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Originally launched by P. Schlettwein Publishing in 1997, the Basel Namibia Studies Series (BNSS) has been released by the BAB Publishing House since 2011. The series addresses current (cultural-)historical, political and anthropological issues related to Namibia.
Thorsten Kern

West Germany and Namibia’s Path to Independence, 1969–1990
Foreign Policy and Rivalry with East Germany

Foreword by Chris Saunders
Basel Namibia Studies Series 21
Basel Africa Bibliography 2019

Kern shows that German division played a vital role in West Germany’s position towards Namibia during the Cold War. The two states’ deeply diverging policies, characterised in this context by competition for influence over SWAPO, were strongly affected by the Cold War rivalry between the capitalist West and the communist East. Yet ultimately, the dynamics of rapprochement helped to bring about Namibia’s independence.

“Kern’s book is likely to remain the definitive account of the relations between a divided Germany and Namibia during the crucial last two decades of the Cold War.”

Chris Saunders
Cameron Welch
“Land is Life, Conservancy is Life.”
The San and the Nja Jaqna Conservancy, Tsumkwe District West, Namibia

Introduction by John G. Galaty
Basel Namibia Studies Series 20, 2018
277p., illustrations, maps, tables, index
CHF 32.00 Print | CHF 22.00 PDF
ISBN 978-3-906927-02-2
ISSN 2234-9561
eISBN 978-3-906927-03-9
eISSN 2297-458X

Focusing on the experiences of a group of predominantly San communities in the North-East of Namibia, the historical and contemporary situations of the San of the Nja Jaqna Conservancy and their engagement with CBNRM are examined. In looking to the future, this work seeks to understand what mechanisms and institutions give indigenous groups, such as the San, a foothold in the State and an avenue through which to navigate and shape their own modernity(ies).

“[This is a] remarkable book, which portrays the history and illuminates the contemporary life of the San peoples of Nja Jaqna.”
John G. Galaty

Luregn Lenggenhager
Ruling Nature, Controlling People
Nature Conservation, Development and War in North-Eastern Namibia since the 1920s

Introduction by Maano Ramutsindela
Basel Namibia Studies Series 19, 2018
266p., illustrations, maps, tables, index
CHF 32.00 Print | CHF 22.00 PDF
ISBN 978-3-906927-00-8
ISSN 2234-9561
eISBN 978-3-906927-01-5
eISSN 2297-458X

Recent nature conservation initiatives in Southern Africa such as communal conservancies and peace parks are often embedded in narratives of economic development and ecological research. They are also increasingly marked by militarisation and violence. These features were also characteristic of South African rule over the Caprivi Strip region in North-Eastern Namibia.

“[The book] confirms that nature conservation does not take place in a political vacuum; ideas and practices of conservation derive their potency from prevailing ideologies and socio-political struggles.”
Maano Ramutsindela
It took the former South African Defence Force (SADF) less than four hours to kill more than eight hundred Namibian refugees at Cassinga on May 4, 1978. Thousands of survivors were left with irreparable physical and emotional injuries. In this book, the afterlife of the victims’ traumatic memories and their aspiration for justice vis-à-vis the perpetrators’ enjoyment of blanket impunity from prosecution are explored with the aim to create public awareness about the unfortunate circumstances of the Cassinga victims.

The author is intrigued by the question: Why can the National Archives of Namibia respond to genealogical enquiries of Whites in a matter of minutes with finding estate records of deceased persons, while similar requests from Blacks cannot be served? Not satisfied with the sweeping statement that this is the result of colonialism and apartheid, she follows the track of so-called ‘Native estates’. This study of memory against forgetting is a call to post-colonial archives to re-visit their holdings and the systemic colonial bias that continues to haunt them.

“This study is a passionate statement on the power of producing and silencing pasts and histories.”

Dag Henrichsen
This book describes the Nyae Nyae Village Schools, an innovative and unique mother-tongue education initiative set in north-eastern Namibia. It examines the enormous paradoxes that schooling presents for the Nyae Nyae community. ‘Owners of Learning’ is the literal English translation of the Ju’hoansi word for ‘teacher’ and it serves to highlight a fundamental question — to whom does education belong?

“[This book] conveys a closely observed and intimately felt perspective, while at the same time amplifying the voices of so many San parents and elders who would otherwise not have had the opportunity to speak.”

Willemien le Roux

This book addresses the challenges of creating a ‘national’ culture in the context of a historical legacy that has emphasised ethnic diversity. The state sponsored Annual National Culture Festival (ANCF) focuses on the Kavango region in north-eastern Namibia. Akuupa critically examines the notion of Kavango-ness as a colonial construct and its subsequent reconstitution and appropriation. He analyses the way in which cultural representations are produced by local people in the postcolonial African context of nation building and national reconciliation.

“One cannot but appreciate Akuupa’s contribution to the academic literary world on Kavango and Namibia.”

Kletus Likuwa
This book deals with colonialism on a Namibian periphery and considers both the German colonial period and the South African rule in the country. The marginality of the Kaoko region within this colonial topography of power is analysed as a dynamic and fractured feature where power relations and constellations remained highly contested.

“[This] is an excellent sample of what can be accomplished by splicing different mediums, genres, traces and even senses in the attempt to convey a multi-faceted history of a region that has only recently been tied into a national historiography.”

Patricia Hayes

Lorena Rizzo
Gender and Colonialism
A History of Kaoko in north-western Namibia, 1870–1950s

Introduction by Patricia Hayes
Basel Namibia Studies Series 14, 2012
331p., illustrations, maps, tables, index
CHF 32.00 Print | CHF 22.00 PDF
ISBN 978-3-905758-26-9
ISSN 2234-9561
eISBN 978-3-905758-49-8
eISSN 2297-458X

Women’s contributions against apartheid under the auspices of the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO and their personal experiences in exile take center stage in this study. Male and female leadership structures in exile are analysed whilst the sexual politics in the refugee camps and the public imagery of female representation in SWAPO’s nationalism receive special attention. The party’s public pronouncements of women empowerment and gender equality are compared to the actual implementations of gender politics during and after the liberation struggle.

“[The book] fills an important gap in literature on Namibia [and] include[s] issues hitherto largely treated as taboos.”

Henning Melber

Martha Akawa
The Gender Politics of the Namibian Liberation Struggle

Introduction by Bience Gawanas
Basel Namibia Studies 13, 2014
230p., illustrations, maps, index
CHF 32.00 Print | CHF 22.00 PDF
ISBN 978-3-905758-26-9
ISSN 2234-9561
eISBN 978-3-905758-50-4
eISSN 2297-458X
This book encompasses a history of identity building amongst Khwe San people and of contestations for authority over land and natural resources in Namibia’s West Caprivi. The politics of authority in this contested borderland area were significantly shaped by state and NGO interventions into local institutions and land use between the late 1930s and 2006.

“This recent history of the Khwe, combining disciplines and extensive fieldwork, provides a wonderful window on the new struggles over land and nature.”

William Beinart
Caprivi, the remote Namibian strip of land encapsulated by neighbouring Angola, Zambia and Botswana, has a contested colonial and postcolonial history. Neglected by German and South African colonial administrations, its inhabitants were often pushed towards neighbouring territories in spite of not being an integral part of them. Becoming a strategic location in the ensuing liberation wars of the late 20th century, its history is often one of conquest and resistance, plunder, betrayal and rivalry.

“This is a book no one will be able to ignore in any future historiography, not only of the Caprivi and Namibia, but also in the wider context of south-central African history.”

Lazarus Hangula
The series Basel Southern Africa Studies (BSAS) is dedicated to a wide variety of topics in the humanities, encompassing the entire region of southern Africa.
Modern-day Namibian history has largely been shaped by three major eras: German colonial rule, South African apartheid occupation, and the Liberation Struggle. It was, however, not only military conquest that laid the cornerstone for the colony, but also how the colony was imagined, the ‘dream’ of this colony. As a tool of discursive worldmaking, literature has played a major role in providing a framework in which to ‘dream’ Namibia, first from outside its borders, and then from within. Through the production of myths around whiteness, German and South African authors designed a literary space in which control, destruction, and the dehumanisation of African peoples are understood as a natural order, one that is dictated by history and its linear continuation. These European texts are offset by Namibia’s first novel by an African, offering a counter-narrative to the colonial invention that was (German) South West Africa.
How does a people’s music reflect their history, their occupations, cultural beliefs and values? These are the core questions that this book addresses in relation to the Aawambo people of Namibia. The author brings to the fore the nuanced views of different people, describing their personal musical experiences — past as well as present. This is the first time that the music and stories of contemporary Namibian musicians are shared alongside those of the elderly.

“This book is a ‘must read’ piece of literature that I strongly recommend to all those interested in Aawambo songs in particular and music in general.”

Ervast Mtota

In dieser interdisziplinären Studie untersucht der Autor die Entwicklung des Tourismus in Namibia anhand eines relationalen Raumbegriffs. Angelehnt an Foucaults Begriff der Heterotopie analysiert er die homogenisierende Wirkung von Technik, die touristische Räume infrastrukturell erschließt und Sicherheit vermittelt. Gleichzeitig führt sie zu einer symbolisch-kulturellen Differenzierung, die spezifische Räume zu einzigartigen Sehenswürdigkeiten macht.

“Breitwieser liefert […] eine umfassende Analyse zur Wirkung von Technik zur Erschließung und Konstruktion touristischer Räume in Namibia.”

Informationsstelle Bildungsauftrag Nord-Süd
South Africa is an example of a relatively successful political transition. Nevertheless, the first democratic elections in 1994 did not change the systemic and structural inequalities, the socio-economic legacies of discrimination or the alienation of the different population groups. At the centre of this study is the transformation potential of two formerly white neighbourhoods in Johannesburg: Norwood and Orange Grove.

“A significant contribution to our understanding of how different ‘communities’ at local level have reconfigured their relationships and social, political and economic interests in South Africa since 1994.”
Sheila Meintjes

Taking the history of trade and of traders as its subject matter, this book offers the first economic history of northern Namibia during the twentieth century. It traces Namibia’s way from a rural, largely self-relying society into a globalised economy of consumption.

“Based largely on archival as well as oral sources, the book presents a wealth of new insight.”
Reinhart Kössler


David William Cohen

The role played by Botswana in various southern African liberation struggles has previously been neglected in historical studies. The country’s politics of support and mobilisation early on in Namibia’s struggle for independence from South Africa proved crucial for the formative period of both nation states.

“[This book] fills a gap in our knowledge and deserves a respected place in the ever-growing literature on the history of Namibia.”

Henning Melber
The impressive formation of the Griqua states in the first half of the nineteenth century outside the borders of the Cape Colony and their relations with Sotho-Tswana polities, frontiersmen, missionaries and the British administration of the Cape take centre stage in the analysis. The Griqua, of mixed settler and indigenous descent, secured hegemony in a frontier of complex partnerships and power struggles.

"It remains by far the best account of what is a crucial, and fascinating, episode in Southern African history [...], constructed on the impressive basis of documentary and other forms of primary source material."

Robert Ross

This book is a long-overdue history of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) and the rise of the Africanist ideology in South Africa. Kondlo analyses the radical traditions, the structural contradictions and the internal conflicts of this rival to the African National Congress (ANC), South Africa’s dominant liberation organisation. The role of the PAC in the power-sharing negotiations leading to the historic 1994 elections in South Africa round off the narrative.

“The first academically reputable history of the PAC from its turbulent beginning in 1959 to the twilight years of the revolution that ended in 1994.”

Patrick Harries
This study investigates the experiences of women journalists during the last phase of Namibia’s liberation struggle against South African rule. Black or white, women journalists in Namibia made significant contributions to the liberation cause — including the founding of a high-profiled newspaper — whilst others worked for media sympathetic to the apartheid government. Maria Mboono Nghidinwa pays close attention to the gendered power relationships in the newsrooms of newspapers and radio stations at the time. She looks at the intense political intimidations which targeted women and, in particular, the constraints experienced by black women journalists.

The Etosha Region in Namibia, comprising the famous Etosha National Park and its adjacent communal and commercial farm lands, has been a contested region since the advent of colonial settlement. The centenary of the Etosha Park in 2007 provides an opportune moment for critical reflection on its history, a much-needed appraisal achieved by this book through its multiple perspectives. At the centre of this book are the Hai||om San and their long history of dispossession and discrimination.

“Dieckmann has made an impressive contribution to Namibian ethnography and history. The book [...] will form a cornerstone for further writing and discussion of Hai||om circumstances, identity and history.”

Nigel Crawhall
The book series Lives, Legacies, Legends (LLL) presents personal narratives and written histories related to life in southern Africa. The majority of titles involve biographies from southern Africa, but others focus on the topic of “Swiss in Africa.”
Sonja Speeter-Blaudszun
Die Linie
Ethnografisches Feldtagebuch einer Namibia-Forschung im Jahr 1996

Mary Elizabeth Barber (1818–1899) has been perceived as “the most advanced woman of her time,” yet her legacy has attracted relatively little attention. She was the first woman ornithologist in South Africa, one of the first who propagated Darwin’s theory of evolution, an early archaeologist, keen botanist and interested lepidopterist. In her scientific writing, she propagated a new gender order, positioned herself as a feminist avant la lettre without relying on difference models, and at the same time made use of genuinely racist argumentation. This is the first publication of her edited scientific correspondence.
“My family did the unthinkable: after getting away with ‘playing white’ for some years, we went one step further and ‘jumped the colour line.’ By various obscure and not well-documented processes, we changed our ‘racial classification’ from ‘coloured’ — as defined by the apartheid policy of the day — to that of ‘white’.”

With these words the fascinating story of Ulla Dentlinger’s life history begins. Growing up in poor, rural Apartheid-Namibia in the early 1950s, Ulla Dentlinger soon learns that her parents are not prone to reminisce about their family’s past. The most mundane information about their background is guarded much like a state secret. As a child, she begins to panic at being asked the question so normal to others: Where are you from?

A child of a Jewish family fleeing Nazi-Germany and settling in apartheid South Africa in the 1930s, Ruth Weiss starts her journalistic career in Johannesburg of the 1950s. Peasants and national leaders in southern Africa — Weiss met them all, travelling through Africa at a time when it was neither usual for a woman to do so, nor to report for economic media as she did. Her writing gained her the friendship of diverse and interesting people. Her life-long quest for tolerance and understanding of different cultures shines through the many personalized stories which her astute eye and pen reveals in this book.
Gertrud Stiehle
Erika Sutter: Seen with Other Eyes
Memories of a Swiss Eye Doctor in Rural South Africa

Foreword by Mamphela Ramphele
Introduction and one chapter by Frances Lund

Lives Legacies Legends 10, 2014
124p., illustrations, map
CHF 25.00 Print | CHF 15.00 PDF
ISBN 978-3-905758-33-7
ISSN 1660-9638
eISBN 978-3-905758-47-4
eISSN 2297-461X

The Swiss ophthalmologist Erika Sutter was born in Basel in 1917. Together with her African colleague and friend, Selina Ma-phorogo, she founded the Care Groups, village self-help groups working for better health in their communities. The movement is still active after more than 30 years, and now has around 2,000 members, mostly women, in over 200 villages. For the creation of this biography, Erika Sutter spent many hours with the author, telling the story of her long life — vividly, with a sharp eye for social issues and dry wit.

“This is an excellent read for health professionals [and] a lesson on how ordinary people can do amazing things with perseverance and commitment to serving others.” Kevin Naidoo

Dag Henrichsen (Hg.)
Hans Schinz
Bruchstücke
Forschungsreisen in Deutsch-Südwestafrika

Lives Legacies Legends 9, 2012
188p., illustrations, maps, index
CHF 25.00 Print | CHF 15.00 PDF
ISBN 978-3-905758-32-0
ISSN 1660-9638
eISBN 978-3-905758-48-1
eISSN 2297-461X

Als erster Wissenschaftler bereiste der Zürcher Botaniker Hans Schinz von 1884 bis 1886 die lediglich auf dem Papier bestehende Kolonie Deutsch-Südwestafrika von Süden nach Norden, von Osten nach Westen. Mit scharfem Blick, spitzer Feder und imperialem Habitus schildert er seiner Mutter, seinem Bruder und Kollegen in Zürich und Berlin seine Eindrücke.
Windhoek in the early 1960s: the 34-year-old politician Clemens Kapuuo knocks at the door of the senior advocate Israel Goldblatt to solicit advice regarding the myriad of difficulties encountered by Africans daily under the apartheid regime. Israel Goldblatt’s notes on these meetings were discovered after his death and form the core of this book. They are complemented by additional biographical information about his interlocutors, and annotations that place his notes in their historical and political context.
The Swiss salesman, Hans Buser, experienced at close quarters the political, social and economic ups and downs of a young Ghana in the period immediately following independence. His stories and reminiscences of those turbulent years between 1956 and 1965 are characterized by sharp observation, technical know-how, insight and humour. Together they create a book that conveys a personal but also historically informative account of one man’s experiences of West Africa.
Kaxumba kaNdola, alias Eliaser Tuhadeleni, a political activist and founding member of SWAPO, spoke up for the rights of his people. In this book, Ellen Namhila takes us to northern Namibia during the apartheid era and follows Eliaser Tuhadeleni, who, as a leader of the early nationalist movement, was persecuted by the South African Government and eventually sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island.

“For those who wish to understand the political dynamics of the liberation struggle from the point of view of people at the grassroots, and the mass mobilisation of the people to support and join the struggle for liberation, I urge you to read this book.”

Andimba Toivo yaToivo
Dr. h.c. Carl Schlettwein (1925–2005), founder of the Basler Afrika Bibliographien, played an important role in the development of African Studies in Basel. The annual Carl Schlettwein Lecture, held by internationally recognised researchers at the Centre for African Studies Basel’s invitation, is a contribution in memory and honour of the generous and far-sighted patron. Since 2016, the BAB Publishing House publishes each presentation.
Like a living being, the generator ingests and expels. At one end of a generator, petrol pours in. At the other, electricity, smoke, fumes, and sound flood out. In Nigeria, generators emerged as a response to breakdowns in the electric grid but are now so broadly disseminated they have become formalized into a system of their own. Ubiquitous in all urban and rural areas, coming in all sizes, their sound, smell and presence is integral to what Nigeria is and how it functions. In this lecture, Brian Larkin examines generators as aesthetic objects, drawing on the older idea of aisthesis as a felt experience. He examines how generators shape the technologized, ambient environment of urban Nigeria — how it is one feels, hears, or smells the world one lives in — and how that environment is part of the reshaping of Nigerian urban life.
Urbanization in Africa also means rapid technological change. At the turn of the 21st century, mobile telephony appeared in urban Africa. Ten years later, it covered large parts of rural Africa and — thanks to the smartphone — became the main access to the internet. This development is part of technological transformations in digitalization that are supposed to bridge the urban and the rural and will make their borders blurred. They do so through the creation of economic opportunities, the flow of information and by influencing people’s definition of self, belonging and citizenship.

Civil society is one of several Western political and social concepts that have not traveled successfully to Africa. Revived in response to the search for democracy in Eastern Europe during the late Soviet era, Western donors promoted and funded new civil society organizations in subsaharan Africa, regarding them as an essential grounding for African democratization. Most of these new civil society organizations had little in common with African associational activity. One candidate worth serious investigation is the Buganda Kingdom Government. This organization violates most distinctions central to Western notions of civil society. Yet it continues to behave like a civil society organization. Its political and conceptual collisions offer guidance toward a useful notion of African civil society and understanding Ugandan politics.
In many instances, the colonial state has left a strong imprint on the postcolonial archive. In the National Archives of Namibia (NAN), for instance, it is difficult to locate pre-independence person-related records of the Black majority, while the same type of records of their light-skinned compatriots are easily accessible. This lecture discusses a substantial corpus of about 11,000 so-called “native estates,” which previously was not accessible through finding aids. Furthermore, a substantial amount of estate files of migrants from other African countries were discovered. A more holistic view of the impact of labour migration might be achieved by digitising and linking such records across the boundaries.

The most extensive urban demographic transitions ahead will take place in Africa and Asia. These transitions occur in regions where the majority of inhabitants remain trapped in vulnerable employment, which limits the capacities to plan, save, invest, and afford critical amenities, as well as the horizons of what is considered possible. Yet, the aspirations for mobility, security, consumption, and attainment are enormous. How can different rationalities and practices of everyday sociality be more effectively connected to the prevailing concepts informing formal political and policymaking projects? How can incommensurable facets of urban life be folded into each other as a matter of an enlarged political practice?
MONOGRAPHS
Namibian beer is celebrated as an inextricable part of Namibian nationalism, both within domestic borders and across global markets. But for decades on end, the same brew was not available to the black population as a consequence of colonial politics. This book aims to explain how a European style beer has been transformed from an icon of white settlers into a symbol of the independent Namibian nation. The unusual focus on beer offers valuable insight into the role of companies in identity formation and thus highlights an understudied aspect of Namibian history, namely business–state relations.

“Not a beer drinker? No problem. Breweries, Politics and Identity looks through a warm amber-coloured lens to bring us a view not only of the beer industry but of a broad history of Namibia from the late nineteenth century to the present.”

Anne Mager
This rich volume is dedicated to the astounding South African writer and literary critic Lewis Nkosi (1936–2010). In this book, Nkosi’s celebrated one-act play *The Black Psychiatrist* is published together with its unpublished sequel *Flying Home* on the satirically fictionalized inauguration of Mandela as South African president. Critical appraisals, tributes and recollections by scholars and friends reflect on the beat of his writing and life. An ideal volume for those encountering Lewis Nkosi for the first time, and a substantial enrichment for those already devoted to his work.

“Much has happened to me that is worth narrating, worth celebrating, in spite of the regrets and sorrows of exile. My life began under Apartheid until I attained the age of 22, and then I subsequently lived in many places and societies, in Central Africa, Britain, the United States, Poland, and during a brief sojourn, in France and, finally, in Switzerland.”

Lewis Nkosi in “Memoirs of a Motherless Child”
**MONOGRAPHS**

Maano Ramutsindela, Giorgio Miescher, Melanie Boehi (eds.)
The Politics of Nature and Science in Southern Africa

2016, 343p., illustrations, maps, tables, index
CHF 30.00 Print | CHF 20.00 PDF
eISBN 978-3-905758-87-0

This book brings together recent and ongoing empirical studies to examine two relational kinds of politics, namely, the politics of nature, i.e. how nature conservation projects are sites on which power relations play out, and the politics of the scientific study of nature. These are discussed in their historical and present contexts, and at specific sites on which particular human-environment relations are forged or contested. This spatio-temporal juxtaposition is lacking in current research on political ecology while the politics of science appears marginal to critical scholarship on social nature.

Veit Arlt, Stephanie Bishop, Pascal Schmid (eds.)
Explorations in African History: Reading Patrick Harries

2015, 96p., illustrations, tables
CHF 20.00 Print | CHF 10.00 PDF
ISBN 978-3-905758-62-7
eISBN 978-3-905758-70-2

This collection of essays documents the growth of African history as a discipline at the University of Basel since 2001. It thus pays tribute to fourteen years of research and teaching by Patrick Harries at the Department of History and the Centre for African Studies Basel. The Festschrift covers a broad range of topics from mine labour to missionary endeavour and the production of knowledge, reflecting some of his core research interests. The contributions engage with Patrick Harries’ oeuvre with reference to the authors’ own scholarship or vice-versa. Some directly address his publications while others take his teaching, correspondence, remarks or intellectual life more broadly as a point of reference. They all pay tribute to a brilliant and inspiring scholar, a great teacher and a kind person.

“In ihrer informativen, gut geschriebenen und in enger Tuchfühlung mit der aktuellen Forschung erstellten Darstellung — einer der besten allgemeinen Geschichten eines afrikanischen Landes — nimmt Wallace ihre Leser mit auf eine lange Reise durch die Zeit.”

DIE ZEIT

“Dieser Band wird auf Jahre hin eine unverzichtbare Einführung in die Geschichte Namibias sein.”

Henning Melber


Jürgen Zimmerer
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2010, 138p., map, index
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Aspects and Perspectives
Essays in honour of Carl Schlettwein
Introduction by Nahas Angula
2001, 192p., ill., maps, index
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African Pastors and African History in the Nineteenth Century: C.C. Reindorf & Samuel Johnson
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ISBN 978-3-905141-72-6, CHF 29.80 Print

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ISBN 978-3-905141-68-9, CHF 20.00 Print

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Geomethodica Vol. 20
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