



International Boundary Study

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Angola – Namibia (*South-West Africa*) Boundary

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**The Geographer
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INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

No. 120

ANGOLA – NAMIBIA (SOUTH-WEST AFRICA) BOUNDARY

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ANGOLA – NAMIBIA (SOUTH-WEST AFRICA) BOUNDARY

I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

Demarcated throughout by pillars or rivers, the Angola–South-West Africa boundary is approximately 855 miles in length. Inland from the Atlantic coast, it follows the median line of the Kunene for 213 miles to the Ruacana Falls and then extends eastward in a straight line for 277 miles to the Okavango. The boundary continues along the median line of the Okavango for 230 miles, and for the final 135 miles it extends along a second straight-line sector to the Zambia tripoint east of the Rio Cuando.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The first Europeans to land on the shores of the present-day territories of Angola and South-West Africa were 15th century Portuguese seafarers. In 1575 the King of Portugal granted a charter for a crown colony which initially included the area between the Congo (Zaire) river and the Rio Cuanza. Ultimately the colony was expanded both eastward and southward by the addition of large tracts of land.

Although vessels frequently visited the shores of South-West Africa, the inhospitable Namib Desert served as a barrier to land movement inland from the coast. Beginning in the 17th century, the first expeditions to penetrate the interior passed northward across the Orange river from the Dutch Cape territory. In the latter part of the 18th and during the 19th centuries, a series of travelers, traders, hunters, and missionaries, mostly Cape Dutch and British in origin, explored the area, utilizing coastal and various other routes inland. Walvis Bay was proclaimed a possession of the United Kingdom on March 12, 1878, and six years later was annexed by the then British colony of the Cape of Good Hope.¹

In 1883 a German merchant obtained a land concession from a local chief at Angra Pequena (Luderitz), and on August 16th of the following year Germany proclaimed a protectorate over part of South-West Africa. Declared a German colony in 1892, the protectorate was expanded rapidly by tribal agreements, proclamations, and international treaties to the present boundaries of South-West Africa.

German administration of South-West Africa ended during World War I when the territory was occupied by South African forces. Under Article 119 of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany ceded rights to its former colonies to the principal Allied and Associated Powers. The Covenant of the League of Nations in Article 22 gave international status to the former German colonies. The administration of South-West Africa was assigned to the Government of the Union (now Republic) of South Africa as a League of Nations mandate on December 17, 1920.

¹ At present Walvis Bay is an integral part of the Cape of Good Hope Province of the Republic of South Africa.

When the League of Nations was dissolved in 1946, its supervisory authority for the mandate was inherited by the newly formed United Nations. The General Assembly rejected a South African request to annex South-West Africa, and South Africa refused to place the territory under a U.N. trusteeship agreement, stating that the United Nations was not an automatic successor to the responsibilities of the League of Nations. On October 27, 1966, during its 21st regular session, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 2145 which terminated South Africa's rights in South-West Africa² and brought the territory under the direct responsibility of the United Nations. In an advisory opinion in 1971, the International Court of Justice concluded, *inter alia*, that South Africa's presence in Namibia being illegal, the Government of South Africa must withdraw its administration.

By constitutional amendment in 1951, the colony of Angola was made an overseas province; as such, it is considered by the Portuguese Government to be legally part of Portugal. The provincial government is administered by a governor general who is nominated by the Overseas Ministry and appointed by the Council of Ministers. The governor general exercises both executive and legislative authority under the guidance of the Overseas Minister in Lisbon.

III. BOUNDARY TREATIES

On December 30, 1886, a declaration by Germany and Portugal established a boundary between their respective possessions and spheres of influence in South-West Africa from the Atlantic Ocean to the Zambezi.

Art. I.—The Boundary line which shall separate the Portuguese and German Possessions in South-West Africa follows the course of the River Kunene [Rio Cunene] from its mouth to the waterfalls which are formed to the south of the Humbe by the Kunene breaking through the Serra Canna. From this point the line runs along the parallel of latitude to the River Kubango [Rio Cubango, Okavango], then along the course of that river to the village of Andara, which is to remain in the German sphere of influence, and from thence in a straight line eastwards to the rapids of Catima [Katima Mulilo Rapids], on the Zambesi [Zambezi].

Article III, Paragraph 2, of an Anglo–German agreement of July 1, 1890, extended the territory of German South-West Africa eastward to the Zambezi by a narrow corridor later known as the Caprivi Strip (Zipfel). The corridor was created by the delimitation of the southern boundary of the strip and the establishment of a minimum width as follows:

... thence it follows that degree [21st meridian] northward to the point of its intersection by the 18th parallel of south latitude; it runs eastward along that parallel till

² By a resolution of June 12, 1968, the General Assembly of the United Nations changed the name of South-West Africa to Namibia.

it reaches the River Chobe [Kwando or Linyanti]^[3]; and descends the centre of the main channel of that river to its junction with the Zambezi, where it terminates.

It is understood that under this arrangement Germany shall have free access from her protectorate to the Zambezi by a strip of territory which shall at no point be less than 20 English miles in width.

In Article IV of the treaty between Portugal and the United Kingdom of June 11, 1891, it was agreed that the western line separating the Portuguese and British spheres of influence in central Africa would terminate in the south at the Katima Mulilo Rapids. The southern end of the Angola–Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) boundary was moved westward from the rapids to the Kwando May 30, 1905, by the award of King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy, who served as arbitrator of the line which was to conform to the western limit of the Barotse Kingdom.

At Cape Town on June 22, 1926, South Africa, mandatory of South-West Africa, and Portugal agreed that the disputed waterfalls on the Kunene referenced in the declaration of December 20, 1886, were the Ruacana Falls located at approximately 17° 13' south latitude. It was stated that the boundary would follow the middle line of the Kunene from its mouth to the parallel of latitude passing through a pillar erected on the left bank of the river adjacent to the Ruacana Falls by an Anglo–Portuguese commission in July 1920. There also was agreement that the land sectors of the boundary "shall in the first favorable season be demarcated by a joint commission."

A second agreement relative to the Kunene was signed by representatives of the Governments of South Africa and Portugal nine days later at Cape Town on July 1, 1926. The agreement applied specifically to the regulation of the use of the waters of the river for purposes of generating hydraulic power, inundation, and irrigation in South-West Africa.

On April 29, 1931, an exchange of notes between Portugal and South Africa approved the demarcation of the boundary by a joint commission in the sector from the Kunene to the Okavango.⁴ Also on August 16th of the same year, an agreement among South Africa, Portugal, and Northern Rhodesia approved the demarcation of a straight-line boundary from the Okavango to the Zambezi. The segment of the line between the Okavango and the Kwando formed a part of the Angola–South-West Africa boundary, and the line eastward from the Kwando to the Zambezi was a sector of the Northern Rhodesia–South-West Africa boundary.

³ This river is or has been known by other names in various sectors, including Rio Cuando and Mashi.

⁴ It was stipulated by the boundary commission that a neutral zone along this sector of the line initially agreed upon by the German and Portuguese Governments and recognized by the Governments of South Africa and Portugal would cease to exist with the approval of the demarcation.

IV. ALIGNMENT

The agreement of July 1, 1926, between Portugal and South Africa establishes the Kunene sector of the Angola–South-West Africa boundary as the middle line of the river.⁵

... that the boundary between the mandated territory [South-West Africa] and Angola is the middle line of the Kunene River from its mouth up to a point on the great Rua Cana Falls above its lip or crest, and that the parallel of latitude further forming the boundary starts from that point and extends due east so as to cause the Kunene River, above the Rua Cana Falls, to be excluded wholly from the mandated territory;

And whereas by this final settlement the use of the waters of the Kunene River at the Rua Cana Falls is common to the Government of the Union of South Africa and the Government of the Republic of Portugal...

In accordance with the agreement of July 1, 1926, a joint boundary commission surveyed and demarcated the parallel of latitude comprising the sector from the Ruacana Falls on the Kunene eastward to the Okavango as contained in a report signed at Kakeri on September 23, 1928. The demarcation was ratified by an exchange of notes between South Africa and Portugal April 29, 1931. Data on boundary pillars 1 through 47 are given in the following table.⁶

⁵ Previously, in the agreement between South Africa and Portugal of June 22, 1926, the boundary was stated to be the middle line of the Kunene.

⁶ In addition to the 47 main pillars, 8 intermediate pillars lettered A through H also were erected.

No.	Description of Position of Pillar	Latitude ⁷	Longitude ⁸
		S.	E.
		° ' "	° ' "
1	On left bank of Kunene River on edge of the Oruahakana Falls	17 23 25.0	14 13 05.8
2	On highest point of range of ridges running N.E.–S.W.	17 23 22.2	14 17 36.3
3	On a small ridge	17 23 22.3	14 22 29.4
4	On a small ridge	17 23 23.7	14 26 55.8
5	On flat country covered with trees.....	17 23 24.3	14 32 34.5
6	In a large depression close to swamps of Omaramba Etaka	17 23 23.7	14 38 13.1
7	In bush	17 23 25.7	14 43 51.9
8	In bush	17 23 24.6	14 49 30.6
9	In bush	17 23 23.7	14 55 09.1
10	In bush	17 23 23.6	15 00 47.9
11	In bush	17 23 23.7	15 06 26.5
12	In bush	17 23 24.4	15 12 05.2
13	In big plain and 600 metres north of Namarua well	17 23 25.0	15 17 43.8
14	On a plain.....	17 23 24.5	15 23 22.5
15	In bush	17 23 23.9	15 29 01.2
16	On E. of small plain.....	17 23 23.7	15 34 39.8
17	On a plain.....	17 23 23.7	15 40 18.5

⁷ The latitude values were determined astronomically at all beacons excepting beacons Nos. 17 and 47, where atmospheric conditions rendered astronomical observations impossible.

⁸ Longitude values were determined astronomically at beacons 1, 6, 26, 31, 36, 41, and 46 in conjunction with the wireless signals from Lafayette and geodetically at the others.

No.	Description of	Latitude	Position of	Pillar
		S.	Longitude	E.
		° ' "	° ' "	
18	In populated region near native kraal.....	17 23 23.3	15 45 57.3	
19	75 metres E. of Namakunde Omafo road	17 23 24.7	15 51 35.8	
20	Populated area.....	17 23 23.6	15 57 14.5	
21	In dense bush.....	17 23 23.7	16 02 53.1	
22	Inhabited region 200 metres N. of a kraal.....	17 23 24.5	16 08 31.6	
23	In bush	17 23 24.2	16 14 10.4	
24	In bush	17 23 24.8	16 19 47.6	
25	In bush	17 23 25.0	16 25 26.2	
26	In bush	17 23 25.8	16 31 04.9	
27	In bush	17 23 25.1	16 36 43.7	
28	In bush	17 23 25.0	16 42 22.5	
29	In bush	17 23 24.5	16 48 01.3	
30	In bush	17 23 23.5	16 53 40.0	
31	In bush	17 23 23.5	16 59 18.8	
32	In bush	17 23 23.7	17 04 57.6	
33	In bush	17 23 23.7	17 10 36.3	
34	In bush	17 23 23.9	17 16 15.1	
35	In bush	17 23 24.0	17 21 53.9	
36	In plain interspersed with trees	17 23 24.7	17 27 32.7	
37	In plain interspersed with trees	17 23 24.9	17 33 11.4	

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No.	Description of	Latitude	Position of Pillar
		S.	Longitude E.
38	Dense scrub interspersed with big trees.....	17 23 24.7	17 38 50.2
39	In bush (big trees).....	17 23 24.2 ° ' "	17 44 29.0 ° ' "
40	In bush	17 23 23.8	17 50 07.7
41	In bush about 5 kilos. N.N.E. of Bongolo Well.	17 23 24.1	17 55 46.5
42	In dense bush.....	17 23 23.8	18 01 25.3
43	In open bush.....	17 23 23.9	18 07 04.0
44	In bush	17 23 23.6	18 12 42.8
45	In plain	17 23 23.1	18 18 21.6
46	In open bush 1 kilo. W. of plain on W. bank of Okavango River	17 23 23.7	18 24 00.3
47	On limestone ridge 240 metres W. of W. bank of Okavango River	17 23 23.7	18 25 06.2

The sector of the boundary formed by the Okavango was established by the declaration of December 30, 1886, between Germany and Portugal. The declaration did not specify the exact relationship of the boundary to the river, but the agreement between Portugal and South Africa of June 22, 1926, stated that the boundary eastward from the Ruacana Falls follows the parallel of latitude to the middle line of the Okavango and thence as described in the declaration of 1886.

The sector of the Angola–South-West Africa boundary between the Okavango and the Kwando consists of a straight line. It is part of a longer line which continues eastward to the Zambezi and forms the western sector of the South-West Africa–Zambia boundary between the Kwando and Zambezi.

During 1930–31 a joint boundary commission surveyed and demarcated the line between the Okavango (northern extremity of Sibanana island) and the Zambezi (center of the Katima Mulilo Rapids). An agreement was signed relative to the alignment of the boundary by representatives of South Africa, Portugal, and Northern Rhodesia on August 16, 1931.

The commission agreed that the village of Andara referred to in the agreement of 1886 was located on Sibanana Island in the Okavango. A beacon or pillar, known as the Andara or western terminal beacon, was erected at 18°01'32.75" S., 21°25'28.81" E., a site which was described as being located on a large rock on the western edge of Dikuyu island. The Katima or eastern terminal beacon is located on the right (western) bank of the Zambezi at 17°28'29.28" S., 24°14'50.04" E., where the boundary extends into the river at Katima Mulilo Rapids.

The location of the Angola–South-West Africa–Zambia tripoint, known as the Triune Point, was not finalized until after the Kwando sector settlement on the Angola–Zambia boundary by the Anglo–Portuguese agreement of November 18, 1954. It was decided that the boundary "shall follow the normal limit of the waters of the River Kwando on its Eastern side when the river is in flood." In the exchange of notes approving the report of an Anglo–Portuguese boundary demarcation commission on October 21, 1964, the Triune Point was listed as Beacon No. 9 (corresponding to Beacon No. 32 of the Kwando series) located at 17°38'10.600" S. and 23°25'47.604" E.

APPENDIX

Documents

1. Declaration between Germany and Portugal respecting the Limits of their respective Possessions and Spheres of Influence in South-West and South-East Africa. Lisbon, December 30, 1886. Edward Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaty, 3 vols., 3rd Edition (London: Harrison and Sons, 1909). Vol. 2, pp. 703–6.
2. Agreement between the British and German Governments, respecting Africa and Heligoland. Berlin, July 1, 1890. Ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 899–906.
3. Treaty between Her Britannic Majesty and His Majesty the King of Portugal, defining their respective Spheres of Influence in Africa, Lisbon, June 11, 1891. Ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 1016–26. Also see Great Britain Treaty Series, Portugal No. 1 (1891), C. 6375.
4. Declaration between Great Britain and Portugal, respecting the Submission of the Barotse Boundary Question to an Arbitrator. Signed at London, August 12, 1903. British and Foreign State Papers (BFSP), Vol. 97 (1903–4), pp. 506–7. Also see Great Britain Treaty Series, No. 28 (1907), Cd. 3731.
5. Award of the King of Italy in the Question between Great Britain and Portugal respecting the Western Boundary of the Barotse Kingdom. Rome, May 20, 1905. BFSP., Vol. 98 (1904–5) pp. 382–5. Also see Great Britain Treaty Series, Africa No. 5 (1905), Cd. 2584 [with map].
6. Agreement between South Africa and Portugal in relation to the Boundary between the Mandated Territory of South-West Africa and Angola. Cape Town, June 22, 1926. BFSP., Vol. 123 (1926-Part I), pp. 590–2. Also see Great Britain Treaty Series, No. 29 (1926), Cmd. 2777.
7. Agreement between South Africa and Portugal regulating the Use of the Water of the Kunene River for the purposes of generating Hydraulic Power and of Inundation and Irrigation in the Mandated Territory of South-West Africa. Cape Town, July 1, 1926. BFSP., Vol. 123 (1926-Part I), pp. 593–8. Also see Great Britain Treaty Series, No. 30 (1926), Cmd. 2778.
8. Exchange of Notes between South Africa and Portugal respecting the Boundary between the Mandated Territory of South-West Africa and Angola. Lisbon, April 29, 1931. BFSP., Vol. 134 (1931), pp. 465–71. Also see Great Britain Treaty Series, No. 28 (1931), Cmd. 3896.
9. Agreement between the Union of South Africa, Northern Rhodesia and Portugal concerning the Boundary between the Caprivi Zipfel, Angola and Northern

Rhodesia. Signed at Kwando, August 16, 1931. South Africa Treaty Series, No. 8 (1931).

10. Agreements between the United Kingdom on its own behalf and on behalf of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and Portugal with regard to (1) the Northern Rhodesia–Angola Frontier and (2) certain Angolan and Northern Rhodesian Natives living on the Kwando River. Lisbon, November 18, 1954. BFSP., Vol. 161 (1954), pp. 161–73. Also see Great Britain Treaty Series No. 27 (1955), Cmd. 9453; and United Nations Treaty Series Vol. 210 (1955), No. 2841, pp. 265–89.
11. Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Portuguese Republic with regard to the Northern Rhodesia–Angola Frontier. Lisbon, October 21, 1964 [with Exchange of Notes between the United Kingdom and South Africa]. Great Britain Treaty Series No. 18 (1965), Cmd. 2568; and United Nations Treaty Series, Vol. 539 (1966), No. 2841, pp. 353–6.

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