

NEWSLETTER 20.4.  
PREPARATIONS FOR KOMAGGAS.  
20-22 SEPTEMBER.

APRIL 2014.

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The Uirab family with spouses and children and with Christine and Horst. Taken in Windhoek, Easter, 19 April 2014.

Dear Komaggas delegates and interested parties,

Interest in the celebration has grown steadily. The numbers of those confirming their attendance is growing. Arrangements for the five nights, three-day event are well under way. I trust that this update provides you with information that will further enhance what to expect and what to get out of our celebration.

1. Important reminder: Those who need to apply for passports should do so soonest. If you require a visa please apply – waiting for these things can take a long time.
2. Once again note: For a full three-day programme you will need to arrive the night before we commence and leave the morning after the programme ends. The implication is that we spend 5 nights in Komaggas.
3. I am pleased to tell you that the funds we collected from those who attended (and a few others) the Wuppertal, Germany gathering last October, have now enabled the purchase of building materials to erect a perimeter fence and gates around the historic cemetery of Komaggas. The need for the fence is that feral donkey's have trampled many graves beyond recognition. Komaggassers have attended to the plans and Christine and I saw the first turf turned by work supplied entirely from the villagers. They intend also to restore graves and gravestones.

3.1. Kenneth and I had a joint meeting with the Heritage Committee and the Komaggas Funeral Committee on 5 April. The Funeral Committee is representative of all Confessions present in Komaggas. It is they who kindly agreed to administer the funds for the fencing project on our behalf. On behalf of the wider family I want to thank them for their assistance and support.

4. Kenneth Makatees and I further, addressed a Komaggas village meeting Saturday, 5 April. The elders of the village had requested that everyone in the whole village should be informed of what the intentions and plans of the Schmelen-Kleinschmidt-Bam family are when we visit Komaggas in September.

The Heritage Committee, who volunteers considerable time and effort for our event, went out of their way to advertise the Saturday meeting in churches, shops and public places. Johan Cloete deserves special thanks.

- 4.1. The public meeting went well judging that people stayed for more than two hours to enquire about the planned celebration but also to find out more about the family links that reach into most families living in Komaggas today. The chance to record the history of Zara and Hinrich has significance far beyond our family gathering. From the floor several people emphasized how the disenfranchised and oppressed during apartheid from throughout this region, want their untold history to receive greater recognition through our gathering.



Part of the audience at the public meeting.

It was agreed that I should visit Komaggas again on 22 April for the committee and I to follow up on decisions we made both at the February and 5 April meetings.

The Komaggas multi-purpose hall will serve as the central venue during our stay. It is in walking distance from most homes. It has suitable kitchen and sanitation facilities. Because accommodation will, in many instances, be provided in homes that are fully furnished but stand empty, it was decided that we should all have breakfasts together at the community hall. The reason many homes stand vacant is due to the closure of the near-by diamond mine. Grandparents, often now in charge of their grandchildren, are looking after the homes their children intend to return to eventually. The tradition that one belongs to Komaggas and will one-day return to it is very strong.

- 4.2. I want to raise an underlying matter; in a way it is the big elephant in the room. - At the end of my presentation at the community meeting I stated that for those relatives who grew up on the white side of apartheid South Africa and Namibia, that we would wish to acknowledge the damage that racism had done, not just in the abstract in our society but within our own family. Two men immediately responded to these sentiments, saying that they would expect acknowledgement in some form and that “the wounds of the past are still raw”. In Windhoek two weeks later I came across a similar sentiment. Otto Uirab, the historian of the Swartbooï’s, with whom the Kleinschmidt’s are related, read me a poem entitled “What are your intentions?” The poem is appended at the end of this newsletter. After generations of our white forebears mostly shunning the dark-skinned side of the family it is by no means automatic that we should come together now and embrace each other without some reflection and acknowledgement. Our family history is laden with rejection of white parents, grandparents and great grandparents of the brown side of the family. This led to forbidding marriages from being formed, the rejection of children, suicides and untold pain and hurt. I will write separately to ask for advice and help about a possible statement we make to those whose dignity and opportunities was compromised by the history our forebears caused. The prospect of reconciliation should be moved forward not through assumptions and demands from the ‘white’ side but through the willingness to acknowledge.

5. A South African national cultural organisation, the Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuur Vereeniging (The ATKV used to be associated with white Afrikaans culture exclusively but has been transformed into a no-sectarian national body), have agreed to sponsor traditional Khoi dance- and song groups from surrounding areas like Pella, Steinkopf and Koeboes to treat us to aspects of Nama culture in the evenings of our stay. The groups will come from places associated with our diverse missionary places and towns in the Northern Cape.
6. The photo below was taken on 22 April when I handed over of a copy of a framed map dating from 1915, 'Drawn and Engraved for Thompson's New General Atlas 1815' in England. It depicts the Northern Cape where the Orange River is referred to as the 'Great or Gariep', and the only places it identifies in the Northern Cape are 'Schmelen's Station' and Pella. It identifies a route that mission inspector Campbell (who was missionary Schmelen's superintendent, in the London Missionary Society,) travelled, presumably when coming from Moffat's mission at the Eye near Kuruman to visit Schmelen at his newly established station. Ominously the map depicts his route along 'death vale'. The map is referenced as: Mr Campbell's Route Marked – Caravan Routes.

The map shows the ox wagon route from Cape Town to the north. It marks the Heuningberg, just beyond the Berg River – the place where Zara was buried. But the map is not precise enough to make further deductions. It does not identify Botmas Hof but does refer to a place called Berry and Riebeeks Casteel before getting to the Berg River.

It identifies the 'Country of the Little Namaquas'. It also identifies the Khamiesberg where the original Cloete's of Komaggas came from. Three rivers are marked south of the Gariep: the 'Koufsie', the 'Zwart Lintjies' and the 'Groene River'.

- 6.1. We are most grateful to Peter and Auriol Müller (relations who are attending the September events) for having provided this map, which they inherited, to be copied. It serves as the first exhibit to be on display at our meeting place in September but will then remain in Komaggas to form part of a planned Komaggas Museum.



From left: Oom Willem, Johan Cloete, Oom Jackie and Horst.

7. In Swakopmund Christine and I met with Kenneth's mother, his sisters and families. They hail directly from Komaggas and were keen to hear about our September plans. They are talking about hiring a bus to get their side of the family to Komaggas.

8. In Windhoek we met with the Uirab side of the family (photo at the very top). Twice I made presentations to groups of family who wanted to see our family linkages, understand the family tree and see the historic photo's I had shown in Wuppertal last year. They too will hire a bus to get to Komaggas. Otto Uirab and I spent several hours to construct the family tree surrounding Ludwig Kleinschmidt. Those of you who have studied the family tree will recall that there are no entries below Ludwig, other than that he 'frequently participated in the negotiations between Governor Leutwein and (Chief) Jonker Afrikaner. There is no mention of whom he married or who his offspring are. It was Otto's research of the Swarbooi's, and their lineage going back to 1700, that revealed a Rebecca Kleinschmidt marrying a Swartbooi. This, after a long search, brought Otto and myself together. I shall write a separate Newsletter about the linkage between the Uirab's and the Kleinschmidt's.

8.1. The Uirab's are fluent in Nama. A group of them have offered to sing in Komaggas the Nama hymns that Hanna Kleinschmidt translated from German. They form part of the Nama Lutheran Hymn Book to this day, acknowledging Hanna Kleinschmidt as the source.

9. The main event of our journey from Cape Town three week journey was to celebrate with my mother her 98<sup>th</sup> birthday in the frail care home in Swakopmund. She is wheelchair bound but is otherwise healthy and remains mentally alert.



10. Lastly, about costs: Kenneth and I will open an account into which I urge you to pay your night accommodation costs and your breakfast, lunch and dinner costs into in advance of your vist. There are reasons for this: Komaggas has neither ATM's nor a bank. The nearest place is Springbok, an hour's drive away, a journey I most strongly advise you not to entertain at night. The road is narrow and windy with wild and domestic animals crossing continuously. The area, being communal land has no fences. Secondly, few people have bank accounts and you'd have to pay them in cash – which is fine, but for the meals to be catered for, it would be most helpful if money is available upfront to make the purchases. The alternative would be for me to have to advance the money to Komaggas, a formidable sum when all is added up.

There is no problem travelling with cash – in case you worry about that. The costs and the account details will be sent in a forthcoming Newsletter.

11. And very lastly, to those of you flying into Cape Town: Christine and I would like to welcome you at our home for a meal before leaving to Komaggas. This will be two or three evenings before we travel. Remember also: if Schmelen's Nama Bible cannot be displayed in Komaggas, that special viewing will be arranged at the Cape Town National Library before we depart.

I hope this Newsletter invigorates and makes you look forward to our historic gathering!

Yours,  
Horst.

Herewith the poem that Otto Uirab read to us in Windhoek. He wrote it in English although this is not his home tongue.

### **What was your aim?**

What was your aim?  
Oh...yes...we ask...  
What was your aim?

Our hands were in chains  
Our feet were in chains  
These same chains around our neck.

Now we ask ...  
What your aims were?  
Oh ... we heard a rumour ...  
That you think you were Superior.

You were holding guns  
You were killing our ancestors  
You were killing young children  
You were thinking you are "God"

You took our skulls for experiment  
Thinking you were "God"

Till today you think you are Superior.  
Coming to our Villages to Experiment  
Thinking you are Superior!!  
To do "Kama" Research

Today clearly we see what your aim was ...  
We gladly welcome you with open arms ...  
For we know your thoughts, your ideas  
You "think" you were superior.

But ... we know from the rivers of our blood  
The thoughts of your thinking.

Oh .. yes...we know what your aims were  
We still know what your aim is now.

For this we say we love you ...  
"Cause we feel the pain of hate  
We have physically experienced this.  
Oh ... Jesus said: "Do not hate ...  
"Cause you can not free your  
Feelings and thoughts.

For now we say we have seen the Promised Land –  
"Cause if you see a dog running to a cat there is no more greedy teeth".

For they said "Are we running to the  
Scramble For Africa ...Or ... to be rescued  
From the "cliff" of our greediness by  
The little known "Red China"

Thoughts running through the Power Greediness of our time

For now we know the meaning of love ...  
Forgiveness and we say ...tomorrow is another day ...in which the sun shines  
brightly over the horizon ...

By Charles Otto /Uirab

