

History, memory, and commemorations: on genocide and colonial past in South West Africa

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RESUMO

Com base na nova historiografia alemã, o artigo trata de algumas formas de compartilhar a experiência, do dever da memória e do reescrever da história no que tange ao genocídio durante a guerra colonial (1904-1907) no sudoeste africano. A história e a memória passam por um processo de descolonização, tanto na Alemanha quanto na Namíbia, que transcorre por meio de petições por reparações ou protestos diante de monumentos do período (pós-)colonial ou de rituais de comemorações. Sobre essas experiências, as histórias nacionais de países africanos apresentam tensões intrínsecas ao caráter multicultural ou pluriétnico das sociedades pós-coloniais. Palavras-chave: genocídio; sudoeste africano; descolonização da memória/história.

ABSTRACT

Based on the new German historiography, this paper deals with some forms of sharing experience, with the task of memory and of rewriting history in view of the genocide during the Colonial War (1904-1907) in South West Africa. History and memory undergo a process of decolonization both in Germany and in Namibia, which takes place by means of petitions for reparations, or protests in front of monuments of the (post-)colonial period, or commemoration rituals. About these experiences, the national histories of the African countries present tensions intrinsic to the multi- or pluri-ethnic character of the post-colonial societies.

Keywords: genocide; South West Africa; decolonization of memory/history.

Despite the current interest in African history, some African regions and historical periods are little known to Brazilian students and historians. In the past three decades, the main journals of African studies in the country have published almost nothing on the history of either Namibia or South West Africa.¹ This situation is not very different from the one that can be verified in the *Journal of African History*, one of the most important international periodicals dealing with the History of Africa.²

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In the wave (surge) of postcolonial studies, comparative history of genocides has reserved special attention to the case of the *Herero* ethnic group. Also an extraeuropean approach in the new German historiography has privileged area studies in which research on the German colonies, particularly the one of South West Africa, is emphasized.³ The history of Namibia registers the first genocide of the 20th century. It happened during the Colonial War (1904-1907) in South West Africa, even though the extermination of the *Herero* continued during the first months of the *post-bellum* period.

In the last years genocide has no longer been a private experience of the *Herero*, an ethnic minority that makes up at present less than 10% of the total population of Namibia. This traumatic experience of an ethnic group ended up being shared by members of the *in-group* and the *out-group*, not only through what can be called “social memory”,⁴ but also through the rewriting of Namibia’s social history.

The critical revision of German historiography in relation to the colonial experience in South West Africa and the recent rewriting of the national history of Namibia bring to mind a series of questions about the tension between past and future, which point to some of Reinhart Koselleck’s ideas about the relationship between field of experience and horizon of expectation, as well as about the different types of history writing and their respective times.⁵

In relation to the colonial war of South West Africa, it can be inferred that the annotated history (*Aufschreiben*), whose temporality is that of the short term, was written by the ‘victors’, whereas the cumulative history (*Fortschreiben*) has allowed a certain critical distance concerning the first, more susceptible to the subjectivity of those who had lived through that experience.⁶ A century after this event, however, the rewritten history (*Umschreiben*) has come closer to the ‘vanquished’. Needless to say that the latter has a therapeutic function in cases of collective or national traumas.⁷

In Germany, the new historiography has accomplished this task in relation to the Holocaust. Over the last years the genocide of the *Herero* has come out of oblivion as German historians began to rewrite the history of colonialism at the time of the II Reich.⁸ By their turn, some Namibian historians propose a revision of Namibia’s own (pre-)national history.⁹ But the acknowledgement of the genocide of the *Herero* is not consensual in the historiography. One of the most important historians of Namibia, Brigitte Lau, disagreed with the thesis of genocide.¹⁰ Among the new generation of German historians the genocide of the *Herero* is widely acknowledged and came to be considered a

‘national trauma’ for Namibia (Zimmerer; Zeller, 2004, p.9). It is worth stressing here the polemical debate on the verdict of historians.¹¹ By the way, what can a rewritten history of the genocide of the *Herero* as ‘national trauma’ imply, considering that Namibia has become an independent nation in 1990?

THE GENOCIDE OF THE *HERERO* AS ‘NATIONAL TRAUMA’

The interpretation of the genocide of the *Herero* as ‘national trauma’ starts a new polemic for the historiographical revision of Namibia’s colonial past. As a category of intervention for certain organisms and associations that claim, among other things, recognition of the genocide and compensations, the ‘national trauma’ is not without ambiguity when some historians turn it into a historical category, for this implies nationalizing the historical experience of an ethnic minority. Obviously, the ‘national trauma’ has a strong media appeal, and it was exploited in newspapers articles and television documentaries during news reports about the centennial of the genocide of the *Herero*.

Besides journalists, consultants or representatives of NGOs or associations resort to the ‘national trauma’ category without a precise definition, as if a genocide would become inevitably a national trauma. But the genocide of the *Herero* as ‘national trauma’ implies a negotiation with the other ethnic groups of Namibia. It is worth remembering that ethnicity is a component of the political party organization in that country.¹²

Nowadays the national population of Namibia is composed of groups of European (German and English) or South African (Afrikaner) origin, and of several groups of African origin (*Ovambo*, *Nama*, *Herero*, *Sam* and *Tswana*, among others), besides a significant group of mestizos of African or Euro-African origin. The majority are the *Ovambo* group, representing 50% of the total population of 2.1 million. The *Herero* and *Nama* groups make up 7% and 5% of the total population, respectively. The white population of German, English, or Afrikaner origin represents approximately 5% of the country’s population.¹³

Historically, all these groups have gotten involved in a greater or lesser degree in the Colonial Wars of South West Africa. In the war against the *Herero* and the *Nama*, for example, the Germans counted on Boer guides or scouts, and on a troop of mestizos. It is important to remember that the war in the African South West happened two years after the end of the last Anglo-Boer War in southern Africa (1900-1902).

Concerning the genocide of the *Herero*, their extermination was an express order from the military high command at the time of the German colonialism. For historiography, the extermination order (*Vernichtungsbefehl*) of General Lothar von Trotha given on the 2nd of October 1904 came to be the documental key to the genocide.¹⁴ It is estimated that around 70,000 people were killed among the *Herero*, that is, approximately 80% of their population. About 14,000 German soldiers participated in the war, 1,500 of whom died in combat or of diseases like typhus.¹⁵

Still in 1904, the *Nama* rebelled against German colonial rule. A fate not so different from that of the *Herero* was declared under the command of the same General von Trotha. The death toll is estimated in 10,000 (50% of the *Nama* population) between 1904 and 1908.

In spite of its greater impact, the genocide was not the only traumatic experience in that war context. Individuals on either side of the conflict suffered other traumas, since many of them were exposed to thirst, hunger, epidemics, forced migration, loss of their dear ones, robberies, rapes, and assaults.

In relation to the genocide, there must be a distinction between the lived experience and the ways of remembering the past experience.¹⁶ Once the war was over, the prisoners had no idea of the number of the dead, of refugees, or of the ones who had been confined to the several concentration camps. Some survivors were scattered. Thousands of men, women, children, and elderly people had died trying to cross the Omaheke desert. It is estimated that only a thousand of them made it to the border of Betschuanaland (present-day Botswana), then under British rule. Among other survivors was the leader Samuel Maharero, who died in exile on March 14, 1923.

The survivors of the genocide gathered together for the first time around Samuel Maherero's grave, in Okahandja.¹⁷ Since then the commemoration happens annually and it constitutes one of the most important rituals of presentification of collective memory of the *Herero*. Symbolically, the *Herero* leader's grave serves as a 'catalyst' to the feeling of belonging for the members of that ethnic community (Gewald, 2004, p.179).

A more political than ethnic identification can also favor a transfer, an appropriation of the past experience by the new generations. Thus the memory of a past experience can be shared by members of other groups. Endowing an event with a new significance can sometimes make the commemoration of an ethnic group become a regional or even national holiday.

In the case of the genocide of the *Herero*, it is worth remembering that Namibian nationalism preceded the social construction of the 'national trauma'; for, without a national identity, it would not have been possible to reconfigure the genocide of the *Herero* as a national trauma. Moreover, the historical event is a reference to remembrance, not identical to the one that manifests itself in collective consciousness (Zimmerer; Zeller, 2004, p.10).

Since Namibia's independence in 1990 its government has had difficulties representing with equity (with the equal representation of) the several ethnic groups that make up the national society as well as meeting their claims concerning reparations of the past. The nationalism of President Sam Nujoma did not make concessions to ethnic minorities. In fact, the official participation of Namibia in the process of the international recognition of the genocide of the *Herero* was timid. The two lawsuits which had been filed in the United States against German institutions accused of benefitting from the genocide during the Colonial War and the dialogue begun in Geneva by the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations shook diplomatic relations between Germany and Namibia.¹⁸ In his turn, President Sam Nujoma stated that such initiatives belonged to *Herero* representatives and not to official Namibian representatives (Melber, 2004, p.218). In other words, the genocide of the *Herero* was not officially considered a 'national trauma', not at least during the Nujoma era (1990-2005). Needless to remember that the ethnic basis of the electorate of Swapo – the party in power since 1990 – is the *Ovambo* group, the major ethnic group of the country.

RITUALS OF COMMEMORATION AND PLACES OF MEMORY

A remarkable event for a collectivity is usually shared by its members. Sharing an experience is what provides it with a social character.¹⁹ The memory of an event is not only made up of the lived experience, but also of the way(s) of sharing such an event. The collective memory of an event is not the sum total of individual memories about it. For the organization and presentification of collective memory the rituals of commemoration of an event play an important role. To Koselleck (1987, p.9), every human community has a space of lived experience based on which people act and in which what is past becomes present through memory or through history and through the rituals of commemoration of a past experience. Similarly, people partake in a horizon of expectation, according to which they also guide themselves. Remembrance or forgetfulness of a past experience conditions the horizon of expectation.

In post-colonial societies, usually composed of several ethnic groups, national history can diverge from the memory(-ies) of each ethnic group or each generation. It is worth considering that history and memory register experience in distinct ways. In spite of memory's asking us for reparations or commemorations, the latter do not replace the experience, whose immutability does not allow us to relive the event. Can we only then remember it, commemorate it, regret it, or forget it? Paul Ricoeur (2000) showed that there is a possibility of representation of the past that is not reduced simply to the subjective and relative exercise of recollection.

The case of the genocide which took place in the former German colony of South West Africa during the Colonial War can be emblematic of the relationship of memory, history, and experience. From the 1920's on, the survivors of the *Herero* and *Nama* groups, and later their descendants, began to commemorate events alluding to their respective experiences. The Germans and their descendants also had 'their traumas' to recollect.²⁰ These three ethnic minorities of present-day Namibia have commemorated, since the beginning of the South African mandate until today, special dates in their respective communities. The German descendants commemorate *Waterberg-Tag*, the *Hereros Ohamakari Day*, and the *Namas Heroes Day*. Three commemorations alluding to three events, which go beyond mere tribute to dead forebears killed during the war in different locations of the national territory, for they serve the identity of the descendants of each of the groups and the presentification of their collective memories.

An event can carry multiple meanings. In the case of a genocide, the experience is registered in the survivors' memory. Not only by history or oral traditions are the new generations made aware of what took place, but also by the symbolic reading of certain landscapes or by commemorations, or even by visits to places of memory like a cemetery. In the *Herero* case, the return of the remains of their leader Samuel Maharero (1854-1923) and their burial in Okahandja in 1923 marked the symbolic rebirth of the group. The ceremony thereafter came to integrate the *Herero* commemorations. Besides religious ceremonies, there is also a military parade with members representing soldiers whose uniforms remind people of those worn by German troops. Among the *Herero* the *Ohamakari Day* is also commemorated. The place of the annual commemoration has historical and symbolic value, because it is where the fatal flight through the Omaheke desert began, which resulted in the death of thousands of men, women, children, and elderly (Förster, 2004, p.213-214). Among the *Nama*, *Heroes Day* takes place in Gibeon, region of the largest

concentration of the *Nama-Wittboi* at the time of the Colonial War.²¹ Besides the religious ceremony, *Heroes Day* includes representations of historical events important to that community. These representations can be, for instance, either of the last battle of the great *Nama* leader, Captain Hendrik Witbooi (1830-1905), or of a *Schutztruppe* attack against the natural mountain fortress where the *Nama-Witbooi* were in 1904. Like other narratives of commemorative parties or celebrations, the ones of *Heroes Day* emphasize the resistance of the group and their *ethnical revival*.²² It is worth underlining that the presentation of an event is part of the *telling*, that is, of *the act of narrating* of a communicative process that includes other key elements (*story, discourse*) of narrative (Bruner, 1986, p.145).

The German descendants commemorate “Waterberg-Tag” in the Waterberg cemetery, where many of their forebears fell and are buried. This denotes the permanence of idiosyncrasies in the collective memories of the multicultural society of Namibia, expressed both in rituals of commemoration and in local and symbolic anchorages (Förster, 2004, p.214).

DECOLONIZING MEMORY AND HISTORY

In several African countries the field studies of History and the Social Sciences have treated subjects such as gender relations and genocides with the support of the new methodological and theoretical approaches.²³ For more ‘classical’ themes in the Social Sciences such as conflicts, ruptures, and continuities, Austral Africa has been an important laboratory. In this sense, the anthropological works of Max Glukman and Victor Turner²⁴ have been seminal for post-colonial cultural studies. Also, the colonial past has been revised critically concerning its legacy in African societies which passed through decolonization, but which have come to know different forms of despotism in the post-colonial period (Mamdani, 1996). However, some Africanists criticize certain generalizations based on cases of southern Africa.²⁵

In the case of Namibia, the genocide of the *Herero* has its particulars and one must be very careful when comparing it with the *Tutsi* genocide, for example.²⁶ This does not mean that there cannot be common elements in the genocide of ethnic groups in different times and places.²⁷

Similarly to the centennial of the genocide of the *Herero*, other commemorations are inscribed in the process of decolonization of history and memory in present-day Namibia. This has given rise to a debate about the task of memory and the right to forgetfulness in that country. In the same way, a

new wave of monuments and memorials has demonstrated how much post-colonial societies seek to heal their traumas in the symbolic field.²⁸ This does not eliminate the difficulties of rewriting a national history which may be able to treat with equity the past experiences of each ethnic group.

Like the writing of history, memorialization also works with past experiences. Distinguishing between them, however, is necessary. Memory is the recollection of a lived experience, present and open to successive changes, usually unconscious. Memory is subject to periods of long latency, but it can be suddenly awaked.²⁹ If it tends to the absolute, making remembrance sacred, history is always relative, implying criticism and analysis. Different from the relation of past experience with memory is its relation with history. History is always a problematic and incomplete construction of what is no longer, but that has left traces. These traces, whether linguistic or not, are the ones that allow figuring out events. Also, the way of articulating past and posterior events differentiates history from memory. Based on the traces, the historian elaborates the narrative of what happened, integrating events in a coherent explicative whole. In this sense, memory and history can even oppose each other.³⁰ But the independence that historical reconstruction – of a past experience – has in relation to social memory does not necessarily result in their opposition. The memory of social groups can help the historian's work (Connerton, 1989, p.14; Dosse, 2009, p.10). Furthermore, memory and history can fulfill a therapeutic function in cases of traumatic experiences.³¹

The task of memory and the rewriting of history do not always find favorable circumstances for their exercise. In some moments or in some places, ethnic minorities face certain difficulties to carry out their commemorations or other forms of cult of collective memory. The cult of memory of an ethnic minority can provoke sanctions from the other minority groups or from the major group(s), especially when these groups also share the same experience or a similar one.

In Namibia some manifestations in favor of the acknowledgement of the genocide during the German colonial rule caused diplomatic embarrassments between the two countries. After the official visits of Helmut Kohl to Namibia in 1995 and of Sam Nujoma to Germany in 1996, the German President Roman Herzog visited Namibia in 1998. On this occasion representatives of the *Herero* spoke up with the intention that the German government acknowledged the genocide. The German President even mentioned the 'mistakes of the past', but did not officially assume any responsibility.

In the beginning of 2000, the English lawyer Lord Anthony Gifford was hired by the *Herero* to file an international lawsuit. In October the first official meeting between the representatives of the *Herero* and the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations took place in Geneva.³² Despite some impact in the media, based on a series of documentaries broadcast by TV stations in several countries such as France, South Africa, and even Germany, as well as several news reports in the European press, the German government was not forced by any law court to pay indemnities for the genocide. Nevertheless, since 2004 Germany has agreed to raise its economic aid for the development of Namibia.³³

Other projects, besides the aid on the economic level, have been carried out between the two countries over the past years. Among them, the project entitled “Anticolonial resistance and liberation fight archive” (*Archiv des anticolonialen Widerstands und des Befreiungskampfes*) stands out. With the help of private and institutional donations, the project has achieved to increase the collection of the National Archive of Windhoek (ANW). In 2008 the librarian of the University of Namibia and the representative of the ANW, Ellen Namhila, were in Germany to receive the donation of a series of important documents (in digitalized version) for the history of Namibia. On this occasion Ms. Namhila gave an interview about the importance of reconstructing the history of the country. For her, “the identity of a people is based on history, it is the core of all the development to come”.³⁴

Also, the demands for the devolution of the collection of skulls of Africans that served to Eugen Fischer’s scientific research are inscribed in this decolonization of the culture of the former ruled and ruler. About the fate of the ‘repatriated’ skulls there is still controversy.³⁵ The government of Namibia even suggested burying them next to the “Heroes Acre” Memorial, inaugurated in 2002. The leadership of the ethnic minorities, on the other hand, want to place them in a Genocide Museum.³⁶

The process of memory decolonization (decolonizing memory) has also encouraged public action such as the substitution of street names, the removal or demolition of monuments, and the inauguration of new monuments, memorials, and museums. In Namibia, some avenues and streets have had their names changed. In the capital city, Windhoek, the former Avenue Curt von François is now called Sam Nujoma Drive. In Swakopmund, the former Kaiser Wilhelm Strasse has become Sam Nujoma Avenue. In Keetmanshoop, the also formerly called Kaiser Street was renamed Sam Nujoma Drive in honor of the first President of Namibia.³⁷ This change of names has also been

part of the process of post-independence ‘namibialization’ (Bader, 1987, p.168).

As mentioned before, the national memorial “Heroes Acre” was inaugurated in Windhoek in 2002.³⁸ In the historical narrative on the plastic relief of the memorial reference is made to the fight for the liberation of Namibia from the Colonial War until the Independence. In this memorial there is a certain line from the ‘resistance heroes’, who fought German colonialism, to the ‘independence heroes’, who fought against South African colonialism. In short, it is a memorial of the ‘black resistance’ of Namibia against the white power in effect under German colonial rule and, later, under the South African mandate.

The History Museum about the Independence of Namibia was also conceived in this process of decolonization, in which even the projected architecture aims at breaking from the architectural heritage of colonial times, still very present in the urban legacy of Windhoek (Zeller, 2004, p. 203).

Nevertheless, the existence of some monuments alongside the lack of others still ‘bothers’. In a parliamentary session in 1993, a deputy of Swapo complained about the absence of a memorial to the prisoners killed in the concentration camp on the island facing the city of Lüderitz, where there is, however, a monument in honor of the founder of the German colony of South West Africa, a Bremen merchant, Adolf Lüderitz.

In the coastal city of Swakopmund, the Naval Memorial (*Marine Denkmal*) is also criticized. As a tribute to the dead of the Naval Battalions I and II, sent by the Kaiser to reinforce the *Schutztruppe* at the beginning of the war in South West Africa, this memorial was raised in 1908. History professor Elisabeth Khaxas’ comment before the Naval Memorial is an example of a ‘reading against the grain’ of these ‘places of memory’:

This memorial is a tribute to the German soldiers that began the genocide. They killed a lot of people, they finished 75% of the Herero people, but they appear as heroes. Why don’t we have any monument to remember the victims yet? This monument is a sign of destruction, of the inhuman treatment a black people of this country suffered.³⁹

The Memorial of the Cavalryman (*Reiterdenkmal*) in Windhoek was another theme of controversies among the ethnic communities in Namibia. For it was not only a tribute to the dead soldiers of the *Schutztruppe*. Like every war monument, it was a reference mark for the identity of the

survivors.⁴⁰ It also inscribed itself in the topography of a colonial space which still carries a strong symbolic charge in a country undergoing a frank process of construction of its national history. After almost a hundred years of standing untouched near the Old Fortress (*Alte Feste*) – another symbolic place from the times of the German colonial rule – the *Reiterdenkmal* was removed in August 2009.⁴¹

But it is not only on the side of the ‘vanquished’ that memory and history go through a process of decolonization. On the side of the ‘victors’ the rewritten history has contributed to this process as well. In 1985 a team of German historians was invited to give their verdict on the question of the genocide of the *Herero*.⁴² The meeting also had the presence of local political authorities and took place in Münster after the polemic about the word *Völkermord*, which appeared in a tribute written by the non-governmental organization *Arbeitskreis Afrika* (Akafrik).⁴³

Other monuments and memorials in honor of the victims of colonialism have also appeared in Germany in the last years.⁴⁴ In the Hanseatic city of Bremen, a monument of 1932, an initiative of the then *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft* in honor of colonial times, became an anticolonialism monument in 1996, due to an action of civil society groups. For the ceremony of the inauguration of the plate in honor of the victims of the German colonial rule came the President of Namibia, Sam Nujoma. In 2009 another memorial was inaugurated in Bremen. This time the homage was to the victims of Waterberg and the genocide.

In general these monuments and memorials aim at settling that double historical debt, that is, the debt with the past and the debt with the future generations. In this sense a symbolic reparation is sought for by means of acknowledging past mistakes; at the same time, possible criticism of future generations is anticipated.

Some monuments of the colonial and post-colonial period which exalt personalities or battles have been removed of the public sphere. Some street names have also been changed. In the center of Munich, for instance, a von Trotha-Strasse is now called Hererostrasse. Such change happened on the 9th of November 2007. This may have been the most emblematic change, because the name of the person who gave the extermination order was replaced by the name of the ethnic group who was the victim of his cruelty.

FINAL REMARKS

The genocide of the *Herero* was the first genocide of the 20th century. It fits in with a series of others (of Armenians, Jews, Tutsis, etc.) which took place between 1904 and 1999. Whereas certain commemorations endow the event with new significance with the intention of presentification of the past, even in the impossibility of reliving the original experience, history has the advantage of discerning changes in collective memory. It allows its reconstruction in time, not of the past as it occurred, but of its permanent reuses, its uses and misuses, its marks impressed in the present time.⁴⁵

Rewriting the history of a genocide favors an approach of the past event as emergence, inscribed within a comprehensive scheme in a narrative construction. Through the historiographical operation the event returns ‘overcharged with meaning’.⁴⁶ In this sense some historians have related certain genocides to imperialism, others have treated them as facts inherent in colonialism. Some of these historical interpretations allow analogies between the genocide of the *Herero* and the Holocaust of the Jews.⁴⁷ Comparative studies about genocides have also shown differences, for example, between what happened in Namibia, in California, and in Tasmania (Madley, 2004).⁴⁸

The memory of a genocide can serve for the ethnic minorities to claim better visibility in a post-colonial context. But if the task of memory is an imperative that defies historians, they should not be confused with ‘memory guardians’. To the historian is assigned the function, perhaps immeasurable, of transmitting an adequate, verified knowledge of this ‘population of the dead’. In spite of all difficulties and implications, abandoning this pretension would be leaving the field free for all kinds of revisions and falsifications of the past.⁴⁹

Sympathetic to the task of memory, historians can contribute for the rewriting of a national history. At the same time, the decolonization of memory and of national history gives rise to new debates, polemics, and even conflicts in contemporary society. The removal of monuments, the replacement of avenue, street, or square names, and the inauguration of new memorials, commemorative plates, and museums contribute to a better dialogue among all social or ethnic groups involved in the presentification of collective memory or the writing of national history.

Even if the authorities of one or another government, like the ones of Germany and Namibia, manage to evade the demands of ethnic minorities or non-governmental organizations, the traces of the past – like the skeletons

found in the beginning of 2000 in the desert near the city of Lüderitz – emerge and defy our task of memory and our commitment to the rewriting of history.

NOTES

¹ In Brazil the journals of the Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais (Ceao/UFBA, Salvador), do Centro de Estudos Africanos (FFLCH/USP, São Paulo), and the Centro de Estudos Afro-Asiáticos (Ceaa/Universidade Cândido Mendes, Rio de Janeiro) have contributed greatly to the dissemination of academic knowledge in several disciplinary fields related to Africa. In an online research as well as in a search by subject in the pages of these African Studies centers there have not been found any papers on the history of Namibia. Among the rare essays which deal with South West Africa or Namibia there is the one of Willfried F. Feuser, from the University of Port Harcourt (Nigeria), who writes a study of comparative literature on two novels about Africa by European writers: *Volk ohne Raum*, by Hans Grimm, and *Terra Morta*, by Castro Soromenho. This paper was published in *Afro-Ásia*, n.13, p.51-66, 1980.

² ECKERT, Andreas. Namibia – ein deutscher Sonderweg in Afrika? In: ZIMMERER, Jürgen; ZELLER, Joachim (Hrgs.). Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwestafrika: Der Kolonialkrieg (1904-1908) in Namibia und seine Folgen. Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2004, p.226-238.

³ WENDT, Reinhard. O olhar para além das fronteiras continentais: história extraeuropeia na recente historiografia [de língua] alemã. (Trad. Silvio M. de S. Correa). In: GERTZ, René; CORREA, Silvio M. de S. (Org.). *Historiografia alemã pós-muro*: experiências e perspectivas. Passo Fundo (RS): UPF; Santa Cruz do Sul (RS): Unisc, 2007, p.194-233, p.231.

⁴ CONNERTON, Paul. *How societies remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

⁵ To Koselleck, the space of experience is the past made current. Thus, several times made (re)current by memory live together simultaneously in the present. The horizon of expectation is related to the future. It is made up of previsions, hopes, anxieties, and projections for the future. Historical time is the fruit of the tension between past and future. See: KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *Vergangene Zukunft*: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989.

⁶ On the three types of history writing (*Aufschreiben*, *Fortschreiben*, *Umschreiben*) and their respective times (*kurz-*, *mittel-*, *langfristig*), Koselleck has observed that the history of the short-term was written in general by the victors, while the long-term history bears the mark of the vanquished since the latter or their representatives seek other explanations for the defeat, and these explanations are ingrained in the long-term or in the analysis of structures. See KOSELLECK, Reinhart. Erfahrungswandel und Methodenwechsel. Eine historische-anthropologische Skizze. In: MEIER, C.; RÜSEN, J. (Hrgs.). *Historische Methode*. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1988, p.13-61.

⁷ KOSELLECK, 1989; RICOEUR, Paul. *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*. (Collection L'ordre philosophique). Paris: Seuil, 2000.

⁸ In the historiography of the two Germanies the theme of genocide had not been dealt with until the mid-1960's. Horst Dreschler's Marxist-oriented book (*Aufstände in Südwestafrika: Der Kampf der Herero und Nama 1904 bis 1907 gegen die deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*. Berlin [Ost]: Akademie-Verlag, 1966) was the first work to relate the genocide of the *Herero* to imperialism. In the Federal Republic of Germany, Helmuth Bley (*Kolonialherrschaft und Sozialstruktur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1894-1914*. Hamburg: Leibniz-Verlag, 1968) made a historical analysis of the social structure in South West Africa under colonial German rule in which the extermination appears associated to colonialism. After the unification of Germany in 1989 several works have been published on the genocide of the *Herero*, especially at its centennial. See DABAG, Mihran; GRÜNDER, Horst; KETELSEN Uwe-Karsten (Hrsgs.). *Kolonialismus, Kolonialdiskurs und Genozid*. Paderborn: Fink Verlag, 2004; ZELLER, Joachim. Symbolische Politik. Anmerkungen zur kolonialdeutschen Erinnerungskultur. In: ZIMMERER, Jürgen; ZELLER, Joachim (Hrsg.). *Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwestafrika. Der Kolonialkrieg (1904-1908) in Namibia und seine Folgen*. Berlin: Links Verlag, 2004, p.192-208; ZIMMERER, Jürgen. Krieg, KZ und Völkermord in Südwestafrika. Der erste deutsche Genozid. In: ZIMMERER; ZELLER, 2004, p.45-63; WASSINK, Jörg. *Auf den Spuren des deutschen Völkermordes in Südwestafrika: Der Herero-/Namaufstand in der deutschen Kolonialliteratur; eine literarhistorische Analyse*. München: M. Press, 2004; HAMANN, Christof (Hrsg.). *Afrika – Kultur und Gewalt*. Hintergründe und Aktualität des Kolonialkriegs in Deutsch-Südwestafrika. Seine Rezeption in Literatur, Wissenschaft und Populärkultur (1904-2004). Inerloh: Institut für Kirche und Gesellschaft, 2005; BREHL, Medardus. *Vernichtung der Herero*. Diskurse der Gewalt in der deutschen Kolonialliteratur (Gemeinschaftsgüter: Recht, Politik und Ökonomie), Paderborn: Fink Verlag, 2007.

⁹ The recent Namibian historiography still tries to 'decolonize' itself from the South African historiographic influence. At the same time, it still faces the weight of authority of German and South African historians whose works, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, leave little room for innovation and visibility for the young Namibian historians. In the historiographic field, for example, when it comes to the colonialism of Austral Africa (including South West Africa), the editorial market is almost a monopoly of 'white' historians of Germany, England, Holand, and South Africa. The few exceptions are Namibian authors who have studied abroad or have jobs as official representatives abroad like, for instance, the ambassador Peter Katjavivi, author of *A history of resistance in Namibia* (Paris: Unesco, 1988).

¹⁰ In a newspaper article the Namibian historian, killed in a tragic accident in 1996, refuted the interpretation of the genocide. LAU, Brigitte. Uncertain certainties: The Herero-German War of 1904. *Mibagus*, n.2, p.4-5, 8, Apr. 1989. Later, the German historian Tilman Dederig, of the University of South Africa, responded to Lau's arguments. Cf. DEDERING, T. The German-Herero War of 1904: revisionism of genocide or imaginary historiography? *Journal of Southern African Studies*, v.19, n.1, p.80-88, 1993.

¹¹ About this subject, see the interesting chapter by historian Pascal ORY, “Du rôle des historiens dans des procès récents”, em BACOT, Jean-Pierre; COQ, Christian (Dir.). *Travail de mémoire 1914-1998: une nécessité dans un siècle de violence*. Paris: Autrement, Collection Mémoires, n.54, jan. 1999. See also these articles: RIOUX, Jean-Pierre. Pas de tribunal de l’Histoire. *Le Monde des débats*, n.12, 1999; GINZBURG, Carlo. Verificando a evidência: o juiz e o historiador. *Revista Notícia Bibliográfica e Histórica*, Campinas (SP), n.202, jan.-jun. 2007; and, recently, DOSSE, François. L’Histoire à l’épreuve de la guerre des mémoires. *Tempo e Argumento*, Florianópolis, v.1, n.1, p.5-16, jan.-jun. 2009. (Accessible at: revistas.udesc.br/index.php/tempo/article/viewFile/707/597).

¹² On ethnicity and its relation with national politics in African societies of the post-colonial period, Mahmood Mamdani (1996) wrote about the historical legacy of colonialism, especially in the relation of that State, called by him a *bifurcated State*, with rural and urban populations. In the specific case of Namibia, Christian Bader and Ingolf Diener have called attention to the ethnic composition of different parties since the South African mandate until Swapo’s hegemony during the first years after the independence. See: MAMDANI, Mahmood. *Citizen and subject: contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*. Princeton University Press, 1996; BADER, Christian. *La Namibie*. Paris: Karthala, 1997; DIENER, Ingolf. *Namibie – une histoire, un devenir*. Paris: Karthala, 2000.

¹³ On the current ethnic division of Namibia, cf. www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5472.htm, accessed on 14 Feb. 2010.

¹⁴ “The Hereros are not German subjects any longer ... All of them must leave their land. If they do not comply, they will be driven by arms. Every Herero that is found within German boundaries, with or without weapons, will be executed. Women and children will be escorted out – or shot ... No one will be taken prisoner. They will be shot...”. Declaration of General Lothar von Trotha to the Herero people. . In: RUFT, Conrad. *Krieg und Fried im Hereroland*. Leipzig, 1905, p.385 (ein Faksimile-Reprint von Fines Mundi Saarbrücken).

¹⁵ The death toll among the Germans, Hereros, and Namas vary from one historian to another. The numbers quoted here bear on the estimates of German historian Horst Gründer (1995, p.121), but the Dutch Henri Wesseling (2004, p.367) presents others: the *Herero* would be 80,000 in 1904 and no more than 20,000 in 1906. Of the 17,000 European men that Germany mobilized in this war, which was its huge colonial war, 2,000 lost their lives. See: GRÜNDER, Horst. *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien*. München: UTB, 1995; WESSELING, Henri. *Les empires coloniaux européens 1815-1919*. Paris: Gallimard, 2004.

¹⁶ The anthropologist Karla Poewe considers that the extermination process of the *Herero* began before 1904. Social and cultural changes brought about by Lutheran missions unfolded the psychosocial disintegration of the *Herero* ethnic group. See: POEWE, Karla. *The Namibian Herero: a History of their psychosocial disintegration and survival*. Lewiston (NY); Queenston (Ontario): Edwin Mellen Press, 1985.

¹⁷ GEWALD, Jan Bart. Die Beerdigung von Samuel Maharero und die Reorganisation der Herero. In: ZIMMERER, ZELLER (Hrsgs.), 2004, p.171-191, p.173.

¹⁸ In an interview given to the German journalist Thomas Knemeyer (apud Melber, 2004,

p.218), Nujoma even states that “the new Namibia and the new Germany do not occupy themselves with the past any longer. We have left the sad history behind and are working together for the future”. See: MELBER, Henning. “Wir haben überhaupt nicht über Reparationen gesprochen”. Die namibisch-deutsche Beziehungen: Verdrängung oder Versöhnung? In: ZIMMERER; ZELLER (Hrsg.), 2004, p.215-225.

¹⁹ LECLERC-OLIVE, Michèle. Les figures du temps biographique. *Revue internationale de Sociologie*, v.104, p.97-120, 1998; PETIT, Jean-Luc. La constitution de l'événement social. *Raisons Pratiques* (Dossier l'événement en perspective), n.2, Paris: EHESS, 1991, p.9-38.

²⁰ FÖRSTER, Larissa. Der deutsche Friedhof am Waterberg. In: ZIMMERER; ZELLER (Hrsgs.), 2004, p.209-214, p.209.

²¹ KÖßLER, Reinhard; MELBER, Henning. Völkermord und Gedenken. Der Genozid an den Herero und Nama in Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1904-1908. In: BRUMLIK, Micha; WOJAK, Irmtrud. *Völkermord und Kriegsverbrechen in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Frankfurt: Campus, 2004, p.37-76.

²² Edward Bruner stressed such a happening in the case of the celebration of the *Pueblo Revolt of 1680* in the summer of 1980 in New Mexico and Arizona. See: BRUNER, E. Ethnography as Narrative. In: BRUNER, Edward; TURNER, Victor (Ed.). *The Anthropology of experience*. Chicago: University of Illinois, 1986, p.148.

²³ On the processes of emancipation of African women, see the four volumes of *Woman Writing Africa* (*The Southern Region*, 2003; *West Africa and the Sahel*, 2005; *The Eastern Region*, 2007; and *The Northern Region*, 2009), and, for a more specific case, see also SANOU, Bruno Doti. *L'émancipation des femmes madare: l'impact du projet administratif et missionnaire sur une société africaine (1900-1960)*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994; on the genocide in Rwanda, see MAMDANI, Mahmood. *When victims become killers: colonialism, nativism, and genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001; and KABAGEMA, Édouard. *Carnage d'une nation: Génocide et massacre au Rwanda*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001.

²⁴ GLUKMAN, Max. *Custom and Conflict in Africa*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955; TURNER, Victor. *Schism and Continuity in an African Society*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968.

²⁵ Despite of being already a classic in the studies about colonial and post-colonial Africa, *Citizen and subject* (1996) has attracted several critical comments from Africanists like Ralph A. Austen (University of Chicago), Frederik Cooper (University of Michigan), Mariane Ferme (University of California, Berkeley), and Jean Copans (Université de Picardie). Cf. www.politique-africaine.com/numeros/pdf/073193.pdf, accessed on 24 June 2010.

²⁶ In “Thinking about genocide”, introductory chapter about the genocide in Rwanda, Mahmood Mamdani (2001, p.3-18) puts the genocides of the *Herero* and the *Tutsi* into perspective. He also mentions the Jewish Holocaust at the time of the Nazism, relating it to the genocide of the *Herero* in *Deutsche Südwest-Afrika* (present-day Namibia).

²⁷ MADLEY, Benjamin. Patterns of frontier genocide 1803-1910: the Aboriginal Tasma-

nians, the Yuki of California, and the Herero of Namibia. *Journal of Genocide Research*, v.6, n.2, p.167-192, 2004; MAMDANI, Mahmood. *When victims become killers: colonialism, nativism, and the genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

²⁸ In some cases, the phenomenon of memorialization fosters an 'ethnic tourism', as is the case with the memory of the slave trade in Ghana, where African-American tourists visit El-mina. Cf. BRUNER, Edward M. *Culture on tour: ethnographies of travel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

²⁹ Pierre Nora et le métier d'historien. "La France malade de sa mémoire". Propos recueillis par BUOB, Jacques; FRACHON, Alain. *Le Grand Entretien, Le Monde* 2, n.105, 18 fév. 2006.

³⁰ MARCOT, François. Devoir de mémoire et légitimité de l'oubli. In: *Journée d'études organisée par le Musée de la résistance et de la déportation, la Maison des sciences de l'homme Claude-Nicolas-Ledoux et le Laboratoire des sciences historiques de l'Université de Franche-Comté*. Besançon, 30 avr. 2003. Available at: www.fondationresistance.com/actualites/themes/devoirmemoirelegitimiteoubli.htm.

³¹ CERTEAU, Michel. *A escrita da história*. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2002, p.93; LANGEWIESCHE, Dieter. Über das Umschreiben der Geschichte. Zur Rolle der Sozialgeschichte. In: OSTERHAMMEL, Jürgen et al. (Hrsgs.). *Wege der Gesellschaftsgeschichte*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006, p.67-80, p.72.

³² After the lawsuits were filed in the United States by legal representatives of the *Herero*, several academic papers dealt with the argument and the legal implications of the process of recognition of the first genocide of the 20th century: HARRING, S. German reparations to the Herero nation: an assertion of Herero nationhood in the path of Namibian development. *West Virginia Law Review*, v.104, p.397-398, 2002; ANDERSON, Rachel. Redressing colonial genocide under international law: the Hereros' Cause of action against Germany. *California Law Review*, v.93, n.1155, 2005. Available at: faculty.unlv.edu/anderson/pdfs/andersonhererogenocide.pdf; COOPER, Allan D. Reparations for the Herero Genocide: defining the limits of international litigation. *African Affairs*, v.106, n.422, p.113-126, 2007.

³³ "Germany admits Namibia genocide", BBC News (Aug. 14, 2004), available at: news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3565938.stm, accessed on Feb. 16, 2010; "Germany regrets genocide", BBC News (Jan. 12, 2004), available at: news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3388901.stm, accessed on Feb. 16, 2010.

³⁴ "Unsere Vergangenheit wurde uns geraubt", Interview von Anja Bochtler mit Ellen Namhila, Vertreterin der Archive des anticolonialen Widerstands- und Befreiungskampfes in Namibia; *Badische Zeitung* vom 15.5.2008, S. 22. Available at: www.freiburg-postkolonial.de/Seiten/2008-AACRLS-Uebergabe.htm, accessed on Feb. 15, 2010.

³⁵ An interview (Nov. 11, 2009) with the director of the Archive of the University of Freiburg about the polemic concerning the skull collection can be found in: "Die Schädelammlung im Freiburger Universitätsarchiv und namibische Rückgabeforderungen", Interview von Heiko Wegmann mit dem Leiter des Universitätsarchivs Freiburg, Dr. Dieter

Speck. Available at: www.freiburg-postkolonial.de/Seiten/dl.htm#2009uniarchiv, accessed on Feb. 14, 2010. See also report in the Freiburg newspaper (Nov. 14, 2009) at www.badische-zeitung.de/freiburg/leichen-im-keller, accessed on Feb. 14, 2010.

³⁶ “Leichen in Keller”, *Badische Zeitung*, Freiburg (Feb.14, 2009), available at: www.badische-zeitung.de/freiburg/leichen-im-keller, accessed on Feb. 14, 2010. See also the interview with Neville Gertze, ambassador of Namibia in Germany, about the polemic of the skull collection of the University of Freiburg: www.freiburg-postkolonial.de/Seiten/2009-Interview-Gertze.htm, accessed on Feb. 14, 2009.

³⁷ ZELLER, Joachim. Symbolische Politik. Anmerkungen zur kolonialdeutschen Erinnerungskultur. In: ZIMMERER; ZELLER (Hrsg.), p.204. Ver também: SPEITKAMP, Winfried. Kolonialherrschaft und Denkmal. Afrikanische und deutsche Erinnerungskultur im Konflikt. In: MARTINI, Wolfram (Hg.). *Architektur und Erinnerung*. Göttingen, 2000, p.165-190.

³⁸ For a historical analysis of the principal monuments of the colonial and post-colonial periods in Namibia, cf. ZELLER, Joachim. *Kolonialdenkmäler und Geschichtsbewußtsein. Eine Untersuchung der kolonialdeutschen Erinnerungskultur*, Frankfurt/M., 2000; ZELLER, Joachim. “Kolonialkrieg und Denkmal. 100 Jahre Politik mit der Erinnerung”. In: FÖRSTER, Larissa; HENRICHSEN, Dag; BOLLIG, Michael (Hrsg.). *Namibia – Deutschland: Eine geteilte Geschichte*. Köln: Widerstand-Gewalt-Erinnerung, 2004, p.124-143.

³⁹ Elisabeth Khaxas gave an interview for the documentary movie *The end of the German South-West (Das Ende von Deutsch-Südwest)*, filmed by Westdeutschen Rundfunk in 1994.

⁴⁰ KOSELLECK, Reinhart. Kriegerdenkmale als Identitätstiftungen der Überlebenden. In: MARQUARD, Odo; STIERLE, Karlheinz (Hrsg.). *Identität*. München: DTV, 1979, p.255-276.

⁴¹ Images of the removal have been made accessible in internet by a newspaper of Windhoek, the *Allgemeine Zeitung*. Available at: www.az.com.na/fotogalerie/reiterdenkmal-vom-sockel-gehoben.92031.php, accessed on Feb.15, 2010.

⁴² The organization *Arbeitskreis Afrika (Akafrik)* invited the following historians to the debate: Horst Gründer (University of Münster), Manfred Hinz (University of Bremen), Henning Melber (University of Kassel), and Helmut Bley (University of Hannover).

⁴³ “We remember the victims of the genocide (*Völkermord*) under German colonial rule in Namibia.” With this sentence a profuuous debate began in Münster, Westfalia, and was held in the years 1984 and 1985, about the historical event that occurred during the Colonial War of 1904-1908.

⁴⁴ On the “decolonization of the culture of remembrance” (*Entkolonisierung der Erinnerungskultur*) in Germany, cf. the Hamburg project www.afrika-hamburg.de/denkmal5.html.

⁴⁵ NORA, Pierre. *Les lieux de mémoires*. Paris: Gallimard, 1993.

⁴⁶ RICOEUR, Paul. Événements et sens. *Raisons Pratiques* (Dossier L'événement en perspective), n.2, Paris: EHESS, 1991, p.41-56, p.55.

⁴⁷ There is a historiographical tendency of comparing the colonial regime, the genocide of the *Herero*, the concentration camps and the forced labor of prisoners of the African South West with the Nazi regime, the Jewish Holocaust, the concentration camps and the forced labor of prisoners during the II World War. See, for example, the essay of MADLEY, Benjamin. "From Africa to Auschwitz: how German South West Africa incubated ideas and methods adopted and developed by the Nazis in Eastern Europe". *European History Quarterly*, v.35, n.3, p.429-464, 2005. Although the term *Konzentrationslager* appeared officially for the first time on December 11, 1904 in a letter of Bülow to the General Lothar von Trotha, Walter Nuhn (1997, p.351) showed that the concentration camp in the African South West did not fulfill the same functions of KZs in the Nazi era. In his essay, Jürgen Zimmerer (2004) focuses on the first concentration camps under the colonial regime in Deutsche Südwest-Afrika, articulating aspects of that experience with its developments at the time of the III Reich.

⁴⁸ See also: STEINMETZ, George. Return to Empire: the New US Imperialism in Comparative Historical Perspective. *Sociological Theory*, v.23, n.4, p.339-367, 2005.

⁴⁹ CHARTIER, Roger. Le temps des doutes. *Le Monde*, 18 mars 1993 (full text available *online* to subscribers of the newspaper).