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## **Mapping the Namib Desert II: Sperrgebietskarte 1913**

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In 1908 some kilometre outside of Lüderitz, the southern harbour of the German colony South West Africa, diamonds were found. After a first rush, large parts of the southern Namib (north and south of Lüderitz) were cancelled for private explorations by the colonial government. In 1911 all rights were transferred to the "Deutsche-Diamanten-Gesellschaft". In addition to the controlled exploitation of the diamond fields the company had also to explore the region, to carry out geological and topographical surveys and to publish a map of the so called Sperrgebiet.

The company did fulfil that obligation by publishing the map series "Karte des Sperrgebietes" in 1913. The 10 sheets with the scale of 1:100 000 show the area between Hottentot's Bay in the north and the Orange River in the south. The production in Berlin was made by a huge amount of different material.

### ***Reminder of the Bergrechtskarte***

The presentation "Mapping the Namib Desert: the Bergrechtskarte" at the ICA-Conference 2005 in A Coruña (Spain) dealt with a map series of the central parts of the Namib Desert (South West Africa, today Namibia). This series was produced by the largest colonial company during the German colonial power over the country between 1884 and 1915: the "Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft für Südwestafrika". The maps were produced mostly with company own surveying material like route mappings and a lot of farm measurements. All maps were drawn in Swakopmund between 1913 and 1920 by the only known cartographer of South West Africa during German times – Albert Max Hofmann. Up to 1920 about 18 manuscript maps with the scale of 1:200 000 were produced. After the companies liquidation in 1921 the valuable sheets were sold to the South African controlled administration of South West Africa. Beside sheet "Usakos" there is no printed version of the maps known. Presumably the maps were used as high quality material for later map series of SWA.

### ***Regional and historical background***

The Namib Desert north and south of Lüderitz and about 100 km in-land was that area of the later German colony that got first attention in 1883 by the trader Adolf Lüderitz. He and his companions hoped to find mineral resources like copper. The huge diamond fields in South Africa were already known but the mostly sandy region around Lüderitz seemed not to be ideal for diamonds. After establishing the German

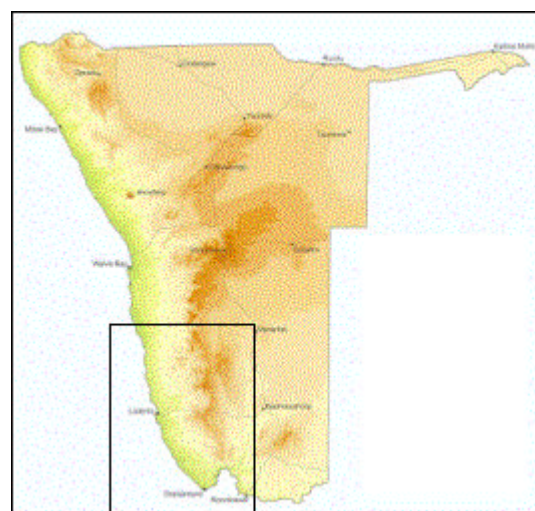


Figure 0: Regional placement of the territory in question (Atlas of Namibia, 2002, page 39)

Figure 1: Topographic details of the territory in question (Atlas of Namibia, 2002, page 32)

colony German South West Africa that south-western part was only useful because of the natural harbour of Lüderitz. For a better supply of the southern parts of the colony around Bethanie, Keetmanshoop and Gibeon a railway line between Lüderitz and Keetmanshoop was built in 1907.

Only in 1908 the first diamond was found in the sand of the desert along the railway line not far outside of Lüderitz near the railway station Grasplatz.

Only short time later the region saw a rush of diamond miners. Even though the whole southern Namib was owned by the Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft für Südwestafrika the mining rights were free and everybody could search for minerals or gems. Hence private persons and small diamond companies marked out there mining fields after the common rule “First come, first served” and began to pick up the diamond directly from the top of the sand. Some people made a lot of money. Especially the town Lüderitz did profit by this development. Some of the most interesting and most expensive houses were built – all the material, from the wood up to the carpet, had to come by ship from Europe. A second town that did profit from the diamond boom was Kolmanskop – today known as a touristy ghost city. Some kilometres outside of Lüderitz the diamonds let establish a completely new town with all modern living and entertainment equipment from a bowling alley to the first ice-block machine in South West Africa.

Only about a half year after the first found the German government did react and cancelled the region for further claims in late 1908. For this cancellation the region is up today known as the “Sperrgebiet”. With the “Deutsche Diamanten-Gesellschaft” a new company was built that got the monopol to exploit the region in 1911. All claims of other persons or smaller diamond companies that existed until then were also saved. Through that the government did assure a huge income and the rules in the fields.

With the contract the company did oblige not only the controlled exploitation – the South West African Government did not want to have conflicts with the strong South African diamond industry. The company had to explore the whole region. They also obliged for comprehensive geological and topographical surveying and mapping of the Sperrgebiet. Moreover a map had to be produced of the region between the 26<sup>th</sup> degree south and the Orange River and about 100 km in-land.

### *Surveying and mapping of the southern Namib*

As said the area around Lüderitz was explored by Germans from the 1880<sup>th</sup> on. Lüderitz’ researchers did already geological surveys and topographical analyses during their expeditions.

Up to 1908 there were only few activities with surveying and mapping in that region. As geodetic reference points only some beacons of the coast surveying between Kegelberg and Pomona did exist. These points were also used as reference for the official claim surveying from 1908 on. The military triangulation came into the region about 1907. The officers surveyed a chain between Bethanie and Lüderitz but the coordinates of the points, calculated and squared in Berlin, were only usable as preliminary version. These results, based on an accurate calculated origin in Windhoek, necessitated an adjustment of the coastal chain at 36”,69 westwards and 6”,88 northwards.

With the basis of the coast triangulation points the Deutsche Diamanten-Gesellschaft started the exploring, surveying and topographical and geological mapping of the Sperrgebiet with own land surveyors (Voigtländer, Moeller, Kalohr and Stoeckel). At first the marine chain was enlarged to Angras-Juntas in the south and to Hottentot’s Bay in the north. Another little chain was measured by surveyor Ploeger from Prinzenbucht to Kaukausib.

From mid 1909 on employees of the Deutsche Diamanten-Gesellschaft visited the part south of the Lüderitz-Keetmanshoop railway line systematically. Especially the already named land surveyors and the companies geologist Dr. Lotz took part in these works. Their main business was to fill the unsurveyed gaps between the existing cadastral measured mining fields. Normally they used route surveys for this job which could be appended to the existing fix points. For the map also route mappings of other persons like Dr. Reuning, Klinghardt, Dr. Barnitzke, Jürs and others could be used. Dr. Reuning – geologist of the “Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft für Südwestafrika” that owned large parts of the Namib north of the Sperrgebiet – surveyed and mapped also large parts outside of the real diamond region that are shown also on the map (see

below). The coastline between Lüderitz and Walvis Bay he explored only with a very small expedition and surveyed the route by foot with counting the steps and compass. The results of the rough survey of the about 173 km long route were quite good. Anyhow Reuning could connect his route to existing reference points in Hottentot's Bay in the south and Reuttersbrunn in the north. In 1913 his map "*Karte des Küstengebietes zwischen Hottentottenbucht und Empfängnisbucht*" with the scale of 1:400.000 could be published. It shows the coastline and the expedition route as a small strip.

As already said all mining claims had to be surveyed and mapped with the scale of 1:5.000 in order of the imperial mining authority. The large but fragmented possessions of the "Deutsche Diamanten-Gesellschaft" were surveyed by the companies own surveyors, especially by surveyor Voigtländer and mine surveyor Kalohr. Aside the private surveying company "Schettler und Schmiedel" – two surveyors with a long experience in South West Africa – took part in these works by contract. All other mining fields owned by other persons or small mining companies were normally surveyed by governmental land surveyors for the registration in the mining register. The Deutsche Diamanten-Gesellschaft could use all the surveys and cadastral plans for their map series.

For the map production the company could additionally use some unpublished further triangulations, coast mappings and soundings of the German Navy from 1910 to 1912. The surveying vessels "S.M.S. Panther" and "S.M.S. Möwe" defined up to 1912 the entire coastline up to the mouth of the Orange River.

### **Map series: *Karte des Sperrgebietes***



Figure 1: Overview over the 10 sheets published as „Karte des Sperrgebietes in Deutsch-Südwestafrika“

With all these information the Deutsche Diamanten-Gesellschaft was able to create a map series of the Sperrgebiet. The map was produced by the expert Paul Sprigade of the colonial mapping institute in the Dietrich Reimer publishing house in Berlin. Dr. Lotz did accompany the production process for the diamond company.

The series of 10 sheets could be published in 1913. Each sheet shows an area of about 50' of longitude and 30' of latitude with the scale of 1:100 000. The multicolour sheets show every important topographic detail and information about the ownership structure of the territory. In black the complete railway, road and path network is shown. Also in black the map shows relief information like reefs and elevations, reference points, prominent points in the terrain and infrastructure elements like telephone circuit and transmission lines. Rivers, water points, fountains and the sea are marked in blue colour. These information were very well determined and partly additionally labelled because of there importance for travellers in the desert. Pans and lagoons are marked with teal

coloured background. The terrain information was given by brown form lines. Sandy regions are highlighted by yellow dotted areas. Dunes and gravel plains are shown by special dotted forms. The tax authority blocks along the railway line, the mining claims of the different diamond companies and the farms were differed by various line colours.

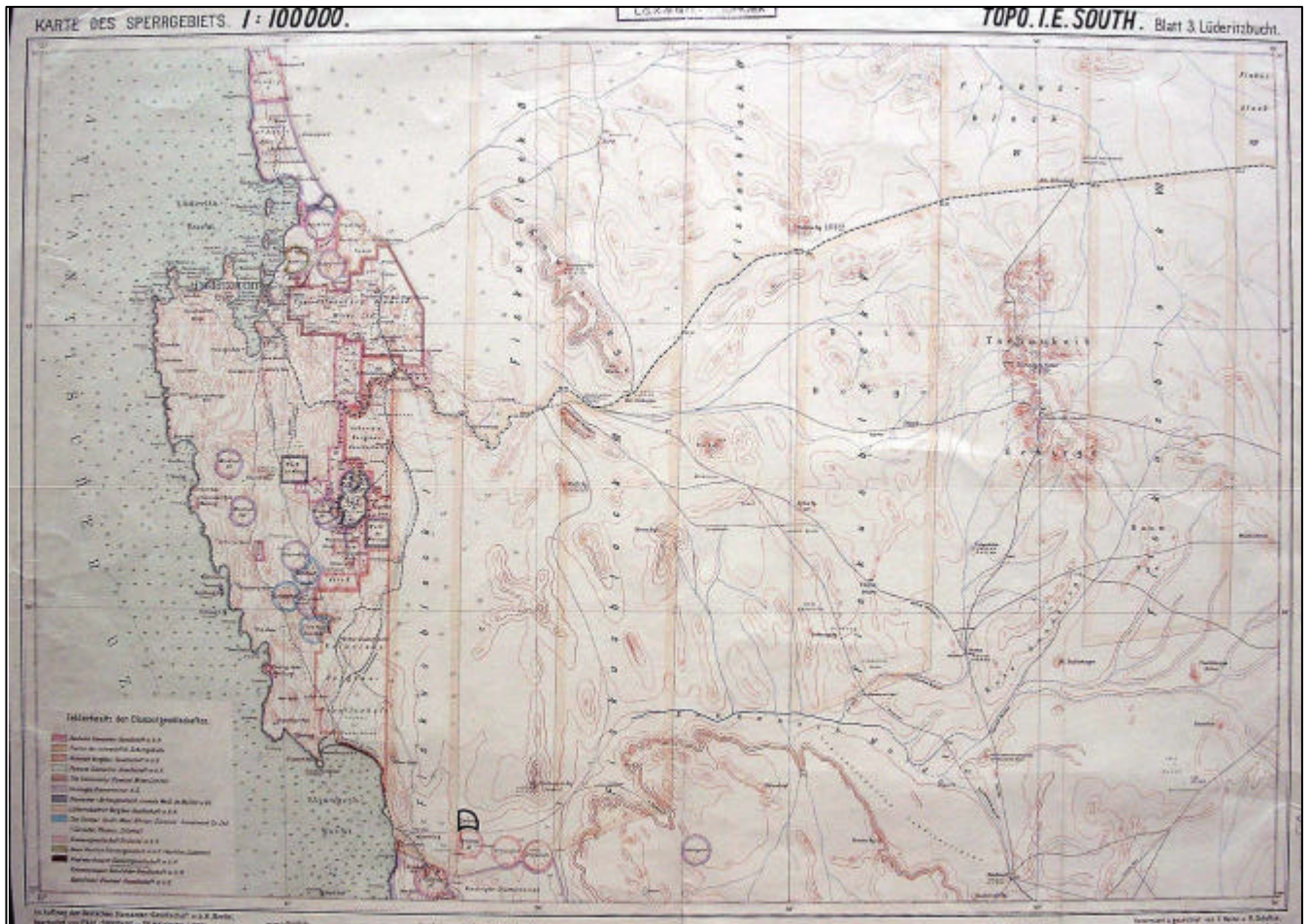
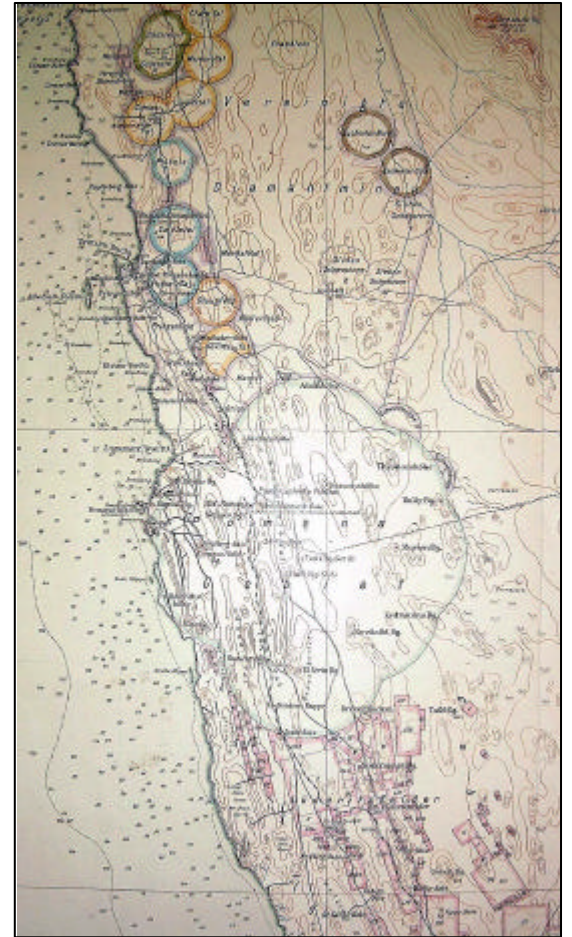
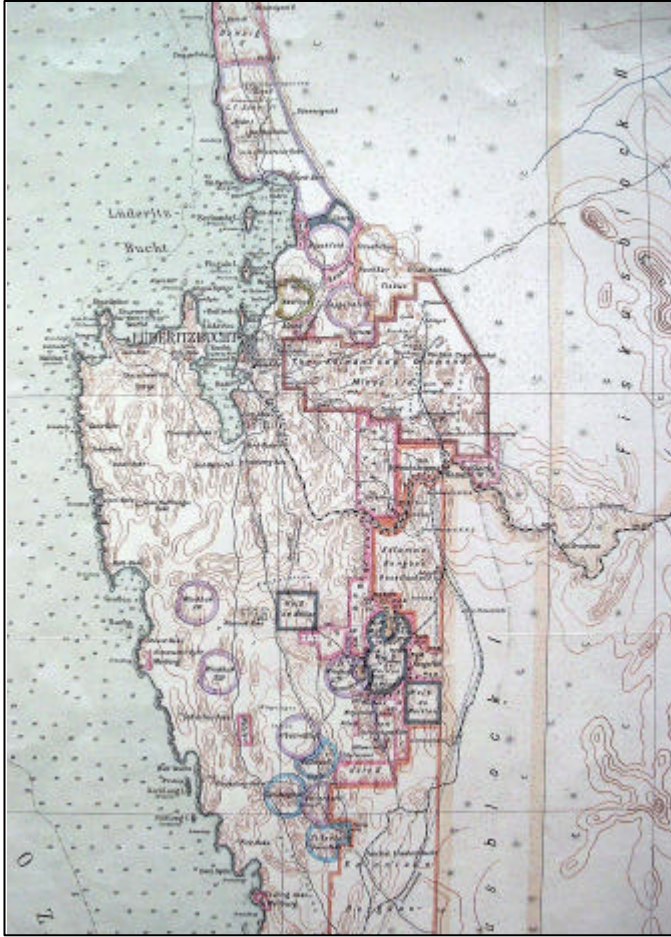


Figure 1: Sheet 3 – Lüderitzbucht of the „Karte des Sperrgebietes“. Besides the small mining claims north and south of Lüderitz it shows clearly the narrow but long tax authority blocks along the railway line (Fiskusblock). (Namibia National Archive, Windhoek, Map Collection No. 211)

## Results

Altogether the map series reached with her content, design and colouring a good clearness and high complexity. Thus it was a good material for the administration, for mining purposes, for other branches of the economy and for further geographical and geological researches. For the first time a map presented the shifting sand dunes belt north and south of Lüderitz completely. Also the cascading decline of the inland-plateau to the coast could be shown clearly.



For the first time a closed region of South West Africa could be shown in such a large scale. Because of the different material used the high quality and accuracy of the sheets are astonishing. Beside high quality triangulations, cadastral surveys, geometrically levelling information and photographs also very basic route mappings were used. But all together brought to a map by the expert knowledge of the geologist with very good knowledge of the region and experienced cartographers enabled a very nice and useful product.

With publishing this map series about one year before World War I the Deutsche Diamanten-Gesellschaft did fulfil their obligation. The maps certainly helped to find little later new productive diamond field.

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