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Challenging Colonial Fantasies –
Colonial Literature and Early Twentieth-Century German
Southwest Africa

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Tiivistelmä:

Saksan keisarikunta oli monella tapaa myöhäinen osanottaja siirtomaakilpailussa, johon suuri osa läntisen Euroopan suurvalloista oli ottanut osaa jo vuosikymmenten ajan. Vaikka Saksan tapauksessa varsinainen siirtomaiden valloitus sai alkunsa vasta 1880-luvulla, oli saksalaisten kollektiivisen itseymmärryksen valloitus ollut käynnissä jo vuosikymmenten ajan. Saksalaisten kirjailijoiden, matkakirjoittajien, filosofien sekä varhaisten siirtomaiden hankinnan puolestapuhujien toimesta saksalaiset asettuivat sivustakatsojan rooliin yhä kiihtyvän siirtomaakilpailun areenalla. Ilman käytännön haasteita, paikallisten kansojen vastarintaa tai siirtolaisten itsensä ristiriitaisia mielipiteitä, saksalainen siirtomaa-ajattelu sai kehittyä eräänlaisessa intellektuaalisessa tyhjiössä – saksalaisen itseymmärryksen valtasi 1800-luvun lopulle mennessä siirtomaafantasioiden kirjo.

Esikoloniaalisen ajan siirtomaafantasiat joutuivat koetukselle varsinaisen siirtomaa-ajan alettua, kun siirtolaiset itse sekä siirtomaiden paikalliset kansat haastoivat siirtomaafantasioita, kuten ajatusta kuvittelusta paremmasta saksalaisesta siirtomaahallinnosta verrattuna muihin kolonialistisiin suurvaltoihin tai fantasiaa uusien alueiden, niiden resurssien ja alkuperäisväestöjen valloituksesta ja alistamisesta. Siirtomaafantasioiden läsnäolon voi havaita monissa saksalaisissa siirtomaa-ajan kirjallisissa tuotoksissa, kuten Saksan Lounais-Afrikan (nykyisen Namibian) pitkäaikaisen kuvernöörin Theodor Leutweinin muistelmassa. Leutweinin yksitoistavuotinen valtakausi oli aikaa, jolloin saksalainen siirtomaahallinto pyrki vakiinnuttamaan asemaansa alueella, jossa lukuisat paikalliset heimot ja kansat, keskeisimpinä Herero- ja Nama-kansat, kukin nauttivat paikallista valtaa ja kilpailivat hegemoniasta. Leutweinin johdolla pyrittiin laatimaan alistaisia sopimuksia, joilla Lounais-Afrikan lukuisat kansat saataisiin alistettua vallitsevien siirtomaafantasioiden mukaisesti osaksi siirtomaahallinnon hierarkiaa.

Siirtomaafantasiat kuitenkin haastettiin 1900-luvun alkupuolella, kun aikakauden uudet vallitsevat ajatukset tieteellisestä rasismista, asutuskolonialismista sekä naisten aseman muuttamisesta, paikallisten kansojen antikoloniaalisen vastarinnan ohella, murensivat entiset haaveet Lounais-Afrikasta osana saksalaista siirtomaajärjestelmää. Uuden polven kirjoittajat Adda von Liliencron, Gustav Frenssen sekä Clara Brockmann ovat esimerkkejä saksalaisten kolonialistien asenteiden muutoksesta ja radikalisoitumisesta – paikallisten kansojen alistaminen korvautui nyt ajatuksilla näiden kansojen tuhoamisesta. Saksalaiset siirtomaafantasiat, jotka luotiin siirtomaiden ollessa vielä haave, haastettiin heidän itsensä toimesta, kun haaveesta tuli todellisuutta. Samalla siirtomaafantasiat kohtasivat haasteen myös kolonisoidun alkuperäisväestön taholta, kun se ei suostunut asettumaan alistaiseen rooliin osana siirtomaahallintoa. Tuloksena oli 1900-luvun ensimmäinen kansanmurha, jossa Herero- ja Nama-kansat suurilta osin tuhottiin saksalaisen siirtomaahallinnon toimesta.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background – From Colonial Subjectivity to a Collective Obsession

“We were still going south night and day. It is wonderful how big the world is. The hand slips easily and quickly on the map from Hamburg to Swakopmund; but how the engine works, monotonously, untiringly, day and night, for three long weeks! What strength and will men have, who are willing to go so far away to live and trade and explore and govern!”¹

In the passage above from Gustav Frenssen’s bestseller *Peter Moor’s Journey to Southwest Africa* the protagonist Peter Moor allows himself to think of his place in the long line of Germans crossing the oceans into unknown lands. He is travelling on a troop transport ship from Germany to the colony of German Southwest Africa (modern day Namibia), to be part of quenching the Herero uprising of 1904. Moor marvels at the strength and will of the men before him, leaving home and the familiar behind, to live, trade, explore and govern. His personal journey to Africa is a continuation of something greater – the German colonial enterprise. Peter Moor’s thoughts in Frenssen’s novel are deeply woven into the realm of fantasy – namely of colonial fantasy.

In this study, I will discuss colonial fantasies found in colonial writings on German Southwest Africa during the first decades of the 20th century with an eye on how and why these fantasies were transformed and challenged. I will continue in the footsteps of Susanne Zantop who coined the term *colonial fantasies* to describe how German self-understanding, national consciousness and a *distinct colonial cult*, with its obsessions of race and nation, formed in precolonial Germany as a result of the “discovery” of the Americas.² My intent is to bring the realm of fantasies Zantop describes into the material world by looking at German colonial writers writing in and on German Southwest Africa during the latter stages of formal German colonialism.

So, my research questions are the following. How did the colonial fantasies, that Zantop describes, manifest themselves in the actual colonial rule and life and in the writings of those discussing it? How did colonial fantasies affect the actions and thinking of German colonialists? How did it come to be, that attitudes radicalized in the latter years of German colonial rule in Southwest Africa, from

¹ Frenssen, 1908, 30.

² Zantop, 1997, 1-2.

those of subjugation to those of destruction? And most importantly, how and why were many of the fantasies of the precolonial period challenged in German Southwest Africa?

An important angle of this study is the theme of transgressing metropolitan divisions in a distinct *settler colonial* setting. Settler colonialism is a field of historical study on colonialism where the original population of a colonized territory is *destroyed and replaced* by a settler population.³ This destruction can be either actual physical destruction of native populations or achieved by, for example, marginalizing communities and eradicating their culture. Settler colonies, such as Southwest Africa for the German Empire, have been a source of fascinating scrutiny in the past years. The field of settler colonial studies has lent new meanings, importance, causalities and theories to the over-arching study of German, European, African and world history.

The formal period of German colonialism lasted from 1884 to the outbreak (or alternatively the ending) of the Great War in 1914 (1918). However, the shadow this seemingly short and irrelevant colonial experiment cast on the rest of German society was immense, as many writers have stated. One such sentiment, by historian Arthur Percival Newton, sums it well:

*“There are few chapters in the history of the world at once so important, so small in compass, so complete in themselves and so rich in political lessons. A whole overseas empire was won and lost by Germany in a single generation”.*⁴

Susanne Zantop also shows how the very core of German self-consciousness, national identity and a myriad of stately and cultural activities were influenced by colonial discourse.⁵ The extent, to which colonial discourse affected the self-understanding and life in general in Germany, both before and some time after unification, was immense.

I will now briefly go through some of the ways this discourse forged thinking in German intellectual circles, in order to lay out, what was brought into the actual colonial enterprise later. These main threads of colonial fantasies will then be returned to in the next chapters, in order to see how they affected the thinking of colonial writers writing on Southwest Africa.

³ Wolfe, 2006, *passim*.

⁴ Newton, A.P., ed., *The Sea Commonwealth*: London, J.M.Dent & Sons., 1919, 33. Quoted by Townsend, Mary Evelyn, *The Rise and Fall of Germany's Colonial Empire 1884-1918*: New York, The Macmillan Company, 1930, ix, Note in the introduction by Edward Neather in *Genocide in German South-west Africa*, xv, 2003.

⁵ Zantop, 1997, 1-9.

The first thread is the thread of almost sexual desire for the *other* – with its unconscious subtext of being linked with desires of power and control. The fantasies that Zantop describes were not violent “male fantasies” that stemmed from sexual anxieties per se, but fantasies of cross-cultural and cross-racial romance – if I may add, a sort of orientalist⁶ interest for the other. These seductive master fantasies of German colonial mastery constantly rewrote colonial history made by others, turning the fantasies into factual reality for much of the German audience of the day. As Zantop describes it, this sort of narrative of fantasy was so widely proliferated in late 1700s and early 1800s Germany that by the late 1880s it had become entrenched in Germany’s collective imagination. Zantop states that the significance of these fantasies should not be underestimated as a corollary to the later more colonial-scientific discourse of the formal colonial period.⁷ What I call *fantasies of conquest and power* in the next chapter, deal with this exact theme – was the conquest of local women an extension to the conquest of the land and its resources?

The second thread, I will be focusing on, is the so-called *Koloniallegende* (“colonial legend”). Even though, I have already evoked the name of Edward Said, by using the term *orientalist*, I tend to agree with Zantop’s contrasting that Said was somewhat wrong when it came to German colonialism. Said, in his ground-breaking studies, imagined German colonialism as weaker in comparison to its European counterparts, because Germany simply had no colonies of its own. As Zantop points out, it was not that the lack of German colonies made German colonialist discourse more abstract and thus weaker, but the exact opposite. As Zantop eloquently puts it:

*“Since a colonial discourse could develop without being challenged by colonized subjects or without being tested in a real colonial setting, it established itself not so much as “intellectual authority” (Said) over distant terrains, than as a mythological authority over the collective imagination.”*⁸

The colonial legend of Germans being better – more benevolent and more effective – colonizers than, for example, their British and French counterparts, persevered in Germany all the way to the 1960s. The German was “*the best colonizer and cultivator*”, as Heinrich Simonsfeld described it.⁹ As for this study, the interesting part of this observation, is the *challenging* part. If, as Zantop states,

⁶ Orientalism here refers to Edward Said’s observation of patronizing western attitudes to the rest of the world. Orientalism, however, also has some veiled fascination towards the other side. For example, motifs of eastern harems in western art often have a sort of underlying fascination towards the unknown and perhaps forbidden eastern ways.

⁷ Zantop, 1997, 3.

⁸ Zantop, 1997, 7.

⁹ Simonsfeld, Heinrich, quoted in Zantop, 1997, 8.

German colonial discourse grew influential precisely because of the lack of challenge to it, how did it transform, when it was then challenged in the actual colonial context – not just by the colonized subjects of Germans, the Herero and Nama, but also by the colonizers themselves? I will return to this question in the third chapter.

1.2. Methods and Sources

My method is to study closely various examples of German colonial literature on Southwest Africa in the first decades of the 20th century. The literature I have chosen is written during and after the Herero War of 1904-08, some of it by authors living in German Southwest Africa at the time, others by those residing in the German mainland in Europe. Part of my hypothesis is that the war and the genocide of the Herero and Nama peoples in the colony represented a watershed moment, and not just for the politics and everyday life of the colony, but also for the colonial writers whose views on native peoples as well as the nature of the colony itself were altered and transformed. Also, as we will see, the more “extreme” views held by colonial writers and activists now prevailed over more conservative ones. One could replace the word “extreme” with, say, *völkisch* and/or *national liberal*.¹⁰ This point also is in the heart of the question of transforming colonial fantasies.

Colonial literature from German Southwest Africa is in many ways a literary genre of its own. Lots of books, be they travel books, practical guides for potential settlers, political commentaries on pressing colonial issues, memoirs, or fiction, have been written. To keep within reasonable limits in this study, I have chosen a sample of four different authors – Theodor Leutwein (1849-1921), Gustav Frenssen (1863-1945), Adda von Liliencron (1844-1913) and Clara Brockmann (1883-1956). These writers and their chosen works will be studied more closely in the following chapters. My emphasis will not be so much on the personal histories of these writers but on their works as part of the larger mass of colonial discourse produced on Southwest Africa and the German colonial enterprise in general. Having said that, some personal background and context obviously needs to be studied.

The authors are a sample, though a limited one at that, of different areas of colonial

¹⁰ The *Völkisch* movement (“folkish movement”) in Germany was an ethnic and nationalist movement active from the late 1800s up until the Nazi era. It was a form of ethnonationalism embodying the idea of organic communities based on the concept of *Blut und Boden* (“blood and soil”). It can be seen as a heterogenous set of beliefs that rose in opposition to modernity. In a colonial context, it rejected “old” conservatism as well as a liberal outlook on colonial discourse.

life. Theodor Leutwein was the governor of German Southwest Africa, and thus represents the highest political power in the colony. Gustav Frenssen was a novelist whose book (quoted in the beginning) was a hallmark of colonial fiction rooted in actual events. Adda von Liliencron was the first chairwoman of the *Frauenbund* of the German Colonial Society¹¹ and, alongside Clara Brockmann, was responsible for German women's contribution to colonial debate. All of them wrote on Southwest Africa specifically, and we will dive into their work in the following chapters. These writers are by no means representative of all the colonial discourse of their time, but I find that they each represent different areas of colonial literature and hold similar and at times opposing views of one another.

A crucial angle, in studying how and why colonial fantasies transformed in German Southwest Africa, is the angle of *gender*. I have chosen two male and two female writers to illuminate the differences and similarities in the views of both female and male authors. By this binary division into male and female authors, I do not intend to deny the variety of gender identities but simply to approach the subject at hand from the same starting point as for example historian Lora Wildenthal did. In German colonial discourse, as Wildenthal has noted¹², a notable change in views held was influenced by women writing on colonial issues.

Also, as stated before, the works studied here will be works written both during and after the colonial war – this is to highlight the influence the war had on the views of colonial writers – both male and female. Mainly the gendered point of view in this study refers to the over-arching connection to racial relations, gender relations and colonial management, which will be addressed at many points during this study. These lines of colonial discourse are what Wildenthal called “*A New Colonial Masculinity*” and “*A New Colonial Femininity*” in her book *German Women for Empire 1884-1945*.¹³

One more important aspect of this study in the wider context of writing academic history must be mentioned here. The relationship between the academic study of history and the concept of memory have been an important observation in recent works of history and especially of colonial history.¹⁴ Memory has been either seen as a part of writing history, categorically opposed to it, or, for

¹¹ In English: Women's League of The German Colonial Society (since 1908), founded in 1907 as the German-Colonial Women's League

¹² Wildenthal, 2001, *passim*.

¹³ Wildenthal, 2001, 79-171.

¹⁴ Jotain tähän!!

example, as a moral obligation of contemporary writers to the forgotten, down-trodden and marginalized peoples and individuals of the past.¹⁵ The latter notion of history, in conjuncture with ideas of truth and justice, is closely tied with the study at hand here. Writing on colonized peoples, such as the Herero and Nama in Southwest Africa, one must do justice to the narratives of the peoples themselves. Thus, I will include in this study some documents that give voice to these colonized peoples through primary sources of the Herero and Nama themselves. I find it important to read these sources alongside the German writers (who are, nevertheless, the main focus of this study), as to paint a more comprehensive picture of Southwest African society at the time. As Geoffrey Cubit writes on *'memorialization'* in his book on the connections and separations between history and memory:

*"Restoring women, slaves and proletarians to their rightful place in the historical record presumably means not only remembering that they existed but according a kind of moral recognition to their interests and perspectives, so that they can be classed as full participants in history, rather than as irredeemably subordinate actors.—"*¹⁶

More often than not, the marginalized group is left marginalized in a historical account even if the historian's intent is good. Victims are left as victims and perpetrators as perpetrators in a sort of good versus evil narrative that has tended to be the overriding way of looking at things from a moral standpoint in much of (read: western) historical self-understanding. This binary moral standpoint, I will try to avoid in this study to the best of my abilities. Cubit continues by extending the moral obligation to 'the dark side' as well:

*"—But can we, within the same frame of historical consciousness, accord the same kind and degree of moral recognition to the interests and perspectives of Gestapo agents? If we cannot, then there is still a kind of selectiveness in our supposedly holistic historical remembering."*¹⁷

What this means for this study on colonial writers in German Southwest Africa, that is the colonizers, is, that I will attempt to read them too with the same emphasis on *'memorialization'* as their colonized counterparts. To understand the minds and actions of people like the colonial

¹⁵ For example: Cubit, 2007, *passim*.

¹⁶ Cubit, 2007, 57.

¹⁷ *ibid*

governor Leutwein or the travel writer Brockmann, we must handle them with the same care as their marginalised neighbors. All in all, I will attempt to read both the colonizers and the colonized with the same respect, in order to uncover some fragments of the mindset of these historical actors in their respective contexts. An objectivist notion of 'truth' in historical study, however, must be treated as an unreachable goal – the views of the historian himself, the historical actors themselves and historical explanations in general tend to be subjective first, rather than attain some objective notion of a universal 'truth'.

1.3 Disposition

First, in chapter two I will discuss the theme of colonial fantasies and how they were imported into the actual colonial enterprise in imperial Germany's foremost settler colony – Southwest Africa. My goal is to bring the colonial fantasies of pre-unified Germany, described by Susanne Zantop, into the period of formal colonialism of the German Empire. My focus in this chapter will be on finding the links between *latent colonialism* – that is the “*unspecific drive for colonial possession*”¹⁸ that manifested itself in Germany since the 1770s as a *colonial subjectivity* of writers tackling issues of colonial rule and Germany's (missing) role in it – with the actual German colonial enterprise and its agents in Southwest Africa. During the phase of Germany's pre-colonial history, as Zantop has discovered, more and more importance was placed on questions of colonial benevolence, and this grew into a *collective obsession* in Germany by the late 1800s.¹⁹ In this chapter, I will situate the memoirs of Theodor Leutwein in the genre of *colonial fantasies* they replicate in the early 20th century. I will first go through Leutwein's system of governance and a brief history of Southwest Africa, and then analyze the relationship between Leutwein and the Nama leader Hendrik Witbooi.

In Chapter three, I will examine how the fantasies studied in the previous chapter were challenged and transformed in the actual settler colonial context of Southwest Africa, in the beginning of the 20th century. One larger theme in German colonial discourse at the turn of the 20th century was the emergence of female colonial writers, whose aim was to take part in, and connect, the colonial discourse in the colonies and metropolitan Germany.²⁰ Much of the running themes of German colonial thinking, practiced also in German colonial rule for some time, were challenged

¹⁸ Zantop, 1997, 2.

¹⁹ Zantop, 1997, *ibid.*

²⁰ Wildenthal, 2001, *passim.*

during this time with the introduction of scientific racism, the women's movement, and pan-German nationalism. In this chapter, I will also parallel and juxtapose Southwest Africa's native experiences with the German colonizers' experiences. My main source for uncovering native voices will be the infamous *Blue Book*, a report published by British investigators in 1918 on the "war atrocities" conducted by the German colonial rulers against the Herero and Nama peoples during the colonial war of 1904-08.²¹ As the reader will learn, the document is quite controversial in its own right, however, it is also one of the few written sources that have actual collected testimonies by the victims and witnesses of the colonial war and the genocide of 1904-08.

Finally, I conclude the study by showing how colonial fantasies, born in a colonial context, were also fundamentally transformed in that very same context. I will discuss, how colonial fantasies were challenged and transformed both internally by the colonizers themselves and externally by the colonized.

²¹ Silvester, J, et al. *Words cannot be found: German colonial rule in Namibia: an annotated reprint of the 1918 Blue Book*, BRILL, 2003.

2. “*Old Africa Hands*” – Fantasies of Conquest and Power

2.1. Colonial Fantasies in Practice

“Indeed, the drive for colonial possession – and by this I mean actual control over territories and resources as well as control over the body and labor of human beings – articulated itself not so much in statements of intent as in “colonial fantasies”: stories of sexual conquest and surrender, love and blissful domestic relations between colonizer and colonized, set in colonial territory, stories that made the strange familiar, and the familiar “familial”. ”²²

Reading this quote by Susanne Zantop on colonial fantasies, the reader might think that the headline of the chapter here is quite the oxymoron. However, this is intentional. Zantop’s interest in the drive for colonial possession was rooted in German colonial discourse before the unification of the German Empire in 1871, while mine is in the following period of formal German colonialism and more precisely in the beginning of the 20th century. The stories of sexual conquest and familial encounters, that Zantop describes in the passage above, were found in anything from children’s adventure literature to philosophical treatises that echoed a sense of yearning for colonial possessions at a time when Germany was notably lacking them. To say that colonial fantasies could be brought to practice is in this sense a little off – unless one thinks that these fantasies were being fulfilled and realized after Germany acquired its colonial lands in the late 19th century.

Colonial fantasies, as Zantop describes them, had two main characteristics. They were stories of sexual conquest and surrender – stories where the German would assert *his* dominance by conquering the land and its resources as well as the population. For many colonial writers up until the late 19th century, what colonial rule essentially meant, was raising the German flag, extracting resources and wealth from the land, and making strategic (albeit unequal) treaties with native nations and tribes to assert German dominance. Often heard concepts of the “white man’s burden” or the “noble savage” are part of this line of “classic” colonial thinking – products of colonial fantasies of the precolonial period in Germany. This line of thinking – the importing of colonial fantasies by colonial writers into German Southwest Africa – will be the subject of this chapter.

²² Zantop, 1997, 2.

The other characteristic is the way these stories made the familiar familiar. A lot of the debate of the early 20th century on colonial policy took place in the colonial household. Familial relations were the frontline to many colonialists, especially for female writers, who argued that the colonial household should be kept racially and culturally pure and German by eradicating most intimate relations between white Germans and their native subordinates. The danger of losing the Germanness of Southwest Africa was expressed with words such as *verkaffern* or *verburen*.²³ This was at odds with the idea of sexual conquest – a sort of masculine line of colonial thinking – as it explicitly attacked interracial relations as something that endangered the *Germanness* or *Deutschtum* of the colony.²⁴ The familial will be returned to in chapter three, where the challenge to colonial fantasies imported from the precolonial era will be analyzed. A new sort of German settler colonial fantasy was voiced by female colonialists such as Clara Brockmann.

I find Zantop's reasoning for using the term *fantasy* quite appealing. The stories, she studied, were fundamentally imaginary and wish-fulfilling in nature.²⁵ One might think that this is only the case with works from the precolonial period, but as I will show with my chosen sample of works here, the same was true with colonial literature written during the colonial period itself too. The yearning for colonial possession did not end with protection treaties and armed conquest of the lands of Southwest Africa, East Africa, Togo, Cameroon, Qingdao, Samoa, and other Pacific territories but continued throughout the colonial period itself. One must understand the mindset of many of these colonial writers when they saw the conquest as ongoing. The conquest of German Southwest Africa was not finished when the prefix *German* was added to the name. Rather, the conquest truly only began when chancellor Bismarck in 1884 proclaimed "imperial protection" over territories the tobacco merchant Adolf Lüderitz had acquired, in what was later to become German Southwest Africa. This was the beginning of the conquest of the land and its resources, but as by now we know, the conquest of the collective mind of Germans and their subordinates had already been under way for a long time. Questions of what comes after the acquisition of territories and people, were being voiced gradually during these formative years of the colony. What was a German colony supposed to look like? How German can a far-away piece of African soil really be? And what action was required if the colony was not German enough? Already, these questions touch on deep

²³ Racially motivated terms, analogous with the English phrase 'going native' that meant losing the racial and cultural identity of a colony. *Verkaffern* refers to the black population of Africa and *verburen* to the Boers, people of mainly Dutch descent in Southern Africa.

²⁴ For example, Brockmann, 1910 & 1912, *passim*.

²⁵ Zantop, 1997, 3.

levels of German self-understanding and the collective imagination of the colonizers and their outlook on the world.

As for the authors, who will be studied, an important development in the world of colonial fantasies was the emergence of travelling – and of course, travel writing. Travelling within western Europe became more and more affordable and popular in the 18th century. Zantop quotes an anonymous German commentator who states that: “*No other era in world history has known more travelers than our century, indeed, traveling has become an epidemic.*”²⁶. The sheer volume of travelogues being published in German states from the 18th century onwards was huge and the number kept on growing in the 19th and 20th centuries.²⁷ Travel writing has been seen as a sort of popular genre of low quality works and was (and perhaps still is) not considered a part of the canon of high literature. What was important in the 18th century trend of increased travelling and travel writing, was its “bourgeoisification” – that is literature being written by and written to the masses and the middle class of society rather than just the aristocracy.²⁸ Travel writing begun with adventurous individuals sharing their experiences from abroad to the ever-growing reading public and ended up being a hugely popular literary genre of its own.

However, for a long time, German travel writing from outside of Europe was miniscule as British and French explorers and travelers made most of the transcontinental journeys of exploration. This cemented the Germans into the role of “armchair conquistadors”²⁹ who would eventually reflect upon the exploits of other Europeans from a sort of a moral highground. The conquest and colonization of South America by the Spanish and Portuguese, for example, was a violent and bloody one, which allowed German contemporaries room to criticize and reflect and assert themselves into an imaginary role of better colonizers. A lack of colonies of their own for a host of German philosophers, authors and early colonial advocates gave room for “a Conquest of The Intellect” – perhaps a better way of gaining a colonial empire was possible that could be achieved by Germans?³⁰ Observing other colonizing powers conquering lands abroad, laid the foundation for the *Koloniallegende* (colonial legend) of Germans as better colonizers.

²⁶ “Über die vielen Reisebeschreibungen in unseren Tagen”, *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 4 (1787), 325., quoted in Zantop, 1997, 31.

²⁷ Already between 1770 and 1800, when book production doubled in Germany, travelogues alone increased by a factor of five. Zantop, 1997, 32.

²⁸ Zantop, 1997, 31-32.

²⁹ A term by Susanne Zantop. After Columbus’s “Discovery”, even the European bystanders such as the Germans, went through a process of “material/physical, epistemological/intellectual, and emotional appropriation”, Zantop, 1997, 17.

³⁰ Zantop, 1997, 31-65.

Each of the four authors studied in this paper could be considered both travel writers and commentators of key colonial discourses in the beginning of the 20th century. Each of them can also be read through the lense of the colonial legend, as they all evoked images of some sort of better colonial rule. They all had something to say about, how relations between the colonizer and the colonized should be organized in Southwest Africa, how the conquest of the land should be brought about, how German colonial rule differed from others', and how different areas of colonial life were part of the bigger picture. The danger in analyzing German writers as a separate entity from others is the lure of the *Sonderweg* ('separate course') thesis. Zantop addresses this line of historical study briefly in the introduction to her book, and states that, her goal is not to study whether or not the Germans were different from others. Her goal was to study "*a sense of German difference that grew out of specific historical realities in the late 1700s and early 1800s*".³¹ In other words, her intent was not to study actual differences between Germans and others, but perceived differences – that is essentially, colonial fantasies. The same is true with the study at hand here – my aim is not to follow a *Sonderweg*, but to discover traces of precolonial fantasies in colonial texts.

Let us now analyze the first of these authors, the governor of German Southwest Africa, Theodor Leutwein, and his memoirs *Elf Jahre Gouverneur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika* (1906).³² Leutwein was born on 9 May 1849 in Strumpfelbronn, Baden-Baden, and was a son of a Lutheran pastor. He studied law in Freiburg, went through military service and continued a soldier's career by attending the military academy. He rose through the ranks during service in metropolitan Germany and was eventually suggested to Chancellor von Caprivi, the Imperial Chancellor who succeeded Bismarck after his dismissal by the Kaiser, for the job of settling the Wibooi War and territorial command of the colony. He was appointed first as colonial administrator and in 1898 as the governor of Southwest Africa. Leutwein died on 13 April 1921.³³

As I see it, he can be considered the embodiment of an "*old Africa hand*" – a phrase voiced by Frieda von Bülow, a prominent female colonialist. Although she was active in German East Africa at the time, her self-characterization speaks volumes of the general state of colonial discourse in Germany and could be applied to Leutwein too:

³¹ Zantop, 1997, 8.

³² In English: "Eleven Years as Governor in German Southwest Africa"

³³ Bley, 1971, 4. (Personal file of Leutwein in *Weltwirtschaftsarchiv*, Hamburg; also personal documents in DZA Potsdam, *Gouvernement für SWA* 1104.)

*“— That is always what happens to me: for the conservatives I am too modern, for the moderns I am too conservative. For the old Africa hands I am too much of a literary type, and for the literary types I am too much of an old Africa hand —”*³⁴

The “old Africa hands” were the practical men in the colonies, seen by many as detached from the racial debate that colonialist women such as Bülow were passionate about. Leutwein is an interesting cross-section of this old thinking and the emergence of a strong critique of it within the colonial discourse. He was a man of action and not the “literary type” that Bülow describes. Leutwein was appointed to his post to solve a problem, the Witbooi War, and his way of dealing with this issue is very informative to his policies and attitudes.

2.2. Conquest and Surrender – Leutwein’s Protection Treaties

*“The way our dominance in Southwest Africa was put up, was namely the conclusion of treaties, in which the native chiefs gave up a part of their governmental power for a promise of protection [from us]. But the ones who, in the name of the Reich, promised this protection had not the slightest power [to do so].”*³⁵

If the German chancellor Bismarck had decreed “imperial protection” over Southwest Africa in 1884, it certainly was not much more than a nominal declaration of the German Empire’s right to the land. This declaration was aimed at other imperial powers rather than the people inhabiting Southwest Africa. In actuality, German rule at this time did not extend much beyond the walls of some mission stations of the Rhenish Missionary Society³⁶ and a couple of military outposts in the region. The task at hand for those in German colonialist circles, was to bring the German rule from theory into practice. Until German armed forces and settlers would control the land and its

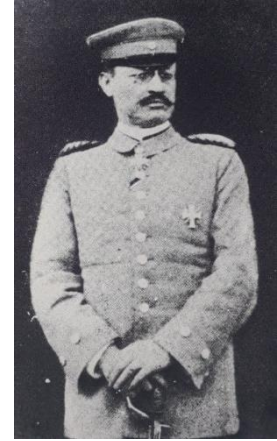
³⁴ LASA, Bülow to Lou Andreas-Salomé, 10 February 1897. Quoted in Wildenthal, 2001, 67. Emphasized and cut by myself.

³⁵ On the formation of German dominance in Southwest Africa in the 1890s: Leutwein, 1906, 13. *“Die Art der Aufrichtung unserer Herrschaft in Südwestafrika war nämlich der Abschluß von Verträgen, in denen die Eingeborenen-Häuptlinge einen Teil ihrer Regierungsgewalt an uns angaben und dafür das Versprechen des Schutzes erhielten. Aber diejenigen, die im Namen des Reiches diesen Schutz versprochen, hatten hierzu nicht die geringste Macht.”*

³⁶ The most prominent missionary society in German Southwest Africa. It had missions all across the colony with the exception of Ovamboland in the north. Here the missionary work was done by the Finnish Missionary Society since 1870.

resources – and indeed, its population – the *Schutzgebiet* (literally “protection area”) would be only nominally German. It was imperative to bring imperial protection to the local levels of governance through “protection treaties” with native tribes and nations in Southwest Africa, to turn the fantasy of a German settler colony into reality.

Thus, the German colonial administration since the 1890s engaged in a series of protection treaties with native tribes and nations of Southwest Africa to bring about German dominance over the entire colony. The aim was to pacify the various groups of the colony under German protection, that the colonial government in Windhoek would offer. In exchange for giving up their independence, autonomous political power, and weapons – including firearms, which were in relatively plentiful supply among the native nations at the time³⁷ – the groups would be integrated into the colonial system and given protection from their native enemies. However, as the quote above from the memoirs of Theodor Leutwein, the governor of German Southwest Africa between 1894-1904, shows, German rule up until his reign was largely nominal and any protection treaties, that were made, could not really be enforced. But why would any of these native groups need protection, and from whom?



THEODOR LEUTWEIN
(Bley, 1971, xxxvii)

Many of the native Herero and Nama tribes and nations in Southwest Africa had been fighting wars for decades over cattle and grazing grounds for said cattle. As Gesine Krüger has noted, 19th century Namibia (before the German conquest at the end of the century) was characterized by radical changes that were not so much brought about by the German colonialists and missionaries but by the development of trade links to the Cape region in South Africa and movements of peoples both from the north and the south.³⁸

The dominant group in central Southwest Africa at the time were the Herero³⁹, a group that had migrated from Central Africa over a long period to the Southwest and established themselves as pastoralist cattle farmers. In fact, the term ‘Herero’ originally meant no more than ‘possessor of cattle’, as historian Dag Henrichsen has stated.⁴⁰ Early to mid 19th century in Namibia was characterized by the ‘Herero golden age’ as the Herero tribes had acquired large herds of cattle

³⁷ For example, Bley, 1971, 4.

³⁸ Krüger, Gesine: “*The Golden Age of Pastoralists – Namibia in the 19th Century*”, in Zimmerer & Zeller, 2003, 8.

³⁹ The *Herero* are a Bantu people that migrated to Southwest Africa from the north at some point in the sixteenth century. Unlike many of their Bantu counterparts who were mainly subsistence farmers, they engaged in pastoralism in the form of cattle-herding.

⁴⁰ Quoted by Krüger in Zimmerer & Zeller, 2003, 9.

and a dominant position in the northern and central plains of Southwest Africa by the second half of the century. Cattle herding indeed was the main livelihood in the region and thus also the main cause of conflict between the Herero and their newly-found rivals from the south – the Nama. As Helmut Bley noted, long before the death of the paramount chief of the Herero, Maharero, in 1890, the stability of the area had been shattered. Notions of peaceful and stable tribal relations that were destroyed by foreign (German) invasion, simply aren't true. The Herero had been at war with the Nama for twenty years (1863-1870 and 1880-1892), which had removed the last remnants of any sort of political equilibrium in the region.⁴¹ This political vacuum would then be filled by an aggressive colonial administration seeking to act as intermediary between the various warring tribes and nations.

The Nama⁴² are introduced to the larger picture of Southwest African society in the beginning of the 19th century with the so-called *Orlam conquest* or *Orlam migration*. The Orlam were a migratory group from the Cape region, who managed to establish themselves in Southwest Africa during the 19th century. Migrating north ahead of Boer expansion towards inland South Africa, they moved across the Orange River and integrated previously migrated Nama tribes living north of the river into their systems of governance – thus the Orlam and Nama are often referred to as the Nama-Orlam.⁴³ Between 1830 and 1865, the southern Namaqualand and Central Namibia were subjugated by the Orlam captain Jonker Afrikaner, whose *Kommandos* (small groups of armed and mounted men) carried out raids deep into Herero territory in the north and managed to vassalize many of the Herero tribes in the area. This phase of 19th century Namibian history has been called the period of 'Orlam hegemony'. In German colonial literature the Nama groups are often collectively referred to as '*Hottentots*', a derogatory term for the various groups in question.

It should be noted, that the wars, between various Herero and Nama nations were not fought with spears and slingshots but usually with rifles bought from markets in the Cape region and elsewhere. Narratives of savage tribes fighting each other in perpetual warfare, which is the starting point of much of the colonial literature that follows, thus aren't exactly accurate. Wars were certainly fought, but with relatively modern means between groups embracing modern warfare. The main native groups also largely embraced Christianity, already before their

⁴¹ Bley, 1971, *xxi*.

⁴² *Nama* or *Namaqua* refers to a branch of the Khoikhoi people native to Southern Africa. Within the Nama, one can find various different tribal groups, e.g. The Red Nation and the Witbooi-Nama. Collectively, the Nama are considered an ethnic group.

⁴³ Krüger in Zimmerer & Zeller, 2003, 10.

subjugation under the Germans – which is certainly a sign of transnational contacts reaching native groups if anything.

In addition to the Herero and Nama, who are arguably more central to this study, Southwest Africa had many other ethnic groups within the area as well. Today, Namibia's most populous ethnic group is the Ovambo, who in the beginning of the 20th century mainly inhabited the northern parts of the region near the border of Portuguese Angola. German colonial administration never managed to penetrate the Ovamboland, and thus the Ovambo were left largely to their own devices with the occasional Finnish missionary making inroads to their communities.⁴⁴ Lastly, there were the San peoples, sometimes referred to as 'Bushmen', who are perhaps the original inhabitants of Southwest Africa.⁴⁵

The various wars and smaller skirmishes that were fought between Nama and Herero tribes and nations led to Southwest Africa being labelled a territory of lawlessness, warfare, and anarchy – a sort of Wild West of the Southwest. This take on the situation, however, is more in line with the views held by the Germans in the land, such as the future governor Theodor Leutwein. The quote in the beginning of this chapter shows, how he did not lament on the protection treaties being unequal or demeaning towards the tribes and nations signing them with the German colonial government, but insufficient in real power. The problem was not the method of bringing about peace and German rule over the land, but the fact that the Germans were in the minority and in a precarious situation with their numerous native neighbors.

The latest clash in the beginning of the 1890s between the colonial administration and native tribes in the area, was the growing hostilities between the Witbooi Nama, situated at Hornkraans in the Namaland in the southern parts of the colony. The Witbooi, led by the famous Hendrik Witbooi, waging guerrilla warfare against the Germans, offered a true test to Leutwein's policy of negotiations. This war, the Witbooi War, had started before his appointment when *Landeshauptmann* Curt von François launched a surprise attack against the Witbooi in 1893. This attack turned out to be a failure which partly resulted in a new way of establishing German rule in Southwest Africa. Leutwein was the instrument of Imperial Chancellor von Caprivi's new colonial policy in 1893 – the aim was to keep Southwest Africa in German hands and not to abandon it

⁴⁴ Since 1870, The Finnish Missionary Society had been doing missionary work in northern Namibia. The Rhenish Missionary Society did not have the resources to extend their missionary network to Ovamboland so they resorted to their fellow protestant Christians, the Finns, to establish missionary work there.

⁴⁵ On the ethnic groups of Namibia/Southwest Africa and a short history of the area before 1890; Bley, 1971, *xxi-xxvi*.

because of its economic poverty.⁴⁶ This was to be done with as little cost as possible to the German Reich, and Leutwein seemed to be the man to do this, since his method of conquest and colonial rule did not include much expensive warfare but rather tried to minimize costs by extending German rule by diplomatic means. It might seem absurd to go through the trouble of drafting unequal treaties, that have no other significance besides a sort of self-legitimization of colonial conquest, but one must understand, that at the time the alternative was direct warfare and no negotiating whatsoever. This was a position the German colonial administration could not afford at the time – not in monetary means nor in military means. The strategy of making treaties was ultimately a way to dismantle unity among the opposition to German rule by tethering the tribes to the colonial administration economically and legally.

This brings us to the views held by these “old Africa hands” such as Leutwein, who envisioned colonial rule as rule *over* the land and its resources – as well as rule over the native peoples inhabiting the land itself. The aim was not just to establish German rule over the territory but also over the people inhabiting the land. The way the German colonialists would assert themselves as the dominant group and authority in the colony, was to first be the mediator between groups locked in warfare with one another, and then subjugate them all under the colonial government in Windhoek. This system of governance has been called the ‘Leutwein system’ – named after the man who oversaw it. It is also a manifestation of the fantasy of *conquest and surrender*, that Susanne Zantop described – the rational German man bringing peace into the land through a series of treaties. In connection to this colonial policy, some German colonists also engaged in intimate relations with the natives, even in the form of some interracial marriages as part of deal-making with local tribes and nations. It was not the “barbaric” and violent way of colonizing that was seen earlier in the conquest of South America by the Spanish and Portuguese, but a “civilized” way of taking over. But if making treaties and enacting colonial policy was Leutwein’s way of conquering the land, who was it that he attempted to parle with?

⁴⁶ Bley, 1971, 3.

2.3. Leutwein and Witbooi – A Rivalry of Equals?

“Which of us two is fit to make peace, you or I?”⁴⁷

One way, Leutwein shows his attitude toward the natives in the Southwest and his policy towards them, is the inclusion of commentary of himself as the governor, and of the most prominent Nama leader of his day, Hendrik Witbooi⁴⁸, in his memoirs.⁴⁹ Commentary of Witbooi begins with a chapter titled *Unser erster Zusammenstoß mit Witbooi*⁵⁰, a chapter on the growing hostility of the Nama and their captain Hendrik Witbooi, and then continues throughout the book. Leutwein describes the Witbooi Nama and their resistance to German colonial rule through remarks of his own. He also occasionally refers to his predecessor Curt von François, whose surprise attack on Hornkraans, the seat of Witbooi’s power, had started the war between the two sides. A staunch believer in the “bloodless conquest” of the land, Leutwein evidently gives a lot of credit to his efforts of (unequal) diplomacy as opposed to his predecessor’s aggressive approach. This chapter is about governor Leutwein’s approach to dealing with the situation in the colony during his tenure – what did Leutwein think about his foremost rivals on the native side, and how do his attitudes embody the colonial fantasies of benevolent rule, discussed earlier?

Leutwein writes in his memoirs on the various native chiefs under a separate chapter titled *Die Häuptlinge des Schutzgebietes*.⁵¹ In the beginning of this chapter, Leutwein reminds the reader of the protection treaties between the various tribes and the German colonial government. It is noteworthy that, despite the treaties being very unequal between the signatories, Leutwein still recognizes the political power the various tribal heads hold. He tells the reader that, “*a precondition to understanding [the treaties] is hereby also the knowledge of the personalities of the the powerful native chiefs and their political positions.*”⁵² Here, we will concentrate on Leutwein’s descriptions

⁴⁷ “*Wer ist würdiger von uns beiden, Frieden zu Machen, Du oder ich?*” Witbooi in 1894, quoted by Leutwein, 1906, 16.

⁴⁸ Hendrik Witbooi (c.1830 – 1905) was the leader of the Witbooi Nama, a subgroup of the Nama. He engaged in guerilla warfare against other tribal groups and the Germans. He died on the field fighting against the Germans in 1905. Jonker Afrikaner, mentioned earlier, was Witbooi’s uncle.

⁴⁹ Leutwein, 1906, 15-39, 297-306.

⁵⁰ In English: “*Our first clash with Witbooi*”, Leutwein, 1906, 15-21.

⁵¹ Leutwein, 1906, 297-327. In English: “*The Chiefs of the Colony*”

⁵² Leutwein, 1906, 297. “*Vorbedingung des Verständnisses hierfür ist jedoch auch die Kenntnis von den Persönlichkeiten der mächtigen eingeborenen Häuptlinge und ihrer politischen Stellung.*”

of the Nama chief Hendrik Witbooi, who could be considered the main rival to German power and thus Leutwein as its wielder. As I have already mentioned, Witbooi is mentioned often in Leutwein's memoirs and is without a doubt a key figure in Leutwein's tenure as governor of Southwest Africa. In addition to Witbooi, Leutwein also writes of the other powerful native chief in Southwest Africa, the Herero chief Samuel Maharero. These two native chiefs were probably the biggest obstacles to the expansion of German rule in the land, a fact that Leutwein himself also recognizes:

“Next there are two men to mention, whose influence – one in the north, the other in the south – with regards to the solution of the question, whether the colony will develop peacefully or in a bellicose manner, tips the balance”⁵³

It is telling, however, that the responsibility of the colony's peaceful future is given to the two tribal leaders, and not so much the colonial government. Leutwein obviously considers his task at hand – conducting treaties with the tribes – is work aimed at achieving peace in the land. This pacifying effort is the driving motivation in Leutwein's thinking and it seems the native population is given a conscious choice in whether to accept the “legitimate” rule of the Germans in Southwest Africa. If there is to be war, as result of Leutwein's (or anyone else's, for that matter) actions, the fault will lie on the native side. I find that Leutwein's writings on his adversaries and occasional partners in diplomacy echo a sort of lamentation on the fact, that they did not seem to see the benevolence in accepting German rule and the olive branch Leutwein saw himself as offering. Instead of a peaceful co-existence, they chose war and their self-destruction. And instead of a peaceful solution to the land issue under Leutwein's governorship, he had to be replaced by a military type in Lothar von Trotha in 1904.

Leutwein sees the power of these native chiefs to be different from each other. He explains, how Maharero's power rested on the large number of his underlings, and Witbooi's on his personality.⁵⁴ Leutwein also mentions two other chiefs, Manasse in Omaruru and Wilhelm Christian in Warmbad, whom he also considers as holding considerable sway in the affairs of the colony. I will concentrate here on Leutwein's thoughts on Hendrik Witbooi, who

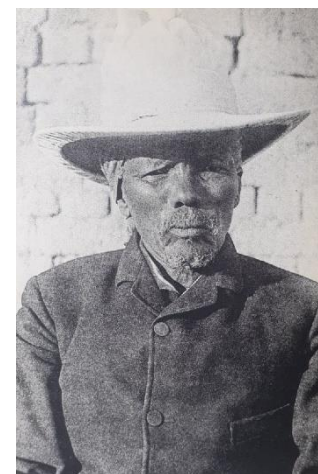
⁵³ Leutwein, 1906, 298. *“Da sind zunächst zwei Männer zu nennen, deren Einfluß – des einen im Norden, des anderen im Süden – bei Lösung der Frage, ob dem Schutzgebiete eine friedliche oder eine kriegerische Entwicklung beschieden sei, in die Wagschale fiel.”*

⁵⁴ Leutwein, 1906, 298.

Leutwein himself considers to be “*in the vanguard*” of the four chiefs and captains he mentions.⁵⁵

Witbooi represented a very real threat to the German colonial enterprise in Southwest Africa. As we have learned, German rule over the vast territory was nominal at best at the time when Leutwein was appointed governor. For example, historian Adam A. Blackler notes, how the staunch refusal by Hendrik Witbooi to sign treaties with the German imperial authorities forced the Germans to confront their administrative limitations in the colony. Blackler also mentions, in this instance, how “*the façade of imperial fantasies gave way to colonial reality*”.⁵⁶ My thesis here is in the same vein as Blackler’s in stating, that the challenge of native resistance alongside internal resistance of the colonizers themselves, forced the Germans to reconsider and reforge their ideas of colonial rule. In essence, colonial (and/or imperial) fantasies were put into practise out of necessity. The person Leutwein engages with in diplomacy, captain Hendrik Witbooi, is seen as the ‘noble savage’ – someone to be guided from his warring path towards civil co-existence under German rule. As it turned out, this guidance was harder to achieve in actual relations with Witbooi, than prevalent assumptions in line with colonial fantasies of benevolent rule would suggest.

Hendrik Witbooi has often been characterized as a sort of religious mystic and later, during the emergence of the modern nation state of Namibia, as a national hero of anti-colonial resistance. It is noteworthy though, as one can observe by reading Witbooi’s preserved archive, his ‘diaries’, that he himself justified his own rise to prominence in the language of Christian religion.⁵⁷ Witbooi was born somewhere around the year 1830 in Pella, south of the Orange river (in South Africa). It seems that already in his early age, he experienced religious visions that would later guide his life. As the South African historian Tilman Dederling notes, Witbooi had extensive contacts to various Christian missionary groups (including the Rhenish Mission Society/RMS, the most prominent missionary organisation in Southwest Africa), already in the 1860s, when German rule over Southwest Africa was not yet realized.⁵⁸ The



HENDRIK WITBOOI
(Bley, 1971, xxxv)

⁵⁵ Leutwein, 1906, 298.

⁵⁶ Blackler, 2017, 1.

⁵⁷ Dederling, 1993, 54.

⁵⁸ Dederling, 1993, 57.

contacts to Germans were thus in place already before the following clashes with the expansive settler population and the colonial government. For example, Dederling notes, that Witbooi was taught to read and write by the Rhenish missionary Johannes Olpp and baptized in 1868. Witbooi even became a church elder either in 1872 or 1876.⁵⁹ Leutwein too starts his descriptions of Witbooi with remarks about his role as a “*religious mystic*”.⁶⁰ The aforementioned missionary Olpp is cited here as describing Witbooi as follows: “*a man that has no faults*”⁶¹, a description that Leutwein does not contest immediately but rather seems to take as granted. This seems to imply, that Leutwein somewhat agrees with his compatriot about the virtuous character of Witbooi as a native that had turned the page on his primitive past to embrace modernity with all its benefits – Christian faith included.

This to me echoes a typical colonial fantasy of the civilizing mission, as in trying to turn the native into at least a semi-civilized person, a sort of mirror image of the colonizer. The fact that Witbooi had embraced Christianity with such enthusiasm, seems to count as a net positive among the German colonizers, even though the Christianity that Witbooi and his people practised was not exactly the established Protestantism that the Germans probably were used to, but had its own African characteristics of syncretism and evangelical ingredients of visions and salvation theology. Of course, one must also keep in mind, that the large number of converts to Christianity among the peoples of Southern Africa, is also a reaction to the ever-increasing colonial pressure that made itself felt across the region. Witbooi evidently was truly a believer in the teachings of Christianity, but it is worthwhile to think about the motivations behind the decision to convert for the people at large. Perhaps conversion to Christianity also offered new economic opportunities in a region, as discussed before, vivid with trading links across the Cape. Perhaps, in a colonial setting, the conversion to Christianity could also be a way to gain legitimacy as a kind of citizen – after all, if one embraces all the facets of modernity, from the teachings of Christianity to the breech-loaded rifle, can one really be classified as primitive any longer? As later events in Southwest Africa show us, that we will discuss in chapter three, it still seems so.

Leutwein obviously has relative respect for his counterpart, who was considered by many, even the German colonialists, as a fierce military commander and a force to be reckoned with. He continues his description of Witbooi as follows:

⁵⁹ Dederling, 1993, 57.

⁶⁰ Leutwein, 1906, 299.

⁶¹ Leutwein, 1906, 299.

“But in one and a half year of fighting, Witbooi had made victory questionable for us, and proved himself as an accomplished master in African warfare.”⁶²

Leutwein describes retrospectively, how during these times, the German Empire did not want to use violent means in Southwest Africa, to achieve its goal of pacifying the region – unless there were justified reasons for the use of force. Leutwein comments on the underlying conflict among the Germans, on how to deal with the task at hand, and tells the reader, how the power balance had shifted. Leutwein mentions, as an example, the number of rifles in the *Schutzgebiet* – during his reign there had been approximately 500 rifles and two cannons at their disposal, and how now (in 1906, at the time of the publishing of his memoirs) the numbers were roughly 15 000 and 40 respectively.⁶³ In stating these figures, Leutwein lays bare the disadvantaged position the German colonial administration found itself in, when the tribes they were meant to subjugate, actually at times were the dominant force in the colony – an uncomfortable reality for the settler population aiming to exert their dominance. Even though being an advocate for negotiations, Leutwein also makes a nod towards his predecessor von François:

“Then in Africa, peace could not be restored just by achieving victory, but only through extermination, that required certain excess of force.”⁶⁴

The ever-present dilemma can once again be found, whether to engage in unequal diplomacy with tribes that understandably resented it, or to resort to overt violence to assert German rule. Both Leutwein’s predecessor von François and his successor von Trotha can be classified as advocates of the latter, and Leutwein too seems to understand the perceived necessity for such actions, when it is “justified”, as discussed before. This dilemma is also what my thesis here is about. To remind the reader, the question is, how did it come to be, that attitudes radicalized in the latter years of German colonial rule in Southwest Africa, from those of subjugation to those of destruction?

To summarize, Leutwein evidently sees Witbooi as a relatively respectable leader of his people who can be reasoned with. Unlike many others in German colonialist circles in his day, and especially afterwards, he engages in diplomacy with local authorities, such as Witbooi, and holds a strong belief in conducting treaties with them. This is partly due to necessity – as stated before, German

⁶² Leutwein, 1906, 299. *“Aber in einem eineinhalbjährigen Kampfe hat Witbooi uns dann die Palme des Sieges streitig gemacht und sich als ein vollendeter Meister in der afrikanischen Kriegführung gezeigt.”*

⁶³ Leutwein, 1906, 299.

⁶⁴ Leutwein, 1906, 300. *“Denn in Afrika kann der Friede nicht durch bloßes Erringen von Siegen wiederhergestellt werden, sondern lediglich durch Vernichtungsschläge, zu denen es eines gewissen Überschusses and Kraft bedarf.”*

rule was not yet solidified in the colony – but I would argue, also due to his held views. He embodies colonial fantasies of German masculine authority over natives in need of some sort of ‘fatherly’ guidance and assistance. In much of this ‘old’ colonial thinking, the native is likened to women and children, who in the dominant patronizing attitudes of the time, were considered subordinates to men. The so-called ‘white man’s burden’⁶⁵ – a conception of the white man’s duty of bringing ‘civilization’ to ‘primitives’ in need of it – is engrained in Leutwein’s thinking. This likening of natives to women will also be visited again chapter three, where we will learn, that even German women in their subordinate position in relation to their male counterparts, would embrace ideals of racial hierarchy, albeit with their unique twist.

The previously mentioned “civilized” way of establishing colonial rule seems to be strongly present in Leutwein. The colonial fantasy of benevolent rule by the Germans – as noted, one of the most prevalent and stubborn fantasies about German colonialism – seems to be driving Leutwein’s thinking. He tends to see himself not just as a military commander pacifying a conquered land but as a diplomat and a statesman whose considerations go beyond the simple thoughts of brutish soldier-types. If one wants to draft generalizations of German colonial types in Southwest Africa, it is easy to divide them by this metric. Some, like Leutwein, tended to adhere some resemblance of respect to their opposition in the natives, while most bought the ever more radical racial thinking and saw the natives as lesser in all possible ways. The latter, like von François or Leutwein’s successor general Lothar von Trotha, probably could have avoided a lot of confrontations and bloodshed if they so desired – just like Leutwein evidently did.

As one approaches the turn of the 20th century, it becomes evident that views such as the ones held by Leutwein earlier in his career as the governor are being left in the sidelines in favour of clearly racially motivated thinking. The negotiation tactics used by Leutwein might have seemed to work in the short term, but in the long run the refusal to comply to German colonial rule by native chiefs and captains, like Witbooi or Maharero, kept the original ‘problem’ in place. In many cases, the protection treaties of Leutwein worked, but with some chiefs in key positions, efforts of subjugation were in vain. The aim of Leutwein was to pacify Southwest Africa and establish German dominance over the land and its resources and people with as little cost as possible to the German Reich. The economic realities involved with settler colonialism – that being its immense cost to the

⁶⁵ The phrase *white man’s burden* originates from Rudyard Kipling’s poem with the same name. In German literature a similar phrase can be found. *Kulturträger* translates to a carrier of culture – a role many German colonialists saw themselves occupying.

colonizing power – tended to push the debate in the direction of the views held by ‘imperial patriarchs’⁶⁶. These views of colonization revolved around networks of kinship formed in colonial contacts with native populations and the colonizers such as Leutwein seem to have mainly been interested in manifesting German imperial authority over overseas territories. Colonization in the ‘imperial patriarch’ style was about extracting economic value from colonies, about establishing racial-cultural hierarchies where the white German man would occupy the top role, and about preserving the perceived sexual rights of German men to native women and thus the connections such relationships provided.⁶⁷ This line of thinking among German colonialists is closely connected to the fantasies of sexual conquest and surrender that, in my mind, have more to do with a patriarchal self-imagery of the German men than with racial-scientific notions of racial hierarchies that would become prevalent later on. As Lora Wildenthal has discussed, German men in colonial circles would go to great lengths, to preserve their sexual rights to interracial relations in the face of debates on ‘race mixing’.⁶⁸ In a sense, the boundaries between the settler population and native populations would now be stricter, as opposed to the the situation before. Leutwein’s engagement with people like Hendrik Witbooi would not be possible any longer in the era of racial segregation and a logic of elimination. Even if the rivalry between Leutwein and Witbooi really was not a rivalry of equals, it is still a rivalry. So, in many ways, Witbooi and others like him still hold agency and political power in the era of Leutwein – even in the German colonial literature.

As a matter of fact, in January 1904, this stark difference in held views by the colonial authorities in Southwest Africa comes to the forefront with the unexpected uprising of the Herero. The governor Leutwein was in the southern part of the colony quelling a revolt among the Bondelswarts, one of many Nama tribes in Southwest Africa, when the uprising began in the north. When Leutwein heard of the Herero revolting, he immediately wrote to their leader Samuel Maharero.⁶⁹ This speaks volumes of Leutwein’s way of thinking – instead of mobilizing his forces immediately against the Herero, he still attempts to open channels of diplomacy with their chief. As Helmut Bley writes, Leutwein assumed that Maharero would attempt to justify his actions as to why his people decided to revolt against German rule.⁷⁰ Leutwein’s actions seem to indicate that he was prepared to negotiate once again, like he had done many times before in similar circumstances. However, this

⁶⁶ Wildenthal, 2001, 79-130.

⁶⁷ Wildenthal, 2001, 79-130.

⁶⁸ Wildenthal, 2001, 79. In German: “*Rassenmischung*”

⁶⁹ Bley, 1971, 152-153.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

time the Colonial Department in Southwest Africa insisted upon an explicit permission from the Emperor to engage in negotiations with the rebelling Herero. Despite strong protests by Leutwein, he was not able to get his way. Leutwein was only allowed to pretend to negotiate with Maharero. This is the end of his near autonomous rule as the governor.⁷¹ Leutwein was effectively sidelined during the first weeks of the Herero uprising. He seems to me to be quite naïve and idealistic – both when it comes to his handling of the native tribes as well as the increasingly radical settler population under his authority. The end of Leutwein’s career as the governor, in my mind, is a very tangible manifestation of the challenge to colonial fantasies embodied by him. The challenge to the ‘old’ way of colonial governance toppled his regime – a challenge both from the colonized native tribes in Southwest Africa as well as the settler population. For a while Leutwein still nominally held his position as governor, but eventually Kaiser Wilhelm II was convinced to replace him with general Lothar von Trotha, a man supported by the general staff of the German army and much of the more radical elements of colonial circles in Germany.

These debates on the nature of settler colonial activity also have a direct impact on the way of conquering and governing Southwest Africa. As harsher views prevailed, usually voiced by the colonial population itself as opposed to the aforementioned ‘imperial patriarchs’ like Leutwein, also questions of monetary cost and careful diplomacy seem to take a backseat. No longer were economic calculations, of whether settlerism in the Southwest was profitable, at the forefront. With writers discussed in the following chapter, German colonization of Southwest Africa seems to become a question of national – and yes, racial – survival. Monetary issues or strategies of careful diplomacy, that guided much of the actions of Leutwein and his superiors, are no longer relevant, when the debate has been framed in such apocalyptic terms. The disagreements in strategy between Leutwein and his colleagues echo larger debates on efficient colonial rule in Germany, but one must still remember, that their end goal is still roughly the same – the subjugation of the land its resources and its people. However, later it seems to be the case, that the people were not to be subjugated any longer – they were to be swept aside. Let us now look at the Herero and Nama uprisings against German colonial rule and the Colonial War that ensued.

⁷¹ Bley, 1971, 153.

3. “*Our new Germany on African Soil*” – Colonial Fantasies Challenged and Transformed

3.1. From Subjugation to Destruction – The War in Colonial Literature

—and then his gaze fixed upon the large horse stable, in which the animals rollicked freely. A passionate yearning, a hot longing, arose in him, to once again swing on the back of a good horse, and side by side with his comrades, fight for Germanness [*Deutschtum*] in this steppe land—⁷²

“Two weeks later — it was the fourteenth of January— I was walking with Behrens and another comrade through Danish Street, when Gehlsen -- came toward us and said: “Have you read the paper?”

“What is it?” I said.

“In southwest Africa the blacks, like cowards, have treacherously murdered all the farmers and their wives and children”

I am good in geography, but at first I was completely bewildered and asked:

“Are those murdered people Germans?”

“Of course,” he replied, “Schlesians and Bavarians and all the other German peoples, and three or four from Holstein, too. And now what do you suppose we marines—”

Then I suddenly recognized from his eyes what he wanted to say.

“We have to go!” I said.”⁷³

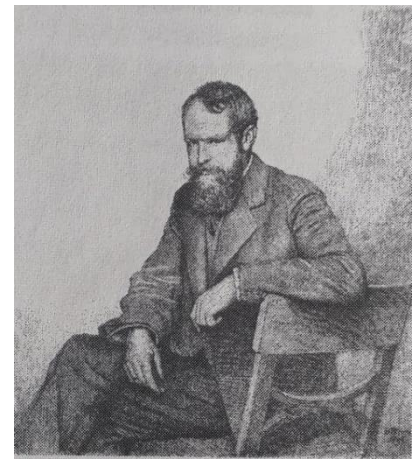
Adda von Liliencron, arguably the leading female colonialist in Southwest Africa at the beginning of the 20th century, describes the feelings of a young corporal Axel Erhard, at the beginning of the Herero uprising of 1904. Erhard who, according to Liliencron, had willingly enrolled in the fourth company of the 1. Feldregiment, and, after some three years of experience in the Schutztruppen, ended up in a military hospital in Swakopmund, now desired to get back to action. Liliencron’s

⁷² Liliencron, 1907a, 8. “—und dann blieb sein Blick an dem grossen Pferdakraal haften, in dem sich die Tiere in freier Ungebundenheit tummelten. Ungestümes Verlangen dachte ihn, eine heisse Sehnsucht, sich wieder auf dem Rücken eines braven Gauls zu schwingen und Seite an Seite mit den Kameraden für das Deutschtum zu kämpfen in diesem Dornenlande—”

⁷³ Frenssen, 1908, 6.

books *Der Entscheidungskampf am Waterberg (1907a)*⁷⁴ on the deciding battle of the Herero war of 1904-8, and *Heiße Arbeit unter heißer Sonne (1907b)*⁷⁵, are works that are filled up with Liliencron's firsthand experiences of the war and collected testimonies and stories of the Schutztruppe soldiers. In my opinion, it is obvious Liliencron does not hide her appreciation of the German troops fighting against the uprising, but rather idolizes the sacrificial deeds of brave German troops in the face of death and savage natives on the other side.

The quote above from Gustav Frenssen's *Peter Moor*, echoes the same sentiments Liliencron found in Erhard – the Germans who went to Southwest Africa at this time, seem to have all shared a feeling of danger and perhaps vengeance with regards to the natives in Southwest Africa. From the German soldiers' point of view, it was a matter of national survival to quench the native uprising that threatened not only German colonial rule in Africa, but the physical survival of Germans abroad as well. Frenssen's bestseller, although fictional, is a great window into the mindsets of Germans both in Southwest Africa as well as in metropolitan Germany.



GUSTAV FRENSSEN
(Tabel, 2007, 69.)

In this chapter, I will go through, how during the Colonial War of 1904-1908, views of the German colonialists seemed to harshen. I argue how the views of German colonialists changed from the views of the 'old Africa hands', such as Theodor Leutwein, to the views of harsh racialists like Frenssen, Liliencron or Brockmann (quoted in the title of this third chapter⁷⁶). I will study the previously mentioned works on the war by Adda von Liliencron as well as the fictional account of the same war by Gustav Frenssen (*Peter Moor's Journey to The Southwest*) here. This is the internal challenge by the colonizers themselves to the colonial fantasies that were replicated in Southwest Africa up until the beginning of the 20th century.

As we have learned before, the relationship between the German colonizers and the native peoples of Southwest Africa was anything but simple. Not only did the various Herero and Nama tribes, alongside other groups as well, fight the Germans from time to time, but they also fought each other on a regular basis. Also, during Theodor Leutwein's administration, treaties were signed with many

⁷⁴ In English: "The Decisive Battle on the Waterberg"

⁷⁵ In English: "Hot Work under the Hot Sun"

⁷⁶ Brockmann, 1910, IV. "unserem neuen Deutschland auf Afrikas Boden"

of the groups in question. Even though treaties between the colonial administration seem to have solved short-term issues of establishing colonial rule across Southwest Africa, the ever-expanding settler population, and its ever-increasing demands of land and privilege kept some of the most influential native groups wary of signing away their independence. By the beginning of the 20th century, the Herero tribes were realizing how treaties with the colonial administration were stripping them of their livelihoods. Hereros were expected to give up their land gradually for settler agriculture, and the grazing lands for their once great herds of cattle were diminishing. As the following maps of Southwest Africa show, reservations were implemented for the native peoples – reservations that became smaller and smaller over the years:



Map 1 South-West Africa after the submission of the Khaua and Witbooi tribes



Map 2 South-West Africa before the Herero revolt (1902)

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As the maps show us, the result of signing unequal treaties with the colonial administration was simple – land allocated for settlers and their agriculture increased at the native peoples' expense. The first map shows us the situation in Southwest Africa at the time of Leutwein's tenure as

⁷⁷ Bley, 1971, xxix-xxx.

governor when the Khaua and Witbooi tribes were defeated. The Khaua, lead by their chief Andreas Lambert were defeated in 1894. The Witbooi, whom we discussed in the previous chapter, were the last native group to be subjugated in 1895.⁷⁸ The uncomfortable reality of the treaties being abused by the colonial government to further the interests of the German settler population, eventually resulted in an uprising against German rule, first by the Herero in central and northern parts of the colony, and then by the Nama in the southern areas. Uprisings were nothing new in Southwest Africa, as we have discussed before – usually some limited fighting broke out, after which the parties involved would sit down to negotiate a peace, and a new slightly different status quo would be established. Samuel Maharero, the paramount chief of the Herero, attempted to rally all the native peoples of Southwest Africa to be part of the rebellion, the Herero and Nama alike. He sent letters to other chiefs across the region, for example telling his foremost rival Hendrik Witbooi:



SAMUEL MAHARERO
(Bley, 1971, xxxvxi)

*“Let us rather die together, and not by German cruelty, in prison and so on.”*⁷⁹

However, this time the German colonial administration reacted differently as the Herero started their revolt against colonial rule in the January of 1904. Adda von Liliencron describes the mood from a colonialist perspective, in the beginning of her book *Heiße Arbeit unter heiße Sonne*:

*“It was the Kaiser’s birthday in 1904. In Germany, a joyful holiday, a day when the young and old happily celebrated. However, it looked very different compared to the motherland, during these hours, in our young colony of Southwest Africa. – The uprising of the Herero had been ongoing for roughly 14 days, farm after farm was plundered by the blacks and their owners slain, and what had been built for years with hard German work, lay in ruins.”*⁸⁰

Liliencron evidently aims to pull the heartstrings of her German readership by referring to popular tropes of her time – nationalism, imperialism, and racial identity. Firstly, she refers to the German

⁷⁸ Bley, 1971, 8-38.

⁷⁹ Leutwein, 1906, 468-9.

⁸⁰ Liliencron, 1907b, 5. *“Kaisers Geburtstag war es im Jahre 1904. In Deutschland ein fröhliches Fest, ein Tag, der von jung und alt frohgemut gefeiert wurde. Anders aber als im Mutterlande sah es in jenen Stunden in unserer jungen Kolonie, in Südwestafrika aus. – Vor etwa 14 Tagen war der Aufstand der Hereros ausgebrochen, Farmen über Farmen waren von den Schwarzen geplündert worden, ihre Besitzer erschlagen, und was durch Jahre hindurch deutscher Fleiß erbaut hatte, lag in Trümmern.”*

Kaiser's birthday as a joyous occasion for all Germans young and old, and how it was stained by a violent revolt by natives. National and imperial sentiments can be found in her way of setting the stage for the uprising. Secondly, she touches upon the prevalent ideals of her time by describing the conflict that had started in racial terms, as a confrontation between the hardworking white Germans and violent black natives. The description of years of hard German work being laid to ruins by the violent Herero, also echoes sentiments of *völkish* ideology – namely of the myth of *Blut und Boden* or blood and soil. Similarly to Frenssen, notions of blood in connection to the Southwest African soil, are prevalent, as Liliencron ties the African land to its German occupants as a natural part of the Kaiser's realm. It seems to me, that for people like Liliencron or Frenssen, the colonial space of Southwest Africa was no longer just a territory to extract resources from or to plant a flag on, as for people like Leutwein before. Southwest Africa was now a place where German blood had been spilled, it became Germany itself – and it was a national and even a racial duty of Germans to defend it against any aggressors.

Historians of the Herero and Nama uprisings mostly agree that the violence in the beginning of the revolt was wildly exaggerated in German accounts of the time. There obviously was occasional violence against white settlers, but the extent to which many of the descriptions, such as Liliencron's goes to, is based mainly on rumours. In the heated atmosphere of an ongoing war, accounts of native violence were often purposefully exaggerated to rally support for military action from metropolitan Germany.⁸¹ The war the Herero had started was portrayed in German colonial circles societies and right-wing newspapers as a race war from the very beginning of hostilities. As the various excerpts of German colonial literature by Liliencron, Frenssen and later Brockmann show us, these accounts were the mainstream narrative in the German Empire at the time. Reports of atrocities committed by the Herero ranged from wildly exaggerated accounts of white German women having been raped, to completely fabricated stories of German men's noses and testicles being cut off.⁸²

It becomes difficult to siphon fact from fiction in these accounts of the uprising of January 1904, as much of the German descriptions of events taking place either is based on rumours circulating within Southwest Africa and the German Empire at large. It is not the aim of my study here, to get to the bottom of individual events as such, but rather try to get a glimpse into the mindsets of the colonialist authors and their views on things. It would probably be hard, to spot the

⁸¹ Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010, 130-131. Zimmerer & Zeller, 2003, 42-43.

⁸² Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010, 130.

‘factual’ accounts of Liliencron or Brockmann from the fictional ones, by people like Frenssen, if the reader had not familiarized himself with the subject matter beforehand. As stated in the introduction of this study, my aim is to read both the colonizer and the colonized with the same respect, and to achieve this aim, the native accounts of events in Southwest Africa will be analyzed in the last part of this chapter.

Fact and fiction seem to be purposefully mixed in Gustav Frenssen’s *Peter Moor*, as he combined factual accounts from Southwest Africa with his fictional tale. One such connection can be found on the arrival of Peter Moor to Southwest Africa:

*“In the meagre little garden, where one could still see traces of the care with which German hands had tended it, lay a heap of white stones. There, buried three feet deep in the barren soil, lay the settler and his wife, who had been attacked and killed by the negroes.”*⁸³

Here, Frenssen describes a scene that Peter Moor and his comrades encounter on their journey by rail from Swakopmund, where their troop transport ship landed, to the colony’s capital in Windhoek. The language used by Frenssen here, in my mind, is almost interchangeable with the ‘factual’ accounts of the ones by, for example Liliencron. Even though there is no mention of who these killed German settlers were or whether anyone really knows who the killers were, some connections can be found to historical reality in Southwest Africa. Frenssen continues the paragraph:

*““The five or six sailors from the Habicht, who at the time held possession of the place, had nailed together a cross out of pieces of boxes and had written upon it with a dull pencil the names of the killed and the words: “Fallen by the hand of the murderer.””*⁸⁴

Even though the event described is most likely thought up in Frenssen’s imagination, as he wrote his book, he connects the characters to actual events and facts. The cruiser *Habicht* was among the first German vessels to carry reinforcements to the troops fighting against the Herero and Nama in Southwest Africa. The same vessel is mentioned in *Peter Moor*, even though it is not the ship Moor

⁸³ Frenssen, 1908, 46-47.

⁸⁴ Frenssen, 1908, 47.

himself takes to join the fight. The historian Jürgen Zimmerer quotes the captain of *Habicht*, by the name of Gudewill, who also describes the escalation of the war during this time:

*“The war has entered a second phase. The strictest punishment is necessary to atone for the countless cruel murders and as a guarantee for a peaceful future. The only way to re-establish peace and confidence among the whites is complete disarmament and confiscation of all land and cattle.”*⁸⁵

In all the accounts above, the shared feeling among Germans, whether real people or fictional characters, seems to be a yearning for vengeance and perceived justice. The uprising of 1904 seems to differ greatly from previous hostilities between the colonial administration and various native groups, in the sense, that it is portrayed as a race war in much of the colonial literature on the subject. Maharero, as we have learned, tried to rally pretty much all the native tribes in rebellion against the Germans, but was not successful in this. In the minds of German settlers and authors writing on the uprising, this did not matter – the war became a war between the white population and the native population of ‘blacks’ or ‘negroes’. It was no longer possible, as captain Gudewill explains, to return to co-existence in Southwest Africa. It is of great importance to note that the “confiscation of all land and cattle” meant nothing short of the extinction of the Herero (and Nama) way of life.

The increasingly racist language of German colonial literature is also linked to the emergence of scientific racism in the German speaking world. Arno Sonderegger writes on the racist fantasies that prevail in Austrian and German African Studies. Sonderegger tells us how “Africa” is created as an inherently imaginary conception of a whole continent.⁸⁶ Academic fields from biology and geography to cultural studies and philology all had their share of scientific racism attached to them. It really seems that colonial fantasies grew into a collective obsession, as Susanne Zantop stated.

The active beginning of the war between the German Schutztruppen and the Herero lasted for several months and culminated in the battle of Waterberg on 11 August 1904. The battle was essentially a slaughter of the entire Herero nation, as the Schutztruppen encircled the Waterberg hill from all sides and unleashed volleys of artillery and machinegun fire upon them. Only one side of

⁸⁵ Zimmerer & Zeller, 2003, 44. Gudewill to the chief of Naval Staff (copied by Naval Staff to Kapitänleutnant Varrentrapp), 4.2.1904. Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg (BA-MA), Information Office of the Reich Naval Bureau (RM3)/v.10263, B1.38a.

⁸⁶ Sonderegger in Hund, Koller & Zimmermann, 2011, 123-139.

the area was left open from which the beaten Herero made their escape towards the Omaheke (Kalahari) desert. The Germans pursued their beaten foes with a clear aim of driving the entire people out of Southwest Africa. The aim was no longer to pacify and subjugate the Herero, but to either drive them out of the colony or to simply exterminate them. In her book, Adda von Liliencron, describes the battle of Waterberg in detail. She describes the end of the battle as follows:

“After the hard fight – the opposing fighting Herero had become totally exhausted and had, in the early morning of the 12th, started their retreat away from Waterberg. – No one considering resistance, poured the aimless [Herero] back in the same direction they had come from, and left their women and children, their cattle and their belongings mostly back in the hands of Germans.”⁸⁷

The lengthy and detailed description of the decisive battle by Liliencron can be characterized as a narrative of young German soldiers embarking on an adventure. She often describes soldiers by name, such as Axel Erhard, whom Liliencron follows throughout her book. She evidently gives a lot of agency to the individual soldiers themselves, though always as part of a larger entity of German camaraderie. Liliencron’s attitude towards her subject matter is, to say the least, admiring. In a stark contrast, she does not really describe the opponents of the German Schutztruppen with the same familiarity and admiration. As discussed before, earlier in colonial literature, even the chiefs of the native tribes in Southwest Africa could be described as fierce opponents or even as faultless individuals, as Witbooi was, but now the Herero are reduced to a people destined to disappear. Liliencron tells her reader, how the defeated Herero abandon their wives and children as well as their cattle and other possessions. She speaks in terms that already echo sentiments of a people that is no longer unified. The Herero scatter, perhaps selfishly in Liliencron’s mind, abandoning their old lives on the Waterberg, and disappear into the Kalahari.



ADDA VON LILIENCRON
(Liliencron, 1912/2013, cover)

It is also noteworthy, that Liliencron describes the cattle and possessions of the Herero

⁸⁷ Liliencron, 1907a, 124. *“Nach dem schweren Gefecht – waren auch die ihnen gegenüber kämpfenden Hereros ganz erschöpft gewesen, und hatten in der Frühe des 12. den Rückzug auf den Waterberg begonnen. – Ohne an Widerstand zu denken, fluteten die planlos in derselben Richtung zurück, aus der sie gekommen waren, und ließen ihre Weiber und Kinder, ihr Vieh und ihre Habe zum größten Teil in den Händen der Deutschen zurück.”*

being left *back* in the hands of Germans, as if they were German possessions all along. This sentiment is commonplace in this later German colonial literature – the natives in Southwest Africa did not really own their land, cattle or other possessions but rather held control of these things under German benevolence. When the Herero revolted against the supposedly lawful rule of Germans, they also lost all rights to the little cattle they still possessed after a series of treaties with their colonial masters. All of this rhetoric is filled with a sense of crooked justice, where the Herero as a people are considered a people no longer let alone worthy of being allowed to return to their old status in Southwest Africa. The war between the Herero and the colonial administration becomes a war of extermination, a race war of sorts.

Calls for the removal of the Herero (and Nama) become commonplace in colonial writings – and a tragic reality in the actions taken by the colonial administration and German armed forces of the Schutztruppen. As mentioned, Leutwein's rule as the governor of Southwest Africa comes to an end in late 1904. He is replaced by general Lothar von Trotha, who arrives in Southwest Africa on 11 June 1904, assumes the authority to act as governor in November, and starts a ruthless war of extermination against the native population in the colony, with no clear distinction between those who had rebelled and those who had not. In his infamous extermination order from 3 October 1904, some six weeks after the decisive battle at Waterberg, he states:

“I, the Great General of the German troops, send this letter to the Herero. The Hereros are German subjects no longer. They have killed, stolen, cut off the ears and other parts of the body of wounded soldiers, and now are too cowardly to want to fight any longer. I announce to the people that whoever hands me one of the chiefs shall receive 1,000 marks, and 5,000 marks for Samuel Maharero. The Herero people must leave the land. If they do not do this, I will force them with the ‘Groot Rohr’ [cannon]. Within the German borders, any Herero, with or without a gun, with or without cattle, will be shot. I will no longer accept women and children. I will drive them back to their people or I will let them be shot at. These are my words to the Herero people.”⁸⁸

This infamous declaration marks a radical shift in the relations between the German colonizers and their native subordinates. Coexistence was no longer possible between the German colonizers and

⁸⁸ Lothar von Trotha's extermination order (Vernichtungsbefehl) 3 October 1904. Quoted in Olusoga & Erichsen, 149-150.

the Herero in Southwest Africa. Von Trotha's extermination order embodies a transformation from a normal colonial war to a war of extermination in which the only possible outcome is the complete destruction of the other side.

So, the Herero uprising in 1904 resulted in a bloody colonial war of destruction, as we have learned. Even though Samuel Maharero, the chief of the Herero, did not manage to rally all the tribes of Southwest Africa in a united front against the Germans, some did join later during the war, most notably Hendrik Witbooi and his Nama people. Some Nama tribes rebelled already in 1903, namely the aforementioned Bondelswart tribe, governor Leutwein set out to pacify when the Herero launched their uprising. In this conflict, Witbooi, in fact, was still on the side of the Germans – though for the last time.⁸⁹ It was not until the end of September 1904, that Witbooi decided to join in the fight against the German colonial government – for reasons unknown only after the battle of Waterberg when the war was all but lost for the native side. It is possible that some Nama auxiliaries that took part in the battle of Waterberg on the German side deserted and described the eliminatory tactics of von Trotha. This, alongside the fact that many Nama leaders had learned German and could read the papers, might have convinced Witbooi and others to finally rise against the Germans.⁹⁰ Almost every one of the Nama tribes followed Witbooi to war – as Leutwein had described Witbooi, his power rested upon his charismatic personality and personal authority among the Nama peoples. Even the Bondelswart tribe, that Leutwein managed to defeat only recently, joined the fight. However, the element of surprise which the Herero had at the start of their uprising, was not as great with the Nama, as the Germans were forewarned by their swifter communications.⁹¹

Just like the Herero, the Nama were totally outnumbered as the war dragged on. Even though in the beginning of the uprising, just like with the Herero earlier, most German farms and police posts were overrun within days, the thousands of reinforcements from metropolitan Germany assured a German victory in the long run. Werner Hillebrecht describes how the tactics of guerrilla warfare the Nama employed, quite successfully I might add, resulted in a great number of German troops being tied down in the fight between September 1904 and September 1905. In this year, the number of German troops doubled from 7,000 to 14,000.⁹² The number of Nama fighters never exceeded 2,000. The overall strategy of the Nama might have rested on previous experiences of

⁸⁹ Werner Hillebrecht: *"The Nama and The War in The South"* in Zimmerer & Zeller, 2003, 143-156.

⁹⁰ Hillebrecht in Zimmerer & Zeller, 2003, 147.

⁹¹ Hillebrecht in Zimmerer & Zeller, 2003, 150.

⁹² Hillebrecht in Zimmerer & Zeller, 2003, 151.

colonial wars, in which a peace treaty would be signed after fighting would turn out to be too expensive or cumbersome for the Germans, but just like with the Herero uprising, this time the Germans were absolutely adamant about bringing about a total victory and von Trotha once again declared bounties for the heads of the leaders of the rebellion. Witbooi's bounty of 5,000 Reichsmark was never collected though, as he was killed in action on 29th October 1905, as he was struck by a bullet and bled out within a few hours.⁹³ This essentially meant the end of the Nama rebellion as the unifying figure that had brought together all the tribes was now gone. One by one, the Germans persuaded with false promises individual units to surrender. Much of the surrendered Nama then ended up on concentration camps⁹⁴ across Southwest Africa alongside the the remaining Herero and others. From a point of view of settler colonialism, the settler colonial space was now essentially cleared for German settlers for good, as those who resisted, had either been killed, exiled from the colony, or locked up in camps.

As we have learned from Adda von Liliencron and Gustav Frenssen, the attitudes radicalized across the board among German colonialists, and the debate on colonial policy shifted. Before the Herero and Nama uprisings, the debates largely circled around questions of gradual expansion and subjugation of various native groups into German networks of governance. After the uprising, debates on colonial policy are largely about what to do after the Herero and Nama are gone. The settler colonial space truly becomes a *tabula rasa* for the German settlers, a huge virgin territory which the settler can populate as he or she wills. Once again, subjugation turns into destruction. Let us next analyze colonial literature in Southwest Africa in the aftermath of the Herero uprising, and Clara Brockmann, a female German colonialist whose harsh views on race and nation speak volumes about the 'new Germany' that would be born out of the ruins of the colonial war.

3.2. A German Settler Colonial Fantasy

“In the last three years, I have become acquainted with a lot of farms in our colony – The years of the uprising had brought them to a standstill; the farmer had to leave their flourishing enterprise without care, their farms were destroyed and burned to

⁹³ Hillebrecht in Zimmerer & Zeller, 2003, 152.

⁹⁴ The most infamous concentration camp in Southwest Africa was probably the camp in the coastal town of Lüderitz. The camp of Shark Island outside Lüderitz has also been described as an extermination camp.

*the ground, their cattle was slaughtered, their wells spilled. – Two, three times they have worked to rebuild their existence from nothing, no failure scared them back [to Germany].*⁹⁵

Clara Brockmann, a civil servant in service of the colonial government in Windhoek, and colonial author in her own right, writes in her second travel book from Southwest Africa, on farmers in the colony. Her remarks on the farmers, she herself encounters on her travels across the region during the years after the Herero and Nama uprisings, are filled with admiration for the resilience and determination of German settlers in the Southwest. Unlike many of her compatriots discussed in this study earlier, Brockmann's two travel books, *Die deutsche Frau in Südwestafrika*⁹⁶ and *Briefe eines deutschen Mädchens aus Südwest*⁹⁷, take mostly place in the years after the uprisings rather than during or before them. Brockmann's books are a fascinating mixture of travel guides for potential settlers, anecdotes of personal experiences and political commentary on the pressing debates of race and colonial policy. She embodies a new type of settler colonial author, who revels in the fact that the vast land of Southwest Africa has been vacated for German settlers to create a new kind of society – *a new Germany on African soil*, as Brockmann herself puts it⁹⁸.

Brockmann talks of farming, which in many instances has been identified as a typical *leitmotiv* of German settler colonial thinking.⁹⁹ Farmers were seen in German colonial circles as ideal settlers, who not only physically turned wastelands into profitable colonial farmland, but also were in the forefront, when it came to forging a settler colonial space in far-away lands. The settler-farmer was the instrument of forging *Germanness (Deustchtum)* in places like Southwest Africa. This work of farming was no longer limited to economic terms but carried more deep meanings of personal, national, and even racial survival. Much discussed *völkish* ideals of *Blut und Boden* or *Lebensraum*¹⁰⁰ are both attached to the idea of tying one's existence to the land. In Brockmann's

⁹⁵ Brockmann, 1912, 66. *"Ich habe in den letzten Jahren eine große Anzahl von Farmen in unserer Kolonie kennen gelernt – Die Aufstandsjahre hatten es lahmgelegt; die Farmer mußten ihren aufblühenden Wirtschaftsbetrieb im Stich lassen, ihre Farmen wurden zerstört und niedergebrannt, ihr Vieh abgetrieben, ihre Brunnen verschüttet. – Zwei-, dreimal haben sie von neuem an dem Wiederaufbau ihrer Existenz gearbeitet, kein Fehlschlag schreckte sie zurück."*

⁹⁶ *The German Woman in Southwest Africa*

⁹⁷ *Letters of a German girl from the Southwest*

⁹⁸ Brockmann, 1910, IV.

⁹⁹ For example: Wildenthal, 1993. Lerp, 2013.

¹⁰⁰ Friedrich Ratzel's term that was made famous during the Third Reich. *Lebensraum* translates to *living space*; a space that a people must acquire in order to survive. Alongside the ideal of blood and soil (*Blut und Boden*), they are terms used in much of German *völkish* ethno-national thinking that tie together themes of race, geography and racial biology.

thinking these *völkish* themes are ever-present, as she sees Southwest Africa as German soil – both in the nationalist as well as a racial sense.

Brockmann describes, how the farmers in Southwest Africa had to abandon their farms during the years of the uprising, when the Herero and Nama attacked white German farms. Instead of lamenting on individual tragedies, she frames the uprising as the spark that would bring about a new age in Southwest Africa. For her, the fact that the German farmer supposedly never gave up on their dream of forging an existence in Southwest Africa – a statement that is not true in any sense of the word¹⁰¹– proves that the dream of creating a German settler colony in Africa was within grasp. As the main obstacles on the way to building a purely white German settler colony, the resisting native tribes were now swept aside, the work of turning the frontier into a better version of the metropole could begin in earnest. However, there is one interesting side to Brockmann’s thinking that did not necessarily fit the overriding narrative of *völkish* settlerism – her belief in elevating German women to equal status with German men. She continues the description of the farmers she encountered in Southwest Africa as follows:



CLARA BROCKMANN
(Tabel, 2007, 329.)

“It has occurred that single women, whose men and children were massacred in front of their eyes, have not let go of this land that they are tied to by their most painful memories; they returned there with force and, in the spirit of the deceased, began again, to work to rebuild the destroyed, often without the support of men. A land that exerts such attraction cannot be fruitless and worthless after all the effort.”¹⁰²

The new Germany, that would be built on the ruins of the colonial war, would no longer be similar to that of the old one – nor resemble the colony in the years before the decisive war. Brockmann

¹⁰¹ Many German farmers indeed did fail to create profitable and self-sufficient farms in Southwest Africa. Also, most German migrants during this time opted to go to North America instead of the settler colonies of the German Empire. Lerp, 2013, *passim*.

¹⁰² Brockmann, 1912, 66-67. *“Es ist vorgekommen, daß alleinstehende Frauen, deren Männer und Kinder vor ihren Augen hingemordet waren, dieses Land, an das sie die schmerzlichsten Erinnerungen knüpften, nicht losließen; mit Gewalt zog es sie dahin zurück, und im Sinne der Verstorbenen arbeitend, begannen sie, oft ohne männliche Unterstützung, das Zerstörte wieder aufzubauen. Ein Land, das eine solche Anziehungskraft ausübt, kann nicht ertraglos und aller Aufwendungen unwert sein.”*

talks of Southwest Africa as a template of a new kind of Germany that would embrace the potential of both German men and women as independent farmers. As is typical of *völkish* ideals of settlerism, she simultaneously yearns for supposedly forgotten ties to German culture – an escape to the old days of Schiller and Goethe¹⁰³ – but also for something new that would transgress life in metropolitan Germany. In some ways, *Völkish* ideals are both anti-modern and modern at the same time. As one can observe by comparing the language of people like Leutwein, the ‘imperial patriarchs’, to people like Brockmann, German colonial fantasies have gone through quite the transformation, from notions of Germans as fatherly overlords of various native peoples under their rule, to the only inhabitants of the colonial space cleansed of native peoples.

Brockmann’s thinking is centred around the ideas of sacrifice of German blood for a land that is destined to be cultivated and populated by the survivors. These survivors of the colonial war have proved themselves, in Brockmann’s thinking, to be the true pioneers of a new sense of Germanness. They have spilled their blood, sacrificed everything, lost their loved ones, and still, not given up on their dream of forging an existence in the harsh land of Southwest Africa. Reading Brockmann between the lines, one can sense both admiration for these brave individuals in the frontlines of a search for new *Lebensraum* in Southwest Africa, but also a slight contempt for those residing in the safety of metropolitan Germany. To me it seems obvious, that she not only wishes for the extension of the German Empire in Africa, but also to transform what it means to be German altogether. For her, the frontier forges a new German man and woman that ultimately will be superior to the ones found in the old country. Once again, colonial fantasies of precolonial Germany, created in the absence of colonies, are transformed in colonial settings.

This tethering of the settler population with a land area that has never truly been *German*, is the process of creating a *Heimat* – a homeland – in the colonies. Jens Jaeger, in his article on the formation of colonial identity in Germany around the year 1900, asks the provoking question: How German can an African mountain become? As it turns out, in settler colonial fantasies, even Kilimanjaro in Tanzania could be classified as the highest ‘German’ mountain instead of the Zugspitze in the Alps!¹⁰⁴ It is fascinating, how in German colonial circles, the discourse in the early 20th century seems to be quite far detached from reality on the ground, when it comes to questions of national identity and colonial fantasies. It seems, that for people like Clara

¹⁰³ Brockmann, 1912, 2. Brockmann quotes one the first officials of Southwest Africa telling her: “*We can live here like in the olden days of Schiller and Goethe – if it is in us!*”

¹⁰⁴ Jaeger, 2009, 467.

Brockmann, the potential fantastic future of a German settler colony was in many ways more important and tantalizing of an opportunity, that all possible practical problems in achieving this goal were sure to be solved in time. Just like *Kibo* in Tanzania, a desert scene in Southwest Africa, could also be a natural part of German national imagery and self-consciousness. Once again, the literary realm in which Brockmann and others navigate is the realm of fantasy – colonial fantasy. If anything, the fantasies of the precolonial period have been transformed and amplified by more radical calls for building a distinctly *German* colony.

Lora Wildenthal has written on the role of female German colonialists greatly influencing colonial discourse. She wrote on Brockmann's "*surprising visions of feminine independence within widely-held views on the importance of social divisions based on "race" and on the virtues of bourgeois womanhood*"¹⁰⁵. This description of Brockmann's literal input on the stage of colonial discourse sums well what she was after. In one hand, she embodied by now typical notions of racial thinking that had become dominant in German colonial circles, on the other, she stands out as an advocate for feminine independence in a very patriarchal environment. However, although Brockmann's progressive ideas of gender equality are admirable and a rarity among her peers, she roots them in the racial thinking that was shared among most, if not all, German colonialists at the time. The emancipation of white German colonialist women is brought about at the cost of the native peoples of Southwest Africa. To put it more bluntly, the white German woman in Southwest Africa would be independent and empowered only through the submission and destruction of the natives – both men and women.

The way that Brockmann, and other colonialist women like Adda von Liliencron, whom we discussed in the previous chapter, influenced the colonial debate at large, was the elevation of racial thinking to the forefront.¹⁰⁶ No longer was it the right of the German man to conquer the native woman alongside the land and its resources. German women in colonial circles began to criticize their male counterparts as being responsible of losing the *Germanness* of the Reich's colonies by engaging in relations with the local populations. As Wildenthal writes, the influence on German national identity during these years, is formed through a comparison between Southwest Africa as a land of freedom and pure Germanness, and Germany itself as the opposite of this.¹⁰⁷ In this line of thinking, the German women in colonial circles played a key part in frowning

¹⁰⁵ Wildenthal, 1993, 68.

¹⁰⁶ Wildenthal, 2001, 131-171.

¹⁰⁷ Wildenthal, 1993, 72-73.

upon those settlers and farmers who failed in their mission as culture bearers (*Kulturträger*), by either engaging in interracial relations with native women, or otherwise being seen as discarding the values and ideals of a German settler. This is what was meant with the terms *verkaffern* and *verburen* mentioned earlier in this study – a sort of degeneration of both Germanness and whiteness that was considered dangerous and immoral by many German female colonialists writing during this time.

All authors discussed in this chapter have at least one thing in common – each of them in their own way abandons the colonial fantasy of subjugating native populations in a hierarchical system of a colonial setting. Liliencron, Frenssen and Brockmann all seem to adhere to a more eliminatory thinking rather than the system of subjugation Leutwein was advocating. Elizabeth Baer describes the change in the views of German colonialist authors through the concept of the gaze – once the colonial/imperial gaze of racial hierarchies turns deadly, it becomes a genocidal gaze.¹⁰⁸ She talks of the academic concept of the gaze and reminds the reader of Edward Said’s “orientalism”, in which one can find two types of gazes. The colonizer can gaze upon the colonized essentially in two ways; he can see the colonized as the “exotic other” or as the “demonic other”.¹⁰⁹ Cutting corners here, one could roughly classify the authors discussed in these two papers, by putting Leutwein in the first, and the other three in the second category. As Baer puts it:

“—the genocidal gaze goes a step further: it provided the German imperialists with a rationale for their depredations on the land and the people of Southwest Africa.

Where the imperial gaze has as its aim the control or even enslavement of the colonized, the genocidal gaze has as its aim extermination.”¹¹⁰

Reading this description of the rationale of German colonial authors, one might recall for instance the extermination order of general Lothar von Trotha or the descriptions of “cowardly attacks” of the Herero on German farms in Frenssen’s *Peter Moor*. In terms of colonial fantasies, it seems to me that a radical shift can be found in the texts and language of German colonial authors in the beginning of the 20th century. The uprisings of the Herero and Nama and the subsequent Colonial War of 1904 seem to mark a watershed moment, in which the last inhibitions, that supposedly stood in the way of German colonialists calling for outright genocide, were brushed aside. In addition to

¹⁰⁸ Baer, 2017, 6.

¹⁰⁹ Baer, 2017, *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Baer, 2017, *ibid.*

the perceived justification in the form of the “treacherous” uprisings, the input of female German colonialists and their racially motivated critique certainly are a factor in radicalizing the German colonial circles to favour genocidal policies and war-making. Before concluding this paper, let us take a quick look at the *other* side and discuss some statements of the Herero and Nama themselves on the rebellion, war, and the genocide of their peoples that followed.

3.3. The *Other* – Herero and Nama Experiences of Colonial Rule

”I went with the German troops to Hamakari and beyond... The Germans took no prisoners. They killed thousands and thousands of women and children along the roadsides. They bayoneted them and hit them to death with the butt ends of their guns. Words cannot be found to relate what happened: it was too terrible. –”¹¹¹

A description of the actions of German troops after the decisive battle of Waterberg (Hamakari) by Jan Kubas, tells a grim tale of the genocidal treatment of the defeated Herero people. Kubas evidently finds it hard to describe the savage violence he saw and tells the British investigators interviewing him, that “words cannot be found” to describe what went on in German Southwest Africa after the uprisings of 1904. In many ways, this phrase became ubiquitous in later historical literature and remembrance of the Herero and Nama genocides. The phrase is also the title of the annotated reprinting of the *Blue Book – a Report on the Natives of South-west Africa and Their Treatment by Germany*.¹¹²

In this chapter, I will briefly take a glimpse at some of the descriptions of the Herero and Nama themselves, on the events of the 1904 uprisings and the subsequent colonial war and genocide. As stated in the introduction of this paper, I find it important to include the voices of the *other* side alongside the German colonialists we have discussed so far. Direct sources of the Herero and Nama themselves are few and far between, but the *Blue Book*, even with all of its problems as a historical document, allows us to bring some of those voices to the conversation. My aim is not to do investigative work and find out exactly who did and what during these decisive years in the history of Southwest Africa, but to simply offer a counternarrative to the one voiced by German authors. As

¹¹¹ *Blue Book*, 1918, 117. “Jan Kubas (a Griqua living at Grootfontein), states under oath:--”

¹¹² Silvester & Gewald, 2003. *Words Cannot Be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia: An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book*

we have learned by now, the vast majority of German sources either downplay and embellish the events of 1904-1908, or engage in outright falsehoods and shaky justifications of their behaviour.

The *Blue Book* is a report commissioned by the British authorities in South Africa at the end of the Great War, when Southwest Africa had been conquered by them from the Germans. The report, compiled by major Thomas Leslie O'Reilly, a member of the 'Special Criminal Court', the highest court in Southwest Africa during the period of martial law in 1915-1920, and A.J. Waters, the Crown Prosecutor for Namibia since October 1915.¹¹³ In addition to numerous, forty-seven to be exact, eye-witness testimonies of German atrocities, the book uses a lot of German sources that were in plentiful supply in Southwest Africa after the occupation of the country by the Union of South Africa in 1915. The *Blue Book* was published in 1918 as an official British publication. However, it was redacted heavily already in the beginning, and permanently pulled from public domain and ordered to be destroyed only a few years after its publication in 1926. Silvester and Gewald, the authors of the reprint of the *Book*, tell that the reason this was done, was to bury any African voices and make sure African statements could no longer be found in written form – after all written word means evidence and it could be used as a justification for action, say reparations.¹¹⁴

The *Blue Book* is also a contested work in the sense, that its creation was motivated by British interests in Southern Africa rather than a kind of journalistic pursuit of the truth. The British authorities used the document to prove to the world that the Germans had acted in violation of all manners of humane and benevolent rule in Southwest Africa, and that the colony had to be acquired by the League of Nations as a mandate and not returned to German rule. Southwest Africa became a mandate of the League of Nations and would remain indefinitely occupied by South Africa (until Namibian independence in 1990). In many ways, the genocidal policies of the German colonial administration were simply replaced with an apartheid regime in South Africa. One reason for the document to be pulled from public domain, was also the fact that the South African regime wanted to put antagonisms between the Boer, English, and still relatively sizable German population behind itself. If uncomfortable truths about the treatment of native peoples in Southwest Africa had remained in public consciousness, it would probably have been a lot harder to forge white solidarity among the various white people groups in Southern Africa. Furthermore, it sure would have been difficult to appear as the morally superior regime in the eyes of the global community as the condemner of German atrocities, when, for instance, South Africa aerially bombed the

¹¹³ Silvester & Gewald, 2003, xvii-xviii.

¹¹⁴ Silvester & Gewald, 2003, xiii.

Bondelswart tribe during their uprising in 1922.

All this being said, the *Blue Book* remains a rare glimpse into the voices of Africans, and the fact that the document was buried by the same authorities that produced it tells that the contents of the report probably are mostly accurate. If the British and South African authorities found the document to be that volatile and problematic for them as the political situation changed, one must assume that the contents of the book would also have been compiled truthfully and in a relatively unbiased manner. So, let us take a look at more accounts by the natives of Southwest Africa on their treatment by the Germans.

As I have discussed in this study, the colonial fantasies that German colonial authors replicated and challenged, were first based around ideas of subjugation and then around ideas of elimination with the introduction of settler colonial ideals, the colonial war and uprisings, scientific racism and the female colonial movement's critique of colonialist men losing the *Germanness* of Southwest Africa. The previous chapter that described the internal challenge to 'old' notions of colonial rule and self-understanding is still only one side of the challenge that colonial fantasies from the precolonial period faced in Southwest Africa. The other side was the external challenge of native accounts – accounts that can be found in the *Blue Book*. The narratives of civilized rule over tribes in Southwest Africa crumble quickly when one observes statements of those who had to endure in this supposedly lawful and just system of colonial hierarchies:

*"Under Herero law our chief punished people who committed willful murder with death. Under the Germans no German was ever sentenced to death for murdering a Herero. Some Germans were sent away to Germany (so we are told); but others who murdered our people are in the country up to the present day. I know of the men Kamahuru, Leonard, a woman Kamahuru and another man Willie Kain... also Kasambouwe, a Herero of Otjimbingwe, who was killed by a policeman at Okahandja, because he did not take off his hat and greet the policeman. – It was the general rule to shield German murderers from justice. –"*¹¹⁵

The adherence to law and order during Leutwein's tenure, the signing of treaties between the native tribes and the German colonial administration, and a supposedly just and lawful society that Germans such as Leutwein were building for *all* Southwest Africans, was at best a wishful fantasy of German preconceptions of benevolent colonial rule, and at worst a malicious lie that a system of

¹¹⁵ *Blue Book*, 1918, 94-95. "Dealing with murders by Germans, Hosea Mundunga states on oath: --"

exploitation was built upon. The inherently unjust system that is built in a colonial setting does not treat equally the settler and the native, the colonizer and the colonized. As Hosea Mundunga describes the inequality in the face of the law, the system of governance that was gradually built to facilitate intertribal relations and the relations between the tribes and the colonial administration, ended up being a system of oppression and slow destruction of the tribes themselves. As we have learned by now, the colonial administration gradually stripped the various tribes in Southwest Africa of their political power, their livelihoods in the form of cattle, their legal rights that were supposed to be protected under the signed treaties – and eventually, with the uprising and the genocide, their human dignity and worth. It becomes easy to understand the decisions of the tribal chiefs Maharero and Witbooi to rebel, when the peace they knew under German rule was a situation where their peoples were bound to eventually disappear from the landscape. The only way to survive was to resist and fight – a narrative that could be found in German texts too, but in the case of the native peoples, the threat of destruction was all too real. While German authors falsely painted the uprisings and the Colonial War as existential struggles of their racial survival in Southwest Africa (and even globally), the threat of being eliminated definitely was true for the native peoples in Southwest Africa.

In late 1905, after most of the tribes in Southwest Africa had been defeated, the report states that peace could have been achieved. General Lothar von Trotha was recalled back to Germany as a result of popular outrage in Germany itself of his extreme policy of destruction. The remaining tribes, namely Jacob Morengo and the Bondelswart and Veldschoendragers tribes that had continued resistance, offered to surrender conditionally if they were allowed to retain their livestock and that all lives were spared.¹¹⁶ Earlier in 1905, Von Trotha, apparently in a vindictive mood, had refused all offers of surrender and demanded an unconditional surrender of the native tribes. This back and forth eventually resulted in Marengo's decision to fight until the bitter end – a decision that other tribes had discarded already before, the Witbooi among them after the death of Hendrik Witbooi.

The aftermath of the colonial war was not to be the gradual restoration of peaceful relations between the tribes and the colonial administration but the systematic destruction of the tribes that had rebelled (and even many of those that had not). Once again, it seems that one side in the conflict respected established rules of warfare and did not engage in war atrocities, while the other

¹¹⁶ *Blue Book*, 1918, 169.

side did. The *Blue Book* calls German actions during and after the rebellion with this term – *war atrocities* – although in my mind, this label only encompasses so much. What was actually taking place, was a genocide. One of the commanders under Jacob Marengo describes the surrender:

”I was never captured by the Germans, and remained in the field until peace was made in end of 1906 or beginning 1907... We were so ordered by our chief to spare all women and children. The missionaries and the English and Dutch settlers were not molested by us if they remained on their farms. When we captured German soldiers we always released them after taking their arms and ammunition. We fought fairly, and only killed in battle. The Germans, on the other hand, killed all who fell into their hands. When we eventually made peace we had lost everything. We had nothing to live on. We used to eat the dead horses and mules of Germans which we found on the veld.”¹¹⁷

By all accounts in the *Blue Book*, it seems that most of the various tribes waging war against the Germans, still respected certain rules of warfare and did not commit war crimes – at least not in the wildly exaggerated numbers that German colonialist authors claimed. Joseph Schayer, in his statement under oath, also reveals the false narrative of a race war between blacks and whites, that the German settlers and colonial authors liked to repeat. At least his *commando* seemed to clearly make a distinction between Germans, English and Dutch people and did not treat them as *whites* per se. The native tribes were fighting Germans and not white settlers in general – an important distinction which was barely recognized by German colonialists in their extensive descriptions of the colonial war.

All in all, it seems that the rebellions from 1904 onwards, the colonial war and the decisive shift in the higher echelons of the German colonial administration, all were steps towards the genocide of the Herero and Nama peoples of Southwest Africa. The accounts of Germans tell a story of revenge and justified action against treacherous natives, a narrative which in my opinion rises from colonial fantasies that were shattered by external native resistance. The accounts of the native peoples form narratives that are responsible for the shattering of a great deal of German colonial fantasies in Southwest Africa. Let us now conclude this paper, and briefly revisit all the authors and their works discussed here.

¹¹⁷ *Blue Book*, 1918, 170. ”Joseph Schayer (Commandant under Marengo) states under oath:--”

4. Conclusion

The German Empire was, in many ways, a latecomer to the colonial race in which most of the western European powers, chief among them Great Britain and France, had been taking part for decades by the latter half of the 19th century. Although the acquisition of colonies only truly started in the 1880s, the conquest of the collective imagination of Germans had been ongoing for decades. In the absence of colonies of their own, German authors, philosophers, travel writers and early colonial advocates asserted themselves in the role of armchair conquistadors – a comfortable seat from which they could imagine themselves as better and more civilized colonial overlords to their European counterparts.

Colonial imagery and dreams of German colonies became so commonplace in German literature and culture at large, that by the time the Reich managed to acquire its colonial lands, they had become a key part of German self-understanding and a distinct colonial cult. Colonial fantasies of conquest and surrender of far-away lands and their peoples cast the German settler into a role of an imperial patriarch – a civilized man bringing *Kultur* to native peoples in need of his salvation. The fantasy of better, more efficient and even morally superior colonial administration and rule – the *colonial legend* – turned from a distant fantastic dream into an undisputable fact for much of the reading public in Germany. With the conquest of Imperial Germany's foremost settler colony – Southwest Africa – these dreams of the precolonial period could finally be achieved.

How did colonial fantasies, first formulated during a time when Germany was lacking colonies of its own, manifest themselves in the writings of colonial authors of the formal colonial period? It seems that fantasies of the precolonial period always linger in the background when it comes to the thinking of 'earlier' colonial authors. They see the conquest of colonial space as a conquest of the land, its resources and its people. Colonial fantasies of benevolent rule, of the *Koloniallegende* and of cross-cultural connections and a romanticized view of the people the settler encounters, all seem to color the views held by such authors. Instead of aiming to remove natives outright from the colonial space, they seem to aim to establish colonial hierarchies – in which the settler occupies the top position.

Many authors in German colonial circles, predominately male at first, embarked upon their personal journeys to Southwest Africa – to settle and farm, to govern and to bring their culture on African soil. Chief among them, the governor of Southwest Africa Theodor Leutwein, who in his memoirs talks of his eleven years as governor in the colony. Leutwein's thinking and outlook on colonial

affairs was rooted in the colonial fantasies of the precolonial period as he attempted to assert German rule over the vast territory by engaging in diplomacy with the natives of the land. Native chiefs and captains, such as Samuel Maharero and Hendrik Witbooi, were treated unequally as they were gradually forced into treaties with the German colonial administration. However, they were still given agency of their own and their people's fates and even some measure of respect as part of a colonial hierarchy. Co-existence in Southwest Africa was anything but harmonious and equal, but it was still co-existence.

How did it come to be, that attitudes radicalized in the latter years of German colonial rule in Southwest Africa, from those of subjugation to those of destruction? It seems that, at the dawn of the 20th century, old fantasies that stemmed from the precolonial period went through a transformation. In much of the German colonialist literature the natives, especially those that resisted colonial rule, were now characterized as somehow unsalvageable unlike before. Instead of aiming to tether native tribes and nations into the colonial system as tribes, it seems that many German colonialists thought it necessary, if not vital, to dismantle all forms of native independence and power. The 'mission' of the German farmer-settler was now to take what was his – and indeed, hers – from the natives. The land was no longer to be shared with the various native peoples of Southwest Africa, rather it was to be exclusively German and white.

This change in thinking – the internal challenge to colonial fantasies of the precolonial period – came with the introduction of new theories of race and nation, most notably in the German case with the *völkisch* ideals of *Blut und Boden* and *Lebensraum*. This new thinking also coincided with the elevation of German colonialist women, who in their quest to achieve equality with German colonialist men, aimed to out do them in ruthlessness against natives of both sexes. Furthermore, the old inherently utopian ideals of colonial rule were challenged by the colonized natives, many of whom were pushed to rebellion by the inhumane and unjust conditions their peoples suffered under the ever-expanding German colonial rule.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the tribes that had been subjugated and forced into protection treaties by the colonial administration, were once again about to rebel. In 1904 the great Herero nation started their uprising which, alongside the Nama uprising later in the same year, would go down in history as the last great anticolonial uprising against German rule. Instead of a return to peace and relative stability, the German colonial administration started a war of extermination. As we have seen, the attitudes held by German colonialists had radicalized. Authors such as Adda von Liliencron, Gustav Frenssen and Clara Brockmann show us, how the colonial fantasies of subjugating native peoples and conquering their lands had been replaced with a new set of fantasies

– fantasies of a purely German settler colony. With the emergence of female colonial writers criticizing their male counterparts of losing the *Germanness* of Southwest Africa, and with the popularization of scientific racism notions of destruction became more and more commonplace. The last straw that barred the German settlers, the *Schutztruppen* and the colonial administration from directly engaging in violence against the native peoples, was the Herero and Nama uprisings of 1904.

As I have discussed in this paper, the narratives of German colonialist authors and the colonial fantasies that can be found everywhere in their writings were challenged and transformed in the early years of the 20th century. Colonial fantasies that forged German self-understanding were created in a colonial context and challenged and transformed in that very same context. The challenge that German colonial fantasies faced was two-fold. Firstly, it was internal, when the German colonialists themselves started to critique 'old' notions of colonial rule. And secondly, it was external, when the native populations – the colonized – resisted their place in colonial hierarchy as inferiors of white Germans.

The field of settler colonial studies is a relatively young one in the larger setting of postcolonial studies of history. The case study of German Southwest Africa is a great one, as it has clear connections to both the settler colonial space as well as the metropole. One can observe and connect issues of colonial origin, such as the themes of global inequality and racism, and thematic issues of, say, the emancipation of women or the formation of national identity and nationalism in general. For me, studying German authors from a hundred years ago, I feel at times like a stranger to them but also recognize familiar signs of humanity. Another thing that makes this admittedly peripheral study perhaps a little more universal, is the knowledge of the fact, that issues of the colonial period are still very much relevant both in the modern-day nation-state of Namibia as well as Germany and the world at large. To return briefly here to Geoffrey Cubit's notion of memorialization, it is of paramount importance to try to sympathize with the historical subjects one chooses to study – even if one does not agree with them.

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