

SK Newsletter 14

June 2012.

“We have been waiting for you, where have you been?”

In 1811, 201 years ago the London Missionary Society sent German born Hinrich Schmelen to the Cape to serve as their missionary in what was then known as Little, and further north, Great Namaqualand. Three years after he arrived he married a Khoikhoi (maybe Orlam) woman from Pella on the Orange River. Her maiden name was Zara Hednricks. Together they had three daughters.

Rhenish Missionary Heinrich Kleinschmidt, who arrived at the Cape in 1838, and the Schmелens second daughter Johanna (or Hanna) got married in Komaggas, Northern Cape, in 1842. They had 8 children. This is the story about Ludwig, their 7th child - the one some relatives shrouded in silence and secrecy.

“Ons het vir julle gewag, waar was julle?” Poignant words and then a warm embrace from Emma Joodt, 74, born Emma Sabatha whose mother was born Sara Rebecca Kleinschmidt. We are in Khorixas, near Fransfontein not far from the Etosha Pan in Namibia. The afternoon is too short to explore all the things that separated the two strands of the family for the past 100 years



Emma Joodt, whose mother was a

born Sara Rebecca Kleinschmidt

That evening before we part to travel back to Swakopmund (nearly 300 km south), Emma asks that we pray together. She, her husband and family are staunch members of the Lutheran Church. First Charles Otto, Emma's son thanks the Almighty that at long last two strands of the family, long alienated from each other have met in a spirit of love and reconciliation. He prays for the further removal of the barriers that divided us. He sees the Lords work being done in what happened on this day and that it marks a great moment in the history for a divided family which is equally symbolic of the wider community. Then Ruben, 87¹, Emma's husband, prays. The sentiments are the same. He has a vision for an age when the war and the hatred of white and black comes to an end. He thanks the Lord for us meeting and how unexpectedly it brings great joy to his life. Then we all hold hands and embrace: Something powerful has taken place and we must not lose it. We will meet again. There is so much about the turbulent and hurtful past we want to bring to an end. We lack the words but the joy and emotion in the humble township home could not be greater.

¹ Ruben Joodt served as a soldier with the South African troops in North Africa and in Sinai in World War II.

² http://www.fransfontein.org/images/genealogie_gross.jpg

Charles Otto /Uirab, Emma's son, is the trigger that brought us here. He is one of several sons of Emma's first marriage to David /Uirab who died in 1971. In an Internet piece² headed, "The Question is: Who am I?" he carefully traces the lineage of his family. He traces the Swartbooi people back nine generations to the early 1700's and demonstrates how the Swartbooi and the Seibeb families are linked and related. It was by sheer chance that I discovered the /Uirab-Seibeb Internet page and, there to find one small entry: they have a relative by the name of Rebecca Kleinschmidt. Charles Otto concludes the annotations of the family tree with these hopeful words: "Understanding my and my community's family histories is to me the beginning of a healing process. Through this we are discovering ourselves, knowing our origins is also the starting point of better things for our community of Fransfontein..."

The entry about Rebecca is nearly incidental, one little dot in the bigger scheme of a clan with a long and proud history. Had Charles Otto, his mother and his father ever hoped or imagined that their grandmother could unlock yet further parts of what he called a 'healing process'?

When first I saw the Internet piece I went back to my own, the Schmelen-Kleinschmidt family tree to see if I could find Rebecca, but, in my mind I already knew that I would not find her. My knowledge of the tree is thorough and I had never seen a Rebecca. Was there a mistake or was I finally to get closer to the family secret I suspected? Was there a Kleinschmidt who had a marriage that was not condoned? Was there an extra-marital child or children, across the colour line? The answer to these questions had to be found in the glaring gap of the Schmelen-Kleinschmidt family tree, the tree I had inherited and had worked on and expanded for the past five years.

² http://www.fransfontein.org/images/genealogie_gross.jpg

The gap where I felt I should be looking was here: Missionary Kleinschmidt and his wife Johanna had 8 children. The family tree is expansive and shows whom the children married and who their and their children's children are. There now are over 220 family members names, dates of birth and when they died. But there is a gap: the entry of the 7th child of the missionary couple records a son, Ludwig Kleinschmidt, born 1857, died 1929. Instead of wife and children the only words added are: Ludwig often negotiated with Hendrik Witbooi, and then an empty space. *See appended on p16 an excerpt of the family tree where the void is apparent.*

There exists a picture of Ludwig, an important and often published one at that. It shows him standing with wide-brimmed hat, leaning against the gunpowder tower of the German garrison in Omaruru. To his right sits omuhona Manasse, leader of the Herero people of Omaruru and to his left the German Governor Theodor Leutwein. The date is 1895, nine years before the outbreak of war. Ludwig, so we understand, was the 'talk', the translator, between the two sitting men. Ludwig has a sheet of paper in his hands. He looks a little diffident, maybe deliberately so, to show that he is not the important man here, even though the other two could not have managed without him. I also have two photographs of him as an early teen schoolboy in Paarl, South Africa.



The youngest two of the missionary sons, Ludwig on the left and George, at the time they attended school in Paarl, South Africa, prior to segregation.

That is it; nobody could or wanted to talk about him. Could the reason be that he had left the employ of the church and was working for or with the German occupiers whilst all his siblings remained closely involved with the Rhenish Mission³. Was Ludwig ever married? No, I was informed, he never married and the silence after the ‘no’ seemed to suggest, un-approvingly, that he might have been gay. The only other piece of information I gleaned was from Tante Elisabeth, my aunt, who said that he farmed near Karibib in the Wilhelmsthal area, but nothing else. I became convinced that he was to the not-so-white white family, a ‘black sheep’, so to say.

³ After our visit I went back to the National Archives in Windhoek to see if I could find out more about Ludwig. In files referred to as Kaiserliches Gouvernement für Deutsch Südwest Afrika - Verträge mit den Häuptlingen (Imperial Government of German South West Africa – Agreements with the Chiefs), I found Ludwig’s signature on several but by no means all the ‘agreements’ or ‘treaties’ that served as the instrument that made Namibia a German colony. Significantly he has no military rank and his signature suggests he is no more than a witness. It would seem the farmer Ludwig was hired by the Germans from time to time because of his command of local languages.



Ludwig in the middle, holding a sheet of paper

Could there be another reason? Somewhere, I do not recall when or where, I had heard that Ludwig, contrary to the white settlers, had distanced himself, maybe even become critical of the German conduct during the war of 1904 – 1908. But evidence is lacking.

When I looked up Ludwig's (and related) files at the Namibia National Archives previously I was stumped because the documentation of the time is handwritten in the Kurrent/Suetterlin script Germans used at the time and I cannot read it – those who do are very few today. What I did establish was that Ludwig had sold his farm Ondujatyikene to the rich German trader Schmerenbeck in 1896. Was Ludwig in financial straits that he had to sell? The only other file took me to the year of Ludwig's death on 6 May 1929. This documentation is in English. (South Africa was given guardianship of Namibia under the League of Nations following Germany's defeat in 1918 and with that English replaced German as the official language.) The basic entries take me no further. Where the death certificate requests information about a spouse, it states, 'unmarried' and as to Ludwigs mother, 'not known' is entered, cold and stark. The only other revelation is that he was farming and now the name of the farm was Okandu, in the Karibib district.

But then a sudden ray of light! In his will, it says, his sole heir is my grandfather Gerhard Kleinschmidt and that Opa Gerhard attended the funeral and was there to 'identify' the deceased. Opa Gerhard and family also lived in the Karibib district. Did Oma and my dad, fifteen years of age at the time, his older brother Helmut and younger sister Elisabeth attend the funeral? Why had dad never mentioned him?



Opa Gerhard Kleinschmidt of Karibib

Ludwig left a will in which the sole heir is Opa Gerhard, the records say. As executor Opa settled the debts and received what was left in the end – Ludwig nominated no one else, no spouse, no child. Could the reason be that Ludwig feared he might be leaving debts rather than assets? In the winding up of the estate Ludwig's assets are listed as: 110 livestock (made up of sheep, goats and cattle), a bed, a chest of drawers, a watch, a pair of field glasses, mouse traps, a leather bag and a lantern. From the proceeds £100 went toward a bond over the farm and when all was said and done Opa was left with £92, four shillings and nine pence, probably good money at the time. No word of what came of the farm. Why did Opa allow Ludwig, his uncle, die without correcting the record, I kept asking myself. After all Ludwig's mother and Opa's grandmother, Johanna Kleinschmidt⁴, the wife of missionary Kleinschmidt, was a well-known and respected figure in Otjimbingue.

⁴ Johanna died in 1884, the year Germany entered Namibia, bringing to an end the era when race was unimportant.

It seems from the available evidence that Opa Gerhard did what had to be done, but there was little affection for him.

It was after my initial search at the Windhoek archives that Christine and I are on the road to Fransfontein having spent time with mother Mutti in Swakopmund, who turned 96 on April 14th. Mutti, who married into the Kleinschmidt family, confirmed once more that she knew nothing of the history or background of Ludwig and appeared sceptical about our adventure north. After four hours of dusty, straight roads, past the Brandberg (place of the KhoiSan rock painting of the White Lady) and then skirting the place of the Petrified Forest, both known as tourist destinations, we get into hilly and lush terrain.



Charles Otto Uirab

Charles Otto /Uirab told us we would not find his place amongst the scattered homes of the 700 odd community, one of the few places left where Nama traditions and language are still practised. We meet at the offices of the traditional court authority on the road through the village. He welcomes us heartily and we embrace, but are we family? And if we are, is there resentment or other emotion I cannot even imagine? Charles Otto shows us the fountain that influenced the community to settle here in 1887 after years of wandering. The Swartboois were originally resident at Rehoboth. Amongst them in Rehoboth and amongst them was their spiritual leader,

none other than missionary Heinrich Kleinschmidt. This is Rehoboth before the Basters made it their home many decades later. Rehoboth, from a biblical source, was named so by missionary Kleinschmidt. It is situated about 80 km south of Windhoek, where, in their time Jan Jonker Afrikaner and his people had settled, having come from the Cape. Jan Jonker was a continuous threat to the Swartboois as Jonker wanted political hegemony and tributes in the form of cattle from all people he could subdue in the area. The violent attack of Rehoboth in 1864 led to the fateful exodus of the Swartboois from Rehoboth, never to return, accompanied by their missionary, Heinrich Kleinschmidt, his wife Johanna and children. After days of fleeing on foot, in hot of exposure and exhaustion in the arms of missionary Hugo Hahn. (Some readers may remember the dramatic 'Dear Kitty' letter I translated and circulated, in which one of the daughters writes about these events to her sister who was studying in Germany at the time.) The Swartboois could not settle here and had to trek on as Otjimbingue was already the place of other people. They had to find unoccupied land, safe for them to settle.

Charles Otto shows us the fountain that sustains agriculture in the village, but our conversation turns, again and again to exploring our common root. So far I have not mentioned Ludwig and neither has Charles Otto. But then the bubble bursts when he unpacks his research and unfurls the meter-long family tree. My eyes search for Rebecca Kleinschmidt, and in hand writing above her name is her father's name: Ludwig Kleinschmidt. The connection is without a shadow of doubt; we are cousins, distant cousins, but real cousins none-the-less. (The reason Ludwig's name did not appear on Swartbooi family tree is that the tree explores the Swartbooi and Seibeb lineage and the Kleinschmidt's are incidental to this.) *See the Swartbooi-Seibeb family tree at:*

http://www.fransfontein.org/images/genealogie_gross.jpg. An excerpt of family tree appears on page 15 and the associated text refers them being related to their being related to missionaries.

The gap, the void, is no more. The ‘white’ family secret is out and my suspicion confirmed. The reason why Ludwig’s spouses and children are silenced out of the family is because of the politics of race, started when Germany disastrously occupied Namibia from 1884 – 1915 and later by South Africa in what became the doctrine of apartheid.

Here in Khorixas on this April afternoon, like spouting fountains, we mention names and connections, pre-conceptions held by relatives and recall the history of ‘war’ as Ruben puts it. It is as though we give life and new meaning to the bitter past – and dare I imagine it, through this, begin to overcome the negative past that was everywhere.



David and Emma Joodt with the author in Khorixas, April. 2012.

The afternoon is too short for our explorations. We need to meet again. Charles learns from me and I learn from him. Here are some of the family details not known to me before:

- Ursula Trueper in her book *The Invisible Woman*, constructs, from the male dominated

world, who the Khoikhoi wife of missionary Hinrich Schmelen, born Zara Hendricks, might have been. It was Zara's daughters, notably Hanna, who married Heinrich Kleinschmidt, who are the origin of an extensive mixed race family of Namibia and South Africa. The maiden name of Zara, according to what Ursula Trueper could reconstruct was Hendricks, but Chales Otto has knowledge of her Nama surname. It is //Geixas and testifies powerfully to oral history as practised in Nama communities. The name //Geixas includes at least two different 'click' sounds. It was 200 or more years ago, that Orlam or people who were part of an amalgam of Khoikhoi, slave, European and maybe other people, adopted European surnames. The reasons for this are complex and I will not elaborate on this here.

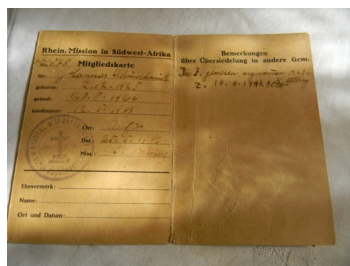
- Ludwig, contrary to what I was told by the 'white' side of the family, did get married! His first wife was Margarethe Bock, a woman from the Baster community of Rehoboth. One of their children was Sara Rebecca (the woman identified on the Swartbooi family tree), the mother to Emma and grandmother to Charles Otto. Was Sara Rebecca named after her Khoikhoi great grandmother Zara?
- Ludwig married a second time. She was Lauda Swartbooi, and they had a daughter Magdalena, born 11.12.1905 who died in 1980. His third wife was Kristina Richter but despite her German sounding surname she did not cut it in the white society either – she was a daughter of a mixed race relationship herself. There are several more children who in turn married and had children – details not yet known to me.

- The Fransfontein family speak of a Kera Kleinschmidt. Is this a derivative for Gerhard, my grandfather? – We need to speak more.



Baptism certificate of Magdalena, 22 July 1906, whose parents are Ludwig and Lauda Kleinschmidt, signed by missionary Olpp.

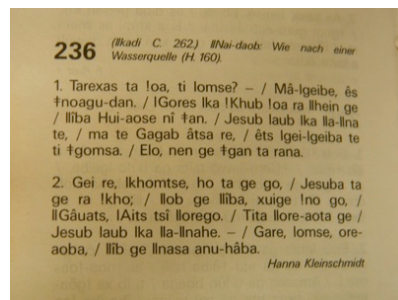
- Emma showed us church certificates issued in German and Nama by missionaries of their time. There is the baptism certificate of Magdalena Kleinschmidt, born 1905 to the parents Ludwig and Lauda Kleinschmidt, baptised in 1906 and confirmed in 1926 by missionary Olpp, someone my parents knew and would speak kindly about. And a mission church membership certificate of Johannes Kleinschmidt dated 1925, Outjo, a brother of Emma's.



Membership card of Johannes Kleinschmidt of the Rhenish Mission, dated 1925. Note: members of the Mission Church, other than the missionaries were never 'white' people. They were always people of colour.

- Emma also shows us a re-published Nama Lutheran prayer/song book in which appear 3 texts translated into Nama, by Johanna

Kleinschmidt, our common great, great grandmother.



Charles Otto or his mother, are cousins to me in the same way and same degree that Ursula Trueper, Peter Mueller, Eberhard Kleinschmidt, Rainer Heller, Juha Rautanen and others are.

When we drive back to Swakopmund that evening I cannot avoid the word betrayal. The people whom the ‘white’ Kleinschmidt’s excommunicated and ‘silenced’ out of their lives and thereby making this their contribution to racism and apartheid, can only feel betrayed. They have cause to be angry. And yet they showed willingness to forgive and embrace. If the ‘white’ relatives want to mend what is broken, if real reconciliation is to happen, then the ‘white’ part of this tribe need to think hard and do much to correct that which our fathers committed in error, including those who played white and derived benefit by doing so.

Note: It may not be clear to every reader how the race hierarchy thinking works. Firstly if you have a Black ancestor and you see your advancement best served by being perceived as a white person, then you do not mention the ‘mistake’ that happened in the past.

The second rule: Make sure that the degree of ‘black blood’ in subsequent generations is regularly or incrementally diluted. Putting it another way, the offspring of say, a white father and a black mother are thus 50% white and 50% black but if you marry a white, your children will be 25% black and if they in turn marry

whites, their 'impurity' goes down to 12.5% and the generation after that to 6.25%. Alas, nature does not obey such mathematical rules and therefore the fear persist amongst those wanting to be white, that there may be a "throw-back", on the white side, as they call it. And evidence of this is not hard to find amongst nieces and nephews; densely curly hair, high cheek bones, wide hips - the give-away traits to this day.

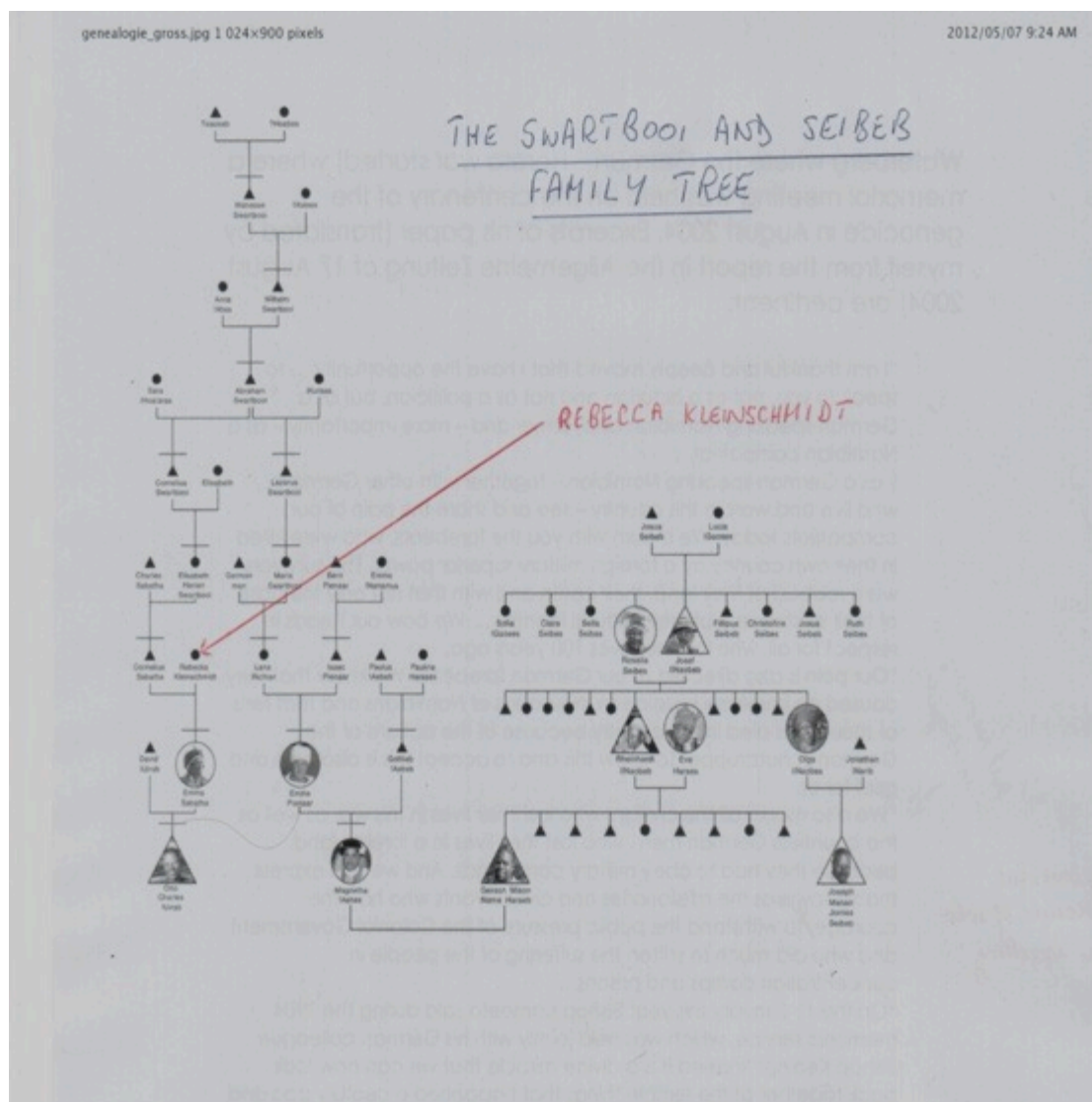
If however there is a lapse of the unwritten rule, then those who believe in whiteness are unforgiving. They accuse the one who marries into a mixed race family or black family, like Ludwig, of being back on the road to becoming "verkaffert", and the racially trained eye would see the "kaffersche" in the offspring immediately. And if you "go native", you are perceived to be less clean than 'us', that is hygienically speaking, you are less educated because your intelligence is 'less' and you don't have 'culture', that high-level form of existence only Europeans, apparently possess.

At any rate the blot on the family, once it has happened, needs to be made smaller with every generation that passes. This is a family's demand! But there is a social dimension also: the stigma of having black 'blood' somewhere in the past must be hidden as far as possible if you wish other whites not to look down on you. That is easy if the black relative is far away, either geographically or due to generations past and long deceased - either way you just don't ever mention this in conversation. Hiding black relations is much more difficult if someone in the family in the current generation goes 'backward' and therefore reduces the 'white blood'. It may not affect you yourself but it is a social blot that reduces your standing in the eyes of the whites you want to be part of. The way to deal with this is to ostracise 'them' from 'us'. Ludwig fell foul of that imperative.

The race devil has ruled in Southern Africa for so long. Any conception of class is always trumped by race. For example, Charles Otto's family, in class terms should be highly acceptable. Amongst Emma's children are a medical doctor, a pharmacist, a top businessman and executive, successful farmers and building contractors, but getting together for tea and cake on a Sunday afternoon remains a no-no.

Odd isn't it?

Horst Kleinschmidt
June 2012.



Extract from the Schmelen-Kleinschmidt family tree to show that no information about Ludwig (Ludo) Kleinschmidt, the 7th child of Missionary Heinrich and wife Hanna Kleinschmidt was entered, for what appear to be questionable reasons.