

## Colonization, Genocide and Resurgence: The Herero of Namibia 1890–1933

Jan-Bart Gewald

The destruction wrought upon Herero society in the Herero-German war is relatively well known, whereas the politics of this society prior to destruction in 1904 and the manner in which it re-established itself after 1904 are less well known. It is these apparent lacunae in the history of Herero that are the subject matter of this chapter. Essentially the chapter describes the manner in which Herero society was destroyed and rebuilt between 1890 and 1933.<sup>1</sup>

Generally research on Herero society and history has been predicated on the Herero-German war, or the perceived anthropological oddities of Herero as an ethnic unit, and comparatively little interest has been shown in the socio-political history of a people who are undoubtedly Namibia's number one tourist attraction.<sup>2</sup> This chapter seeks to go beyond these observations which see the war as the beginning and end of Herero history and it does not concentrate on the perceived anthropological oddity or uniqueness of the Herero.

---

<sup>1</sup> By and large, this chapter recapitulates the findings and arguments of Gewald, Jan-Bart 1996. *Towards Redemption: A Socio-political History of the Herero of Namibia between 1890 and 1923*. Leiden, revised and reprinted 1999 as *Herero Heroes: A Socio-political History of the Herero of Namibia between 1890 and 1923*. Oxford.

<sup>2</sup> Bridgman, J. 1981. *The Revolt of the Hereros*. Berkeley; Drechsler, Horst 1981. *"Let Us Die Fighting": The Struggle of the Herero and Nama against German Imperialism (1884–1915)*. London, and Pool, Gerhardus 1979. *Die Herero Opstand*. Capetown/Pretoria, all concentrated on the Herero-German war to the detriment of a further analysis of Herero history. The work of Bley, H. 1981. *South-West Africa Under German Rule, 1894–1914*. London, too, dealt with the war but was more concerned with an analysis of German colonial involvement in Namibia than with Herero history.

### Herero, Ethnicity and History

Recently it has become necessary to considerably revise the accepted views on central Namibian history.<sup>3</sup> These views held that the various ethnic and population groups living in Namibia in the twentieth century, had arrived in Namibia in the past as distinct entities each with its own language, race and culture.<sup>4</sup> Most notably, this view contends that the "Herero", as a single ethnic unit, sharing race, culture and language, arrived in Namibia as unitary whole in the 16th century. The contributions by Smith and Henrichsen clearly show this view to be incorrect, and work presented elsewhere by the author compliments this revisionist perspective. The work presented by Henrichsen suggests the existence of a particular pastoralist strata in the central Namibian highlands at the beginning of the 19th century. Essentially they shared a set of core ideas regarding, relating to and revolving around the ownership of cattle and a pastoralist economy.<sup>5</sup> It was in drawing upon this, as yet ethnically undefined stratum, that Herero society developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. Consequently, the "Herero" did not come wandering into Namibia from the Great Lakes region over the course of the 16th century. Thankfully, and at times frustratingly so, history and societies are more complex than mere teleological reductions would have us believe. Instead, it is apparent that Herero society developed out of people, cultures and economies already existent within Namibia prior to the arrival of Vasco de Gama, Bartholomeus Diaz and other European sailors in the 16th century.

In dealing with the second half of the nineteenth century, one of the most notable aspects of Namibian history is evidence that Herero society was much less monolithic than originally thought. Ethnic divisions were far from clear cut, and very porous. Herero society, if such can be defined, was driven by tensions and splits which extended beyond the Herero as conventionally defined. It were these splits and tensions that the incoming German colonial agents utilized to the full, and which allowed and enabled them to play off one leader against another, thereby facilitating their conquest. The nineteenth century in central Namibia was characterized by evolution and disintegration of polities and ethnicities. This process was

<sup>3</sup> Particularly the views put forward by Heinrich Vedder and perpetuated in popular histories and anthologies written thereafter.

<sup>4</sup> Budack's translation of Malan, J.S. 1995. *Peoples of Namibia*. Pretoria.

<sup>5</sup> As clear a case as any regarding that much maligned and misused concept coined by Herskovitz, the "Cattle Complex".

partially arrested and frozen with the establishment of German colonial control in Namibia.<sup>6</sup>

### The Death of Maharero Tjamuaha, and the Arrival of German Colonialism

Maharero Tjamuaha, the most powerful of the central Namibian Herero chiefs, died in Okahandja in 1890. A year in which the central Namibian Herero were involved in a series of bloody skirmishes and running battles with a tenacious band of people led by Hendrik Witbooi. However, Herero oral historians refer to Maharero's death as having taken place in the year of the camel; the year in which a camel, which formed part of the advance guard of Germany's colonial endeavor, entered Okahandja and cast its shadow across the *Okuruuo* of Maharero.<sup>7</sup> In the year preceding Maharero's death, a small contingent of German soldiers, led by Curt von François and his brother Hugo, entered Hereroland and occupied a strategic water hole which straddled and commanded control of the trade routes that led from the coast to the interior. In occupying Tsaobis, which they renamed *Wilhelmsfeste*, the small German contingent were able to effectively control the import of arms and ammunition to the interior. Thus, they were able to force the Herero, desperate as they were for arms in their conflict with the Witbooi, into a number of concessions, the principal one being the signing of "protectorate treaties", which, though they were almost immediately repudiated by the Herero, served as legal justification, in terms of

<sup>6</sup> Charles Ambler's excellent, *Kenyan Communities in the Age of Imperialism* (Yale 1988), brought to the fore that:

"In contemporary Africa, ethnic boundaries are often the site of intensely bitter and violent conflict; and to many people—Africans and outsiders alike—tribalism represents an atavistic, seemingly insurmountable obstacle to progress. Yet the history of central Kenya makes clear that in Kenya at least the roots of ethnicity are twisted and shallow." p. 157.

The findings of Gewald's work, as presented in *Herero Heroes*, indicate that the development of ethnic identities in central Namibia in the nineteenth century mirrored what happened in central Kenya at the same time. Ambler's words regarding central Kenyan communities are equally relevant to the communities of central Namibia. Along with Ambler's work, the influential work edited by Vail, Leroy 1988. *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*. London, on the development and entrenchment of ethnic identities in southern Africa greatly influenced the author's thinking.

<sup>7</sup> As Maharero was a member of the *Oruzuuo Ohorongo* (Patri-clan of the Kudu), hornless animals were taboo for him. Herero oral historians note that the shadow cast by the camel across Maharero's *Okuruuo* doomed him.

international law, for the continued presence of the German contingent and its successors in the territory.<sup>8</sup>

Though Herero hoped, and may have believed, that the treaties signed with the representatives of Imperial Germany would protect them from the trepidations of war, nothing could have been further from the truth. German protectorate troops simply stood by and watched as the forces of Hendrik Witbooi raided the cattle and settlements of the Herero.<sup>9</sup> In response to Maharero's urgent appeals, the Germans replied that:

[...] help could not now be supplied, as the troops had instructions not to get involved in 'native' affairs<sup>10</sup>.

On account of the activities of Witbooi, the majority of stock owning Herero, who had lived in central Namibia, withdrew to the Northern parts of Hereroland. Left behind in central Namibia were Maharero Tjamuaha, his closest advisors, the poor, and the Christians who were bound to the mission stations established there. Needless to say, Maharero Tjamuaha cut a pathetic and disillusioned figure as he spent the last days of his life dying of dysentery at the grave of his father Tjamuaha.<sup>11</sup>

### The Ascendance of Samuel Maharero

It was in the political vacuum that existed in Okahandja after the death of his father that Samuel Maharero asserted himself. Strictly speaking in terms of Herero inheritance Samuel Maharero was not entitled to the position which his father had occupied as chief of Okahandja. Instead, a number of Samuel's cousins, Nicodemus Kavikunua, Ass Riarua, and others, were eligible for Maharero's position, and entitled to aspects of his inheritance. However, Samuel Maharero, who as a Christian was well aware of the right of primogeniture in settling succession and inheritance disputes in Europe, was able to convince the missionaries, and subsequently the German colonial representatives of his right to his father's inheritance and position. For their part, the incoming German colonial authorities, most notably Theodor Leutwein, who would later become governor of German South West Africa, were well aware of the dubious nature of Samuel's claims, but

<sup>8</sup> Gewald 1996. *Towards Redemption*, pp. 37–45.

<sup>9</sup> In writing this I am reminded of US forces in Liberia, and French forces in Ruanda.

<sup>10</sup> Von François, Hugo 1895. *Nama und Damara*. Magdeburg, p. 129.

<sup>11</sup> Gewald 1996. *Towards Redemption*, p. 47.

chose to support him in the interests of their own political agenda in the territory.

In August of 1891, in response to Samuel Maharero's letters:

With great eagerness he sought information from me, in anticipation of his crowning, as to how Kings were proclaimed with us.<sup>12</sup>

Hugo von François traveled to Okahandja to inform Samuel Maharero that the Imperial German Government recognized him as the paramount chief of the Herero.<sup>13</sup> Apart from the fact that the position of paramount chief had not existed before, German recognition did not count for much in terms of actual wealth and power. In addition, German recognition did not immediately imply German assistance.<sup>14</sup> In effect the Germans recognized Samuel Maharero as the paramount chief of a people who refused to recognize him, and of territories which were either beyond his control or under constant threat of Witbooi attack. As such, the remaining Herero chiefs and contenders were prepared to simply ignore Samuel Maharero, or to make fun of him.<sup>15</sup>

As long as the commando raids of Hendrik Witbooi threatened southern Hereroland, Samuel's position, as chief of Okahandja, was effectively that of chief of very little. It was only following the removal of the threat of Hendrik Witbooi that the chieftaincy of Okahandja, and all that pertained to it, once again became an object of contention within Herero society. In early 1893, Curt von François undertook unprecedented action. On the morning of 12 April 1893 German troops, surrounded and attacked the settlement of Hendrik Witbooi.<sup>16</sup> The massacre of Hendrik Witbooi's family and

<sup>12</sup> Von François, C. *DSWA*, p. 78.

<sup>13</sup> Von François, C. *DSWA*, p. 147. Von François, H. *Nama und Damara*, p. 144.

<sup>14</sup> This much is made clear in Hugo von François' account of a meeting with Samuel Maharero in late 1891:

"After some preliminary questions he requested the protection of the government against uncooperative chiefs, apparently so as to cover his back. He did not want to carry responsibility for all the problems in the Herero territories. Regardless of this admittance of weakness he requested our permission to improve his income through taxation. He wished to tax every trader operating in Hereroland 100 mark for water and grazing, whereas previously money had been paid to the single owners thereof. It goes without saying that this Testimonium paupertatis could not be covered by the government." Von François, H. *Nama und Damara*, p. 144.

<sup>15</sup> Missionary Irlé recounts the view of Samuel as a child.

<sup>16</sup> In the aftermath of the attack, a badly shaken Hendrik Witbooi wrote:

followers by German soldiers effectively ended the threat which Hendrik Witbooi posed to southern Hereroland. Within months of Witbooi's defeat, Samuel Maharero found himself struggling to maintain his position in Okahandja. With the threat of Witbooi attack diminished, Herero contenders to the inheritance of Maharero Tjamuaha streamed back to Okahandja and southern Hereroland, and effectively ousted Samuel Maharero.

In 1894 Herero opposition forces drove Samuel Maharero out of Okahandja. Stranded on a mountain top 20 kilometers to the South of Okahandja, Samuel appealed to the Germans to come to his aid. The newly arrived *Landeshauptmann*, Theodor Leutwein, was delighted with Samuel Maharero's request.<sup>17</sup> Well aware of the fact that, as he put it, 'in terms of Herero customs', Nicodemus Kavikunua had been the rightful heir to Maharero, Leutwein noted, "[...] it is obviously more convenient for us to deal with a politically divided [zerrissenen] Herero nation, than with a closed and unified one."<sup>18</sup> Anxious to seize the initiative, Leutwein promised Samuel Maharero that he would come to his aid: "Such a beneficial opportunity, at influencing Herero affairs, was not soon again to be

---

"[...] I knew of no war which would shoot me, therefore I was completely at peace and unsuspecting with my men, therefore the few guns we had were not carried in slings on our bodies but everything had been put away into the chests. In this condition the *Hoofman* [von François] shot us early in the morning as we still lay unsuspectingly asleep, I left with all my men, without offering them resistance, in this way the *Hoofman* captured our place, and destroyed the place in the most terrible manner, as I had never imagined from a white civilised nation, which knows the laws and conduct of war, but he robbed me, and small children, which still lay at their mother's breast, and bigger children and women and children he shot them dead, and many corpses, which he had already shot dead, he placed in the grass houses which he lit and burnt the bodies to ash. Sadly and terrifyingly the *Hoofman* did his work in disgraceful war." ELCIN, *Politische Briefe etc. 1876-1893*, Letter Hendrik Witbooi at "Hoornkrans den 18 April 1893" to kaptein H. van Wijk. [JBG's translation].

<sup>17</sup> Major Theodor Leutwein arrived in Namibia in December 1893 to take over as Landeshauptmann from von François. In 1898 he became Governor of GSWA. Prior to his appointment in Namibia he had been a lecturer at the military staff college in Freiburg. An aspect of his past that comes to the fore in his correspondence.

<sup>18</sup> BAP, RKA 2100, Leutwein in Windhoek, 17/6/94, to RKA.

expected."<sup>19</sup> In the event, German cannons and cavalry carried the day, and Samuel Maharero was re-installed as paramount chief of the Herero.<sup>20</sup>

Given that Samuel Maharero owed his position to the power of German cannons, it was only to be expected that Leutwein exacted a heavy price from Samuel Maharero. In exchange for German assistance, and continued German protection, Samuel Maharero agreed to the establishment of a German garrison in Okahandja. As Leutwein noted: "Hereby the capital of Hereroland was placed truly within the power sphere of the protectorate."<sup>21</sup> Added to this, and in keeping with his new position as chief of the Herero Samuel Maharero agreed to refund cattle taken by his opponents from traders in 1891. But most importantly Samuel Maharero committed himself to future talks on the determination of a definite southern boundary to Hereroland, and the delimitation of further land for German settlers.<sup>22</sup>

Thus it was through the astute manipulation of Herero kinship structures and missionary and German administrator ideas of succession and governance that Samuel Maharero ensured Imperial German support in his struggle against the other Herero chiefs, and recognition in the newly created position of paramount chief of all the Herero. For the time being, in exchange for land, cattle and labor, taken from his newly acquired subjects Samuel Maharero was able to purchase and rely on the support of Imperial Germany.<sup>23</sup>

### The Khauas-Khoi Mbanderu war

Between his installation as paramount chief of the Herero in 1894 and the outbreak of the Ovambanderu Khauas-Khoi war of 1896, Samuel Maharero, through the shrewd manipulation of German colonial power,

<sup>19</sup> Leutwein, Theodor 1906. *Elf Jahre Gouverneur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika*. Berlin, p. 60 [JBG's translation]. See also, NNAW, ZBU 2027, Leutwein in Windhoek, 17/6/94, to Samuel Maharero.

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed description of events in Okahandja at the time see Gewald 1996. *Towards Redemption*, pp. 61-64.

<sup>21</sup> Leutwein 1906. *Elf Jahre*, p. 61. [JBG's translation].

<sup>22</sup> BAP, RKA 2100.

<sup>23</sup> Similar alliances between incoming colonialists and African chiefs were made throughout Africa. Elsewhere in southern Africa: Bonner, P. 1983. *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires: The Evolution and Dissolution of the Nineteenth-century Swazi State*. Cambridge, and Delius, P. 1983. *The Land Belongs to Us: The Pedi Polity, the Boers and the British in the Nineteenth Century Transvaal*. Braamfontein, have detailed the development and ultimate dissolution of similar alliances.

consolidated and extended his power. In the symbiotic relationship that developed between Samuel Maharero and Theodor Leutwein, Samuel Maharero used, and came to rely on, Leutwein's power to extend his own power. Similarly Major Leutwein was dependent on Samuel Maharero to extend his own power and to add an air of legitimacy to his colonization. One by one Herero chieftains opposed to Samuel Maharero were forced to submit to him in the face of German firepower. In exchange for the services rendered by the Germans, Samuel Maharero signed treaties pertaining to the rights and properties of people who had never before been under his jurisdiction. Land, newly acquired by Samuel, was either sold off to German settlers or signed away in a series of boundary adjustments instigated by Theodor Leutwein. Through the conclusion of these treaties Herero chieftains were placed within the ambit of Samuel Maharero's and ultimately Germany's control. Furthermore the newly delineated boundaries led to the encirclement of Hereroland and the encroachment by German settlers and land companies on former Herero lands.

Between 1894 and 1896 Samuel Maharero supplied troops to delineate and enforce the newly established southern boundary of Hereroland, assisted in the expulsion of people from their ancestral lands, settled his own followers on land now officially in his control, and, in return for payment, assisted in the enforced sale of his subjects' cattle. In effect, Samuel Maharero used the territories and cattle of people who had recently become his subjects, as patronage for his supporters and as payment for his debt to the Germans. Needless to say these activities enflamed passions amongst all those who were not allied to Samuel Maharero.

The dispossession and enforced land clearances, which resulted from Samuel Maharero's alliance with the Germans, led to increased social tension and pressure on the land remaining in Herero hands.<sup>24</sup> Prime amongst those who suffered were those chiefs who had sought to oppose Samuel Maharero in the succession dispute. In 1896 events came to a head when Nikodemus Kavikunua, – the rightful heir to Maharero Tjamuaha – in alliance with the Ovambanderu of Kahimemua and the Khauas-Khoi of Lambert, initiated military action against the German garrison in Gobabis in

<sup>24</sup> Events in southern Tswanaland in the 1870s and 1880s foreshadowed what happened in Namibia. Here too people were driven off their lands, forced onto ever smaller stretches of land until eventually war and further dispossession was the result. For a detailed overview of events in southern Tswanaland see, Shillington, Kevin 1985. *The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana, 1870–1900*. Braamfontein.

eastern Hereroland. In a short and sharp war the combined forces of German *Schutztruppe* and Herero and Witbooi auxiliaries annihilated the forces led by Nikodemus Kavikunua. Indeed, the Khauas-Khoi ceased to exist as a separate political entity. In a policy of genocide all Khauas-Khoi survivors were captured and taken to Windhoek where they were placed in a concentration camp, and used as forced labor by the German colonial state.<sup>25</sup>

In a sense, the Ovambanderu Khauas-Khoi war only temporarily relieved the land pressures existent within Hereroland. As a result of the war large tracts of Herero territory were cleared for German settlement and large amounts of Herero stock captured and distributed amongst German settlers. However the war did nothing to change the fundamental process of land dispossession which was taking place in the territory. The land clearances which continued unabated following the war led to continued overcrowding in the territories allocated to the Herero. This inadvertent overcrowding was to have dire implications for Herero stock when rinderpest struck in the year following the Ovambanderu Khauas-Khoi war.

### The Rinderpest Epidemic

In 1896 the rinderpest epidemic, which had spread throughout Africa following its inadvertent introduction to the continent in the 1880s, arrived in Namibia.<sup>26</sup> It spread like wildfire. Herero herds which, on account of the land clearances and boundary enforcements, had been forced into an ever smaller range formed an easy target for the disease. Quarantining of herds had become well nigh impossible.<sup>27</sup> Within six months of its introduction to Hereroland, at least two thirds of the cattle in the territory had been killed

<sup>25</sup> NNAW, ZBU 436, D IV c.1, *Band 1–2 Feldzug gegen die Hereros und die Khauas-Hottentotten 1896*. and ZBU 2030 W. II d. 23, which contains lists of captured Khauas-Khoi.

<sup>26</sup> For an overview of the spread and impact of rinderpest through the continent and southern Africa see, Ballard, C. 1986. *The Repercussions of Rinderpest: Cattle Plague and Peasant Decline in Colonial Natal*, in: *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 19, 3 (1986); Kjekshus, H. 1977. *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History. The Case of Tanganijka, 1850–1950*. London, pp. 126–142.; Van Onselen, Charles 1972. *Reactions to Rinderpest in South Africa 1896–97*, in: *Journal of African History* XIII 3(1972), pp. 473–488.

<sup>27</sup> For an overview of the clearances following the Ovambanderu Khauas-Khoi war see BAP, RKA 1489, *Militärisches Einschreiten der Schutztruppe; 20 Juli 1896–2 Februar 1898*.

by the disease. Some communities lost 95% of their cattle.<sup>28</sup> Herero society, which had already been substantially weakened by the activities of Samuel Maharero and his German allies, was further weakened as the powers of Herero chiefs were usurped by German vaccinating and culling teams. Acting on the instructions of Doctors Kohlstock and Koch, epidemiologists who had been brought in by the German colonial administration, German led teams selected herds for slaughter and vaccination.

The colonial authorities enforced the policy of culling all cattle herds believed to have been infected by the disease.<sup>29</sup> Apart from the fact that there were instances where German soldiers and settlers acted of their own accord in killing Herero cattle, the killing of what was to all intents and purposes healthy stock had a fundamental impact on Herero society. This fundamental breakdown in what was after all a world dependant on the ownership of living cattle herds was exacerbated when young Herero men, most of whom were too young to be stock owners in their own right, were employed, and paid an ox a day, to assist in the slaughter of cattle.<sup>30</sup> Whole herds were slaughtered in a vain effort to prevent the disease from spreading.<sup>31</sup>

Following Kohlstock's arrival in Hereroland in June 1897, a systematic inoculation program was started.<sup>32</sup> To acquire the gall necessary for vaccinating purposes, every stock owner, depending on the amount of cattle possessed, had to donate one or more of his cattle. These were then purposefully infected with the disease, whereafter their gall was then used to inoculate healthy cattle against the disease. Not surprisingly the enforced donation of cattle, for inoculation purposes, was not greeted with much enthusiasm. Particularly as lack of experience and the generally chaotic manner in which cattle were inoculated resulted in wildly varying success rates. This is well illustrated by what happened to the cattle herds of missionaries Dannert and Bernsman. Of Bernsman's herd of 13, a mere 4 survived, whilst all of Dannert's herd of 20 survived.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Drechsler 1980. *Fighting*, p. 98, quoting from Irle, Jakob 1906. *Die Herero. Ein Beitrag zur Landes-, Volks- und Missionskunde*. Gütersloh, p. 301, who reported that barely 5% survived. Pool, Gerhardus 1991. *Samuel Maharero*, p. 165, has figures of 97% of cattle being killed.

<sup>29</sup> ELCIN, V. Chroniken, Omaruru 1897.

<sup>30</sup> *BRMG*, 1897, p. 323.

<sup>31</sup> *BRMG*, 1897, p. 323.

<sup>32</sup> Leutwein 1906. *Elf Jahre*, p. 126.

<sup>33</sup> ELCIN, V. Chroniken, Omaruru 1897.

Koch and Kohlstock's method of vaccination was a somewhat uncertain affair. In Otjosazu in a period of six weeks no less than 2000 cattle of the 3000 cattle vaccinated died.<sup>34</sup> In Otjimbingwe, of the 6178 cattle vaccinated with gall vaccine, 2731 cattle (43%), died. Whilst a mere 6 head of cattle, of the 1394 cattle vaccinated with a blood vaccine, died.<sup>35</sup> Rhenish missionary Eich, who was stationed at Otjonzdjupa near the Waterberg, reported that at Hamakari, cattle only started dying of the disease after having been vaccinated against it. Small wonder that Eich concluded:

The Herero have completely lost all faith in the inoculation program and refuse to allow further inoculations to be conducted.<sup>36</sup>

German colonial reports make ample mention of Herero refusing to participate in vaccination campaigns. It was a refusal to participate which was engendered in part by the unreliability of the gall and blood vaccines. Another major factor in limiting Herero participation in the vaccination campaigns was the apparently inconsistent and erratic manner by which cattle were selected for purposeful infection for the production of gall and blood vaccine which was then used elsewhere. Not surprisingly people were unwilling to donate cattle in the sure knowledge that they would be infected and die terrible deaths. Added to this was the fact that in a number of cases vaccinators, who can at best be described as having been over-zealous, confiscated cattle for the production of vaccine regardless of the size of the stock owner's herd, and then used the vaccine on the herds of totally different stock owners. Needless to say, the enforced vaccination and donation of cattle, for the purpose of vaccine production, was a policy open to abuse.<sup>37</sup>

The power of chiefs was undercut as they lost not only their means of acquiring capital, but also their means of patronage. In the aftermath of the epidemic, crop failures, diseases, droughts, and the breakdown of power structures that had existed beforehand served to destabilize Herero society

<sup>34</sup> Irle 1906. *Die Herero*, p. 301.

<sup>35</sup> BAP, RKA 6090, Dirrling in Otjimbingwe, 15/8/97, to AA. This contradicted clinical trials conducted by Koch and Kohlstock which had concluded that the gall vaccine was more effective than the blood vaccine.

<sup>36</sup> Mossolow, N. c. 1975. *Waterberg. Beitrag zur Geschichte der Missionsstation Otjonzdjupa, des Kambazembi-Stammes und des Hererolandes*. Windhoek, p. 20.

<sup>37</sup> Leading at one stage to open armed conflict. See the *Etaneno Affair*, Gewald 1996. *Towards Redemption*, pp. 144-147.

even further.<sup>38</sup> In 1898, a year after rinderpest had decimated Herero cattle herds, a particularly destructive cocktail of diseases, affecting water, milk and meat, struck down the Herero survivors.<sup>39</sup> The diseases referred to included scurvy, typhoid and a form of malaria.<sup>40</sup> It is probable that forms of anthrax, induced by eating rotten flesh, were also prevalent.<sup>41</sup> The missionary chronicles of Omaruru, one such settlement struck by typhoid, give a clear and graphic description of the terrible conditions prevalent at the time:

In the beginning of the year, typhoid broke out throughout the land, so that the year 1898 brought even more need and sorrow than the year 1897. People got sick and were dead or alive by the end of the week, primarily people between 20 and 50 years old. Some of the werften in the field died out completely, the corpses were then found unburied in the pontoks [huts]. In Omaruru itself there were days when 6-7 people died in a day. It was not possible to find people to help in burying people so children had to help in carrying their own parents to the graveyard. Elders Joel and Barnabas died and the wives of elders Asa and Ferdinand and teacher Elisa died. In the space of a few months 56 deaths had to be filled into the death-register, this was a loss of 12% of the community. Amongst the heathens, where food and living conditions are generally much worse than amongst the Christians, the percentage of deaths was much higher. Amongst those who survived the typhoid fever a serious lower body affliction developed, this apparently developed due to an imbalance in the patient caused by typhoid and which generally manifested itself in the form of intestinal abscesses.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Jeff Peires has described in great detail what can happen to a society when it is struck by such natural disasters as befell the Herero. To some extent events in central Namibia following the rinderpest appear to reflect similar conditions as to what occurred in the eastern cape following the lung-sickness epidemics of the 1850s. Peires, J. 1989. *The Dead will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-killing Movement 1856-7*. Johannesburg.

<sup>39</sup> Irle 1906. *Die Herero*, p. 302.

<sup>40</sup> Von Weber, Otto 1979. *Geschichte des Schutzgebietes Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika*. (Second edition). Windhoek, p. 76. Irle 1906. *Die Herero*, p. 301.

<sup>41</sup> For this information I wish to thank veterinary epidemiologist Dr. Klaus Depner and veterinary virologist Dr. Katie Depner, both formerly of the Namibian state veterinary services.

<sup>42</sup> ELCIN, V. Chroniken, Omaruru 1898.

The settlement of Otjimbingwe appears to have been particularly hard hit. Missionaries blamed the outbreak of the human epidemic on the disinterment of cattle carcasses, by starving people looking for bone marrow, and reported that, "90% of the people were sick, the death knells sounded all the time. In some pontoks up to 12 were dead or dying".<sup>43</sup> Approximately 10% of the settlement's total population died as a result of the disease.<sup>44</sup> Missionary Irle, who was based at Otjosazu, reported that during the course of four weeks at Otjosazu and Okatumba approximately 450 people died and in total an estimated 10.000 lives were taken during the plague of 1898.<sup>45</sup>

Elsewhere, Kevin Shillington, writing on the impact of rinderpest on the southern Tswana, noted:

Rinderpest [...] helped to accelerate that process which the natural limitations of the ecology combined with the coercive policies of colonisation had done so much to promote in the preceding decades.<sup>46</sup>

In a sense this was also the case with Herero society. Rinderpest and colonisation were processes that fed into and off one another. Due to the activities of Theodor Leutwein and Samuel Maharero, people and cattle had been pushed together onto ever smaller areas of land. Not only had this led to a heavy burden being placed on limited and scarce environmental resources, it had also facilitated the spread and impact of rinderpest when the disease struck. Added to this, Samuel Maharero and Theodor Leutwein had, prior to rinderpest, substantially weakened the position of the remaining Herero chiefs, with the rinderpest the power of these chiefs was further reduced, as they lost the means to control the loyalty of their followers. The economic devastation that rinderpest wrought upon Herero society ensured that the society became hopelessly indebted. Which in turn led to further labor export, land sales and continued dispossession.

<sup>43</sup> ELCIN, V. Chroniken, Otjimbingwe 1897.

<sup>44</sup> ELCIN, V. Chroniken Otjimbingwe 1897, 200 people died at Otjimbingwe alone. Of the Christians 72 died out of ± 800 people.

<sup>45</sup> "No house no werft was spared, whole Werften died out. Added to which the famine amongst the natives was appalling, many died due to starvation [*Entkräftung*]. Often there was nobody left to bury the dead. Our youngest daughter also died—as a result of drinking pestilant milk." Irle 1906. *Die Herero*, p. 302.

<sup>46</sup> Shillington 1985. *The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana*, p. 113.

A result of the rinderpest epidemic was that there was a major break in Herero society as it had existed before and as it came to exist in the aftermath of the disease. Rinderpest finalized the breakdown in authority of the chiefs who had already been weakened and encapsulated by the activities of Theodor Leutwein and Samuel Maharero. In the aftermath of the epidemic, as Samuel Maharero sought to recoup his losses, new Herero elites allied to Samuel Maharero emerged. Men such as Willy Cain and Kajata, who, primarily through their close contacts with German colonial officials, the sale of lands, and the export of labor, were able to overshadow and defeat older but subsequently impoverished chiefs.<sup>47</sup>

Herero were forced to seek new forms of economic subsistence. Herero commoners were forced into wage labor or indentureship, either within their own territories or in other countries. Herero chiefs took to selling large tracts of land to traders and land companies, whereby further stretches of Herero territory were opened to settler occupation and thus further Herero dispossession.

Socially rinderpest transformed Herero society. Age boundaries were broken as young uninitiated men acquired cattle, power and wealth independently of their elders. At the same time systems of patronage that had existed were either transformed or destroyed. Unable to provide cattle, chiefs sought to bind their subjects to them through the allocation of alcohol. Something that had happened before, but now with the absence of cattle this form of patronage increased. It was however a form of patronage that entailed further dependence on traders who demanded land in exchange for cash and goods. Associated with these changes, institutionalized conventional forms of looking at the world, appeared to have failed to deal with the awesome power of rinderpest. In attempting to come to terms with what had happened a substantial amount of people turned to the missionaries for religious assistance.

Following rinderpest, Herero society lost its land, people and cattle, and sunk ever further into debt. It became dependent on the good will of the colonial state for its very existence. It became dependent on the colonial state for land, in the form of reserves, food and employment; on the traders and settlers for credit and employment, and on the mission for religious guidance. By 1904, Herero society was a series of scattered groupings centered on urban centers subject to German garrisons and their associated

<sup>47</sup> In the end Willy Cain died a particularly gruesome death in mysterious circumstances at the hands of a German nobleman who had probably attempted to seduce him.

chiefs. Effectively Herero society had lost its independence and the German colonial state was victorious.

### The Herero German War

In the years after rinderpest, Samuel Maharero, and chiefs allied to sought to retain their power, prestige and influence by controlling provision and export of labor, and by the selling of land to German traders and settlers.<sup>48</sup> Frightened by the extent of Herero land sales, and convinced that this would eventually lead to strife, Rhenish missionary in conjunction with the German governor, Theodor Leutwein, sought to create reserves of inalienable Herero land. A substantial proportion of the colonial settlers, soldiers and administrators were opposed to the creation of reserves and agitated against the new legislation. In the climate of opposition to Herero reserves and the belief in settler rights to the land, war between Herero and Imperial Germany became a self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>49</sup>

The Herero-German war was not the result of a premeditated Herero insurrection against German colonial governance. Ideas of a national insurrection existed solely in German colonial minds.<sup>50</sup> Land shortage on the part of the Herero, was not a cause of the war. Indeed, Herero chiefs willingly sold land in the aftermath of the rinderpest. Instead, those opposed to the further sale of Herero land were the German governor Theodor

<sup>48</sup> The turmoil that emerged in central Namibia following the Ovambo-Khauas-Khoi war and the rinderpest was in many ways similar to the situation that emerged in Zululand following the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879, as is described by Guy, Jeff 1979. *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*. London: both instances new warlords sought to improve their positions through reserves and labor export. For Herero export of labor see Gewald, J.B. 1999. *The Revolt of the Man Called Love and the Sack of Sero: The Herero-German War and the Export of Herero Labor to the South African Rand*, in: *Journal of African History*, vol. 40, no. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Shula Marks 1970 in her *Reluctant Rebellion, the 1906-8 disturbances in South-West Africa* (Oxford), has described how in a similar series of misunderstandings and conscious deceit, as to those which led to the outbreak of the Herero-German war, the war against Bambatha became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

<sup>50</sup> Rust, Conrad 1905. *Krieg und Frieden im Hererolande: Aufzeichnungen aus dem Kriegsjahre 1904*. Berlin, p. 5. The settler Conrad Rust laid traps for his settlement in a vain endeavor to discover when war was due. He describes in detail how in Christmas 1903 he arranged a mass at which he hoped to entrap his servant betraying the impending revolt.



Leutwein and the Rhenish missionary society.<sup>51</sup> Once legislation was passed limiting the amount of Herero land available for sale, German settlers were cut off from land.<sup>52</sup>

The settlers felt cheated of their rightful prize. The Herero chiefs were quite willing to sell land. Following the rinderpest there was no land pressure, and in any case land companies didn't enforce dispossession. In 1902 settlers could expect to pay land companies between one to five Marks per hectare of land, whilst the government charged thirty pfennig to one Mark fifty, and Herero land could be bought for between fifty pfennig and one Mark.<sup>53</sup> Land companies, which had acquired land to speculate with, were loath to sell and only sold land at highly inflated prices. The settlers were therefore dependent on Herero chiefs, or on the government for the purchase of land. With Leutwein's credit regulations and reserve policy, the possibility of obtaining cheap land appeared to have been placed beyond the reach of the aspirant settlers. The jingoistic attitudes of the settlers and their sympathizers that resulted from this legislation, led to the creation of a climate wherein the outbreak of war became inevitable. Leutwein knew that his moves did little to endear him to the ever increasing settler population, of whom he noted that they:

[...] were inclined, with their inborn feeling of belonging to a superior race, to appear as members of a conquering army, even though we had conquered nothing. The majority of settlers had no knowledge of the protection treaties signed with the Herero.<sup>54</sup>

Undaunted, Leutwein attempted to continue to administer the territory.

The attitudes of the settlers were shared by the majority of the aspirant settlers who served as soldiers and officers under Leutwein. With the exception of a few officers associated with Estorff, Leutwein knew himself to be opposed in his policies by his officers united around *Hauptmann* Franke.<sup>55</sup> The reports of *Oberleutenant* Kuhn, *Premierleutenant* Volkmann

<sup>51</sup> NNAW, ZBU 2032, WII e1, Eingeborenenreservate und Lokationen 'generalia', Band 1.

<sup>52</sup> For a discussion on the introduction of this new legislation see Bley 1971. *South West Africa*, pp. 133–134.

<sup>53</sup> Schrank, Gustav 1974. *German South West Africa: Social and Economic Aspects of its History, 1884–1915*. Unpublished PhD New York University, p. 129.

<sup>54</sup> Leutwein cited in Bley 1971. *South West Africa*, pp. 139–140.

<sup>55</sup> Franke, one of the heroes of German colonial historiography, but who, as a reading of his diary indicates, thoroughly enjoyed inflicting all manner of pain on

and others made no bones about their opposition to Leutwein's policies and new legislation. Whilst on leave in Germany, Volkmann stated: "There is absolutely no reason why at the present time there should be a general regulation of the reservation question in Hereroland"<sup>56</sup>. Yet these were the very same men who were expected to enforce and negotiate the boundaries of the newly to be established reservations. A policy which they opposed and felt was at the expense of the settlers. Paul Leutwein, the son of the governor, provided some indication as to the 'gung ho' attitude existent among reservists, troops and white settlers at the time.

The company of Franke marched into Windhoek on 31 December 1903. On the same day there was a celebration in *Kasino Sylvester*. Here there were a large amount of Farmers whose farms lay in the Herero area. These were generally opposed to the ruling that White farms could no longer be enlarged at the cost of the Herero. All believed that the time had now come to change this ruling in favour of the whites. Not one thought of any danger. I can still see before me how, in a fiery speech, one of the oldest *Afrikaner* [settler], the *Hauptmann* v. François called for a general *razzia* against the Herero.<sup>57</sup>

It was in this alcohol fuelled atmosphere that men such as Okahandja's *Distriktschef* Leutenant Zürn attempted to implement and carry out the legislation passed by their supreme commander, Theodor Leutwein.

Charged with implementing a reserve policy for which he felt little sympathy, *Distriktschef* Leutenant Zürn determined the boundaries of what, it was envisaged, would become the Okahandja and Waterberg reserves.<sup>58</sup>

those unfortunate to fall within his power. In addition Franke was infused with the belief in his own alleged racial superiority, and thoroughly anti-semitic. In short, an utterly despicable man. NNAW, ACC 560, *Tagebuch Viktor Franke*.

<sup>56</sup> NNAW, ZBU 2032, WII e4, *Bericht betreffend Schaffung von Reservaten für Eingeborenen im Hererolande*, Volkmann in Berlin, 16/2/02.

<sup>57</sup> Paul Leutwein, cited in: Nuhn, Walter 1928. *Sturm über Südwest. Der Hereroaufstand von 1904. Ein düsteres Kapitel der deutschen kolonialen Vergangenheit Namibias* [Auflage von 1989]. Koblenz, p. 52.

<sup>58</sup> Zürn was not particularly happy in his place of employment, but he was anxious to make a career for himself. Indeed, at exactly the same time that he was finalizing the reserve treaties, he was also applying to the Governor for a transfer out of his position in Okahandja. Not yet thirty years of age, and after a mere two years in service, he requested that Leutwein appoint him as the replacement of *Hauptmann* Franke as temporary *Bezirksamtman* in Omaruru. BAP, RKA 2021, Zürn in Okahandja, 29/12/03, to the Governor.

The Okahandja reserve was determined against the wishes of the Okahandja councilors associated with Assa Riarua, who wished to see more land reserved.<sup>59</sup> Missionary Diehl commented that on the occasion the Herero rejected the boundaries drawn by Zürn as the territory allocated to them was: "(i) too small; (ii) located in a part of the country more or less unfamiliar to most of them; and (iii) left much to be desired in terms of grazing land"<sup>60</sup>. However, as Diehl continued:

Zürn summoned the Headmen again to bring the matter to a close. They were, however, sorely disappointed to hear that Herr Zürn was still insisting on the borders as originally defined by him. Indignant, they refused to sign on the dotted line. Herr Zürn thereupon dismissed them in what they said was a rather rude fashion, observing that he could well do without their signatures as Samuel would be prepared to sign in their place and that would be quite sufficient.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, after more than a little cajoling on the part of Zürn, the boundaries of the Okahandja reserve were decided upon. As another contemporary observer, Paul Rohrbach, noted:

A number of witnesses have stressed that during discussions with Herero councillors in the fort of Okahandja the *Distriktschef von Okahandja* [Zürn], the same official whom Samuel claimed wanted to kill him, used threats [*Drohmitte!*] to ensure their acceptance of a smaller reserve for Okahandja.<sup>62</sup>

However forceful he may have been, Zürn had at least gone through the pretence of having had discussions with the Okahandja councilors before determining the boundaries of the reserve that was to be assigned to them. In the case of the inhabitants of the Waterberg, Zürn dropped all pretence of engaging in discussion and did not even bother to consult. Instead, anxious to ensure sufficient land for future settlement *Leutenant* Zürn consciously forged land treaties.<sup>63</sup> When Herero representatives from Waterberg traveled

<sup>59</sup> BAP, PTS 2115, Leutwein in Okahandja, 2.6.04, to Kolonial Abteilung AA.

<sup>60</sup> Diehl cited in Drechsler 1980. *Fighting*, p. 116.

<sup>61</sup> Diehl cited in Drechsler 1980. *Fighting*, p. 116.

<sup>62</sup> Rohrbach, Paul 1907. *Deutsche Kolonialwirtschaft*. Berlin-Schöneberg, p. 338.

<sup>63</sup> Gewald 1996. *Towards Redemption*, p. 184. Citing, NNAW, ZBU 2032, Treaty between Zürn and Herero chiefs, September 1903, folio 98–99. Zürn placed crosses at the end of the document and then subscribed them with the text "signature of the Kaptein David in Waterberg" and so on for all the Waterberg councilors. None of the Waterberg councilors were present in Okahandja when

towards Okahandja, it was this man's troubled conscience and panic that led to the first shots of the war being fired in Okahandja in January of 1904. It is sad to say but the Herero-German war broke out as the result of settler paranoia coupled with the incompetence and panic of a German officer.<sup>64</sup>

Attempts by Samuel Maharero and Theodor Leutwein at coming to a negotiated settlement were consciously sabotaged and frustrated by German metropolitan ideas as to how the war was to be conducted. Once it became known to the settlers that Leutwein had corresponded with Samuel, it was leaked to the press.<sup>65</sup> In the jingoistic atmosphere that had developed, the settlers found themselves supported by non other than the Kaiser himself. Leutwein was instantly ordered by Berlin to desist from entering into any form of negotiation. Instead he was ordered to immediately engage in an offensive against the Herero. Leutwein's prophetic words, written in defense of his actions, were dismissed; "In colonial issues there must always be a diplomat standing next to a leader. The rebels must know that their route back is still open, one that does not always lead to death"<sup>66</sup>. Instead Leutwein was relieved of his command and replaced by the German Kaiser's own candidate, Lieutenant-General Lothar von Trotha.<sup>67</sup>

In contrast to von Trotha, Leutwein strongly believed in a negotiated end to the war. Earlier Leutwein had written:

[...] I do not concur with those fanatics who want to see the Herero destroyed altogether. Apart from the fact that a people of 60.000 or 70.000 is not so easy to annihilate, I would consider such a move a grave mistake from an economic point of view. We need the Herero as cattle breeders, though on a small scale, and especially as laborers. It will be quite sufficient if they are politically dead.<sup>68</sup>

Zürn appended their signatures to the treaty that threatened to disown them of a substantial part of their territory. Some of the councilors had enjoyed some missionary education, particularly Salatiel and David Kambazembi, and could thus write their own names. That the Herero chiefs of the Waterberg were not present when the treaties were signed, see: Pool 1991. *Samuel Maharero*, p. 186 fn. 48, and Pool 1979. *Opstand*, pp. 48–50.

<sup>64</sup> For an overview as to the causes and events leading up to the war, see Gewald 1996. *Towards Redemption*, pp. 178–191.

<sup>65</sup> Leutwein 1906. *Elf Jahre*, p. 511.

<sup>66</sup> Leutwein cited in Nuhn 1928. *Sturm*, p. 112. JBG's translation.

<sup>67</sup> See Bley 1971. *South West Africa*, pp. 158–163, for a discussion on the appointment of von Trotha.

<sup>68</sup> Leutwein cited in Drechsler 1980. *Fighting*, p. 148.

Von Trotha, for his part was of a totally different opinion. His procedure, as he put it in his own words:

My initial plan for the operation, which I always adhered to, was to encircle the masses of Hereros at Waterberg, and to annihilate these masses with a simultaneous blow, then to establish various stations to hunt down and disarm the splinter groups who escaped, later to lay hands on the captains by putting prize money on their heads and finally to sentence them to death.<sup>69</sup>

In early August, Trotha issued battle orders to his troops. On the eleventh of August the battle of Hamakari at the Waterberg took place. The Herero were defeated and fled in a south-easterly direction into the dry desert sands of the Kalahari, known to the Herero as the *Omaheke*.<sup>70</sup> Trotha's troops pursued the Herero ever deeper into the *Omaheke*. On the 16th and 26th of August Trotha issued orders which, by placing a cordon along the waterholes, cut off all escape routes to the west, south and northeast, and effectively forced the fleeing Herero to move further into the inhospitable stretches of the *Omaheke*.<sup>71</sup> In a series of follow up skirmishes, during August and September, the German troops pursued the fleeing Herero.

Pocketed by the desert and the German patrols the Herero chiefs and their followers congregated along the Eiseb river. Around the first of October 1904, General Lothar von Trotha, who was actively taking part in the pursuit, and his retinue had reached the waterhole *Osombo-Windimbe*. During the afternoon of the following day, Sunday 2 October 1904, after the holding of a field service, General von Trotha, addressed his officers.<sup>72</sup> In his address Trotha declared that the war against the Herero would be continued in all earnestness, and read out the following proclamation:

I the great General of the German troops send this letter to the Herero people.

The Herero are no longer German subjects. They have murdered and stolen, they have cut off the ears, noses and other bodyparts of wounded soldiers, now out of cowardice they no longer wish to fight. I say to the people anyone who delivers a

<sup>69</sup> Von Trotha's diaries cited in Pool 1991. *Samuel Maharero*, p. 251.

<sup>70</sup> Pool 1979. *Opstand*, pp. 219–240. *Omaheke* is the Otjiherero name for the sandveld area east of the Waterberg.

<sup>71</sup> Pool 1979. *Opstand*, p. 245ff.

<sup>72</sup> Rust 1905. *Krieg*, p. 384.

captain will receive 1000 Mark, whoever delivers Samuel will receive 5000 Mark. The Herero people must however leave the land. If the populace does not do this I will force them with the *Groot Rohr* [Cannon]. Within the German borders every Herero, with or without a gun, with or without cattle, will be shot. I will no longer accept women and children, I will drive them back to their people or I will let them be shot at. These are my words to the Herero people.

The great General of the mighty German Kaiser.<sup>73</sup>

At dawn the following morning, Herero prisoners, who had been sentenced to death by a field court-martial, were hung in the presence of about 30 Herero prisoners, women and children amongst them. After the hanging, Trotha's proclamation was read out to the prisoners in Otjiherero. Printed copies of the text in Otjiherero were distributed amongst the Herero prisoners. The prisoners were then turned loose and driven out into the *Omaheke*.<sup>74</sup>

Of late a number of authors have sought to deny or at least downplay the existence and implications of Trotha's proclamation, which has become known as the *Vernichtungsbefehl*.<sup>75</sup> However, Trotha's own words, in his diary and elsewhere, indicate that he knew full well what his proclamation entailed.<sup>76</sup> Major Ludwig von Estorff was one of von Trotha's junior

<sup>73</sup> NNAW, ZBU D.I.a Band 3–4, leaf 165. With thanks to Mr. W. Hillebrecht for finding it at such short notice. [JBG's translation].

<sup>74</sup> Rust 1905. *Krieg*, p. 386 and Nuhn 1928. *Sturm*, p. 282.

<sup>75</sup> Lau, Brigitte 1989. *Uncertain Certainties: The Herero-German War of 1904*, in: *Mibagus*, Nr. 2, April 1989, pp. 4–8.; Poewe, Karla 1985. *The Namibian Herero: A History of their Psychosocial Disintegration and Survival*. Lewiston; Spraul, Gunter 1988. *Der "Völkermord" an den Herero: Untersuchungen zu einer neuen Kontinuitätsthese*, in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 1988/12, pp. 713–739, and Sudholt, Gert 1975. *Die deutsche Eingeborenenpolitik in Südwestafrika. Von den Anfängen bis 1904*. Hildesheim.

<sup>76</sup> On the day that the proclamation was handed to the prisoners Trotha wrote in a letter:

"Now I have to ask myself how to end the war with the Hereros. The views of the Governor and also a few old Africa hands [*alte Afrikaner*] on the one hand, and my views on the other, differ completely. The first wanted to negotiate for some time already and regard the Herero nation as necessary labor material for the future development of the country. I believe that the nation as such should be annihilated, [...]. My intimate knowledge of many central African tribes (Bantu and others) has everywhere convinced me of the necessity that the Negro does not respect treaties but only brute force. [...] I find it most appropriate that the

officers. His own words also clearly describe what the intentions were of his commanding officer, as well as his own disgust with what he was expected to do.<sup>77</sup>

The policy of extermination was only stopped following extensive missionary lobbying in Germany. To alleviate the labor shortage that Leutwein had foreseen, the German Reichskanzler recommended that missionaries be asked to encourage the Herero to surrender and that those Herero who surrendered were "to be placed in concentration camps [*Konzentrationslagern*] in various parts of the country where, under guard, they could then be used for labor."<sup>78</sup> With the effective containment of the Herero survivors, missionaries of the Rhenish Missionary society and their assistants were sent into the *Omaheke* to lure the survivors out and into the newly established camps. Holding camps were set up in Omburo, Otjosazu, Otjihaena and later Otjozongombe.<sup>79</sup> Large numbers of Herero, starved, pursued and hunted like animals, were enticed out of the desert. The captives were placed in holding camps, from whence they were then redistributed to smaller camps all around the country.

---

nation perishes instead of infecting our soldiers and diminishing their supplies of water and food. Apart from that, mildness on my side would only be interpreted as weakness by the other side. They have to perish in the Sandveld or try to cross the Bechuanaland border." Pool 1991. *Samuel Maharero*, pp. 272–274

<sup>77</sup> "[...] I followed their spoor and found numerous wells which presented a terrifying sight. Cattle which had died of thirst lay scattered around the wells. These cattle had reached the wells but there had not been enough time to water them. The Herero fled ahead of us into the Sandveld. Again and again this terrible scene kept repeating itself. With feverish energy the men had worked at opening the wells, however the water became ever sparser, and wells ever more rare. They fled from one well to the next and lost virtually all their cattle and a large number of their people. The people shrunk into small remnants who continually fell into our hands [*unsere Gewalt kamen*], sections of the people escaped now and later through the Sandveld into English territory [present day Botswana]. It was a policy which was equally gruesome as senseless, to hammer the people so much, we could have still saved many of them and their rich herds, if we had pardoned and taken them up again, they had been punished enough. I suggested this to General von Trotha but he wanted their total extermination." Ibid., pp. 116–117, [JBG's translation].

<sup>78</sup> NNAW, ZBU 454 DIV 1.3. Band 1, Telegramm des Reichskanzlers an das Gouvernement, eingegangen am 14 Januar 1905.

<sup>79</sup> ELCIN, V. Ortschroniken, Omaruru 1905 & II. 9.1,7, Privatbrief von Missionar J. Bohm aus der Aufstandszeit 1904 ff aus Walfischbay.

Deutsch-Südwest Afrika - Wohnungen der gefangenen Hereros

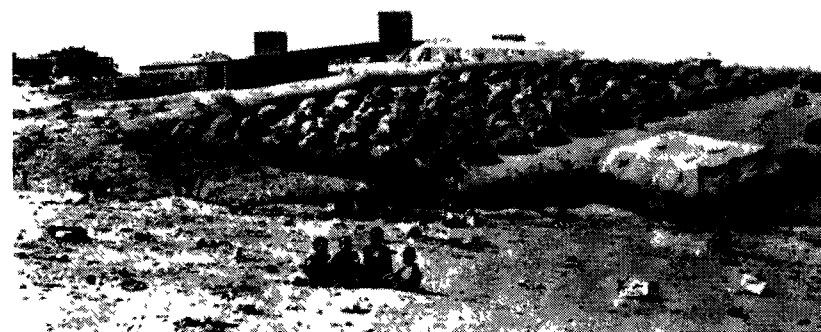


Figure 1: Herero prisoner of war camp next to the *Alte Feste* in Windhoek 1905  
source: Namibian National Archives Windhoek

Herero prisoners of war were used as labor by both military and civilian enterprises for a wide range of activities. Prisoners were put to work in civilian companies, ranging from laundries to transport contractors, breweries and shipping companies.<sup>80</sup> Various military units used their prisoners, often children, primarily for the maintenance and care of their stock. This entailed the construction of cattle kraals, the pumping of water, and the cutting of grass for fodder and herding.<sup>81</sup> The German colonial civil administration used its Herero, and later Nama prisoners of war, for the building of railway lines between Usakos and Otavi and later between Lüderitz and Keetmanshoop.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Numerous letters written by various civilian companies for POW labor are to be found in NNAW, ZBU 454, Band 1–3.

<sup>81</sup> NNAW, ZBU 454 Band 1–3. For children one look at the various photographs in the Namibian National archives will suffice to show the employment of minors by the German troops. See particularly the photographs in Acc. 109 which carry the following appellation "*Eingeborenen Kinder helfen Kraal bauen*".

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., and ELCIN II 9.1,7 Privatbrief von Missionar J. Bohm aus der Aufstandszeit 1904 ff. aus Walfischbay.

Conditions in the camps were horrendous. Apart from the texts provided by the civilian and military authorities, there are also extremely detailed reports written by the missionaries, who were actively involved in the herding of Herero into the camps. The missionary chronicles for Swakopmund provide a clear image of conditions in these camps:

When missionary Vedder arrived in Swakopmund in 1905 there were very few Herero present.<sup>83</sup> Shortly thereafter vast transports of prisoners of war arrived. They were placed behind double rows of barbed wire fencing, which surrounded all the buildings of the harbour department quarters [*Hafenamtswerft*], and housed in pathetic [*jämmerlichen*] structures constructed out of simple sacking and planks, in such a manner that in one structure 30–50 people were forced to stay without distinction as to age and sex. From early morning until late at night, on weekdays as well as on Sundays and holidays, they had to work under the clubs of raw overseers [*Knütteln roher Aufseher*], until they broke down [*zusammenbrachen*]. Added to this the food was extremely scarce: Rice without any necessary additions was not enough to support their bodies, already weakened by life in the field [as refugees] and used to the hot sun of the interior, from the cold and restless exertion of all their powers in the prison conditions of Swakopmund. Like cattle hundreds were driven to death and like cattle they were buried. This opinion may appear hard or exaggerated, lots changed and became milder during the course of the imprisonment [...] but the chronicles are not permitted to suppress that such a remorseless rawness [*rücksichtslose Roheit*], randy sensuality [*geile Sinnlichkeit*], brutish overlordship [*brutales Herrentum*] was to be found amongst the

<sup>83</sup> With the outbreak of the war all Herero living in Swakopmund, and those captured along the railway line towards Karibib, were placed onto the ship SS Eduard Bohlen, which at that stage was anchored off the coast at Swakopmund. Not really knowing what to do with the prisoners the authorities decided to offer the male prisoners to South African labor contractor A. Hewitt as labor for the mines. Hewitt gladly accepted these prisoners, but argued that, as the prisoners were already embarked and at sea, he need not have to pay customs duty nor 20 mark per laborer as demanded by the German authorities. Hewitt did not have to pay and on the 20th of January 1904 the SS Eduard Bohlen, with 282 prisoners on board, set sail for Cape Town and the mines of the Rand. NNAW, BSW 7, folio 110, Letter from the Kaiserliches Bezirksamt Swakopmund to the Kaiserliche Gouvernement Windhuk dated 12/2/04.

troops and civilians here that a full description is hardly possible.<sup>84</sup>

### The Remaining Years of German Rule

By early 1905, Germany had won the Herero-German war. Herero society, as it had existed prior to 1904, had been destroyed. The Herero, the majority of whom were confined to camps, were left propertyless, landless and leaderless, and legislation was passed to ensure the eternity of this condition. Indeed, in the aftermath of the war, when the camps were eventually abolished in 1908, Imperial Germany sought to transform the Herero, and the survivors of the Nama German war, into a single amorphous black working class.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>84</sup> ELCIN, V. Ortschroniken Swakopmund. [JBG's translation]. The author of the text, Dr. Heinrich Vedder, would later become an acclaimed national socialist, anthropologist and historian of Namibian affairs. After World War II Vedder was appointed to the South African senate as representative of the black population of Namibia. His election led in part to the majority of Herero leaving the Rhenish Mission church and establishing their own independent church.

<sup>85</sup> For the development of German legislation regarding the dispossession of all Herero property see, BAP, RKA 1220, *Einziehung von Vermögen Eingeborener im Südwestafrikanischen Schutzgebiet*. 9 Mai 1905–6 Februar 1914. Von Lindequist in Windhoek, 17/7/05, to colonial office. In this letter von Lindequist echoed von Trotha's suggestion that Herero prisoners be indelibly marked, by noting that henceforth, "The native will receive as legitimation a tin counter embossed with a number, magistrarial district and the Kaisers crown." Letter from the Reichs-Justizamt in Berlin, 31/10/05, to the colonial office and for a printed version of the legislation, which was passed into law on 26/12/05, see *Deutsches Kolonialblatt*, 1/1/06, pp. 1–3.

For copies of the legislation regarding the control of Herero see, NNAW, ZBU, 2023 Verwaltung der Eingeborenen Angelegenheiten, WII a4–a10. For published texts see, *Verordnung des Gouverneurs von Deutsch-Südwestafrika, betr. Dienst- und Arbeitsverträge mit Eingeborenen des südwestafrikanischen Schutzgebiets*, *Verordnung des Gouverneurs von Deutsch-Südwestafrika, betr. Maßregeln zur Kontrolle der Eingeborenen*, and *Verordnung des Gouverneurs von Deutsch-Südwestafrika, betr. die Paßpflicht der Eingeborenen*, all of 18/8/07, DKB, 15/12/07, pp. 1179–1184. For a detailed discussion of this legislation see, Bley 1971. *South West Africa*, pp. 170–17, and for African responses to this legislation see, Prein, P. 1994. *Guns and Top Hats: African Resistance in German South West Africa, 1907–1915*, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Volume 20, Number 1, 1994, pp. 99–121.

There had been calls for the complete elimination of the Herero as a separate ethnic identity.<sup>86</sup> An attempt was made to take from the Herero all that defined them as such, and to mix them along with the other inhabitants of Namibia into a "single coloured working-class"<sup>87</sup>. In line with these aims, a series of laws had been passed which "aimed at totally changing the African's personality by recreating their feelings, wiping out their memories, and making their legal status dependant on their political attitudes"<sup>88</sup>. Yet the Herero did survive as a separate ethnic identity.

Effectively two groups of Herero survived the Herero German war; those who had been incarcerated in the camps; and the *Bambusen*, those who had been taken into the German army as mascots, servants and auxiliaries.<sup>89</sup> During the Herero-German war, numerous Herero orphans and children were captured and adopted, initially as mascots and servants, later as soldiers, into the German army. These young men grew up and were socialized in the confines of the military. However, of the three groups, the Camp Herero were numerically the most significant.

During the course of the war and the resultant incarceration, the majority of the Camp Herero converted to Christianity. These people became Christians, not solely because of possible material improvements in their condition, but because Christianity provided them with an identity that existed beyond the confines of German incarceration. Christianity provided Herero with a means of social organization which was beyond German control, and contained within it the promise of salvation. As a result, the bulk of the Herero came to be organized around Herero mission evangelists, who were effectively the sole Herero who were permitted to travel and read and write.

With the abolition of the POW camps there was an acute shortage of labor in the territory. The extreme shortage of labor facilitated the movement of Herero and allowed them to re-coalesce and begin to re-establish a society. The society which came to be re-established was based upon the structures found within the institution of mission Christianity. These structures came to replace and complement those that had existed in

<sup>86</sup> Bley 1971. *South West Africa*, p. 223.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Naturally there were also those who survived by fleeing across the desert to Bechuanaland.

Herero society prior to 1904, some of which had never been destroyed.<sup>90</sup> Thus by 1915, there were essentially two groups of Herero in Namibia, Christians and soldiers.

### South African Rule and Herero Lands

In 1915 South African armies invaded German South West Africa. In a short sharp campaign, the once proud and seemingly invincible *Schutztruppe* [protectorate forces] were routed and defeated. With the war, Herero believed that better times were upon them and acted accordingly. As Rhenish missionary Pardey, whose Herero evangelist deserted him for the advancing South African troops, reported:

Most Natives believed, that the golden age of *Omaere* [fermented milk] drinking had dawned, an age in which they could, as they had in the past, live in the field and on cattle posts, without being drawn into labor. [...] heathendom resurfaced [...] heathen dances once again became fashionable, even amongst the Herero who usually seldom indulged in dancing. Whole nights long one could hear the howling [*Gejohle*], it also happened that on Sundays they danced in church. My rebukes had little effect. As soon as the people saw me they walked away, only to return later to make things worse. Eventually I asked the native commissioner to take steps against the ever increasing dancing.<sup>91</sup>

As the South African forces advanced ever further into GSWA, Herero at all levels of society deserted their erstwhile employers. Farm laborers, domestic servants, church evangelists, police and army *Bambusen*, and missionary teachers, all abandoned their employers and returned to their

<sup>90</sup> The work of Delius, Peter 1989. *The Nzundza Ndebele: Indenture and the Making of Ethnic Identity, 1883-1914*, in: Bonner, P., I. Hofmeyr, D. James, and T. Lodge (eds.). *Holding their Ground: Class, Locality and Culture in 19th and 20th Century South Africa*. Johannesburg, pp. 227-258, on the Nzundza Ndebele details how following their defeat by the Transvaal Boers, the Ndebele were able to retain and re-establish their identity as Nzundza Ndebele contrary to the wishes of their victors who wished to see them reduced to an amorphous mass of labor power. The manner in which the Nzundza Ndebele were able to overcome their subjugation mirrors that of the Herero.

<sup>91</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, ELCIN, Uncatalogued document entitled, *Vierter Quartalbericht der Gemeinde Grootfontein 1914*.

former areas of residence, or found employment with the advancing South African troops.<sup>92</sup>

To all intents and purposes the incoming South African administration was faced with a *fait accompli*. Herero had reoccupied some of their former lands and had re-established forms of leadership in the urban centers of Namibia. In effect, the South African administration was forced to recognize, accept, deal and enforce legislation, with Herero who were far removed from the shackled, numbered and controlled mass of potential labor which they had appeared to be in the aftermath of the Herero-German war.<sup>93</sup>

In the aftermath of the South African invasion, Herero occupied abandoned settler farms, re-acquired cattle, and set about re-establishing their herds. As the Herero prospered, they came into increasing conflict with the settlers. The new South African administration passed legislation, which was continually mediated by the conflict that existed between liberal and settler tendencies within the South African administration. It was within the ever changing parameters of this conflict that the Herero came to re-establish themselves, largely beyond the bounds of settler control. That is, the Herero were able to make use of the leeway provided by this conflict to re-establish Herero society. One of the unintentional outcomes of this conflict was the creation of Herero reserves.

With the establishment of grazing reserves, the administration sought to contain and control the Herero living in the vicinity of settler farms. In the event, the administration was simply overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of Herero and herds involved. Caught between attempting to appease settler interests and fulfilling Herero demands, the administration reacted with brute force against the Herero. Thus for instance in 1917, on the grounds that Herero had trespassed, police under the command of Captain Actavus Bowker burnt down the huts and gardens of Herero living on Orumbo reserve. This, coupled to the inadequacy of the reserves, led to the further radicalization and growing self awareness on the part of the Herero vis-à-vis the South African administration. In effect, the administration's actions

<sup>92</sup> The extent of Herero migration can to some extent be gleaned from the new administrations professional interest in the matter and its appointing part of its bureaucracy to deal specifically with the issue. Namibian National Archives Windhoek, NNAW ADM. 76.

<sup>93</sup> Correspondence in NNAW, ADM 43, Protectorate of South West Africa, Native Affairs.

allowed for the development of a new centralized and ever more radicalized Herero leadership associated with Hoseah Kutako.

On account of the South African invasion, the young Herero who had become German soldiers were left leaderless and without the social structure that had given them status and identity. Left in limbo these young men created a new social structure, based on that which they knew best, the German army. These newly created *Otruppe*, also known as the *Truppenspieler*, provided the young men with identity, social support, contacts and standing.<sup>94</sup>

Within Herero society new ideas and attitudes, with regard to the manner in which the world was organized, and their place within it, came to be ever more widespread.

This radicalization and opposition to colonial rule was reflected in the growth of independent churches, the development of new political groupings, such as the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and the emergence of new Herero leadership. Though UNIA was initiated in Namibia by West Indians and Africans, its organizational structures soon passed over into the hands of Herero. The millenarian and militaristic messages purveyed by UNIA in Namibia ensured that UNIA was a catalyst in bringing together the two strands of Herero society existent at the time.<sup>95</sup> The development of the *Truppenspieler*, which provided Herero youth with social support and status, the development of UNIA, which provided the catalyst and means for the reestablishment of Herero chiefly authority, the development of Herero discontent vis-à-vis the mission church, and the suppression of the Bondelswarts rebellion, all served to emphasize to the

<sup>94</sup> The development of the *Otruppe* is a fascinating aspect of Namibian history and is sure to occupy the work of future academics dealing with Namibia. Suffice it to say that in many regions of the colonized world in the 20th century people have engaged in activities that appear to mimic those of the colonizer. For interesting views on this phenomena see, Ranger, Terence 1975. *Dance and Society in Eastern Africa, 1890-1970: The Beni Ngoma*. Berkeley, Stoller, Paul 1995. *Embodying Colonial Memories: Spirit Possession, Power, and the Hauka in West Africa*. London, Taussig, Michael 1993. *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*. New York, and Worsley, Peter 1957. *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of 'Cargo Cults' in Melanesia*. London.

<sup>95</sup> Bradford, Helen 1987, in her: *A Taste of Freedom: The ICU in Rural South Africa, 1924-1930*. New Haven, has documented the impact of mass organizations on the rural communities in South Africa. That this impact was far greater than initially anticipated, mirrors the case of the UNIA in Namibia between 1920 and 1923.

Herero what their true status as subjects of the South African administration in Namibia was. These events served to educate the Herero as to their position as a colonized Black population.



Figure 2: Unknown Herero *Otruppe* member wearing German spiked helmet and uniform jacket (undated); source: Namibian National Archives Windhoek

The universalistic pan-African identity of UNIA was soon discarded for a narrower, more specific Herero identity which was first manifested, and therefore probably born, at the burial of Samuel Maharero in 1923. This event not only brought together the two strands, Christians and soldiers, but

also brought Herero in Namibia back into contact with Herero living in following the war of 1904. In effect, Herero society was re-founded i run up to Maharero's interment, when all the various splintered histc strands of Herero society came together to create that which had not ex beforehand, a single Herero identity. Effectively, Samuel Mahar funeral in August 1923, brought together, for the first time, the H royals of Botswana and Namibia, the Herero soldiers, and the H Christians, newly converted and otherwise. It not only served to l together the various strands that went to make up the Herero, but also se to emphasize to the Herero their specific identity as Herero with a spe history of having come through the hellfire of war.

Following this event Herero had begun establishing new form organization and governance, and had sought to withdraw from all form direct dealings with the colonial society. However, this did not mean Herero society had been forged into a unit. For this to happen a catalyst necessary, a catalyst which would bring the disparate groupings that begun developing on the reserves and towns of Hereroland into contact one another; the young men of the *Otruppe*, and the former royals who held office in the UNIA. The funeral of Samuel Maharero, and e surrounding the event, proved to be the catalyst for which Herero had waiting, whilst the Herero involvement in the UNIA provided organizational structures which were necessary for the establishment, fc first time in history, of Herero unity. Samuel Maharero's funeral symbolic of the restoration of patriarchy in Herero society, and it wa first presentation of Herero society as Herero believed it ought to be. I re-presentation of Herero society, there was a conscious drawing on the for inspiration.<sup>96</sup>

Samuel Maharero, was a chief who had been installed when the H were still paramount over their own lands and destiny. He died in a p of time in which the Herero had lost control over their own lands destiny. In his life Samuel Maharero carried the extremes of H existence; independence and colonial subjugation. His death forced Herero to rethink and discuss the life and times of Samuel Maharero thus provided the Herero with a link back into their own past. The peri time, more than 4 months, that it took to get him buried, provided Herero with ample time to discuss and anticipate the funeral of Sa

<sup>96</sup> Obviously this drawing on the past was but very selective. Similarly it m borne in mind that in this process the past was also to some extent red and/or moulded, to fit the present.



Maharero. The build-up that climaxed in the funeral of Samuel Maharero led the Herero to discuss and analyze the causes of their downfall.<sup>97</sup>

In the aftermath of Samuel Maharero's funeral, and in keeping with what the Herero believed their ancestors did and would have liked, Herero men and women submitted themselves to self-mutilations, rites of passage, abstentions and forms of gender specific relations which for the greater part of Herero society had ceased to exist a generation earlier.<sup>98</sup> Indeed the aim of the greater mass of the Herero between their first contact with the 'modernism' of the Cape colony in the 1840's and Samuel Maharero's funeral in 1923 had been for their whole-hearted inclusion in the 'modern' world. Much like Wilhelm Maharero could boast of a square house, in which he housed his library of calvinist religious tracts, and wore the latest in Cape fashion in the 1880's, Samuel Maharero and his followers had anxiously sought to acquire and appropriate the goods, ways and means of the 'modern' world. All of this changed with the death of Samuel Maharero. In due course Herero argued and reasoned that the cause and reason for their downfall was to be found in their deserting the ways of their forefathers. To heal and restore Herero society they had to return to the ways of their ancestors.<sup>99</sup>

In order to become what was deemed to be a true Herero, men and women took to knocking out their lower incisors and filing an inverted V in their upper incisors. Though Herero women had to relinquish political control over Herero society to men, this did not prevent them from

<sup>97</sup> VEMA, 2514b Band 2, Kuhlmann, Omaruru, 30/9/23, *Halbjahrsbericht*, 1/4/23–30/9/23. For a published overview of this build up see BRMG, 1923, pp. 109–110; Poewe, Karla 1985. *The Namibian Herero*; and Gewald 1996. *Towards Redemption*, pp. 330–337.

<sup>98</sup> VEMA, 1660 e, Band 5, Vedder in Okahandja, 1/12/49, to mission directors in Wuppertal. Describes aspects of Kukuri's life. Andreas Kukuri, the last major Herero chieftain to convert to Christianity, converted in 1903, only to be hung in 1906.

<sup>99</sup> VEMA, 1678, *Personalakten*, Kühhirt, Christian Ludwig, Band 2, Farm Missionsreise vom 1. bis 28. Oktober 1925, describes how two Herero approach his campfire on a deserted farm. One of the men declares: "I am a heathen, I must retain the holy fire of my dead father, he will open heaven's gate for me when I die, I will only have to mention my name, and I will be immediately recognized.

VEMA, 2503 a, Pardey in Grootfontein, 6/10/25, *Halbjahrsbericht* and Pardey in Grootfontein, 8/4/26, *Halbjahrsbericht*; VEMA, 2533 b, Meier in Windhoek, 13/1/26, *Konferenzbericht Hererogemeinde* and Meier in Windhoek, 12/11/27, 2. *Halbjahrsbericht*, zugleich *Konferenzbericht*.

effectively ensuring that henceforth Herero men were circumcised. From the 1840's onwards circumcision had been discouraged and finally prohibited by the mission. However, following 1923 Herero men and women, confronted with the low birth rates that characterized Herero society in the first 2 decades of the century, believed and argued that it was the uncircumcised nature of Herero men that had prevented Herero women from bearing children in a manner which Herero women had done in the past.<sup>100</sup> Herero women argued that they did not want to have intercourse with children, and thereby placed pressure on Herero men to circumcise themselves. As a consequence adult men allowed themselves to be circumcised by professional circumcisers who traveled the land peddling their trade. The impact of the event cannot be underestimated and bears truth to the tremendous changes that were taking place within Herero society at the time.<sup>101</sup>

Herero men, for their part, argued that another prime reason for their downfall was the fact that, at the urging of the missionaries, they had agreed to monogamous marriages. On account of the war and its aftermath, there was a surplus of Herero women. As long as these women were not confined within the constraints of marriage, Herero society was in danger of itself. Added to this, Herero reasoned that another reason for their low birth rate and singular lack of children was that they were monogamous, something that their ancestors had not been.<sup>102</sup>

In 1903, when Andreas Kukuri became the last major Herero chief to convert to Christianity, he extinguished his *Okuruo* or holy fire, which Herero believed was the embodiment of their forefathers, and submitted his ancestral fire sticks to the missionaries. Kukuri did not merely put out a fire,

<sup>100</sup> Herero birth rates are something that has fascinated not only the Herero. In the 1920's Steenkamp wrote a pamphlet entitled *Are the Herero committing race-suicide*; not to be outdone, Vedder wrote a number of documents dealing with the same issue and Herero forms of abortion. VEMA 2635, *Die künstliche abortio bei den Herero und Ovambo*. In the 1990's American researchers Harpending and Pennington were able to get extensive research funding to investigate the same issue.

<sup>101</sup> VEMA, 2533 b, Meier in Windhoek, 12/11/27, 2. *Halbjahrsbericht*, zugleich *Konferenzbericht*; VEMA 2640, H. Vedder, Antw. van Sendingsbestuur op vrae vanuit Suid-sinodale besprekingspunte, Sinode 1938; VEMA 2503 a, Pardey in Grootfontein, 6/10/25, *Halbjahrsbericht* and VEMA 1678, Band 2, Kühhirt, Farmmissionsreise vom 1 bis 28 Oktober 1925.

<sup>102</sup> VEMA 2503 a, Pardey in Grootfontein, 8/4/26, *Halbjahrsbericht*; Pardey in Grootfontein, *Halbjahrsbericht*, 1/7/31–31/12/31; and VEMA 2533 b, Meier in Windhoek, 12/11/27, 2. *Halbjahrsbericht*, zugleich *Konferenzbericht*.

time at their annual conferences in seeking to develop arguments with which to refute those of the Herero.<sup>108</sup>

Following the funeral of Samuel Maharero, the majority of the Herero sought to create a society in their image of the past. On the other hand, there were also other possible paths into the future which were attempted. There were, as already mentioned above, Herero women and children, as well as a few men, who sought to continue as Christian Herero associated with the mission and all that this entailed. More spectacularly, there were those Herero who were inspired by the wave of 'bekenkende' apostolic evangelism that swept southern Africa in the decades following the establishment of Union in South Africa. Here Afrikaner farmers, who found themselves on the downside of life, took to apostolic evangelism in a big way.<sup>109</sup> Afrikaner soldiers and farmers brought this form of religion with them to Namibia, where they preached to and clearly inspired members of Namibia's Herero population. This resulted in a spectacular syncretization of apostolic evangelism and elements taken from Dama and other societies. Certain Herero men refrained from cutting their hair, carried sticks mounted with cows tails, and allowed themselves to become possessed by spirits as they sought out and dispelled the evil that was so clearly manifest in their societies.<sup>110</sup>

### Land and Ideals

In the first years immediately after South Africa's occupation of Namibia, very little was done by the new administration with regard to Herero land claims. In a rather haphazard fashion Herero settlements sprung up on the lands which they had occupied prior to the Herero-German war. After 1920, a commission was appointed to look into the issue of land:

<sup>108</sup> VEMA 2533 b, Meier in Windhoek, 9/10/25, 2. *Halbjahresbericht der Herero Gemeinde*; VEMA 1644 b, *Personalakten* August Kuhlmann, contains numerous reports on Herero thought and social life; VEMA 2698, *Afrika Reise von Inspektor H. Drießler 1931*; VEMA 2501 a, Irle in Gobabis, *Halbjahrsbericht Gemeinde Gobabis April-September 1926*; VEMA 2635 b, *Vorträge und Aufsätze zu SWA Band 2*.

<sup>109</sup> In the early years after the first world war, unskilled Afrikaners were increasingly marginalized in South African society, creating what became known as the 'poor white' problem. The discontent felt by these people came to the fore in the Rand revolt of 1922, as well as the election of Herzog.

<sup>110</sup> VEMA 1644 b, Kuhlmann in Omaruru, 31/3/26, *Halbjahrsbericht*, 1/10/25-31/3/26.

[...] while pointing out the desirability of retaining for local labor requirements a sufficient native population within the vicinity of employing centres advocated the adoption of the principle of segregation.

- a. to secure the removal of native settlements from essentially European areas;
- b. to obviate the existence of "Black Islands" i.e. small isolated native reserves within white areas;
- c. Prevent the renting of land to natives commonly known as "Kaffir farming";
- d. to secure healthier and more natural living conditions for the native population;<sup>111</sup>
- e. to provide better and more efficient control of such reserves.<sup>112</sup>

In the end the Herero were allocated lands in parts of the country, in which, as Hoseah Kutako put it, "we have never lived before"<sup>113</sup>. Elsewhere Wolfgang Werner has detailed the history of land dispossession and the partially forced move of Herero into the reserves of Namibia.<sup>114</sup> Though Chief Nikanor Hoveka, in contrast to Hoseah Kutako, had convinced himself that Epukiro would be the ideal place for him and his settlers to remain, the reality of the reserve, as with the other newly established reserves, turned out to be very different.

Most of the reserves were established on lands that had only been used occasionally by the Herero in the past. Lands to which the Herero pastoralists had resorted to in times of drought, or in times of extreme rainfall. Naturally the lack of good grazing directly affected the condition of the settlers stock. In addition, due to the lack of phosphates in the grazing, cattle developed pica and took to chewing the bones of dead animals. This led to outbreaks of botulism and anthrax in the Sandveld reserves in the east of the territory. Indeed, botulism came to be known in the territory as the "sandveld-disease" or by its Afrikaans names *Lamsiekte* or *Gallamsiekte*. Whereas in the past Herero pastoralists had been able to range

<sup>111</sup> Note the underlying colonial ideas of what is considered to be natural.

<sup>112</sup> NNAW, LGO 3/1/10, folio 2.

<sup>113</sup> Poewe, K. 1985. *The Namibian Herero*, p. 321.

<sup>114</sup> Werner, Wolfgang 1993. *A Brief History of Land Dispossession in Namibia*, in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1, March 1993, pp. 135-146. Werner, Wolfgang 1989. *An Economic and Social History of the Herero of Namibia, 1915-1946*. PhD thesis, University of Cape Town.

far and wide in search of the nutrients necessary for their cattle, they were now confined to reserves which were in effect death traps for their cattle.

Herero cattle, should they stray beyond the confines of the reserve, were liable to be impounded. Bone meal could have been used to supplement phosphate deficiencies in cattle. However, Herero residing in the reserves did not have sufficient money to pay for bone meal, let alone its transport to the reserves. As superintendent Barnes in Aminuis noted in 1927:

[...] stock losses have been very heavy and if continued the many old people depending entirely on milk will have nothing at all and Govt will have to find some means of supporting them. ... bone meal (for Gallamziekte) costs about 26/- per bag for transport alone and thus cost is prohibitive for native use.<sup>115</sup>

Another issue was the lack of adequate water in the reserves. In 1926 Hoseah Kutako led a delegation to meet the then Assistant Secretary for South West Africa, Courtney Clarke. Referring to the issue of water and grazing Courtney Clarke resorted to true 'Colonial Master Speak' and stated the following:

I see the position. I understand it. The place where the water is there is no grass, or the grass is eaten off because there are too many cattle but most of the reserve has lots of grass although there is no open water. If you look at the map you will see the whole of the big reserve. The place where you tell me the grass is poor is this little place, the rest of the country is very good but no open water.

[...]you like the country where there is open water. You are a bit frightened of pipes and windmills that bring the water from the ground. You are afraid the pump will go wrong and your cattle will die before you can have it repaired. That is what you told us when we wanted you to go to Epukiro. Is not that so? There is always a difficulty somewhere; you must remember you cannot have everything.<sup>116</sup>

But this was precisely the point, the pumps and wells were insufficient, the grazing was inadequate, and Herero stock did decline following the enforced move to Aminuis.

<sup>115</sup> NNAW, NAW 28, Barnes in Aminuis 16.6.27 to NAD.

<sup>116</sup> NNAW, LGO 3/1/10, Notes of Interview of Herero delegation from Aminuis, led by Headman Hosea and introduced by Mr. Cope, February 25th, 1926, Windhoek. p. 4.

In 1933 things came to a head in the midst of the great depression Hoseah Kutako led a major delegation to meet Mr. Smit, the secretary for South West Africa. Hoseah Kutako sought to draw the government's attention to the many and varied problems with which the Herero were faced. Smit, in true colonial administrator fashion, sought to side step and outwit Kutako by claiming never to have heard of Herero complaints before. In the face of this Kutako responded by attempting to explain where and when in the past they had sought to draw attention to their problems, and when he saw that this was ineffectual he continued as follows:

[...] It seems to me that such a question never came before you, Sir, and therefore we want to start otherwise. Now why we put such a question is in connection with this:  
*We are the people that are born in this country and who are the owners of this territory [...].*<sup>117</sup>

In doing so Kutako placed his finger upon the crucial factor of the colonial debate. He indicated that at the basis of their demands for a more equitable form of administration was the very simple truth that by virtue of their birth and origin, the territory being talked about and administered by the colonial administration was their land, it was Herero land.

### Conclusion

This chapter, it is hoped, will provide a historical framework and basis for further research that is to be conducted on Herero society and history. At present it revolves around and concentrates on the activities of one man, Samuel Maharero. As such it calls for further research to be conducted on those who have been referred to in passing in this work, the other Herero chiefs, chiefdoms, councilors, evangelists, women and children.

Therefore in conclusion, the first half of this chapter dealt with the ways in which the political structures of Hereroland developed, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but could not cope with German imperialism. Indeed, even before the outbreak of the Herero-German war, Herero society was falling apart. The second half of this chapter dealt with Herero society in the aftermath of the Herero-German war, where, on the basis of German militarism and missionary endeavor, Herero society re-established itself. By 1923 and the funeral of Samuel Maharero, Herero society had redeveloped

<sup>117</sup> NNAW, LGO 3/1/10, Deputation of representatives of the Herero people interviewed on Friday, 2nd June, 1933 By the Secretary for South West Africa, folio 2.

structures which could and were used to attempt to cope with the new colonial administration which the South Africans were creating. An administration which allowed for the return of Herero to land and cattle, albeit in very specific areas and contexts.