**AFRIKANER**

**SELF-DETERMINATION:**

**ORANIA**

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8. **A FIRST APPROACH TO AFRIKANERS**

Afrikaners are a South African ethnical group descendent from Dutch settlers first arriving in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[[1]](#footnote-1) Their first language is Afrikaner, but they also speak English and some other languages like Bantu[[2]](#footnote-2). Their religion is Calvinism.

The Afrikaner culture was promoted under the apartheid, and they held a privileged position in South Africa, alongside the other Europeans. 1994 was the first time everyone voted in South Africa; until then, only white minority voted. While negotiations to end apartheid were going on, this group had to get used to the change. They needed to peacefully relinquish privilege to adapt to the new society. [[3]](#footnote-3)

During the whole transition period, Afrikaners were holding on to their existing views. A small group of them started a process of implementing their dream of Afrikaner self-determination. This group bought a derelict in Northern Cape by the banks of the Orange River.[[4]](#footnote-4) This is the origin of the name of the town, “Orania”. This river supports the two main industries: farming and tourism.

They have been looking for self-determination and independence since the early 19th century; the word used to refer to this is “Volkstaat”[[5]](#footnote-5), which means people’s state.

Afrikaners are making efforts to secure minority rights, although this protection is supposed to be granted by the post-apartheid Constitution. Volkstaat is part of their efforts.

Employment equity legislation favours employment of black South Africans as well as Indians, white women, disabled people and Chinese people over white men[[6]](#footnote-6). Therefore, they’re trying to protect their rights and culture by the creation of a separate community.

After apartheid, there has been a growing number of Afrikaans suffering poverty and struggling for survival compared to the pre-apartheid years. They are suffering constant farm attacks and violence, and the murder rate for them is four times the one of the rest of the South African population[[7]](#footnote-7). The government’s inaction about this has been harshly critized. These facts have led to a significant emigration of white people from South Africa since 1994[[8]](#footnote-8). A large number of them have migrated to Commonwealth countries such as Canada, Australia or UK. Also, other countries like Brazil, Mexico or the United States.

Section 235 of the South African Constitution allows the right to self-determination of a community, although no national legislation for any ethnical group has been enacted for the moment. Regarding international regulation, professor C. Lloyd Brown-John explains that a geographically separate minority which are culturally and ethnically different, and have been placed in a subordinated position and are being denied from their linguistic, cultural, political or religious rights, may have the right to separation. However, Afrikaners are not a distinguished geographical congregation and their political, cultural, linguistic and religious rights have not been denied.

Afrikaners promote their culture and language with the Afrikaans Language and Cultural Association. Regarding political views, the majority of them support the Democratic Alliance, a liberal party. Others support nationalist and separatist organizations. Therefore, to keep their own identity, they have been trying to create independent systems for a long time.

1. **ORANIA**

The geographic dispersal of Afrikaners makes it difficult for them to create a Volksaat, and are separated in three minority congregations: Kleinfontein in Ganteng[[9]](#footnote-9) (established in 1992 as a cultural village, recently developed and gained limited economy); Balmoral in Mpumalanga[[10]](#footnote-10) (established in 1997 by Afrikaner businessmen) and Orania Northern Cape, focusing on the latter on this paper.

Orania, the biggest independent congregation, gets its name from the adjoining river, Oranje. It consists of three residential areas: “small happiness”, “Big Town” and “Orania West”[[11]](#footnote-11). The first one is the poorest one and it’s about 1.5 km away from the main town[[12]](#footnote-12). They are working on narrowing the gap on living conditions. It has its own radio station, swimming pool, nursing home and currency. Located in Northern Cape, it was considered a great opportunity to establish independence, as this area was not considered territory for any black population. Its legal basis is, as mentioned before, 235 of the Constitution, which grants self-determination to any community sharing common cultural and linguistic heritage.

Carel Boshoff, the founding father of Orania, decribes it as the town where all Afrikaners can go to escape to feel safe and protect themselves from the violence they are suffering. Despite most Afrikaans don’t move to the Volkstaat, he considers the fact that they have this option very important[[13]](#footnote-13).

Its population was 1297 in December 2015, and it’s been growing 12% every year, expecting it to reach 10000 inhabitants in 2030.

A. Institutions.

-Council.

The Doorsprad is the town office, located in the central hospital building. It consists of five members and a Chairman, who is also the Mayor[[14]](#footnote-14). The Council is elected annually, and is in charge of dealing with day-to-day issues. It is also in charge of handling matters arriving to Orania from the outside.

-Culture.

The Orania Beweging is another important institution. It’s a cultural and political movement which looks to restore freedom for the Afrikaner by creating a separate democratic Republic based on Christian values[[15]](#footnote-15). Foreigners and Afrikaners living abroad can join the movement. People supporting the cause who don’t live in Orania are called Uitwoners, and create a network of supporters all around the world. Funds donated by supporters are invested in projects in Orania[[16]](#footnote-16).

Preserving Afrikaans culture is one of the basic points of the foundation of Orania. There are some other institutions, such as the Arts Council of Orchestra and Choir or the Cultural History Museum[[17]](#footnote-17).

There is a ‘Mountain hill’ outside town where there is a collection of busts of Afrikaner leaders after apartheid. Also, a museum with items and pictures of Henrik Verwoerd, a South African psychology and philosophy scholar, editor of Afrikaans paper and Prime-minister of South Africa[[18]](#footnote-18).

One of the tourist attractions in Orania is the Koeksister monument, which celebrates the women who baked and sold the koeksister with the purpose of raising money for charity[[19]](#footnote-19). The Koeksister is a traditional South African flavored syrup or honey infused fried dough.

There is also an Irish Volunteer museum, dedicated to the Irish soldiers who fought on the Boer side in the Boer war[[20]](#footnote-20), very important war for Afrikaners.

Orania has a mascot named ‘small giant’, which appears in their currency, flag and merchandise. It’s a small boy shown rolling up his sleeves[[21]](#footnote-21).

“Volkspele”[[22]](#footnote-22) is a South African traditional dance, with its origins in Sweden. It is taught to Afrikaner pupils in High School of Boshof back in 1914.

Junkskei[[23]](#footnote-23) is a 270-year-old folk sport, also part of Afrikaner’s culture.

The Orania Karnaval is the main cultural event in this town, held since 2000[[24]](#footnote-24). It consists of exhibitions, competitions and concerts from Afrikaner artists, and traditional Afrikaner food stalls[[25]](#footnote-25).

As in many small communities, there is not much recreational activity. There is a pub, a liquor store, a shopping center with a pizza store and a movie theater, and a park with another pub and a coffee shop[[26]](#footnote-26). Young residents used to play Quad racing[[27]](#footnote-27), but not anymore due to safety reasons.

One rule of settlement in Orania which overlapped with moral concerns of many of its inhabitants was prohibition of cohabitation. This was meant to deter from pre-marital sex. Men and women who were not related or married could not live together. Some people complained that this rule was unfair since a there was a gay couple in town who lived together. Although the town can’t be said to be supportive of homosexuality, gay people can live there and do perfectly fine. It is also not uncommon for those with racist beliefs to get along well with black people. This shows that politeness prevails in people’s behavior[[28]](#footnote-28).

Church attendance has also a strong family element to it, due to its role in bringing up children and the view that family is fundamental in social and religious matters.

-Education.

There are also two schools in Orania which offer full education for children. They use different educational systems. One of them uses the system used in most European Countries, while the other one focuses on a system that makes students arrange their own study-time[[29]](#footnote-29).

-Sports.

Regarding sports, as Rugby, Cricket and golf are known to be popular amongst Afrikaners, they launched their own Rugby team in Orania, “Orania Rebelle”.

-Housing.

Two projects were executed to solve the shortage of housing for poor Afrikaner incomers suffered in Orania. The first one is The Elim Center; they carry out interviews for young Afrikaners who come to Orania looking for work. If they pass the interview, they offer them accommodation. The employment arranged in Elim is mostly low-skilled, such as building or gardening, and the workers are not very well equipped to compete in the market in South Africa. Elim is situated in Kleingeluk. This area is the former living quarters for the black service workers; it’s a community within the community. The houses and plots here are smaller and cheaper than in the main part of town, and some residents are laborers or domestic workers. However, it’s also a home for professionals and people who prefer small houses for reasons other than affordability[[30]](#footnote-30).

The other project is The Nerina[[31]](#footnote-31), a residential complex offered for single Afrikaner women or single mothers.

-Holidays.

The holidays celebrated in Orania are based on Afrikaner history, such as the Majudabag on Ferbruary 27th, commemorating the Boer victory in the First Boer War in 1881, or the Taaldag on August 14th, celebrating the Day of Afrikaner language[[32]](#footnote-32).

-Religion.

Orania is a very religious community, most of its local churches being protestant. there are six Christian Protestant denominations in town. According to a 2014 survey, the Afrikaans Protestant Church is the most important denomination. In total, 84.4% of the households are affiliated with a religion.

The “Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk” was established in 1991[[33]](#footnote-33), being the first church established in Orania[[34]](#footnote-34), with around 145 members[[35]](#footnote-35). The Dutch Reformed Church was established in 1999[[36]](#footnote-36).

Public meetings are opened with a prayer, usually by the highest-ranking male, and with a bible reading for more formal occasions. Beyond that, most people are churchgoers, but not all, and congregations take different forms, with some a few times a week, some weekly, some at irregular intervals when a minister from outside visits, and others conduct family worship at home. Whilst all adhere to the bible, there are many interpretations, differences of focus, and degrees of literalism[[37]](#footnote-37).

-Media.

Their first local community radio (Radio Club 100), had repeatedly applied for a license and were only carrying out tests when it was shut down in 2005 for being a racist-based station and broadcasting without a license. In 2008, a new Radio Station was launched (Radio Orania)[[38]](#footnote-38). Over 50 volunteers run the community station[[39]](#footnote-39). It can only be received within a few kilometers of the town. The programs cover topics such as new music, current affairs, business, quizzes, cooking, literature, history or politics. The town is built through personal connections; people take interest in each other’s businesses. Being aware of what’s happening in the town does not rely on public networks but in private circles of information[[40]](#footnote-40).

Orania also has a newsletter launched in 2005, which reports on local events and meetings of the town Council[[41]](#footnote-41).

-Environmental sustainability

The ethic among Orania leans towards sustainability. There are several houses made of straw bales clad with concrete. Some houses have solar panels or wind turbines for generating electricity, and all new houses must have solar hot water tanks installed. The town’s waste is separated into five different bins and collected for recycling[[42]](#footnote-42).

B. Administration.

Orania receives no fiscal support from any state[[43]](#footnote-43). The Helpsaam Fund and the donations from supporters, help raise money for projects. It’s part of Thembelihle municipal area, but they collect no taxes from Orania’s citizens and the municipality provides no services to them.

However, it is not governed by the Thembelihle municipality, and it’s the only town in South Africa which has its own transitional representative council in place. These were the common form of local government between 1994 and 2000. In 2000, all transitional representative councils were abolished, except for Orania’s due to some problems. This led to an agreement[[44]](#footnote-44) between Orania and the government of South Africa in which they settled the next points[[45]](#footnote-45):

* The Orania Transitional Representative Council would remain in place indefinitely, and not be replaced by the implementation of the Municipal Structure Act.
* It will remain in place with all its powers until there is an agreement between Orania’s inhabitants and the government of South Africa about Orania’s status.
* Orania will remain within the geographical borders of Thembelihle municipality, but this municipality will not provide with any services to Orania and they will have no power over them as long as the Transitional Representative Council remains active.

Therefore, Orania’s inhabitants don’t vote for Thembhelile municipality, but their own Transitional Representative Council. However, at provincial and national level Orania is integral part of the South African political system.

The town is privately owned by a company called Vluytjeskraal Aandeleblok Bpk. This company implements some guidelines for the administration of Orania: all functions are carried out in terms of the Law by private companies, a debt free basis and the annual election of an expertise board, while election of political parties is not allowed. Houses are owned in the form of shares of the company[[46]](#footnote-46).

The town council functions as a municipal administration, and provides Orania with services such as electricity, water, sanitation and maintaining roads, parks and sidewalks[[47]](#footnote-47).

Orania is very responsible with the environment. They recycle plastic, glass, paper and metal. Recycling is compulsory for every household, and they have five different trash cans for this purpose. Other examples are green architecture and imposing removable energies and all new houses (solar geysers)[[48]](#footnote-48). They also implement a bicycle sharing system.

Also, they provide Orania with other services such as tourism, emergency services, security, law and order, sports and leisure, social aid, etc.

The town has no prison or police force[[49]](#footnote-49). Minor crimes are handled internally, and Neighborhood watch patrols are carried out by volunteers[[50]](#footnote-50). Suspects from illegal activities are taken to the police station in the neighbor Hopetown[[51]](#footnote-51). However, all disputes are encouraged to be solved by mediation and arbitration methods, rather than resorting to South African Courts[[52]](#footnote-52).

C. Application process and employment.

As said, incoming residents have to go through a compulsory interview, in which they are asked about their Christian values, and can be denied access due to criminal records, etc. Once a person is accepted, he enters the community either as a shareholder or as a tenant.

Some sources report that only Afrikaners are allowed in the town, while others say that its basis is “cultural” and not racial, and any Afrikaans-speaking colored person could be admitted in the community.

The rate of unemployment is around 3%; all jobs, from management to manual labor, are occupied by Afrikaners only. Non-afrikaners are not allowed to work, except they have skills nobody else has. This happens since they need to protect their culture and language.

Selfwerksaamheid[[53]](#footnote-53) means that where possible, people should do their own tasks rather than finding another person to do menial work for them. This is part of their ideas, due to the self-determination they’re looking for. This is remarkable in South Africa, where having domestic servants and gardeners is entirely normal.

D. Economy and agriculture.

Its principal economic activity is agriculture and farming. Their most important project is The Pecan Nut (a kind of tree)[[54]](#footnote-54), which gave them an economic boost. The town is one of the largest producers of pecans. Vegetables, olives and sheep are also part of the local agricultural economy[[55]](#footnote-55).

They are provided with water by a pumping station located by the Orange River, financed and built by Orania’s residents[[56]](#footnote-56).

Most agricultural production is exported to China[[57]](#footnote-57).

More than 100 businesses

Its tourism is developing very fast, creating new facilities as the luxury river spa[[58]](#footnote-58), a hotel complex, restaurants and a tour operator, the Orania Toere. In 2010 there were more thirteen independent hospitality business operating[[59]](#footnote-59). From October 2012 to February 2013 there were more than 2000 visitors in Orania[[60]](#footnote-60).

At the moment the building boom in Orania has meant that there are several teams of builders operating in the town. This industry provides work for the architect, men with earth moving equipment, builders, plumbers, electricians, and also the planning and development people at the town council. There are also a number of people employed at the two schools, sometimes as their only job, other times to supplement or supplemented by other work[[61]](#footnote-61).

It is difficult to get by financially in Orania because it is a very small town with limited resources and market[[62]](#footnote-62).

The increasing growth of the population in Orania has led to new commercial developments and higher Immigration, but also to more class differences between individuals. The average wage is considered to be low for white South African standards. The actual distinction is between manual and professional work, where the latter is seen as privileged. In Orania it is not the case that people view manual labour as something reserved for lower class people, even if for some people manual work is still a novel activity[[63]](#footnote-63).

In 2009, 14% of the population was self-employed[[64]](#footnote-64).

Orania’s women are economically active, both for philosophical and financial reasons. In practice, almost everyone in South Africa who can afford a domestic servant has one, whether someone who stays on the property or comes once a week. By contrast, in Orania most women are responsible for the upkeep of their own households, for shopping, washing and cooking. although a woman’s first priority is to her family, she can support her family and her community through a career. In fact, her income is likely to be important to the household[[65]](#footnote-65).

In 2004, Orania launched its own monetary system, the Ora, based on discount shopping vouchers[[66]](#footnote-66). The Ora represents rands[[67]](#footnote-67). It can only be used in Orania, discouraging theft[[68]](#footnote-68). Moreover, the rand they represent are in the bank, being useless for outsiders, and therefore, making it a safety measure[[69]](#footnote-69). New notes are printed out every three years to replace the overused ones. There’s a bank called the Orania Savings and Credit Co-operative.

1. **CONCLUSION**

Orania is a community looking for self-determination. They want to protect their culture, language and traditions; it’s a place where all Afrikaners can feel like at home, and every inhabitant makes efforts for its sustainability and progress. Despite the deep racist ideology of many residents, its inhabitants try to respect others and base their behavior on politeness and respect. Orania is very environmentally friendly and frequent visitors, such as journalists or tourists, refer to it as a peaceful and enjoyable town.

However, although a survey carried out in 2010 concluded that 56% of respondents would move to a volkstaat, most Afrikaners don’t support the creation of an Afrikaner state. After the first residents who migrated to Orania in 1991, most white South Africans considered it unrealistic, with even right-wingers rejecting it for being located too far away from traditional Afrikaner states.

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