Namibians but to fulfill white settlers' need for cheap labor (Werner 2004: 292).

After the German colonial government established Fransfontein as a reserve in 1905, it expanded in size in the 1930s, again in accordance with the needs of the white farmers in the region rather than for the good of its inhabitants. The expansion came about when expanding land occupation by white settlers in 1938 forced a group described as "Ovambo" (composed of Ovambo- and Herero-speakers) was forced to leave Otjeru, a settlement located between Outjo and Omaruru that had been granted to them by the German administration (Miescher 2006). The leader of the group, Lazarus Amporo, asked Petrus Swartbooi, then head of the Fransfontein Reserve Board and leader of the Swartbooi, for support and for permission to settle in the Fransfontein

area. Petrus Swartbooi was in favor of the idea and, given the limited size of the Fransfontein reserve, submitted a petition to the colonial administration for an extension to the reserve, a request which was granted.[10] This migration was probably the largest migration into the Fransfontein reserve; yet it was followed by a number of smaller, additional ones, as for example the "!Ganeb migration" of the !Ganeb family in the 1940s (Schnegg 2007a). Yet the extension of the reserve did not occur in proportion with the growing population: while becoming more multiethnic, it also became more crowded. At this point it had a police station with a police commander who submitted a monthly report to his supervisors in Outjo, updating them on livestock and grazing, the number of visas issued, the crimes committed and a classification of the population by ethnicity.[11]

The lives of the older generation in Fransfontein were thus characterized by experiences of extreme loss in both movement and property. This generation had to endure the consolidation of the reserve, the continuous deprivation of land and autonomy, and the forced need to work for white farmers. Until the 1960s, "blacks in Namibia were totally excluded from all positions of influence or authority within the Namibian polity" (Abrahams 1982: 21). People were forced to work at the lowest level of unskilled labor, in the case of Fransfontein's older generation as workers on white commercial farms.

For the oldest generation of the residents of Fransfontein, the lines of confrontation ran between what was perceived as the "natives" and the "white settlers", and not (yet) along ethnic lines (Lau/Reiner 1993: 11). Indeed, "apart from a few piecemeal exceptions, rural reserves were not intended to be confined to particular ethnic groups until the Odendaal Plan was tabled in the early 1960s" (Silvester/Wallace/Hayes 1998: 46). At this point, a policy of "politicised ethnicity" thoroughly changed the structure of indigenous Namibian communities (Kössler 2005: 8; Maré 1993), a development we see shaping the middle generation.

10 Schnegg (2007a) mentions that the South African administration might have agreed to the extension in order to accommodate Nama from Grootfontein and Walvis Bay rather than the "Ovambo" group from Otjeru.

11 Ethnicity captured in this way is very problematic and biased. However, as Schnegg (2007a) shows, ethnic heterogeneity clearly increased in the Fransfontein reserve from the 1930s to the 1950s as a result of this in-migration.

THE MIDDLE GENERATION: SEPARATED BY APARTHEID

The division into ethnic groups, so central to the construction of apartheid, not only resulted in the creation of "politicised ethnicity" (Kössler 2005: 8) between ethnic groups but also initiated processes of stratification within ethnic groups. To understand how these class formation processes during apartheid shaped the Fransfontein middle generation, it is necessary to first outline the new homeland structures.

After Namibia's full administrative "integration" into the Republic of South Africa in the late 1950s and 1960s, Namibia was administered as South Africa's fifth province. This annexation also implied the establishment of apartheid and the creation of "homelands" based on ethnic criteria in Namibia (Rohde 1997: 258). To achieve this, the South African government appointed the so-called "Odendaal commission" in 1962. Because of international critique, the implementation of the commission's suggestions, summarized in the "Odendaal plan" (RSA 1964), commenced only in the late 1960s (Vesper 1983: 107). One of its main recommendations was the creation of ten ethnically homogeneous and self-administered "homelands" (Vesper 1983: 113; Wallace 2011: 261-271), among these "Damaraland" that would include the Fransfontein reserve.

Because of the poor quality of the land that was allocated to Damaraland, already the Odendaal plan stated that the majority of the population would be unable to survive solely from the resources available in the homeland (RSA 1964: 93). Forty per cent of the newly created Damaraland was made up of desert (Wallace 2011: 263). For the creation of what came to be known as Damaraland, 223 farms were bought from their white owners, most of them only surveyed and settled since the 1930s and holding extensive cattle and small-stock enterprises (Rohde 1997: 258; see also Rohde 1994). In addition, some state land and the three existing reserves of Okombahe, Fransfontein and Sesfontein were allocated to the new homeland (Rohde 1997: 259). Unlike the 8500 hectares that were considered the minimum size of land a white farmer needed for farming, residents in the newly created Damaraland had to survive on a meager 250 hectares per family. Consequently, many Damara-speakers had to live on white commercial farms or in the Windhoek township Katutura in order to access employment (Barnard 1992: 213; Rohde 1997: 259). This situation was comparable to the situation in other homelands: "As none of these artificially created homelands was economically viable in terms of subsistence agriculture, the inhabitants were forced to look for wage employment in order to provide for their families" (Jauch 1998: 28).

As envisaged by the Odendaal plan, the structure of Damaraland's administration was grounded in notions of traditional leadership (RSA 1964: 93). A so-called Damara Council was established that took over the functions previously carried by the South

African Department of Bantu Affairs, except for issues of defense, security, foreign affairs and utilities which remained in the hands of the South African government. The council consisted of an appointed chief, his deputy, and the headmen and councilors for Okombahe, Fransfontein and Sesfontein. Head or chief of the Damara Council was "Damara King" Justus //Garoeb. The town of Welwitschia (later renamed Khorixas) became the administrative seat of this Damara regional government. The administration of Damaraland was subdivided into 12 *wyke* (wards). Fransfontein was ward nine, headed by *hoofman* (headman) Johannes Isaak Hendriks. Festus !Aseb, Petrus !Gaoraseb and Rudolf !Nawaseb represented ward nine as councillors.

With the intention to legitimize the new homeland structure, the first so-called "Bantustan-elections" were held in 1978 in Damaraland. However, these elections were boycotted by all political groups except for the Damara United Front which was linked to the South-African backed Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) (Sullivan 1996: 22). Then, in 1980, the Damara Council under Justus //Garoeb received a massive majority. This victory marked the rise of a strong regional power, based on a rather static "tribal" identity (ibid). It also marks the emergence of new patronage structures in Damaraland. The headmen and councilors of the newly created wards started to receive government payments for their administrative services. Further, they were now in charge of the distribution of pensions and wages (ibid: 23). Thus, the bureaucratization of the Damara homeland created a new elite of politicians and administrators, strongly intertwined with the Damara Council. Similar process also occurred in other homelands.

In Ovamboland, the new homeland structures created a "modernizing" elite, qualified through (Western types of) education and consisting of teachers, religious leaders, official/clerks and nurses; this new elite complemented the "traditional" elite of pre-apartheid times, consisting of traditional leaders and traders, often lacking any Western type of education (Tötemeyer 1978). This latter interconnection may even have had historic roots, as Gregor Dobler (2014) traces these types of links back in time into colonial Ovamboland. Writing about elite formations in the Kavango during the homeland period, Mattia Fumanti (2016) suggests that the disparities between "traditional" and "modern" types of elites might be a question of generations.

Who then formed the new homeland elites? A closer look at the institutional make-up of the homelands reveals at least three groups: politicians, civil servants, and professionals, such as teachers and nurses (Jauch 1998: 41; Tapscott 1995: 157; Werner 1987: 76). However, there was a certain occupational fluidity supposedly characteristic also for other African elite formation processes (Daloz 2003; Fumanti 2016): many politicians, for example, started out as teachers. The salaries this new elite earned was on par with salaries earned by white counterparts and were significantly higher than those of the average black worker (Jauch 1998: 41). During the

1970s and 1980s, most indigenous households continued to live in poverty and in some regions the situation even worsened (see Fuller 1993 for Otjimbingwe). For the professional, political and administrative elite, though, the economic situation significantly improved. The differences in wages in the later 1970s were marked: where black ordinary wage-earners earned R230 annually (even less in rural areas), the chairmen of the homeland executive committees had an annual salary of between R22.000 and R28.000, ordinary members of the (ethnic legislative assemblies between R3000 and R5000, and high school teachers R12.000 to R18.000 (Abrahams 1982). And in addition to their salaries, elite earners received access to housing, medical aid and pension schemes. In 1984, this class comprised approximately 15-20 per cent of all indigenous households (Jauch 1998: 41).

The emergence of the "new indigenous elite" was recorded by political activist, co-founder of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) and medical doctor Kenneth Abrahams (Abrahams 1982: 21). In his work, he defines the elite as a group of people occupying positions of superiority by virtue of certain qualities (actual, claimed or presumed) of excellence or distinctions (ibid: 21). Introducing the elite with Janis Joplin's famous song line "Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz", he demonstrates how the impoverished workers of Katutura called the elite the *waserauta*, those who had "'sold out' – to South Africa or to the governing authorities or for financial gain. They are considered to have betrayed their people". (ibid; cf. Tapscott 1995: 157). Abrahams (1982: 22) shows how the percentage of indigenous Namibians employed in better paying jobs such as management positions or occupations in the health sector strongly increased in the 1970s, thus corresponding in time with the institutionalization of the homelands. He concludes:

> In short, due to a combination of factors, including the new political dispensation, the establishment of a National Assembly and Ministers Council, Namibianisation of the civil service, the creation of eleven ethnic administrations, the massive departure of skilled White workers, and the legal abolition of the Colour Bar in the private sector (commerce, industry, trade, agriculture, etc.), skilled and qualified Blacks are, for the first time in our history, able to become mobile in upward direction. (ibid: 23)

Abrahams (1982) compares the Namibian indigenous elites with postcolonial elites of other African countries and discovers both similarities and differences. In terms of lifestyle, consumerism and influence of "Western" products, practices and values, Abrahams sees the emerging Namibian indigenous elite as rather similar to other African elites. Huge amounts of public funds were invested into luxurious housing and vehicles (ibid: 30). Yet, unlike in other African countries, the indigenous elites in Namibia were a "pre-independence phenomenon" that developed long before the

country's independence. Despite their elite status, members of the new Namibian elites were confronted with the everyday racism inherent in the apartheid system. Apartheid then both enabled the emergence of new indigenous elites and at the same time constrained the lives of the new Namibian elites (ibid).

A moral evaluation of Namibian indigenous elite formation has thus to proceed very cautiously (Behrends/Pauli 2012). As Carola Lentz (1994: 151) warned in relation to Ghanaian elites, one should neither hold "partisan perspectives that idealise them as upholders of 'civil society' [n]or condemn them as exploitative patron-bureaucrats". While Tapscott (1993, 1995), Herbert Jauch (1998), Abrahams (1982) and Henning Melber (2007, 2011, 2014) critically assess the (mis)behaviour of many indigenous Namibian elites since the 1970s, Gerhard Tötemeyer (1978), David Simon and Richard Moorsom (1987), Dobler (2014) and Fumanti (2007, 2016) are much more cautious.[12] Fumanti (2007) stresses that there are significant differences between various Namibian regions regarding collaboration, cooperation and the political activism of regional elites that need to be considered when evaluating the elites in the decades before independence. In Damaraland, the new elite was not perceived as corrupt or exploitive. Rather, the Damara Council was viewed as successful by the local population: first, it seemed successful at redistributing wealth to the wards and, second, it fought to overcome historically ingrained negative stereotypes of the Damara people without compromising its support for SWAPO's nationalistic ideology (Sullivan 1996: 23).

The classification into modernizing and traditional elites is also helpful to understand the dynamics of elite formation in Fransfontein. Although a modernizing elite existed before the establishment of the homeland in the 1970s and 1980s, it was very small and mainly linked to the Protestant church that had been established in Fransfontein in 1891. By the time apartheid was introduced in Namibia, the Fransfontein church hosted a small school, hostel and a health station with one nurse and one pastor. The establishment of bureaucratic structures with the homeland notably increased this modernizing elite. Now, jobs as administrator or politician became available.

12 The involvement of the South African state in Namibian class formation processes is another field of inquiry on which the above mentioned authors differ. Jauch (1998), Abrahams (1982) and especially Tapscott hold the view that, with the implementation of self-governance through "homeland authorities", South Africa fostered the rise of a loyal and stabilizing class within the homelands: "As in South Africa at the time, the creation of a black middle class was intended to act as a hedge against the growing militancy of the masses and to counter their growing antipathy towards capitalism". (Tapscott 1993: 30, 1995: 156) In contrast, Fumanti (2007) underscores the agency and resistance of an indigenous elites in Rundu.

Additionally, a new school and a new health station were opened in Fransfontein, offering employment for teachers, nurses and domestic workers. This sudden availability of new employment opportunities changed the economic structure of Fransfontein. Almost all new occupations of influence, power and prestige were filled by men. Women were very differently integrated into the novel economic structures. They were placed at the receiving end, being offered low-paying occupations as domestic workers by the new male elite. This development was an important element in the establishment of a homeland patronage system.

Big men at work: Homeland patronage systems

> The development of a "homeland" bureaucratic infrastructure led to new economic dynamism based on state and leadership patronage.
> *Richard Rohde/Nature, Cattle Thieves and Various Other Midnight Robbers*

The colonial South African state was interested in the development of loyal indigenous elites. With the implementation of the homeland administrations from the 1960s onwards, emerging local elites had remarkable autonomy to administer public funds. A general lack of accountability presented opportunities for politicians, administrators and professionals to enrich themselves through corruption (Tapscott 1995: 157).[13] Although a commission of enquiry into corruption was established (see Rohde 1997; Werner 1987), the misappropriation of funds was not really sanctioned. Quite the opposite, as Tapscott (1995: 157) states; the behavior of the new "ethnic" elite was in a way welcomed by the colonial state: "It is evident that corruption and inefficiency, while not endorsed, were nevertheless tolerated as necessary for retaining the support of the leadership of the second-tier authorities".

A closer look at the dynamics within Damaraland reveals a rather complex picture. On the one hand, and similar to other homelands, there are multiple accusations of corruption, as for example the buying of cars without interest charges, or the allocation of "inconvenience allowances" and "private construction projects" (Botha n.d.). The Damara Council was described as "a money picnic", an observation based,

13 Not all researchers assess the extent of corruption within the homelands in equal measure. Tapscott (1993, 1995), Christo Botha (n.d.) and Abrahams (1982) see a strong presence of corruption. Simon and Moorsom, in contrast, consider it a much smaller phenomenon, stating that only "a handful" of politicians engaged in these practices (1987: 85-86). It is likely that corruption varied in the different homelands.

for example, on the fact that the Council overspent its allocated budget of R20 million in 1982–1983 by R9 million (Rohde 1997: 296).[14] On the other hand, there was also an awareness of significant administrative problems within the Damara Council. In the 1980s, the chairman of the Damara Executive Committee, King Justus //Garoeb, admitted that his administration lacked good administrators and was not able to deal with the influx of 28.000 people into Damaraland (Botha n.d.). //Garoeb also pointed out the difficulties in the interaction with white officials. In several instances, for example regarding the resettlement of Riemvasmaker people into Damaraland, South Africa had failed to consult with the Damara Council (Botha n.d.: 9).

It is remarkable that, despite a strong increase in internal stratification and multiple accusations of corruption, the Damara council was nevertheless supported by most of the Damara-speaking population of the region (Botha n.d.; Rohde 1997; Sullivan 1996). Above I already mentioned two possible explanations: the Council's success in remodeling the negative stereotypes of Damara people into a positive and self-conscious ethnic identity (Sullivan 1996: 23); and the perception that the Council did redistribute wealth to the local level. This redistribution was mainly channeled through patronage networks, as I describe below. Yet there is a third reason to explain the Damara Council's credibility among the local population: namely that the overspending of funds provided by the colonial South African government was perceived as a kind of resistance and revenge against the colonial power. Botha records it in the following manner:

> A telling comment on the differing perceptions concerning misappropriation of government funds was provided by Emil Appolus, former SWAPO member and "interim government" member. Accusations against the Damara Council-controlled government of having misappropriated funds, he stated, invited a reaction from among ordinary Damaras "… that they should have stolen more from the Boers". (Botha n.d.: 9)

Another example for a Damaraland *kai aob* (big man) (Rohde 1997: 294) was councilor Simon G. (Rohde 1997: 295).[15] G. was a very successful business man and one of the wealthiest men in the region. He died in 1985 in a car accident. He has variously been described as either a Damara Robin Hood or as a corrupt politician and petty criminal (Rohde 1997: 294). He drove a big Mercedes Benz and newspapers of

14 During the same time, the Council's contribution to the "homeland" budget was R640.000 (Rhode 1997: 296). This money was mainly gathered through the regional authorities' responsibility of collecting a monthly grazing fee of 5c per small stock and 60c per head of cattle to supplement their budget (Sullivan 1996: 23).

15 Singular *kai aob*, plural (two) *kai aora*, plural (more than two) *kai aogu*.

the 1980s described him as the best dressed man in Damaraland (Rohde 1997: 295). Remarkably, Damara residents did not view his grandeur as elitist snobbism but, quite the contrary, widely admired it as an expression of his ability to take advantage of the white apartheid regime (Rohde 1997: 296). Their positive evaluation of the local "big men" is confirmed in the political continuity of most of these actors in the postindependence period. Indeed, several of Simon G.'s "more discreet political associates, less flamboyant *kai aob* including King Justus //Garoeb and the present regional councillor for Khorixas district Simson Tjongerero, have remained in political office since that time" (Rohde 1997: 296).

The revenge and resistance discourse was backed up by a complex patronage system. Because of their positions, ward leaders, councillors and other administrators had access to important resources like drought relief and many other rights and privileges. Ward leaders and councillors were, for example, consulted on questions of residence and disputes over access to land, the latter being rarely taken higher than the ward level. The ward's authority also served symbolic and organizational functions: "Within the impoverished economy of Damaraland, networks of patronage associated with administratively legitimized leaders and their mediation in issues of access to the few resources available was highly significant within the homeland system". (Rohde 1997: 262)

Jobs were probably the most important asset that the new patrons distributed. With the establishment of Damaraland, new buildings, like health stations and schools, were built in the administrative capital Khorixas and – though to a lesser extent – also in smaller communities. In Fransfontein, the Frans Frederik Primary School was inaugurated in 1964. In 1980, its old, rather small hostel was replaced by a new state-financed hostel that offered job opportunities for women as domestic workers. A large community hall was built in 1978, today used in particular for weddings. In 2000, a small post office moved into one part of the hall. And in 1981, a health station was built in Fransfontein. In Khorixas, four primary schools and two secondary schools, all with adjacent hostels, and a hospital all opened between 1968 and 1982. Thus, both in Fransfontein and Khorixas job opportunities significantly increased and became a central element in the emerging patronage systems as employment came to be distributed through the local power structures (Sullivan 1996). This also legitimized the positions of the tribal authority (Rohde 1997: 262). Equally, "tribal leaders utilised their access to state authority and funds to expand their support" (Werner 1987: 76). Yet the *kai aogu* received more than political support and loyalty in exchange for their patronage. Often, they also received love and children. This gender dimension of their patronage behavior has rarely been explored (Pauli 2010b). In all of the newly built institutions, the hostels, schools and health stations, young, unskilled women were employed as cleaners, cooks or hostel matrons; many of them were lovers of *kai aogu*.

Hertha's story of how she received a lifelong occupation as one of the domestic workers in the Fransfontein school hostel highlights this central feature of the economic and social dynamics of patronage networks. Hertha was born in the mid-1950s and came to Fransfontein as a teenager. She continued her school career but dropped out at the age of 17 when attending grade 7 because she was pregnant with her daughter. The baby girl was taken away from her by her family and grew up with the father's family. In 1974, Hertha became pregnant again but lost the baby. Around that time she started dating one of the local big men; she was in her mid-twenties and full of admiration for the older, married man. He treasured her beauty and her youth. In 1978, she fell pregnant with his child. At the same time, he assisted her with gaining employment at the hostel – first temporarily to replace a worker on maternity leave (even though pregnant herself) and then, after the birth of her child, as a permanently employed domestic worker. The relationship with the *kai aob* did not last much longer than the birth of the child. However, this child was the only one of her children that ever received maintenance by the father. The fathers of her other four children never paid any maintenance; Hertha, however, did not sue them. Today, Hertha enjoys being economically independent. Although she does not earn a lot, she is happy to have a permanent income as a hostel worker. She has a small but well-kept house. She says that she never wanted to marry any of the fathers of her other children: that would have only meant an extra mouth to feed and the loss of her economic independence (Pauli 2007a, 2007b). When I asked whether she would have married the *kai aob*, she indicated reluctantly that she probably would have, but that he was already married when she met him.

Like Hertha, many young women in the 1970s and 1980s were lovers of influential men of the homeland's administration.[16] One of the ward's council members, now in his late fifties, provided us with information about all the children he knows he fathered: in total, he knows of 20 children he had with 11 women, one of them his wife (with her he has five children). Most of his children were born during the 1970s and 1980s. However, not all women who gave birth to children of *kai aogu* received support similar to what Hertha experienced. Some received smaller favors and others hardly anything at all. Conversely, not all women who were lucky enough to find domestic employment in the 1970s and 1980s were lovers of influential big men. Jana, born in the mid-1950s, started working as a hostel cleaner in the 1980s. She had

16 These gender relations did not necessarily cease after independence. Furthermore, not only the *kai aogu* of the new administrative structures had lovers and out-of-wedlock children in the 1980s; men of the "modernizing elites", especially teachers, acted in a very similar manner to the political *kai aogu*.

Table 4: Occupation of 381 women by birth cohorts

Birth cohorts	11	**Hostel worker**	**Other government employee**	**House-wife**	**Penny economy**	**Pen-sioner**
1915-1924	11					11
1925-1934	28					28
1935-1944	45	1	1			43
1945-1954	48	12	2	3	27	4
1955-1964	58	10	6	5	37	
1965-1974	68	2	2	10	54	
1975-1984	91		1	3	87	
1985-1994	32				32	
Total	**381**	**25**	**12**	**21**	**237**	**86**

been a member of the United Democratic Front (UDF), the party lead by Damara Council's head Justus //Garoeb, for some time. Every time she met //Garoeb at a meeting, she begged him for work and stressed that she had always been loyal to him and the party. Eventually, Jana says, he pitied her so much that he gave her the work. Not only women but also a few men received job favors from the *kai aogu*, as for example toilet cleaners or janitors; yet, most of the permanent, albeit low-paying jobs that the patrons gave away were given to young women who were often their lovers. Table 4 indicates how closely employment as a hostel and school cleaner is linked to two specific birth cohorts, namely women born between 1945 and 1954 and between 1955 and 1964.

Of the 25 women who found employment at the Frans Frederik hostel and school, 22 were born between 1945 and 1964. Furthermore, a quarter of the women born between 1945 and 1954 and a fifth of the women born between 1955-1964 have worked or are working for the hostel or school, compared to only one woman from the earlier cohorts and none in the later ones. All of the women were hired in the 1970s and 1980s when they were in their twenties and thirties. Most of them had children by men from the homeland administration who were influential at that time. Women in the "pensioner" category have never been employed as hostel workers or

at any other government institution such as the health station or the school.[17] I summarize state-financed occupations such as teaching and nursing in the column "other government employees". As with the emergence of hostel workers, better paid positions requiring higher qualifications (as in education, health care or the local administration) became more common in the 1970s and 1980s. The largest category of women, however, finds itself in the "penny economy" category. This is a broad category, including occupations such as taking in clothes for washing, collecting fire wood, working temporarily for commercial farmers, working as a pastoralist or helping in the mother's household.

Only two women born after 1964 were ever hired as hostel workers. Almost all younger women never had a chance to work in this sector – all positions were occupied before they came of age. Today, the rather inflated Fransfontein hostel and school sector is no longer expanding but rather being cut back. As Hertha's account of love and work has already indicated, the cohort employment pattern that becomes visible in Table 4 underlines that hostel work was one of the central modes of exchange between the *kai aogu* and a particular section of the local female population. Through hostel work the women received a certain degree of economic security and autonomy, most often in exchange for love and children.

Table 4 also shows the rise of "housewives". The discourse surrounding these married women is that they do not have to work because their influential and relatively wealthy husbands provide for them. In Part II, I analyze these types of marriage transformations in detail. Here, I only want to comment briefly on the entanglements between male patrons, their wives and their lovers (who sometimes became hostel workers). Splendid and expensive weddings were first celebrated in the 1970s. In fact, the above-mentioned member of the ward council who fathered 20 children with 11 women was one of the first people in the area to celebrate a large, sumptuous wedding in the mid-1970s. He married a former hostel worker who, after the marriage, stopped working and became a "housewife". One might argue that the male patrons of that time were very privileged – in opulent weddings they married their wives and at the same time continued relationships with other women with whom they also had children.

While the local big men thrived, the "small men", thus men without permanent and secure employment, lost out significantly (Rohde 1997: 296). Their chances of ever financing one of the increasingly more expensive weddings fell dramatically.

17 Every Namibian who reaches the age of 60 is entitled to receive a monthly pension. During our main fieldwork time in 2003 and 2004 the amount was NAD250 per month. The exchange rate between Euro and Namibian Dollar (NAD) was about 1:8 at the time of data collection.

During the last two decades, the postcolonial disempowerment of large portions of men has become a topic in African gender studies (Honwana 2012; Silberschmidt 2001). In Damaraland, "unemployed young men are unable to gather the necessary wealth – animals for slaughter, traditional beer and store bought liquor, a dress for the bride, and food for the reception – that a marriage requires. As a result, sexual unions remain informal, lacking the consent of the community" (Fuller 1993: 297). This situation creates underlying tensions that can turn violent (Rohde 1997: 297), lead to excessive drinking and erupt into domestic fights. Who then are the big, who the small men? Again, the middle generation has profited the most from the jobs created with the homelands. More than men from any other cohort, those born in the 1945-1954 and 1955-1964 cohorts managed to work as traditional authorities or for the local government within the homeland administration.[18] Yet they form a very small elite compared to the large group of men with insecure or no employment.

The patronage system that emerged with the homelands was thus dominated by a few powerful *kai aogu*. These men thoroughly changed marriage by increasingly celebrating their distinctiveness on an ever larger scale (see Part II). By giving occupational favors to some of their lovers, the big men (probably unintentionally) also created a space for female autonomy. In contrast to the older generation of women whose lives were framed by the white settler community, the life chances of the women of the middle generation were thus "terribly different in appearance" (Rosaldo 1980: 111). Next I discuss both the changes and the continuities in the life chances of the youngest generation of women.

THE YOUNGER GENERATION: "NOW EVERYBODY CAN HAVE AN OPINION"

During casual discussions in Fransfontein, the one thing that residents highlighted as a central characteristic of the postindependence period was the freedom to express oneself. On weekday mornings in Fransfontein it is very common to find people listening to a phone-in radio program on the national broadcaster in which listeners call in to talk about their opinions, worries or problems. The program is aired in all major Namibian languages, including Khoekhoegowab. One morning, as my friend Silvia and I were listening to the program, a man called in to offer some quite conservative views on the role of women in society. Silvia's reaction took me by surprise: she

18 The majority of both male and female professionals, mainly teachers, also stem from this middle generation.

laughed at him rather than feeling angry or annoyed. With great exuberance she proclaimed: "That's democracy, now everybody can have an opinion," and, grinning, added, "also stupid opinions".

In 1990, SWAPO's "long walk to freedom" – to borrow Nelson Mandela's famous book title – finally came to an end. SWAPO had refused to accept an interim government and only considered the UN Security Council Resolution 435 of 1978 a viable solution. The resolution included a ceasefire, the return of exiled Namibians, the withdrawal of South African troops and a general election to determine the composition of a constituent assembly. In 1988, South Africa finally accepted the peace plan and in November 1989 the first free general election was held, under UN supervision. The election was won by SWAPO and Namibia finally achieved its formal independence on March 21, 1990 (Jauch 1998: 29; Melber 2014).

The situation SWAPO had to master after independence was difficult: "At independence the incoming SWAPO government inherited a society in which racial, ethnic and class differentiation were firmly entrenched, and in which political enmity and social distrust were endemic". (Tapscott 1995: 162) To overcome these divisions, the government initiated a policy of national reconciliation (Tapscott 1993). Although this policy was politically and economically expedient, in order to forestall the flight of skills and capital from the country and given the experiences made in Angola and Zimbabwe, "national reconciliation also reinforce[d] the *status quo* by protecting pre-independence gains of the minority, by reproducing existing relations or production and by legitimizing patterns of social differentiation that had existed in the colonial era" (ibid: 162). Thus, processes of class formation continued in postindependence Namibia, and increasingly transcended ethnic boundaries. On the national level, Namibian postapartheid elite formation developed in the following way: "What has been emerging […] is at best a crypto-capitalist, petty-minded, self-enriching new black elite, which expends its energy on exploiting the public purse" (Melber 2014: 149), a situation similar to what has been described in other newly independent countries. At first sight it appears surprising that these dynamics have continued under SWAPO rule, a party ideologically oriented towards socialism. But, SWAPO is foremost "a nationalist movement, composed of a broad spectrum of social strata" (Tapscott 1995: 162), suggesting that there is also room for fostering the privileges of elites. Thus, "present-day Namibian society is quite different from the one the movement had promised to create". (Melber 2014: 150)

In the former homelands, the laws that had constituted the homeland authorities were replaced and powers were removed (Rohde 1997: 263). The property under Damara authority reverted back to the Namibian state. Today, Namibia is divided into administrative regions. The southern part of former Damaraland is now part of the Erongo region while the northern part is included in the Kunene region. However,

although former chiefs, headmen and councilors of the Damaraland have officially lost their positions, their authority has not markedly diminished: "Headmen and councilors have lost much of their 'official' status, yet in the absence of anything to replace their power, they retain a strong advisory role in conflicts over land allocation and land disputes". (ibid: 264)

Today, state laws regulate traditional leaders and traditional authorities (Kössler 2005: 15). In Fransfontein, the Traditional Authorities Act, No. 17 of 1995, has initiated a number of political changes. As described above, Fransfontein had always been a multiethnic community, though it is possible to say that before the apartheid period the Swartbooi Nama were probably more influential than the Damara. This clearly changed with the apartheid establishment of Damaraland. During that time most of the important and influential positions (and many minor ones) were given to people who considered themselves Damara. In the postindependence period, the Swartbooi Nama have managed to regain their influence.

Unlike the Damara fraction, the Swartbooi Nama applied soon after independence to become the traditional authority of Fransfontein. They were supported by Dr. Libertine Appolus Amathila, a very influential SWAPO politician, member of the National Assembly of Namibia since 1990, Minister of Regional and Local Government and Housing from 1990 to 1996, then Minister of Health and Social Services, and since 2005 Deputy Prime Minister. Dr. Amathila was born in Fransfontein in 1940, into the Swartbooi Nama community. As a result of this action, the Swartbooi Nama were gazetted as official traditional authority in the 1990s. They maintain a state-funded traditional authority office with a full-time secretary in Fransfontein. However, the Damara also continue to maintain an (unofficial) office in Fransfontein. This complicated situation, charged also with "politicized ethnicity" (Kössler 2005: 8), is not only restricted to questions of representation. The conflicts are inseparably tied to very mundane questions, such as control of land, water and grazing (ibid: 16), but also government jobs, and they tackle the economic foundations of collective identities – production and reproduction. Thus, further arenas of contestation are the establishment of so-called conservancies, namely the practices and institutions of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) (Linke 2017; Schnegg 2016b; Schnegg/Bollig/Linke 2016; Schnegg/Linke 2016), but also the maintenance of the church and the erection of historical monuments. Similar conflicts have erupted in the former Kaokoland where two conflicting groups are each trying to legitimize their power claims through specific readings of history that aim to prove their true "traditionality" (Friedman 2005).

The new administrative units have also produced new bureaucratic spaces and patrons. In terms of gender relations, the new dynamics very much resemble those types of exchange I have described for the homeland authorities of the 1970s and

1980s. The following example demonstrates these exchange dynamics. In 2006, the position of local governor of Fransfontein became vacant when the office holder was promoted to another position. It is the responsibility of the governor to manage several public services, such as the supply of water to the community and the provision of plots for building a house. Given that official communication and correspondence takes place in English, fluency in this language and good bookkeeping skills are necessary for the job. And yet, a young woman in her early twenties with limited English and bookkeeping skills was employed in 2006, despite the fact that there had been several well-qualified candidates. According to rumors, she was the lover of a new, influential *kai aob* in Khorixas.

New types of corruption and patronage also include the highly politicized land issue (Tapscott 1995; Werner 2004; Melber 2014). After independence, land was allocated to black farmers through the Commercial (Agricultural) Land Reform Act of 1995 (Werner 2004). Yet, instead of benefiting disadvantaged and poor citizens, as the act had envisaged, it was wealthy politicians who managed to gain access to the so-called "resettled farmland" (Werner 2004: 302). These wealthy black farmers began to push the government for further redistribution of land: again, their aim was not to make land available to impoverished rural inhabitants, but to enable themselves to enlarge their own holdings (Tapscott 1995: 165). It was at this time too that wealthy farmers – often business men, former officials of the homeland administration or politicians – began to fence off communal pasture for their own private use, a situation that also developed in the Fransfontein communal area (Schnegg/Welle 2007).

From this discussion it becomes clear that class dynamics that developed during the period of the apartheid homelands continue into postapartheid times. The joy of independence is mixed with bitter undertones. This period has also been marked by the dramatic spread of HIV/AIDS that has shaken the foundations of gender and other social relations. During our fieldwork stints in 2003/2004, 2005 and 2006, HIV and AIDS were very present in the community – both as lived experience and as ambiguous discourse. Several Fransfonteiners of different genders and age told us that the first time they had had contact with the disease was through a "woman from Grootfontein". She had come to Fransfontein where her aunt cared for her until her death. This woman, nameless and identified only by the location she came from, left a deep imprint on the collective memory of the community. She was the first person in the experience of the Fransfontein community who was open about suffering from AIDS and about the possibility that she would die.

After having outlined central facets of the history of the community and the shaping of three generations of Fransfonteiners, I now turn towards contemporary livelihoods and ask how these are shaped by continuous and new forms of exclusion and inequality.