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*Flags, funerals and fanfares:
Herero and missionary contestations of the
acceptable, 1900–1940 **

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ABSTRACT *The article describes the contested relationship that existed between Herero people and German missionaries in Namibia between 1900 and 1940. It is argued that Herero converted to mission Christianity with specific aims and intentions, which were not necessarily the same as those envisaged or intended by German missionaries. The article highlights leisure time, commemorative activities and funerals, and indicates that Herero acquired specific forms of music, dress, comportment, and behaviour from German missionaries. Once these specific forms were acquired they were often transformed and brought to the fore in ways that were considered unacceptable by the missionaries and settler society in general. The article shows that apart from race there was little difference in the intentions and activities of Herero and German settlers, both of whom sought to influence the same colonial administration. In conclusion it is argued that, in the last resort, what was of primary importance in the colonial setting of Namibia between 1900 and 1940 was the issue of race.*

On a wintry Sunday morning in 1927, a missionary working in the small settlement of Otjimbingwe in Namibia found his early-morning devotional ministrations rudely disturbed by the stridently noisy arrival of a football team from the neighbouring town of Karibib. Borne on trucks bearing flags in the 'colours of the Ethiopian freedom movement' and singing songs, the young men and their supporters began a boisterous day of competition, and ensured that the missionary had but a paltry few church attendants. As the shouts, cries, thumps and cheers wafted in from the soccer pitch, the missionary doggedly sought to continue conducting his Sunday services. Later it was with disgust that the missionary noted in his diary that it had been in particular the 'progressive youth' within the community who had participated in the day's events.¹

In reading through the missionary's texts, one cannot help but register his irritation at having been prevented from conducting his church service properly. However, what particularly galled him was that the activities and the behaviour, considered by him to be unbecoming for the Herero, had been displayed by precisely those Herero in whom he and the mission had placed their faith. That is, the missionary expected different

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¹ Vereinigte Evangelischen Missionsarchiv Wuppertal (hereafter: *VEMA*), 2536, Halbjahresbericht über die Missionsarbeit auf Otjimbingwe, November 1927.

behaviour from the flower of the nation. In the eyes of the mission, progressive youth – that is, Herero youths who had enjoyed extensive missionary education – were the envisaged future leaders of Herero society upon whom the mission hoped to build, and as such they should not be engaged in such activities. Indeed, Herero youth needed to be elevated above the brutish, which included football, and engaged in such elevated activities as reading and Bible study (Engel 1976; Henrichsen 1987: ch. 6; Sundermeier 1973).

In their opposition to Herero activities the missionaries failed to see that the Herero were participating in the modern world on their own terms, and not on the terms and conditions which the missionaries had so fervently hoped for. That is, though the missionaries and missionary societies could hope to influence the everyday life of Herero in such a manner as to conform to their ideals of what the modern world should be, in the end the Herero would seek to live their lives on their own terms and on the basis of what they considered to be modernity.²

Of necessity, and not out of love – though some of the missionaries would have sought to deny this – the Herero and the missionaries were forced into a relationship of mutual dependence. The missionaries depended on the Herero for souls, or rather the ever-elusive promise of conversions to come, which in turn justified their existence as missionaries and ensured the continued financial support of philanthropists in Europe. The Herero, for their part, depended on the missionaries for the skills, talents and opportunities which could be gained through association with the mission. However, in taking on aspects of the modern world, through the mediation of the mission, the Herero came into conflict with the missionaries, particularly in terms of their usage of particular skills, beliefs, attitudes and activities.³

Herero did not merely seek to acquire specific worldly skills from the missionaries; a number of them also took on the new creed, although they did so on their own terms and often transformed it to fit their own interpretation. Thus missionaries could be faced by Herero who, when lambasted by the missionaries for polygamy, would quote 'Go forth and multiply' or refer to the Old Testament patriarchs who had had more than one wife.⁴ There were Herero who could and did debate the finer points of Christian theology and biblical exegesis with the missionaries.⁵ However, this article is concerned with the more profane aspects of everyday life and death.

Herero turned to missionaries for specialist skills such as the learning of a language or specific musical instruments, and missionaries sought to instruct Herero as to the correct context and manner in which these skills were to be used. Indeed, missionaries sought to influence and determine all the ways in which Herero lived and died. However, in all of these cases of technical and cultural transfer Herero and missionaries found themselves with differing ideas as to what correct usage should be.

² For a series of articles dealing in part with ideas of modernity see Cooper and Stoler (1997); Crais (1998).

³ For missionary intentions and southern African perceptions of the mission see Elphick and Davenport (1997); Landau (1995).

⁴ *VEMA, Konferenzverhandlungen der Gemeindeältesten und Evangelisten im Augustineum zu Okahandja vom 7.-13. Dezember 1930.*

⁵ One such man was the missionary evangelist Nikanor Hoveka: *VEMA* 2501, Irlé, Halbjahresbericht Gemeinde Gobabis April-September 1926. For an overview of Herero-missionary relations in the first half of the twentieth century see Gewald (1999: ch. 5-7; 2000: ch. 3).

1. Herero and the mission

Following the Herero–German war of 1904–08 thousands of Herero converted to Christianity for a wide variety of reasons. Prior to the outbreak of the Herero–German war a small but very influential minority of the Herero had converted to Christianity. The real spate of conversions occurred in the immediate aftermath of the terrible defeat of the Herero in the battles of 1904.⁶ In their scramble for the souls of the surviving Herero imprisoned in the concentration camps strewn across the length and breadth of colonial Namibia, the struggle of Roman Catholic and Lutheran missionaries for the hearts and minds of the surviving Herero sank to such levels that the military administration was forced into drawing up strict sets of rules which sought to ensure equal access to the imprisoned Herero. Missionaries were granted access to the Herero on alternating weekdays and Sundays, or camps were divided into two halves and the missionaries issued with strict instructions not to poach from the captive audiences of the competing denomination.⁷ Eventually the camps were abolished and the Herero let free to choose the faiths of their own persuasion. The ending of German rule in Namibia ensured an even greater degree of freedom, and the missionaries, if they wished to keep their converts, were forced to change their relationship with the Herero from that of philanthropists preaching ‘fire and brimstone’ sermons of repentance to that of missionaries appealing to Herero to take heed of their specific creed, and offering particular skills which would ensure their continued association. That is, if one can be forgiven for using the parlance of the 1990s, the product being offered by the missionaries shifted from physical short-term relief assistance to structural skills training. Missionaries, if they wished to retain or regain the hearts and minds of their converts, were forced to offer products which the market, in this case the Herero, called for.

The missionaries, for their part, saw themselves involved in battle, not only against the hordes of the Prince of Darkness, but also against the forces of competing denominations. For the Lutheran missionaries of the Rhenish Missionary Society, battle had to be waged against the legions of the Roman Catholic Church. Engaged in a struggle for souls and competing against one another, Lutheran and Catholic missionaries sought to offer skills to the Herero in the hope that this would then bind them to their respective faiths.

⁶ For more information on the war and the subsequent mass conversion of Herero see Gewalt (1999: ch. 5–6); Krüger (1999). For an excellent overview of the development of Christianized Herero society in the nineteenth century see Henrichsen (1997: 394–413).

⁷ For conflict see Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia Archive (hereafter: *ELCIN*), Windhoek, I.1.22 Konferenz Protokoll Karibib 15.–17. Januar 1906 & Otjimbingwe 15.–26. September 1906. During the September sitting the conference even carried its struggle beyond the borders of German Southwest Africa, when referring to the Herero around lake Ngami the missionaries stressed that all should be done to prevent them ‘from falling into the hands of the Romans’. For a copy of the arrangement between the Roman Catholics and Rhenish Mission concerning access to prisoners see *ELCIN* VII.31.1. Swakopmund, 15/12/05. For interdenominational struggles continuing at stations long after the war see particularly *ELCIN* V.8, Chroniken Gobabis, and an as yet uncatalogued *ELCIN* folder entitled Jahresberichte v. H. Pardey Grootfontein 1908–1924, particularly the conference report for Grootfontein of 26/9/10. For conflict with denominations other than the Catholics see *ELCIN* I.1.29 Beilagen und Protokolle 1913–1922, which contains information on the London Missionary Society working among Herero refugees at Tsau in Betchuanaland.

2. *Dance halls, fanfares and bands*

Immediately after their arrival in the 1840s, missionaries had begun importing musical instruments and teaching Herero how to play them. Music, albeit of a very particular style and tradition, was seen by the missionaries as one of the steps towards civilization which needed to be taken by their charges. Indeed, music – including the reading of sheet music – formed an integral part of the training received by African missionary evangelists in colonial Namibia.⁸ Coplan (1985; 1994) has indicated the manner in which musical instruments, upon their introduction into southern African societies, were soon appropriated, retuned, modified and incorporated into musical traditions more to the liking of southern Africa's inhabitants. Thus, concertinas would have stops removed and valves modified to fit another musical scale, and similarly violins would be re-strung. Violins, fiddles, penny-whistles, tambourines and organs were in existence throughout southern Africa prior to the 1880s. One of Samuel Maharero's closest associates, his cousin Zemoundja Kandikirira, mightily impressed Hugo von François by his ability to read sheet music and assisting von François' wife, by turning the pages as she played *lieder* on a piano, following an afternoon tea in 1893 (von François 1895: 179, 188). The arrival of the German military in Namibia saw the introduction of military brass bands into the territory. Whether practising in barracks or parading in the settlements of Namibia in victory parades, on the Kaiser's birthday and on other such occasions, the brass band became an integral aspect of everyday life in Namibia. Missionary Bernsmann, who served in Omaruru in the 1890s, provides us with a fine example of such a parade in 1895:

At the head rode three trumpeters playing a fanfare. At the church they formed up on the left-hand side of the road, whilst the Major [Leutwein] together with the Assessor [von Lindequist] and the assistant medical officer Dr. Schöppwinkel formed up opposite to them. The procession paraded in between them to the sound of the trumpeters' raucous (*schmetternden*) fanfare. First to pass by were 60 to 70 horsemen. ... Then followed about 40 soldiers on foot ... and immediately behind them a number of Herero and Bergdamara on foot from Otjimbingwe. ... Then followed a cannon with ammunition wagons drawn by nearly a thousand oxen.⁹

Needless to say, the sight of wagons, soldiers, trumpeters and nearly a thousand oxen, left an indelible impression upon those who happened to see such parades. Herero soldiers, men who had been marching and wearing uniforms of an apparently western cut since the 1870s, now sought to acquire bugles and trumpets to accompany their parades. At the same time large numbers of young Damara and Herero men took service in the German military or were directly employed, as servants, cooks, messengers and the like by German soldiers (Henrichsen and Selmeçi 1995; Gewald 1999: 204-6). By the time the German army was defeated by South African forces in 1915, there were at least two military bands staffed by Herero and Damara soldiers.¹⁰ With the ensuing absence of the

⁸ Music played a particularly large role in mission schooling: VEMA 2648, Augustineum (Gehülfe-Seminar) in Otjimbingwe u. Okahandja 1845-1931, particularly Vedder, 25 April 1923, Bericht über die Arbeit im Augustineum in Okahandja. With regard to Christian hymns in Tswana society in neighbouring Botswana see Landau (1995: 26-9, 187f). On the role of Christian hymns as an aspect of popular culture see the references to 'music and dance' in Parsons (1998).

⁹ *Berichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft (BRMG)* 1895, p. 80, my translation. A footnote in the text stated: 'Brother Bernsmann fought in the expedition against France in 1870/71.'

¹⁰ Unfortunately, as the German *Schutztruppe* archives for Namibia disappeared in 1914, this figure is of necessity based on circumstantial evidence. In VEMA 2503, Corporal John is described as being a *Kapellmeister* (Eckenbrecher 1940: plate facing 113).

German army, people wishing to obtain instruments and a modicum of musical training were forced to rely once again on the missionaries.

Unfortunately for the Herero, the Lutheran missionaries had very specific ideas regarding what was to be done with music. Music was to be used for the greater glory of God, and not for frivolous indulgence, and certainly not for the accompaniment of dancing. Indeed, in 1843 one of the reasons why some of the very first Lutheran missionaries active in Namibia were expelled from Windhoek centred around Hugo Hahn's reaction to 'heathen' moonlight dancing. Hahn, who waded into a group of dancers wielding a whip and screaming religious texts,¹¹ entered missionary lore as the quintessential hero of missionary endeavour in Namibia. Subsequent missionaries drew strength from Hahn's activities. Kuhlmann of Omaruru, for example, wrote in 1921:

When the moon returns with its full yet so subtle light and spreads its lightly spun silver sheen over the wide African expanse, [...] then it is done with the youth; no power can hold them back and prevent them from immersing themselves in the sensual temptations of the night; they flirt, they dance into the bright morning, and as Bacchus was accompanied by Venus, so the temptation is doubly big. The results are a wrecked youth and a shaky adulthood. These orgies usually take place on Saturday.¹²

Concluding, Kuhlmann lamented that he did not have the fortitude of the missionaries of old; for then he too would have waded into the dancers with a sjambok.

In the first half of 1923 Damara and Herero men living in Omaruru approached Kuhlmann with a request for violins and musical instruction. Not surprisingly, Kuhlmann's reaction was negative, whereupon the men turned to the Roman Catholic missionary, who, though he did not play the violin, did agree to instruct them in the playing of bugles and trumpets. Commenting on the affair, Kuhlmann noted:

As a trade, I would also have been able to do it, but it would have been impossible for an evangelical missionary to develop a musical dance band, such as this one was. I would gladly, particularly as I did not see eye to eye with the pater, have transformed the Choir into a brass ensemble (*Posaunenchor*). But the people were disinclined to do so, because it would not have delivered any money. They would rather blow [the trumpet] to supplement their weak cash supply than to the honour of God.¹³

Here Kuhlmann clearly indicated where the differences of opinion lay between Herero and missionaries. Musical skills could be used to earn money in economically depressed Namibia of the 1920s. Yet the missionaries believed that even in the midst of economic misery, music should be used to proclaim the glory of God and should be kept within the confines of Christian choirs and bands. There were situations, though, in which missionaries could allow their Christian convictions to be overcome by their prejudices as German nationalists. A fine example of this is the case of Missionary Pardey, who, in

¹¹ Anti-social practices engaged in by the missionaries consisted of amongst other things, the destruction of *dagga* (marijuana) plantations which belonged to the followers of Jonker Afrikaner (marijuana was and is one of the most important cash crops grown in southern Africa), the prohibition and active prevention of 'heathen' dances and ceremonies, the washing of sacred milk gourds (ensuring that the cattle would become barren) and the refusal to extend beyond a token participation in the arms trade. Hahn (1985: pt. 1) describes destroying plantations (op. cit.: 112-13, 142-3, 145-7); 'heathen' dances (op. cit.: 131); the arms trade (op. cit.: 104) and the washing of milk gourds (op. cit.: 109). For similar responses to 'heathen' drumming and singing see Haviland (1928). I thank K. Sheldon for this reference.

¹² VEMA 2514 b Omaruru, 30.9.21, Kuhlmann, Halbjahresbericht (1 April to 30 September), my translation.

¹³ VEMA 2514 b Kuhlmann, Omaruru, 30.9.23, Halbjahresbericht, 1 April-30 September 1923, my translation. According to W. Hartmann (personal communication), the *Posaunenchor* is an aspect of Lutheran Christian tradition specific to Westphalia.

praising the superior quality of Ovambo as future mission converts, noted that when they sang they sounded as the Urgermanen of old must have sounded.¹⁴

Even so, Herero entrepreneurs and businessmen went ahead and established dance halls where small bands played music in the African locations of colonial Namibia. Though the drinking and brewing of alcohol was forbidden, Herero women were able to purchase the protection of the 'native police' in the territory, and thus they brewed and sold the illicit alcohol drunk by patrons prior to their visits to the dance halls. Added to this, the police, if not on the take, were also actively involved in the exploitation of these establishments. Indeed, in Grootfontein, where in the eyes of the mission the police section of the location had long enjoyed a reputation as a den of iniquity, the first dance hall to be officially established was established by a Herero policeman, Corporal John.¹⁵ Missionary Pardey described his views and the events surrounding the opening of the dance hall as follows:

In the location of Grootfontein a Herero has built a dance hall, where whole nights are often spent dancing, which is a great danger for our youth. I have spoken to the owner about this, I have told him how much trouble this has caused within our community, and I have asked him to close his establishment or to sell it to us. We would then transform it into a house of worship. However, it was all for nought: money has gained too much power over him.¹⁶

Within a year of the opening of his dance hall and his conversation with Missionary Pardey, Corporal John died of an undisclosed wasting disease. Writing of his death, one of the missionaries highlighted the corporal's love for music as follows:

In this period of time the death occurred of the policeman John, of whom I earlier reported that he had built a dance hall. In the last weeks he lived in the neighbouring location. As he really loved music and song, I once went to him with some school pupils and gave him a musical recital. Afterwards I discovered that at his urgent bidding all the boys and girls in the location would voluntarily gather every evening at his pondok to give him this, his last happiness.¹⁷

Corporal John, the proud owner of Grootfontein's dance hall, died with the sound of children's voices singing Christian hymns ringing in his ears, and Missionary Pardey's hopes and plans continued unhindered. Within half a year of his death, Corporal John's dance band had been transformed into an evangelical band, and his dance hall, which had been inherited by a business accomplice, seemed destined to suffer the same fate. Missionary Pardey described his success with the following words:

After great endeavour, we have finally succeeded in transforming the earlier music band into an evangelical band. As a result we now have 12 horns. ... The band has also been joined by the former band leader and present owner of the dance hall in the Damara location. Hopefully we will now be able to transform the dance hall into a prayer hall, something which has always been our goal.¹⁸

Whilst the missionaries wanted music solely for Christian purposes and the Herero wanted to make music for money, the German settlers, for their part, had yet another use

¹⁴ VEMA 1609 c Pardey to Eich 13 April 1921. This was in stark contrast to Grootfontein, where Herero drunks 'bawled out Christmas carols [*Weihnachtslieder mitgröhnten*]' (VEMA 2503 Grootfontein, 31 December 1928 Carl Schmitz, Bericht über das letzte Quartal 1928).

¹⁵ VEMA 2503 Grootfontein, 1.4.-30.9.29 and 1.1.-30.6.31, Pardey. Anxious to curb and control the activities in these establishments, the administration was finally forced to open its own beer and dance halls (Gewald 2000: 86-124).

¹⁶ VEMA 2593, Halbjahresbericht der Station Grootfontein, Januar-Juni 1931, my translation.

¹⁷ VEMA, Halbjahresbericht von Schw. Liesel Hohl, Grootfontein, Swakopmund den 31 Dezember 1931, my translation.

¹⁸ Halbjahresbericht der Station Grootfontein, Januar-Juni 1932, Pardey, my translation.

for the Herero and Damara brass bands which had been established. In the 1920s settlers of German descent in colonial Namibia became ever more vociferous and vocal in their condemnation of what they saw as a disregard for German rights in the territory. Though the settlers had representation within the legislative council of the territory far in excess of their numbers and were granted rights and privileges unheard of in the other mandated former territories of Germany, settlers continually complained that they were being discriminated against by the South African-led administration of the territory.¹⁹ This belief became particularly widespread when in 1928 the South African government relocated, settled and allocated farming land in the Gobabis district to thousands of Boers from southern Angola. Increasingly German settlers identified with what they saw as their mother country and called for the restoration of German colonial rule in the territory.

Apart from the former German soldiers, united in the *Alte Kameraden* (old comrades) and the political parties, the development of German nationalism in the territory was fuelled by organizations such as choirs, gymnastic teams, literary magazines, youth groups, carnival, cultural associations and so forth. German-language magazines, such as *Der Reiter von Südwest* or *Meinerts Monats Magazin*, carried articles and numerous photographs relating to the activities of these organizations. Thus, an edition of *Der Reiter von Südwest* carried an article based on 'The travel log (*Fahrtenbuch*) of our youngest'. The article, written in the terse style of a military communiqué, contains photographs of trucks carrying young flag-bearing German settler children dressed in uniforms based on those of the *Schutztruppe*, engaged in playing war games.²⁰ The magazines covered the visits of members of choirs to the 'glorious cities of Germany' and carried photographs of choir members proudly brandishing, rather than bearing, the banners of their choir whilst standing on the running boards of cars or raising beer mugs in Germany.²¹ Two organizations which featured particularly prominently in the Namibian German language magazines of the 1920s were the regional cultural association *Jungs Holt Fast*, an exhortation meaning something along the lines of 'Chaps, stick together', and the *Windhuker Gesangverein* (Windhoek Song Society). In effect, these organizations were little more than front organizations for the aggressive German nationalist sentiments and ideals shared by most settlers of German descent in the territory at the time.

In the late 1920s German settlers, united under the banners and pennants of *Turnverein*, *Gesangverein*, and regional associations, paraded through Namibia's towns and villages. The bodies of German soldiers who had died in any of the many wars that characterized German colonialism in the territory were exhumed and reinterred with great pomp and ceremony in graves considered to be more fitting. Wearing uniforms that were modelled on those of the German army, with oak-leaf laurels on their heads, and bearing wooden staves in lieu of rifles, members of the German community paraded and agitated for the restoration of German rule. It was with liberal lashings of turgid central European symbolism that in 1928 German settler organizations commemorated the Herero-German

¹⁹ For an overview of German nationalist aspirations in Namibia in the 1920s and 30s see Diepes (1996); Engel (1976); Schmidt-Lauber (1993); Farson (1940).

²⁰ *Der Reiter von Südwest; Deutsches Monatsheft*, herausgegeben von C. Rich. Dengler, Windhoek, S.W. Afrika. December 1927, p. 10.

²¹ *Der Reiter von Südwest*, Number 2, March 1927, contains an article and photographs covering the visit of the *Männer-Gesangverein* Windhuk to Germany in 1926.

war through an elaborate ritual at the foot of the Reiterdenkmal in Windhoek.²² During the course of the ritual, 'honorary maidens' presented the flag bearers of the various German organizations with their flags. Following the ceremony the German nationalists and 'honorary maidens' were preceded in their parade through Windhoek by a brass band, hired for the occasion; significantly, this band was composed not of Germans but solely of Herero and Damara.²³

Though German settlers and the colonial administration might ridicule the commemorations and activities of the Herero *otruppe*, which they referred to as *Truppenspieler* ('troop players'), German settlers, in seeking to advance their position, were no different from the Herero, and, indeed, in some instances were totally dependent on them for the success of their ritual displays. The 'civilized' German nationalists, who paraded through the towns and villages of what is now Namibia wearing fantasy uniforms and bearing wooden staves in lieu of rifles, were, but for the colour of their skin, indistinguishable from the 'primitive' Herero who 'persisted in playing childish games.' Both the Germans and the Herero drew their inspiration from a common 'modern' way of conducting public ritual and sought to influence one and the same colonial administration. This is not to say that the Herero and Germans could count on similar reactions from the administration. In the event, race always counted for more and became, as was so often the case in colonial society, the deciding factor.

The colonial administration, when first confronted with Herero men marching in uniforms and bearing staves instead of rifles, was wont to dismiss such activities as childish play.²⁴ In some instances administrators, when confronted with Herero requests for permission to march, suggested that the Herero indulge in sports seen as more fitting, such as football. Little did they realize that football was already intimately tied up with the various Herero *Truppen* of the territory.²⁵ Similarly, many of the missionaries failed to realize that what the Herero were displaying when they marched, wore uniforms, played instruments, or played football, were all manifestations of specific ideas relating to life in the modern world which they shared with the German settlers resident in the country. However, one missionary, Olpp, was able to extend beyond the level of mere ridicule. With insight he wrote:

There is hardly anything that the Blacks have not attempted to imitate from the Whites. They have seen something of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides with flags and uniforms, and immediately they wish to have the same in their form. They see how the Whites celebrate and have remembrance days for the battles for Okahandja, the relief of Omaruru, the massive battle of the Waterburg and so forth. Now they do the same with remembrance days for their former chiefs and leaders. Yesterday, on Sunday, there was a car here from Karibib. They came to give the last military honours, as they have seen the Whites do, to the son of a leader who lies buried here. They arrived in the short kilts of Scottish highlanders and one proudly wore a black, white and red sash. Such copying may appear childish to us; they are, however, for those who look further, proof that here a people is awakening, is

²² For an overview of the ceremony see *Der Reiter von Südwest*, Dezember 1928, 'Alte Kameraden: Gedenkfeier an den Herero-Aufstand', p. 10 and 'Ein deutsches Fest in Südwest-Afrika', pp. 12-16. The monument is situated between the Alte Feste and the Christuskirche, overlooking Windhoek, and consists of a larger-than-life statue of a German *Schutztruppe* soldier on horseback. The statue rests on a pedestal bearing the names of Germans who died in the war.

²³ *Der Reiter von Südwest*, Dezember 1928, p. 15.

²⁴ For a fine introduction to the *otruppe* see Werner (1990).

²⁵ Namibian National Archives Windhoek (hereafter: NNAW), SWAA 432 A.50/59 Native Affairs, Drilling by Native *Truppenspieler*s.

rising up from its lack of history, and is searching for the forms which it needs to ensure that it and its race will also gain recognition from the Whites.²⁶

In contrast to his contemporaries and a number of present-day observers, Olpp saw Herero action as being more than the mere aping of German activity. Though one need not agree that Herero 'sought forms with which to gain recognition [solely] from the Whites', Olpp did recognize that the use of cars, commemorations or uniforms could be, and was, used to gain recognition. They were social markers and indicators of the modern world, bestowing upon those who used them the predicate 'modern', as opposed to 'primitive'. Certainly the appropriation of such forms could be used to gain status on a par with whites, but it is doubtful if this was all that the Herero strove for.²⁷

The sight of trucks filled with *otruppe* racing along with flags and banners braced against the wind must have been impressive. Certainly the missionaries thought so, and this was precisely what the troop members were aiming at. As has been noted at the beginning of this paper, the arrival of a truckload of football players from Karibib, bearing flags in the 'colours of the Ethiopian freedom movement', was enough to disrupt a Sunday service and to score moral points off a home team.²⁸

3. Funerals

In the late nineteenth century the Herero, as pastoralists dependent on water and grazing, conceptualized their land in terms of the watering points. That is, Hereroland was bound together, as it were, by the water holes scattered across the land. In the twentieth century, when the Herero through force of circumstance ceased to be pastoralists, Herero conceptualized their land as being tied together by the many graves of Herero ancestors scattered across the landscape. Though Herero cattle had been taken and Herero lands transformed into white settler ranches, the graves constituted physical evidence of Herero occupation prior to settler occupation (Krüger and Henrichsen 1998). In the twentieth century a series of rituals developed in association with these graves, and the graves became nodal points in a web binding Hereroland.

However, it was more than the mere physical presence of the graves themselves that bound together Hereroland: it was the rituals of commemoration, and specifically the ideas expressed therein, that provided Herero with mental concepts of a single united Hereroland encompassing certain swathes of territory in southern Africa. That is, the rituals created Hereroland in the minds of the Herero commemorating the dead. This was particularly so following the segregation, on the basis of race, of the graveyards of Namibia in 1926. Though the graveyards may have been segregated, and the Herero banished to live beyond the confines of Namibia's towns, the graves of their ancestors continued to lie in the centre of towns and farms which the settlers now considered to be theirs.²⁹ Missionary Kühhirt, in bemoaning the lack of Herero congregants in his church, gave expression to the manner in which graves and associated rituals bound together and recreated Hereroland in the minds of Herero:

²⁶ *VEMA Zusammenfassender Bericht über die Missionsarbeit in Südwestafrika im Jahre 1929*. J. Olpp Swakopmund 18.12.1929, my translation.

²⁷ It is important to note that at the time the majority of whites living in central Namibia were similarly cut off from access to motor vehicles.

²⁸ *VEMA 2536, Halbjahresbericht über die Missionsarbeit auf Otjimbingwe, November 1927*.

²⁹ Even in the 1960s the settler officials believed and argued that the graves of the Herero chiefs in Okahandja should be allowed to deteriorate, as the town was now white and with the passing of time the primitive commemoration of the dead would pass away (Gewald 1999: 282-4).

Often they make big excursions (*Ausflüge*) with hired lorries. They have been at the inauguration of a gravestone of a chief in Omaruru, at the commemorative celebrations at the grave of their chief, Samuel Maharero in Okahandja, and now they were driving in fine military dress with flags on two trucks to Otjizeva, where with ceremony they would place a cross on the grave of a dead comrade.³⁰

German settlers in Namibia, much like the Herero, sought to stake a claim to the territory through the commemoration of their dead. Like the Herero *otruppe*, German men and women paraded in uniforms of their own choosing to the graves of those they considered to be their fallen heroes. As with the Herero, money was collected for the erection of imposing tombstones. But, in contrast to the Herero, German settlers could not immediately claim primordial residency in certain towns on the basis of graves in town centres.³¹ One way of overcoming this problem was through the reinterment of German soldiers, many of whom had died during the German colonial administration and who, in the mind of German settlers, had died for *Deutsch Südwestafrika*. Thus Germans reinterred their dead so as to stake and reinforce their claims to the settlements which they now considered to be theirs. Missionary Schmitz, operating in Grootfontein, a settlement associated with respective San, Ovambo, Herero and Boer occupation, reported on the reburial of German soldiers in Grootfontein in the following manner:

On 14 November a big patriotic event took place. During the Herero revolt in 1904, the three-man military detachment stationed in neighbouring Otjituuo was murdered and their remains buried shortly thereafter by a patrol. Following permission to transfer these bones to our churchyard, a number of important people, including the high and mighty of the administration, arrived and joined us at the barrow.³²

Schmitz's words clearly bring to the fore the underlying ideas of German settlers in reintering the dead, whom they claimed as theirs, in Grootfontein. It was, in Schmitz's words, a patriotic affair, in their own graveyard, with many important people including those from the higher echelons of the colonial administration. However, what is interesting about these events is the fact that a number of the rituals associated with the burial of 'cultural heroes', be they German or Herero, were conducted in an identical manner. Herero *Truppe* (soldiers) buried their heroes in a manner which had developed in Europe in the nineteenth century, a manner which was reserved for the high and mighty, and in which the Germans, too, sought to bury their dead heroes (Hartmann 1998: 125-31).

Funerals, in particular the rituals associated therewith, are institutional events subject to fashion and the current norms and values of a particular time, place and culture. German missionaries had little time for Herero funerals which they considered not to be in keeping with their Christian teachings. Missionaries sought to influence the way in which Herero dealt with all aspects of life and death. Rituals associated with the deceased are amongst the most fundamental of any society. Not surprisingly, therefore, missionaries sought to impose their ideas regarding the manner in which funerals were to be conducted. Thus, Missionary Werner flatly refused to take part in the reinterment of Samuel Maharero in 1923, on the grounds that the funeral service and everything

³⁰ VEMA, RMG 2533 c, Windhoek 1929-1945, 1.10.29-31.3.30, Halbjahresbericht, Kühhirt, Windhoek.

³¹ In attempting to stake a claim, *Meinerts Monats Magazin*, No. 3, Jahrgang 1, pp. 112-5 carried an article entitled 'Der erste Weiße in Südwest, ein Deutscher?', which suggested that the first European to visit Namibia had been a man from Nuremberg named Martin Behaim.

³² VEMA 2503, Jahresbericht über 1926, Evangelische Gemeinde Grootfontein, Schmitz, my translation.

associated with it were heathen.³³ Shortly afterwards, Missionary Kuhlmann, too, sought to influence a funeral in such a manner that it would become a worthy Christian funeral:

In this month (March 1926) Herero from Windhoek brought the body of the chiefly son of the late Otjimbingwe tribe Zeraua here, to bury him at the side of his great ancestors. It was a big wake, one such has not been seen here before. I was afraid that they would do the same as they had done at the funeral of the chief Samuel Maharero, who was buried half-heathen and half-Christian. I also learnt that in the night before the body had arrived here by train, Omaruru women had held a heathen parade in the location. When the Windhoek Herero turned to me on account of the funeral, I told them straight out that I was God's servant and that I would have nothing to do with heathenism. If the Christians here and amongst them did not have the will or the power to keep all heathenism away from the funeral, and suppress all heathenism in the location until the day of the funeral, then they did not need to come to me on Sunday afternoon when the chiefly son was to be buried. [...]

I helped the people to make it a truly dignified funeral. I instructed them as to how to organize the procession and what was necessary for the celebration. With their help I arranged the marshals and churchyard gate attendants necessary for the massive procession. In keeping with German custom I let the school children lead [the procession] and carry numerous palm fronds. So that at the end of the burial the Herero women did not begin with their heart-rending (*herzzerreisende*) and ear-deafening (*ohrenbeteubende*) wailing, whining and screaming, the still living old and truly dignified chiefly wife of the paramount of the Herero here, Manasse, would, through her example, prevent this.³⁴ She did this and was supported in this by other Christians and numerous men. In this manner we had a purely Christian funeral.³⁵

Kuhlmann's frank description of his direct involvement in the funeral for Parmenaus Zeraua is interesting for a number of reasons. Kuhlmann influenced the manner in which the funeral procession and the participants as a whole presented themselves to the outside world. He determined the physical arrangement of the funeral, ensuring that school children bearing palm fronds in accordance with German tradition walked in front and so forth. But Kuhlmann also sought to influence the manner in which people grieved, more specifically the manner in which they gave expression to their extreme emotions. In so doing he was operating from a specific template of late nineteenth-century European middle-class ideas regarding appropriate behaviour in the face of death. Kuhlmann's description of the funeral indicates that the missionaries had succeeded in at least partially transferring their ideas regarding correct behaviour to their Herero converts.

Though Kuhlmann could not have realized it at the time, his involvement in the funeral laid the basis, in part, for the establishment of annual commemorations at the graves in Omaruru; commemorations which almost immediately came to be seen as uniquely Herero in origin. Within ten years, colonial officials were writing to the mission asking for information regarding the origin of the commemorations, and by then the missionaries had completely erased their own involvement in the development of these rituals.³⁶ Instead missionaries, of their own accord, wrote to colonial officials warning them of upcoming 'traditional' Herero celebrations.³⁷

³³ Regarding the funeral of Samuel Maharero see Gewald (1999: 274-82). Similarly, missionaries refused to conduct funeral services for Herero Christians who were unable or had failed to pay their church dues.

³⁴ Kuhlmann conveniently forgot to mention that Albertine Manasse detested her husband and all of his family. Perhaps it is not surprising that she reacted in the way she did.

³⁵ VEMA 2514 b Omaruru, 31.3.26, Halbjahresbericht, 1.10.25-31.3.26, my translation.

³⁶ Magistrate Bovey wrote to Vedder in 1937 for information on the origins of the Omaruru commemoration: NNAW, LOM 3/1/5.

³⁷ NNAW, LOK 3/1/15, 2/7/2 Native Chiefs and Headmen, Heinrich Vedder to magistrate.

4. *Herero, missionaries and everyday life*

By nature, missionaries seek to influence the everyday lives of those they work amongst. However, the extent to which they wish to allow this influence to extend amongst their novices is bound within narrow parameters. Converts are to remain converts; they are to remain in a subservient position to their teachers and should not become the teachers' teachers. Missionaries may urge their converts to wear civilized clothes, but the clothes to be worn are very specific and exclude clothes considered to be inappropriate to the standing of those newly-converted. Thus men should not wear dresses, and women should not wear trousers. But quite apart from this, there are clothes which, though appropriate for a specific gender, are considered inappropriate for the newly converted. A case in point here is the issue of Herero and Damara Rhenish missionary converts wishing to wear top hats in Namibia in the 1920s. Though these hats were clearly considered appropriate for specific occasions and a specific class in settler society, they were felt to be inappropriate for the colonized and converted (Prein 1994). Should the colonized seek to act and dress in a manner considered appropriate for the colonizer, such actions are perceived as being spectacularly inappropriate: Herero men should not wear top hats, drive cars, wave banners, wear uniforms and the like. Whenever this does occur, the actions of the colonized are considered from a perspective which places and compares these alongside the activities of the colonizer. Thus we often forget that what is being done by the colonized is little different from that of the colonizer.

In looking at Herero society people seek to expose and discuss the spectacular. Yet what was being displayed by the Herero was in effect no different from what was being displayed by the German settlers and missionaries in their midst. What we get to see is the spectacular; yet it is the spectacular that gives us insight into the everyday, if only because it is so different from the norm. Funerary rites, though spectacular, do allow us to gain insight into the manner in which Herero wished to portray themselves. Though it is true that a number of structures and ways of doing things, in celebrations, clothing and the like, are now considered to be uniquely Herero, they were copied from, and in part enforced by, missionaries. This is not to say that the Herero merely accepted and copied what the missionaries sought to impose. Instead, Herero appropriated specific structures and ways of doing, precisely because they were perceived as being correct and appropriate behaviour in the modern world. Once appropriated and transformed, they became uniquely Herero.

In this paper we have seen how missionaries operating in Namibia in the 1920s and 1930s sought to impose specific ways of being upon the Herero. Though the missionaries believed that they had succeeded in introducing what they considered to be correct behaviour, the Herero appropriated from the missionaries and settlers what they (the Herero) considered appropriate for life in a modern world.

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