National Liberation in Postcolonial Southern Africa

Tracing the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) across its three decades in exile, this book examines the rich, local histories of the camps where Namibian exiles lived in Tanzania, Zambia, and Angola. Christian A. Williams highlights how different Namibians experienced these sites, as well as the tensions that developed within SWAPO as Namibians encountered one another and as officials asserted their power and protected their interests within a national community. The book then follows Namibians who lived in exile into postcolonial Namibia, examining the extent to which divisions and hierarchies that emerged in the camps continue to shape how Namibians relate to one another today, undermining the more just and humane society that many had imagined. In developing these points about SWAPO, the book draws attention to Southern African literature more widely, suggesting parallels across the region and defining a field of study that examines postcolonial Africa through “the camp.”

Christian A. Williams is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice at the University of the Free State.
African Studies

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National Liberation in Postcolonial Southern Africa

A Historical Ethnography of SWAPO’s Exile Camps

CHRISTIAN A. WILLIAMS

University of the Free State, South Africa
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Acknowledgments

This book is written primarily with and about people who experienced Namibia’s liberation struggle. The names of those who contributed to the book directly are scattered throughout the text and references that follow. Nevertheless, there are several individuals and organizations that I especially wish to acknowledge here.

First, I would like to acknowledge people affiliated with St. Therese Secondary School in Tses. There, as a WorldTeach volunteer in 2000 and 2001, I found my first Namibian home. It is St. Therese alumni who first shared with me their personal histories of exile, including histories of violence perpetrated on them by fellow SWAPO members in camps. Through our encounters, I was pushed to question my early views of national liberation in Southern Africa and to consider the consequences of a dominant narrative that effaces how different people have experienced a painful past.

From these beginnings many have contributed to my research. In 2007 and 2008 I again lived in Namibia while preparing a doctoral thesis on Namibia’s exile history. Then, and during annual return visits, I have based myself in Windhoek and traveled throughout the country following former exiles and their families to some of the many scattered places where they now live. Here I would like to acknowledge several individuals who, although they are not cited in this book as research participants, have nevertheless helped make my research productive: Martha Akawa, George Beukes, Phillip Bolocoto, Raymond Castillo, Erasmus Stephanus, Wolfram Gleichmar-Hartmann, Werner Hillebrecht, Justine Hunter, Grace Kandundu, Pauline Kruse-Vries, John Liebenberg, Beauty Matongo, Antoinette Mostert, Lovisa Nampala, Vilho Shigwedha, Kontiki Silva, Jeremy Silvester, and Josef Thomas. Special thanks are also due to research participants whose contribution to my project extends far beyond that of our cited interviews. These include Steve Swartbooi for working with me for several months as a research assistant, Canner and
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Abbreviations

AFP    Agence France-Presse
AME    African Methodist Episcopal Church
ANC    African National Congress
BAB    Basler Afrika Bibliographien
BBC    British Broadcasting Corporation
BWS    Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement
CANU   Caprivi African National Union
CCN    Council of Churches of Namibia
CCZ    Christian Council of Zambia
DELK   Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche
DTA    Democratic Turnhalle Alliance
EIN    Ecumenical Institute for Namibia
ELC    Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa
ELOC   Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-Kavango Church
Exco   SWAPO National Executive Committee
FNLA   Frente Nacional para Libertação de Angola
FRELIMO Frente de Libertação de Moçambique
G1     the first SWALA group to infiltrate Namibia
G2     the second SWALA group to infiltrate Namibia
ICC    International Criminal Court
ICJ    International Court of Justice
ICRC   International Committee for the Red Cross
ICTJ   International Center for Transitional Justice
IDAF   International Defence and Aid Fund
IGFM   Internationale Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte
ISHR   International Society for Human Rights
LWF    Lutheran World Federation
LWI    Lutheran World Information
MK     Umkhonto we Sizwe
MPLA   Movimento Popular para Libertação de Angola
NAN    National Archives of Namibia
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>Namibian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NISER</td>
<td>Namibian Institute for Social and Economic Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSHR</td>
<td>National Society for Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organization of African Unity</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPC</td>
<td>Ovamboland People's Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPO</td>
<td>Ovamboland People's Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCC</td>
<td>Political Consultative Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLAN</td>
<td>People's Liberation Army of Namibia</td>
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<tr>
<td>PUM</td>
<td>Patriotic Unity Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDP</td>
<td>Rally for Democracy and Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SADET</td>
<td>South Africa Democracy and Education Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SADF</td>
<td>South African Defence Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPARC</td>
<td>SWAPO Party Archive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWALA</td>
<td>South West Africa Liberation Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWANU</td>
<td>South West Africa National Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWAPO</td>
<td>South West Africa People's Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWAPO-D</td>
<td>SWAPO-Democrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWATF</td>
<td>South West African Territorial Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYL</td>
<td>SWAPO Youth League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>Truth and Reconciliation Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCT</td>
<td>University of Cape Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>United Democratic Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNAM</td>
<td>University of Namibia</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commission for Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children's Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIN</td>
<td>United Nations Institute for Namibia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIP</td>
<td>United National Independence Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNITA</td>
<td>União para Independência Total de Angola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMD</td>
<td>United Nations Mission on Detainees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNTAG</td>
<td>United Nations Transition Assistance Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>UWC</td>
<td>University of the Western Cape</td>
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<tr>
<td>VEM</td>
<td>Vereinigte Evangelische Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WENELA</td>
<td>Witwatersrand Native Labour Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>United Nations World Food Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZANU</td>
<td>Zimbabwe African National Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZAPU</td>
<td>Zimbabwe African People's Union</td>
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Map 1. Southern Africa.
MAP 2. Namibia.