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Diluting Drinks and Deepening Discontent

Colonial Liquor Controls and Public Resistance in Windhoek, Namibia

Jan-Bart Gewald

The colonial conquest of Namibia was extremely brutal. Repressive controls continued in the decades that followed as exemplified by the South African colonial administration's regulation of the production and consumption of alcohol by the territory's black African inhabitants. Nonetheless, the colonial state's policies were inconsistent and vigorously opposed at every turn by differing sections of the black population. In this chapter, the unlikely alliance of two of the territory's Herero urban groups, the *Otruppe*, otherwise known as the *Truppenspieler* or "soldier players," and the female *khari* beer brewers, is examined. During the 1920s and 1930s, they faced the colonial state's attempts to undercut and ultimately eradicate the illicit production of alcohol. In so doing, they were pitted against the colonial state and a newly emerging Herero political elite.

Official attitudes to alcohol consumption in southern Africa have changed over time. Colonial administrations were not averse to alcohol per se, particularly on account of the substantial revenues that could be generated through the sale of drink (van Onselen 1982). Regardless of colonial sanctions or moral condemnation, alcohol, as an addictive substance, has always been in demand. The selective provision of alcohol is a powerful political tool, and the degree to which colonial agents controlled and regulated access to it is a good indicator of their power and political acumen. In turn, the urban population, denied access to alcohol, used this as an issue around which to mobilize their political aspirations. There has been much debate about the political nature of struggles over alcohol. As Harries (1994) argues, the mere inebriation of colonial subjects does not

constitute anticolonial resistance. On the other hand, an examination of changing patterns of leisure time and the consumption of alcohol in southern Africa can provide insights into the political and social transformation of the region, as this chapter demonstrates for Windhoek in Namibia.

In the first section, brief historical background will be provided, followed by a description of how missionaries perceived African alcohol usage. The remainder of the chapter chronicles the struggle over liquor controls between the colonial state and the black political elite on the one hand, and the powerless women beer brewers and the young male *Otruppe* on the other.

CONQUEST OF THE HERERO BY SUCCESSIVE COLONIAL REGIMES

During the Scramble for Africa, Namibia was declared a German protectorate in 1884. Twenty years later, the Herero, who bore the brunt of the colonial presence, became involved in a genocidal war with Imperial Germany. Following a conscious policy of annihilation, the German military sought out, ran down and executed those Herero who had survived the fighting and had fled into the *omahaheke* (coarse sand desert) that lies between present-day Namibia and Botswana. In the face of missionary protests and metropolitan censure, Herero were rounded up, put into camps, and set to work as forced laborers throughout central Namibia. Over four years an estimated 80 percent of the Herero people died. The majority of those who survived were women and children.

In 1908, when the camps were finally abolished, legislation was passed whereby all Herero over the age of eight had to wear a copper disk embossed with the Kaiser's crown, a number, and the magisterial district in which they resided. In addition, Herero were prohibited from owning stock or land, or from practicing any form of non-Christian ritual (Pool 1979; Bridgman 1981; Gewald 1995, 1996). Germany's colonial mission was "to divest the Herero as far as possible of their national characteristics and gradually to merge them with the other native groups into a single colored working-class" (Bley 1996). However, even in the face of such extreme "social engineering," Herero began reestablishing forms of social cohesion little anticipated by the colonial administration.

In 1915 South African armies invaded German South West Africa. In a short, sharp campaign, the once proud and seemingly invincible *Schutztruppe* were defeated. In the aftermath, the Herero believed that better times were upon them. As the South African forces advanced, Herero at all

levels of society deserted their erstwhile employers to reoccupy some of their former lands and reestablish Herero leadership in the urban centers of Namibia. In addition, the Herero attempted to establish themselves independently of the ideological institutions associated with the settlers. The South African administration was forced to deal with Herero who were far removed from the shackled, numbered and controlled mass that had emerged at the end of the Herero-German war.

WINDHOEK SURFACING FROM THE RAVAGES OF WAR

The urban Herero population that developed in Windhoek was characterized by one particular aspect: women outnumbered men by about two to one. In contrast to the men, the majority of these women remained staunch Christians associated with the mission church. Herero men, who for their part largely turned their backs on the church, could be divided into two broad categories: a mission-educated literate elite employed in local government and businesses as clerks, drivers, messengers and policemen, or self-employed as small traders; and a second group who were employed as day laborers, herdsmen, gardeners, railway men and factory workers.

During the 1920s and through the introduction of a "Location Advisory Board," the South African administration sought to extend and strengthen its control over the town's black African population. Only literate men were eligible to sit on the board, and board members were either appointed by the colonial administration or voted in by annual elections open only to men (Gewald 1996). Herero women, even though they outnumbered men, were cut off from any formal means of influencing the colonial administration. To a far lesser extent, the same held true for the majority of the illiterate Herero men who lived in the town, and who formed the basis of the *Otruppe*.

The origins of the *Otruppe* can be traced back to the advent of German colonialism in Namibia, when many Herero were employed as auxiliaries in the German army, and Herero military units fought alongside German forces. Following the Herero-German war, Herero orphans and children were captured and adopted, initially as mascots and servants, and later as soldiers for the German army. These young men grew up and were socialized in the confines of the military. With the defeat of the German forces in 1915, they were left leaderless. Their structures of social organization had collapsed, and from having been powerful functionaries of the colonial state, they became young uninitiated men. They sought to maintain and re-create the structures that had given their lives meaning and

social standing. As young men with no property and employed as wage laborers in towns and on Namibian farms, they came together to reestablish their power. They appropriated the names and titles of their former commanders and sent hand-written telegrams in German to one another. They issued military passes, pay books and commands to each another. And on moonlit nights they gathered together, to march, talk and dream of the power that could be theirs (Gewald 1996). Effectively, by copying the structures and images of the German military, young Herero men had set up their own countrywide support and information network.

Ideas within the administration were divided with regard to the *Otruppe*, and ranged from outright rejection and demands for the banning of the movement to benevolent mocking. The administration was clearly worried by the sight of black Africans in uniforms.

As the process of social stratification increased within Herero society during the 1920s, urban Herero women increasingly came to be allied to Herero men similarly denied formal access to power. The issue around which these two groups were to mobilize their discontent against the established order was that of the manufacture and provision of alcohol.

THE COLONIAL STATE AND "KAFFIR BEER"

Traditionally *khari* had been a highly nutritional beer of low alcoholic content made of grain. In the immediate aftermath of the South African invasion of Namibia, the newly appointed public health and Native Affairs officials were all for the continuation of the brewing of "native kaffir beer." It was thought that this could help reduce the high incidence of scurvy found among migrant laborers. Detailed step-by-step instructions on its brewing were distributed among the territory's Native Affairs officials.¹ Thus, in the late 1910s, under government sanction, the brewing of beer was placed under the control of men well versed in the fine art of brewing. As the Acting Director of Railways reported: "Kaffir Beer prepared to your recipe (enclosed) is being issued to natives by the Railway compound Managers in daily rations. The difficulty experienced at certain depots has now been overcome by your providing us with Ovambo Foremen who know how to brew this beer."²

In 1921 legal responsibility for Windhoek's "locations" (black residential areas) was transferred to the municipality, and a plethora of legislation followed seeking to control every aspect of African life in the territory (Gordon 1998). The issue of urban areas and alcohol was of particular importance in

the Natives (Urban Areas) Proclamation (34/1924), and was based on the act of the same name in the Union of South Africa. Essentially a piece of legislation that sought to control the movement of Africans to and from urban areas, the proclamation contained specific reference to alcohol. On account of the substantial revenues received from beer halls in Natal province, where the administration held and enforced a monopoly in beer production, the idea of the beer hall as a money-spinning venture was included in the act (la Hausse 1992). Windhoek's African inhabitants were thus not legally entitled to produce or consume alcohol, but the Urban Areas proclamation held within it the possibility of the provision of beer under the monopoly of the colonial administration. The ambiguity of conflicting legislation and overlapping government regulatory agencies would underpin the colonial state's vacillating policy over the next three decades.

Initially, the government took a hard line. By 1919, with Namibia having been established as a class C mandate to be administered by South Africa, the production of alcohol and its distribution to and consumption in any form by the territory's black African population was prohibited. With the effective banning of grain beer, *khari* soon developed into a low volume yet highly potent alcoholic drink.

Previously *khari* had been brewed solely using grains such as sorghum and millet. The grain was soaked and then germinated, before being dried and ground, and thereafter added to water and allowed to ferment for one to two days. The alcoholic content of the resulting brew was very low, whereas its nutritional value was high. But in a process that had already started in the early 1900s, brewers started adding yeast and refined sugar to speed up the fermentation and to increase the alcoholic content of the brew. As the demand for alcohol, or rather inebriation as opposed to nutrition, grew, brewers left out the grain altogether and used cheaper forms of carbohydrates such as dried peas, beans, maize, stale bread and potatoes. They produced these brews in the hills around Windhoek, where they could be fairly certain that their activities would not be discovered by the authorities.³ Brewers often buried their wares in the deep, dry riverbeds in the vicinity. The bulky transport of low percentage alcohol and the concomitant risks of being discovered encouraged an increase in the alcoholic content of *khari*.

In Windhoek in the 1920s and 1930s, the brewing of *khari* was almost wholly in the hands of Herero women who refused to be drawn into the demeaning category of domestic labor that had been reserved for them by the colonial state. Following the establishment of Herero reserves in the early 1920s, the urban areas, and Windhoek in particular, became safe havens for

Herero women seeking to escape poverty, polygamous marriages and patriarchal authorities. The brewers of *khari* emerged from among these women (Krueger and Henrichsen 1998; Gewalt 2000). Most were in the paradoxical position of being devout Christians defying the moral dictates of their clergy, and consequently they found themselves facing a moral barrage.

CULTURAL COMBAT OF MISSION TEACHINGS

Though the colonial state and the mission did not often see eye to eye, the one issue on which they almost always agreed was drink, or rather what they both construed as "native abuse of drink." They viewed the consumption of alcohol by Namibia's indigenous population as an evil to be vigorously combated at every opportunity. Along with many other missionary movements, the Rhenish Mission wanted to bring about temperance in Namibia. The mission had attempted to prevent the consumption of alcohol at its various stations in the country, and it was supported by some of the chiefs, whose followers tried to seize and destroy the liquor stocks of those who sought to trade alcohol.

Mission Christianity demanded specific behavior in all manner of social contexts, and the mission was anxious to create what it believed was the correct demeanor in church and in everyday life. Thus there was to be no excessive expression of emotion such as laughing or crying. Mission Christians were even expected to refrain from crying at funerals.

Clearly, alcohol, with its tendency to dispel inhibitions, was exactly what missionaries wanted their congregations to avoid. In their eyes, the consumption of alcohol led to licentiousness and bacchanal scenes of carnal delight. Writing in 1921, missionary Kuhlmann let his imagination flow when he wrote:

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.⁴

The consumption, let alone abuse, of alcohol was not something that the missionaries were prepared to tolerate, least of all in church. In the 1920s missionaries reported that church attendance had become an activ-

ity almost solely confined to Herero women, and that Herero men, when they did attend services, were invariably drunk. According to the missionaries, Saturdays were spent carousing, and Sundays were spent recovering for the coming working week. As missionary Schmitz observed:

There are more than a few faithful churchgoers among the Herero women, but the men's section of the church is nearly always empty. The few Ovambo, who are employed in the town, sit on the benches of the Herero, and apart from a few evangelists of the community I hardly have any Herero men as listeners. Recently, among the few who did come, there were a few drunks.⁵

In the 1920s, the consumption of alcohol was associated with virile masculine behavior, fitting for those men who were involved in the *Otruppe* movement of the Herero. Writing at the time, Missionary Kühhirt complained, "Most of the youths are totally occupied with playing soldiers [*Soldatenspielen*] and drinking, because their fathers have given them the example."⁶

In the same way that the hard-drinking and swearing soldiers of the German Kaiser had attended church services on special occasions, so too the Herero soldiers of the *Otruppe* occasionally entered church to attend services at, for example, Christmas. In so doing, they unsettled the missionaries, as recorded by Missionary Rethmeijer: "In the Church the troops always bring about a certain amount of disquiet, as they consist of Christians expelled from the community as well as heathens, particularly youths."⁷

Drinking was not confined only to men. Missionaries were puzzled as to why Herero women, whom they generally respected on account of their correct Christian demeanor and attitudes, seemed to be engaging in drinking binges that ran counter to their professed faith. A good example is the account of a missionary stationed in Karibib during the 1920s, who noted that

the thirst for drink [*Trunkzucht*] is increasing as never before. Even those women who remained faithful to the church drink, one can observe how they are degenerating internally as well as externally. On account of the drink, their vision is clouded, they no longer comprehend why one should struggle against their sins.⁸

Particularly disconcerting for the mission were those instances when they were confronted with women wanting to pay their churchly dues with money they had earned from beer brewing. More often than not, brewing was a way in which women could keep their families fed, and certainly did not immediately imply lax moral standing. A perfect example was a single mother who did not drink herself, and who sought to pay not only her own

churchly dues, but also those of her daughter. The woman was informed that she could no longer pay her dues with such money.⁹

Over time, the mission intensified its campaign against the consumption of alcohol. In the middle of the Great Depression, at the annual conference of the Rhenish missionary evangelists, various participants presented stirring diatribes against the evils of drink. Indeed, whole days were devoted to the theme of "The Struggle Against Drunkenness," at which sessions entitled "Our Battle Against Sugar Beer" featured prominently.¹⁰ The activities of the mission, coupled with those of the state, led to the development of a culture of mistrust, with informants, spies and vigilantes taking the law into their own hands and spilling beer. The accusation, false or otherwise, of being in possession of alcohol was used by community members to intimidate and defeat the aims and activities of others. Certainly, urban inhabitants saw each and every beer raid as a conscious betrayal by specific persons intent on creating havoc.

BOWKER'S TEMPERANCE CRUSADE

During the night of 16 August 1924, South African police, who had been called in by G.O. Bowker, superintendent of the Windhoek locations, conducted a surprise raid. Records indicate that absolute pandemonium ensued. Panic-stricken, undoubtedly with all too vivid memories of the past, women and children fled into the bush, only emerging days later when hunger and thirst drove them to return. Bowker claimed that he had ordered the raid on account of tax defaulters, incompetent headmen, and illegal alcohol consumption and possession: "You were going from bad to worse and something had to be done, and someone had to act. I say therefore the blame for any stern measures adopted by me should attach to your headmen and not to me."¹¹

Captain Octavus George Bowker, descended from 1820 settler stock in South Africa's Eastern Cape, arrived in Namibia in 1915 as part of the invading South African army. Between 1915 and 1920 he headed the Windhoek District Native Affairs Department (NAD), which, like all the branches of government at the time, was run by the military. Following his resignation from the NAD, he was employed by the municipality of Windhoek as superintendent of the city's locations. Bowker retired from this position in 1946, but for thirty years he was the principal figure through which Windhoek's African population came into contact with government policy. In effect, Bowker came to personify colonial rule in Windhoek's lo-

cations, with location policemen even being referred to as "Bowkers." Bowker himself viewed the locations and their inhabitants as his personal fiefdom.

Inspired by the manner in which locations were administered in South Africa, Bowker appointed a number of "headmen" whom he believed would assist him in governing. However, these appointed headmen did not see themselves as agents of control, but thought of themselves as representatives and spokesmen for the inhabitants of the locations. In 1919 Bowker defined the role of headmen thus:

[T]hey are called upon to see that all tax payers fulfill their obligations . . . they are expected to assist in tracing deserters . . . they are held responsible for the proper conduct of the sanitary scheme and maintenance of hygienic conditions in the Locations and . . . they are looked to for the maintenance of order generally among their people.¹²

In part it was the contrasting views of headmen as purveyors or enforcers of the government's wishes that led to conflicts over the production, distribution and consumption of alcohol within the locations. In 1924 those Bowker had appointed as headmen of the locations were men who were in no position either in terms of social standing or power, let alone inclination, to inform Bowker on the production of alcohol. They were not directly engaged in brewing, but they were certainly among those who consumed illicit stocks of grain beer in the Windhoek locations.

Following the raid of 1924, a commission of enquiry into the course of events was held, the results of which make interesting reading. The headmen of Windhoek locations were assaulted by the location dwellers and labeled colonial informers, while the police looked on. Uncomfortably wedged between the colonial government and his own people, Herero headman Constantine Muatie pleaded for the colonial government to clear him of the people's charge that he was a colonial informer: "Please say who told the Police that kaffir beer was being made in the location, because the people say that I and headman David gave them away."¹³

Drew, the officer in charge of Native Affairs Windhoek, reacted angrily by telling Muatie that he was a paid headman whose duty it was to inform Superintendent Bowker on the brewing of beer. Muatie felt that the headmen had a less confrontational way of controlling beer production:

Last year and this year we seized all kaffir beer and threw it out. We want to be informed by the Superintendent in future of any proposed raid for kaffir beer by police. We are headmen and consider that we should be informed. Had we been

informed of last Saturday's raid we would have seen that there would have been no row. We would have kept order. The people are still of the opinion that we headmen are responsible for this raid, whereas we knew nothing about it.¹⁴

Bowker, unapologetic as ever, went out of his way to cultivate an image of himself as totally ruthless with "the natives."

I did burn your huts at Orumbo in 1918
 I have sold your huts in the location
 I have caused you to go to gaol
 I have been the cause of your being fined
 I have caused police raids on the location for beer drinking
 I am appointed Superintendent to place a check on your lawless proclivities, and
 I have tried for two years to rule you with kind words and you are today more
 lawless and drunkenness is more rife among you than at any previous time.¹⁵

Bowker did not stop there and lashed out against his headmen:

Constantine Muatie informed the commission yesterday that he could not understand why the police were called in on account of beer drinking without the knowledge of the headmen; that he and other headmen never failed to report drunkenness and the presence of beer in the location . . . I accuse Constantine of uttering a deliberate falsehood. I have been two years at the head of the location. During that period there is not an instance on record where any of my 13 headmen have reported a case of drunkenness or the presence of beer in any hut in the location.¹⁶

The event clearly demonstrates how the control of alcohol was used to confirm the black population's colonial subservience. Bowker's raid, or rather the reaction engendered by the raid, initiated the only protest that ever seriously threatened Bowker's seemingly unassailable position. In the aftermath of the raid, the position of headman was abolished.

The raid also reveals the role of up-and-coming Herero and nationalist politicians, the most prominent of whom was Hoseah Kutako. Two months after Bowker's fateful raid, Hoseah Kutako organized a petition calling for Bowker's removal from office, claiming, "I am speaking for the people." Characteristic of his consummate political style, Hoseah wasted no time in drawing attention to the double standards of racial prejudice, pointing to the role of Windhoek's white inhabitants in the lucrative trade in alcohol:

Why should the location be raided for liquor? In March and April I reported to Mr Wilmot that there was drinking in the location and that I had seized and thrown out liquor, that liquor was brewed (obtainable) at Gamams River by Europeans

and conveyed into the location. Mr Wilmot said he was a newcomer, but would enquire from others and send for me later. Mr Wilmot also told me of the ill effects liquor was having on people in the Union. Mr Wilmot never sent for me.¹⁷

Possibly on account of his background as a missionary evangelist, Hoseah echoed the colonial state's policies regarding alcohol and the black population, yet at the same time he used these very issues to draw attention to the hypocrisy of the colonial authorities. Hoseah indicated that it had been on his initiative, and not that of the colonial state, that action was undertaken against brewers "when too much beer was being brewed."¹⁸

Doubtless affected by the vehemence of the reaction to his raid of 1924, Bowker avoided initiating another raid for at least another four years. This provided ample ammunition for those in the Native Affairs Department who saw Bowker and the Windhoek municipality as a rival to their hegemony. In an attempt to bring Bowker down to size, Cope, the NAD officer in Windhoek, noted, "I assumed Office shortly after the Location was handed over to the Municipality [and thus under the authority of Bowker] and wish to place on record, that loafers, the excessive brewing of liquor and its attendant drunkenness, were not so prevalent as at the present time and there was decidedly better control."¹⁹

Cope's report indicated that Bowker and the system that he had tried to establish in the locations had failed to control the production, distribution and consumption of alcohol by black Africans. Apart from demonstrating his dislike for Bowker, Cope's report also indicated that the production of *khari* had grown beyond the colonial administration's capacity to control. There was simply too much demand to ever ensure its effective prohibition.

Police figures indicated that although there was a steady increase in the number of people being tried, the production of illicit alcohol continued unabated. Interestingly, the production of illicit beer appeared to be almost entirely in the hands of women. Indeed, 80 percent of those being tried under laws relating to the production and sale of illicit alcohol were women.

There were good profits to be made from the trade, something that had become apparent to many more people in the lower strata of urban colonial life. The commander summed up the colonial state's predicament in the following manner:

We are . . . faced with a position . . . that the Natives, by utilizing the ordinary means of sustenance [mealie meal, potatoes, sugar, peas and old bread] are able to

manufacture an intoxicating beverage. . . . I submit that if consumption of Kaffir beer on the premises, in properly controlled canteens, is legalized provided illicit possession is punishable by imprisonment without the option of a fine, considerable improvement will be brought about.²⁰

THE DEPRESSION AND "BOWKER'S BREW"

On the eve of the Great Depression, unable to prevent the consumption of alcohol, the colonial authorities in central Namibia had reached the stage where they were willing to countenance the regulated distribution of alcohol to the territory's inhabitants. However, on account of the sudden transformation of urban life that took place during the Depression, the matter went no further and was dropped from all official discussions. During the Depression, with less money all round, the city's black urban inhabitants found themselves retrenched and with less cash to spend on alcohol, while the colonial authorities had no resources to initiate an alcohol-control program either.

Elsewhere in southern Africa research has indicated that during the Depression, women continued to make ends meet precisely because they were engaged in the brewing of beer. For example, women, and the lower strata of society, were dependent upon the brewing of beer in Natal, South Africa. In 1929, when the authorities in Natal attempted to ban the commercial brewing of beer by women and extend government-regulated beer halls, women, supported by young men of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, donned male military uniforms and staged protests (Bradford 1987). Bowker's call for a municipal beer hall in Windhoek the following year brought a swift preemptory response from his rival, Cope, in the Native Affairs Department: "This is a matter which would require the most careful consideration in view of recent events in Natal."²¹ The image of social mayhem and the dented confidence of the colonial administration in Natal were enough to ensure that the authorities turned a blind eye to women brewing beer in Windhoek during the Great Depression.

In seeking to strengthen his administration and control over the black urban population of Windhoek, Bowker established a location police force in 1926, and later tried to create an air of consensus with the establishment of the Location Advisory Board. The board consisted of twelve members, six of whom were elected and six of whom were appointed by Bowker. Bowker acted as chairman of the board, and his wife, Sybil, served as secretary. Elections and appointments to the Advisory Board

took place annually. Only adult male residents of the locations who had paid their taxes were allowed to vote. Board members had to be literate, and almost without exception they were location notables and businessmen who had developed under Bowker's wing. In one way or another, these men were dependent on Bowker for their livelihoods, since Bowker issued the licenses and permits necessary for any form of economic enterprise in the locations.

The Advisory Board had no legislative powers and was used primarily as the administration's sounding board. Needless to say, this led to extreme frustration among some of the board members (Emmett 1986). One such man, Aaron Mungunda, led the Windhoek branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and voiced his frustration as follows:

We have met here today to appoint a new board. What is the use of doing so? The Council and the Administration treat members of the board as if they were a lot of children. Time after time we make representations through our board minutes and ask that this and that be done or granted us but we never receive proper replies to these representations and questions.²²

The board did manage to some extent to voice the prejudices and concerns of certain sections of the location, but generally the board represented the newly emergent black elite of Windhoek, whose interests were closely aligned to those of the colonial state. Two of its longest serving members, Kapuuo and Schimming, were Herero businessmen who had annual turnovers "running into four figures."²³

It was not until toward the end of the Great Depression in 1934 that the issue of illicit alcohol production in the Windhoek locations once again became a topic of official discussion. In what must surely rank as one of the finest examples of racist paternalism, Bowker took it upon himself to brew a sample of grain beer that he, using the Zulu term *utshwala*, referred to as *tjwala*.²⁴ Bowker's brew was presented to the appointed members of the Location Advisory Board as a sample of the brew that would, in the event of regulated provision, be provided to the male inhabitants of the locations for consumption. Clearly Bowker's brewing skills were not up to the discerning taste and standards of the audience whom he had sought to impress. The Assistant Native Commissioner backed up Bowker's efforts.

The Government will authorize the Municipality to make native (grain) beer for you but will not hear of any kind of European liquor being allowed you. As you know, Captain Bowker made some of this grain beer to taste; it may be that this sample was not quite right and not as good as it can be made. This native beer is

the universal beer of Union natives and Ovomboland [sic]. You have turned it down and say you don't like it. You say you want stronger liquor. *So far as liquor is concerned you will get this grain beer or nothing.* My advice to you is to give this beer a trial for 12 months, then if you still don't like it come and say so. *Get one thing into your heads: you will get no liquor other than native grain beer.*²⁵

This strongly worded recommendation regarding beer consumption was then backed by threats aimed at women brewers. Bowker enlisted Magistrate Ahrens to issue the warning: "I notice that four women who were recently in possession of *khari* have been ordered to leave the location. This will happen to others in similar cases . . . accept our beer or drink water, I don't mean fire water."²⁶

The Advisory Board members who supported Bowker's *tjwala* beer were placing themselves in direct opposition to the women brewers, as well as the militarily attired, beer-drinking *Otruppe*. In stark contrast to the public outcry and headmen's protests over the beer raids ten years earlier, by 1934 the Advisory Board was almost wholly staffed by representatives of the locations' economic and political elite who clearly no longer identified with, or were intimidated by, the disempowered population of Windhoek's locations.

It is clear, however, that Bowker's otherwise compliant Advisory Board members were not overly impressed with his brewing skills. With this in mind, the municipality approached the Windhoek breweries with a request for what was euphemistically referred to as "a different class of beer." A batch of 1,000 liters was brewed and supplied to Bowker and the Location Advisory Board for tasting and comments. At the Advisory Board meeting held to discuss the qualities of the brew, Corporal Petrus, a municipal policeman and active *Otruppe* member but not an Advisory Board member, was asked to present his views. After having asked Bowker whether he could speak openly, Corporal Petrus announced:

The beer is very clean and pure, just as clean and pure as the water in the tanks and has the same strength. If the Government offered me a pair of trousers surely they would not give me a pair made from paper. The Government says our *khari* is poison and we must have something wholesome. We agree but let the Council make a stronger beer. If the people drink too much and get drunk, the police and the law are there to deal with them. . . . I know what liquor is and the beer supplied is no stronger than water.²⁷

In the months that followed, with great pomp and ceremony, further casks of beer were supplied for tasting, until eventually in late 1934 a brew

acceptable to both the colonial authorities and members of the Location Advisory Board was chosen. Immediately thereafter, urban opposition to the Advisory Board, spearheaded by the *Otruppe*, came to the fore as polling for seats on Windhoek's Location Advisory Board got under way. During the nomination for candidates, the *Otruppe* took a leading stance to get their men into office. Crowds tried to storm Bowker's office and arrests were made.

Women who brewed beer and those most directly affected by the decisions of the Location Advisory Board were not enfranchised. These women sought to influence the outcome of the vote by allying themselves with the *Otruppe*. Bowker and the Advisory Board were alarmed. Their very existence was at stake, and they became focused on rooting out the *Otruppe* movement on moral grounds. Legal proceedings were instituted to remove Festus Katura, the self-confessed leader of the territory's *Otruppe*, from Windhoek and to relocate him to one of the Herero reserves, while board members unanimously voted in favor of the following motion: "This meeting is of the opinion that the organization known as the *Truppenspieler*s is harmful to the morals of the young men of the location and that it [is] hostile to the properly constituted government of the locations. For these reasons the meeting asks the authorities to put a stop to the movement entirely."²⁸

In the same month, Bowker moved against the women brewers by starting construction of a municipal beer hall for the locations. The *Otruppe* rallied behind the women brewers, as noted by the Assistant Native Commissioner for Windhoek: "The *Truppenspieler*s are actually in a minority—but they are an active and vocal minority. They appear to be definitely opposed to the location administration—more especially in regard to the new Municipal beer venture."²⁹

The Windhoek locations' municipal beer hall was officially opened on 28 February 1936, and a little less than a month later, the Location Advisory Board met to discuss "Bowker's baby."³⁰ The proceedings of this meeting clearly reveal the Advisory Board's subservient position vis-à-vis the state. Advisory Board member Kapuuo expressed his thanks to Bowker effusively:

I never believed that the authorities would be able to provide us with the privileges which [we] are now enjoying. They are privileges which have hitherto been strictly prohibited to natives, and I feel that it is my duty to say that we are pleased to be recognized at last as human beings and as such deserving of the privileges granted.³¹

Bowker saw the beer hall as an exercise in "civilizing the native," a site where social drinkers could set themselves apart from the degenerate,

shifty wretches who continued to seek solace in the drink of the illegal brewers. Bowker's ideas and sentiments were clearly modeled on attitudes he and his fellow administrators shared regarding social time, recreation and leisure. For them the beer hall was to develop into what must surely be one of the most well known of British cultural icons, the pub. The aspirations appear in the administration's annual report, which paints an idealized picture of women drinking at the beer hall in the company of men:

The normal day of a native female living, say, in the Windhoek location . . . would be somewhat as follows: She would rise so as to be at her employer's residence—some two miles distant—by 7.30 a.m. There she would be employed on the ordinary household duties till 2 p.m. . . . when . . . she would be permitted to return to the location where she would proceed to tidy up her hut, undertake the washing and repair of her garments and prepare the evening meal for herself and her husband if she were married. Possibly on her husband's return home she would accompany him to the Native beer hall for a glass of [*sic*] two of beer. If she were religiously inclined she would, after supper, attend a prayer meeting on two or three evenings of the week. Otherwise she would in all probability put in an appearance at the Municipal Dance Hall.³²

Despite the Advisory Board's vocal praise of the initiative, there was still the nagging matter of the brew's alcoholic quality. Indeed, Advisory Board member Kapuuo, unconsciously echoing Corporal Petrus's criticism, noted:

It is a clean beer, it is a wholesome beer and it has a very good taste. But from what I have gathered from the talk of the people it is still too weak in alcohol. It is through this beer that we are trying to stop the people drinking the illicit and unwholesome liquor hitherto brewed by the natives known as *khari*. . . . In order to fight this *khari* I would propose that the authorities consider the matter of adding a little more alcohol to our beer.³³

Other Advisory Board members recommended provision of a "week-end beer," because they were well aware of the location inhabitants' preference for alcohol over colored fizzy water. They needed the physiological effect offered by drinking alcohol. Without it, there would be little reason for people to bother drinking the municipal beer. Added to this, they knew that as long as the physiological effect of inebriation was missing, drinkers would continue to patronize the *khari* brewers. Mungunda ventured to observe, "People who work in bars say European beer makes them feel heady while our beer does not."³⁴

In response, Bowker left the Advisory Board in no doubt as to his intentions to eliminate all alcohol other than his brew from the locations, and explained that until now

[t]he authorities have never really had their hearts in their campaign against illicit brewing of liquor in my locations . . . the Government will not tolerate much longer the defiant attitude being taken up especially by the Herero. Yesterday my police destroyed 76 cans of *khari* representing 300 gallons. I do not wish to threaten people, merely to give them a friendly warning. The Government is strong enough to kill *khari* and it will kill it. If it cannot be done any other way it will be done by the simple process of elimination. That is to say people found in possession of *khari* will be sent away from the location and this can continue until there are no more *khari* brewers left here. Tell your people not to drive the Government to these lengths but rather to submit to an all-powerful government before it is too late. I do not want to see such a law introduced but nor do I want to see my beer hall, which is my baby, killed before it is grown up.³⁵

KHARI BREWERS AND THE OTRUPPE STANDING FIRM FOR THE RIGHT TO URBAN LIVELIHOOD AND LEISURE

In April 1936, men described as being "members or sympathizers of the *Trupenspieler* movement" and as "the main antagonists of the municipal beer scheme" to whom "most of the women *khari*-vendors belong" engaged the services of an attorney to submit an eight-point written list of their grievances.³⁶ Apart from protesting about the Advisory Board, the system of hut tax, the expulsion of wrongdoers (the majority of whom had been convicted of alcohol offenses) and other subjects, the petitioners had as their fourth point of complaint "kaffir beer." In the words of Trollope, the Assistant Native Commissioner, "They object to the native police being allowed at night to search their huts without warrants or while dressed in mufti as their women are surprised while naked."³⁷

In submitting the petition to his superiors, Trollope commented, "For 'while naked' read 'while in possession of *khari*' and the complaint will be more honest." Bowker's municipal policemen had the right to search any person's premises at any time of the day, while either in or out of uniform. In other words, the system was wide open to abuse. Off-duty policemen could, at their whim and fancy, break into any person's lodgings on the pretext of searching for illicit alcohol. Herero women were outraged and looked to the *Otruppe* to defend their rights. Trollope, municipal authorities

and the black African elite saw removal of the women from the locations as the only way to break the deadlock.

In the location there are 332 Herero men as against 518 Herero women, a great number of the latter being illicit liquor brewers. In March 1929, Hoseah on his own initiative called a meeting in the location and "passed" laws in an endeavor to combat the menace. . . . Last year again Hoseah saw me personally and requested me to take steps to restrict the large number of Herero women flocking into the location. The necessary steps were taken—but it is difficult to get those women who are already here, away. Although the Beer hall has been opened and is being very well patronized, the Herero are standing aloof and there appears little diminution of their *khari*-brewing.³⁸

Herero women in Windhoek had fled the strict patriarchal confines of the reserves, where they faced the prospect of being forced into unwanted polygamous marriages, for the comparative freedom, independence in choice of partners, and income in the city. In attempting to make a living through the brewing of beer, these women were naturally averse to any laws or institutions that threatened their livelihood. The Herero men of the *Otruppe*, who were cut off from formal power, knew that apart from themselves, the most powerful social grouping in the locations were the *khari* brewers, who were similarly denied formal power. *Khari* formed the basis around which the *Otruppe* and the women could cooperate and exert pressure on the administration and its allies. Together, they were a formidable force. The *khari* vendors were also able to count on the continued support and patronage of their clients. Six months after the opening of the beer hall, Bowker complained: "Unless illicit Kaffir Beer is kept down, the sale of Municipal Beer and profits there from are adversely affected and, that drunkenness occurs at the Beer Hall, not from over indulgence there, but as a result of natives, already the worse for liquor, making a practice of coming to the Hall to 'top off.'"³⁹

Even with a battery of legislation that allowed for the random searches by his policemen, Bowker was unable to eradicate the brewing of *khari*. He failed to bring developments in the locations under control. According to oral testimony, the locations' policemen, the "Bowkers," were corrupt. Bowker, a self-proclaimed expert on native affairs and a firm disciplinarian, was reduced to the indignity of having to request assistance from the regular police to try to control the situation. The addition of regular police did little to diminish the *khari* trade. Indeed, writing six months after the regular police began assisting Bowker, Major du Preez of the South West African police noted, "The illicit liquor had not decreased since the Beer

hall was opened. The Herero were boycotting the Beer Hall and their women are still the chief culprits in the illicit *khari* trade."⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

Despite its unpopularity, Bowker's beer hall remained an integral part of the location for almost twenty-five years. It was finally torn down, along with the rest of the location, following the shootings and the subsequent forced removal of people in connection with the Group Areas Act, as "grand apartheid" bulldozed its way through the social fabric of southern Africa (Ridgeway et al. 1991).

In terms of the apartheid regime's Urban Areas Act of 1951, black urban residences had to be established at a minimum distance of five miles from any white residential area. Integral to the new location bearing the name Katatura ("we will not move") was the beer hall. In contrast to Bowker's ideal British pub version of a beer hall, the new beer hall consisted merely of cement tables and benches where black urban residents were allowed to drink. The Katatura beer hall persisted until the repeal of a number of apartheid laws in 1977 when the black population was, once again, permitted to drink what they wanted in places of their own choice.

In summary, this chapter has traced the development of the illicit production and provision of alcohol in Windhoek locations during the 1920s and 1930s, documenting how the provision of illicit alcohol came to be almost wholly within the hands of Herero women. The colonial administration's attempt to eradicate the illicit production and provision of alcohol through the establishment of a Location Advisory Board co-opted a large section of the newly emerging Herero economic and political elite. In response, Herero women allied themselves to those who were similarly cut off from access to formal political power, the young men who constituted the core of the *Otruppe*. These angry young men and the Herero women brewers proved to be an invincible alliance that managed to evade colonial regulations on alcohol.

The South African colonial administration used the selective provision of alcohol as an instrument to control its subjects, presenting a striking example of the extreme colonial paternalism and racist denial that existed in Namibia at the time. The effects have almost certainly been carried over into the present. Past official sanctions against the consumption of alcohol have molded a culture in which the consumption of alcoholic beverages for inebriation has become the norm.

NOTES

1. Namibian National Archives Windhoek (NNAW), South West Africa Administration (SWAA) 1681. SWAA A 324/3, Public Health Scurvy South African Railways (SAR) Employees "Recipe for the Manufacture of Kaffir Beer."
2. NNAW, SWAA 1681, 27/12/16 P.E. Potter, Acting Director of Railways to Secretary for the Protectorate.
3. NNAW, Magistrate Windhoek (MWI) 36/1/37 v. 14, Location Annual Report 1936.
4. Vereinte Evangelische Missions Archive (VEMA) 2514 b Omaruru, 30/9/21, Kuhlmann, Halbjahrsbericht (Vom 1 April bis 30 September). J.B. Gewalt's translation.
5. VEMA 2503, Schmitz, Grootfontein Halbjahrsbericht, 30/9/27. J.B. Gewalt's translation.
6. VEMA, Rheinische Missions Gesellschaft (RMG) 2533 c, Windhoek 1929–1945, 1/10/29–31/3/30, Halbjahrsbericht, Kühhirt, Windhoek. J.B. Gewalt's translation.
7. VEMA 2510, Dreivierteljahrbericht, der Station Okahandja vom 1/4/1930–31/12/1930, H. Rethmeijer. J.B. Gewalt's translation.
8. VEMA 2619, Missonarskonferenzen im Hereroland: Protokolle (und Vorstrandssitzungen), 1922–1928 Band 9. Konferenzbericht der Gemeinde Karibib ber die Zeit von März 22–Dez 25. J.B. Gewalt's translation.
9. VEMA 2510, Kühhirt, Halbjahrsbericht zum 100 Jährigen Jubiläum am 23/9/28.
10. VEMA 1660, Konferenzverhandlungen der Gemeindeältesten und Evangelisten im Augustineum zu Okahandja vom 7–13 Dezember 1930.
11. NNAW, SWAA 66, Statement of the Superintendent of Locations on the Charges brought against him by Natives of the Windhoek Locations, Saturday, 23 August 1924.
12. NNAW, SWAA 66 A13/15, Municipality of Windhoek, Locations Windhoek Klein Windhoek, Native Affairs Windhoek and District, 3 February 1919, the Secretary for the Protectorate Windhoek, Location Affairs.
13. NNAW, SWAA 66, Meeting 22/8/24, Mayor, Town Council, Superintendent, and Officer in Charge Native Affairs Windhoek meet 80 Natives.
14. Ibid.
15. NNAW, SWAA 66, Statement of the Superintendent of Locations on the Charges brought against him by Natives of the Windhoek Locations, Saturday, 23 August 1924.
16. Ibid.
17. NNAW, SWAA 66, 22/10/24, Representatives of Hereros, Damaras and wit-booi hottentots, numbering about 50.
18. Ibid.
19. NNAW, SWAA 67, 7/5/26, Native Locations Windhoek report by Cope Native Affairs Department.
20. NNAW, SWAA 67, 16/10/28, Memorandum Brewing of Kaffir Beer, Native Location, Windhoek.

21. NNAW, SWAA 67, Officer in Charge of Native Affairs, Windhoek, 27 May 1930, to the Native Commissioner Windhoek: Location Annual Report.
22. NNAW, Native Affairs Windhoek (NAW) 29, Advisory Board election and minutes, Minutes, 29/12/30, Bowker, Harasemab, Gawachab, Jantse, Etope, Kandjou, Kapuuo and Mungunda.
23. NNAW, NAW 31, Annual reports 1939.
24. By brewing "kaffir beer," Bowker was also indicating and emphasizing his position as an expert on all things related to the "Native."
25. NNAW, NAW 29, Minutes of Advisory Board Meeting of 8 March 1934, p. 4. (Italics consistent with the original.)
26. Magistrate Ahrens, cited in NNAW, NAW 29, Minutes of Advisory Board Meeting of 8 March 1934, p. 4.
27. NNAW, NAW 29, Minutes of Advisory Board Meeting 12/8/34.
28. NNAW, SWAA 432, Assistant Native Commissioner in Windhoek, 13/12/35, to Chief Native Commissioner.
29. NNAW, SWAA 432, Assistant Native Commissioner in Windhoek, 20/1/36, to Chief Native Commissioner.
30. Bowker's own term when referring to the beer hall. NNAW, NAW 29, Minutes of Advisory Board, 27/3/36.
31. NNAW, NAW 29, Minutes of Advisory Board, 27/3/36.
32. South Africa, Annual Report 1939, p. 141 (Wallace 1997).
33. NNAW, NAW 29, Minutes of Advisory Board, 27/3/36.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. NNAW, SWAA 67, Memorandum in regard to the section of the Herero tribe who are making complaints: L. Trollope, Assistant Native Commissioner; Windhoek, 27 April 1936.
37. NNAW, SWAA 67, Office of the Assistant Native Commissioner, L. Trollope, Windhoek, 15/5/36 to the Chief Native Commissioner. Windhoek Location Administration. List of grievances handed in by a section of the Herero through Attorney M. Fraser.
38. Ibid.
39. NNAW, SWAA 67, District Commandant, Police District No. 1, Windhoek, 30 June 1936. The Commissioner, SWA Police, Windhoek; Police arrangements, Windhoek Native Location.
40. NNAW, SWAA 67, Resolutions passed at conference on Native Affairs Matters, 23/11/36.

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