

## BECOMING A CHRISTIAN, BECOMING A TROUBLEMAKER

THE RISE AND FALL OF FRANZ/HOESMAB OF WINDHOEK,  
1893 TO 1933

*Jakob Zollmann*

Christianity was imagined by European contemporaries interested in “colonial questions” as one of the decisive tools of empire. It was considered a central part of the quest to develop the “civilization” and to increase “the moral and material well-being of the indigenous populations” – a task the European powers subscribed to in the preamble of the General Congo Act (February 1885). It was thus assumed that the belief in a Christian God and the Holy Church as the assembly of believers around the world would also have transformative effects on the individual who was to be guided toward and converted to Christianity, leaving behind her or his “pagan,” “uncivilized” status and finding a rightful place as a morally uplifted, loyal member of a society remodeled according to colonial mores and needs.<sup>1</sup> The Lutheran doctrine of the Two Kingdoms furthered a tendency to divide the world into pagan and Christian. For many German Protestant missionaries in southern Africa (formed by Lutheran theology, pietism, and romanticism with their emphasis on the individual and his or her personal efforts to live a Christian life) a “Christian” culture thus stood in opposition to a “pagan” culture.<sup>2</sup>

However, throughout colonial Africa the experiences of administrators, military officers, and settlers with African converts were more ambiguous and challenging than any blueprint of the effects of Christianization could have foreseen. Christianity neither led uniformly toward an unquestionable acceptance of colonial rule nor to the recognition of “Christian” culture as defined by missionaries or colonial administrators. On the contrary, from the early days of formal colonialism onward, Christianity might have had – seen from the status quo of the colonial order – “revolutionary effects”<sup>3</sup>. The examples are numerous: In German Southwest Africa, the Nama-leader Hendrik Witbooi repeatedly used his Christian

- 1 For a recent overview, see Gladwin, Michael: Mission and Colonialism, in: Rasmussen, Joel D. S./Wolfe, Judith/Zachhuber, Johannes (eds.): Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Christian Thought, Oxford 2017, pp. 282–304.
- 2 Cf. Pakendorf, Gunther: For there is no power but of God. The Berlin Mission and the Challenges of Colonial South Africa, in: Missionalia. Journal of the Southern African Missiological Society, no. 3, Pretoria 1997, pp. 255–273.
- 3 Levzion, Nehemia: Final Discussion, in: Lincoln, Bruce (ed.): Religion, Rebellion, Revolution. An Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Collection of Essays, New York 1985, p. 293.

faith to justify not only his military campaigns (*komandos*),<sup>4</sup> but also to defend argumentatively the independence of his realm from any overlords, including the Germans.<sup>5</sup> As is well established, from the early twentieth century Africans engaged in Christian prophetic movements rose to challenge the colonial order, responding to societal change and political crises.<sup>6</sup> Throughout Africa during high imperialism, western missionary efforts were not the only ones to multiply; so-called Ethiopianism and other African independent churches also gained more and more followers – much to the chagrin of the European missionaries.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the merits of Christian conversions did not remain unchallenged among colonial personnel. In German East Africa, German officers admittedly preferred Muslim soldiers, describing them as “more responsible and more loyal” than Christians or Animists.<sup>8</sup> Open and escalating conflicts between mission personnel and colonial officials were common throughout the colonial world.<sup>9</sup>

The following account of a Christian African leader who made himself first indispensable to the missionaries and colonial authorities and later defied the orders of his religious and administrative superiors in Windhoek (the capital of German Southwest Africa) is an illustration of the narrow line that African actors at times managed to walk between accommodating the expectations of missionaries and officials on the one hand and their own aspirations on the other.

The “case of Franz/Hoesemab”<sup>10</sup> is thus not merely another history of individual African resistance against the daily impositions of colonialism. The subject of resistance has been dominant in writings about African history; since the 1960s, “resistance” was seen as a historiographic means to “Africaniz[e] African history.”<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, for some time, historians have been reluctant to dis-

- 4 Cf. Hardung, Christine: Zur Rolle der Religion in (imaginierten) Gewaltgemeinschaften Mauretaniens und des südwestlichen Afrika (19./21. Jahrhundert), in: Speitkamp, Winfried (ed.): *Gewaltgemeinschaften in der Geschichte. Entstehung, Kohäsionskraft und Zerfall*, Göttingen 2017, pp. 209–232, p. 216.
- 5 Cf. Hendrik Witbooi to Maharero, Hoornkranz, 30 May 1890, in: Heywood, Annemarie/Maasdorp, Eben: *The Hendrik Witbooi Papers*, no. 34, Windhoek 1995, p. 50.
- 6 Cf. Adas, Michael: *Prophets of Rebellion. Millenarian Protest Movements Against the European Colonial Order*, Chapel Hill 1979; Anderson, David/Johnson, Douglas H. (eds.): *Revealing Prophets. Prophecy in Eastern African History*, East African Studies Series, London 1995.
- 7 Cf. Chirenge, J. Muteru: *Ethiopianism and Afro-Americans in Southern Africa, 1883–1916*, Baton Rouge 1987.
- 8 Cf. Bühner, Tanja: *Die Kaiserliche Schutztruppe für Deutsch-Ostafrika. Koloniale Sicherheitspolitik und transkulturelle Kriegführung 1885 bis 1918*, München 2011, p. 138.
- 9 Cf. Habermas, Rebekka: *Skandal in Togo. Ein Kapitel deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, Frankfurt am Main 2016, pp. 139–140.
- 10 Cf. Engel, Lothar: *Kolonialismus und Nationalismus im deutschen Protestantismus in Namibia 1907 bis 1945. Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen evangelischen Mission und Kirche im ehemaligen Kolonial- und Mandatsgebiet Südwestafrika*, Frankfurt am Main 1976, pp. 88–102; Oermann, Nils-Ole: *Mission, State, and Church Relations in South West Africa under German Rule*, Stuttgart 1999, pp. 162–166; Zollmann, Jakob: *Koloniale Herrschaft und ihre Grenzen*, Göttingen 2010, pp. 260–268.
- 11 Cooper, Frederick: *Decolonizing Situations. The Rise, Fall, and Rise of Colonial Studies, 1951–2001*, in: *French Politics, Culture & Society*, no. 2, New York 2002, pp. 47–76, 56.

cuss the “non-European foundations of European imperialism,”<sup>12</sup> although the sheer necessity of the “African elites to help the [colonial officials] govern” the colonized is by now a well-established element of colonialism. Also, African intermediaries were aware of the “dependence” of the colonial officialdom and thus of the inalienability of their “help.”<sup>13</sup> They therefore held their own bargaining power and could use it to their own advantage<sup>14</sup> – as the actions of Franz/Hoesemab exemplify.

Church records indicate that Hoesemab was born in 1874. However, there are no indications of where he was born in pre-colonial Namibia or who his parents were. The only indication given is his “tribal” background, which is always mentioned in German sources, describing him as a “Bergdamara.” During the German colonial era the “Bergdamara” – the *German Colonial Encyclopedia* (printed in 1920, but written before World War I) also mentions their self-designation, “Haukoin,” and the (pejorative) denomination “Klippkaffern” credited to the neighboring Ovaherero – were often attributed a particularly low status among the “tribes of GSWA.” The paternalist overtones were characteristic of the colonial literature. German ethnologists (and missionaries) considered the “Bergdamara” incapable of forming “even larger tribal communities” and saw them without any “*Kultur* in a higher sense.” Historically, it was said, “Bergdamara” were a “slave people” (*Sklavenvolk*), “subdued,” “despised,” and “mercilessly killed by Herero and Hottentots” before the arrival of the Germans, who found them an “utterly intimidated people,” scratching out a “meagre existence.”<sup>15</sup> Such victimizing discourse about this “poor tribe” had in fact changed over the course of several decades. Pre-colonial missionary reports emphasized the “bestiality” and “brutality” of the “Bergdamara” in their fight against the Ovaherero. This discourse had a clear legitimating impact, aimed at colonial intervention to end the “permanent warfare” among Africans.<sup>16</sup> Historian Brigitte Lau summarized this form of self-congratulatory German writing dominated by the missionary Heinrich Vedder

**Kommentiert [A1]:** Laut Verlagsvorgaben sollen bei Zeitschriftenartikeln in den Fußnoten die Heftnummern angegeben werden, nicht der Jahrgang.  
Handelt es sich bei „no. 41“ um den Jahrgang?

- 12 Cf. Robinson, Ronald: Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism. Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration, in: Sutcliffe, Roger Owen-Bob (ed.): Studies in the Theory of Imperialism, London 1972, pp. 117–142.
- 13 Cf. Roberts, Richard: Review of Miers and Klein (eds.): Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa (1999), in: Journal of African History, no. 41, Cambridge 2000, p. 307.
- 14 Cf. Lawrance, B. N./Osborn, E. L./Robert, R. L.: Introduction. African Intermediaries and the ‘Bargain’ of Collaboration, in: idem (eds.): Intermediaries, Interpreters and Clerks. African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa, Madison 2006, pp. 3–34.
- 15 Art. “Bergdamara”, in: Deutsches Kolonial-Lexikon, vol. I, Leipzig, 1920, pp. 167–168; cf. Wegner, P.: Die Bergdamara in Deutsch-Südwestafrika und die Arbeit der Rheinischen Mission an ihnen, Barmen 1907.
- 16 Cf. Pfeffer, Clemens: Koloniale Repräsentationen Südwestafrikas im Spiegel der Rheinischen Missionsberichte, 1842–1884, in: Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien no. 22, Wien 2012, pp. 1–33, 12.

(1876–1972) – still called the “leading ethnographer of the Damara”<sup>17</sup> – under the ironic title “Thank God the Germans came.”<sup>18</sup>

The main settlement areas of the “Bergdamara” were reported to be in the western and southern part of “Hereroland, especially in the Erongo Mountains ... and the Komasland,” described as “the sanctuary of the wild Bergdamara.” However, thousands of “Bergdamara” (out of an estimated 19,600 in 1912), whose “intelligence is remarkable,” had in the meantime settled among European settlers and were “much valued as workers and servants ... Also the mission gained quick access to this frugal people.”<sup>19</sup>

The fact that the “Bergdamara” Franz /Hoesemab was baptized by Rhenish missionary Freerk Meyer (1847–1923) only as an adult in 1893 may indicate that his parents were not Christians, as they may have otherwise had him baptized when he was still a child. Whether or not he bore, prior to his baptism, another, non-European first-name is also unknown. /Hoesemab was baptized in Otjimbingue, located in southern Hereroland and until 1890/91 the administrative seat of the German colonial authorities under Commissioner Curt von François. More importantly, Otjimbingue, the seat of the Zeraua royal house of the Ovaherero, was one of the oldest mission stations in Hereroland, founded in 1849 by the Lutheran Rhenish Mission Society (RMS). The increased commercial opportunities between the harbor at Walvis Bay and the Ovaherero, Oorlam, and Nama communities farther inland – who were particularly interested in guns, ammunition, and alcohol – made Otjimbingue an important stopover. The Rhenish mission station (with the missionaries pursuing their own trade in cattle, hides, and European commodities like any other European traders) attracted not only Africans, but also a number of German settlers, miners, and traders in the pre-colonial period. In 1866, Missionary Carl Hugo Hahn (1818–1895) founded the Augustineum, a seminary and training college with the aim to educate African mission aides (*Missionshelfer*). However, the Augustineum remained in Otjimbingue only until 1890 when it was moved to Okahandja.<sup>20</sup> It is therefore impossible that /Hoesemab was a student at this institution, as he was not yet baptized in 1890 and as a fifteen- or sixteen-year-old boy would have been considered too young to be a mission aid. However, /Hoesemab did attend the mission school for children. The schooling of African children – which had the purpose of converting them to Christianity and bringing them *Kultur* – was an important factor in Rhenish missionary efforts throughout Southern Africa. Furthermore, the missionary argu-

Kommentiert [A2]: *Missionshelfern* ?

17 Barnard, Alan: *Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa. A Comparative Ethnography of the Khoisan Peoples*, Cambridge 1992, p. 201.

18 Lau, Brigitte: ‘Thank God the Germans Came’. *Vedder and Namibian Historiography*, in: Heywood, Annemarie (ed.): *Brigitte Lau. History and Historiography, four Essays in reprint*, Windhoek 1995, pp. 1–16; on Lau, cf. Saunders, Chris: *Some Roots of Anti-colonial Historical Writing about Namibia*, in: *Journal of Namibian Studies*, no. 3, Bochum 2008, pp. 83–93, 84.

19 Art. “Bergdamara”..., op. cit., p. 168.

20 On pre-colonial Hereroland, see Henrichsen, Dag: *Herrschaft und Alltag im vorkolonialen Zentralnamibia. Eine Studie über die Geschichte des Herero- und Damaraland im 19. Jahrhundert*, Basel 2011.

ments in favor of opening schools in the colonies served at the same time as an “appeal to rescue African orphans or slaves [that] proved highly effective for raising funds in Europe.”<sup>21</sup> However, prior to 1900 missionaries in Namibia were not particularly successful in their efforts at conversion. This had repercussions for their schools. Very few schools such as the Augustineum were maintained for any length of time. Financial difficulties restricted expansion, as did the reluctance of the African population to convert. Prior to 1900 the number of baptisms was low. Historians have repeatedly shown that Africans were “using missionaries for their own purposes” and had varying reasons for attending mission schools or sending their children there.<sup>22</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, missionaries seemed important to many Africans, most of all because of their access to modern goods (including weapons and alcohol) and their ability and willingness to teach reading and writing in the native languages. Due to the work of missionaries, texts written in African languages (including the widely spoken Cape Dutch) circulated and were read by Africans long before the colonial era.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the differences between the indigenous language and the colonial language were not as striking as has been described in other colonial contexts in Africa. The teacher-missionaries often preferred Cape Dutch as the language of instruction. The German language became attractive for Africans only when it was evident after 1890 that the Germans would indeed set up an administrative body which would encroach more and more on their everyday life. Those Africans able to communicate directly with the new power brokers thus had an undisputable advantage. The curriculum of the mission school in Otjimbingwe, as in other mission stations in central and southern Namibia, included reading and writing in Cape Dutch and possibly also in Otjiherero or the Nama language, plus singing and the Bible.<sup>24</sup> The mission schools were first of all not “places of *Bildung*, but a means for *Erziehung*.”<sup>25</sup>

The fact that /Hoesemab was fluent in the German language (spoken and written) early on indicates that the teaching of German to Africans was, although certainly not a main educational aim of missionaries, already practiced in the early days of German colonialism. Later on, the question of whether African children

Kommentiert [A3]: ok?

- 21 Johnson, Hildegard B.: The Location of Christian Missions in Africa, in: *Geographic Review*, no. 2, Oxford 1967, pp. 168–202, p. 178.
- 22 Berman, Edward H.: African Responses to Christian Mission Education, in: *African Studies Review*, no. 3, Cambridge 1974, pp. 527–540, p. 527.
- 23 Cf. Henrichsen, Dag: “Iss Worte!” Anmerkungen zur entstehenden afrikanischen Schriftkultur im vorkolonialen Zentralnamibia, in: Marfaing, Laurence/Reinwald, Brigitte (eds.): *Afrikanische Beziehungen. Netzwerke und Räume*, Münster 2001, pp. 329–338.
- 24 Cf. Adick, Christel: Muttersprachliche und fremdsprachliche Bildung im Missions- und Kolonialschulwesen, in: *Bildung und Erziehung*, no. 3, Köln/Weimar/Wien 1993, pp. 283–298, 286; Kienetz, Alvin: The Key Role of the Orlam Migration in the Early Europeanization of South West Africa (Namibia), in: *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, no. 10, Boston 1977, pp. 553–572, 562.
- 25 Eckl, Andreas: Grundzüge einer feministischen Missionsgeschichtsschreibung. Missionars-gattinnen, Diakonissen und Missionsschwester in der deutschen kolonialen Frauenmission, in: Bechhaus-Gerst, Marianne/Leutner, Mechthild (eds.): *Frauen in den deutschen Kolonien*, Berlin 2009, pp. 132–145, 142.

should learn German as a foreign language or whether they should be taught all or most subjects (German, mathematics, history, geography/*Heimatkunde*, natural science, and singing) in German from an early age was a constant bone of contention in GSWA.<sup>26</sup> German colonial administrators were yet undecided on whether or not the spread of the German language among Africans was advisable for their self-declared “civilizing mission.”<sup>27</sup> In Otjimbingue, the teaching of German to pupils may have also been facilitated by the fact that this was the town where Rhenish missionaries had set up the first school for German settler children in 1876. Assuming that /Hoesemab grew up in Otjimbingue or nearby, the schooling facilities were certainly not yet strictly segregated and thus African pupils may have interacted with German comrades more frequently than was later thinkable.<sup>28</sup>

Since the pioneering study of Jacob Ade Ajayi on the influence of mission schools in Nigeria on the “making of a new [African] elite” (1965) many examples of similar elite-making effects of Christian missionary efforts through education throughout colonial Africa have been analyzed.<sup>29</sup> /Hoesemab’s rise in the new African social hierarchies created by the colonial state was based on the language skills he learned from the missionaries in Otjimbingwe. By the late 1890s, when, after his peace with Hendrik Wibooi, Governor Theodor Leutwein had more thoroughly established the colonial state in central Namibia, German language skills had become sought after among Africans. Of course, though speaking German was essential, it was not the only condition for /Hoesemab’s future success.

Until further research opens new sources, we will not know how or why /Hoesemab made his way from Otjimbingwe to the colonial capital of Windhoek in the mid- or late 1890s. Windhoek was then a small town of about 700–800 inhabitants; however, it was constantly growing. In 1903, Missionary Carl Wandres (1858–1933) counted 2,054 Africans living in the town, of whom 526 were Christians. Around 500 “whites,” most of them Germans, the majority being officials or soldiers, lived in Windhoek at that time.<sup>30</sup> Since 1898 the German administration had tried to encourage the African population to live in separate compounds, called *Werft*, outside the inner city where most of the Germans had their houses.

26 Cf. Adick, Christel: Muttersprachliche und fremdsprachliche Bildung im Missions- und Kolonialschulwesen, in: *Bildung und Erziehung*, no. 3, Köln/Weimar/Wien 1993, pp. 283–298, 293.

27 Cf. Steinbach, A.: Sprachpolitik und Zivilisierungsmission im Britischen Empire. Die Verbreitung der englischen Sprache im 19. Jahrhundert in Ceylon und den Protected Malay States, in: Barth, Boris/Osterhammel, Jürgen (eds.): *Zivilisierungsmissionen. Imperiale Weltverbesserung seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, Konstanz 2005, pp. 149–168; Zollmann, Jakob: *Communicating Colonial Order. The Police of German South-West-Africa (c. 1894–1915)*, in: *Crime, History & Societies*, no. 1, Genève 2011, pp. 33–57, 46 f.

28 On these questions see Zollmann, Jakob: *Children of Empire. Childhood, Education and Space in German South West Africa, c. 1880–1915*, in: *Journal of Namibian Studies*, no. 1, Bochum 2015, pp. 71–124.

29 Ajayi, J. F. A.: *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841–1891. The Making of a New Elite*, London 1965.

30 All numbers in Zollmann, Jakob: *Koloniale Herrschaft...*, op. cit., p. 219.

Windhoek, like most other colonial towns thus developed into a “dual city.”<sup>31</sup> However, around 1900 many Africans working for Germans were living either in the same mansions as their employers or had their huts (*Pontoks*) nearby on the same plot. Over the course of the 1890s, several “tribal” – as the Germans called them – compounds had developed at the fringes of the German inner city. In 1896 the officer Fr. von Bülow identified three distinct quarters in the eastern parts of the town: those for the “Hottentots,” the “Berg-Damaras,” and the “Bastards.”<sup>32</sup> Later on, further “tribes” were given their own quarters at the *große Werft* established after 1910.

This pattern of ethnically segregated compounds was based not on (pre-colonial) reservations or on Namibian peoples’ antagonisms against one another. Rather, it was a concrete element of Governor Theodor Leutwein’s often-quoted *divide et impera* policy,<sup>33</sup> which was inscribed into the urban space of colonial Windhoek. Officials were eager to exploit these antagonisms for the profit of the colonial order’s stability. Segregating the different African language or cultural groups living in the colonial territory was a major colonial concern.<sup>34</sup> “Racial dualism was thereby anchored in a politically enforced ethnic pluralism.”<sup>35</sup>

However, the production and enforcement of this form of “ethnic pluralism” proved to be very demanding for colonial officials. The German administration (and more specifically the colonial police force) tried, mostly in vain, to control the behavior of Africans in these *Werften*. This included the restriction of access to these “native compounds” and of alcohol production and consumption there. These colonial policing efforts were often extremely intrusive, if not brutal, and were executed by both German and African police personnel. However, it became evident to colonial officials in the local administration that without support from within by African authorities, the *Werften* could not be controlled or administered. Therefore, the position of African foremen (*Vormänner* or *Werftälteste*) was established.<sup>36</sup>

In 1900, Franz/Hoesemab was appointed foreman of the Windhoek “Bergdamara-Werft.” His “sophisticated German,”<sup>37</sup> his ability to influence “his” people, and his way of negotiating on friendly terms with colonial officials were decisive for his appointment by the Windhoek administration. Barely one year later, the Rhenish mission also appointed/Hoesemab to one of the highest positions an Afri-

31 Gründer, Horst/Johanek, Peter (eds.): *Kolonialstädte. Europäische Enklaven oder Schmelztiegel der Kulturen?*, Münster 2001, p. vii.

32 v. Bülow, F. J.: *Drei Jahre im Lande Hendrik Witboois*, Berlin 1896, p. 174.

33 Bley, Helmut: *Kolonialherrschaft und Sozialstruktur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1894–1914*, Hamburg 1968, p. 63; Kundrus, Birthe: *Moderne Imperialisten. Das Kaiserreich im Spiegel seiner Kolonien*, Cologne 2003, p.190.

34 Becher (2001), 219; Osterhammel, Jürgen: *Kolonialismus. Geschichte, Formen, Folgen*, Munich 2003, p. 71.

35 Mamdani (1996), 7; see Berman and Lonsdale (1992), 95; Spears (2003), 25.

36 See Zollmann, Jakob: *Koloniale Herrschaft...*, op. cit., pp. 260–261.

37 Joh. Olpp to Mission Director in Barmen, 7.5.1913, in: Engel, Lothar: *Kolonialismus und Nationalismus...*, op. cit., p. 91.

**Kommentiert [A4]:** Auf welche bibliographische Angabe bezieht sich Becher (2001)?

**Kommentiert [A5]:** Auf welche bibliographischen Angaben beziehen sich die markierten Kurzformen?

can could achieve in the mission hierarchies: he was made school master (*Schulmeister*) in Windhoek's mission school for "Damara-children," succeeding Franz Gértzie, who lost his position due his "alcoholism and sodomy." Together with missionary J. Diehl, /Hoesemab taught the children of "his" *Werft* according to the mission curriculum. Missionary Carl Wandres, head of the Lutheran Nama and Damara congregation in Windhoek from 1900 and a renowned specialist of their language,<sup>38</sup> thought highly of /Hoesemab, lauding him in the annual report as someone who "adores to teach." Furthermore, Wandres described /Hoesemab as "a total abstainer" – learning only later that this was in fact not the case.<sup>39</sup> Around 1900, /Hoesemab was thus among the second-generation Namibian "African church leaders, theologians and Christians"<sup>40</sup> who would shape the church over the coming decades.

When in 1906 Missionsdirektor Spieker from Barmen visited Windhoek to "inspect" the RMS mission works in GSWA, he noted: "Around 2,000 people live on the *Damarawerft* under the leadership of Franz /Hoesemab."<sup>41</sup> Since 1907 the position of the foremen had been formalized according to Section 13 of the Native Control Decree. The colonial official in charge of "native affairs" (mostly the *Bezirksamtmann*, the local district commissioner) "normally [had] to use the intermediation of a foreman" when dealing with the inhabitants of the *Werft* under his supervision. The foreman was to be appointed by this colonial official, who had to take into consideration "the requests of the natives that are put under his control." The foreman, in turn, was to be "held responsible for the conduct of the *Werft*" – which was thus seen by the colonial officials as a unitary social body that could only be guided by trustworthy Africans under German leadership.<sup>42</sup>

Given the length of his tenure as foreman, German colonial officials had reason to be satisfied with /Hoesemab's administration of the *Damarawerft*. This can also be seen from the fact that he was the only one among the Windhoek foremen who received a monthly salary from the Windhoek district office (*Bezirksamt*) of

38 Meinhof, Carl (mit Beiträgen von Hermann Hegner, Diedrich Westermann und Carl Wandres): Lehrbuch der Nama-Sprache, Berlin 1909.

39 Archives of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (AELCRN), vol. 36, Bl. 41 (Gemeinde-Chronik, 1901); Bl. 52. AELCRN, C I 1.40, Bl. 78, Missionar Wandres: Jahresbericht der Station Windhoek 4, 1902.

40 Ludwig, Frieder: Profile der afrikanischen Christentumsgeschichte. Einleitung, in: Koschorke, Klaus (ed.): Außereuropäische Christentumsgeschichte (=Periplus), Berlin 2006, pp. 35–59, 36.

41 Archiv der Vereinigten Evangelischen Mission (VEM-RMG), 2.533a [Micro-Film in NAN Windhoek], Bl. 223 f., Report of Spieker 1906.

42 "§ 13. Die mit der Werftaufsicht betraute Person soll sich im Verkehre mit den Bewohnern der ihm unterstellten Werft in der Regel der Vermittlung eines Vormannes bedienen, den er aus der Zahl der Eingeborenen ernennt und der für das Verhalten der Werft verantwortlich zu machen ist. Bei der Bestellung des eingeborenen Vormanns sollen tunlichst die Wünsche der ihm zu unterstellenden Eingeborenen berücksichtigt werden." Verordnung, betr. Maßregeln zur Kontrolle der Eingeborenen, vom 18. August 1907, in Deutsches Kolonialblatt, vol. 18, Berlin 1907, p. 1181; Köbner, Otto Max/Gerstmeier, Johannes (eds.): Die deutsche Kolonial-Gesetzgebung, vol. 11, Berlin 1908, p. 345.

around thirty marks or possibly more. Only in 1912 did the district commissioner manage (by pointing to /Hoesemab's salary) to secure the necessary funds to pay the other foremen an income for their work. The fifteen- to twenty-mark salary they finally received was comparable to the salary of an African policeman in German employ (though barely a tenth of what German policemen received) and put the recipients on the upper scale of the African income hierarchies in GSWA.<sup>43</sup> Historians of colonialism have repeatedly emphasized that one of the preconditions for "collaboration" was the interest of important segments of the colonized societies in the continuation of the colonial system. Financial benefits and other privileges thus remained important elements in the upkeep and daily workings of the colonial "native administration."<sup>44</sup>

In comparison to other foremen appointed to head the other *Werften* in Windhoek, it is notable that Franz /Hoesemab was always mentioned by his name in the German administrative files. His influence on the African population in Windhoek went well beyond the Damara community, as was known to his German interlocutors. /Hoesemab's popularity among Africans, however, was a challenge to German attempts at creating not only spatial, but also mental patterns of "ethnic pluralism." In late 1911, the Windhoek district commissioner Fromm "attached great importance to the fact . . . that the Hottentots are not under the control of foreman Franz [/Hoesemab]," but were "under the elder David [Zwaartbooi] and his councilor Hendrik. . . . For obvious reasons the main nations must not be shuffled together."<sup>45</sup> The writings about /Hoesemab make evident that he was considered important and taken seriously by the German officials. He worked together with the Windhoek "native commissioner" Bohr and the police sergeant stationed on the *Werft* on a daily basis. He wrote down complaints, confirmed sickness, acted as interpreter (even in court cases, which was normally reserved for missionaries), and liaised between African workers and German employers, some of whom addressed him as "Dear *Herr Franz*," wrote letters to him, and gave him presents, hoping to obtain from him the necessary workers for their businesses. German policemen complained about his "intrusions." They heard "everywhere complaints that he [/Hoesemab] holds off natives from work if they work for those whites who do not regularly make presents to Franz."<sup>46</sup> He was never reluctant to stand his ground. Keeping the pipe in his mouth, /Hoesemab was self-confident enough not to remind a German police sergeant that he was not his superior: "I am not a soldier."<sup>47</sup>

Kommentiert [A6]: Is this an idiom or literal?

43 National Archives of Namibia (NAN) BWI 36, E 1 f, Bd. 2, Bl. 21, BA Windhuk to Gouverneur, 23.4.1912; Bl. 20, Gouverneur to BA Windhuk, 12.5.1912.

44 Osterhammel, Jürgen: Kolonialismus..., op. cit., p. 71; cf. Lawrance, B. N./Osborn, E. L./Roberts, R. L.: Introduction. African Intermediaries and the 'Bargain' of Collaboration, in: idem (eds.): Intermediaries, Interpreters and Clerks. African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa, Madison 2006, pp. 3–34, 10.

45 NAN BWI 37, E 1 g, Bd. 2, Bl. 3, Windhoek district commissioner Fromm to Secretary Bohr, 11.10.1911: "müssen die Hauptnationen nicht zusammengeworfen werden."

46 NAN BWI 37, E 1 g, Bl. 28, Police to BA Windhuk, 10.6.1908.

47 NAN BWI 36, E 1 f, Meldung an BA Windhuk, 22.10.07.

/Hoesemab was also in charge of the security of his *Werft* (burglaries were a constant problem) and organized a guard for this purpose. His administrative duties due to his position as foreman were, from a missionary perspective, quite onerous. Wandres on the one hand hoped for a marked Christian influence on the *Damarawerft* since /Hoesemab was considered a man of the mission, but on the other hand Wandres lamented that the “*Werftälteste* [Franz] . . . is more often absorbed because of this [worldly] office.”<sup>48</sup>

It was, as elsewhere in colonial Africa, received wisdom of the German “native administration” not to meddle in the internal affairs of Africans (without however legally defining them). Since the “native commissioner” had orders to avoid direct intervention as far as possible, the foremen were made all the more important as it was up to them to settle disputes on “their” *Werft* and to assess when it was wise to involve the German officials. In this context, /Hoesemab also met from time to time with the head of the “native division” of the governorate of GSWA, Kurt Streitwolf, to discuss matters generally relevant to “native policy” (*Eingeborenenpolitik*) in the colony. One issue of general interest and particular urgency for Windhoek’s Damara population was the question of reparation payments (or deliveries in kind) promised by the governorate for the losses in stocks during the Herero War (1904–7). During the war – or “rebellion” as the German contemporaries called it – the Damara had stayed “faithful” (*treu*) to their German overlords because the Germans had assured /Hoesemab in 1904 and afterward that all stock losses would be replaced. More than this, the Damara were promised they would be given their “own place” outside Windhoek in !Keres for their herds. Vague assurances about political autonomy, whatever its meaning, were also given.

However, after the war the Germans required all Africans to ask the governor (!) for authorization to own cattle or horses, which amounted to a de facto prohibition, as such a permit was only given under exceptional circumstances based on the “worthiness of the native.” Additionally, the reparations of the Damaras’ stock losses never occurred seriously, except for the delivery of a small number of goats that were distributed on his *Werft* by /Hoesemab and Wandres in 1908. More goats were distributed in 1912, many of which died of scabies soon thereafter.

/Hoesemab personally fared better. In 1909 he bought two head of cattle and asked afterward for the governor’s authorization (the process was supposed to be vice versa).<sup>49</sup> However, whereas their leader could hope to create a sizeable cattle herd over the next years, in 1913 most Damara were still waiting for compensation for their losses of almost ten years before. For them, many living in abject poverty and thus lacking the means to purchase livestock that would have improved their diet, it appeared, as some critical German witnesses also noted, that it did not matter anymore that they had stayed “faithful” to the Germans. They were politically and economically no better off than the former “rebels,” the Ovaherero

48 AELCRN, C II.1.13, Wandres: remarks, 1908.

49 NAN BWI 36, E 1 e, Bl. 87, Gouvernor to BA Windhuk, 19.6.1909; Bl. 90, Gouv to BA Windhuk, 10.6.1909.

Kommentiert [A7]: ok?

Kommentiert [A8]: I cannot explain this.

and the Nama. Even colonial officials noted a “marked discontent” among the Damara. Some feared a new “rebellion.”<sup>50</sup>

Franz /Hoesemab was pressing the administration for more and healthier livestock for his people. But he was also not shy to express his disappointment with the Rhenish mission. This disappointment peaked after Wandres had been sent to Keetmanshoop and missionary Gustav Becker arrived as his replacement in 1911. Furthermore, in 1912 another mission teacher, Nowack, started working on the “Damara-*Werft*.” In both cases /Hoesemab, who had been at the helm of the Damara community now for over ten years, had neither been consulted nor informed beforehand, a treatment that served as a reminder of his subordinate position in the mission hierarchy. It was, given /Hoesemab’s standing in the community, an insult he was not to forget in the coming months.<sup>51</sup>

On one occasion in late 1912, /Hoesemab openly tested his power over Windhoek’s Damara population compared to that of missionary Becker and another foreman, Zedekia, who had “found 19 pots of beer in the *Pontoks*” of a smaller *Werft* in Klein-Windhoek, the consumption of which the Rhenish mission had prohibited for Christians. Zedekia informed Becker about this transgression, who then cancelled the sacrament, thus punishing more than just the disobedient Damara. Disappointed, the parishioners turned to /Hoesemab who, eager to win over clientele, defended both the wrongdoers and those who had to suffer the consequences without having produced or consumed alcohol. He quarreled with Zedekia and reprimanded him, explicitly reminding Zedekia that he was only installed by the colonial administration while he, /Hoesemab, was elected by the Damara.<sup>52</sup> Hoesemab was, given the broad support he enjoyed not only from “his” people but also from native commissioner Bohr, destined to win this conflict. Like other colonial officials, Bohr was not particularly well disposed toward missionaries, who caused, in his opinion, too much unnecessary perturbation with their strictures on the *Werft*. For the time being, Bohr stood behind /Hoesemab. From the state official’s point of view it was especially important to keep up good relations with an African leader who had proven his loyalty to the colonial government as well as his popularity among and influence with the population of Windhoek’s *Werften*.

Without any doubt, during the negotiations about more substantial reparations – and most of all the proprietorship over !Keres – /Hoesemab would otherwise have played a leading role. However, the year 1913 proved disastrous for him not only with regard to his relations to the Rhenish mission, but also in his standing with the German colonial administration. Franz /Hoesemab, the self-confident, outspoken, well-dressed leader of “his Berg-Damara” became, for a colonial sub-

50 NAN ZBU 2365, Geheimakten VII m, Bl. 5–7, G. Redecker to Gouverneur, 12.5.1913.

51 Engel, Lothar: *Kolonialismus und Nationalismus...*, op. cit., p. 89.

52 AELCRN, V 36, Bl. 79 f., *Gemeinde-Chronik*, 1912.

ject, too self-confident, too outspoken, too well-dressed.<sup>53</sup> As discontent had already been brewing for a time, the trouble began to break open due to a seemingly frivolous issue. Damara men, including /Hoesemab, proudly wore top hats, especially when going to church on Sunday and during wedding ceremonies in Windhoek. In early 1913, the Rhenish missionaries, aware that these hats allegedly made the men the laughingstock of the white population, concluded at a conference to order their parishioners not to wear top hats. Still, despite Becker's admonitions and repeated orders to the Damara church elders that Damara men must not wear top hats, younger men in particular continued to defy the order. When Becker was supposed to hold a wedding ceremony, he noticed that "all the young people came with top hats, while usually only two or three or only the bridegroom came with top hats. This was open resistance."<sup>54</sup>

In their interpretations of this "top-hat episode," historians differ: Lothar Engel sees a confrontation between colonial-missionary demands for obedience and counter-demands for "Damara independence," for which the top hat served as "symbol" indicating the possibility of equality with the white population.<sup>55</sup> Rather than simply intending to "upset Becker," Philipp Prein emphasizes the generational conflict between Damara elders and the young men: On the one hand, young men used the hats as a "means of expressing social achievement and prestige," signifying "upward mobility . . . in defiance of elderly authority." On the other hand, "perhaps Damara youth ridiculed [the] acquaintance and acceptance of colonial norms" by their elders as expressed by their wearing of top hats – but only until the missionary master ordered them to stop mimicking the Germans.<sup>56</sup>

Missionary Becker himself did not give much consideration to the generational aspect of this dispute. He assumed, based on his static understanding of "African" society, that the youth would never act without the consent of the elders. He focused instead on the challenge to his and the mission's authority. Was this dispute a sign not only that he was losing influence, but that the Damara congregation might secede from the Rhenish mission? Becker put the responsibility for this "open resistance" squarely on /Hoesemab, who gained the support of both the elders and the young after he involved the state administration in this dispute with the missionary. /Hoesemab asked the native commissioner for permission to wear top hats and Bohr assured him, much to the chagrin of Becker, that nobody was allowed to forbid them to do so. Again the state official, after being actively involved by /Hoesemab, was protecting the foreman against the insinuations of the mission. Becker and the other missionaries of the Rhenish mission, however, concluded that the conduct of /Hoesemab was unacceptable. Despite a meeting in

53 A photograph of "Schulmeister Franz [/Hoesemab] and [his] wife in Windhuk" is reprinted on the back cover of Hartmann, Wolfram (ed.): *Hues Between Black and White. Historical Photography from Colonial Namibia, 1860s to 1915*, Windhoek 2004.

54 Report Becker, 23.9.1913, quoted in Prein, Philipp: *Guns and Top Hats. African Resistance in German South West Africa, 1907–1915*, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies*, no. 1, Abingdon 1994, pp. 99–121, 118.

55 Engel, Lothar: *Kolonialismus und Nationalismus...*, op. cit., p. 90.

56 Prein, Philipp: *Guns and Top Hats...*, op. cit., p. 118.

April 1913 of the Damara elders with Becker and missionary J. Olpp, at which the former (including /Hoesemab) grudgingly accepted that nobody wearing a top hat would be admitted to a church service, Franz /Hoesemab was dismissed from his position as mission teacher and preacher in the Damara parish on April 29. Formally, he was accused of having illegitimate children; “sodomy” was considered incompatible with his position in the congregation. Missionary Olpp explained /Hoesemab’s disobedient behavior by virtue of his “tribal” origin: “Franz is typical for his people, a former slave people.” He argued that “Bergdamara” were not used to liberty and power, circumstances that made them “cheeky and cocky.”<sup>57</sup>

In early May 1913 the Rhenish mission tried to convince the colonial government that /Hoesemab, given his political capabilities and oratory skills, was a “political danger” to the colony and should therefore also be dismissed as foreman of the *Damarawerft*. A high-ranking colonial official, Gustav Redecker, who was himself born in Otjimbingwe and was considered an expert on “native affairs,” agreed that /Hoesemab was a “megalomaniac,” but this, Redecker argued, was due to /Hoesemab’s “false treatment at the hands of us whites.” Like the head of the “native department” of the governorate, Streitwolf, he rejected the demands of the Rhenish mission to dismiss /Hoesemab from his foremanship (“a political mistake”).<sup>58</sup> Emboldened by this seeming neutrality of the colonial administration in the dispute between him and the missionaries, /Hoesemab went a step further in his defiance of the Rhenish mission by opening a decolonial perspective for his parish: prohibiting his people from attending the mission school and the mission church, /Hoesemab himself “continued to preach and teach. In the middle of 1913 he . . . formally reclaimed his offices by founding his own independent church and school. The majority of Damara followed Franz.”<sup>59</sup> The colonial state in the person of Native Commissioner Bohr still refused to intervene since /Hoesemab gave no indication of disloyalty toward the German colonial government.

Missionary Becker complained of /Hoesemab’s “arrogance.” He described the year 1913 as “absorbed by the dispute with schoolmaster Franz /Hoesemab. He is a highly gifted, towering spirit, the mission has appointed him as a schoolmaster and deputy church leader; the government made him foreman on the *Werft*, the whole Bergdamara people, even beyond Windhoek, recognized him as an authority, he was flattered by many whites and asked for his influence in their favor. This was too much for a Bergdamara,” who “felt like a captain elected by his entire people.”

Evidently Becker complained extensively about the lack of support from the government in the affair. He considered Native Commissioner Bohr “fickle,” letting /Hoesemab “get him down.” The governor’s decision not to dismiss /Hoesemab was, according to Becker, “resented by White and Black.” Worse still for the Lutheran, the “Romans” (Windhoek’s Catholic missionaries) “endeavored” to win over /Hoesemab. They hoped to use his influence, which reached far

57 Engel, Lothar: *Kolonialismus und Nationalismus...*, op. cit., p. 90.

58 NAN ZBU 2365, Geheimakten – VII m, Bl. 5–7, Redecker to Gouverneur, 12.5.1913.

59 Prein, Philipp: *Guns and Top Hats...*, op. cit., p. 119.

beyond Windhoek, for their own missionary activity.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, in June 1913 Native Commissioner Bohr – after the matter had been discussed in the Territorial Council (*Landesrat*) – showed that he was convinced of the “person of the much-named foreman Franz,” whom, he argued, the authorities should “bolster up as a foreman.” This seemed advantageous to him because /Hoesemab “in full accordance with his so-called *Werft* council had indicated to the missionary [Becker] for the Nama-speakers that interference in pure tribal matters by him is not welcome anymore.” /Hoesemab wanted to negotiate only with the government. Bohr was pleased because without the “interference of the mission” the government’s measures (such as compulsory vaccination and the examination of sexually transmitted diseases) would be much easier to conduct.<sup>61</sup>

However, when /Hoesemab became politically active during several trips to Usakos and Karibib, where he allegedly called for the appointment of chiefs in accordance with traditional customs, the government intervened based on renewed advice from the Rhenish mission. In the settler community, concerns were raised about another “rebellion,” potentially led by /Hoesemab. Governor Seitz dismissed the troublemaker in November 1913 as *Werft* foreman. Furthermore, he was relegated to Lüderitz for two years for “political reasons”; even banishment to Cameroon had been contemplated.<sup>62</sup> His family was “taken care of. Franz blames the mission for his misfortune.” Despite the relief about Franz’s deposition, the missionaries deplored the reluctance of the Damara to return to church services. An increase in “drinking, dancing, and fornication” on the *Werft*, which led to the deposition of two church elders, was, according to Becker, still due to /Hoesemab’s influence. In August 1915, /Hoesemab returned to Windhoek after the German surrender to the South African troops and was “soon appointed by the South Africans as a *Werft* foreman.” In 1918 he returned for the first time to Becker’s church services, but he was again dismissed in 1919 and expelled from Windhoek to Okatimba because he was involved in controversies over dominance in the Damara *Werft*.<sup>63</sup> In 1923 /Hoesemab resigned from the “evangelical mission” and lived, as the congregation register recorded, “in adultery,” but, confessing all his transgressions and paying all outstanding fees, he was readmitted in 1932. In 1933 /Hoesemab lost an election for the Damara chieftainship, organized by the South African colonial authorities, but they still appointed him to the position of “Chief of Windhoek Bergdamarawerft.”<sup>64</sup>

Over the course of forty-odd years, Franz /Hoesemab used the opportunities and skills offered to him as a talented mission pupil and later as an efficient

60 AELCRN, V 36, Bl. 79–82, Gemeinde-Chronik, 1913; cf. Oermann, Nils-Ole: Mission, State..., op. cit., p. 164.

61 NAN ZBU 2365, Geheimakten – VII m, BA Windhuk to Gouverneur, 30.6.1913; Bl. 26 f., report.

62 NAN ZBU 162, A VI a 8, Bl. 89, Annual Report Native Commissioner Windhoek, 31.3.1914; cf. Oermann, Nils-Ole: Mission, State..., op. cit., pp. 164–165.

63 AELCRN, V 36, Bl. 83, Gemeinde-Chronik, 1915; Bl. 92, Gemeinde-Chronik 1919; Engel, Lothar: Kolonialismus und Nationalismus..., op. cit., p. 100.

64 AELCRN, VI 36.2, Bl. 144, Taufverzeichnis, Nr.68/69; V 36, Bl. 133 f., Chronik, 1933.

church and government administrator. Clearly profiting economically and politically from the colonial system, he gave, on the one hand, “the impression of a collaborative headman.”<sup>65</sup> As a skilled tactician, he recognized the tensions within the colonial fabric – between administrative levels and between the two missions – and he knew how to exploit them for his own benefit and that of the people who put their trust in him. He stood at the “relay point between colonial state and colonized society” and, because of his knowledge of the German administration as a “middleman,” he kept “a foot in each of the two camps.”<sup>66</sup> “Segregation as a technique of rule” opened for him the opportunity to take a position at the top of at least a part of the African population of Windhoek, which he would never have reached without the colonial state.

On the other hand, the same abilities that determined his rise in the new colonial hierarchies for Africans precipitated his fall. As Nils-Ole Oermann argues about the “case of Franz Hoesemab,” the Rhenish mission “had opened Pandora’s box”: by teaching African children and youth and educating young evangelists, the mission created a “new local elite” that it was, however, unable to permanently control. The former pupils could turn against their teachers when they felt unfairly treated. The power position this “new elite” reached due to its mission education could then be used against the mission itself and help, for example, /Hoesemab “to dissociate himself from the [Rhenish mission]. A mission dispute turned into a political affair.”<sup>67</sup>

The “case of Franz Hoesemab” is once more an example that “resistance and collaboration” are to be seen “as rational, alternative strategies to Africans trying to defend their interests.”<sup>68</sup> A decolonial perspective emerged in 1913, as /Hoesemab’s opponent, Becker, recognized when he lamented the Damaras’ “open resistance” under the leadership of /Hoesemab, making possible even his independent church services and finally culminating in calls for renewed chieftaincies.<sup>69</sup> The First World War opened a few new political opportunities in this respect. /Hoesemab seized them immediately upon his return, trying to resume his old power position and participating in elections for chiefs. Other former mission pupils and evangelists and African mission teachers would continue his quest for greater independence from the mission institutions.<sup>70</sup>

65 Prein, Philipp: *Guns and Top Hats...* op. cit., p. 119.

66 Osterhammel, Jürgen: *Kolonialismus...*, op. cit., p. 74.

67 Oermann, Nils-Ole: *Mission, State...*, op. cit., p. 162.

68 Walraven, K. v./Abbink, J.: *Rethinking Resistance in African History. An Introduction*, in: idem (eds.): *Rethinking Resistance. Revolt and Violence in African History*, Leiden 2003, pp. 1–40, 2.

69 Report Becker, 23.9.1913, quoted in Prein, Philipp: *Guns and Top Hats...*, op. cit., p. 118.

70 Cf. Engel, Lothar: *Die Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft und die deutsche Kolonialherrschaft in Südwestafrika 1884–1915*, in: Bade, Klaus (ed.): *Imperialismus und Kolonialmission. Kaiserliches Deutschland und koloniales Imperium*, 2nd edition, Wiesbaden 1984, p. 142–164, 161–162; Sundermeier, Theo: *Wir aber suchten Gemeinschaft. Kirchwerdung und Kirchenspaltung in Südwestafrika*, Witten 1973.